Teachers' Perceptions towards Disruptive Behaviours among Students in Public Secondary Schools in Tanzania

Jonas Kinanda

PhD Student, School of Education, University of Dar es Salaam
Email: kinandajj@gmail.com

Abstract

Disruptive behaviours among secondary school students adversely affect students, teachers, parents and community members. This study explores teachers' perceptions towards disruptive behaviours among students in public secondary schools in Tanzania. This qualitative study involved 50 teachers selected from four public secondary schools from two councils, namely Mwanza City and Ukerewe District, both found in Mwanza Region, Tanzania. Data collection was done through interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews. The analysis was thematic and MAXQDA. The findings showed that teachers perceived students' disruptive behaviours as problematic to the teachers, peers, school administrators, parents, and the community at large. This is because they were experienced with various forms of students' disruptive behaviours ranging from less severe problems such as noise making and truancy to severe ones such as delinquency and aggressive behaviours. The conclusions are that teachers and students in public secondary schools are not physically and psychologically safe because, apart from interfering with teachers' activities and properties, some of the students' disruptive behaviours are threats to students' and teachers' lives, particularly by being attacked, humiliated, abused, injured and even sometimes killed.

Keywords: *teachers' perceptions, teacher, student, students' disruptive behaviour, public secondary school*

Introduction

Disruptive behaviours among students have become an issue of concern among teachers, parents, and community members across the globe (Sunday et al., 2022; Nash et al., 2016; Nakpodia, 2010). It is a phenomenon that has caught much of the attention of researchers in the fields of education, psychology, and social work. It is reported to be putting teachers, parents, and the general public in tension (Nash et al., 2016; Nakpodia, 2010). Studies show that students' disruptive behaviours increase stress among teachers, reduce their professional competence, and ruin the student-teacher relationship that is supposed to facilitate educational attainment (Levin & Nolan, 2010; Kourkoutas & Giovazolias, 2015). Arguably, for several decades there has been a consensus among researchers that students' disruptive behaviours are a major source of teachers' stress (Martin & Sass, 2010). Ball et al. (2012) points out that disruptive behaviours are still an issue of concern in schools. Furthermore, these behaviours disturb the calm of the learning and teaching environment. Consequently, such behaviours are associated with adverse impacts on both the academic and social development of students, attributing to poor performance, absenteeism, school dropout, and delinquent behaviours

(Baker et al., 2008; Yusoff & Mansor, 2016). Subsequently, the prevalence of disruptive behaviours in schools today presupposes an increase in the number of criminal adults in the future (Vogel, 2008). Dully, Morrell (2002) warns that the school is where violence starts to develop if children's behaviours are not well managed. Therefore, as students are expected to take over the future generation, their current disruptive behaviours predict problematic citizenry and leadership in future.

Literature Review

Several studies consider students' disruptive behaviours as a relatively new and growing problem that is somewhat difficult to understand. As such no consensus on its definition has been reached so far. This is because every culture has its way of interpreting disruptive behaviours (Kauffman, 2005). Similarly, Evans et al. (2003) argued that the definition lacks clarity in terms of which particular acts or traits constitute disruptive behaviour. This lack of clarity has something to do with the fact that certain behaviours may appear problematic to some teachers, parents, and students, but may be considered normal by others. That means teachers and other people may not perceive students' disruptive behaviours in the same way. Thus, to understand why some behaviours are considered problematic while others are not, it is important to have a clear understanding of how teachers perceive students' disruptive behaviours.

Literature shows that disruptive behaviours go by different names. Historically, they have been referred to as conduct problems, behavioural problems, disruptive behaviours, emotional disturbance, behavioural disorders, misbehaviours, deviances, anti-social behaviours, maladjusted behaviours, and behavioural disorders (Befring et al., 2013 in Stavness, 2014). Variation in these terms reflects concepts that are unique to history, culture, profession, and theoretical positions (ibid.). Although these terms are vague and do not describe the behaviours displayed, they have been used to indicate a wide range of behaviours and serve as a reminder that disruptive behaviour is a multidisciplinary field, and that different perspectives exist in this field of study (Stavnes, 2014). Henceforward, due to a lack of uniformity and inconsistent application in the use of the terms, in this study, the term disruptive behaviour is used for consistency's sake. Equally, in this study, concepts like misbehaviours and discipline problems are treated under the rubric of disruptive behaviours for contextualisation and familiarisation purposes.

