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Disciplinary Practices and their Impact on Students' Behavioural Development in Military-Owned Secondary Schools in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the disciplinary practices and their impact on students' behavioural development in military-owned secondary schools in the Morogoro and Pwani Regions of Tanzania. The study was motivated by ongoing concerns about student indiscipline in secondary schools, alongside a growing scholarly and policy emphasis on structured disciplinary systems as mechanisms to enhance positive behavioural outcomes. Specifically, the study examined how disciplinary practices such as strict supervision, rule enforcement, routine regulation and hierarchical authority structures shape students' behavioural development in terms of discipline, responsibility, respect for authority and self-control. The study was guided by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and complemented by B. F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory, both of which explain how behaviour is acquired through observation, reinforcement and environmental conditioning. A convergent parallel mixed-methods research design was adopted. The study involved 106 respondents, including 70 students, 20 teachers and 16 key informants. Additionally, 20 students participated in focus group discussions. Data were collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, FGDs and documentary review. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Findings revealed that disciplinary practices in military-owned secondary schools are highly structured and systematically enforced. These include routines and timetables, assemblies and parades, uniform and grooming regulations, communication of school rules, corrective punishment, rewards and recognition, supervision, peer-led discipline, involvement of military personnel and drills. These practices are implemented through continuous monitoring and strict institutional control. Regarding behavioural outcomes, the study established that disciplinary practices positively influence students' behavioural development by fostering responsibility, punctuality, self-control, respect for authority, social cooperation and accountability. However, some respondents indicated that excessive regulation may limit students' autonomy, creativity and emotional well-being. The study concludes that disciplinary practices in military-owned secondary schools play a significant role in promoting positive behavioural development among students. However, their effectiveness depends on striking a balance between institutional control and approaches that foster internalised discipline and holistic learner development. The study recommends strengthening counselling and mentorship services, promoting positive disciplinary strategies and developing policies that balance institutional discipline with students' psychosocial needs. Further research is recommended on long-term behavioural outcomes and the psychological effects of military-oriented school environments.

Keywords: Disciplinary practices; Behavioural development; Military-owned secondary schools.

1.0 Introduction

Education systems are increasingly expected to develop learners who possess not only academic competence but also discipline, ethical values and social responsibility necessary for effective citizenship and societal participation (Robinson-Pant, 2023). Within this broader mandate, school discipline has become central to shaping student behaviour and promoting positive developmental outcomes. Despite this expectation, student behavioural challenges persist globally. As reported by Dadras (2026), schools continue to experience increasing cases of truancy, absenteeism, bullying, classroom disruption and substance use, all of which negatively affect students' learning and well-being. In response to these concerns, many education systems have adopted structured disciplinary approaches to strengthen behavioural regulation, a trend highlighted by Welsh (2024). However, Hicks (2024) argues that such measures have not fully resolved behavioural challenges, suggesting important limitations of control-based disciplinary models.

These challenges are increasingly interpreted as manifestations of broader systemic issues. According to Welsh (2024), factors such as weakened school

climate, strained teacher–student relationships and inadequate psychosocial support contribute significantly to persistent behavioural problems among students. Similarly, Avery-Overduin and Poed (2023) contend that rigid and exclusionary disciplinary practices, including suspension-based approaches, may inadvertently increase student disengagement even as they seek to restore order. This situation presents a paradox in which disciplinary systems can simultaneously promote institutional order while contributing to the persistence of behavioural challenges.

Proponents of structured disciplinary systems argue that discipline extends beyond behavioural control to include broader developmental outcomes such as self-discipline, responsibility, emotional regulation, teamwork and respect for authority, thereby contributing to students' character formation (Rodriguez and Welsh, 2022). From this perspective, discipline functions as a developmental process through which learners internalise socially acceptable norms and values, consistent with character education theory, which conceptualises moral development as the integration of knowing, valuing and doing what is right (Lickona, 1991). Recent systematic evidence further suggests a growing consensus that school-wide disciplinary frameworks embedded within institutional culture are more effective in shaping moral and behavioural development than isolated interventions (Oldham and McLoughlin, 2025), a view also reinforced by Berkowitz and Bier, (2021), who emphasise ethical formation through sustained educational experiences. Accordingly, disciplinary systems are expected to facilitate the transition from externally regulated behaviour to internalised moral identity, although the extent of this transformation remains theoretically debated and empirically uncertain, particularly in highly structured school environments.

