



Structure and Functions of Student Councils in Secondary Schools in Kericho County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In Kenyan secondary schools, student conflicts pose significant challenges in the 21st century. This study aimed to evaluate the structure and functions of student councils in secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya, based on the functionalism theory. The evaluation research design was employed, targeting students, teachers, and school principals, school boards of management, County director of education, and sub-county directors of education in Kericho County. A combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques was used to select 568 respondents, including 384 students, 120 teachers, and various school administrators. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, presenting frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Qualitative data was analyzed through data coding and narrative analysis, presented using graphs, charts, and tables. Results showed that 81% of respondents indicated the student council was elected by students, although the administration had significant input. Only 16% agreed that there was no administration interference in the council formation process. Most student councils (47%) comprised 21-40 prefects, with only a few (10%) having 1-20 students. Regarding effectiveness, 68% of respondents were comfortable with the council's performance, while 20% believed it was too large to be effective, and 12% considered it too small. In conclusion, the student council structure allows for effective discipline management and conflict resolution. However, the administration's influence in council formation affects its perceived efficacy, leading to student perception of loyalty to the administration. The study recommends government intervention to limit administrative interference in student council formation, fostering true democratic processes in school governance.

Keywords: Functions, Kericho County, Secondary Schools, Student Councils, Structure

I. INTRODUCTION

Student unrest has become a common occurrence in Kenyan secondary schools, leading to closures and significant property damage in recent years (Mukiti, 2014). Notable incidents include those at Kericho Boys High, Londiani Boys High School, Keben Secondary School, and Kiptewit Secondary School in 2016, where dormitories were set ablaze and unruly behavior was exhibited by students.

The prevailing view among educational stakeholders suggests that the leadership structure among students may contribute to these incidents. Historically, prefects appointed by school administrations were often disliked by fellow students, potentially leading to unrest (Murage, 2014). To address this, Kenya's 2010 constitution empowered individuals to exercise their sovereign power, prompting the Ministry of Education to develop sessional papers such as Act 14 of 2013. These initiatives aimed to ensure students were adequately represented to prevent chaos and property disruption in secondary schools.

In response, student councils were established in 2008 to facilitate student advocacy, allowing for active student participation in school decision-making processes (Murage, 2014). However, despite being elected by students to act as intermediaries between students and school administrations, these councils have not been fully empowered to address critical issues such as financial management, disciplinary actions, or examination matters. Consequently, conflicts persist, leading to unrest despite the presence of student councils.

Instances of student conflicts, including those in Kericho County, continue unabated, with conflicts escalating into dangerous unrest causing economic, psychological, and physical harm (Koross, 2015). Even after the establishment of student councils in 2013, conflicts persisted, as evidenced by incidents at Kericho Boys High, Londiani Boys High School, Keben Secondary School, and Kiptewit Secondary School in 2015 (Kigotho, 2000). These events underscore the need to investigate the effectiveness of student councils in mitigating conflicts in Kericho County's secondary schools.

1.1 Research Objective

Examine the nature of student unrest in secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya



II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by functionalism theory, primarily developed by Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton (Gómez-Diago, (2019). Adopting Spencer's perspective, the theory likens society to a human body, with various parts working collaboratively for effective functioning (Gómez-Diago, (2019). According to Spencer, societal structures, including beliefs, norms, behaviors, and patterns, are essential for maintaining peace and stability. The theory asserts that different social institutions must remain intact and interdependent for societal harmony (Urry, 2000).

Functionalism posits that society functions as a system of interconnected parts, each contributing to maintaining balance and social equilibrium. For instance, family, education, politics, economics, and religion serve vital functions within society, such as socialization, governance, production, and moral guidance (Mooney, Knox & Schacht, 2007). The theory underscores the interconnectedness of society, highlighting how each part influences and is influenced by others.

In the context of secondary schools, functionalism emphasizes the importance of cohesion and stability, where every component – including the student council, administration, students, teaching and non-teaching staff – plays a crucial role. Failure of any unit to fulfill its role effectively can lead to conflicts. Thus, cooperation among all units is necessary for the smooth functioning of schools.

Functionalism theory facilitated an examination of the student council's role in mitigating student unrest in Kericho County's secondary schools. By analyzing this role, the study identified gaps contributing to tensions among stakeholders and proposed recommendations for effective mitigation measures. The theory's emphasis on cooperation among societal components guided the study's focus on fostering collaboration to ensure proper functioning of educational institutions and societal stability.

2.2 Empirical Review

According to Kumwenda (2010), a student council is an organization of students that entails curricular and extracurricular activities in which it provides a platform for students to exercise leadership skills and democratic rights. It's a body constituting selected students who are either nominated or elected to represent the affairs of students. The student leaders have adhered to work under the supervision of a superior body guided by a constitution that contains a variety of rules and regulations (Kumwenda, 2010). The collaboration of students is facilitated by the student's council, which increasingly impacts the activities within the schools' premises.

Mwanza, (2013) states that the student's council as a representative structure of student's works together with the school management to ensure the successfulness of the institution is attained by helping it in achieving its goals. The instances of indiscipline within a school institution are attributed by non-participative decision-making process (Mwanza, 2013). Behavior is referred to the way a person conducts oneself toward a particular attribute, the management of discipline within a school institution is aimed at ensuring that the students are able to conduct themselves responsibly and abide to the rules and regulations that are laid down by the institution (Daniel, 2015). Discipline is a form of guidance that helps in maintaining order; it forms the blood life of the successfulness of the institution. It is achieved when a school provides a conducive environment in which the student is aware of the need to be responsible and the consequences of being irresponsible. The students' leaders are responsible for facilitating coordination of activities with the rest of the students. The good quality leadership within the student's council impacts positively to the community as they develop to be responsible adults.

In the USA, student councils are known as student governments. These student governments are found in both secondary education as well as higher education. The students' governments in the USA vary across institutions depending on the composition of the student population in those institutions. In the USA, the student governments are structured like the federal system of government with three branches of government including the executive, legislature and judiciary. These three branches of students' governments in the USA have distinct roles but are also interdependent on each other. In the USA the executive arm of student government is led by the students President who has a cabinet. The students 'government also has a legislative arm which has the legislative veto, recall, and referendum.

In the UK, the structure of the students' leadership is different from that of the USA. In the UK, students unions are led by a trustee board which is headed by the Sabbatical trustees elected on one term basis of a maximum



two years each. The Trustees are in charge of all matters concerning student including reputational, legal and financial integrity. They also manage student unions and act as stewards of students' assets. The Trustee board can delegate its powers to operations group and union councils which then would work towards ensuring the daily operation of the unions are properly coordinated. The operations group is led by an executive officer who has delegated powers to manage the daily operations of the students' union. The Union council on the other hand represents students and formulates policies on behalf of the students. The council also holds powers from the Trustee board to amend the union's constitution and also do follow ups on any issues approved by the trustee board.

