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# Influence of Student Councils' Involvement in Student Welfare Activities on Students Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Kathonzwani Sub-County, Kenya

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of student councils' involvement in student welfare activities on students discipline in public secondary schools in Kathonzwani Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was 30 public secondary schools in Kathonzwani Sub-County. Stratified random sampling was used to select a sample size of 108 students, 162 teachers and 28 principals. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect primary data. The questionnaires were also subjected to pilot test to ensure that research instruments were reliable. The data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences computer programme version 20.0. The results were presented in form of frequency tables and chi square tests. Chi square tests were used to show the relationship between the variables. The results indicated that a school where a student council are not involved in the deciding over students welfare activities was characterized by high levels of indiscipline than those where student council was involved deciding over students welfare activities. It is recommended that student councils should be involved in deciding the welfare of the other student.

**Key words:** *student welfare, discipline, public secondary schools*

## **1.0 Introduction**

The persistent waves of students' strikes in secondary schools in Kenya since independence continued to be witnessed hence the need to allow students to be heard through their representatives (Wachira, 2010 in Mukiti 2014). There are many reasons advanced supporting the need for student councils. The major argument advanced being the need to change attitude towards youngsters and the need to promote student involvement in school governance (Keogh & Whyte, 2005).

Most schools do not really use the Representative Council of Learners to promote democratic participation. The majorities of schools are still authoritarian and reinforces passive subordination amongst the learners (Duma, 2011). The policy maintains that the Representative Council of Learners acts as a link of communication between students and the school management (Hilda, 2004). Schools should build the necessary frameworks and communication avenues for developing student councils. Thus, school administration should put in place good communication systems in schools to ensure a smooth two-way flow of information to all prefects, students, and teachers and support staff (Muli, 2012).

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Student indiscipline has been on a rise over the years in Kathonzwani Sub-County compared with the neighbouring sub-counties; as indicated by frequent strikes, student unrest and poor school performance (Kenya Ministry of Education, 2016). From the Kathonzwani District Education office report (July 2016) five schools within the district were involved in strikes, destruction of property hence closed indefinitely with others requiring law enforcers to guard the schools.

Mwiria and Ngethe (2007) analyzed the reforms in school governance but focused more on students' representations in governance with less emphasis on decision making process in Kenyan universities; the same can be applied in the secondary schools within Kathonzwani Sub-county, Makueni County. A study by Cook-Sather (2002) and Fletcher (2005), Bukaliya (2012) and Vundi, Majanga and Odollo (2014) advocate for student participation in decision making. The study investigates the influence of student councils' involvement in student welfare activities on students discipline in public secondary schools in Kathonzwani Sub-County, Kenya.

## **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The study was guided by the following objective;

To establish the influence of student councils' involvement in student welfare activities on their discipline in public secondary schools in Kathonzwani Sub-County

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Student Councils Involvement in Student Welfare Activities and Students Discipline**

Both the head teacher's manual and the KESI suggest that students be involved in community welfare and development activities that include participation in tree planting (Muritu, 2012). Student councils play a crucial role in welfare activities (Patmor, 1999). They assume daily activities in school on behalf of the teachers. The activities range from organizing out of class activities like games, solving minor indiscipline cases and other welfare programs like ensuring all students get meals. They also undertake supervision of school activities (Ozigi, 1995).

Students council's play an important role in school management because they are given very many roles like students' welfare, coordinating co-curricular activities, supervising learning activities like early morning and late evening preps. They also check students' attendance to such activities and monitor indiscipline cases. This therefore denotes that student councils' are the link between the school administration and the entire student population in the school (Kouzer, & Posner, 2013). It also denotes that student councils bridge all good or bad happenings in the school hence the administration is fully informed with whatever takes place without being in direct contact with the student population.

