

**STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS' MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WARENG SUB-COUNTY, KENYA**

Miriam Jepkemboi*

*Faculty of Education, Catholic University of Eastern Africa
P. O. Box 908-30100, Eldoret, Kenya*

Paul A. Ogula

Professor of Education, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Jennifer K. Munyua

Senior Lecturer, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

ABSTRACT: *In Kenya, there has been increasing concern that acts of student indiscipline are on the rise in schools. In light of this view, this paper explores the extent to which student council members manage of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Wareng Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by the Social Systems Theory, which states that an organization is a system that comprises of different units which are interrelated in carrying out activities. The study's main research question was to what extent do student councils to meaningfully participate in management of students' discipline in secondary schools in Wareng Sub-County? The study employed ex post facto research design. The target population was student councillors, deputy, head teachers and principals in public secondary schools in Wareng Sub-County. Stratified simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample to participate in the study. Data collection was through use of a questionnaire and interview. Descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations were used to analyse and present the research data. To test hypotheses independent samples t-test and ANOVA were used. From the findings of the study, the research concluded that student council members were aware of the mission and vision of their schools. Majority of the participants were trained to follow rules and regulations. Problem solving strategies were also covered during training. Moreover, student council members were taught the importance of skills public speaking. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the Kenya Ministry of Education should come up with a proper school governance system that enables student councillors to participate in decision-making process and especially in matters that concern students through active involvement in various meetings. The Ministry should adopt a proper school governance system that enables student councillors to participate in decision-making process especially in matters that concern students through active involvement in various meetings.*

KEYWORDS: Student Council Members, Management, Discipline, Public Secondary Schools, Wareng, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Acts of indiscipline in secondary schools in both developed and developing countries are on the increase in terms of frequency and gravity. There are increased cases of violent and non-violent indiscipline acts for instance, fighting, burning hostels and bullying (Mangope, Dinama & Kefhilwe, 2012). Other forms of indiscipline include property vandalism, alcohol and drug consumption, late coming to school or class, noise making in class, and unwillingness or failure to do homework (Modikwa, 2008; Garegae, 2008). In Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, the Ministry of Education (2005) considered the issue of student discipline deterioration a big problem. In Tanzania, instructors were intended to have outright controls over students, obvious in strategies for remuneration or discipline utilized by the educator on account of student indiscipline cases (Musaazi, 2013).

Discipline management is primarily about establishing guidelines for behaviour and making sure that those guidelines are followed (Bean, 2001). Further, the writer avers that teachers were not inspired by great conduct only for the good of behaviour yet great conduct is significant for making a situation where students' learning will happen. Control is, in this case, seen as an essential part and for sure the principal part of instruction since it trains consistence to aggregate standards.

In almost all schools in the world, there is often a person or group of persons charged with the responsibility of leading others often known as prefects or student councils depending on a country and they are the key student leaders who are expected to play a predominant role in the day-to-day functioning of the school (Bean, 2001). According to Musaazi (2013), student councils are bodies of persons who influence the activities and behaviour of an individual student or group of students in efforts towards goal achievement in a school situation. For student councils to be able to command respect from other students, they have to be adequately empowered and this empowerment can take different dimensions ranging from; how they assume leadership positions, how they are mentored, how and whether they were or are trained, supported and appraised. When student leaders are trained, it means that they was able to take an independent autonomous decision on how to deal with particular situations, a decision that may not necessarily be the same one taken by the school authorities but a decision which must be respected nonetheless.

In many British and Commonwealth schools, student councils are usually students in their senior grade (Mangope *et al.*, 2012). They have considerable power and effectively run the school outside the classroom. For example, in Hornsby High school 2010 there was a Prefectoral Board, which is a body made of carefully selected proficient senior students. The prefect body is a government and it governs the school. The prefects have some sort of authority over other students. The prefects in this school have their duties, responsibilities, special rights in which they are allowed to punish students who behave contrary to the rules and regulations. However, they are sometimes restrained where a case is beyond their context wherein is referred to the school administrator. In conjunction, the school has the Student Representative Council (SRC), which is the mouthpiece of the students. The council is made up of elected representatives and it works in cooperation with the prefect body (Mangope *et al.*, 2012).