Just like in other parts of the world, Adelabu and Akinsolu (2009) observed that students unions in Africa often are run like "a typical government; it has senate and also examines legislative procedures". Additionally, the scholars assert that the student unions provide a platform where students practice political leadership roles. Akinboye and Eesuola (2015) further emphasize that, students' unions are made up of three branches of government: executive, legislature and judiciary. In this regard, the Unions practice representative democracy in which different faculties and halls of residents are represented as part of the leadership representing various student constituencies.

In Nigeria, traditions of the University student Unions, just like other parts of the world emerged from traditions of the Medieval Europe (Utomi, 2006). The use of conventional governance systems in the Universities is to enhance the smooth operations of the Universities. The government operations also enhance the involvement of the students in political roles and socio-political affairs in the country (Eesuola 2012). Succinctly put, the students' union can be a fertile soil for experimentative political skills and leadership (Akinboye & Eesuola, 2015).

Student councils in Kenya have been known more in the Universities until recently when the system of students electing their own leaders was introduced in Secondary schools. In the past, students in secondary schools were led by prefects who were appointed by the school administration (Idu & Olugbade, 2011). The prefects were not representatives of the student but rather acted as "eyes" of the teachers when students were left alone. The narrative of student councils in Kenya has mainly been associated with activism, riots and protest which have for many years been common in Kenyan public universities.

Despite the fact that the student council has been effective, it has not managed to resolve most of the conflicts that the students have with the administration. In fact, as studies have proved, the student of the council requires some adjustment so that it can create an effective platform to resolve conflicts (Mukiti, 2014). Thus, this study concentrates on the role of the student council in mitigating conflicts in secondary school. It also focuses on the structure and functions of the student council with the aim of identifying the gaps in the structure, which should be fixed to come up with an effective student council.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive research design to investigate the role of student councils in managing student unrest in secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya. It involved describing the nature of student unrest, the structure and functions of student councils, and the successes and challenges faced by these councils. The research was conducted in Kericho County, which comprises six constituencies and 15 administrative divisions. The county has varied topography, with undulating terrain and a moderate climate. The study population included students, teachers, school principals, deputy principals, members of school boards of management, county director of education, and sub-county directors. Sampling strategies included both probability and non-probability sampling methods, and data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The total sample size was 568 respondents. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation of respondents.

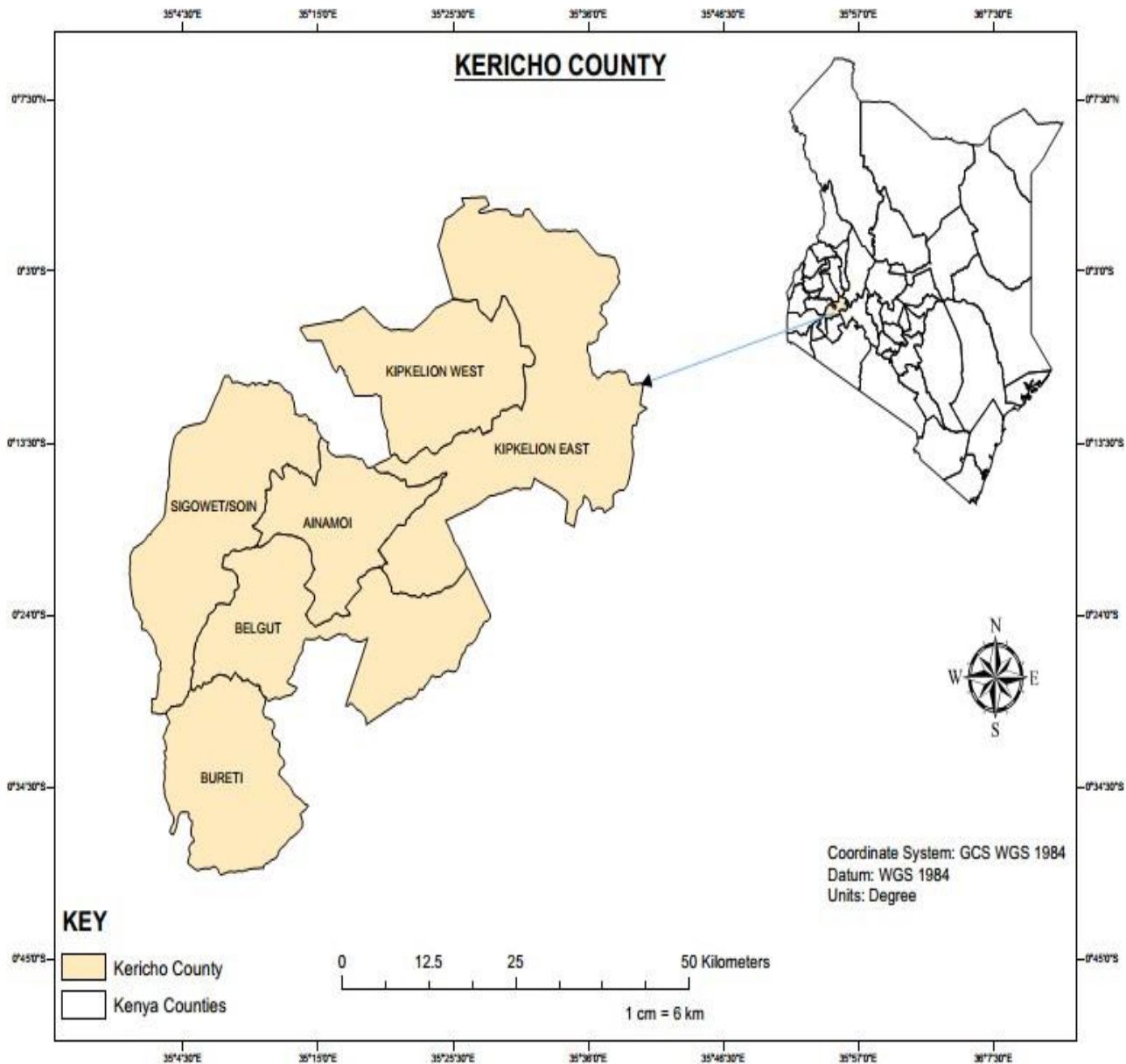


Figure 1
 Map of Kericho County
 Source: Researcher, (2018)

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Response Rate

The objective sought to assess the structure and functions of Student Councils in secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya. The researcher gave questionnaires students and teachers from various secondary schools. Key informants such as school principals, deputy principals, county director of education, and sub-county directors were interviewed.

