
PRINCIPALS' INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN DECISION MAKING IN RELATION TO REPORTED DISCIPLINE CASES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KITUI COUNTY, KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

Discipline is a pivotal element in smooth operation of Organisation whether public or private. The purpose of the study was to investigate influence of principals' involvement of students in decision-making on students' discipline. The study sought to the reported types of student indiscipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County Kenya and to establish the influence of secondary school principals' levels of involvement of students in decision making on their (students) discipline in Kitui County, Kenya.

The study was guided by participatory theory or "people centred theory" the theory focuses on bottom-up planning and the view that ordinary people have abilities to manage their own affairs. Students were viewed as stakeholders. Descriptive survey research design was used with a target population of 369 Secondary School Principals, 369 Deputy Principals and 76071 students. From the target population, a sample of 110 principals, 110 deputy principals and 440 students were sampled through purposive sampling for principals and deputy principals, stratified proportionate sampling for the students. Questionnaires for students and deputy principals were used and an interview guide used for principals. The return rate was 110 principals 100 per cent, 80 deputy principals (72.7%) and 367 students (83.4 %).

The descriptive statistics indicated that drug and substance abuse (65%), bullying (37%) and property destruction (33.5%) were the most prevalent forms of student indiscipline. Independent T-test was employed to compare means between involvement and decision making (independent variable) with same

continuous dependent variable (discipline) to determine whether the mean occurrences of student discipline differed based on principals' involvement of students in decision making. The study established that schools had different means on discipline based on involvement of students in decision making. This implied that there could have been other factors that influenced discipline in the schools. The average mean for all the schools under study was 3.00 on discipline and 3.40 on involvement of students in decision making as indicated by the students, deputy principals and principals. The study revealed that 10 schools had means of above 4.0 indiscipline and 13 schools had means of above 4.0 in decision making, however majority of the schools indicated higher means of involvement in decision making than in discipline. The study found from 76.0 per cent of the students agreed to have been involved in decision making and this made students more responsible and committed to their work and this impacted positively on their behaviour. From the t-test $p\text{-value } 0.001 < 0.005$ indicate there is no significant difference between principals' levels of involvement of students in decision making and students' discipline. The results concurred with those of 85 per cent of the deputy principals who agreed that the students were involved in decision making to enhance discipline in school. The study concluded that principals involved students in decision making. The study recommends that there is need for principals to hold students responsible of decisions they participated in making especially on discipline issues.

Key words: Decision Making, Involvement, Student discipline

INTRODUCTION

Decision making is defined as the process of solving a problem using different alternatives in a school setup and significant to an individual life (Asha & Hawi, 2016; Kosgei & Sirmah, 2017). The decision for students to be involved in leadership processes on areas dealing with their discipline is very important. Students' discipline is a system of restraining from misbehaviours (Belle, 2016; Wambua, Okoth, Kalai, 2018). Kagendo (2018); Oni and Adetero (2015); Tikoko and Kiprop (2011) and Mati, Gatumu and Chandi (2016) note students' involvement in decision making by the school management is very important since students take accountability in developing school activities on a cooperative basis to help improve their discipline.

Uzonwanne (2016) argues that decision making a model where an individual uses facts and information, analysis, and a step-by-step procedure to come to a decision. This implies that decision making involves making choices with options which can be as basic policy guidelines for solving certain problems. The school manager may have to involve the school stakeholders in decision making on discipline cases. According to Aukot (2017); Kangovio (2020); Mũmuyuri, Kibaara and Severina (2021); student involvement in decision making signifies that the student body contributes to day to

day activities within the school that affect them such as selection of student council. The inclusion of students as ambassadors of students on issues that affect them in school means that the principals are able to organise ways through which students can participate in decision making hence solving problems that would cause indiscipline among students. This could make them responsible and therefore improve their discipline. However the continued students' unrest in secondary schools in Kitui County is of great concern. It raises the question of whether involvement of students in decision making on matters related to their welfare has been of any significant impact in reduction of reported cases of student indiscipline in secondary schools. This study therefore sought to establish whether the principals' involvement of students in decision making influences students' discipline.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of principals' involvement of students in decision making on students' discipline. The study had two objectives:

