
**INFLUENCE OF INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENT COUNCIL IN
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ON STUDENTS' DISCIPLINE IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RONGAI SUB-COUNTY,
NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Problem Statement: Cases of students' indiscipline have been on the rise. Most secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county have been hit by a wave of indiscipline among students which is escalating rapidly with notable strikes, bullying, arson cases in schools, and vandalism of school property, general refusal to follow school rules and regulations as well as increasing alcoholism.

Purpose of the Study: Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess how involvement of student council influence students' discipline in public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county.

Methodology: The study applied mixed methodology and thus adopted descriptive survey research design. The study targeted 800 respondents comprising of 50 deputy principals, 750 teachers and 1080 student leaders from which a sample of 330 respondents was obtained using Yamane's Formula. A sample of 15 deputy principals, 200 teachers and 115 student leaders were selected. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms whereas quantitative data were analyzed descriptively such as frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS 23) and presented using tables.

Research Findings: The study established that cases of indiscipline among students in public secondary schools are on the rise. However, school management practices such as involvement of student council are yet to mitigate these indiscipline cases.

Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: Thus, the study recommends that secondary schools to design training and development programmes meant to equip the student leaders with appropriate leadership skills and specifically on ways of addressing student discipline.

Keywords: *Student Council, School Management, Students' Discipline, Secondary Schools*

1. INTRODUCTION

Success of students in academic activities in secondary schools depend on the levels of discipline which they exhibit. However, issues of indiscipline in schools have attracted growing attention of many worldwide. The problem of learner indiscipline has been characterized as serious and pervasive, negatively affecting student learning (Tozer, 2010). This problem manifests itself in a variety of ways which include vandalism, truancy, smoking, disobedience, intimidation, delinquency, murder, assault, rape, theft and general violence (Marais & Meier, 2010). School principals form a very important component of secondary school management and the extent to which students manifest desirable behaviour patterns. In keeping with this assertion, Leithwood and Jantzi (2013) assert that a large part of any secondary school principal's job is to handle student behaviour by adopting a multiplicity of measures and strategies.

According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2013), disciplinary measures refer to a set of strategies and practices adopted by school principals such as the principal to mitigate the impact of indiscipline among students. However, the role of student council as a panacea to increasing cases of students' indiscipline is yet to be fully explored. In this context, it is important to re-orient the role of the school management and identify the forms of leadership actions, behaviours and practices that enhance the main purpose of a school's mission, that of enhancing student learning through effective governance of students' discipline. In such re-orientation, specific areas of school management require adjustment such as those that recognise students as important stakeholders in decision making process (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2011). In the United Kingdom, David (2011) noted that meaningful student involvement is the process of engaging students as partners in every facet of school change for strengthening their commitment to education and democracy. Students' involvement in governance should be concentrated within elected student representatives or council (David, 2011). Through this, secondary schools are in a position to stress for adherence to rules and regulations, reduced cases of indiscipline, few strikes, reduced violence and fights among students, improved completion and retention rates.

In keeping with these assertions, in a study carried out in Austria, Kythreotis, Pashiardis and Kyriakides (2010) found that involvement of students in school management improves students' discipline and enhances behaviour change. Kythreotis *et al* (2010) further state that involvement of students' leadership in school management assists them in being active and

responsible participants of the whole learning process, from planning, resource mobilization, execution, evaluation and appraisal of the learning program, facilities and policies. However, they are sometimes restrained where a case is beyond their context. The roles of the student councils include acting as role models for other pupils, promoting the ethos of the school, maintaining the standards of discipline, attending school events and student council meeting when required and to ensuring all students adhere to full school rules and regulations. Most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are not an exception and secondary schools have regularly experienced violent student disturbances (World Bank, 2008). In Tanzania, the role of student councils in governance of schools seemed to be entrenched and made provision for student participation and representation in committees involved in decision-making on matters discipline (Harper, 2003). Harper (2003) refers to Nyerere who argued that only by practicing direct democracy, and learning by mistakes, can students become accountable in their responsibilities. This objective became policy through a directive from the Chief Education Officer in May 1968 regarding secondary schools as quoted by Harper (2003).

