

Influence of Student Councils on Management of Discipline in Secondary Schools in Kirinyaga East District, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: In Kenya, every secondary school has its own unique system of maintaining discipline in the school in addition to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology guidelines. However, there are common methods of discipline that most schools use such as the school rules, punishment and guidance and counseling. All these methods to some extent help the schools to manage discipline issues particularly after the Children's Act (2001) criminalized corporal punishment. For effective management of discipline, the cooperation between the head teacher, staff, students, parents and the community is essential. In view of the causes of students' indiscipline in secondary schools in Kenya, various stakeholders have made suggestions regarding how this problem can be addressed. The study found out that students had positive perceptions towards student councils when the establishment and voting was free and fair. In schools where student councils had been established, members played their role as expected. In some schools, however, students failed to take instructions from student councils where they felt that the election of student council members was not free and fair. From these findings, it was recommended that all secondary schools should establish student councils in a free and fair process for effective management of school discipline.

Key Terms: *Student councils; Discipline; Leadership; Election; Selection; Appointment*

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I. BACKGROUND

There have been various types of students' leaders in the history of teaching and learning. These leaders include prefects, captains, councilors, ministers and student councils (Muli, 2007). Students' Governing Councils (SGC) is mainly found in higher institutions of learning like the universities. Students elect their leaders who represent their grievances to university management. Ministers are students' leaders in tertiary institutions like Teachers Training Colleges. The chief minister is responsible for coordinating the activities of other ministers. Students' leaders in high schools are referred to as captains, prefects or monitors. In primary schools leaders are referred to as prefects or monitors. Prefects are mostly selected by school authorities for their academic ability and conformity to the philosophy of alma mater. The prefect system reflects a hierarchical type of management (O'Gorman, 2003). Student councils on the other hand, differ primarily in that students elect the members. They aim to represent students' issues and are a voice for students within the school.

In the United States of America, elementary school students elect class presidents. He/she is charged with the responsibility of ensuring the class issues are presented for deliberations at the student councils. They are also charged with the responsibility of chairing cabinet meetings and organizing class activities (Brady, 2005). Class presidents are elected by students in the particular classes and usually serve for a maximum term of one academic year with the option of seeking re-election. In Kenya, students' leadership is composed of prefects who are appointed by the teachers. In this method, students do not have much input in the process. The principal, deputy principal and the teachers have heavy influence in the process of selection of the students' leaders. This has been a major source of conflict between the school administration and students' body where they feel that the students' leadership is not reflective of their preferences as indicated during the election process (Oyaro, 2005).

In Kenya, violent high schools strikes are a common occurrence. In 2008, for instance, the incidence of high school strikes raised by (34%) (Ojwang, 2012). There are several causes that have been associated with high school students' infringements, unrest which eventually leads to violent strikes. One of the causes that have been identified is high handedness by school administrations. In Kenya for example, the decision making process in high schools pertaining matters that affect students' welfare mainly involves the board of governors,

principals and teachers. Usually there is little input from students who are primarily affected by the policy implementation.

Secondly, parental neglect has also been identified as a factor associated with increased students' infringements and violent protests in high schools especially in Kenya (Buhere, 2008). The global financial crisis in 2008 had varied effects on countries across the globe. Kenya, which is a net importer of manufactured goods, suffered some of these effects which eventually led to an increase in the cost of living. Therefore, there has been increased pressure on parents as they try to mitigate such effects by engaging in more income generating activities. This therefore, has resulted in increased time constraints and thus parents are not in a position to take care of all emerging issues from teenagers in high schools. Therefore, such children resort to more violent ways to express their discontent.

