

THE INFLUENCE OF DISCIPLINARY ROLES PLAYED BY STUDENT COUNCILS IN CURBING THE FREQUENCY OF STUDENT UNRESTS IN PUBLIC BOYS BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ELGON SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

Authors

Tikoko Betty Jeruto ⁽¹⁾ ; Kimame Leslie ⁽²⁾ 

Main author email: talaitikoko@gmail.com

(1.2) Kabarak University, Kenya.

Cite this article in APA

Tikoko, B. J., & Kimame, L. (2022). The influence of disciplinary roles played by student councils in curbing the frequency of student unrests in public boys boarding secondary schools in Elgon sub-county, Kenya. *Journal of education management and leadership*, 1(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.51317/jeml.v3i1.67>



A publication of Editon Consortium Publishing (online)

Article history

Received: 25.05.2022

Accepted: 16.06.2022

Published: 06.07.2022

Scan this QR to read the paper online



Copyright: ©2022 by the author(s). This article is an Open Access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Abstract

This study sought to address the influence of disciplinary roles played by student councils in curbing the frequency of student unrests in public boy's boarding schools in Elgon Sub-county, Kenya. This study was based on a survey research design where the researcher interacts naturally with respondents and records observations without undue influence. The study was conducted in Elgon Sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya. It also used a multistage sampling technique as well as purposive sampling. In conclusion, it was found out that student councils play important roles in disciplining other students, which could in turn, help in curbing the frequency of student unrest in schools. Such roles are: reporting offenders, punishing and supervising students who are being punished, and ensuring that students adhere to school rules and regulations. This study recommends that students should be given more powers to assist teachers in supervising other students and, more so, the ones who have high tendencies to flout school rules. Through proper policy formulation, capacity building and sensitisation of both teachers and students should be undertaken by stakeholders so that students and teachers could support student leadership.

Key terms: Disciplinary roles, student council, public boys boarding secondary schools, preps.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Discipline in the form of punishing a group is done at the ordinary level in secondary schools, which involves corporal and verbal punishment or any of the two. However, punishment as a school management tool has resulted in some violent incidents of student unrest in some schools in Tanzania (Kambuga & Omollo, 2017). This was agreed by Simatwa (2012), in his study on the management of student discipline in secondary schools that revealed that caning, physical punishment; detention, reprimanding, expulsion, and suspension had caused a lot of unrest in schools. Therefore, student councils must communicate student grievances to the management to reduce the frequency of student unrest in schools.

Poor discipline is evidenced by many cases of strikes in public secondary schools for boys in Bungoma County. Despite having functional student councils, many schools in Elgon Sub-county were particularly affected by the wave of student unrest, which led to property loss during 2014-2017. In 2016, three public schools in Elgon Sub-county experienced student unrest, burnt dormitories and boycotted joint exams leading to the closure of schools. In particular, public boys' boarding schools in Elgon Sub-county were affected in 2016. Boys' schools in Elgon Sub-county still grapple with the problem of student unrest even though they have put in place student councils. Elsewhere in Kenya, the issue of student unrest was reported by research studies conducted by Mukiti (2014), Nzioki (2015), and Kinyua (2015). Over 800 secondary schools in Kenya experienced student unrest between 2007 and 2010 (Owino, 2016). This study, therefore, focuses on the efficacy of student councils in addressing the problem of discipline among boys in secondary schools. Could there be a link between student councils' disciplinary roles in curbing student unrest in Public Boys Boarding Secondary Schools in Elgon Sub-county, Kenya?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Gorton and Alstan (2009) asserts that student councils play a key role in resolving conflicts among learners and promoting cohesion among students for a peaceful learning environment, be it in the dormitory, classroom, field, library or dining hall. This is corroborated by MoE (2010), which maintains that student councils should be used to detect any bullying alongside other minor crimes in school. Mutua (2014) notes that discipline moulds behaviour, character and expectation for students to adhere to the occasional correction and reform behaviour. This is done by reporting and punishing students who participate in acts of indiscipline. Such students are punished by asking them to clean toilets, wash the dining hall, sweeping classrooms, weed the compound, kneel or collect litter.

Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) argue that student councils participate in school management through communicating student needs, representation and decision-making on issues affecting students in schools. For example, student councils play a key role in effecting disciplinary actions like punishing latecomers and making in disciplined students kneel or collect litter in the school compound. In Kenya, Kinyua (2015) found out that student councils can be said to effectively manage student unrest in schools when they successfully iron out problems, make recommendations and change things like uniforms, break times, meals, harsh policies and poor hygiene in schools. On the other hand, KESSHA (2013) found that most principals rarely respond to student demands and student activism; instead, they call in the police officers, criminalise student leaders, arrest them or ban student bodies instead of allowing dialogue. However, student councils used by the school management to oppress other students will not be supported by students; they will be considered traitors and ineffective (Ogol & Thunguri, 2017).

Simatwa (2012) noted that student councils have a chance to play a part in disciplining students. They improve student welfare through the formulation and implementation of guidelines in schools. In his view, this will allow learners to adhere and conform to school rules and regulations. Kirera (2015) observed that student councils disciplinary actions create efficiency and orderly operation in schools as it improves communication, discipline, guidance, and counselling. He further points out that these student councils give guidelines to the rest of the students by setting objectives and proposing what should be done in order to meet the set rules and regulations. MoE (2010) reports that student councils have special roles like punishing minor offenders, manning queues during meal time, maintaining order in the hostel, and library, recovering lost items and during school functions. However, no study has been conducted to establish the influence of student councils' disciplinary roles in curbing student unrest in Kenya.

Mukiti (2014) found out that those principals who involved student councils in several representational obligations like reporting student's grievances to the management; supervising preps around the study areas such as the library and laboratories, areas for group discussion, classrooms and other common halls often experience minimal student unrests. According to Ogol and Thunguri (2017), most principals are threatened by student councils. Some consider members of student councils as lesser beings, not worthy reasoning with. Student councils are seen as immature. They lack the awareness to handle student welfare.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the study was to assess the influence of student councils' disciplinary roles in curbing student unrest in public boys boarding secondary schools in Elgon sub-county, Kenya. Ordinary students and student council members were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements on how student councils played disciplinary roles in schools. Table 1 presents the findings.

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

Table 1. Student Councils' Disciplinary Roles in Curbing Student Unrest

Statement	A	F	S	N	Mean	SD
Student councils punish students who sneak out of school.	41.8%	16.4%	0.0%	41.8%	2.42	1.39
Student councils monitor preps in school	5.7%	43.7%	28.3%	22.3%	2.67	0.88
Student councils punish students who bully others in the school.	20.4%	0.3%	10.7%	68.6%	3.27	1.20
Student councils punish students who fight in class	12.6%	13.2%	5.3%	68.9%	3.31	1.11
Student councils inspect students at the gate during opening days.	0.0%	10.4%	3.1%	86.5%	3.76	0.63
Student councils punish students who plan riots in school.	13.2%	1.3%	31.1%	54.4%	3.27	1.01
Student councils punish students who make noise in class.	11.0%	8.2%	44.0%	36.8%	3.07	0.94
Student councils punish students who do not attend class.	0.0%	0.3%	34.9%	64.8%	3.64	0.49
Student councils punish students who abuse drugs in school.	0.0%	1.3%	34.3%	64.5%	3.63	0.51
Student councils punish students who bully others in the school.	20.4%	0.3%	10.7%	68.6%	3.27	1.20
Disciplinary roles played by student council's overall index.					3.26	0.46
Valid N (list wise)	318					

Key: A=Always; F=Frequently; S=Sometimes; N=Never; SD=Standard Deviation

Respondents (41.8%) agreed that student councils always punish students who sneak out of school. Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) concur by observing that student councils play a good role in effecting disciplinary actions like punishing latecomers and making indiscipline students kneel or collect litter in the school compound. However, it was noted that 41.8 per cent of the respondents maintain that student councils never punish students who sneak out of school. Notably, the Ministry of Education banned corporal punishment (Mikaye, 2012). So, situations, where students are still being punished may cause them to resort to unrest. Up to 43.7 per cent of the respondent noted that student councils monitor preps frequently in school; with 28.3 per cent of respondents stating that student councils only do that sometimes.