Despite the differences in the way it is defined or interpreted, the term disruptive behaviours means behavioural problems. Arguably, the term encompasses behaviours that are directed towards others, expressed in actions, are highly visible, and tend to be quite disruptive, a reason why they are commonly known as disruptive behaviours or externalising behaviours as opposed to internalising behaviours. Thus disruptive behaviours are easily detectable when children interact with others, such as parents, teachers, and peers. Disruptive behaviours are behaviours exhibited by students in and outside the school settings but they interfere with learning and teaching. Feasibly, such behaviours violate the norms, disturb the social environment and interfere with the rules of a particular place including the school and the classrooms in particular (Stavnes, 2014; Charles & Senter, 2011; Colvin, 2010). Since they

violate the norms of the society, disruptive behaviours are unacceptable in a particular society. Potentially, a definition that may apply in different contexts comes from Webber and Plotts (2008) who treat disruptive behaviour as one that deviates from cultural norms. Generally, in the present study disruptive behaviours are not limited to students' troublesome behaviours, rather it goes beyond as it may refer to any unacceptable, awkward and uncivilised student behaviours that usually are prohibited behaviour by teachers, parents, schools, and society.

Depending on their nature and severity, disruptive behaviours range from minor troublesome to severe behavioural problems. While disruptive behaviours are common across all ages, they begin during childhood but the type of the problem may differ according to age, sex and culture. Levin and Nolan (1996) categorise disruptive behaviours into four major groups. The first is a category of behaviours that interfere with the teaching and learning process such as the act of students to openly refuse to follow instructions or engage in aggression in the classroom. The second comprises behaviours that infringe on other students' right to learn. A typical manifestation of such behaviours is when a student interrupts while the teacher is teaching. Others are inattention, restlessness, bullying, stealing, fighting, and assault. The third is a category of behaviours that are psychologically or physically unsafe such as spelling or posing threats to other students, constantly harassing or teasing peers or distracting teachers and peers, failure to accomplish assignments, drug abuse, and absenteeism. The last one relates to behaviours that lead to the destruction of properties like desks, tables, books, and more.

The literature points out multiple factors associated with the occurrence of disruptive behaviours among students. These factors are complex and interrelated and most of them occur in combination with other problems as such they differ in terms of the type of disruptive behaviours depending on the individual, culture, and socioeconomic status. Yet, Smith and Taylor (2010) are of the view that assigning the causes of disruptive behaviours should be viewed from biological and environmental factors. Subsequently, there are internal and external factors influencing disruptive behaviours among students. According to Kauffman (2005), the internal factors are related to the individual child's genetic makeup, brain injury, nutrition, biochemistry, physical illness or disability, and temperament. As for the external factors, these include family, school, community, neighbourhood, cultural interference, technology, poverty, or rather teachers, parents, and peers. Agambire et al. (2019) stated that the environment in which adolescents live may contain conditions that make the adolescents engage in various risky behaviours particularly the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, violence, suicide, and sexual activity.

Theoretical Framework
Given disruptive behaviour is culturally bound and might be interpreted differently among individuals, it might be perceived differently among teachers. Subsequently, this study used the attribution theory by Weiner (2010). In his theory, Weiner (2010) emphasizes the role of the perception of individuals' behaviours on the causes of their behaviour and that of others. Accordingly, Weiner (2010) suggests that individuals' perception of the causes of behaviours plays a crucial role in predicting their emotional and physical or behavioural reaction. This means, an individual reacts to his or her behaviours and that of others based on how they

attribute the causes of such behaviours. In that case, how teachers react to students' disruptive behaviours is determined by how teachers believe to be the causes of their students' disruptive behaviours, which in turn might lead to their reactions emotionally and physically. Further, Weiner (2010) identifies two major perceived causes or factors, that is, internal and external factors. While the internal factors are concerned about the causes that are within an individual, the external factors, are factors that operate on the environment or the external forces that are found in the environment in which the students stay. Thus, it can be concluded that teachers' perceived factors to the students' disruptive behaviours might have adverse impacts on their perceptions, attitudes and relationships with their students who exhibit disruptive behaviours (Nemer et al., 2019). This theory emphasizes the mechanism in which teachers develop perceptions and reactions towards students' disruptive behaviours.