Learning in secondary schools in Kirinyaga County has been disrupted by students' unrest. For example, following a series of unrest in November 2012, 18 schools were closed and more than 1,000 students suspended on disciplinary measures. Unrest continued to sweep across secondary schools in Kirinyaga County (Munene & Wanyoro, 2012). In Kirinyaga county more schools were closed as the county came in terms with the growing number of strikes that had hit the region. Property worth millions of shillings was destroyed as students burnt stores, staffroom, classrooms over the anger of extension of third term (Kariuki, Karanja, & Munene 2012). 30 out of 119 schools in the county were affected by riots which disrupted studies.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Management of discipline in secondary schools continues to be a major challenge to teachers, parents, ministry, government and all stakeholders of education in Kenya. Indiscipline in schools has caused untold havoc both financial and social to parents, teachers and sponsors of schools. During schools riots and unrest, property of unknown value is lost through fire inferno, destruction or malicious damage. To students, schools riots and unrests impact on them negatively where they lose valuable learning time which makes them perform poorly in national examination. In order to enhance academic excellence and quality education, the Ministry of Education has continued to put some control measures to mitigate the effects of unrest in secondary schools. One of the control measures of indiscipline was the formation of Kenya Secondary Schools Students Council. Despite the formation of Kenya Secondary Schools Students Council (KSSSC) in 2009 by the Ministry of Education with a view to make secondary schools governance more participatory by including students in decision making structures in schools management, students' indiscipline, in Kirinyaga East district remains relatively high. The paper sought to investigate why indiscipline continues in the district, despite the introduction of the councils. Available studies have focused on students' unrest but have not fully explored the role Student councils play in the management of discipline in secondary schools.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- i. To determine perceptions of students towards methods of establishing student councils in secondary schools in Kirinyaga East District.
- ii. To examine the role played by student councils in management of discipline in secondary schools in Kirinyaga East District.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study sought to establish the influence of student councils on management of discipline in secondary schools in Kirinyaga East District, Kenya. The theoretical framework that guided the study was the House (1974) Path-Goal Theory. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. Purposive samplings technique was used to sample schools while simple random sampling technique was used to sample teachers, members of student councils and students. The sample size comprised a total of 20 principals / deputy principals, 40 teachers, 160 members of student councils and 100 students from both Boarding and Day secondary schools in Kirinyaga East District. Questionnaires were used as the tools of data collection in the study. The data was analysed by use of descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution tables and graphical techniques were used for data presentation.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Path-Goal theory developed by House (1974) based on the leader-follower concept. The Theory primarily relates the leader's behavior with the motivation, performance and the satisfaction of followers. The leader defines the goals, clarifies the path so that subordinates know which way to go, remove roadblocks that are stopping them going there and provides support by increasing the rewards along the route. Leaders can take a strong or limited approach in these. In clarifying the path, they may be directive or give vague hints. In removing roadblocks, they may scour the path or help the follower move the bigger blocks.

In increasing rewards, they may give occasional encouragement or pave the way with gold. The leadership styles include directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented (House, 1996).

The Path-Goal model indicates that effective leadership encompasses identification of the most suitable leadership behavior in various situations. Student councils, act as students' leaders in Kenyan secondary schools, therefore, their ability to recognize the appropriate leadership behavior in various situations is critical. Similarly, various student council's posts demand varied behavior. Therefore, it is imperative for student councils to identify the leadership behavior most suited for their council posts. Discipline is key to academic success in a school environment. The ultimate goal of a student in school is academic achievements. This can be possible through interplay of hard work and discipline. The students' leaders can set high discipline standards in school to be followed by fellow students in order to achieve academic success.

The students' leaders can reduce or remove obstacles like bullying, laziness, untidiness, drug abuse, theft just to mention a few which prevents students to perform in class work. Students' leaders can guide and support other students in healthy social relationships, team work, completing various tasks assigned to them by teachers and being role models in good study habits. Leaders should keep on encouraging their subject along the way to academic achievements.

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework comprised of independent variables which were, students' perception towards the methods of establishment of student councils, role of the student councils in managing discipline in secondary schools. Independent variables interacted with each other as they got modified by the intervening variables consisting of children's rights, constitution of Kenya, political factors, media and democratic ideals to produce dependent variables represented by effective school discipline whose indicators are punctuality, adherence to school rules, decency, good behavioral, good human relations and good academic performance (See Figure 1).

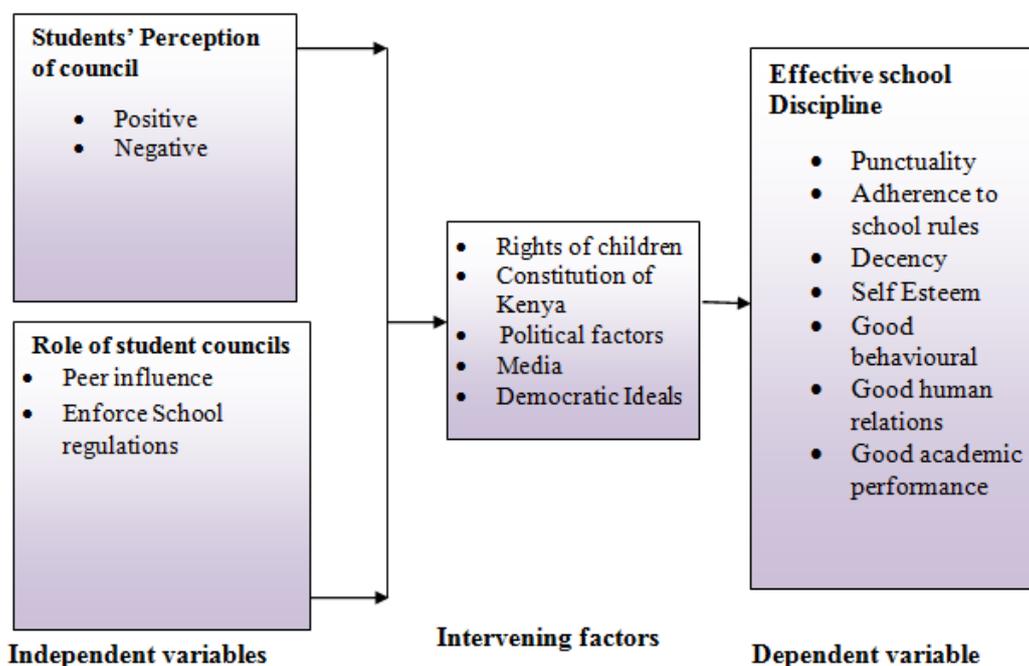


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors model from Literature Review (2014)

