

# Vices in Competitive Sports and Barriers That Hinder Inculcating Values among Learners in Primary and Secondary Schools Kenya

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## Abstract

Education systems worldwide aim to not only impart knowledge but also instill values among learners. In Kenya, this objective faces several vices and barriers that hinder the effective inculcation of values in primary and secondary schools. Despite efforts to promote values in educational settings, vices such as cheating, fighting, and drug use remain prevalent in competitive sports within Kenyan schools. The objective of the study was to explore the prevalence of vices and the barriers hindering the inculcation of values among learners in primary and secondary schools in Kenya, particularly within the context of competitive sports. The study employed a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from schools across 24 counties, targeting school administrators, teachers, learners, and key informants. The sample included head teachers, teachers, learners, and stakeholders from various community sectors. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, interview schedules, and focus group discussions, with pre-testing to ensure reliability and validity. The findings highlight significant challenges in promoting values within the educational system. Vices such as cheating (39.3%), fighting (24.0%), and drug use (18.0%) are prevalent in competitive sports, undermining the ethos of sportsmanship and creating adverse environments for value promotion. Despite efforts to implement value-based education, barriers such as peer pressure (36.2%), lack of role models (45.1%), heavy academic workloads, and the influence of social media persist, impeding the effective inculcation of values among learners. In conclusion, the study indicates that vices such as cheating, fighting, and drug use are prevalent in competitive sports within Kenyan schools, posing significant challenges to the promotion of values among learners. To address these challenges, the study suggests several interventions. Strengthening value-based education through curriculum integration and ethical teachings that can foster critical thinking and ethical behavior among learners. Additionally, implementing stricter oversight and penalties for examination malpractices are necessary to maintain academic integrity.

**Keywords:** Value-based Education, Core Values, Character Development, Ethical Behavior, Primary and Secondary Schools, Curriculum Framework, Basic Education Curriculum, School-Community Partnerships, Influencers of Values, Integrity and Respect, Kenya Education System.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education systems worldwide aim to not only impart knowledge but also instill values among learners. In Kenya, this objective faces several vices and barriers that hinder the effective inculcation of values in primary and secondary schools. These barriers range from examination malpractices and ineffective communication to broader socio-cultural issues such as gender discrimination and inequitable access to education. This background explores these barriers, drawing insights from academic research and suggesting potential solutions.

Examinations are critical in assessing learners' progress and providing feedback to the teaching process. However, examination malpractices, often perpetrated by teachers, compromise the integrity of the education system. A study by Edward Maina Andafu (2020) examined the effectiveness of deterrent measures by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) in combating examination malpractices among teachers. The study highlighted that despite legislation and deterrence strategies, some teachers still engage in examination malpractices. This undermines the values of honesty and integrity that the education system seeks to promote. Andafu recommends a rational approach to inculcate examination integrity among teachers,

suggesting that a focus on actualizing their moral potentialities might overcome these tendencies (Andafu, 2020).

Effective communication plays a vital role in maintaining discipline among students. A study by J. Kindiki (2009) found that poor communication channels and ineffective communication between school administration and students led to indiscipline in Kenyan secondary schools. This study highlighted that the lack of dialogue and regular meetings contributed to conflicts, chaos, and misunderstanding, which in turn hindered the inculcation of values. The study recommended initiating dialogue with students to discuss discipline matters, rules, and regulations, as well as using guidance and counseling to overcome communication barriers (Kindiki, 2009).

Gender discrimination remains a significant barrier to inculcating values among learners, particularly in leadership roles. A study by Victor F. O. Combat (2014) revealed that despite women being the majority and highly qualified in Kenya's municipal primary schools, they occupied fewer administrative positions than men. The study identified gender socialization, beliefs in meritocracy, and patriarchal influences as barriers that create a cycle of discrimination. Combat suggested that addressing these barriers requires remedial solutions that promote women's involvement and participation in educational leadership (Combat, 2014).

Institutional barriers also play a role in hindering the inculcation of values. A study by B. Tikoko (2021) explored the hindrances to student participation in decision-making in secondary schools in Kenya. The study found that despite the institutionalization of Student Councils, students faced barriers such as lack of support from the school community, long delays in implementing their suggestions, and a perception of student participation as rebellion. These barriers restrict students' ability to engage in decision-making processes and hinder the development of values like responsibility and accountability (Tikoko, 2021).