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

On the other hand, 22.3 per cent of the respondents noted that student councils never monitor preps in school. Although cases of no monitoring, however small, could cause unrest, when students are involved in student management and supported by the school administration, the frequency of student unrest in schools will drop significantly (Kirera, 2015). Only 10.7 per cent of respondents opined that student councils sometimes punish students who bully others in the school. Contrarily, 68.6 per cent of the respondents observed that student councils never punish students who bully others in the school. When student councils are not involved in punishing students who misbehave in the school, it will create room for indiscipline acts such as unrest. MoE (2010) maintains that student councils should only be used to detect bullying alongside other small crimes in school. It does not say that they should punish students. The fact that student councils do not punish students could explain the high incidences of student unrest? The debate on banning corporal punishment is on (Katalo, 2016).

Up to 75.5 per cent of respondents reported that student councils never discipline students who use their mother tongue to plan riots against the school management. A total of 68.9 per cent of respondents reported that student councils never punish students who fight in class. This could lead to a high number of student unrests in Elgon Sub-county, Kenya. The study revealed that student councils never frisk students at the gate during opening days (86.5%). Furthermore, the findings show that student councils never punish students who plan riots in school (54.4%). Only 31.1 per cent of the respondents observed that student councils sometimes punish students who plan riots in school.

Moreover, the findings show that student councils sometimes punish students who make noise in class (44.0%). Other respondents (36.5%) were of the opinion that student councils never punish students who make noise in class. Although student councils contribute positively to the leadership of the public secondary school in Kenya, there is a persistent wave of conflict, hostility and student unrest in schools (Ajowi & Simatwa, 2010). The respondents (64.8%) were of the view that student councils never punish students who do not attend class. According to 34.3 per cent of the respondents, student councils sometimes punish students who abuse drugs in school. However, up to 64.5 per cent of the respondents opined that student councils never punish students who abuse drugs in school. This shows that student councils are seldom involved in the discipline of students who abused drugs and those who do not follow school rules and regulations.

Student councils should act as a watchdog to the school management. Kamau (2017) noted that student councils had been given duties and responsibilities with special rights to discipline students who do not adhere to school rules and regulations. In the case of this study, student leaders were rarely involved in punishing errant students. It is evident from this research study that the role of student councils in disciplining other students was limited to informing school management about mistakes students committed but not punishing them. Kyalo et al. (2017) observed that the lack of student involvement in the formulation of school rules and regulations schools is regarded as a problem for the administration, teachers, parents and the entire society. This is because some principals consider members of student councils as immature and lack awareness of how to handle students' welfare. However, there is a need to incorporate students into disciplinary processes so as to curb the frequency of unrest (Ogol & Thunguri, 2017). According to 44.0 per cent of the respondents, student councils were only involved in punishing students who make noise in class. Only 41.8 per cent reported that student councils were involved in punishing students who sneak out of school. They were also hardly involved in monitoring school preps

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

(28.3%). When student leaders are not involved in punishing errant students, the latter are likely to be involved in unrest more frequently. In general, it can be noted from the percentages that student councils are not involved in disciplinary roles as they should be since the work is left to the deputy principal, who is the head of the disciplinary committee in the school (Kirera, 2015). Members of student councils should also perform administrative tasks like punishing petty offenders instead of leaving them to the principals, who may not be around the offenders all the time (Okonji, 2016).