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

Student Councils and Management of Discipline

Student councils are representatives' structure through which students in post-primary schools can become involved in the affairs of the schools, working in partnership with school management and staff and parents for the benefits of the school and its students. In Ireland, many schools have student councils system operating in their schools. Students in these bodies may be called 'prefects', captains, or councilors. Prefects are mostly chosen by school authorities for their academic ability and conformity to the philosophy of alma mater. The prefect system reflects a hierarchical type of management (O'Gorman, 2004). Student councils on the other hand, differ primarily in that students elect the members. They aim to represent students' issues and are a voice for students within the school.

O’Gorman (2004) underlines that student councils is not a union, which may conjure up images of confrontation, and that it must assist management and support the school mission statement and ethos. Dowling (2003) states that a student councils is not a student group to run a unit of the school, a body to gripe about teachers, an organization to change everything and finally not a power base for student authority.

In many countries in Europe the student councils feed into a bigger organization of either regional or national student councils or youth organizations. Some countries like Ireland, Belgium and Finland have very good student councils systems in place. Their effectiveness depends on the school principal’s willingness to listen to the views of students. Quite a number of student councils in Europe include staff and parental representatives and quite a few countries have students on school boards of management. In the United Kingdom, however, there is a law that forbids having students as members of governing bodies of secondary school as these bodies have a lot of authorities.

Student councils have achieved much in European countries. In Ireland, they have promoted the increase in creating awareness of young people’s rights and reflect a changing way of thinking about children and young people. The focus is on a respect for authority and accepting the roles assigned to them by their parents (Devine, 1999). They have also promoted youth participation in democracy and citizenship by encouraging youth to vote and providing ways of learning about democracy as well as acting as student representatives.

Student councils have supported school effectiveness through assisting in management by participation, responsibility and accountability, hence creating a sense of ownership of the school and its activities among students population. Student councils encourage high academic achievements and learning where they are involved in aspects of learning environment in areas of curriculum development, codes of conduct, and exam policy. Students’ integrations into school system have raised their self-esteem through the sharing of trust, responsibility and participation in decision making. They promote better discipline in schools. Giving students a voice in learning of the school help promote inclusion and reduce the behavior problems. Learners generate codes of conduct and anti-bullying policies. They have improved students and staff relationships in schools. Student councils provide opportunities for students to engage in a structured partnership with teachers, parents and school managers in operation of their schools, in Belgium student councils lobbied successfully to make the math’s curriculum easier in secondary schools.

In Finland, student councils were involved in developing the matriculation examination. They argue that one of the reasons for their success is that 1/3 of upper secondary school students are member of organization. In some countries, students have also had in put into education system. In United States, the National Association of Student Councils (NASC) has been supporting student councils since 1931. It works under the auspices of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). NASC support state association of the student councils in 50 states and organizes an annual conference which host schools in the United States of America (USA). Most high schools in USA have student councils. Some of the student councils concentrate on students’ activities such as dances, rallies and assemblies. Others have broader remits and are involved in school policy issues, curriculum and hiring and the evaluation of teachers. One of the difficulties for student councils, according to NASC is staff attitude to the councils.

In Australia, Students’ Representatives’ Council (SRC) are very common and most high schools have SRC. The department of education and training has students’ representatives which represents the views of students in New South Wales government secondary schools. The Canada Association of Students Activity Advisors (CASAA), established in 1985, is students ‘organizations which promotes and develop students’ leadership and activities within Canada high schools. The 1st international Students Representative Conference (ISRC) together with the 1st international SRC adult advisors conference held in Australia in 2000 was supported by a number of students’ organizations such as NASC in USA, CASAA in Canada and Professional Association of Students Representative Council Advisors (PASTA) in Australia. Among the topics discussed in the conference were challenges facing young people in the 21st century. The 2nd conference was held in Canada in august 2004 hosted by CASAA.

In Kenya, Kenya Secondary Schools Student Council (KSSSC) was formed in 2009 by the ministry of education with a view to make secondary schools governance more participatory by including students in decision making structures in schools management. The prefect system of governance which was dictatorial was replaced by democratic student councils system, where students would elect their leaders and participate in management of discipline in schools. However, despite the student councils being in place, management of discipline in secondary schools remains a problem. Not much research has been conducted to investigate whether student councils have impact on management of discipline in secondary schools. It is in light of this therefore that the study aimed at investigating whether the student councils had influence on management of discipline with a view to fill the gap between theory and practice in management of discipline.