Access to education is a fundamental requirement for inculcating values among learners. However, several factors hinder equitable access to education in Kenya, contributing to disparities in value inculcation. A study by Achoka, Odebero, Maiyo, and Ndiku J. Mualuko (2007) outlined various challenges in accessing education, including poverty, regional and gender disparities, and policy framework issues. These barriers prevent learners from acquiring education and subsequently impact their ability to internalize societal values. The authors recommended making basic education free and compulsory, improving health services, and intensifying the fight against demeaning cultures to enhance educational access (Achoka *et al.*, 2007).

The vices and barriers that hinder inculcating values among learners in Kenya's primary and secondary schools are multifaceted, encompassing examination malpractices, communication challenges, gender discrimination, institutional barriers, and inequitable access to education. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach involving legislative reforms, improved communication, gender equality initiatives, and equitable access to education. Implementing these measures can create a more conducive environment for value inculcation, ultimately contributing to a more harmonious society.

## **METHODS**

### **Study Design**

The study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. It utilized a cross-sectional survey design, allowing the collection of data at a single point in time from a broad population sample. This approach enabled the capturing of a diverse range of perspectives from the target population concerning the importance of values in the educational system and the sports arena.

### **Target Population**

The target population for the study included school administrators (principals and head teachers), teachers, and learners from both primary and secondary schools across Kenya. Additionally, the study targeted Ministry of Education field education officers, county administrators, religious leaders, agency representatives, parents, and guardians. This broad target population provided a comprehensive perspective on the role of values in education and sports.

### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The study used a multistage sampling procedure to select a representative sample. Gender balance was considered during sampling to ensure equal representation. The sampling process was stratified based on geographical and demographic characteristics, with counties with strong sports traditions receiving a higher proportion of the sample. A total of 24 counties were identified through stratified sampling, with each stratum containing counties with similar geographical and demographic features.

Within each stratum, a proportionate sampling approach was applied. In each county, three primary schools, three secondary schools, and one Special Needs Education (SNE) institution were purposively selected with assistance from County Directors of Education (CDEs). The schools were chosen based on their sporting achievements to ensure a diverse and relevant sample. In each school, the head teachers, along with two teachers involved in sports leadership, were included in the study. A random sample of 8-10 learners was selected using a table of random numbers. Additional key respondents, including Ministry of Education officers, county sports

administrators, religious leaders, and parents/guardians, were also sampled at random.

including the number of head teachers, teachers, learners, focus group discussions (FGDs), and other stakeholders involved in the study.

Table 1 outlines the sampling frame, detailing the distribution of respondents across regions and zones,

**Table of sampling frame**

Region/zone	Counties	Head Trs	Teachers	Learners	Learners FGDs	Other stakeholders
Rift valley	6	48	96	144	48	24
Eastern	4	24	48	72	24	14
Central	3	21	42	63	21	12
Western	4	24	48	72	24	14
Nyanza	4	24	48	72	24	14
Coast	4	24	48	72	24	14
NEP	1	3	6	9	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>96</b>

**Data Collection Instruments**

Data collection relied on several instruments. Questionnaires were administered to teachers, interview schedules were used for key informants (Field Education Officers, principals/head teachers, and opinion leaders), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with learners. These instruments were pre-tested in two primary and two secondary schools in Nairobi and Kajiado Counties to ensure reliability and validity.

The content validity of the instruments was confirmed through expert review by ADAK and KICD researchers, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives. The pre-testing process allowed for adjustments to improve the usability and clarity of the instruments.

**Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection teams comprised officers from KICD and ADAK, assigned to different counties for data collection. The entry point to each county was through the Ministry of Education County Director's office for a courtesy call and orientation. The data collection teams

then covered the sub-counties within their assigned regions, with schools serving as the primary entry points for engaging with teachers and learners. Interviews with stakeholders outside schools were conducted based on prior appointments.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis process involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were coded and interpreted in relation to the study's objectives. This dual approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the data collected, providing insights into the current state of values among learners in primary and secondary schools in Kenya.

**RESULTS**

**Response Rate**

The response rate for the study was analyzed across different categories of respondents. Table 2 shows the expected and achieved response rates, along with the corresponding percentages.