In Tanzania, the increase of disruptive behaviours among secondary school students has been reported in several places throughout Tanzania (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology [MoEST], (2017; 2018): President's Office, Regional Administrative and Local Government [PO-RALG], (2020). Given students' disruptive behaviours have been found to negatively impact students, teachers, parents, and community, it is still not clear whether or not teachers perceive students' disruptive behaviour as a problem of concern. Existing studies (e.g. Levin & Nolan, 2010; Kourkoutas & Giovazolias, 2015) opine that teachers perceived students' disruptive behaviours as problematic because it is stressful and a threat to their careers. However, although they are still struggling to manage students' disruptive behaviours, there is limited research that captures their perceptions in the Tanzanian context. In light of this milieu, this study sought to explore teachers' perceptions towards students' disruptive behaviours in public secondary schools in Tanzania. Specifically, it sought to answer two research questions: (i) Do secondary school teachers perceive students' disruptive behaviours as a serious problem of concern? (ii) What forms of student disruptive behaviours do teachers usually encounter in public secondary schools?

Methodology
Design and Procedure
This study adopted a qualitative research approach in the collection and analysis of data. Under this approach, an exploratory case study design was employed. The design was adopted since it is ideal for answering 'what' questions as opposed to the 'who' and 'where' questions (descriptive design) or the 'why' and 'how' questions (explanatory design) (Yin, 2016). The researchers selected Mwanza City and Ukerewe District councils in Mwanza Region as the study areas. The region was purposively selected because it is among the top five regions with the highest rate of disruptive behaviours among students. Unlike other regions which included Tabora, Morogoro, Kagera and Geita (MoEST, 2017, 2018; PO-RALG, 2020), Mwanza Region is rapidly growing, and the second region with the largest population characterized by a multicultural composition, and varied socio-economic statuses. In due regard, given that discipline problems and disruptive behaviours are inseparable, Mwanza City Council and Ukerewe District Council were selected purposively because of having a large number of cases of indiscipline among secondary school students (PO-RALG, 2020). Given that disruptive

behaviours are related to age in human growth (Matsoga, 2003) and occur most in secondary schools than in other educational levels (Fields, 2000), snowball sampling (Bock & Harel, 2010) was used to obtain the targeted four public secondary schools as informed by the District Secondary Education Officers (DSEOs) and the Regional Education Officer (REO). While class teachers and heads of school were purposely sampled, based on particular criteria that were deemed appropriate to enable the researcher to obtain the required data, an inconvenience sampling technique was used in this study to obtain subject-teachers, school counselors, and discipline masters/mistresses because they were easily accessible in the school setting (Elfil & Negida, 2017) and were willing to participate in this study (Andrade, 2021).

Sample Size
The population for this study comprised secondary school teachers from which a sample of 50 participants was drawn in Mwanza City and Ukerewe District. These participants belonged to six major categories: subject teachers, class teachers, discipline masters/mistresses, school counselors, and heads of school who were equally divided across the Councils (Figure 1.1). The majority of participants were subject teachers and 30 (60%) of them participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) while eight (16%) participated in the interviews. This sample size was deemed appropriate for the study because it was convenient for the researcher to reach data saturation (Bryaman, 2012; Creswell, 2014) on the perceived prevalence of disruptive behaviours among students.
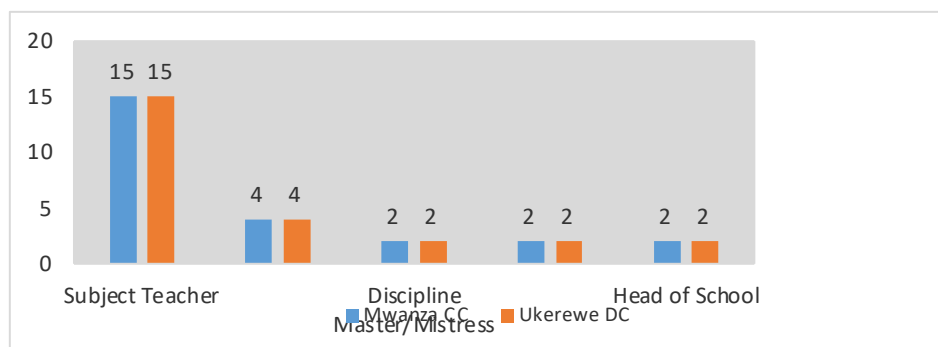

Figure 1.1: Study Sample
Source: Field data 2022

Data Collection Methods
The researchers applied multiple sources of data collection methods to have a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study (Yin, 2016). More specifically, a semi-structured interview, focus group discussions, and documentary review were used to collect relevant data on students' disruptive behaviours. The interview method was used among class teachers, discipline masters/mistresses, school counselors, and heads of school since it keeps the researcher focused on predetermined open questions and prompts, and gives the interviewee freedom to elaborate certain issues (Dornyei, 2007: Bryman, 2012). Likewise, FGD was employed in this study to complement the data obtained via in-depth interviews and documentary reviews. Similarly, documentary review was also used as a major secondary source of data that was used to collect relevant data for this study (Walliman, 2011) to