VII. DISCIPLINE ISSUES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

At organizational level, discipline can be defined as the action by the management to enforce organizational standards and the process of encouraging workers to move uniformly towards meeting the objectives of an organization. It is the administrative action taken by education managers to encourage employees to follow the standards, rules and organizational expectations enthusiastically (Okumbe, 1999). It also refers to the values that students should live by within the school, family, the neighborhood, the village and all the social units, up to the nation and the entire world community (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992).

At classroom level, discipline can be defined as the business of enforcing simple classroom rules, to facilitate learning and minimize disruption. In fact, school discipline is the system of rules, punishment and behavioral strategies appropriate to the regulation of children and the maintenance of order in school. Also, the term discipline is applied to the punishment that is the consequence of breaking the rules in a school.

Cowley (2001) points out that there can be a tendency for teachers to think that misbehavior is planned or premeditated by their students. She adds that whilst it is certainly true in some cases that students make conscious decisions to misbehave, in reality the majority of poor behavior stems from very different factors. Cowley points out that if teachers understand some of these causes and learn ways to deal with them, they can avoid setting up situations where confrontations occur between them and the students. The success of instilling positive discipline therefore, calls for the establishment of a relationship of trust and respect between the adult and the child (Waithaka, 2005).

Ojwang (2012) identified several causes that can be associated with student unrest in Kenyan secondary schools. In her study, which focused on Rachuonyo district, Nyanza province, she identified several causes including drug abuse. Students both in day and boarding secondary schools have had increased access to drugs which has resulted in an escalated rate of drug and alcohol abuse. Another cause identified is decreased motivation amongst the teaching staff. Consequently, most teachers are not keen on change of student behavior which could be an indication of presence of vices such as drug abuse (Sushila & Bakhda, 2006). Therefore, the teachers are not in a position to identify such issues emerging from their classroom interactions with the students. This may lead to misunderstandings which could be the basis of violent student protests and strikes.

Poor administration was also identified as a primary cause of student unrest. Mostly, school administration enacts policies affecting student's welfare without consultation with the students. Therefore, there is increased dissent amongst students during the implementation of such school policies. In many cases, where the school administration remains hard-headed, students often resort to violent protests as a tool of expressing their dissenting views. This often leads to loss of school property and in worse cases fatalities. Parental neglect has also been identified as a factor associated with increased students' infringements and violent protests in high schools especially in Kenya (Buhere, 2008).

The breakdown of traditional values is another contributing factor to discipline problems in our schools. Traditional norms and customs are no longer valued in our modern society due to the influence of western culture. There is a breakdown of traditional ties due to urbanization, formal education and white collar jobs, leading to individualism. The society is no longer concerned about the welfare of the child. Discipline of the child is left to the teacher who has too much to handle and only concentrate on academics. This has raised an undisciplined generation in the modern society. Also, there are frequent go slows, demonstrations and strikes amongst workers and professionals agitating for better pay and other rights in Kenya. Examples include teachers, doctors, nurses, lecturers among others. This has impacted negatively on the students as they see strikes as way of forcing the school administrators to give in to their demands.

Perceptions of Students on Methods of Establishment of Student Councils

A study by the National Youth Council of Ireland (2000) surveyed all the second level schools in Ireland on students' perception on the establishment of student councils. There was a response rate of only (40%) from Principals (300 out of 752 schools). It found that all-girls' schools were more likely to have student councils than all-boys' schools (60%) compared to (40%). This is significantly different to the Department of Education and Science survey in Ireland (2000) which indicated that more voluntary secondary boys' schools had student councils than girls' schools. In (79%) of cases, the school Principal was responsible for the establishment of the student councils, in only (8%) did the students take the initiative. In schools that had student councils, (25%) thought they were 'very useful', (44%) said that they were 'somewhat useful' and (31%) said they were not useful. In schools that did not have a council, (61%) of students wanted to set student councils up and (30%) said they did not know, (9%) said they did not want it. Therefore majority of students (61%) had a positive attitude towards the establishment of the council.

McLoughlin (2004) surveyed the views of 129 female students. They found that first year students perceived the student councils to be more beneficial than the fifth year students. When asked if the council was a benefit to the school, (75.6%) of first year and (51%) of fifth year students answered that it was beneficial, and (65.4%) of first year and (53.1%) of fifth year students believed that the council did benefit the students. When

asked 'is the student council effective?' (57.6%) of first year students responded positively compared to (34.6%) of fifth year students. Senior students expressed dissatisfaction with the limits of the council's power. They felt that teachers ignored their opinions and suggestions, and decisions were made without taking their views into account. They wanted to be involved in the running of the whole school. First year students wanted the council to organize non uniform days and special trips, while the 5th years were interested in student participation on the school's Board of Management. Both groups wanted more representatives on the student councils and more feedback and involvement from the wider student body. This is a suggestion that students would like to be involved more in decision making processes in the running of schools.