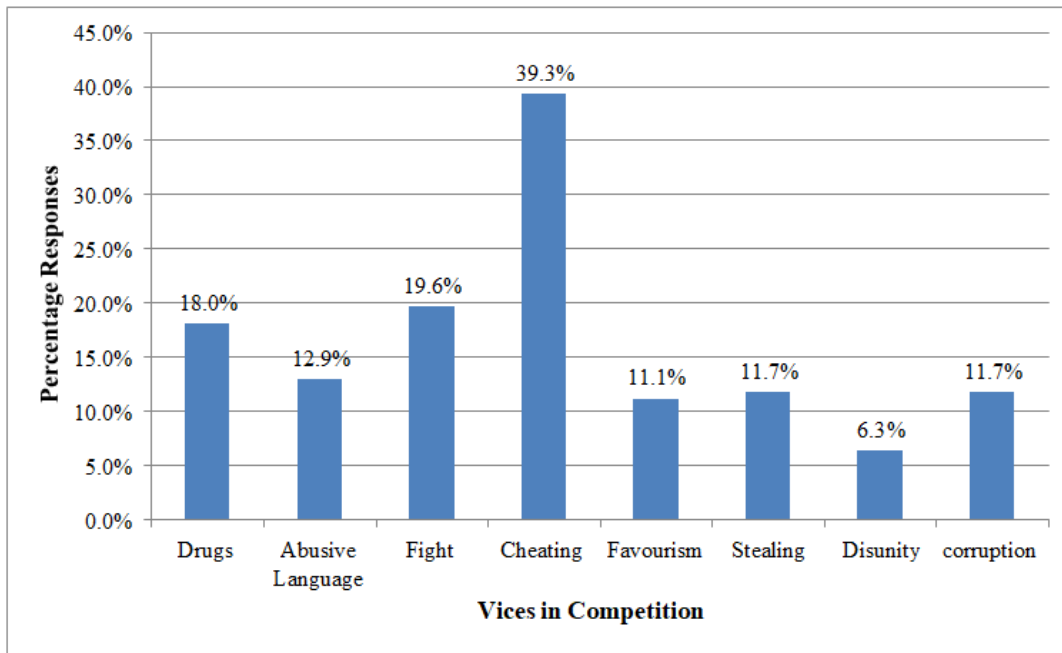
Respondents	Expected	Achieved	Percentage (%)
Head Teachers	168	164	97.6
Teachers	336	334	99.4
Learners	504	475	94.2
Learners in FGDs	1,680	1,220	72.6
Key Informants	96	94	97.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,779</b>	<b>2,289</b>	<b>92.3</b>

The overall response rate of 92.3% is satisfactory and reflects the engagement level of the study's participants.

**Vices in competitive sports**

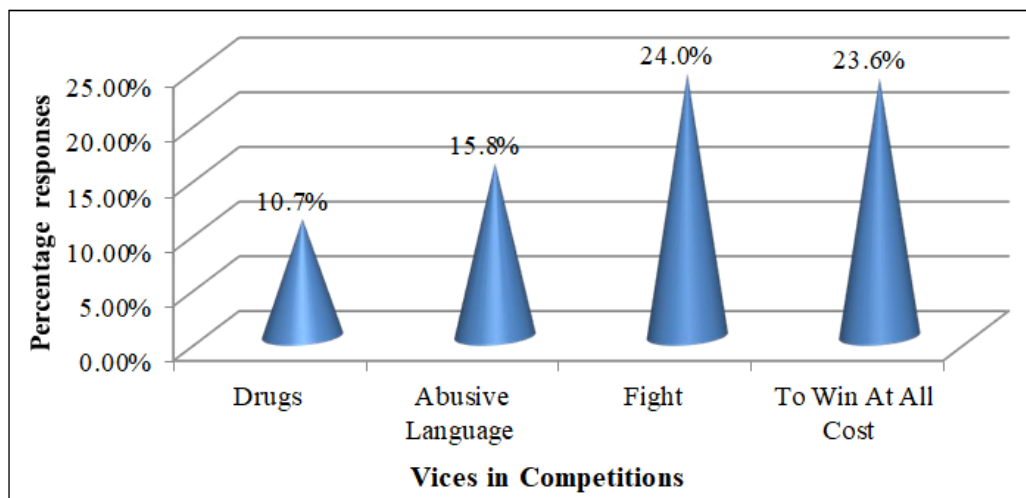
Findings from the teachers' responses indicated in Figure 1 showed level of different vices commonly practiced in competitive situations in school. Cheating

was rated highest (39.3%), followed by fighting (19.6%) and the use of drugs (18.0%). These responses may seem low, but according the Constitution, BECF and WADA teachers tool kit, these vices lead to situations that are hostile to promotion values in the society, and for the sporting world, they contradict promotion of the spirit of Sports.