The relationship between disciplinary systems and behavioural development can also be understood through Operant Conditioning Theory and Social Learning Theory. Operant Conditioning Theory, as advanced by Skinner (1953), posits that behaviour is shaped through reinforcement and punishment, implying that the consistent application of rewards and sanctions can encourage behavioural conformity. In contrast, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory emphasises that behaviour is acquired through observing and imitating significant others within the social environment. Extending this perspective, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) argue that learning is influenced by modelling processes through which individuals adopt behaviours demonstrated by influential role models. Within school settings, teachers and senior students therefore function as behavioural models who shape learners' conduct through example, observation and reinforcement.

However, critical perspectives challenge the assumption that behavioural compliance necessarily leads to moral internalisation. Kohlberg (1981), through his theory of moral development, argues that obedience to authority does not automatically signify advanced moral reasoning, which is characterised by autonomous ethical judgment and principled decision-making. Likewise, Foucault (1977) conceptualises disciplinary systems as mechanisms of surveillance and control that encourage conformity by regulating behaviour rather than fostering genuine moral autonomy. These perspectives underscore an important distinction between behavioural compliance and character formation, suggesting that orderly conduct may not always reflect the internalisation of moral values.

Empirical evidence regarding the influence of disciplinary systems on behavioural development remains mixed. Studies by Watts, Nguyen, Carr, Vernon-Feagans and Blair (2021) and Sorensen, Bushway and Gifford (2022) indicate that structured school environments characterised by clear rules and consistent enforcement can enhance attendance, punctuality and responsible behaviour among students. Likewise, Craig and Martin (2023) report that positive school climates are associated with higher levels of student engagement and behavioural regulation. In contrast, Darling-Hammond, Ruiz, Eberhardt and Okonofua (2023) argue that excessive reliance on external control mechanisms may diminish students' autonomy and intrinsic motivation, thereby limiting the internalisation of desirable behaviours. These findings suggest that while disciplinary systems may foster short-term behavioural compliance, their effectiveness in promoting sustained behavioural change remains uncertain.

In the African context, structured disciplinary systems are widely employed to address persistent behavioural challenges, including absenteeism, bullying and other forms of student indiscipline. Research conducted in South Africa and Ghana indicates that such systems can enhance school order and behavioural compliance. For example, Gagnon, Sylvester and Marsh (2021) as well as Abonyi and Salifu (2023) report improvements in adherence to school rules and behavioural regulation among students. However, Zondo and Mncube (2024) note that the extent to which these disciplinary practices foster internalised and enduring behavioural change remains uncertain. These findings highlight the complexity of establishing a direct relationship between disciplinary control and character development.

Student indiscipline remains a persistent concern within secondary schools in Tanzania. Betese (2022) identifies recurring behavioural challenges such as truancy, absenteeism, substance abuse, vandalism and disrespect for authority among students. Despite the implementation of interventions, including counselling services, close supervision and the enforcement of school rules, Gervas (2023) observes that these behavioural problems continue to persist. According to Luwumba, Lyamtane and Muteti (2022), such behaviours disrupt teaching and learning processes, while Bear (2020) notes that they can reduce instructional effectiveness and undermine school authority and climate. Collectively, these challenges raise concerns about the capacity of existing disciplinary approaches to promote meaningful and sustainable behavioural development.

Tanzania's education system is grounded in strong policy frameworks that emphasise discipline and character development. The Education for Self-Reliance philosophy, as articulated by Nyerere, (1967) promotes the development of self-disciplined citizens who can contribute meaningfully to society. Similarly, the Education and Training Policy (2014, revised 2023), as advocated by Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2023) reinforces the view that discipline is central to effective schooling by positioning behavioural and moral development as core outcomes of education, while also emphasising shared responsibility, guidance and counselling and positive discipline approaches that promote self-regulation and responsible citizenship. In addition, institutions such as the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF), National Service (JKT) and the Tanzania Prisons Service provide structured disciplinary training aimed at cultivating responsibility, civic duty and patriotism among young people, reflecting Nyerere's broader vision of nation-building through disciplined citizenship.