Walsh (1999), cautions against expecting too much too soon from a council. Duffy and Flynn (1990) found that there were unrealistic and often conflicting expectations of the student councils that lead to frustration and discouragement among the members. They argue that good leadership from among the student body is a real asset to a school. O'Gorman (2003) found that the overall opinion of the working of their student councils was negative. Students were dissatisfied with the way their councils communicated with them. Boys were more negative about their student councils than girls. All students gave a negative on 'Management listens to the student councils'.

"Effective discipline requires the principals to redefine the role of prefects in schools" (Nasibi, 2003, 38). MOEST (2000/2001) reports that there are many problems in Kenyan secondary schools because of the poorly perceived role of prefects among the student's body. This has led to open hostility, violence and even murder. Students view prefects as puppets of the administration, traitors and sell-outs (Oyaro, 2005). Oyaro adds that they see them as part of the autocratic system that suppresses them and as such they despise and loathe them. This attitude has prevailed because of the following: The way the prefects are chosen; Special privileges given to prefects but denied other students like eating and sleeping in privileged situations or rooms; being served meals first and therefore getting the best; Power to discipline, scare and report other students; In some cases, they have more powers than the teachers (Republic of Kenya, 2001).

Nasibi (2003) adds that negative attitudes towards prefects can be changed if school administrators do the following: Form student councils with representatives elected directly by the students. Such student councils would owe their loyalty to fellow students and not the administration. At the same time, it gives the students a say on who is going to lead them; ensure that the teachers do not abdicate their responsibilities to students' councils; be clear on the role/duties of the student councils. These must be in writing; Encourage students' councils to give peer guidance and counseling to fellow students instead of policing over them; student councils should treat students with respect so that they can earn the same from the students they are serving; See student councils as a bridge between the school administration and the student's body and therefore an effective tool for creating understanding between fellow students and the administration.

Student councils therefore, play a very important role in the management of discipline in schools. Their appointment should be democratic and cautiously done so as to ensure that the right cadre of student councils is appointed for effective administration. To ensure that they perform their roles effectively, they must be inducted to orient them into their roles. They should also be supported and encouraged to maturely handle issues by themselves. Students' leadership is an important tool in communicating all the student grievances and thus ensuring that the school administration stays abreast with development in the student fraternity (Kiprop, 2007). One school that has been able to implement a system that ensures that students' grievances are voiced in time to avert violent protests is Starehe Boys Centre School. This is a boarding school with a system of freedom, trust and maximum responsibility to students. The boys are free to question anything they think is not done right, whether by fellow student or the director in their weekly Baraza,(Graffin, 1994). The congregation of school captains is known as the House of Captains and is very instrumental in the process of selection of incoming captains. Therefore, potential leaders are verified by the house before they can become full members of student councils. Also, former director, the Late Dr. Geoffrey Griffin met regularly a cabinet appointed from the body of student councils from where he was able to gather grievances from the student body. The system has remained very effective for the school which also enjoys high levels of discipline (Hongo & Mugambi, 2000). If principals, deputy principals and teachers in other secondary schools can adopt this system, they can positively enhance management of discipline and students in their care.

Teachers' Perceptions and Student Councils

Lack of clearly defined roles and expectations for student councils also could contribute to a level of fear among the teachers regarding the breakdown of discipline if there was an increase in the level of student involvement in school matters (Fox, 2000). Teachers in O'Gorman's study also identified transparency and clarity of purpose in the activities of the council as one of the most important factors for the effective operation of a council. Although it is perhaps impossible to listen to children too much; there is a danger if teachers feel disempowered and bypassed through students' consultation. Monahan (1999) gives a number of reasons why there might be opposition to student councils, including previous bad experience of students using the council

for ‘teacher-bashing’ and complaints. It may have raised questions about the traditional understanding of the teacher’s role and there may be a perception that students had more influence with the Principal than the teachers. It may have led to a two-tier student body, taken students’ energy away from their academic work and unfairly raised expectations of students which led to disillusionment.

Duerr (2004) found that ‘the attitudes of teachers towards students participation seem to mirror at least to a certain degree their own life experience and socialization line an authoritarian education system. However, it has also been recognized that a student council can play an important role in recognizing and supporting the work of teachers.

VIII. FINDINGS

The number of questionnaire administered were 320 while those that were returned were 320. This gives a questionnaire return rate of (100%). The reason for (100%) response rate was due to cooperation of the respondents and their willingness to fill in and return the questionnaire immediately since the researcher administered them personally.