4.1.1 Formation of Student Council in Schools

According to the results from the questionnaires, the majority of the respondents agreed that the student council is elected by student with the input from the administration. In fact, 81% of the respondents in the questionnaires, both for the teachers and students, pointed out that there was the input of the administration in the

election of the council. This indicates that the students are not allowed to select the students they want on their own.

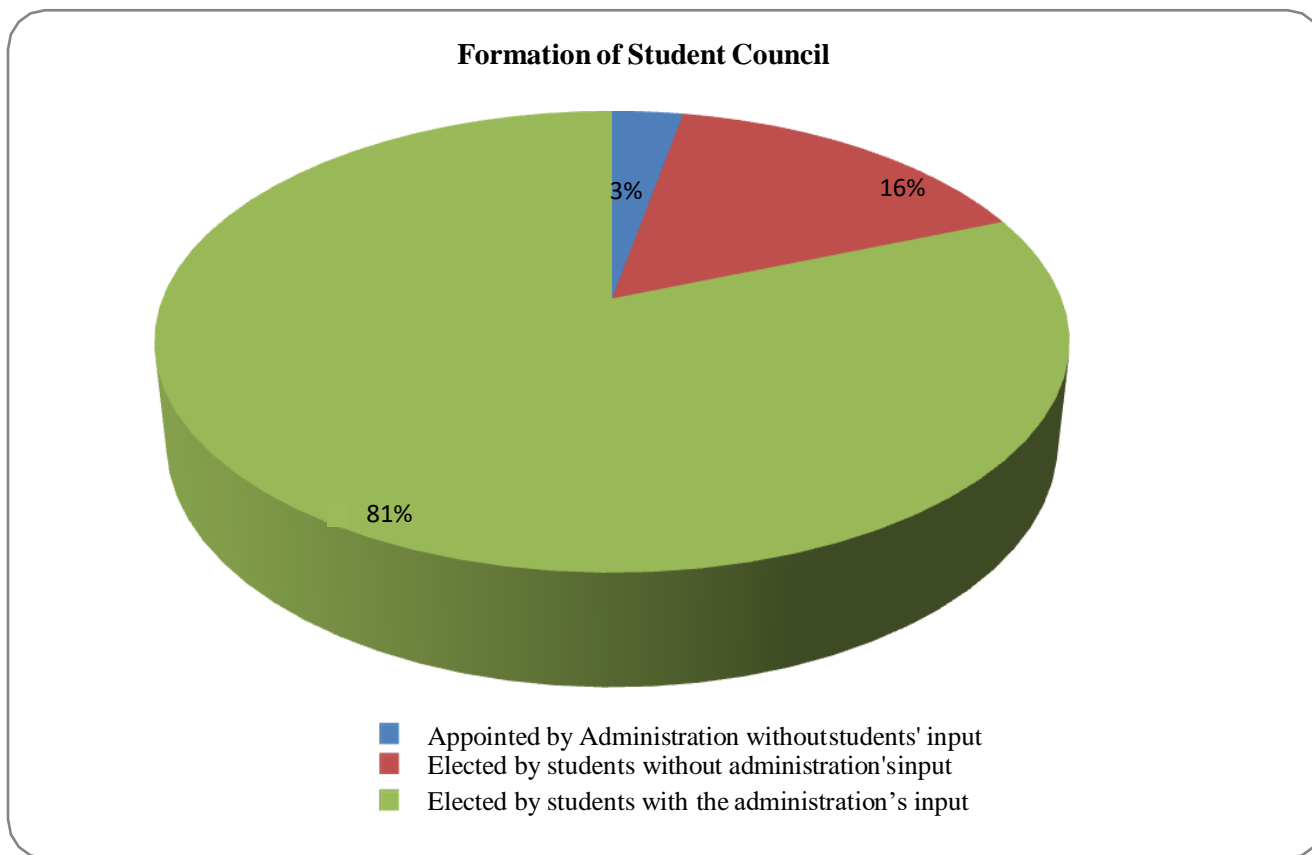


Figure 1

Formation of Student Council

During the focus group discussions with the students, the respondents argued that they are not allowed to elect their leaders. It is the administration that determines who will be selected in the posts, especially the most powerful position such as the head-boy/school president. They feel that the administration selects the people they know will cooperate with them. They do not allow the student to democratically elect their own leaders.

During the interviews, the principals agreed that they have a hand in the student leaders' election. They pointed out that they cannot allow the students to elect the leaders alone because they will give immature students who can easily be comprised by a group of students. In fact, one of the principals argued that they have the final say in the election results. After the students do their work in choosing, the teachers announce the final results. The announced results comprise the list they are comfortable with, without considering the will of the students. The principal said that:

"We do not allow pure democracy when electing the student council. The disciplinary committee has the final say on who will be in the council. We fear allowing student leaders who will be comprised by students" (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

According to Ojwang' (2012), the lack of democracy or fairness in the election of the student leaders is a cause of strife in schools. Although it is paramount for the administration to have students they can work comfortably with, they should also factor in the needs, and opinions of the students that the student council should be representing. If the student leaders only represent the needs and support the opinion of the administration, the schools will be running under tyranny, which does nothing to ease unrest. There should be balance between what the teachers want and who the students want, in the representation in the council. That is the only way the students' opinions and grievances will be aired to the administration. If the administration and students have a compromise in the student council, both parties will have faith in the operation of the council and the cooperation between them.

In all the schools that participated in the study, the student council positions were elective. The students are



elected once every year. In most schools, there is vigorous vetting by the administration. The vetting committee comprises of the disciplinary committee which is chaired by the deputy principal, while others have the entire teaching staff and administration doing the vetting. The candidates who are interested in the positions fill the forms which are taken to the administration for vetting. Only the most qualified students are allowed to campaign. In most schools, the factors that are considered include discipline, academic performance and ability to pay fees. During the interviews, one of the principals argued that discipline and academic performance were the key factors that they consider. They want leaders who can command the students knowing that they perform well in class. Those who do not perform well are not allowed to campaign because they should give all their time to academic work to try and improve their studies. On the same note, discipline is very crucial. Students who are in the council must be disciplined for them to help in enforcement of discipline. One of the principals pointed out that they demote any student who is found to be indiscipline. The student must maintain discipline for them to be role models to the rest of the students.