Within this framework, military-owned secondary schools operated by institutions such as the TPDF and the Tanzania Prisons Service have emerged as part of the country's broader approach to disciplined education. As noted in institutional education scholarship, such schools are designed to embed order and behavioural regulation within everyday school life. These include Kizuka, Jitegemee, Makongo, Kawawa Youth College, Ruhuwiko, Navy (Kigamboni), Airwing, Unyanyembe and Bwawani Secondary School. According to Gervas (2023), schools of this nature are typically characterised by strict discipline, hierarchical authority structures and highly structured routines intended to shape student behaviour through continuous supervision and control.

Despite the growing presence of military-owned secondary schools in Tanzania, empirical evidence regarding their contribution to students' behavioural development remains limited. Chaula (2023) notes that studies on school supervision and institutional management generally indicate that structured monitoring, effective communication and continuous supervision can contribute to improved discipline and positive behavioural outcomes in educational settings. However, there remains limited empirical evidence on how these practices specifically shape students' behavioural development within military-owned secondary schools in the Tanzanian context. This gap is especially evident in Morogoro and Pwani regions, where military-owned secondary schools operate but have received limited scholarly attention. Therefore, this study examines the influence of disciplinary practices on students' behavioural development in military-owned secondary schools, with particular emphasis on distinguishing behavioural compliance from internalised character formation.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Area

This study was conducted in Morogoro and Pwani Regions of Tanzania. Morogoro Region was selected through simple random sampling using the lottery method from a sampling frame of five regions hosting military-owned secondary schools under the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF) and the Tanzania National Service (TNS), namely Iringa, Tabora, Morogoro, Dar es Salaam and Ruvuma. Through this procedure, Morogoro Region was selected. In contrast, Pwani Region was purposively selected as it hosts the only secondary school operated under the Tanzania Prisons Service. This setting was included due to its correctional-oriented institutional environment, which shares key organisational and disciplinary features with military-owned secondary schools, including structured command systems, strict discipline and highly regulated administrative and boarding arrangements aimed at promoting obedience, order and behavioural control. Overall, the inclusion of Morogoro and Pwani Regions provided a suitable comparative context for examining disciplinary practices in military- and correctional-oriented secondary school environments, enabling the generation of relevant empirical evidence on how structured disciplinary systems influence students' behavioural development in highly regulated educational settings in Tanzania.

2.2 Methods of Data Collection

To address the study objective on the effects of disciplinary practices on students' behavioural development, a mixed-methods approach was used to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaires were administered to 70 students (35 per school) and 20 teachers (10 per school). The instruments included closed-ended and selected open-ended items. The closed-ended items used a five-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of behavioural outcomes such as self-discipline, self-control, responsibility, punctuality and adherence to school rules, while the open-ended items captured brief explanatory responses. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 key informants, including school administrators, discipline masters/mistresses, military instructors, counsellors/psychologists, internal quality assurance staff, matrons, patrons and cooks. These were purposively selected due to their direct involvement in implementing and supervising students' behavioural regulation. Data collection continued until saturation was reached, with each interview lasting 30–60 minutes, audio-recorded, supported by field notes and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involved 20 students selected from questionnaire respondents through simple random sampling (lottery method), with two groups of 10 participants each. Each FGD lasted 45–60 minutes and explored students' lived experiences of disciplinary practices and behavioural outcomes. Documentary review of discipline registers, punishment records, attendance logs and school codes of conduct was also undertaken to triangulate findings.

2.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' perceptions of the effects of disciplinary practices on students' behavioural development, particularly in relation to self-discipline, self-control, responsibility, punctuality, respect for authority and adherence to school rules. Inferential statistics were not employed as the study adopted a descriptive design focused on describing patterns of perceptions within the study sample rather than testing hypotheses or making statistical generalisations beyond the sampled population. Qualitative data generated through interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and documentary review were analysed thematically through transcription, coding, categorisation and theme development. Documentary evidence was used to substantiate and enrich the qualitative findings. Consistent with the convergent parallel mixed-methods design, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during interpretation to identify areas of convergence and complementarity, thereby enhancing the credibility and comprehensiveness of the study findings.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Disciplinary Practices Implemented in Military-Owned Secondary Schools

This section presents findings on the disciplinary practices implemented in military-owned secondary schools. Quantitative results are summarised in Table 1, while qualitative evidence from interviews, focus group discussions and documentary review is used to contextualise and explain the findings.