Gender of the respondents

This section shows the gender of the respondents. With regard to gender of respondents, 167(52.2%) were females while 153 (47.8%) were male. There was fair representation of each gender (See Figure 2)

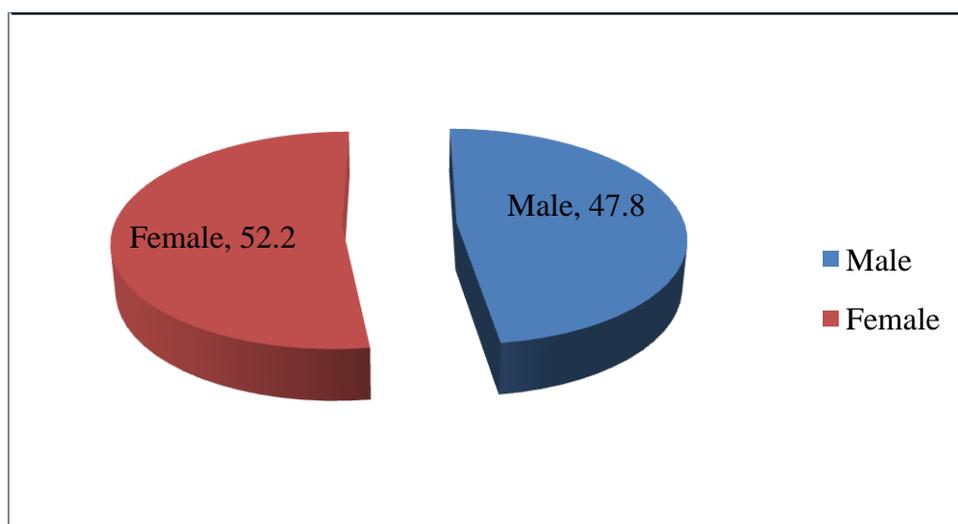


Figure 2: Gender of the respondents

Source: Field Survey (2014).

Students’ Perceptions towards Methods of Establishing Student Councils

The study sought to get responses from respondents regarding the perceptions of students toward methods of establishing student councils and also confirm from students whether student councils played their roles as expected. It also sought to find out whether the establishment of the student councils was free and fair.

a) Establishment of the Student Councils Was Free and Fair.

Respondents were required to indicate whether the process of establishing student councils was free and fair, i.e. whether the council was democratically elected by students. Results indicated that 60(60%) of the respondents agreed that the establishment of the student councils was free and fair while a significant number of students 40(40%) disagreed (See figure 3)

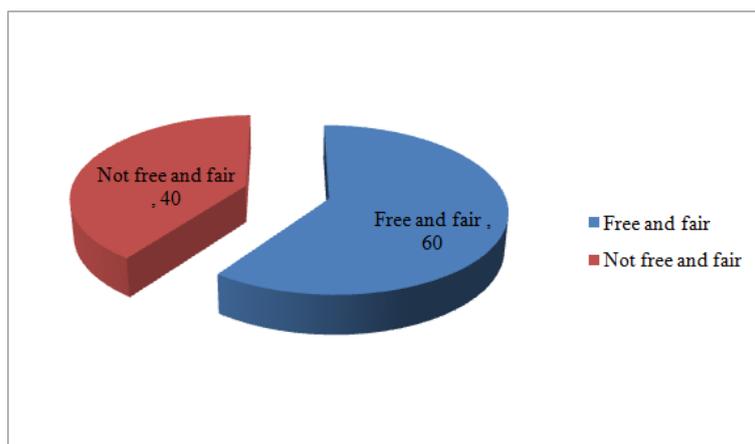


Figure 3: Establishment of whether the Student Councils Was Free and Fair.

Source: Field Survey (2014).

The student councils system was a new concept that was re-inventing itself. Teachers who have been in the system for a long time were still stuck in the era of school prefects who were easily manipulated by the administration. This could affect the establishment of student councils as well as the management of discipline negatively.

b) Establishment of Student Councils Was Not Free and Fair

Responses were sought regarding why the students felt that the methods of establishment of student councils were not free and fair. Results indicated that, 48(48%) of respondents agreed that the selection was based on class performance, 30(30%) agreed that they were appointed by teachers while 15(15%) reported that the selection was based on their fame (See Table 1)

Table 1: Why the Establishment of Student Councils Was Not Free and Fair

Responses	Frequency f	Percentage %
They were appointed by teachers	30	30.0
Selection was based on class performance	48	48.0
Selection was based on their fame	15	15.0
Others	7	7.0
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey (2014).