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: In general, the idea of involving student councils in disciplining students was left to teachers and the school management. Student councils only informed school management about the mistakes committed by students. In a few cases, student leaders asked offenders to kneel down or collect litter. Student councils play important roles in disciplining other students, which could, in turn, help in curbing the frequency of student unrest in schools. Such roles are: reporting offenders, punishing and supervising students who are being punished, and ensuring that students adhere to school rules and regulations. It is also concluded that student councils were hardly involved in punishing offenders. They only reported students who sneaked out of school, monitored preps and punished students who made noise in class. The student councils were never consulted when making school rules. It can be concluded that involving student councils in formulating, implementing, and enforcing school rules could influence student discipline. The study shows that disciplinary roles may influence up to 15.2 per cent of student unrest in schools.

Recommendations: It is recommended that students should be given more powers to assist teachers in supervising other students and, more so, the ones who have high tendencies to flout school rules. Through proper policy formulation, capacity building and sensitisation of both teachers and students should be undertaken by stakeholders so that students and teachers could support student leadership.

5.0 REFERENCES

1. Ajowi, J. O., & Simatwa, E. M. W. (2010). The role of guidance and counseling in promoting student discipline in secondary schools in Kenya: A case study of Kisumu District. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 5(5), 263–272. <https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR>
2. Gorton, R. A., & Alston, J. A. (2009). *School leadership and administration: Important concepts, case studies, & simulations* (8th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
3. Jeruto, T. B., & Kiprop, C. J. (2011). Extent of student participation in decision making in secondary schools in Kenya. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(21), 92–99.
4. Kamau, A. (2017). *Influence of students' council involvement in management of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-county, Kenya* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Nairobi.
5. Kambuga, Y., & Omollo, A. (2017). Understanding students' leadership role and challenges in secondary schools in Tanzania. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Science*, 2(3), 1–10.
6. Katolo, G. N. (2016). *Principals' leadership practices and their influence on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makindu Sub-County, Kenya* (Unpublished master's thesis). South Eastern Kenya University.
7. Kenya Secondary School Heads Association & United Nations Children's Fund. (2013). *Secondary schools students' councils training manual*. KESSHA/UNICEF.
8. Kinyua, A. C. (2015). *Factors influencing effectiveness of students' councils in public secondary schools*

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

in Kirinyaga East Sub-county, Kenya (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Nairobi.

9. Kirera, H. W. (2015). Challenges faced by prefects in managing students' discipline in secondary schools in Buuri Sub-County, Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 3(7), 552–565.
10. Kyalo, K. D., Kanori, E., & Lucy, L. W. (2017). Influence of student councils' involvement as a link of communication between students and administration on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kathonzi Sub-County, Kenya. *Journal of Education*, 1(1), 47–55.
11. Mikaye, O. D. (2012). *Influence of guidance and counselling on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kabondo Division, Kenya* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Nairobi.
12. Ministry of Education, Kenya. (2010). *Guidance for formation and implementation of secondary school student councils*. Government Printer.
13. Mukiti, T. M. (2014). *Role of students' councils in secondary schools management in Mwingi Central District, Kitui County, Kenya* (Unpublished master's thesis). Kenyatta University.
14. Mutua, T. M. (2014). *Role of student council in secondary schools management in Mwingi District, Kitui County, Kenya* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Kenyatta University.
15. Nzioki, L. M. (2015). *Influence of student councils' involvement in management in public primary schools in Kangundo Sub-County, Kenya* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Nairobi.
16. Ogol, O. J., & Thunguri, R. W. (2017). A critical analysis of effectiveness of student council leadership on learners' discipline management in secondary schools in Kenya. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 3(1), 90–97.
17. Okonji, C. A. (2016). *Influence of institutional factors on students' council involvement in public secondary school management in Emuhaya Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Nairobi.
18. Owino, H. (2016). Cartels to blame for Kenya's mass school burnings, witnesses say. *New Internationalist*. <https://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2016/02/08/cartels-to-blame-for-kenyas-mass-school-burnings>
19. Simatwa, E. M. W. (2012). Management of student discipline in secondary schools in Kenya: A case study of Bungoma County. *Educational Research*, 3(2), 172–189.