Table 1: Disciplinary Practices Implemented in Military-Owned Secondary Schools

Disciplinary Practice	Students' Mean (M)	Teachers Mean (M)	Overall Mean (M)	Interpretation
Structured routines and timetables	4.93	4.85	4.90	Very High
Morning assemblies and parades	4.93	4.75	4.84	Very High
Uniform and grooming regulations	4.93	4.80	4.87	Very High
Communication of school rules and regulations	4.96	4.80	4.92	Very High
Punishment as a corrective mechanism	4.91	4.85	4.90	Very High
Rewards and recognition for positive behaviour	4.86	4.10	4.69	High
Teacher supervision and monitoring	4.94	4.45	4.83	Very High
Peer-led discipline	4.76	4.65	4.73	High
Military personnel in school discipline	4.90	4.65	4.84	Very High
Drills and group duties	4.97	4.25	4.86	Very High
Grand Mean	**4.92**	**4.62**	**4.84**	**Very High**

Note. Students (n = 70); Teachers (n = 20). Mean scores were derived from a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00–1.80 = Very Low; 1.81–2.60 = Low; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate; 3.41–4.20 = High; and 4.21–5.00 = Very High.

Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

The findings indicate that disciplinary practices are implemented at a very high level, as reflected by the overall grand mean of 4.84. Both students (M = 4.92) and teachers (M = 4.62) reported strong agreement regarding the presence and consistent enforcement of disciplinary mechanisms within the schools.

Among the identified practices, communication of school rules and regulations recorded the highest overall mean (M = 4.92), followed by structured routines and timetables and punishment as a corrective mechanism (M = 4.90 each). Uniform and grooming regulations (M = 4.87), drills and group duties (M = 4.86), military personnel involvement (M = 4.84), morning assemblies and parades (M = 4.84) and teacher supervision and monitoring (M = 4.83) also received very high ratings. Although rewards and recognition for positive behaviour (M = 4.69) and peer-led discipline (M = 4.73) recorded comparatively lower scores, they were nevertheless perceived positively by respondents.

Qualitative findings validated these results. Participants consistently described the schools as highly structured environments characterised by strict timetables, routine assemblies, regular inspections, continuous supervision and active involvement of military personnel in discipline management. Students further reported that adherence to school rules was reinforced through a combination of corrective sanctions, rewards and peer monitoring systems. Documentary evidence, including school timetables, disciplinary records, codes of conduct and duty schedules, confirmed that these disciplinary practices are formally institutionalised and consistently implemented.

The findings suggest that discipline in military-owned secondary schools is maintained through an integrated system of behavioural regulation combining rule communication, supervision, military-oriented routines, corrective measures and positive reinforcement. This supports the view that highly structured school environments promote order, behavioural conformity and accountability among students.

3.2 Effects of Disciplinary Practices on Students' Behavioural Development

This section examines four behavioural dimensions: self-discipline, behavioural control and reduction of misconduct, social behaviour and cooperation and moral development and future orientation. Quantitative findings are presented using mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD). In contrast, qualitative data from interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and documentary review are used to contextualise and substantiate the statistical results. The integration of these data sources provides a comprehensive understanding of how disciplinary practices shape students' behavioural development in military-owned secondary schools in the Morogoro and Pwani Regions of Tanzania.

3.1.1 Enhancement of Students' Self-Discipline

Table 2: Enhancement of Students' Self-Discipline

Respondent Category	School	n	M	SD
Students	School A	35	4.76	0.55
Students	School B	35	4.66	0.59
Students Total	**–**	**70**	**4.71**	**0.57**
Teachers	–	20	4.47	0.51
Overall Total	–	**90**	**4.66**	**0.56**

Legend: Mean scores were computed from respondents' ratings on statements assessing the contribution of disciplinary practices to students' self-discipline. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of respondents.

