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### Influence of Student Leaders Involvement in Enhancing School Discipline on Academic Performance in Kisii South Sub-County, Kenya

Rael Kemunto Mwagi<sup>1\*</sup> & Dr. Evans Monda, PhD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mount Kenya University, P. O. Box 4441-40200, Kisii, Kenya.

\* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1163-7215>; Email: [raelmwagi@gmail.com](mailto:raelmwagi@gmail.com)

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#### Keywords:

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Poor academic performance of student leaders in C could be attributed to bad personal character, their leadership role expectations and the duties and responsibilities that these student leaders have. This study used a mixed method with a concurrent triangulation design. The study targeted principals, all the deputy principals in charge of discipline, and student leaders in public secondary schools in Kisii South Sub-County, Kisii County. A sample size of 179 respondents was determined by the Magnani formula. The researcher collected data by using interview schedules on principals and deputy principals, questionnaires on students and document reviews provided by teachers in charge of academics as data collection tools. Data was analyzed by use of both descriptive and inferential statistics applying SPSS version 22, while qualitative data was analyzed in themes and presented in narrative form. The analysis gave rise to two key findings: school-integrated student leadership was involved in the operations of school management, and the reception of the students was positive.

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## INTRODUCTION

The administrative structure in educational institutions made a provision for student leadership. Students' Representative Councils (SRC) were founded in most educational institutions in line with this provision (Fletcher, 2009). In most cases, the representatives were elected by the students themselves after the school administration nominates candidates for various positions. In other cases, students were allowed to nominate and elect their own leaders. Student leaders exhibited some unique characteristics that endeared them to the hearts of their colleagues. They were great orators who sounded very convincing. They sought to know all the problems of their colleagues and were quick to promise to have antidotes to all such problems. A careful analysis of events, however, revealed that all the characteristics displayed by most student leaders were just for the purpose of winning their confidence, which was expected to be translated into votes for them. The involvement of school administration in the choice of school prefects stemmed out of the concern about the calibre of students put in leadership positions.

Leadership is often provided by persons who occupy positions of formal authority in schools. It was assumed that individuals who held such positions had leadership responsibility. On the other hand, leadership was also present in the informal setting, where it was sometimes provided by individuals without formal rank or authority, such as the students (Campbell & Samiec, 2011). Students' leadership participation in school management that was integrated into the school system influenced efforts towards commonly accepted goals, which were crucial factors in determining the success of a school.

Students' participation in school management was learned. It was an observable pattern of practices and behaviour and a definable set of skills and abilities. Any skill was learned, strengthened, honed, and enhanced, given the motivation and desire, along with practice, feedback, role models and coaching. The truth was that the best participants were the best learners.

In Anne Arundel County, Maryland, students had a full-voting member of the school board, where they modified the bus schedule during high school mid-term and final exams. This move saved the district \$100,000 (Fletcher, 2009). Student participation in school management was used by principals in the USA to improve the academic performance of secondary-level students because the students were not making adequate reading progress to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) by 2013-2014 (Hall & Kennedy, 2006). This approach to students' participation changed the systems of thinking manner among the students, empowered them to make important decisions, and had a coherent instructional program that led to students' literacy success. In contrast to excessive numbers of unrelated, sustained improvement initiatives in a school, instructional coherence contributed to learning by connecting to students' experiences and building on them over time (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004).

In Kenya, each public secondary school has its student leaders. In a study done by Nyamwamu (2007) on students' involvement in enhancing public secondary school discipline, she stated that school indiscipline problems were caused by the absence of dialogue between the students and the school administration. In view of this, head teachers were required to cultivate a democratic and participatory environment in the school by engaging the students' participation and encouraging regular fora (*barazas*) where teachers and students were encouraged to express their views (MOEST, 2001).