In most schools, discipline and academic performance were the main factors. However, in some schools, the ability to pay fees is a key factor. In this case, students who are frequently sent home for school fees are not allowed to hold positions in the student council. During the interviews, principals who had fee payment as a factor argued that they cannot have frequent absentees as leaders. One of the deputy principals in such schools said that:

"We know that it is not the fault of these students to be sent home. However, if they are absent every now and then, who will take their positions? There will be a vacuum every month, and that will give room for indiscipline in that area. Therefore, we must consider fees payment as a factor" (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

The results of the study indicated that most of the members of the council are in form three and four. The form ones and twos only have the class representatives. The other positions are in the upper forms to ensure there is command. It is hard for the students in the lower forms to rule those in the upper forms. Therefore, the form three and form four students are given the chance to take the senior posts. The strong positions of school captain, the deputy, dorm captain and the deputies, dining captain and academic counselor requires form four and form threes. In most schools, the captain was in form four while the deputy was a form three. However, some of the schools had changed that strategy. They discovered that the deputies automatically assumed the senior posts when the form four left school. Thus, the posts were only taken over by the deputies irrespective of their previous performances. Thus, they adjusted to adopt a strategy of having the captain and the deputy in form four. Consequently, the posts will be empty and open for any student. One of the deputy principals from such schools indicated that:

"We select a form four as the captain and the deputy to avoid confusion after the form four complete the course. We realized that when the deputy is not working, and is in form three, we were forced to make him the captain irrespective of his underperformance record. For now, every position is open for competition with no one from the previous council being considered" (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

During the focus group discussions with the students, they cited a case of a school captain who was overshadowed by the deputy. The captain was elected because he was the deputy captain to the previous captain. However, he was weak and did not have the power to command the entire school. However, because of the previous culture in the school of making the deputies to be the captains, the mistake occurred. As a result, there was unrest in the school as the captain could not maintain law and order when the teachers were absent. The school ended up with a strike. The students are comfortable that the administration had considered the option of having the captain and the deputy in the same class so that they eliminate such cases.

The results of the study, as revealed during FGDs with students, indicated that the student council meets regularly with the administration after the election. They are given leadership tips on how to balance the leadership responsibilities with their academic work. During the interviews, 50% of the principals agreed that they take the student leaders through training that takes one day. The training is aimed at helping the students be effective leaders. They are trained on how to be students and leaders at the same time. Considering the huge responsibility the student leaders have ahead, the one-day training is not enough. They cannot learn enough skills, unless the administration keeps on having refresher courses and reminder workshops to strengthen the leaders. Majority of the board of directors interviewed in this study emphasized on the importance of training the students. They are young students who are given the responsibility of leadership. They have their studies to handle while at the same time they have to take part in administrative duties. However, 50% of the principals said that their student council does not go through any formal type of training. The student leaders start to take their responsibilities immediately after the election.



4.1. 2 Nature of Student Representation in the Student Council

The study sought to understand the nature of student presentation in the council. The results of the study indicated that every class is represented in the council. During focus group discussion with the students, the respondents agreed that there is enough representation at the council. During the interview with school heads, the results of the study indicated that most schools 9(47%) have 10-40 students’ leaders. Also, 5(26%) have 40-60 student leaders. Only 2(10%) have 1-20 leaders, and 3(16%) have more than 60 members of the council.

Table 1

Number of Students in the Student Council

No of Students in the Student Council	Frequency	Percentage
1-20	2	10%
21-40	9	47%
41-60	5	26%
Above 60	3	16%

Every sector is represented fairly at the council. Most of the departments are similar. Even if there are some differences in the names and sections, the structure of the student council in Kericho County can be represented in the following Figure 2.

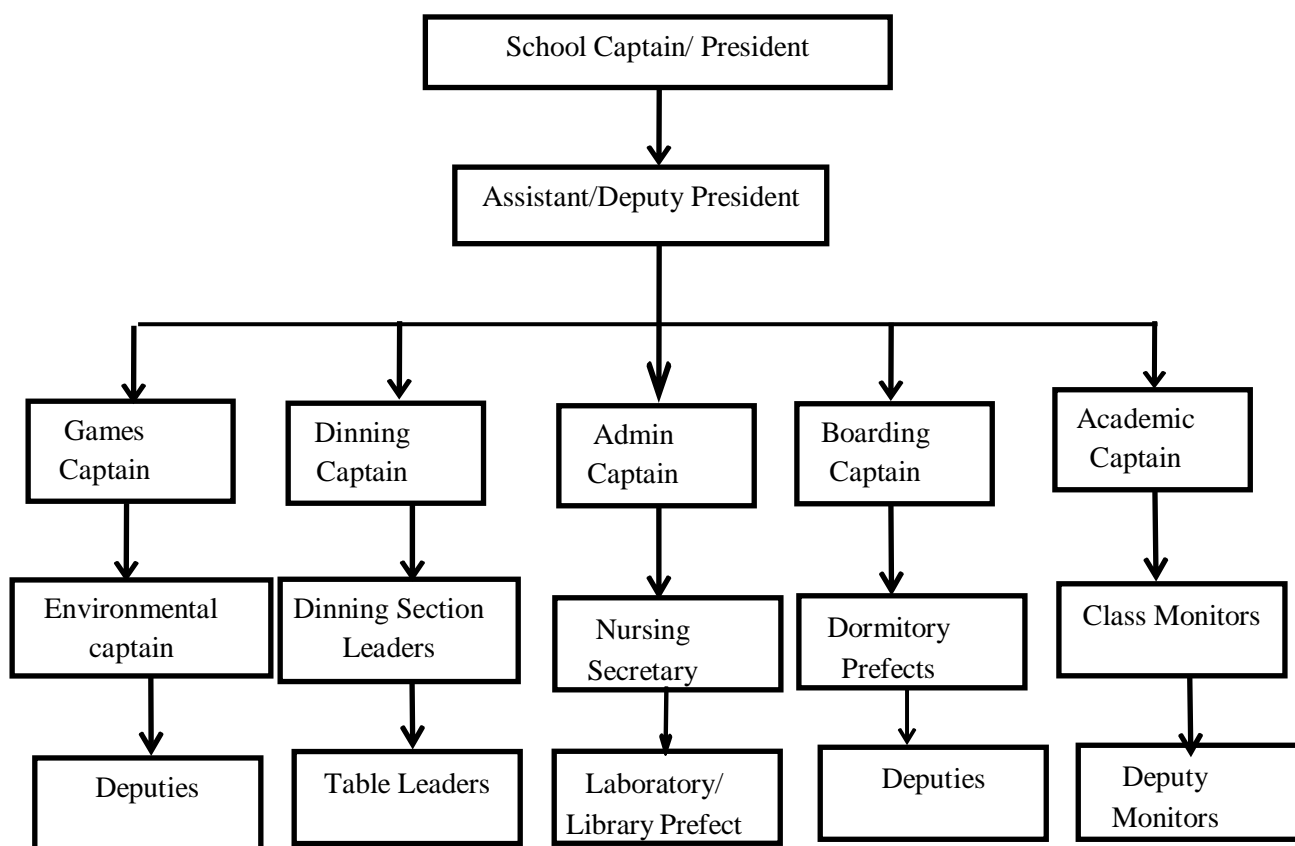


Figure 2

Structure of Student Council

There is the overall head of the student council with different names depending with the school. The most common names are: School captain, head boy/head girl, chair lady/chairman and school president. There are other schools with unique names such as counselors and secretaries of various departments.