This implies that students have not been fully involved in election of their leaders. In the past school prefects were selected by the school administration and mostly based on performance. The teachers and the school administration seem to be resistant to change. This could affect negatively the attitude of students towards the councils and methods of establishment of student councils.

c) Students' Perceptions on the Roles of Student Councils

Students were required to confirm whether members of student councils played their role as expected. Results indicated that 51(51.0%) of students confirmed that members of student councils played their role as expected, for example, students agreed that the student councils promoted school rules and regulations and represented students' grievances/views to the school administration. A number of students 33(33.0%) were for the opinion that student councils did not play their role as expected (See Table 2).

Table 2: Students' Perceptions on the Roles of Student Councils

Responses	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Student councils gives students the opportunity to contribute to decision-making in order to enhance quality of	15	15	13	13	3	3	35	35	34	34

decisions										
Student councils enhances students' commitment to the programmes of the secondary school	22	22	15	15	15	15	25	25	23	23
Student councils promotes cordial relationship between staff and students	22	22	9	9	15	15	32	32	22	22
Student councils enhances students' feelings of belongingness	18	18	14	14	14	14	34	34	20	20
Student councils promote school rules and regulations	10	10	10	10	18	18	33	33	29	29
Student councils represents students grievances/views to the administration	15	15	4	4	22	22	31	31	28	28
Student councils treat all students fairly/equally	37	37	13	13	9	9	17	17	24	24
Student councils are role models to students	13	13	21	21	10	10	40	40	16	16
Average	20	20	13	13	15	15	30	30.0	21	21

Source: Field Survey (2014).

This implies that students appreciated the role of councils if the methods of establishment were free and fair. However a significant number of student 33(33%) were for the opinion that student council did not play their role as expected, where the process of establishment was not free and fair.

Role of Student Councils in Managing Discipline

The study sought to get responses from members of student councils regarding their roles in managing discipline in schools in Kenya. The result attained indicated that 91(56.9%) of the respondents agreed to a high extent that student councils played a positive role in managing discipline while 69(43.1%) disagreed (See Table 3).

Table 3: Role of Student Councils in Managing Discipline

Responses	Not at all		Small Extent		High Extent		Very high Extent	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Student councils take part in school governing body activities	31	19.4	77	48.1	33	20.6	19	11.9
Policies are formed after rigorous deliberations including students	51	31.9	50	31.3	31	19.4	28	17.5
Student councils ensure enforcement of school rules and regulations to the latter	13	8.1	29	18.1	73	45.6	45	28.1
Student councils participate freely in disciplinary meetings with school authority	84	52.5	27	16.9	31	19.4	18	11.3
Student councils are equal partners in decision making about discipline	42	26.3	60	37.5	29	18.1	29	18.1
Student councils cultivate a culture of positive behavior amongst students	7	4.4	26	16.3	56	35.0	71	44.4
Student councils encourage fellow learners to participate and are responsible for the sound functioning of school	5	3.1	25	15.6	63	39.4	67	41.9
Student councils are involved in anti-bullying	45	28.1	20	12.5	32	20.0	63	39.4
Student councils promote good discipline by holding regular learners meetings and discussions	17	10.6	39	24.4	59	36.9	45	28.1
Student councils use communication	25	15.6	55	34.4	39	24.4	41	25.6

channels to discuss learners fears and frustrations									
Student councils create clubs and special projects to promote learners involvement	43	26.9	44	27.5	36	22.5	37	23.1	
Student councils develop and promote a positive learner spirit and culture within the school	4	2.5	33	20.6	47	29.4	76	47.5	
Average	29	18.2	40	24.9	44	27.7	47	29.2	

Source: Field Survey (2014).

A significant number of respondents 69(43.1%) were for opinion that student councils did not play any role. The student councils did not participate freely in disciplinary meetings with school authorities. They did not take part in school governing activities where they could have learnt management skills. This implies that some members of student councils had not been orientated on their roles hence they were not effective in management of discipline in their schools. Student councils given opportunities and when established in a free and fair way has a positive effect on the management of discipline.

a) Extent of Student Councils participation in decision making in administrative tasks

Responses from student councils regarding the level of participation in decision making in administrative tasks were sought. Results indicated that student councils did not participate much in decision making in administrative tasks, 106(65.4%) were for opinion that student councils participated in decision making to a small extent. Members of student councils were not involved in planning school menu, co-curricular activities, extra tuition and choice of school uniform. Only 36(24.8%) reported that they were involved in decision making in administration tasks (See Table 4).