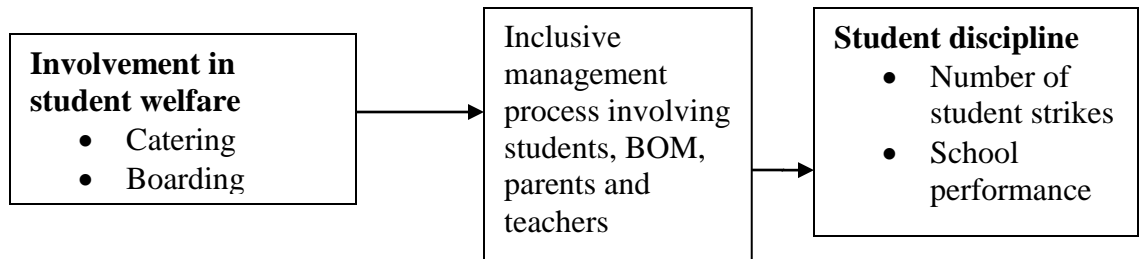
Tikoko and Kiprop (2011) conducted a study regarding involving students in running schools. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The results showed that though students' views are considered, they were not extended to core management guidelines of the school. Though involved in welfare programs, they were not involved in school administrative issues.

### **2.2 Theoretical background**

This study is anchored on the Social Systems Theory. Social Systems theory elucidates key principles that can be employed at different disciplines of life. School system is a live and always changing institution. A school is comprised of other social institutions which include departments, committees and students' council experiencing continued interaction and interdependency amongst themselves. A learning institution is thus a system. This Theory was suitable the school was viewed to comprise other sub units like student councils, departments and the administrative unit interacting at different levels to bring about harmonious school management.

### **2.3 Conceptual framework**

This is an analytical tool representing different variables that interact together at different levels resulting to a common output. A figurative illustration of the variables interacting is shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1: student councils’ involvement in student welfare activities and discipline**

### 3.0 Research Methodology

A descriptive survey design was employed. The target population was 30 public secondary schools in Kathonzi Sub-County, Makueni County. The study targeted a population of 1000 student representatives, 800 teachers and 30 principals. Stratification method was used to choose a sample size 108 student representatives, 162 teachers and 28 principals. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather primary data. The researcher administered the questionnaires in person and the respondents given enough time to respond. The filled questionnaires were collected. Interview questions were read to the principals. Collected data (quantitative) was keyed in into SPSS software version 20.0. The results generated included average and deviations from the mean. The results were presented in frequency tables. The chi square tests checked the relationship of research variables. The chi square test was meant to compare the students’ level of discipline between the schools which student councils’ were involved in student welfare activities and those schools where student councils’ were not involved in student welfare activities. Qualitative data gathered by use of interview guide was analyzed through content analysis and presented in prose form.

### 4.0 Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

#### 4.1 Instruments’ Response Rate

The return rate provides a profile of study units that participated. The respondents of the study were teachers, student councils and school principals. The return rate is indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response rate**

| <b>Respondents category</b> | <b>Administered</b> | <b>Returned</b> | <b>Unreturned</b> | <b>Percentage returned</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Teachers                    | 162                 | 134             | 28                | 82.7                       |
| Student representatives     | 108                 | 104             | 4                 | 96.3                       |
| Principals                  | 28                  | 28              | -                 | 100                        |

The response rate for teachers was 82.7 percent; the response rate for student representatives was 96.3 percent while the participation rate for principals was 100 percent. According Kothari (2004), a return rate of more than 50 percent is sufficient. Therefore, a response rate achieved for this study was adequate for analysis.

#### 4.2 Involvement of Student Councils in Welfare Activities and Student's Discipline

The respondents were asked to establish the influence of student councils' involvement in student welfare activities on their discipline in public secondary schools in Kathonzwi Sub-County. The responses were indicated on a five Likert scale and presented in Table 2. The choices were presented as (5= never, 4= rarely, 3= can't tell, 2 = frequently and 1= all the time.