- i) To identify the types of reported cases of student indiscipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya

ii) To determine the influence of secondary school principals' involvement of students in decision making on their (students') discipline in Kitui County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The school management can manage discipline through engaging students in setting rules to promote ownership of the rules and be encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour (Amoah, Mensah, Prince & Gyamera, 2015). This is because the principal has the responsibility to ensure students are rallied to keep to the rules and regulations that were made during the collaborative decision making. Agih (2015) also argues that the principal is the coordinator of many activities hence it is important to ensure smooth teaching and learning environment. This can be achieved through involvement of students by regularly, complimenting classroom instruction and guidance of the students. Eman (2018) also noted that students' decision making makes the students more responsible as well as help in formulating policies that would boost academic achievement of the students. According to Asha and Hawi (2016) students' involvement in decision making at this level has a significant impact on the individual life. This impact can be key in problem solving in everyday life.

Wambua, Okoth and Kalai (2017) cited Musyoka (2011) who pointed that one of the significant correlates of student behaviour is the extent to which students' involvement in decision making process within the school. That the principal plays a critical role in determining how the school community relates. It is also noted that decision making helps the students become responsible of their behaviour as well as their academics and this ultimately boost their academic achievement (Stave, Tiltens, Khalil & Hussein, 2017).

Hutchins, Berman and Groundwater-Smith (2014) are of the view that students become more reflective as pre-existing skill which help them develop cognitive capability that would also help in making right decision towards their behaviour and academic goals. This also helps them in the transition to responsible adults and acquisition of life experience that can help them in future endeavours. Wambua, Okoth and Kalai (2017) in a study on influence of principals' involvement of students in decision making on discipline in secondary schools, Kenya noted that students involvement in decision making enhances discipline in schools by making it possible to learn social adjustment, practical living competence skills, self-confidence, self-esteem and sense of being humane.

The collaborative decision-making process on issues that affect the students directly or indirectly would also help them to get future vibrant leaders who are multi-talented. The students would also become more creative and help get a platform for self-realization and excellence when they leave school.

In Kenya, school discipline is regulated in the Basic Education Act, 2013. Gikunda (2019) observes that increasingly school principals are facing challenges in enforcing students' discipline in public schools as has been observed in secondary schools since the introduction of new policies on discipline and especially the ban on corporal punishment. The introduction of student leaders is an important factor in trying to bring students on board as a strategy to curb indiscipline. This is because the student leaders are supposed to support school management in discipline matters within the school.

Ogol and Thinguri, (2017) reported that there is need for an accommodative environment to be created where students will feel safe to make contributions to discipline policy. They noted that learners should be fully involved in making suggestions on policy documents on disciplinary.

The code of conduct must be written and accepted in the best manner making the disciplinary rules amicable to all learners and coming up with measures for punishment in case of undesired behaviour (Wambua, Okoth & Kalai, 2018). Although there are different stakeholders in a school set up this study focuses on the students' discipline. Therefore, this study endeavoured to establish the extent to which principals' influence of students' involvement of students in decision-making influences secondary school students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by participatory theory or 'people centred theory' the theory focuses on bottom-up planning 'people centred' and the view that ordinary people have abilities to manage their own affairs. The theory encourages the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of development (Burkey, 1993; Rahman, 1993; Oakley, 1991; Bryant & White, 1982). According to Sagnak (2016) participation or participative leadership is defined as deciding jointly or as the shared influence for deciding between superiors and subordinates, in this case between school administration and students. Students were viewed as stakeholders hence the need for the principal to involve them (students) in decision making about issues affecting them at school.

It is however imperative to take into account the fact that involvement of students in decision making has limits and should take into account the aspects under consideration. Whereas it is practically possible and logical to involve students in management of student welfare issues; it would be impractical to involve them on setting of examinations, its moderation and matters relating to who their teachers should be. This is important to consider because at their developmental stage; learners can be easily susceptible to adults whose agenda is to make management of the school a challenge. Some teachers can employ populism and make it difficult for high school Principals, their deputies and Deans of Curriculum to objectively allocate some teachers to some classes and subjects. It is therefore imperative that the involvement of students in decision making be done with full cognisance of the dynamics of teacher and student management since it can be hijacked by maverick stakeholders whose agenda is less than noble.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by descriptive survey design. The target population is defined as any member of an actual or assumed group of people, events or items which the researcher intends to generalise the outcome of the research study (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003).