**Figure 1: Teachers' responses on Vices in Competitions**

On their part, learners were also asked to cite vices that are mostly witnessed during competitions, especially in sport activities. Their responses are depicted in figure 2.



**Figure 2: Learners' responses on Vices during Sports Competitions**

From the learners' responses it was observed that fighting (24.0%) and the desire to win at all cost (23.6%) were negatively affecting competitive situations in school. The use of abusive language (15.8%) and drugs (10.7%) are vices that were also noted.

From the FGDs learners in primary schools added that disobedience, fights and quarrels were the mostly practiced vices during competitions. Others include unkindness to those who are defeating them, cheating in order to win, and being cruel because they don't want others to win and use of an abusive language. The respondents were also of the view that, disrespect, injustice, hatred, selfishness, rudeness, violence and

being chaotic depict other vices that are witnessed during competitive activities. The least of the vices included that of taking medicine to help one run for a longer distance, tripping others with the intent of defeating them, poisoning food for other competitors so that they can collapse when they are running, the desire to pass exams and thereby please parents, being envious and using drugs.

From the Secondary school FGDs, the respondents were of the view that conflicts and fights, dishonesty, corruption, indiscipline, disrespect and drug abuse mainly featured in competitions. Other vices mostly indicated by this category of respondents include

cheating, use of an abusive language by competitors, pride, selfishness, hatred and doping during competitions.

Key Informants were also asked to identify vices that are practiced mostly in competitive activities. From their responses, it was observed that, fighting and/or hooliganism among competitors is a major concern in competitive activities. Indiscipline and rudeness, misuse of drugs by players and athletes as well as dishonesty were cited. Other vices were cheating and impersonation in sports activities, misappropriation of funds by coaches and teachers, disrespect, pride and jealousy among competitors, unfairness by referees as well as failure to accept defeat.

From the responses emanating from the different categories of respondents, fighting, use of drugs, indiscipline and several instances where participants use abusive language depict vices that are conspicuous in schools' competitive activities. Cheating was manifested in different ways like using substances to unnaturally enhance performance. All the vices cited by different respondents are contrary to values that the society would like to see among the learners.

There are different reasons that were mentioned by respondents as to why the cited vices exist. Among them were crave for fame or winning; disobeying rules by competitors; lacking parental or societal guidance; negative influence; emphasis on winning as well as greed. Other reasons for vices as explained by key informants were indiscipline, peer pressure, jealousy, discontentment with the results, discrimination, lack of supervision, poverty or inadequate resources, lack of good role models as well as lack of values and virtues on the part of competitors.

It was explained that the reasons for these vices in competitive sports was both due to the individual's own desires and influence from external forces. When these forces are combined, they compel an individual to operate outside the set rules and norms regulating the behaviour of competitors; either in school or outside the school environment.

Sports in a society plays an integral part in shaping the character of a growing child.

Competitive sports may be viewed as 'a means to an end' and not 'an end in itself' where winning an event is at all costs. A child who acquires positive values that promote the 'spirit of sport' can reflect all other values that are necessary for co-existing in a society.

Therefore, it is essential for schools in Kenya to be well equipped with Information, Education and Communication (IEC) programmes whose main objectives include changing social behaviour of the targeted audiences and their perceptions towards each other especially in competitive sports. The change that is anticipated by the teachers and parents may be visible in terms of behaviour change and knowledge acquired by such children. However, this process can be influenced by the existence of a negative social and cultural environment that may act as a barrier to impartation of positive values to a growing a child. This has therefore necessitated the discussion on how such barriers can be overcome to allow a smooth process of on impartation of values.