The overall head is responsible of overseeing that every leader takes care of his department effectively. The



study found out that the captain is respected by both the teaching and the non-teaching staff. During the focus group discussions with the students, the learners argued that they respect the school captain because he/she has authority. In fact, he/she can influence an indiscipline case. Some respondents cited cases where the captain saved them from being expelled from school, or contributed towards expulsion of some students. He/she reports to the principal's office frequently brief him on the behavior of the students.

During the interviews with school heads, the respondents pointed out similar departments that are headed by the student council. There are five major categories that appear in majority for the schools. They include: games, dining, boarding, academics and administration. The games department is headed by the games captain who is responsible of the gaming activities in the field. According to one of the interviewed sub-county directors of education, the games departments in some schools also have the environment prefect who works together with the games captain to ensure conservation of the environment. He oversees activities such as tree planting, flower watering and proper disposal of waste in the school.

The results of the study indicate that the dining department is a major sector that is highly valued. According to the majority of the board members interviewed, most of the unrest cases in the school originate from this department. One member of the board said that:

"If the students are unsatisfied at school, they will not cooperate. These are teenagers who value food more than anything else. You must give them enough food or they will not cooperate with you. They can cause chaos and burn the entire school if the tea has no sugar" (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

The importance of the dining department makes the administration to be extremely keen in the selection of the dining head. The administration desires to have a person who has the power to control the students and convince them that everything is working in their favor. During the interviews with head of schools, one of the deputy principals reported that the dining captain must report to her every evening and brief her on the day's meals and the level of student satisfaction.

The boarding department consists of all dormitories in the boarding schools. There are dormitory monitors and deputies in every dorm. During the focus groups discussions, the students agreed that it was important to have the dorm prefects as they act as a link between the matrons and the learners. According to one of the board members interviewed, the leadership in this department is greatly influenced by the matron and dorm masters/mistresses. They select the person they would like to work with, and the administration does not reject their choice. A deputy principal agreed with this argument during the interviews. She pointed out that the dormitory mothers in her school make the final decision on who will be the head of a particular dorm. Since the dormitory heads work hand in hand with the dorm masters, their say must be respected.

The Academic department is present in every school. Every class has a class monitor who keeps the records of everything that happens in class. They report to the class teachers and the dean of studies. They also report any indiscipline cases to the master on duty. In most schools, the class monitors are elected by the students in that particular class. However, as reported by some respondents during the FGDs with students, sometimes the class teachers influence the election. The class teachers have the power to accept or reject the elected class monitor. These leaders report directly to the class teacher, and he has to work with a person he is comfortable with.

The administration department deals with the daily running of the other sectors in the school. The department has leaders in the laboratory, library, nursing and religious leaders. These members of the council report to the deputy principal as well as the head of specific departments. These sections are important but do not require a lot of interference from the disciplinary committee. The prefects ensure that the school properties in their specific areas of duty are protected.

The constitution of Kenya 2010 gives individual of the country to practice their sovereign power. The education system in the country needed changes to ensure students were well advocated for. So, the ministry of education developed sessional papers of the basic Act of 2013 number 14 to deal with the issue as illustrated by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016). The law was instituted to ensure that students felt well represented, hence avoiding chaos and disruption of property in secondary schools. The student council law was born in the year 2008 with a common goal for the advocacy of student council. The ministry of education with other stakeholders, Children Education Fund, and Kenya Secondary School Heads Association sat together and realized that students need active inclusion in major school decisions.

The law established was designed to involve students in contributing to new ideas of developing the school system. According to Griebler & Nowak (2012) the law gives power to elected representatives to exercise sovereign power beneficial to the institutions they are in. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016) stated that



the law stipulated that student had an upper hand in contributing their ideas in the daily running of the school. The student council is allowed to sit in Board of Management meetings when important matters concerning the school and students are discussed. The student council must set an example to other students through involvement with all stakeholders, while offering strong leadership skills (Mukiti, 2014). The prefect system was pushed away because it was a way that the administration used to subdue the views of the students increasing tension that led to strikes in secondary schools. The student council law protected and gave ownership to students to own their school programs, while bridging a gap between the administration and students.

4.1.3 Size and Effectiveness of the Student Council

When asked about the size and effectiveness of the student council, the majority of the students (68%) who filled the questionnaires agreed that the student council is appropriate and effective. Some respondents (20%) felt that the student council was too big to be effective. A small percentage of 12% indicated that the student council was too small to be effective.

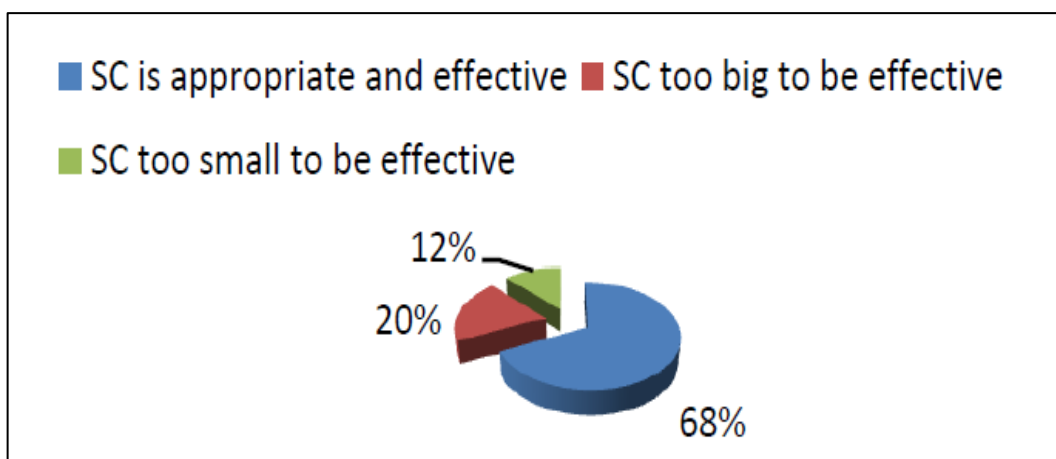


Figure 3
Student Response Size and Effectiveness of Student Council

The questionnaires from the teachers also indicated a similar perception. Most of the teachers (60%) felt that the student council in their school was effective, 26% believes that the SC is too big to be effective while 14% pointed out that the SC is too small to be effective.