In line with the global practice, the government of Kenya introduced the children governance system in 2008 to facilitate an enabling process that will equip the children with knowledge, skills and attitudes that instil positive attributes such as hard work, honesty, accountability, innovativeness and respect for the rule of law. According to Koffi (2009), students would better appreciate the country's resources if they were taught the importance of good governance at an early stage. Maraj (2000) further recommends that school governors undertake induction courses to prepare them for their tasks. These initiatives included adoption of student council policy which implies involvement of students in school decision-making process on matters discipline, academic and managerial in nature.

A study conducted in Kakamega East District, Abwere (2009) revealed that, in some schools, student councils are so efficient and effective that the role of teachers is limited to teaching and carrying out other academic duties. In view of the growing demand for more and better services at secondary education levels, Abwere (2009) has established that competencies of student councils should be addressed urgently. If management and governance structure is vague or is missing certain elements, it is very difficult for governance of students' discipline to function well. If managers are not competent or trained, do not understand their roles, or work under conditions that do not enable them to carry out their responsibilities, no matter how well defined

the governance structure is, it cannot function as intended. In practice, then, governance and management are intertwined, even at the local level.

Abwere (2009) further noted that the student council works in partnership with the schools to achieve common goals of increased student engagement and student success. It is tasked with considering the long-term strategic direction of the institution. These viewpoints affirm the fact that the cardinal aim of student engagement is to enhance students' experience through a well-developed relationship. In other words, a significant component of student engagement is the inter-student relationships and communication that offers students a meaningful voice in the matrix of communication that delivers student engagement. In line with these assertions, Muthamia (2001) holds that, in order to foster inter-student discussion and develop a sense of community, an element of structure and organization is required within the student body.

In Nakuru County, the involvement of student council in the governance of schools has not been clearly defined (Obondo, 2013). This implies that students have not been adequately involved in planning, organizing, sourcing, leading or directing, and controlling the school activities. Yet, according to RoK (2012), it is a requirement that participation of learners in the school management be enhanced as a mitigant to increased number of students' strikes, violence and fights among students and above all dropout rates. In Rongai Sub-county, cases of students' indiscipline have become a commonplace in secondary schools. A report by Ministry of Education (2011) shows that public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county have witnessed 19.7% increase in cases of indiscipline among students. An assessment by Bwana (2015) also echoes similar sentiments that instances of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county have been on the rise up to 45.1%.

According to Bwana (2015), Rongai Sub-county has witnessed 34.9% cases of drug and substance abuse among students, 56.1% instances of teenage pregnancy, 44.3% cases of bullying and violence among students and 54.3% cases of students' strikes in secondary schools. This points to an increasing trend of students' indiscipline. To mitigate these challenges, schools have embraced the idea of involving student leaders in school management. Increasingly the role of management and governance is recognized as important for providing an environment where positive students' discipline is maintained and checked. School policies are far more likely to be successful where they are clearly understood and accepted by all partners within the school community (Republic of Kenya, 2012). However, much is yet to be done since few empirical studies have exhaustively interrogated the extent to which

involvement of student council in school management enhance students' discipline in public secondary schools, hence the need for this study.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Student leadership plays an important role in shaping the behaviour patterns of their peers in secondary schools. However, the current situation in Rongai Sub-county's education system has faced increases cases indiscipline among students which is escalating rapidly with notable strikes, bullying, arson cases in schools, vandalism of school property, general refusal to follow school rules and regulations as well as increasing alcoholism. As noted in the background, a report by MoE (2011) shows that public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county have witnessed 19.7% increase in cases of indiscipline among students. Further, a study by Bwana (2015) also notes that instances of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county have been on the rise up to 45.1%. According to Bwana (2015), Rongai Sub-county has witnessed 34.9% cases of drug and substance abuse among students, 56.1% instances of teenage pregnancy, 44.3% cases of bullying and violence among students and 54.3% cases of students' strikes in secondary schools. Efforts to mitigate these challenges have not yielded much remarkable progress. Despite these statistics, few empirical studies have not interrogated the extent to which involvement of student council in school management influences students' discipline; hence the need for this study.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study sought to address the following objectives;

- 1) To assess the status of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-County;
- 2) To establish the influence of involvement of student council in management on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-County;

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on the school management theory, which was postulated by Luhmann (2004). The school management theory is an approach to organizations which likens an organization to an organism with interdependent parts, each with its own specific function and interrelated responsibilities. In order to realize educational goals, the school transforms students' discipline through the use of alternative methods of instilling discipline on students which include peer counselling, suspension of indiscipline students and use of class meetings with students for collaborative decision making. This depends on the nature and quality of students' discipline produced as a result of use of school management practices used in schools

hence the suitability of the theory in the study. This study was also guided by the Assertive Discipline Model which was proposed by Canter and Canter (2001) to address significant issues with discipline management which affects students' learning and achievement.