### Statement of the Problem

To be a leader, one needs to be convinced about the characteristics and attributes one possesses. Some people take leadership positions without knowing what is expected of them. Such people lord it over their colleagues and, most often, abuse their positions for personal gains. There is an argument that leaders were born and not made. Others, however say the reverse is true. For a secondary school student leader to be effective, he/she should be aware of his/her roles. It is

therefore, important to find out what student leaders perceive their roles to be in relation to their age and prior leadership experience. Equally important is the need to find out the impact that student leadership characteristics, role expectations, duties, and responsibilities have on their academic performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Nyamu (2001) stated that the universal purpose of any form of disciplined behaviour in life is eventual success in various human endeavours. The success of a school may be measured by the level of discipline of its students. When discipline is part of the student, it becomes intrinsic and their guide even after school when they become citizens of the nation. According to Mwiria and Ngethe (2003), the disciplinary system depends on the well-defined basic policy established by the head of an institution in consultation with the stakeholders. This policy must be enforced fairly and consistently by all persons in authority, including the student.

Charles (2002) said that discipline was essential to the smooth functioning of schools and society. Sergiovanni (2000) defined discipline as a system of guiding the individual to make reasonable decisions responsibly. He further said that the goal of discipline is to make it possible for the individual or team of individuals to succeed in set goals. It was the work of the school administration to give guidance to the students on discipline matters. The students were able to take their own initiative and guide their fellow students to also be disciplined and focused.

Okumbe (2007) indicates that in order to successfully achieve the objectives of a school, all members of the educational organization are required to strictly adhere to the various behaviour patterns necessary for maximum performance. Discipline will enable them to concentrate on their academic work and improve their performance in CATs and also in the final exam, K.C.S.E.

According to Kiprop (2012), discipline is about the ways in which students behave towards each other and the school administration and the ways

that the school administration behaves towards students. He points out that establishing a common set of values is not easy because the values held by the school administration and which are implemented in the school's behavioural policy may sometimes conflict with those held by the school administration and the students. To solve this challenge, Sushila (2004) recommends the inclusion of students at various levels of decision-making. The involvement of students in the formulation of school discipline policies may be constructive and significant and, if approached in the right manner, would work positively in meeting the objectives of the school.

The purpose of the school rules is to create a safe and warm environment (Chaplain, 2003). School rules must also relate to the stated function of education or the school process. The principle of common sense must prevail in establishing disciplinary action for breaking a rule. Students in the classroom should be involved in making rules for individual classroom behaviour and should constantly be reminded of this principle. Furthermore, all students must be aware and prudent of the rules before disciplinary action can be administered (Franken, 1998). The students share the responsibility of promoting values and standards, which we hope will help fellow students and the rest of the school to establish sound behavioural codes for their own benefit and the society as a whole.

This view is also shared by Latham (2003) who suggests that one strategy is to view the rule-making process as a potential learning experience, not as an administrative chore. Latham adds that instead of distributing rules as an edict, the school can encourage teachers and students to work together in the rule-making process. A student may act as the representative of fellow students in making the rules together with the school administration. Classroom Discipline Plan (2005) also suggests that the students can be encouraged to come up with rules that could be incorporated into the old school laws. This would give them a feeling of ownership since they will view them as their own creation and thus strive to obey them. Students are far more likely to internalize and

respect rules that they helped create than rules that are handed to them (Schimmel, 2007).

According to Rogers (2001), a well-run school depends on a few but clearly understood rules that students find easy to follow. Blandford (2000) suggests some guidelines that the students may consider when drafting the school rules together with the school administration: The rules should clarify its intentions; the rules should specify the persons to benefit from the rules, in this case, the teachers as well as the students; the school rules should not expect discipline problems to disappear all of a sudden, but should put into consideration students youthful immaturity; and school rules should act as a guideline and the teacher should help the student who cannot cope with the rules.