complement the data obtained through interviews. The researchers reviewed documents such as joining instructions, minutes of discipline committee meetings, black books, and school by-laws as well as job descriptions of class teachers, discipline masters/mistresses, and school counselors who usually serve as teachers and school counselor as well.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from in-depth interviews and FGDs were recorded by using a digital sound recorder and were transcribed during and after the data collection process ended. The transcribed data were analysed with MAXQDA version 10 through which a thematic analysis method was employed with a focus on the meanings. Thus, the collected data were coded, analysed, and categorised according to patterns and themes as per Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis model through the MAXQDA. The six-step thematic analysis model begins with familiarization then it proceeds to creation of codes, searching and identification of themes, reviewing of themes, naming and definition of the themes and finally production of a comprehensive report. Pseudo-codes made of a combination of letters and numbers were used instead of the actual names of the schools and participants to ensure anonymity during data analysis and reporting of the findings. For example, FGDST1S1 to FGDST8S4 were used to identify subject teachers who participated in the four FGDs in the four participating schools respectively. Similarly, IDCT1S1 to IDCT2S4 used to identify classroom teachers, IDDMS1 to IDDMS4, represented discipline master/mistress, IDSCS1 to IDSCS4 school counselors and DHMS1 to IDHMS4 represented heads of school who participated in the in-depth interviews in the four participating secondary schools.

Perception towards Students' Disruptive Behaviours

The first research question was on teachers' perceptions of students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools. Examining teachers' perceptions about students' disruptive behaviours was important in determining the extent to which students' disruptions are problematic to teachers in secondary schools. Weiner (2010) proposed the attribution theory to explain how teachers' perception towards students' behaviours might express their emotional reactions towards them. The study revealed that participants perceived students' disruptive behaviours as very problematic in and outside the school setting. They revealed that students' disruptions were a serious concern in many schools as they interfered with the teaching-learning process and teachers' work. Arguably, almost all participants argued that all forms of students' disruptive behaviours are problematic in their school, students, teachers, parents, and community members as illustrated below:

> *Honestly, students' disruptive behaviours are a big problem to us as teachers, but also to others such as peers, parents and community members. It is more of a threat to us, students and school administrators; we as school administrators are sometimes confused much with these behaviours. This is because they destroy the reputation of our school as they affect the school's academic performance which makes our school perceived as awful and low standard by the community. (IDHMS3, Male)*

This statement from the school head suggests that even the school administrators perceive students' disruptive behaviours as challenging to the school. This is because they jeopardise the reputation of the school, which in turn makes parents and the community uncomfortable with the school. This finding supports the practice of the majority of parents to compete to send their children to schools with good discipline, as they believe that good discipline is an assurance of students' better performance (Nakpodia, 2010: Semali & Vumilia, 2016) and good behaviour. Discipline contributes to the good image of the schooland prepares students for the future (Glasser, 2009). Thus, it is evident that teachers' perception of all forms of students' disruptive behaviours is a severe problem. This is because their perceptions were centred on their reaction that students' disruptive behaviour is a problem towards the attainment of the teaching and learning process, the core business of every school. This finding corroborates the study by Cohen and Romi (2010) who found that both pre-service and in-service teachers perceived the severity of all forms of students' misbehaviours. This is attributed to the fact that students' disruptive behaviours make the learning environment inconducive, which in turn weakens the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Muna, 2019). Similarly, Chukwunonyenim and Imwenoghomwen (2020) stated that teaching and learning cannot be achieved if students have disruptive behaviours in the classroom. Arguably, these behaviours are problematic because they might lead to poor lesson preparation and presentation (Opurum, 2017).

Additionally, it was highly perceived that students' disruptive behaviours are a serious problem of concern as it is more dangerous and a threat to the teachers' lives and work. One teacher had this to say in that regard:

> *Students' disruptive behaviours are more like a problem that needs to be taken seriously otherwise teachers like us who are struggling to manage them are in great danger. This is because some students who exhibit disruptive behaviours, particularly those who smoke marijuana, are as dangerous to us as they are capable of beating, hurting or even killing us. (IDDMS4, Male)*