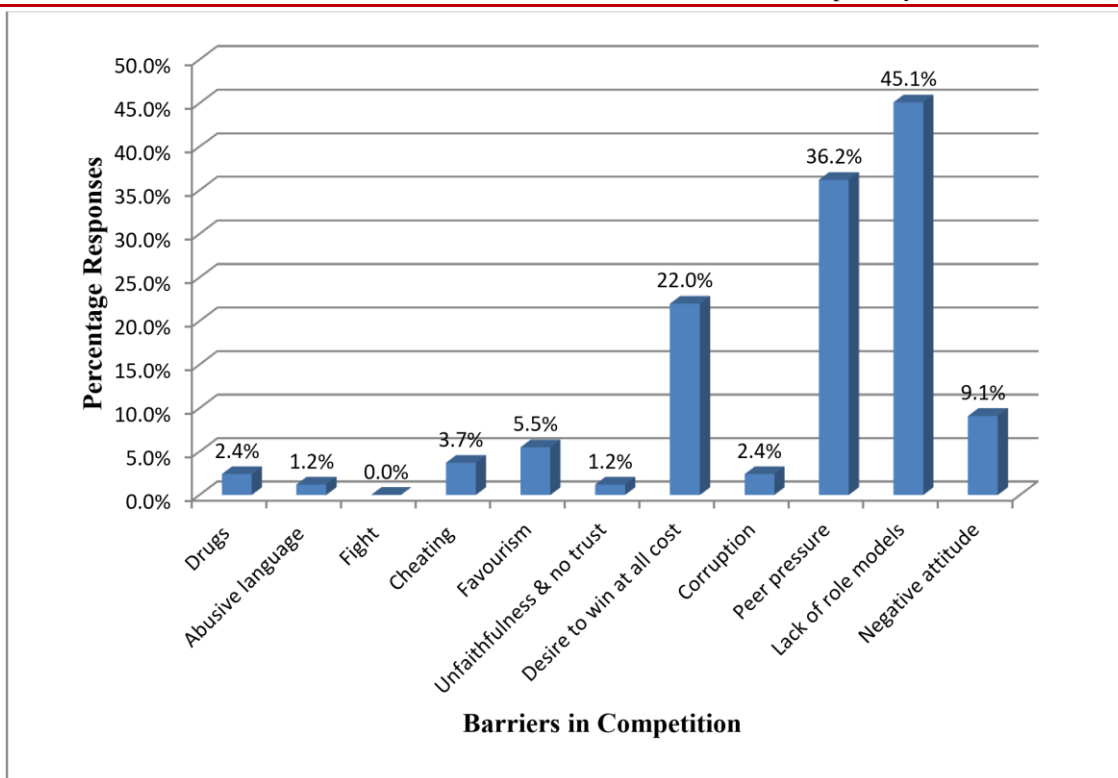
### **Essential values in Competitive activities**

Competitive activities in the school are very emotive and tests beliefs systems of the participants. Whether the competitive activities are sports, drama, examinations or a science congress, there is a test on one's values. This study sought to establish from respondents the values that they deem essential in competitive activities to inform mainstreaming of VBE in learning institutions.

The respondents were of the opinion that team work, honesty, discipline, hard work and respect are the most important values in competitive activities as it ensures that there is no discrimination amongst the participants. Being obedient, fair, humility and empathy were also cited as values that can promote a conducive environment for competitive activities. The key informants also cited strong character, accepting unexpected outcomes like defeat, focused leadership and practising love as other values that are important during competitions. This values resonates well with what has been identified by both the BECF and WADA on values.

### **Barriers hindering imparting values in learners**

Nurturing of values for learners is an essential process for bringing up a responsible and accountable person. The burden of doing this is not only for parents but teachers as well since children spend the better part of their time in school. Hence to impart values, schools have created forums or programmes to impart knowledge and information on values especially in all competitive situations. One of the objectives of this study therefore sought to find out from the head teachers and learners about which factors that may hinder imparting and acquisition of values in learners. The head teachers' responses indicate three main problem areas as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Head teachers' opinions on Barriers in competitions**

Findings from the head teachers' indicated that lack of role models (45.1%), peer pressure (36.2%) and the desire to win at all costs (22%) were the highest rated barriers or vices to competitions. These were barriers to imparting values especially in competitive activities. Many learners get influenced negatively by their peers whom they spend most of the time with.

Lack of proper role models in the society was identified as a barrier is a reflection that humans learn through modelling others. As these experiences accumulate through adolescence, teens decide what socially acceptable behaviour is and what is not. They also learn strategies for achieving their goals. While role models are often seen as people with outstanding qualities, the reality is that role models can have positive or negative influence on children.