Students may use Guidance and Counselling (G & C) to control indiscipline. It is to be strengthened at the peer level with the setting up of peer counselling groups in every school and the peer counsellors being given the necessary skills and

knowledge on how to handle discipline matters at their own level but must be guided and supported by the G & C department in the school. The G & C manual further points out that secondary school principals should allow open-air discussions in school, formal meetings, peer counsellors meetings and suggestion boxes for students to air out their views (Republic of Kenya, 2002).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out in Kisii South Sub County in Kisii County among the public secondary schools. The study targeted all student leaders, school principals and all teachers of public secondary schools in Kisii Sub-County, Kisii County. The study used a sample size of 179 respondents from the available population of 23 schools, 23 principals, 15,000 students and 23 teachers. The proportionate stratified inspecting was embraced on the grounds that it gives a superior accuracy than a straightforward irregular examination of a similar size.

**Table 1: Sampling Frame**

Category of respondents	Population	Sampled
Public secondary Schools	23	7
School principals	23	7
Deputy principals	23	7
Teachers in charge of academics	23	7
Students	15,000	151
Total	15575	179

It was assumed that about 13.5% of the student leaders participate in management school programmes at one point in their whole leadership period in schools. The sample size was determined by Magnani’s (2007) formula:

$$n = \frac{t^2 * p(1-p)}{m^2}$$

Where n = required sample size, t = confidence level at 95 % (standard value of 1.96), p = estimated of respondents with knowledge about student leadership used in school within the study area, m=margin of error at 5%.

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.135(1-0.135)}{0.05^2}$$

The sample size therefore was 179 participants.

The researcher collected data by use of interviews and questionnaires as data collection tools.

Data analysis began by identifying common themes. The procedure started with the collection and analysis of quantitative data. This was followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. The second qualitative phase of the study was designed so that it follows from the results of the first quantitative phase. The relevant information was broken into phrases or sentences, which reflect a single, specific thought. The responses to the close-ended items were assigned codes and labels. Frequency counts of the responses were obtained to generate information about the respondents and to illustrate

the general trend of findings on the various variables that were under investigation. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the study objectives and presented in narrative forms, whereas quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation and inferentially using ANOVA with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 23). The quantitative findings of the study were presented using tables and charts.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Response Rate

The study had a sample size of 179 respondents. Fourteen (14) respondents were interviewed, and

the remaining 165 were to fill out questionnaires. The researcher picked the filled questionnaires after three weeks. One hundred forty-nine respondents had filled in the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 83.24%. Due to the constraint of time, the researcher continued with the analysis since, according to Best and Khan (2006), a response rate of 50% is considered adequate, 60% good and above 70% very good. Therefore, in view of this, the response rate was considered very good and met the threshold postulated by Best and Khan.

### Student Leadership Involvement in Making School Rules

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

**Table 2: Student leadership was involved in making school rules**

	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	47	31.5	31.5
Disagree	54	36.3	67.8
Agree	48	32.2	100.0
Total	149	100.0	

From *Table 2* above, the majority of the respondents (77.8%) disagreed that student leadership was involved in making rules. According to Sushila (2014), the involvement of students in the formulation of school discipline policies may be constructive and significant and, if approached in the right manner, would work positively in meeting the objectives of the school. Though making school rules seemed to be an activity that could involve the school head, the deputies, and teachers, it was important to consider the key stakeholders of the school, who were students who could only be represented by a

council that acted as a proxy to the students. Their involvement in this process would have created a union with the rest of the school due to their understanding of the student's activities and behaviour, thus increasing the academic performance of the school and particularly the student leadership.

### Student Leadership Involvement in School Rules Enforcement

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

**Table 3: Student leadership was involved in enforcing school rules**

	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	12	8.1	8.1
Agree	71	47.7	55.8
Strongly Agree	66	44.2	100.0
Total	149	100.0	

From *Table 3* above, 8.1% of the respondents disagreed that student leadership was involved in enforcing school rules. 91.9% of the respondents

agreed that student leadership was involved in enforcing school rules. The majority of the respondents agreed that student leadership was

involved in enforcing school rules. According to Franken (2011), student representatives, together with the rest of the school, shared the responsibility of promoting values and standards, which hoped, with the help of fellow students, could establish sound behavioural codes for their own benefit and the society as a whole. Student representatives and prefects ought to have been involved in enforcing the school rules. Setting a weekly roster of prefects to work alongside the teachers on duty would have smoothened the

process of rules enforcement, thus minimizing the room for indiscipline cases, which may end up consuming a lot of time to resolve. This would have led to increased efficiency in the leadership teams, leading to their increased academic performance.