This statement implicitly suggests that participants believe that student's disruptive behaviour is a problem of concern because it is a threat to their lives and career. This is not surprising because there have been a tremendous increase in dysfunctional interactions between students and teachers in school settings. For instance, some students fight with their teachers and even attempt to beat them, chop them with a machete, or even stub them with a knife. This is evident because, in September 2023, it was reported that a student chopped his teacher's left hand in the Mara Region following the teacher's attempt to punish the student for an indiscipline case (Makaka, 2023). Similarly, in July 2023, it was reported that a male student killed his teacher with a knife in the Dar es Salaam Region following the deceased teacher waking him up in the morning for preparation time (Loshilaa, 2023). Consistent with these findings, Elibariki (2014) stated that students tend to abuse their teachers and are capable of fighting with them. Consequently, in the light of these behaviours, teachers' jobs may be affected. This is because teachers may not be free to teach as they think that they are no longer safe at work as they are preoccupied with the thoughts of whether students possess dangerous weapons like

guns that might be used against them (Nakpodia, 2010). Accordingly, McIntyre and Silva (1992) opined that students' misbehaviours may affect teachers' job satisfaction, which can lead to their decision to resign from the teaching profession. Unlike in the present study, surprisingly, in the United Kingdom (Reid, 2010) it was noted that the rates of delinquency, vandalism and drug-related crimes among students in secondary schools were higher to the extent that it was described that schools are dangerous places that people were frightened to go.

Forms of Students' Disruptive Behaviours
The second research question explored forms of student behaviours that teachers usually encounter in their schools. This research question was important for finding the relevance of teachers' perceptions on students' disruptive behaviours to their actual experiences in teaching and working with students at school. It was found that participants encountered different forms of students' disruptive behaviours, which can collectively be regarded as either severe or less severe disruptive behaviours.

In this study, severe disruptive behaviours, include behaviours that appear to be extremely dangerous to the student himself or herself and others, or difficult to be managed by the teachers and the school. These behaviours include stealing, vandalism, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, fighting, bullying, physical attacks, unsafe sex practices, and abortion. These behaviours appear to be severe because they are either criminal or aggressive. Accordingly, they are further categorised as either aggressive or delinquent behaviours.

Likewise, in the current study, aggressive behaviours refers to some disruptive behaviours that usually involve an intention to harm peers or objects. These include bullying, physical attacks, and vandalism. Specifically, the study revealed that bullying is the most common form of aggressive behaviour in secondary schools because those in the lower-class levels were being intimidated by perpetrators, who were their fellow students, either from the same or other upper classes that were either mature and stronger or more powerful than their victims, as captured in the following extract:

> *There are various forms of bullying in secondary schools particularly that involve a bully forcing another student to clean the toilets, taking other students' properties like food or clothes by force as well as intimidating the victim students to do what the perpetrators want them to do. For example, buying something like bites and drinks for the perpetrator but at the victim's expense. (FGDST8S2, Male)*

Generally, the participants reported that the bullies organize themselves in groups and cooperate in several issues such as eating, drinking, smoking, and many more. Moreover, it was revealed that in most cases, bullies engage in different forms of disruptive behaviours particularly substance abuse, stealing, attacking, and noise making. Contrary to the existing literature in Tanzania which shows that it is common for students to be bullied by their teachers (Moris, 2008; Ndibalema, 2013), this study found that students also bully each other. They threaten, frighten, harm, tease, harass, and humiliate each other, which is against human rights.

These findings suggest that students may be bullied by either their peers or their teachers or by both. In line with this study, Marais and Meier (2010) found that bullying which involved teasing, taunting, mocking, biting, hitting, pushing, shoving, and intimidating peers was more common among learners in South African schools.

Additionally, the study revealed that vandalism was among disruptive behaviours in secondary school. It was reported that several behaviours lead to the destruction of school properties, particularly desks, tables, windows, and so on. Students who disrupt normally destroy property intentionally as revenge after being irritated by teachers or school administrators who interfere with their affairs, particularly in an attempt to control their disruptions. Thus, to this effect, they may plan to set the teachers' offices or dormitories on fire. The following extract from a teacher testifies this:

> *Sometimes, students can destroy various properties, particularly by setting them on fire. In some cases, they have been associated with burning dormitories or schools as you may have heard or observed in various places throughout the country. It is usually done by students organising themselves in groups to destroy the school or hostel by setting them on fire. (FGDST3S3, Male)*