On the other hand, teachers' cited the social environment, family backgrounds and factors related to family/societal set-up as possible barriers to impartation of values. For instance, lack of parental support, poor nurturing of values in family set-ups, cultural beliefs and religion. When these children are exposed to environment where vices dominate, that becomes a hindrance on the impartation of values because if the same persons nurturing the children are living contrary to the moral societal expectations, then it's expected that the younger ones will do the same.

Different vices were cited as barriers to fair competitive sports among the learners themselves. These vices pose a major challenge to instilling values in children. They were asked for the vices which were barriers to practicing values in competitive sports were. Their responses are shown in Figure 4.

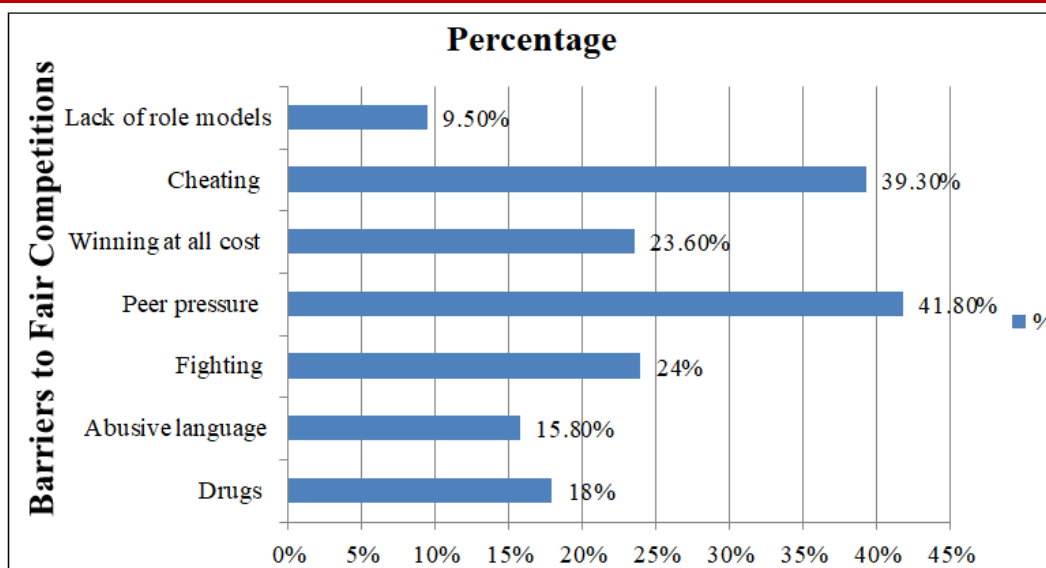


Figure 4: Learners responses on Vices which are Barriers in for fairness in competitions

Findings show that peer pressure (41.8%) and cheating (39.3%) were identified mostly as a vices during competitions which affect application of values. The presence of drugs in society was identified by 18% of the learners as a hindrance to impartation of values, abusive language used around them was cited by 15.8% of the learners as being an impediment. Constant conflicts and fights is a vice cited by 24% of the learners.

There was a positive correlation in the responses of learners interviewed and that of the teachers where they strongly agreed that the characteristics of the society whether positive or negative, have a great impact on impartation of values. Many of the vices being practiced in the society make it difficult for learners to practice positive values. Society influences people by shaping their belief systems, controlling their behaviour and determining their values. Such values are sent to individuals through media, school curricula, community leaders, family and churches.

The learners FGDs also identified harsh weather conditions which cause students not to attend school. It therefore becomes impossible to be in an environment in which values can be taught. Some reported that Government policies, such as teachers canning students, impacted negatively to acquisition of positive values. According to the respondents this made it impossible for the learners to respect the rules and therefore an impediment.

Another possible barrier was found to be concentration on academic work. Most schools spend a lot of their time on academic learning and preparing their students on passing examinations. This implies that learners are given a lot of academic workload and assignments which hardly allow them time to perform co-curriculum activities which are avenues to imparting values.

As a result of advancement of technology, young people are spending too much time on Social media. As reported in learners FGDs, social media was identified as having a negative impact on the character and moral standings.

## DISCUSSION

### *Vices in Competitive Sports*

The high prevalence of vices such as cheating, fighting, and drug use among learners in competitive sports suggests an environment that is hostile to promoting values and contradicts the spirit of sports. Cheating, rated highest among teachers at 39.3%, reflects the pressure to win at all costs, which undermines the notion of fair play (Andafu, 2020). This observation aligns with other studies, indicating that the current competitive environment in Kenyan schools fosters unethical behavior (Itegi, 2018).