**Student Leadership Involvement in Disciplinary Committee**

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

**Table 4: Student leadership was part of the disciplinary committee**

	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	59	39.6	39.6
Agree	66	44.3	83.9
Strongly Agree	24	16.1	100.0
Total	149	100.0	

From the table above, 39.6% of the respondents disagreed that student leadership was part of the disciplinary committee. 60.4% of the respondents agreed that student leadership was part of the disciplinary committee. The majority of the respondents agreed that student leadership was part of the disciplinary committee. According to Latham (2013), student representatives who were part of the commission that enhanced discipline in the school gave them a sense of ownership due to their involvement in the enforcement and follow-through processes, thus making them internalize the rules and follow them. Disciplinary committees composed of both teachers and students provided a different perspective in

following the set rules and regulations. Fairness and common sense would prevail through this collaborative effort because student leaders had a decision to make that affected their fellow students. This effort would improve the behaviour of other students by avoiding fixing their representatives. It ought to have improved overall school conduct, thus making it easier for the leaders to focus on their academics alongside other students and their responsibilities.

**Student Leadership Involvement in Enhancing School Discipline and Academic Performance**

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

**Table 5: Student leadership involvement in enhancing discipline affected academic performance**

	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Undecided	54	36.2	36.2
Agree	54	36.2	72.4
Strongly Agree	41	27.6	100.0
Total	149	100.0	

From the table above, 36.2% of the respondents were undecided on whether student leadership involvement in enhancing discipline affected their academic performance. 63.8% of the respondents agreed that student leadership involvement in enhancing discipline affected their academic performance. The majority of the respondents

agreed that student leadership involvement in enhancing discipline affected their academic performance. According to Okumbe (2010), to successfully achieve the objectives of a school, all members of the educational organization were required to strictly adhere to the various behaviour patterns necessary for maximum performance.

Discipline enabled them to concentrate on their academic work and improve their performance in CATs and KCSE. Based on the respondents' feedback, it was evident that the involvement of student representatives was part of enhancing their performance. However, the responsibilities that came along required leaders to strike a strict balance between their leading roles and academics. Students chosen to be representatives must be good performers, which would be

manageable for them to make genuine trade-offs on what to do at any given point in time.

**Inferential statistics**

Further quantitative analysis was implemented on the data obtained. The techniques used were correlation and linear regression.

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

**Table 6: Correlation for objective i**

		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.</b> Student leadership is involved in making school rules	Pearson Correlation	1	.664**	.392**	-.254**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.002
	N	149	149	149	149
<b>2.</b> Student leadership is involved in enforcing school rules	Pearson Correlation	.664**	1	.101	-.330**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.219	.000
	N	149	149	149	149
<b>3.</b> Student leadership is part of the disciplinary committee	Pearson Correlation	.392**	.101	1	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.219		.609
	N	149	149	149	149
<b>4.</b> Student leadership involvement in enhancing discipline affected academic performance	Pearson Correlation	-.254**	-.330**	.042	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.609	
	N	149	149	149	149

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

From the table above, there were two key positive correlations whose concurrent implementation would have positively impacted the academic performance of student leaders. The increase in effectiveness of one factor had a direct proportionality on the other one. They were as follows:

- Involving student leaders in the making of school rules and their enforcement had a correlation coefficient of .664\*\*.
- Involvement of student leaders in the making of school rules and ensuring student representatives were part of the disciplinary

committee had a correlation coefficient of .392\*\*.