This finding concurs with the available reports on the destruction of school properties by students in various schools throughout Tanzania. For example, in 2013, there was an incident that involved several secondary school students setting fire to dormitories in the Chunya district in the Mbeya Region following some of their colleagues being suspended from school for indiscipline cases (Anonymous, 2013). In the same vein, "*Wanafunzi Njombe wateketeza bweni*" (2014) reported another well-known incident in Tanzania that involved students from one school in the Njombe Region burning dormitories, workshops and destroying various school properties including teachers' houses and stoning a discipline master's car following their resistance to being restricted into various issues, including going clubbing. In 2022, some students burnt a teacher's motorcycle and destroyed his maize grains in Singida Region following their colleague being punished for possessing a mobile phone (Swahilitimes, 2022). These incidents prove the extent to which secondary school students engage in vandalism, which is dangerous to the schools, students, teachers, and the surrounding community. This finding is somewhat different from Marais and Meier (2010) who found that vandalisms such as breaking windows, blocking toilets with toilet papers, scratching teachers' cars, puncturing teachers' car tyres, and damaging plants and trees, were serious disruptive behaviours among learners in the foundation phase in South African schools. The difference may be due to historical differences between Tanzania and South Africa. Unlike Tanzania, South Africa has experienced several forms of turmoil in which the majority of people, including students, were involved. For example, aside from the apartheid system of 1994, South Africa also faced the worst civil unrest in 2021 (Elumalai et al., 2022).

Delinquent behaviour is another area of disruptive behaviours. Behaviours such as stealing, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, fighting, unsafe sex practice and abortion are categorised as delinquent behaviours. Arguably, such behaviours were supposed to be termed criminal behaviours, however, since the offenders are young persons, in this study they are treated as

delinquent behaviours or juvenile delinquency. These behaviours might simply be regarded as delinquent behaviours because they are specified in the United Republic of Tanzania's penal code as illegal. Specifically, it is disclosed that stealing is common among students in secondary schools because it is claimed that some students steal other people's property such as books, money, mobile phones, watches, and pens as stated below:

> *We have several cases that involve students being reported to lose their property*
> *in their classrooms, particularly books and money. In most cases, male students*
> *are the ones who have been caught stealing various things from various students.*
> *Students who are thieves may steal these properties during break time, or at a time*
> *for extracurricular activities from anyone, regardless of his or her age, gender,*
> *and status. (IDCT2S2, Female)*

It was reported that though students are the victims of theft in most cases, in rare cases, teachers' properties, homes, and communities' properties like money, mobile phones, clothes, chickens, and foodstuffs, particularly maize, cand groundnuts are stolen by students who have such behaviour. The participants claimed poverty, economic hardship, and poor household income as the major factors that drive students into theft. Most of the students who engage in these delinquent acts are male. This is evident because "Ripoti maalumu" (2021), holds that secondary students usually possess, dangerous weapons like knives, machetes, screwdrivers, and syringes which they use to grab other students' property. This finding concurs with Yusoff and Mansor's (2016) study conducted in Malaysia, which revealed that the public was becoming more anxious as the rate of severe disruptive behaviours such as stealing was increasing. Similarly, Marais and Meier (2010) declared that learners steal clothes, money, cellular phones, and stationery from each other. This is alarming, as stealing at school age may advance to stealing more valuable items during adulthood.

Moreover, several participants reported that some students in their schools were smoking cigarettes, consuming alcohol, and abusing drugs like marijuana. Worse still, it was exposed that some students not only consumed alcohol and drugs, but also dealt with selling them in collaboration with some individuals on the streets. This was proved by the fact that some students were caught with certain drugs and they admitted that they were using and selling them to fellow students and various people on the street. A discipline master from one school had this to say:

> *These students do not only consume alcohol or smoke cigarettes and marijuana,*
> *but they also sell them. We had students who admitted after being intimidated that*
> *had been selling and using drugs for several years. (IDDMS4, Male)*

This finding is concordant with Jamii Forum's (2023) recent report that 12 secondary school students in Handeni District in Tanzania were caught red-handed smoking marijuana in the bushes. Accordingly, the National Centre on Addiction (2011) as cited in Jacobsz (2015) stated that, whether in private or public schools, the majority of primary and secondary school students know how and where to buy alcohol, marijuana, and drugs. Furthermore, it revealed

that secondary school students engaged in unsafe sexual practices while still young, below the age of 18 years and before marriage. This not only violates school rules and regulations, but it is against the law of the country and the universal societal norms and standard of living. For example, a subject teacher reported that:

> *These children nowadays are obsessed with unsafe sex. This is manifested itself in the occurrence of pregnancies and abortions among secondary school girls. Nowadays, it is possible to conduct pregnancy tests in school and find that out of fifty female students, five are pregnant. (FGDST8S2, Female)*

This finding is in line with Thomas' (2009) findings which showed that adolescent students were practising unsafe sex as they had multiple partners and had sex without a condom in South Africa. In the same vein, Alo and Akinde (2010) in south-west Nigeria found that 14.2 per cent of children had sexual intercourse before they reached age 14, and 84 per cent had sex before the age of 20.