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings in Table 2 suggest that disciplinary practices enhanced students' self-discipline, as evidenced by the high overall mean score of 4.66 (SD = 0.56). The relatively low standard deviations across respondent groups indicate a high degree of consensus, suggesting that disciplinary practices promoted self-control, responsibility and compliance with school rules. Qualitative findings further revealed that students gradually learn to regulate their behaviour through repeated exposure to disciplined environments and clearly defined behavioural standards. This finding was supported by interview evidence. One discipline master explained that, *"Students gradually become self-disciplined because every activity is guided by a timetable and clear expectations. Over time, they learn to manage their time and responsibilities without constant reminders"* (Discipline Master, School A, Interview, March 19, 2026). Similarly, a student participating in the FGD stated that, *"At first, it was difficult to follow all the rules, but eventually punctuality and responsibility became part of our daily routine"* (Student Participant 3, School B, FGD, March 23, 2026).

The findings suggest that behavioural consistency and personal responsibility in military-owned schools are largely shaped by a highly structured and hierarchical organisational system in which drills, inspections, strict timetables and continuous supervision make behavioural expectations explicit, routine and consistently enforced. Within this environment, behavioural control is embedded in daily practice, as students are constantly observed, corrected and required to comply with established standards, thereby normalising discipline as a lived routine rather than a formal rule. This structured context explains the pronounced outcomes in punctuality, accountability and self-regulation, as deviation is immediately detected and addressed. Theoretically, these dynamics are reinforced by Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, through sustained modelling of disciplined behaviour by authority figures and peers, while Operant Conditioning further explains the process through consistent reinforcement and immediate corrective feedback, which together contribute to the gradual internalisation of disciplined conduct.

Similar findings have been reported in African school contexts, where structured disciplinary systems characterised by clear rules, consistent enforcement and close supervision, as demonstrated by Masath, Hinze, Nkuba and Hecker (2022), improve student behavioural regulation and reduce misconduct, as further evidenced by Gervas (2023). Likewise, Waiswa, Mutungi, Mugizi and Ludigo (2024) observed in Ugandan secondary schools that structured disciplinary approaches characterised by consistent rule enforcement, positive reinforcement and close supervision contribute to the development of student responsibility and self-control through routine behavioural regulation. Extending this perspective, Rizky, Istikomah and Huda, (2026) emphasise that such outcomes are reinforced when disciplinary systems are embedded within school management structures, where leadership practices, institutional routines and organisational culture collectively shape behavioural expectations and sustain character formation. However, despite these positive

behavioural outcomes, it remains unclear whether the self-discipline developed in highly regulated environments reflects genuine internalisation of values or compliance driven primarily by institutional supervision and external control. Consequently, schools should complement disciplinary enforcement with approaches that encourage intrinsic motivation and independent self-regulation.

3.1.2 Behavioural Control and Reduction of Misconduct

Table 3: Behavioural Control and Reduction of Misconduct

Respondent Category	School	n	M	SD
Students	School A	35	4.96	0.12
Students	School B	35	4.92	0.16
Students Total	–	70	4.94	0.14
Teachers	–	20	4.52	0.75
Overall Total	–	**90**	**4.85**	**0.41**

Legend: Mean scores were computed from respondents' ratings on statements assessing the effectiveness of disciplinary practices in controlling student behaviour and reducing misconduct. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of respondents.

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings in Table 3 suggest that disciplinary practices played a significant role in behavioural control and the reduction of student misconduct. This is evidenced by the high overall mean score of 4.85 (SD = 0.41). Students reported slightly higher levels of agreement (M = 4.94, SD = 0.14) than teachers (M = 4.52, SD = 0.75). Qualitative findings further reinforced this observation. A school administrator noted, *"Cases of misconduct are addressed immediately, which discourages repetition and helps students understand the consequences of their actions"* (School Administrator, School A, Interview, March 12, 2026). Likewise, a military instructor remarked, *"Because supervision is continuous, students are less likely to engage in behaviours that violate school regulations"* (Military Instructor, School B, Interview, March 27, 2026). The findings imply that discipline operates as a comprehensive regulatory framework that extends beyond classroom instruction to encompass boarding life, co-curricular activities and daily interactions. Such continuous regulation reduces opportunities for misconduct while reinforcing behavioural conformity.

These findings align with Operant Conditioning, which explains behaviour as a function of reinforcement and corrective feedback and with Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power, which emphasises surveillance and institutional control in shaping compliant conduct. In military-owned schools, these mechanisms are reinforced through rigid hierarchies, continuous monitoring and clearly defined authority structures that make behaviour constantly visible and deviations immediately identifiable. This contributes to high behavioural control, as misconduct is promptly corrected while appropriate behaviour is consistently reinforced, gradually fostering self-regulation through sustained exposure to structured authority. Similar evidence from East African secondary school contexts supports this view, showing that structured disciplinary systems characterised by clear rules, consistent enforcement and close supervision enhance behavioural order and self-regulation through ongoing monitoring and corrective feedback, as emphasized by Musambai, Barasa and Manasi (2024).