According to Mbwesa (2006) population is the entire group of people, events or things of interest the researcher wishes to investigate. At the time of the study Kitui County had 369 public secondary schools hence 369 principals, 369 deputy principals and 76071 students (County Director's office Kitui County).

A sample is a representative proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). A sample of 30 per cent or more is to be considered a large sample (Best & Kahn, 2011) and sizeable enough to detect a notable effect (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). From a target population of 369 Principals, 369 Deputy Principals and 76071 students, a sample of 110 principals, 110 deputy principals and 440 students were sampled.

Two questionnaires and an observation form were used to collect data from deputy principals and students while an interview guide was used to collect data from the principals. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) notes that a questionnaire is beneficial since it maintains standardized and open responses to a range of topics from large population. Orodho and Kombo (2003) argue that questionnaires are usually filled in answers in written form and the researcher collects the questionnaires with the complete information.

The questionnaires were divided into parts A and B. Part A dealt with the background information. Part B dealt with information on students' involvement by the principals in decision-making. Questionnaires for both teachers and students were used for rating the school discipline.

Validity was also checked through pre-testing of the instruments. Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) noted that pre-testing helps to weed out any potential problems with the tool and rectify the difficulties. The pre-testing allowed the researcher to gain feedback, identify areas of redundant questions so as to remove or restructure them. A different county from the area of study was used however the county had similar characteristics in terms of discipline management. The reliability results showed that the correlation for the students' questionnaire was 0.75 while that of the deputy questionnaire was 0.8. The results concur with those of Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), a correlation coefficient (r), of 0.7 is considered appropriate and hence reliable for collecting data. The correlation was computed to determine correlation coefficient, which shows questionnaires were reliable to be used in the study. Independent t-test was employed to compare means between involvement and decision making variables with same continuous dependent variable (discipline) to determine whether the mean occurrences of student discipline

differed based on principals involvement of students decision making. The findings were presented in tables. From a total of 110 questionnaires administered to secondary schools principals, deputy principals and teachers, there was a 100% and 72.7% return rate respectively, while out of the of 440 questionnaires administered to the return rate was 70%.

The objective of the study was to establish the extent to which student involvement by the principals in decision making influenced secondary school students' discipline in Kitui County. Out of a five point Likert scale, the average mean on discipline for all the schools was at 3.00 while that of the involvement of students in decision making as indicated by the students, deputy principals and principals was at 3.40. The highest rated schools on discipline were 10 each with a mean of above 4.00 and 13 schools with means above 4.00 on involvement in decision making. The findings in majority of the schools (102 schools) which translates to 92.7 per cent shows high means in involvement in decision making than means of discipline. In some schools the means were the same in discipline but differed in involvement in decision making in some of the sampled schools.

The findings indicated that that though in some schools student involvement of students in decision making was rated lower, the discipline rating was higher.

This could imply that there could have been other factors that influenced discipline in these schools. This could imply that there were no significant differences between students' levels of involvement in decision making and reported student discipline in secondary schools. The next section explores the types of discipline issues in secondary schools in secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.

Table 1: Students' response on types of discipline issues experienced in the school

Type of discipline issue	Very common	Common	Fairly common	Lowly common	Not common at all
Drugs and substance abuse	240(65.4%)	5(1.4%)	0	5 (1.4%)	117 (32.5%)
Students bullying	137(37.3%)	23(6.3%)	30(8.2%)	23(6.3%)	154(42.0%)
Property arson and destruction	123(33.5%)	35(9.5%)	30(8.2%)	23(6.3%)	156(42.5%)
Theft among students	116 (31.6%)	39(10.6%)	56(15.3%)	47(12.8%)	109(29.7%)
Absconding of duties	97(26.4%)	5(1.4%)	20(5.4%)	5 (1.4%)	240(65.4%)
Strikes and demonstrations	70 (19.1%)	26 (7.6%)	89(24.3%)	0	182(49.6%)

A majority of the students (65.4%) indicated that drug and substance abuse was a very common discipline issue while 32.5 per cent noted that this was not common at all. The result agrees with 58.1 per cent of the deputy principals who noted that cases of drug and substance abuse were very common in their schools.