In St. Georges High School, an English International school in America, student councils help to supervise young pupils while they work at lunchtime and provide an additional pair of eyes for teachers at break time (Georgesal Schools, 2010). The student councils act as ambassadors and diplomats for the school; guiding guests around the school with open friendliness. Its prefectural structure is made up of a head boy, four senior prefects and four ordinary prefects. The student councils meet regularly to organize events. The roles of the student councils at St. Georges High School include: To be role models for other pupils; to promote the ethos of St. Georges High School; to maintain the standards of discipline; to attend school events and prefect leaders' meeting when required to ensure all students adhere to full school rules and regulations.

Students' councils play an enormous role in management of school discipline. However, despite this role, individual students are inclined to discount their value if they are not recognized or validated by the rest of the Institute, particularly by those who are more perceived as "authority figures" on learning institutions. Student leaders may in turn receive little or no recognition for their efforts as leaders (Stratton, 2006). Student councils' involvement in governance is concentrated within elected students representatives within the school composed of students of various classes and departments within the school (Kyalo, 2017). Student councils or student governments are not an entirely new phenomenon in Kenya and in the world at large. The US, the UK, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Singapore and South Africa have active student councils at high school level. The republic of Ireland has a union of secondary students which was formed in 2001, while Norwegian laws requires all schools to set up student councils elected by the students themselves (Critchley, 2003). Kyalo notes that in Kenya the student councils have been active in many tertiary education institutions. In all of the country's seven public universities; Nairobi, Kenyatta, Egerton, Moi, Jomo Kenyatta, Maseno and Masinde Muliro, student councils have served as training grounds for the country's top political and social leaders (Olembo, Wanga & Karagu, 2000).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Social Systems Theory propounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968). The Theory attempts to describe, explain and predict organizational behaviour. The general system theory is based on the work of a biologist; Ludwig Von Bertalanffy from a biological standpoint, an organism is an integrated system of interdependent structures and functions. An organism is constituted of cells and a cell consists of molecules, which must work in harmony. Each molecule must know what the others are doing. Each one must be capable of receiving messages and must be sufficiently disciplined to obey. According to the Social Systems Theory, all organizations are systems comprised of different units or parts, which are interrelated and, interdependent in carrying out their activities, are all geared towards attainment of common goals. These different units are known as sub-systems. Sub-systems are the interdependent interacting elements of a system that need to function in a coordinated way so that the entire system functions properly to achieve its goals. A system gets its inputs from the larger societal environment (supra system). From the supra system, the school gets students, teachers, resource materials and finances.

The system transforms the inputs into finished products. For example, a school produces a changed person with skills, knowledge and values to enable him/her to contribute positively to self and society. Okumbe (1999) pointed out that the social systems theory was developed from the social theory to explain social changes and human interaction in organizations. Since organizations are a collection of individuals or people who come together to perform specified tasks geared towards the attainment of common goals, they are referred to as social systems. Thus, schools are social systems. They have principals, teachers, support staff and student councils who carry out various tasks towards the major purpose of enhancing student learning.

Sub-systems have distinct properties both in specialization and scope of responsibilities but there is no single subsystem that is superior or inferior to others. All subsystems perform unique but complementary roles to attain the common goals of the system. Thus, even if the principal occupies a higher position than student councils who are in the lowest rank of the administrative hierarchy, the role of student councils is not inferior to that of the principal. They all perform various but interrelated tasks in an interdependent manner to achieve high levels of student discipline. It is, therefore, important that school administrators appreciate and recognize the role played by student councils regardless of their position in the administrative hierarchy.

The malfunctioning of an organ in a human body will negatively affect another organ or even the whole body. Since a system is a set of interdependent and interacting elements, a change at any one point will eventually trigger off a chain of events that will have an impact on the entire system.

This spill-over effect is referred to as, the concept of multiple causation where one unit causes reactions, which spread to the entire system affecting all its operations or part of them. Thus, a change in the functioning of the student councils system will have an effect on the stakeholders. That is why school unrests caused by ineffective student council systems may lead to destruction of school property, or even loss of human life. The managerial subsystem, the principal, plays the role of, among other things, coordinator, planner, controller and facilitator of activities of the entire system to ensure efficiency.