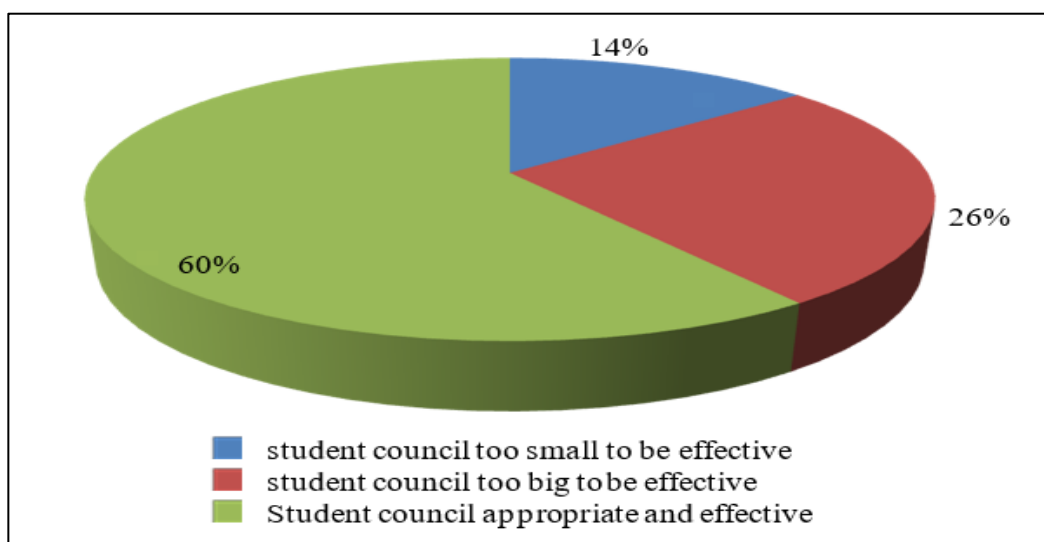


Figure 4
Teachers Response on the Effectiveness of SC



Most of the respondents believe that the student council is appropriate and fairly represents the students. The schools that have a high population have more than 40 student leaders. During the interviews in one of the national schools with more than 1500 students, the principal said that they have many leaders because the students are many. For the schools that have a low population, the size of the student council is smaller. In fact, some of the schools which had less than 300 students had less than twenty members of the council.

During FGDs with students, some respondent argued that the student council was too large to be effective. They felt that there is over-presentation in the council. The prefects are exempted from performing cleaning duties. The students felt that they have to do extra work which should be shared among more students, who are too many in the council. They claim that there should be fewer prefects as they only stand in for the teachers. In their views, some of the dockets should be eliminated. One of the students said that:

“Why should we have a captain and a deputy? A captain is enough. Further, we should not have the games captain, the deputy games captain and the environment leader. They all perform the same duty. This department should only have one prefect. Even the prefect on duty is enough to check how we play in the field. Furthermore, the Sports and Talent Patron is always present. There is no need to have all these leaders. It is a duplication of duties” (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

According to the director of education in the county, some of the schools have so many members in the council. The administration allows for a big number because they want to manage everything that the students do. Sometimes the over representation makes the student to be uncomfortable. They lack the freedom to do what they want to do even during games or leisure time that they should be free every time there is a prefect passing nearby. Thus, they must act in a manner that will not annoy the prefect. However, the big size of student council is sometimes very useful, especially in the big schools. During the interviews with the board of directors, one of the respondents agreed that they require a big number because the teachers cannot be present everywhere. Thus, it is essential to have prefects everywhere as they are the “eyes” of the administration.

The student council members spend all their time with their colleagues. In this case, they give first-hand information to the administration. During the interviews, the school heads agreed that the student council has helped them learn of dissatisfaction among the students. In fact, most of the heads are pre-informed of a strike before it occurs. The members of the student council learn through their colleagues that there would be unrest because of various reasons. They have severally controlled the situation before its escalation to chaos. They are grateful that the student council has been very useful to the school. During the FGDs with students, the respondents pointed out that the student leaders relay information to the administration and help them communicate various issues. Thus, the students believe that the student council should remain. The studentbody acts a link between the students and the administration.

However, some of the students (12%) felt the student council was too small to be effective. They claimed that there were very few leaders. The few who are there are given a lot of responsibilities to the extent that they cannot be effective. During one of the FGDs with the students, the respondents pointed out that the administration only allows them to select class prefects and the head-boy. They are given responsibilities to offer leadership roles in the dining hall, during games, in the laboratory and library. The roles are rotational. As a result, there is no specific role for a particular prefect. As a result, the respondents felt that they do not have a person to ask question pertaining a specific section such as the library. One of the respondents during the FGDs said:

“The person who was in the library last week goes to the laboratory. If you wanted a particular book and you had liaised with that particular prefect, you start the process again. Before the book is returned to the library and reserved for you, another prefect comes in. In this case, the student council becomes ineffective because it is too small” (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

It is important to have a moderate student council that will be effective. The administration should avoid over-representation as it makes the students uncomfortable. They feel that there are so many idle prefects who should be sharing duties as normal students. Thus, a very big size creates enmity between the students and the student council. In addition, a small population is not effective, as it does not cover all the required sectors. A small student council leaves gaps in the administration.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of the student council, both the teachers and the students filling the questionnaires agreed that the student council was effective. A moderate number of students comprising of 28% believe that the student council was very effective, while 40% believe that it was effective. However, 32% have a different opinion that the student council is not effective.

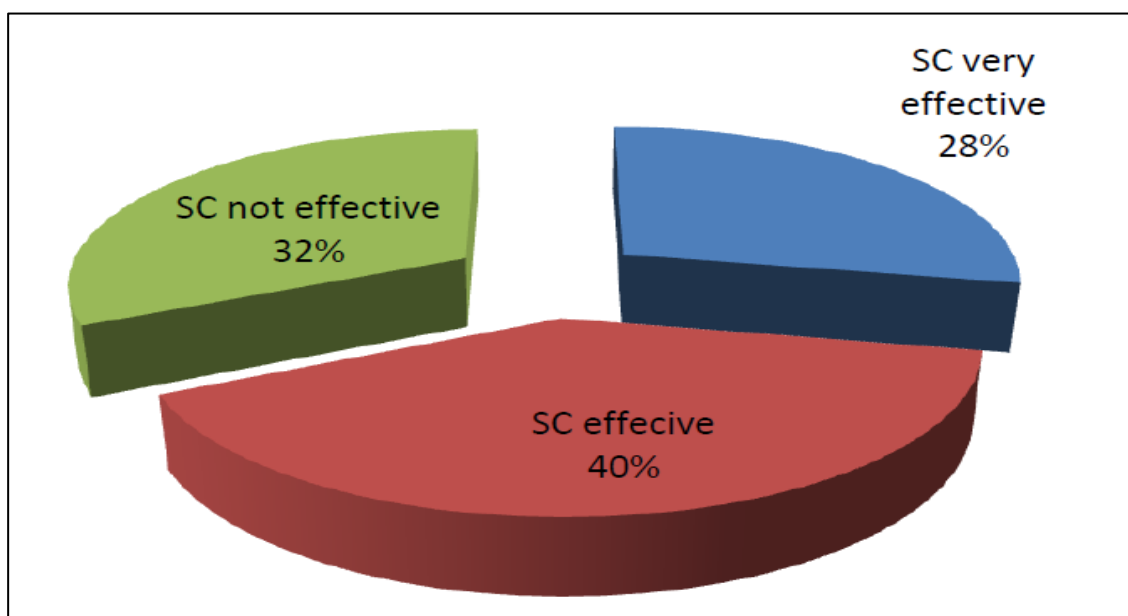


Figure 5
Effectiveness of SC

Most of the students from schools that have had serious unrests in the last two years believe that the student council has not been effective. During FGDs with the students, they argued that the interference of the administration during the formation of the student council is what makes them ineffective. In their views, the administration selects students who can easily be manipulated. One of the students said that:

“The student council in this school belongs to the teachers. They represent the interest of the teachers and not the students. All the leaders we elect are not announced. The administration announces a list that favors them. Therefore, we do not like the student council and it does not help us. It is ineffective to us, but effective for the administration” (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

When the students feel that the administration is unfair and that there is no democracy, they reject the student council in place. In this case, the administration should make the election process appear as democratic as possible. Some of the school heads interviewed in this study pointed out that they do not allow the students to democratically elect the council. They “doctor” the results because they cannot allow the student to elect leaders who cannot cooperate with the administration. However, this should happen without the knowledge of the students. It is advisable to make the students believe that the candidate announced as the leader is the one who won the elections. Further, the administration, through the disciplinary committee, should only allow the most qualified candidates to vie for the seat. There should be vigorous vetting of the interest parties so that the administration is comfortable with any of the candidates who win after the campaign. Consequently, the student will only have a choice to elect their leaders from a clean list.

4.1.6 Student Councils’ Role in Management of Discipline

The respondents were asked to state the effectiveness of the student council in the management of discipline. The results of the filled questionnaires were as follows:



Table 2
Effectiveness of SC in Discipline Management

Role of Student Council in Management of Discipline	Agree	Disagree
Student councils take part in school governing body activities	52%	48%
Policies are formed after rigorous deliberations including students	8%	92%
Student councils ensure enforcement of school rules and regulations to the latter	79%	11%
Student councils participate freely in disciplinary meetings with school authority	32%	68%
Student councils are equal partners in decision making about discipline	8%	92%
Decisions about discipline are transparent and open	15%	85%
Student councils cultivate a culture of positive behavior amongst students	51%	49%
Student councils encourage fellow learners to participate and are responsible for the sound functioning of school	64%	36%
Student councils promote positive communication with educators and school management	57%	43%
Student councils are involved in anti-bullying	72%	28%
Student councils promote good discipline by holding regular learners' meetings and discussions	48%	52%
Student councils use communication channels to discuss learners' fears and frustrations	79%	21%
Student councils create clubs and special projects to promote learners' involvement	26%	74%
Student councils act as ambassadors in the school and community	65%	35%
Student councils develop and promote a positive learner spirit and culture within the school	54%	46%

According to the result of the study (52%), the student council is actively involved in the management of discipline. The student council is given the responsibilities of ensuring that the school rules are implemented. During the FGDs with students, they agreed that the prefect body plays a crucial role in ensuring that the students follow the set rules. In most schools, as revealed during the FGDs, the prefects are allowed to give punishments to the students who do not follow the rules. The respondents said that the punishments which the prefects give are fair. They tell them to sweep the compound or redo their duties if they are not done properly. In most cases, the members of the student council report the student found with indiscipline cases to the Master on Duty or to the deputy principal. Class monitors report cases to the class teachers, while the dormitory representatives report to the matron or the boarding patrons.

In some cases, the members of the student council participate in the disciplinary meetings with the authority. Most of the schools' heads agreed that they involve students in the disciplinary meeting if the case being discussed was reported by a member of the council. They involve the prefect so that they can get first-hand information and a witness in the committee. However, the member of the council is not allowed to make any decision. He/she comes to the committee for a short time to give relevant information, and then he is allowed to go back to class. During the interviews, some board members pointed out that the student council should be allowed in the disciplinary meeting if the council will have a positive contribution. However, most of the sub-county directors of education were against that idea. During the interviews, one of the sub-county directors pointed out that:

"Students should not be allowed into the disciplinary meetings at all. These are students and should not be given such privileges. In fact, the student who misbehaved should not even know who reported him. Such instances create enmity between the student and the Student Council. The students might decide to take vengeance on the student leader who reported him to the authority" (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

Majority of the students (85%) felt that decisions about discipline were not transparent and open. Students are hardly given a chance to give their views in matters of discipline. During FGDs with students, the respondents argued that the authority makes decision without listening to them. Even their representatives from the council are not given a chance to give their views. According to the school principals interviewed, matters of discipline are administrative. Allowing students to give their views would compromise the discipline of the school. Thus, the disciplinary committee makes the final decision without involving the students.

Majority of the students (92%) disagree that the student council is involved in policy formulation. Only a small percentage of 8% agrees that there are vigorous deliberations before the formulation of the policies. During the FGDs with students, the participants argued that they are not informed of any policies being formulated the administration only reports of new policies and expect the students to obey without objection. When the researcher



asked the principals during interviews on whether they involve the student council in the formulation of the policies, the respondents pointed out that is a purely administrative role. Therefore, they do not involve students. The students are young and have no knowledge of how policies are formulated. Therefore, they should follow the school rules because the stakeholders in policy formulation make policies that are mature. However, some board members have a different view. When interviewing some of the board members, they pointed out that it would be important to involve the students because the policies directly affect them. One of the board members said that:

“Even if the students are young, they should have a say in the new rules and regulations set. We are in the 21st century, and we should let the students air their views. They might have some information that we do not have. Giving them a chance will make the policies friendlier” (Respondent, Kericho County, 2018).

In as far as the management believes that the student council should not be involved in the policy, research indicates that participation of students in their rules bears positive fruits. The students will feel that their ideas are valued. As a result, they will obey the rules and cooperate knowing that the policies are for their benefits.

Student leaders have a role in cultivating a culture of positive behavior amongst student. They remind the students of the importance of doing the right thing at the right time. During FGDs with students, they agreed that they learn a lot from the Student Council. Most of the student leaders are disciplined and good performers in academics. Therefore, they listen to them and emulate them in many ways. The student council encourages fellow learners to participate in different activities. The SC makes the school function smoothly as they promote communication between the educators and the management.

The results of the study indicate that the student council is involved in management of discipline. However, there is little participation of students in administrative decisions. The student council concentrates more on the implementation of the policies. During the interviews, one of the principals pointed out that they allow students to participate in some administrative issues such as the choice of school uniforms. They allow the students, through the student council to give the colors they would prefer. The other administration decision that students have a say in is planning of co-curricular activities. The games captain represents the students when deciding which sports the students should be playing.