The theory asserts that, the teacher should create and teach a discipline plan with 4-5 rules and specific consequences by first identifying rules and expectations and presenting them to students, ensuring that they are understood. In the context of this study, this theory fits this study because all schools have rules and regulations or ethos which must be adhered to by all students. Management of students' discipline depends largely on the practices such as adherence to rules and regulations, stakeholders' involvement, guidance and counseling and involvement of student council adopted by school managers, more so the principals.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study applied mixed methodology and thus adopted descriptive survey research design. The study targeted 800 respondents comprising of 50 deputy principals, 750 teachers and 1080 student leaders from which a sample of 330 respondents was obtained using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was applied to create five strata based on the number of zones in Rongai Sub-county. From each zone, three deputy principals were selected using purposive sampling considering schools which have had several cases of students' indiscipline. However, 40 teachers and 23 student leaders were selected using simple random sampling to avoid bias. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to sample 15 deputy principals, 200 teachers and 115 student leaders. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers, interview guides were used to collect data from deputy principals and focus group discussions from student leaders. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms whereas quantitative data were analyzed descriptively such as frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS 23) and presented using tables.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the objective. It also outlines the methods of presentation of the study findings and discussions.

Response Rate

In this study, 200 questionnaires were administered to teachers and, in return, 54 questionnaires were filled and returned. The researcher interviewed 13 Deputy Principals and conducted focus group discussions among 101 student leaders. This yielded response rates shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents	Sampled Respondents	Those Who Participated	Achieved Return Rate (%)
Deputy Principals	15	13	86.7
Teachers	200	199	99.5
Student Leaders	115	101	87.8
Total	330	313	94.8

Table 1 shows that Deputy Principals registered a response rate of 86.7%, teachers registered 99.5% whereas student leaders registered a response rate of 87.8%. This yielded an average response rate of 94.8% which is consistent with the assertions of Creswell (2014) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate. This information was important since it allowed the researcher to generalize the study outcomes to the target population.

Status of Discipline among Students in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to assess the status of discipline among students in public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Status of Students' Discipline in Public Secondary Schools

Indicators of Indiscipline in Schools	SA	A	U	D	SD
	%	%	%	%	%
There are many cases of violence against colleagues	55.8	11.1	5.5	22.1	5.5
Students are involved in many cases strikes and school riots	53.4	10.1	4.0	24.6	7.9
Students steal from each other regularly	59.3	9.1	3.1	24.1	4.5
Cases of teenage pregnancies are high	52.3	14.1	5.5	19.6	8.5
Truancy and absenteeism are very common among students in secondary schools	57.3	9.0	6.5	20.1	7.1
Students' register low academic poor performance	64.8	7.5	6.0	13.6	8.1
Students break school rules and regulations very often	54.8	9.5	6.5	23.1	6.1

Table 2 shows that slightly more than half, 111(55.8%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that there are many cases of violence which students mete out against their colleagues whereas 22(11.1%) who agreed. However, 11(5.5%) were undecided, 44(22.1%) disagreed whereas 11(5.5%) strongly disagreed. From the study findings, most, 106(53.4%), of teachers strongly agreed with the view that students are involved in many cases strikes and school riots while 20(10.1%) agreed. However, 8(4.0%) were undecided, 49(24.6%) disagreed whereas

16(7.9%) strongly disagreed. More than half, 118(59.3%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students steal from each other regularly whereas 18(9.1%) were in agreement. However, 6(3.1%) were undecided, 48(24.1%) disagreed whereas 9(4.5%) strongly disagreed. Table 2 further shows that 104(52.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that cases of teenage pregnancies are high whereas 28(14.1%) agreed. However, 11(5.5%) were undecided, 39(19.6%) disagreed whereas 17(8.5%) strongly disagreed. More than half, 114(57.3%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that truancy and absenteeism are very common among students in secondary schools while 18(9.0%) agreed. However, 13(6.5%) were undecided, 40(20.1%) disagreed whereas 14(7.1%) strongly disagreed. Majority, 129(64.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students' register low academic poor performance while 15(7.5%) agreed. However, 12(6.0%) were undecided, 27(13.6%) disagreed whereas 16(8.1%) strongly disagreed. Majority, 109(54.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students break school rules and regulations very often as did 19(9.5%) who agreed. However, 13(6.5%) were undecided, 46(23.1%) disagreed whereas 12(6.1%) strongly disagreed. During the interviews, the study also sought the opinions of the Deputy Principals and student leaders with majority echoing similar sentiments. They indicated that students have manifested several cases of indiscipline. When probed further, Deputy Principal, DP1, admitted,