The principal would have to define clearly the goals of the school; and the role of each individual or group towards the attainment of this goal. He should carry out a division of labour and delegate responsibilities accordingly. Job descriptions will have to clearly show the scope of responsibilities to avoid conflicts and role ambiguity in carrying them out. Therefore, principals should put in place good communication systems in schools to ensure a smooth two-way flow of information to all student councils, students, and teachers and support staff. They should also facilitate the setting up of the School Code (Rules and Regulations) to ensure order and tranquillity in schools, act with impartiality and train student councils to make them competent in their work and clearly define their roles to avoid any role conflict or ambiguity.

The theory recognizes interdependence of personnel, impact of environment on organizational structure and function, effect of outside stakeholders on the organization. The theory focuses on environment and how changes can impact the organization. The theory broadens the theoretical lens for viewing organizational behaviour. The theory does not focus on specific task functions of individuals in an organization. It does not directly explore the impact of interpersonal relationships

and loyalty on productivity. It states that changes in environment directly affect the structure and function of the organization.

The researcher will utilize the claims of the theory to investigate how proper coordination, training, role clarity and healthy relationship between student councils with the school administration and entire student fraternity operate in order to manage students' discipline in schools sampled. This is because schools are social system. With subsystems such as the student councils.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used ex-post facto research design. It targeted 52 public secondary schools in Wareng' Sub-County. Therefore, the target population was 52 principals, 52 deputy head teachers and 162 student councillors. The schools were stratified into the following categories by the ministry of education: boarding/mixed, mixed/day, boarding/girls, boarding/boys and mixed/boarding/day. As such, sample size of 44 public secondary schools formed a representation of the schools. Random sampling was used to select schools in each stratum to constitute the sample. All principals from the sampled schools were involved in the study. They were sampled using census method. Deputy head teachers were sampled using census method. The student council members from the target population of 162 was sampled for the study.

The study used a questionnaire for student councillors and interview schedule for principals and deputy principals to collect data. Data collected was first cleaned, classified and coded to facilitate data analysis. Secondly, data solicited was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study mainly collected quantitative data and therefore quantitative analysis was adopted to achieve the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were adopted to analyse the data. Hypotheses were tested using ANOVA and independent t-test. ANOVA and t-test was also used to test the relationship between the study variables (relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable). Analysed data was presented using mainly tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the student council members' management of discipline in public secondary schools in Wareng Sub-County, Kenya. Table 1 below shows the frequency distribution on the student councillors' management of discipline in the studied schools.

Table 1: Student Councillors' Management of Discipline

Statements		Rarely	ST	Often	VO	Total	Mean
Student councillors explain to the students about the school vision and mission	F	19	22	59	39	159	1.62
	%	13.6	15.8	42.4	28.1	100	
Student councillors remind other students on the need of adherence to school rules and regulations	F	23	21	84	11	159	1.40
	%	16.5	15.1	60.4	7.9	100	
The student councillors lead by example and provide role model in the right direction	F	23	21	84	11	159	1.40
	%	16.5	15.1	60.4	7.9	100	
Student council applies leadership and management skills.	F	38	28	70	3	159	1.11
	%	27.3	20.1	50.4	2.2	100	
The student councillors are involved in decision-making when there is indiscipline case.	F	3	21	60	55	159	1.92
	%	2.2	15.1	43.2	39.6	100	
The student councillors explain student rights and obligation when there are indiscipline cases.	F	14	16	58	51	159	1.79
	%	10	11.5	41.7	36.7	100	
The student councillors speak publicly without fear when there are indiscipline cases in a school.	F	0	5	47	87	159	2.26
	%	0	3.6	33.8	62.6	100	
The student councillor identifies, explain and solve problems and challenges such as settling minor disputes among students	F	14	12	47	66	159	1.91
	%	10	8.6	33.8	47.5	100	
Student councillors explain on class and environment cleanliness	F	30	39	51	19	159	1.25
	%	21.6	28.1	36.7	13.7	100	
The student council solve problems in a school when it arises	F	0	12	48	79	159	2.17
	%	0	8.6	34.5	56.8	100	
Student councillors provide role model in the right direction	F	38	28	70	3	159	1.11
	%	27.3	20.1	50.4	2.2	100	
Student councillors explain and settle minor disputes among students	F	0	5	47	87	159	2.26
	%	0	3.6	33.8	62.6	100	
Student councillors explain and provide a link between the administration and students	F	38	28	70	3	159	1.11
	%	27.3	20.1	50.4	2.2	100	

As shown in Table 1, 84(60.4%) of the participants reported that when addressing discipline cases they were able to remind other students on the need of adherence to school rules and regulations. This finding meant that student leaders were aware governance of the school was impossible minus school rules. The other meaning of the finding was that order would not be easily maintained if rules and regulations were violated. Another meaning, which can be attached to this finding is that school rules lay a solid ground for adult responsibility. Adherence to rules also helps to prepare students for life. This finding agrees with Marie (2018) who established that strict keeping of school rules is meant to protect the student and the general setting of the school.