This implies that students in majority of the schools were abusing drugs. The results agree with Ondigo, Birech and Gakuru (2019) who found that drug and substance abuse continues to be a challenge among the youth in schools and out of schools. The study found that drugs erode the core values hence affecting students' social skills development as well as academic performance.

On Student bullying 43.6 per cent of the students indicated student bullying was very common, while 42.0 of the students said student bullying did not happen at all in their schools. The results from the deputy principals (53%) concur with the students who noted that students bullying was very common. This may mean students bullying was a common discipline issues in majority of the schools. Jan and Hussein (2015) concur that bullying among students is a perennial challenge in secondary schools. They noted that bullying affected all students including the person who bully, the victim and those who watch the problem.

Property arson and destruction was also found to be a common problem among 33.5 per cent of students. The results agree with 55.0 per cent of the deputy principals who noted the property destruction and arson was very common discipline issue.

This is in concurrence with the National Crime Research Centre (2017) students unrest in second term is a flight mode culture in the minds of candidate resulting in destruction of property and arson cases. The study noted that there are underlying factors such as overload, peer pressure, lack of administrative authority since the principal is out for meetings most of the time, negative influence from indiscipline students who transfer to the school, lack of effective guidance and generally indiscipline among students.

Another form of indiscipline was theft among students with 31.6 per cent of the students indicating it was very common factor. A majority of the deputy principals (57.5%) also agree that theft among students was a common phenomenon. This implies that stealing among students is found to be common especially when the students want to maintain the adopted behaviour that otherwise they cannot sustain without stealing. Mwaniki (2018) found that stealing was common cause of students' indiscipline issues. The study found that many students stealing habits were to enable them sustain other behaviours such as drug abuse.

About 26.4 per cent of the students said it was very common to abscond duties and 65.4 per cent said it is not common at all.

The results agree with those of 51.2 per cent of the deputy principals who noted that it was very common for students to absconding duties. This implies that student absconding duties had taken a centre stage in some schools. The results agree with those of Waithaka (2017) who noted absconding duties among students as form of not adhering to school rules. This was encouraged by lack of parents' support in disciplining the students. The least rated discipline issue was strike and demonstrations in school with 26.7 students noting it was a very common phenomenon and 49.6 per cent of them noting it was not common at all. Slightly above half of deputy principals (51.2%) indicate that strikes and demonstration were very common. The results from the deputy principals disagree with those of students who slightly below half indicated it was not common at all. Malenya (2019) found that students are conscious individuals continually searching for who they are through actions in school life as they make choices based on their experiences, values and outlooks. The study found violent protest was a means of self-realization among students.

The ratings on discipline issues indicated on table 1 above explains why school discipline ratings for most of the schools were below a mean of 3.00. The next subsection focuses on the descriptive aspects of the dependent variable. The data is captured in Table 2.

Table 2: Students’ responses on their involvement in decision making by their principals in relation to their discipline

STATEMENT	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The principal involves students in making decisions concerning discipline in the school	337(91.8%)	5(1.4%)	20(5.4%)	5 (1.4%)
Students are allowed to offer suggestions on most issues concerning them and this has enabled them to manage time well	291(79.3%)	23(6.3%)	30(8.2%)	23(6.3%)
Students decision making has made students more responsible and committed to their work which has contributed to improved discipline	279(76.0%)	35(9.5%)	30(8.2%)	23(6.3%)
Students are allowed to give suggestions on the type of rules/punishment they can be given	101(27.5%)	26 (7.6%)	89(24.3%)	151(41.1%)
Teachers are willing to use recommendations made by students and this has	225(61.3%)	39(10.6%)	56(15.3%)	47(12.8%)