In my secondary school, we have had to handle disciplinary cases about students' violence against each other. In most cases, students engage in fights among themselves or sometimes bully their junior colleagues. They also miss school, steal from each other and even register low performance in their academic studies

During the focus group discussions, student leaders admitted that there have been numerous instances of indiscipline among students. Student leaders observed;

In our secondary school, there have been many cases of theft and violence among students, strikes, arson and vandalism caused by students.

However, some of the Deputy Principals discounted the view that indiscipline is very high in public secondary schools. On further probing, DP2, stated,

There are cases of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools, but not in the magnitude being projected by teachers and other stakeholders. There are mechanisms of ensuring that students attend school regularly and without fail.

These findings support the findings of a study undertaken by Bwana (2015) which also revealed that instances of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county have

been on the rise up to 45.1%. Bwana (2015) further revealed that public secondary schools in Rongai Sub-county have witnessed 34.9% cases of drug and substance abuse among students, 56.1% instances of teenage pregnancy, 44.3% cases of bullying and violence among students and 54.3% cases of students' strikes in secondary schools. These findings thus point to the fact that indiscipline has become a serious issue in public secondary schools. Many students have manifested incidences of indiscipline in one way or another and have thus become a national concern to education stakeholders. This leads to involvement of riots, strikes and other forms of infractions while at school.

Involvement of Student Council and Students' Discipline in Secondary Schools

The study sought to examine the influence of principals' involvement of student council on students' discipline in public secondary schools. The findings are shown in Table 3;

Table 3: Views of Teachers on the Influence of Principals' Involvement of Student Council on Students' Discipline in Secondary Schools

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Secondary school principals' involvement of student council in modeling behaviour has reduced students' strikes	53.3	14.6	7.5	11.1	13.6
Students adhere to school rules and regulations since secondary school principals involve student council in modeling their behaviour	68.3	25.6	2.0	2.0	2.0
Secondary school principals' involvement of student council in management of peer pressure has reduced students' strikes	54.8	18.5	7.4	20.4	9.3
Secondary school principals' involvement of student council in conflict resolution has reduced students' strikes	60.3	16.6	5.5	9.5	8.0

Table 3 shows that 106(53.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that secondary school principals' involvement of student council in modeling behaviour has reduced students' strikes whereas 29(14.6%) agreed. However, only a paltry 15(7.5%) were undecided, 22(11.1%) disagreed whereas 27(13.6%) strongly disagreed. The study revealed that 136(68.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students adhere to school rules and regulations since secondary school principals involve student council in modeling their behaviour whereas 51(25.6%) agreed. However, 4(2.0%) were undecided, 4(2.0%) of the teachers disagreed whereas 4(2.0%) strongly disagreed. The study also revealed that 109(54.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that secondary school principals'

involvement of student council in management of peer pressure has reduced students' strikes while 37(18.6%) were in agreement. However, 15(7.5%) were undecided, 28(14.1%) disagreed whereas 10(5.0%) strongly disagreed.

Majority, 120(60.3%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that secondary school principals' involvement of student council in conflict resolution has reduced students' strikes while 33(16.6%) agreed. On the same breath, 11(5.5%) were undecided, 19(9.5%) disagreed whereas 16(8.0%) strongly disagreed. These findings lend credence to the findings of a study carried out in New Zealand in which Macky and Johnson (2003) established that where student councils were involved in school management, students were more likely to be involved in a range of discipline management issues, given a greater sense of school ownership as well as enhancing problem solving abilities and improving behaviour.