According to the results displayed in Table 1, majority of the participants reported that often they were involved in decision making when there was an indiscipline case. What was inferred from the finding was that the role of student leaders was highly recognized in schools. The finding concurs with that of Jared and Thinguri (2017) that due to indiscipline cases in schools school administrators ought to embrace student council leadership. The finding also agrees with that of

Nyaga (2018) who noted that student councillors felt their role was very helpful and that they spent their own time serving the school and the students.

Majority of the participants 87(62.6%) reported that very often student councillors speak publicly without fear when there are indiscipline cases in a school. This finding meant that student leaders were empowered by school authorities' to execute their duties. The other meaning of the finding was that democracy was practiced in schools. Of the respondents who took part in the study, 66(47.5%) said that student council members identifies, explain and solve problems and challenges such as settling minor disputes among students. The finding meant there was a differentiation in discharging of duties between the teachers and the student council members. The finding is in agreement with that of Nyabisi (2014) who noted that when empowered, student council members felt that they could handle discipline problems by themselves. Only if the problems were difficult, they would approach the discipline teachers. Discipline student councillors did not easily seek the help of discipline teachers as they found discipline teachers were very busy. They preferred to seek help from their group leaders the head or deputy head student councillors.

The research further sought to find out the extent to which student council members of either gender were able to manage students' discipline. The research results were as displayed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Student Council Members' Gender and Management of Discipline

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score of management of discipline	Male	106	29.03	14.159	1.375
	Female	53	31.72	15.141	2.080

The results displayed in Table 2 show that the male student council members registered a mean of 29.03 in regards to management of discipline whereas the female counterparts had a mean of 31.72. The difference between the mean scores is meagre, meaning that when handling indiscipline cases in schools, both male and female student council member had the skills to handle the issues. This is because student council of either gender undergo similar training on how manage discipline in school.

The study further investigated the type of school where management of discipline was well conducted. The results were as displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: School Type and Management of Discipline

School Category	Score of management of discipline		
	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Mixed day	53	25	19
Boys' boarding	52	43	5
Girls' boarding	27	28	0
Mixed boarding	27	17	0
Total	159	30	15

According to results displayed in Table 3, the boys' boarding school registered the highest mean 43 and the girls' boarding had a mean of 28. The finding meant that discipline was highly maintained in boys' boarding schools as compared to other categories of schools. The mixed boarding had a mean score of 17 whereas the mixed day had a mean score of 25.

The study tested hypothesis that there is no significant difference between mean level of leadership scores of male and female student council members using independent t-test. The test results were as presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Independent Samples for Difference in Mean of Management of Students' Discipline Scores of Male and Female Student Council Members

	Gender	n	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t	Sig(2-tailed)
Score of management of discipline	Male	106	-2.689	14.159	1.103	.272
	Female	53	-2.698	15.141		
	Total	159				

Independent samples t-test was used to test the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between mean of management of students' discipline scores of male and female student council members. The p-value obtained was 0.272. Since this value was greater than the acceptable significance level of 0.05 then the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between mean of management of students' discipline scores of male and female student council members. This finding meant that management of discipline was not dependent on the gender of the student council member. The other meaning that was inferred from the finding was that a student council member of either gender had the authority to manage discipline as long as one was inducted properly once elected to the office. Further, the study tested the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between mean management of student discipline scores of student council members from different types of schools using ANOVA and the results were as follows.