The results of the study agree with the view of Basaam (2018) that the students' council is concerned with minor issues within the institution such as conflicts among the students, misunderstandings, allocation of duties and even personal issues of students. Every student has to participate to attain success since the higher the level of participation the higher the probability of good performance which is inversely proportional to the level of discipline (Basaam, 2018). The students' body establishes policies that facilitate the promotion of good behaviors among students since they clearly understand the specific roles that they ought to play. The policies guide the relationship among students in eradicating indiscipline cases such as bullying. Policies also validate that the students are agents of the inevitable change of behaviors.

According to Kennedy (2018), involvement of the students' council in the formulation of rules and regulation within the school premise includes the students' views and negotiations in decision making that are done through a collective dialogue between the students' council and administration. However, as revealed in the study, the extent to which the students' council is involved in the formulation of policies is undermined by the administration because the student leaders are seen as immature and lack the know-how on how to run a schooling institution. It is viewed that the students are to remain passive since they receive instructions from the teachers, parents and the administrators for them to follow, therefore the policymaking process is undertaken by the administration (Kennedy 2018). In this case, the student council fails to work as expected.

In the views of Anderson & Ritter (2017), the students' council involvement in the formulation of rules and regulation is significant in the management of the school concerning issues such as students' welfare. The administration lacks a clear understanding to illustrate various issues that affect student thus the administration to manage discipline within the institution (Anderson & Ritter, 2017). Nonetheless, as revealed during the study, the student leaders' involvement in making decisions is limited because they are only restricted to addressing issues that affect them directly. The induction process is the technique that the student uses to become involved fully hence the student council should be involved in major areas such as planning the development of the school and discipline.

The results of the study agree with the views of Blank and Shivit (2016) that keeping time facilitates the smooth running of the school; the students' council have the responsibility to ensure that time is managed. They ensure that all activities are done on time hence play a vital role in the management of students' discipline (Blank & Shivit, 2016). During the interviews, school principals confirmed that for the efficacy of the students' council in keeping time, the student council is divided into various categories including those in charge of managing time. To



ensure that that the students observe time, the student leaders command respect for their voices to be heard, by doing this their studies conclude on time hence the management of the school's discipline.

The results of the study indicate that the students' council plays an important role in offering instructions to students thus, responsible for managing the pace at which various activities are conducted to achieve the objectives given by the administration. Nekesa (2018) agrees that the SC provides an environment in which the students work and motivate them to enhance greater performance in their school activities (Nekesa 2018). However, Nekesa (2018) further warns that this is only effective if the administration provides a democratic election to acquire a forum of student leaders who are willing to carry out their roles without being forced, and also helping them in achieving good school performance holistically. They alert the administration informing them, of any misconduct within the students.

During the interviews, the county director of education in Kericho county pointed out that punctuality is achieved since the students' council are on their duties at all time in all places during their stay in school, by keeping time order is attained within the school premises, students take their lunch and break the right time. This enhances the enforcement of rules regulation within the institution. This is in agreement with Kennedy (2018) that the student council is capable of ensuring the rules and regulations are followed, including punctuality that is crucial in a learning environment. Involvement of the students' council in the day to day running of the institution ensures that the students are disciplined for they are found at the right time at the right place, this shows their adherence to the school's rules and regulations.

Majority of the school principals interviewed indicated that they no longer allow the student leaders to give punishment to their fellow students. They pointed out that such privileges were previously available, but they were eliminated as they created unnecessary gap between the student council and the other student. In the views of Mboyonga (2018), allowing the student leaders to administer punishment creates enmity between the student and their leaders. The traditional prefect body that was given such responsibilities failed terribly as the students feared and hated them. In fact, Mboyonga (2018) concludes that when student leaders are involved in punishment administration for the management of the school, school unrest increases. Despite the fact that it can be valuable since it tends to make sure there are limited chances of indiscipline and students conduct themselves responsibly when teachers are absent, it creates animosity that can lead to worse situations when the students decide to strike against their leaders. As indicated in the literature review, such cases have in the past caused painful deaths when students targeted their own leaders in a wave of violence in Nyeri High school in 1999 when four prefects were burnt by their fellow students in their cubicles as they were sleeping.

BoM members pointed out that the SC plays a very important role in reporting cases of student having phones and laptops illegally. The student leaders can easily learn who has such gadgets as they live with their fellow students. Damiani (2016) points out that the advancement of science and technology has increased rapidly; it is a major factor influencing student's behaviour. Students are hooked to social media platforms to acquire psychological satisfactions. The mannerisms observed are transferred to the school premises and a couple of time adopted within the institution (Damiani, 2016). Students purchase electric gadgets such as mobile phones for entertainment and carry them to school illegally, hence violating the school's rules. The role carried by the student's council is to keep the administration body aware to search possession of gadgets. Deputy Principals agreed during interviews that students found guilty are expelled or severely punished to act as a good example to others and reduce such cases.

The principals and deputy principals also pointed out that the student council is involved in the indication process. The students' council ensures that the students understand the need for them to observe discipline within the institution from the time they join. According to Mboyonga (2018), student leaders help the new comers especially the first years to quickly adapt to the new environment. They guide them on how to do their daily activities in school. In some schools, the student leaders are given the role of mentors. Each leader has a group that he/she mentors for one whole term. The mentorship program has helped many students adapt to the environment and easily acquire a sense of identity. It sometimes continues until the leaders' complete school, and it has proved to be effective in many schools.

The results of the study agree with Kibui et al. (2014) that the students' council acts as an avenue that connects the administration with the students' body. Issues affecting students are addressed to the administration through the student's council then discussed and resolved amicably (Kibui et al., 2014). This prevents the students from presenting themselves to the administration at a personal level since the ratio of student to administrators is high. Feedback is given out through the students' council to the rest of the students who are involved in the decision-making processes. The students' council has enhanced the welfare, development of good leadership qualities and career choice among the students. The following are just but a few demonstrations of the role of the student's council.



V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that the student council is structured in way that it can effectively help in management of discipline and mitigating conflict. However, the administration does not allow the students to democratically elect their leaders. Instead, the administration has a great input in the formation of the student council. Thus, the students feel that the student council is loyal to the administration, and this hinders its efficacy.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that the government should restrict the interference of the administration in the formation of the student council. As indicated in the results, the administration interferes with the formation of the student council. Thus, students have a prefect body that is not their choice. In this case, it becomes hard for the students to relate properly with a student body that was put in place by the administration. Such a student body cannot act as a bridge between the student and the administration. Therefore, the government should make it clear that the student council should purely be elected by the students so as it can achieve the desired goals.

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