The findings obtained are shown in the *Table 7*. From the table, all the variables were significant predictors of improving performance. Their significance levels were below  $\alpha=.05$ . This meant that there was a 95% confidence level that the significance obtained would be practically implemented in the real world, thus increasing the academic performance of student leaders. The constant variable was also a significant predictor of improving the academic performance of students in Kisii South Sub-County, Kisii County

**Table 7: Linear regression for objective I.**

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.995	.169		47.197	.000
	Student leadership is involved in making school rules	.125	.022	.180	5.661	.000
	Student leadership is involved in enforcing school rules	-.194	.030	-.190	-6.364	.000
	Student leadership is part of the disciplinary committee	-.134	.017	-.184	-7.694	.000
	Student leadership involvement in enhancing discipline affected academic performance	-	.024	-.956	-	.000
		1.021			42.126	

*a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance*

### Qualitative Responses from Interviews

One of the principals was quoted saying the following:

*“To ensure that a high level of discipline is maintained, it is important to get a perspective of the student’s behaviour and needs by having representatives from the key stakeholders. They provide a mental picture of the typical attributes that a student portrays. However, when choosing the representatives, students who are self-motivated, determined and can strike an almost perfect balance in all school affairs are ideal for leadership. You do not want to have students who are vulnerable and easily be swayed when it comes to evaluating key issues, not forgetting that the overall objective is increased academic performance, which includes the representatives themselves.”*

### Mixing and Interpretation of Data

Though making school rules seemed to be an activity that could involve the school head, the deputies, and teachers, it was important to consider the key stakeholders of the school, who were students who could only be represented by a council that acted as a proxy to the students. Their involvement in this process would have created a union with the rest of the school due to their understanding of the student’s activities and behaviour, thus increasing the academic performance of the school and particularly the

student leadership. Student representatives and prefects ought to have been involved in enforcing the school rules. Setting a weekly roster of prefects to work alongside the teachers on duty would have smoothened the process of rules enforcement, thus minimizing the room for indiscipline cases, which may end up consuming a lot of time to resolve. This would have led to increased efficiency in the leadership teams, leading to their increased academic performance. Disciplinary committees composed of both teachers and students provided a different perspective in following the set rules and regulations. Fairness and common sense would prevail through this collaborative effort because student leaders had a decision to make that affected their fellow students. This effort would improve the behaviour of other students by avoiding fixing their representatives. It ought to have improved overall school conduct, thus making it easier for the leaders to focus on their academics alongside other students and their responsibilities. Based on the respondents’ feedback, it was evident that the involvement of student representatives was part of enhancing their performance. However, the responsibilities that came along required leaders to strike a strict balance between their leading roles and academics. Students chosen to be representatives must be good performers, which would be manageable for them to make genuine trade-offs on what to do at any given point in time.



## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

Making school rules involved the school heads, the deputies, and teachers; it was important to consider the key stakeholders of the school, who were students who could only be represented by a council that acted as a proxy to the students. Their involvement in this process creates a union with the rest of the school due to their understanding of the student's activities and behaviour, thus increasing the academic performance of the school and particularly the student leadership. Student representatives and prefects ought to have been involved in enforcing the school rules. Setting a weekly roster of prefects to work alongside the teachers on duty would have smoothed the process of rules enforcement, thus minimizing the room for indiscipline cases, which may end up consuming a lot of time to resolve. Disciplinary committees composed of both teachers and students provided a different perspective in following the set rules and regulations. Fairness and common sense would prevail through this collaborative effort because student leaders had a decision to make that affected their fellow students. This effort improves the behaviour of other students by avoiding fixing their representatives. Based on the respondents' feedback, it was evident that the involvement of student representatives was part of enhancing their performance. However, the responsibilities that came along required leaders to strike a strict balance between their leading roles and academics. Students chosen to be representatives must be good performers, which would be manageable for them to make genuine trade-offs on what to do at any given point in time.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

In determining the influence of student leaders' involvement in enhancing school discipline and their academic performance.

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