Table 4: Extent of Student Councils Participation in Decision Making

Responses	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Planning of co-curricular activities	39	24.4	20	12.5	25	15.6	53	33.1	23	14.4
Preparations of School budget	107	66.9	18	11.3	7	4.4	10	6.3	17	10.6
Choice of school uniforms	97	60.6	22	13.8	8	5.0	31	19.4	2	1.3
Extra tuitions	79	49.4	23	14.4	17	1.6	36	22.5	5	3.1
Planning of School Menu	91	56.9	27	16.9	19	11.9	15	9.4	8	5.0
Formulating School rules and regulations	52	32.5	22	13.8	14	8.8	57	35.6	15	9.4
Decision on teaching methods	78	48.8	18	11.3	24	15.0	33	20.0	7	4.4
Discipline of staff	107	66.9	17	10.6	13	8.1	17	10.6	6	3.8
Interview of staff	125	43.1	14	19.4	10	13.8	6	20.6	5	2.5
Planning and developing physical facilities	69	43.1	31	19.4	22	13.8	33	20.6	4	2.5
Managing free secondary education fund	122	76.3	17	10.6	13	8.1	6	3.8	2	1.3
Decision on the nature of punishments	65	40.6	33	20.6	19	11.9	38	23.8	5	3.1
Average	85	50.8	21	14.6	16	9.8	28	19.7	8	5.1

Source: Field Survey (2014).

This implies that students were not involved in decision making oversensitive issues that affected them and caused indiscipline in schools such as school menu and extra tuition. Students should be involved in all areas of school life. The range of activities that make up the work of a school can be categorized in a number of

different ways, such that students have opportunities for involvement in each major area –including rules, rewards and sanctions, curriculum, teaching and learning, management and development planning.

IX. DISCUSSION

The first objective was to determine the perceptions of students towards methods of establishing student councils. The study found out that 60(60%) of students had positive perceptions towards student councils when establishment and voting was free and fair.

However the student councils have been established and the link that they were supposed to form between teachers and students have not been fully exploited hence the lack of effectiveness. From the findings it was noted that the establishment of student councils was perceived by 40(40%) of the respondents not free and fair. The student leaders were selected by teachers and therefore students were not involved in the processing of choosing leaders of their choice. In some schools, however, students failed to take instructions from the student councils where they felt that the voting in of council members was not free and fair. This resulted to a situation where a good rapport was lacking between students and the members of student councils. This is in line with Oyaró, who affirmed that the principal, deputy principal and the teachers have heavy influence in the process of selection of the students' leaders. This has been a major source of conflict between the school administration and students' body where they feel that the students' leadership is not reflective of their preferences as indicated during the election process (Oyaró, 2005).

From these findings, all secondary schools should establish student councils in a free and fair process for effective management of school discipline. The findings were also in line with Nasibi who supported that their appointment should be democratic and cautiously done so as to ensure that the right cadre of student councils is appointed for effective administration and management of discipline (Nasibi, 2003).

The second objective was to establish the role played by student councils in the management of discipline. The result attained indicated that 91(56.9%) of the respondents agreed to a high extent that student councils played a positive role in managing discipline while 69(43.1%) were for opinion that student councils did not play any role. The study established that student councils given the opportunity and when established in a free and fair way has a positive effect on the management of discipline. In schools where student councils had been established, members played their role as expected. This is in line with Kiprop who affirmed that students' leadership is important in communicating students' grievances and thus ensuring that the school administration stays abreast with development in the student fraternity (Kiprop, 2007).

Students also confirmed that student councils played their role well. Student councils were involved in ensuring rules and regulations were followed to the letter as indicated by 118(73.7%) of the respondents; promoted good discipline by holding regular meeting and discussion with students as shown by 130(81.3%) of the respondents and encouraged fellow learners to participate and was responsible for the sound functioning of school.

However student councils did not participate much in decision making in administrative tasks. They were not involved in planning of menus as indicated by 118(73.7%) of the respondents, formulation of school rules and regulations, choice of school uniform as indicated by 119(74.4%) of the respondents, planning of co-curricular activities indicated by 102(63.8%) of the respondents and planning of extra tuition which has been a major source of conflict between students and school administration. Student councils have not been integrated into school system which should have raised their self-esteem through the sharing of trust, responsibility and participation in decision making. These findings were supported by Dowling who stated that great disparity seemed to exist in his study between how the principals viewed the role of student councils and what student councils' representatives believed their role to be (Dowling, 2003). Giving student councils a voice in running of school would help promote inclusion and reduce behavior problems.

If principals, deputy principals and teachers in all secondary schools in Kenya can adopt this system, they can positively enhance the management of discipline and students in their care. This is in line with Devine who confirmed that student councils system has remained very effective in Belgium, Finland and Ireland and schools also enjoys high levels of discipline (Devine, 1999).

X. CONCLUSION

Based on the summary arising from the study findings, the following conclusions were made:

- i. Student councils helped in managing discipline in secondary schools where it had been established.
- ii. The study established that student councils given opportunity and when established in a free and fair way has a positive effect on the management of discipline.
- iii. If student councils could be involved in school governing activities they tend to have a more positive influence on the management of discipline.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, the following recommendation was made; the school administration should involve student councils in school governing activities. Student councils should be involved in decision making like planning of co curriculum activities, entertainments, choice of school uniform, formulation of school rules and regulation and planning of the menu.

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