Table 5: ANOVA Summary for Difference between Mean Management of Student Discipline Scores of Student Council Members from Different Types of Schools

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14041.302	3	4680.434	37.813	.000
Within Groups	19185.792	155	123.779		
Total	33227.094	158			

Results displayed in Table 4 show that the F value obtained is 37.813 and the P-value is 0.00. Since P-value is less than 0.05 the acceptable significance value, then the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that the type of school in which a student council attended did not have a

direct influence on how the member managed students' discipline. The finding also meant that once a student council member had been elevated to power and training conducted, and then the member was able to manage the discipline.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings of the study, the research concludes that student council members are aware of the mission and vision of their schools. Majority of the participants are trained to follow rules and regulations. Problem solving strategies are covered during training. Student council members are also taught the importance of skills public speaking. Moreover, there is a thin difference in mean scores for the extent to which male and female student council members are trained to manage discipline in schools. Lastly, boys' boarding schools exhibit a high mean in regard to the extent to which they train student council members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above conclusions, it is recommended that the Kenya Ministry of Education should come up with a proper school governance system that enables student councillors to participate in decision-making process and especially in matters that concern students through active involvement in various meetings. The Ministry should adopt a proper school governance system that enables student councillors to participate in decision-making process especially in matters that concern students through active involvement in various meetings.

Moreover, the County and Sub-County Directors of Education should organize regular seminars and workshops for student leaders so as to address equip them management skills. On their part, the school principals and deputy principals need to plan for training of student council members so that the training needs of the student leaders can be addressed at school level. Principals ought to allow student leaders to attend student leaders' conference .Since, this will enable them update them with management skills.

Since training is imperative in equipping student leaders for leadership, it should be well structured, planned and offered more regularly. A curriculum of intensive training of student council leaders should be developed and implemented in schools to enable them resolve conflicts, perform their duties with ease, comfortably and effectively. Both formal and informal training should be offered to induct the student councillors to leadership. Moreover, the principals and the BOM should strive to address the challenges enumerated by the student councillors in their respective schools if the student councils are to be effective.

Lastly, the Kenya Management Institute, which is in charge of training of principals on management of discipline of teachers, needs to extend the training to student leaders whereby a different comprehensive training manual ought to be developed specifically for the students.

REFERENCES

- Bean, S. (2001). Classroom management to promote learning. *Skills for Educators*. Resource Centre for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention.
- Von Bertalanffy, L. (1968). *General System Theory Foundations, Development*. New York: George Braziller.
- Critchley, S. (2003). The nature and extent of student involvement in educational policy making in Canadian school systems. *Educational Management and Administration*, 31, 97-106.
- Garegae, K. G. (2008). "The crisis of student discipline in Botswana schools: an impact of culturally conflicting disciplinary strategies," *Educational Research and Review*, 3, 48-55.
- Georgeseshal Schools (2010). *Georges School prefecture*. Retrieved from <http://www.georgeseshal-p.schools.nsw.edu.au>
- Jared, O. O., & Thinguri, R. W. (2017). A critical analysis of effectiveness of student council leadership on learners discipline management in secondary schools in Kenya. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 3(1), 90-97.
- Kyalo, K. D. (2017). *Influence of Student Councils' Involvement in School Governance on Students Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Kathonzweni Sub-County, Kenya* (Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis). University of Nairobi.
- Mangope, H., Dinama, B., & Kefhilwe, M. (2012). Bullying and its consequences: A case of Botswana junior secondary schools. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 3, 65-74.
- Marie, D. O. (2018, April 20). School uniforms: Do they really improve student achievement, behaviour? *Journalist's Resource*. Retrieved from <https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/education/school-uniforms-research-achievement/>
- Modikwa, O. (2008). Botswana: Runaway indiscipline at Phikwe school. *allAfrica*. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804072035.html>
- Musaazi, J. C. S. (2013). *Educational Planning: Principles, Tools and Applications in Developing Countries*. Kampala: Makerere University Printery.
- Nyabisi, E. (2014). *Students' participation in school governance at the secondary school level: a Kenyan principals' perception* (Doctoral dissertation). Moi University.
- Nyaga, N. B. (2018). *The Influence of Students 'council Leadership Training on Discipline Management in Secondary Schools in Kirinyaga-East Sub-County Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation). Pan Africa Christian University.
- Okumbe, J. A. (1999). *Education Management: Theory and Practice*. Nairobi: University Press.
- Olembo, J. O., Wanga, P., & Karagu, N. M. (2000). *Development of Critical Leadership Skills for Higher Education Institutions in Kenya*.
- Stratton, J. A. (2006): *Leadership and Governance*. Retrieved from <http://web.mit.edu/committees/sll/f4.html>