In essence, each school is unique and has its own rules and regulations, which the student councils uphold as they enhance the other students to adhere to them. This implies that students have not been adequately involved in planning, organizing, sourcing, leading or directing, and controlling the school activities. These findings also support the assertions of RoK (2012) that participation of learners in the school management be enhanced as a mitigant to increased number of students' strikes, violence and fights among students and above all dropout rates. These findings point to the significant role of student leadership in the management of discipline in secondary schools. In secondary schools where student leadership is frequently involved in decision-making, cases of indiscipline tend to go down.

Inferential Analysis of the Influence of Involvement of Student Council on Students' Discipline in Secondary Schools

To verify the influence of involvement of student council on students' discipline in public secondary schools, data were collected on how often sampled public secondary schools involve student council in decision-making (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) and the cumulative number of indiscipline cases in public secondary schools for the last five years (2016-2020). The results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Frequency of Involvement of Student Council and the Number of Indiscipline Cases in Public Secondary Schools

Frequency of Involvement of Student Council	Number of Strikes	Number of Bullying Cases	Number of Theft Cases
1	3	29	11
2	1	24	23
2	2	30	32
1	4	22	24
2	2	13	20
2	2	10	12
2	1	23	21
2	1	29	15
2	1	18	14
3	0	22	15
4	0	19	13
5	0	5	7
5	2	11	9

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 4 shows that, in public secondary schools, where student leadership is frequently involved in decision-making with regard to students' affairs, there are few reported cases of indiscipline. These results were further subjected to Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis and the results are shown in Table 5:

Table 5: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Involvement of Student Council and Students' Indiscipline in Public Secondary Schools

		Frequency of Involvement of Student Council	No. of Strikes	No. of Bullying Cases	No. of Theft Cases
Frequency of Involvement of Student Council	Pearson Correlation	1	-.587*	-.635*	-.556*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035	.020	.048
	N	13	13	13	13
Number of Strikes	Pearson Correlation	-.587*	1	.213	.320
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035		.484	.286
	N	13	13	13	13
Number of Bullying Cases	Pearson Correlation	-.635*	.213	1	.574*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	.484		.040
	N	13	13	13	13
Number of Theft Cases	Pearson Correlation	-.556*	.320	.574*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.048	.286	.040	
	N	13	13	13	13

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows that there is a strong correlation between involvement of student council and different cases of indiscipline among students in public secondary schools. That is, the higher the frequency of involvement of student leadership in discipline management in secondary schools, the lower the number of cases of indiscipline among students $r(13) = -0.587, -0.635, -0.556, p = 0.035, 0.020, 0.048$ at $\alpha = 0.05$). This indicates that the role of student council in the management of students' discipline cannot be ignored as a mitigant to rising cases of indiscipline in secondary schools.

Thematic Analysis of the Influence of Involvement of Student Council on Students' Discipline in Secondary Schools

During the interviews, Deputy Principals also noted that student council is part and parcel of school management and plays an important in reducing cases of indiscipline. Deputy Principal, DP2, noted;

In our secondary school, we engage the student leaders in handling daily issues which affect their colleagues and resolve minor issues which may not have to reach school managers. This has helped us reduce cases of conflicts thus minimizing instances of students' indiscipline in the school.

On their part, the student leaders also echoed similar sentiments as teachers and Deputy Principals that they are often involved in management of students' affairs. They stated that they are often involved in handling matters affecting their colleagues. They noted;

We are often involved in dealing with matters of discipline among our peers. We always advise, counsel and orient new and younger students on how to behave and adhere to rules and regulations.

These findings affirm that student leadership plays an important role in the management of discipline in secondary schools. In other words, in secondary schools where student leadership is frequently involved in decision-making, cases of indiscipline tend to go down.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

From the study findings, it is evident that cases of indiscipline among students in public secondary schools are on the rise. There are many cases of violence which students mete out against their colleagues, students are involved in many cases strikes and school riots, theft, teenage pregnancies, truancy and absenteeism, low academic poor performance and disobedience of school rules and regulations. Principals involve student council in the management of students' daily affairs. Student leaders are involved in resolving minor issues which may not have to reach school managers.

This has helped us reduce cases of conflicts thus minimizing instances of indiscipline in the school. They also advise, counsel and orient new students on how to behave and adhere to rules and regulations. This implies that student leadership occupies a significant place in students' discipline management in schools.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that school administration should design training and development programmes meant to equip the student council leaders with appropriate leadership skills and specifically on ways of addressing student discipline. The Ministry of education should organize and offer seminars to ensure that school heads are well sensitized on the importance of involving students in school governance.

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