Consequently, incidences involving students engaging in unsafe sex practices inform as having multiple sexual partners and engaging in unprotected sex, put students at the risk of contracting infectious diseases, particularly the HIV/AIDS pandemic and early pregnancies that may compel them to do an abortion. Participants declared that, given the fact that several female students engage in unsafe sex, some get pregnant, and thus to avoid being expelled from the school and being known by others, they might opt for abortion. The following quotes discloses this situation:

> *When they get pregnant, several female students opt for abortion. However, since abortion is not allowed, it is normally kept as a big secret. It is normally done by various health practitioners on the street who are there for money. (IDSCS2, Female)*

Generally, these findings confirm a finding by Vitaro et al. (2007) who contend that it is common for some adolescents to commit delinquencies. Moreover, these findings are in line with Yaghambe and Tshabangu (2013) who found stealing, alcoholism, drug abuse, and vandalism to be the most common disciplinary problems among students in secondary schools. Likewise, this study affirms the claim that conduct problems, aggressive behaviours, and delinquent behaviours are very common among secondary school students in Tanzania (Semali & Vumilia, 2016). To sum up, the severe disruptive behaviours revealed in this study are more or less the same as conduct disorders, a condition characterised by three or more symptoms such as bullying, physical fights, vandalism, stealing, and violation of social norms in the past twelve months, or with at least one criterion being present in the last six months (APA, 2013). Contrary to other previous studies like that of Weeks (2000) conducted in South Africa, this study found that in most public secondary schools there are no more severe disruptive behaviours that are characterized by unnecessary repetitive or frequent movements, disorganised thinking or speech, and repetitive jumping, which are collectively classified as childhood schizophrenia and autism. These behaviours are generally diagnosed as deep-seated

mental disorders. Therefore, this study suggests that in public secondary schools, there are students who exhibit severe disruptive behaviours that are connected to mental disorders.

Another finding is about less severe disruptive behaviours. It has been revealed that some of the students' disruptive behaviours that teachers encounter in secondary schools may be regarded as less severe disruptive behaviours. Even then, they may jeopardise school discipline and impede the teaching and learning process. These behaviours may collectively be categorized as disciplinary problems which include noise-making, mockery, truancy, dropout, and resistance. Consequently, while some of the less severe disruptive behaviours like noise making can directly disturb other people, students' peers in particular, however, some of them such as truancy, dropout, mockery, and resistance may either, directly or indirectly disturb other people, teachers and parents in particular. Conversely, unlike severe disruptive behaviours, most of the less severe disruptive behaviours are less severe because they are neither specified in the penal code as illegal nor aggressive, but rather they are against school rules and regulations, and to some extent, they are against societal norms and standards of living. Noise-making for example, is among the forms of students' disruptive behaviours which were reported to be more common during break time as well as free time when teachers are not in the classroom. One participant was of the view that:

> *Some classes like Form Twos and Threes are very well known for noise pollution. In these classes, noise explodes during break time either in the classroom or outside the classroom, particularly when they are free (no lesson) and normally their noises may be so high, shouting and accompanied by various dramas and sometimes fighting among students. (FGDST7S1, Female)*

Noise-making in the classrooms has been found to harm academic performance among secondary school students (Lapp, 2018). This is because it might hinder the learning process by disrupting concentration and increasing stress levels.

Additionally, the study revealed that truancy is also among the forms of disruptive behaviours that disturb teachers and the school at large. The participants reported that some students decide not to go to school without permission. Two major forms of truancy in the participating public secondary schools exist: short-term and long-term truancy. According to the participants, short-term truancy entails the act of a student disappearing from school for a relatively short period such as for some hours in a day, or a few days in a week. Long-term truancy, on the other hand, is the act of students disappearing from school for a relatively long period such as two weeks, one month, or more. However, it should be noted that, if a student is absent for 90 days or more, they will automatically be disqualified from being a student. One class teacher clarified more about this, saying:

> *Some students are so confusing, you can see they are in the classroom during the morning, however, when you come up for roll call in the afternoon, you will be surprised to find that they have already disappeared in the school compound. This means that they will not be involved in the evening school activities. And*

> *sometimes, you may find that they do not come to school even the following day until the day they decide to come back to school. Surprisingly this is done without any valid reason (IDCT1S4, Male).*