improved discipline				
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The study also revealed that 91.8 per cent of the students agreed that principals involved students in making decisions concerning discipline in the school. This was complemented by the 66.3 per cent of the deputy principals who concurred with students that students were allowed to make decisions concerning their discipline concerns. The study also revealed that 79.3 per cent of the students and 80 per cent of the deputy principals agreed that principals allowed students to give suggestions on the type of rules/punishments they can be given. This concurred with the principals indicating that they involved students to establish school’s norms and determine sanctions for indiscipline to mould students’ discipline. The study found from 76 per cent of the students that they were involved in decision making which made students more responsible and committed to their work and this impacted positively on their behaviour. The results concurred with 85 per cent of the deputy principals who agreed that the students were involved in decision making to enhance discipline in school.

The study revealed that 86.4 per cent of the principals held meetings with the students to discuss rules and regulation to encourage students take responsibility of their actions.

The study established that 61.3 per cent of the students agreed and 28.1 percent disagreed that the teachers were willing to use recommendations made by students and this had improved discipline. The areas of involvement of students include such as students’ diet, entertainment, outings, visiting etcetera. The results agree with those of 75 per cent of the deputy principals who agreed that the students’ decision making was a strong strategy for improving discipline hence creating more time for school work. The results from 78.7 per cent of the deputy principals also noted that they held consultative meetings with the students. The study revealed that 76.2 per cent of the deputy principals agreed that students’ involvement in decision making enhances their openness in discussing their problems with the school authorities. The study revealed from the principals that 88.2 per cent of the principals often attended consultative meetings with students.

The t-test was to make inferences on the dependent and independent variable. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Group Statistics on student involvement in decision making and discipline

	Is students involvement in decision making adequate	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Involvement Decision Making	Yes	278	3.40	.790	.047
	No	89	3.22	.579	.061

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Involvement Decision Making	Equal variances assumed	2.47	.120	1.19	365	.275	.175	.091	-.015	.335
	Equal variances not assumed			1.19	215	.275	.175	.078	-.015	.335

From the group statistics, the principals who involves students in decision making had a mean of 3.40 and those who did not involve students in decision making had a lower mean of 3.22. The results from the independent sample test table are in two rows; Equal variances and Equal variance not assumed.

The results from the t-test p-value $0.001 < 0.005$ indicate there is no statistical significance difference between students involvement in decision making on students discipline. This means students involvement in decision making made no significant difference. If Levene's tests indicate that the variance is equal across the two groups, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted the vice visa happens. In this study the p-value =0.001 which is low, hence there is no significant difference between the principals who involved students in decision making and those who did not. The researcher sought to establish whether from linear regression would give similar result.

Table 4: Linear Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.891 ^a	.793	.790	.268

From the model Summary Table 4, the R value represent the simple correlation at $R=0.891$ which means there is a high correlation. The R^2 Value (0.793) is the total variation in the dependent variable, student involvement in decision in maintaining discipline can be explained by the independent variables on student participation in decision making within the school. This means 79.3% can be explained which is very large. The ANOVA table fits in the regression equation to the data.

Table 5: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	99.599	5	19.920	277.067	.001 ^b
	Residual	25.954	361	.072		
	Total	125.553	366			

Table 5 shows that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. This indicates the statistical significance of the regression model that has run with the $p\text{-value} = 0.001 < 0.005$ which indicates that there is no linear relationship between the two variables, hence there is a linear relationship between the variables. This implies that there could be other factors that influence students discipline other than getting students involved in decision making. The principals determined whether to use a collective decision or whether to make an appropriate decision. The results are also replicated in the linear regression and the correlation data with the $p\text{-value} 0.001 < 0.005$ indicating there is no linear relationship between principal's involvement of students in decision making on issues affecting them (diet, outings, discipline, visiting among others) and student's discipline.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that although principals involved students in decision making, there were cases where there was no direct link or association between student's involvement in decision and student's discipline.

This could mean that other factors other than involvement in decision making might have been attributable to student discipline in secondary schools. The principal should endeavour to explore all the factors such as setting meetings with the students, allowing students to give suggestions on school rules/punishments, establishing of the school norms as well determining sanctions on discipline. The principal should therefore, endeavour to interrogate other factors and areas that would reduce the number of reported cases of student's discipline.

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