The observation that learners frequently engage in fighting (24.0%), verbal abuse (15.8%), and drug use (10.7%) during sports competitions is consistent with reports of increased violence and indiscipline in Kenyan schools (Opere et al., 2019). This behavior can result from individual desires and external influences, including societal pressures, peer influences, and inadequate supervision.

One inconsistency that arises is between the observed vices and the expected outcomes of value-based education (VBE). According to a study by Ominde *et al.*, the Kenyan curriculum has undergone significant reforms to promote values and ethics (Ominde *et al.*, 2022). However, the persistence of vices indicates that the implementation of these reforms may be insufficient to instill values effectively.

### **Barriers Hindering Imparting Values in Learners**

The high rate of peer pressure (36.2%) and lack of role models (45.1%) in schools reflects the significant barriers to imparting values among learners. These findings are consistent with the idea that peer pressure, especially during adolescence, significantly impacts learner behavior and contributes to negative influences (Tenkorang & Maticka-Tyndale, 2013).

Another barrier highlighted by teachers is the social environment and family background. Teachers identified cultural beliefs, religious factors, and lack of parental support as significant challenges to nurturing values among learners (Itegi, 2018). This observation aligns with the idea that values are shaped by various factors, including family, societal norms, and educational practices.

An inconsistency arises in the finding that learners cited heavy academic workload and negative social media impacts as additional barriers to value inculcation. This observation contrasts with the emphasis on academic success in many schools, indicating that the focus on exams and academic performance may impede efforts to promote positive values (Mackatiani, 2017). A possible explanation is that the exam-oriented approach encourages rote learning, which may neglect the development of practical skills and values.

### **Essential Values in Competitive Activities**

Respondents identified teamwork, honesty, discipline, and respect as essential values in competitive activities. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of these core values in promoting a positive environment in schools (Chiriswa & Thinguri, 2015). The focus on these values suggests that efforts to inculcate them through educational reforms, like the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), are gaining traction in Kenyan schools.

However, despite these identified core values, the continued presence of vices suggests that there is a gap between policy intentions and practical implementation. A possible explanation for this inconsistency is the lack of effective supervision and a conducive environment that fosters value-based education (Nyaga & Njuguna, 2023). To address this, educational stakeholders must focus on creating a more supportive and value-oriented school culture.

## **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION**

The study's key findings reveal that vices such as cheating, fighting, and drug use are prevalent in competitive sports within Kenyan schools, undermining the spirit of sportsmanship and creating environments hostile to the promotion of positive values. Despite efforts to implement value-based education, barriers such as peer pressure, lack of role models, heavy academic workloads, and the influence of social media

persist, impeding the inculcation of values among learners.

To address these challenges, several recommendations can be made. Firstly, schools should strengthen value-based education by integrating ethical teachings into the curriculum. Incorporating subjects like philosophy for children can foster critical thinking and encourage ethical behavior among learners. This approach aligns with broader educational reforms aimed at instilling values from an early age. Cheating and examination malpractices require stricter oversight and penalties for offenders to maintain academic integrity. Schools should ensure proper supervision during exams and enforce consequences for cheating to deter such behavior. Extracurricular activities can play a significant role in reducing academic pressure and offering learners opportunities to develop social skills while practicing values in real-world contexts. Schools should provide a variety of extracurricular activities to help learners balance academic work with other enriching experiences. Promoting positive role models within schools and communities is another effective strategy. Schools should establish mentorship programs and invite successful individuals to inspire learners, countering the negative influences of peer pressure and societal norms. This approach can instill a sense of direction and motivation among students.

Additionally, implementing transformative pedagogy can mitigate violence and indiscipline in schools. Transformative pedagogy shifts focus from teacher-centered approaches to methods that encourage critical thinking and behavior change. This approach can foster a non-violent school community, reducing instances of fighting and other disruptive behaviors.

### **Declarations**

**Competing Interest:** The author declare that they have no competing interests.

### **Authors & contributions**

Martin Sisa Yauma conceived the paper, designed and performed the study. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

### **Disclaimer**

The findings and conclusions presented in this manuscript are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Anti doping agency of Kenya.

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