3.1.3 Promotion of Social Behaviour and Cooperation

Table 4: Promotion of Social Behaviour and Cooperation

Respondent Category	School	n	M	SD
Students	School A	35	4.84	0.33
Students	School B	35	4.78	0.41
Students Total	–	70	4.81	0.37
Teachers	–	20	4.73	0.57
Overall Total	–	**90**	**4.79**	**0.42**

Legend: Mean scores were computed from respondents' ratings on statements assessing the contribution of disciplinary practices to the promotion of positive social behaviour and cooperation among students. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of respondents.

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings presented in Table 4 suggest that disciplinary practices contributed to the promotion of social behaviour and cooperation among students. The overall mean score was 4.79 (SD = 0.42), indicating a high level of agreement. Students reported slightly higher perceptions (M = 4.81, SD = 0.37) than teachers (M = 4.73, SD = 0.57), suggesting a shared view that disciplinary practices contribute to the development of positive interpersonal relationships and cooperative behaviour in school settings. Qualitative findings further suggest that disciplined environments encourage students to adopt shared norms of conduct and develop a sense of collective responsibility. Interview participants consistently emphasised the role of collective activities in strengthening social relationships. One Matron explained, *"Students work together in most activities and this encourages cooperation, mutual support and respect for one another."* (Matron, School B, Interview, March 24, 2026). Similarly, an FGD participant observed, *"We learn to help each other because many school activities require teamwork and collective responsibility."* (Student Participant 5, School A, FGD, March 14, 2026).

These findings suggest that social integration in military-owned schools is not simply an outcome of group participation but a product of systematically engineered behavioural regulation embedded within the school's organisational structure. The combination of rigid hierarchy, compulsory drills and continuous supervision functions to standardise student conduct by limiting behavioural discretion and embedding cooperation as an institutional requirement rather than an individual preference. From a Social Learning Theory perspective, this environment intensifies behavioural acquisition through sustained exposure to authoritative models whose conduct is consistently observed, imitated and reinforced within a closed and highly regulated system. However, the strength of this mechanism lies less in voluntary imitation and more in the constrained nature of the environment, where conformity is continuously rewarded and deviation is immediately corrected, thereby narrowing the range of acceptable behavioural alternatives.

Empirical evidence from East African secondary school contexts supports this interpretation, indicating that structured disciplinary regimes enhance self-regulation and cooperation through modelling and reinforcement processes. In particular, Simeo and Tangi (2022) demonstrate that in Tanzanian secondary schools, consistent enforcement of rules, combined with guidance, counselling and coordinated teacher–student supervision, strengthens behavioural conformity and promotes disciplined conduct by providing clear behavioural models and predictable reinforcement mechanisms. Nonetheless, the military context extends these effects by institutionalising surveillance and reducing behavioural autonomy to a greater extent than conventional school systems, raising critical questions about whether observed social cohesion reflects internalised behavioural norms or compliance shaped by persistent external control.

3.1.4 Moral Development and Future Orientation

Table 5: Moral Development and Future Orientation

Respondent Category	School	n	M	SD
Students	School A	35	4.87	0.39
Students	School B	35	4.79	0.45
Students Total	–	70	4.83	0.42
Teachers	–	20	4.60	0.60
Overall Total	–	**90**	**4.78**	**0.47**

Legend: Mean scores were computed from respondents' ratings on statements assessing the contribution of disciplinary practices to students' moral development and future orientation. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of respondents.

Source: Field Data (2026)

As shown in Table 5, respondents generally agreed that disciplinary practices contributed to students' moral development and future orientation, as reflected in the overall mean score of 4.78 (SD = 0.47). Students reported a slightly higher level of agreement (M = 4.83, SD = 0.42) than teachers (M = 4.60, SD = 0.60). These findings suggest that disciplinary practices play an important role in fostering ethical values, responsible decision-making and goal-oriented behaviour among students. Qualitative evidence indicated that students associated discipline with personal growth and future success. A School Psychologist explained, *"Discipline helps students develop responsibility and self-awareness, which are important qualities for their future careers and personal lives."* (School Psychologist, School B, Interview, March 25, 2026). In a similar vein, one student stated, *"The discipline we receive here prepares us to become responsible citizens and to make better decisions in the future."* (Student Participant 10, School A, FGD, March 14, 2026).