Furthermore, the study found that quitting school or dropping out is a common occurrence among secondary school students. It was revealed that some students may quit studies in the beginning or amidst or near the completion time due to various reasons, including ignorance and poverty. Those who are likely to do this include those who are stubborn to their parents and teachers. Some of them decide to leave school without their parents' consent, and thus parents may attempt to bring them back to school but in vain. As the findings indicated, once they are brought back to school, they tend to disappear again. A truant student may be brought back to school by force either by his/her parent in collaboration with other people or by the parent in collaboration with a teacher and other students but in vain. The following quote from a teacher testifies this:

> *In some cases, students leave school several times and [later on] may decide to settle and resume studies normally. However, some are so troublesome, no matter how hard you work to help them, they will still quit school and engage in various activities on the streets, particularly fishing and agriculture. (IDCT2S3, Female)*

This finding confirms the connotation that the majority of students are still out of school with a large number of them dropping out (Doe et al., 2022). This is evident because the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2020) exposes that 1.48 per cent of students with a corresponding number of 5.2 million girls and 5.7 million boys in secondary school were at the risk of dropping out of school in the world in 2020. Unlike severe disruptive behaviours, most of the less severe disruptive behaviours such as the ones just explained are not specified in the penal code as illegal or aggressive though they are against school or societal norms. This finding corroborates studies conducted in countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, and Hongkong (Sullivan, et al., 2014; Sun & Shek, 2012), where less severe students' disruptive behaviours like disrespecting teachers, verbal aggression, non-verbal communication, and taking focus out of turn by chatting and conversing in the classroom were more pronounced. This is opposed to Ekechukwu and Amaeze (2016) who observed singing in the classroom, eating, sleeping, gaming, poking, verbal assault, frequent movement from one place to another, passing notes to friends during instruction, and writing love letters as less severe disruptive behaviours that were common in Nigeria. These differences can be based on the way disruptive behaviours are defined differently depending on the culture, place, and research purpose. In this study, students' disruptive behaviours are not limited to disruptions of the teaching and learning process but rather go further with the violation of school rules and regulations.

Moreover, it was noted that many of the less severe disruptive disorders closely resemble Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a disorder that makes a child fail to follow instructions, finish school work, and listen carefully when spoken to directly. Other symptoms of ADHD are impatience, restlessness, excessive talking, interrupting or intruding others (APA, 2015). The findings of the study indicated that some students had disruptive behaviours

which are closely related to ADHD, for instance making noise, mockery, using abusive language, and truancy. Similarly, the study found that other less severe disruptive behaviours almost show signs of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), a condition that makes a child easily lose their temper, argue with adults, actively rebel, or refuse to comply with requests or rules of adults, deliberately do things that will annoy other people, get angry and annoyed even by minor things, or be spiteful (APA, 2013). This was affirmed by the participants who reported that some students had disruptive behaviours such as resisting teachers and parents and plotting attacks on the teachers and peers. Generally, if not managed effectively less severe disruptive behaviours are more likely to advance into severe disruptive behaviours iwhose consequences are more likely to be higher.

Apart from the data obtained during the interviews and focus group discussions, some of the reviewed documents were very useful in complementing the information obtained during the interviews and FGDs. The minutes of the disciplinary committee, the black book, and class attendance registers have revealed that teachers or the schools have been using various methods to manage different forms of students' disruptive behaviours. These documents showed various forms of disruptive behaviours that students do, but were not supposed to do. In most cases, nearly all disruptive behaviours that participants claimed to occur in their schools are those that are found on the reviewed documents. The reviewed documents revealed that teachers encounter different disruptive behaviours that range from disciplinary cases to delinquencies. Disciplinary cases include resistance, mockery, noise-making, pregnancy, engagement in sexual intercourse, dropping out, and truancy. Delinquent behaviours include theft, drug and alcohol abuse, fighting and abortion.

Conclusion
Based on these findings, it is evident that teachers in public secondary schools are experiencing different forms of students' disruptive behaviour that are severely troublesome to teachers, students and school administrators. Due to this situation, it can be concluded that teachers and students in public secondary schools are not physically and psychologically safe. This is because, apart from interfering with teachers' and students' activities and properties, students' disruptive behaviour is a threat to their lives, particularly by being attacked, humiliated, verbally abused, and injured, and are vulnerable to death. Arguably, some of such behaviours are against the school rules and regulations, the laws of the country, religious beliefs, and societal and cultural norms. This is a call for the responsible ministry to intervene in managing these behaviours for the good of the current and future generations. The importance of these findings is twofold; first, the study may serve as the body of knowledge for educational stakeholders like school psychologists, school counselors, social workers, police force and parents in collaborating with teachers in lessening the negative impacts of such behaviours in school settings; second, the study serves as a body of knowledge for other researchers interested in researching educational psychology, particularly on students' behaviours and teachers' mentorship and support.

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