**Table 2: Involvement of student councils in welfare activities and student's discipline**

| Role   | all the time | frequently | Can't tell | Rarely | Never | Mean | SD  |
|--|--------------|------------|------------|--------|-------|------|-----|
| Type of meals and diet                               | 9.7%         | 8.2%       | 6.7%       | 32.8%  | 42.5% | 3.9  | 1.3 |
| Games and co-curricular activities                   | 8.2%         | 16.4%      | 8.2%       | 41.0%  | 26.1% | 3.6  | 1.3 |
| Prompt medical attention to sick students            | 8.2%         | 15.7%      | 9.7%       | 23.1%  | 43.3% | 3.8  | 1.4 |
| Psychological support through Guiding and counseling | 6.0%         | 14.2%      | 2.2%       | 30.6%  | 47.0% | 4.0  | 1.3 |
| Provision of safe and conducive boarding facilities  | 8.2%         | 8.2%       | 19.4%      | 37.3%  | 26.9% | 3.7  | 1.2 |
| Provision of safe and clean environment              | 10.4%        | 11.9%      | 4.5%       | 42.5%  | 30.6% | 3.7  | 1.3 |
| Provision of safe and conducive learning environment | 11.9%        | 4.5%       | 6.0%       | 40.3%  | 37.3% | 3.9  | 1.3 |
| Average  |              |            |            |        |       | 3.8  | 1.3 |

Table 2 showed that majority of the respondents (75.3%) indicated that student councils were not involved in deciding type of meals and diet. The results also showed that majority of the respondents (67.1%) indicated that student's councils were not involved in deciding time games and co-curricular activities. The results also showed that majority of the respondents who were 66.4 percent of the respondents indicated that student council is not involved deciding prompt medical attention to sick students. This is in agreement with Tikoko and Kipro (2011) that though there attempts to include views of students in school policy, such attempts did not extend to core management issues. Students were involved

in student welfare issues but were deemed to be immature and therefore were not involved in administrative issues.

Decision-making relating to the student welfare and academic affairs is not fully developed in most schools. Very often, there is lack of effective involvement by students' council when deciding on the welfare of students. Students council's play an important role in school management because they are given very many roles like students' welfare, coordinating co-curricular activities, supervising learning activities like early morning and late evening preps (Backman, & Trafford, 2006).

On a likert scale, the mean of the responses was 3.8 indicating that majority of the respondents were not agreeing to the statements in the questionnaire. The deviation from the mean was 1.3 meaning that the responses were clustered around the mean response. The average mean of 3.8 and standard deviation of 1.3 indicated that there was a high variation in the responses from the respondents with regard to student councils' involvement in student welfare activities and students' discipline. During interviews, school principals indicated that student' councils were involved when deciding on their welfare programmes.

A Chi square test for independence between student councils' involvement in students' welfare activities and student's discipline was conducted. Student councils' involvement in welfare activities was categorized into those schools where student council are involved in the welfare activities of students and those that do not involve student council in students welfare activities. This was tabulated against students' level of discipline that was categorized into high indiscipline cases and low indiscipline cases. Table 3 shows how student level of discipline was evaluated against student council involvement in the welfare activities of students.

**Table 3: Chi Square Test for Independence between Students Council Involvement in Welfare Activities and Student's Discipline**

|                             |  | Students discipline     |                        | Chi-square (p value) |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
|                             |  | High indiscipline cases | Low indiscipline cases |                      |
| Students welfare activities | Students council not involved in students welfare activities | 106                     | 2                      | 115.823 (0.000)      |
|                             | Students council involved in students welfare activities     | 1                       | 25                     |                      |

A school where a student council are not involved in the deciding over students welfare activities was characterized by high levels of indiscipline than those

where student council was involved deciding over students welfare activities. Result findings indicated that, there was high indiscipline cases when student council was not involved in the welfare of students as shown by 106 respondents as compared to 1 respondent who indicated that student councils act are involved in deciding over welfare activities of the students. Further, student indiscipline cases were low when student council was involved in deciding over welfare of students as indicated by 25 respondents as compared to only 2 who indicated that student council is involved in deciding over welfare of students.

The study findings were statistically significant supported by a chi square of ( $\lambda = 115.823$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Chi square test was meant to show whether there existed any significant association between involving student council in deciding over welfare activities and students levels of discipline. These findings therefore imply that involving student council in deciding over students' welfare activities influences students' discipline.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

It is concluded that involving student council in deciding over students' welfare activities influences students' discipline. Students council's play an important role in school management because they are given very many roles like students' welfare, coordinating co-curricular activities, supervising learning activities like early morning and late evening preps. They also check students' attendance to such activities and monitor indiscipline cases.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

The study recommends that students are involved in welfare activities like meals and time for preps. This will ensure that we do not experience conflicts between the school administration and students.

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