These findings suggest that discipline serves not only a regulatory function but also a developmental role in shaping students' character and future aspirations.

The results imply that continuous engagement with institutional norms and behavioural expectations in military-owned schools fosters the gradual internalisation of responsible citizenship through sustained exposure to tightly regulated routines, clear authority structures and consistent behavioural monitoring. This persistent exposure reduces behavioural ambiguity and progressively aligns student conduct with institutional standards, thereby shaping long-term behavioural stability and social responsibility. From a Behaviourist (Operant Conditioning) perspective, this process can be understood as the cumulative effect of repeated reinforcement of appropriate behaviour and immediate corrective feedback for misconduct, which gradually strengthens compliance and stabilises socially acceptable conduct over time. Empirical evidence from Masath, Hinze, Nkuba and Hecker (2022) in Tanzania further supports this interpretation by showing that structured disciplinary environments characterised by consistent enforcement and monitoring enhance student behavioural regulation and reduce misconduct. However, related studies by Waiswa, Mutungi, Mugizi and Ludigo (2024) in Uganda caution that while such structured systems are effective in promoting order and discipline, their long-term impact depends on whether learners move beyond compliance to genuine internalisation of values, suggesting the need for complementary interventions such as counselling and mentorship to strengthen autonomous moral reasoning and ethical decision-making.

3.1.5 Overall Implications for Behavioural Development

Overall, the findings indicate that disciplinary practices in military-owned secondary schools are strongly associated with high levels of self-discipline (M = 4.66), behavioural control and reduced misconduct (M = 4.85), social cooperation (M = 4.79) and moral development and future orientation (M = 4.78). These outcomes are shaped by a structured institutional system characterised by continuous supervision, routine rule enforcement and consistent behavioural monitoring, where discipline is embedded in everyday school life through clear expectations and immediate responses to behaviour. From a Social Learning Theory perspective, students internalise behavioural norms through observation and imitation within this regulated environment, while Operant Conditioning reinforces behavioural stability through rewards for compliance and corrective feedback for misconduct. However, the strength of these outcomes raises a concern as to whether they reflect genuine internalisation of values or compliance driven by external control, highlighting the need for approaches that enhance intrinsic motivation and autonomous self-regulation. At a broader level, the findings align with the Education and Training Policy (2014, revised 2023) and Nyerere's (1967) Education for Self-Reliance, which emphasise discipline as central to responsible citizenship and character formation.

4.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that disciplinary practices in military-owned secondary schools significantly enhance students' behavioural development, particularly in self-discipline, behavioural control, social cooperation, moral responsibility and future-oriented behaviour. This is achieved through structured routines, continuous supervision, consistent rule enforcement and corrective guidance that collectively foster responsible conduct and behavioural adjustment. However, the findings also indicate that some behavioural outcomes may reflect external regulation and institutional control rather than full internalisation of values. Accordingly, while military-oriented disciplinary systems are effective in maintaining order and promoting desirable behaviour, their long-term effectiveness depends on balancing control with strategies that strengthen reflective learning, moral reasoning, personal initiative and self-regulation. Overall, the study affirms that disciplinary practices function not only as behavioural management tools but also as instruments of character formation and social development among secondary school students.

5.0 Recommendations

The study makes the following three key recommendations. First, military-owned secondary schools should strengthen counselling and mentorship services alongside structured disciplinary systems to promote students' holistic development, including self-regulation, moral reasoning and personal responsibility beyond institutional compliance. Second, school administrators, teachers and military instructors should adopt and consistently apply positive disciplinary strategies that balance behavioural control with opportunities for student autonomy, critical thinking and psychosocial support, thereby enhancing both discipline and independent decision-making. Third, educational policymakers should develop and reinforce clear guidelines that ensure disciplinary frameworks in schools are balanced with learners' psychosocial needs, while also strengthening student leadership systems to promote accountability, cooperation and positive peer influence within school environments.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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