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The role of students council in curbing indiscipline in secondary schools in Kangundo Sub- County, Machakos County, Kenya

By

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Abstract
Students' indiscipline has been a threat in the management of secondary schools in Kenya. It has led to the destruction of properties and the rise of other forms of misconduct among the students. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of the students' council in enhancing discipline in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-County, Machakos County. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and utilized structured questionnaires to collect data from students, student council members, and deputy headteachers. The study targeted 24 public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub- County in Machakos County. A sample size of 8 principals, 8 deputy principals, and 71 student's leaders and 198 students was used in this study. Public Secondary Schools were stratified and then, systematic sampling technique applied in each stratum. SPSS was used to analyse quantitative data, regression analysis was used to test the research hypothesis, while the thematic technique was used to analyse the qualitative data. Findings showed that student councils play a vital role in reinforcing discipline by functioning as brokers between school administrations and students. Democratic processes had elected student leaders who had earned the respect of fellow students and contributed significantly to conflict mediation, checking on fellow students, and pinpointing potential areas of discipline at an early point. Peer counseling was identified as an effective approach to creating a sense of responsible conduct, with over 70% of students acknowledging its impact on developing positive behavioral choices. School principals also confirmed that students were more ready to open up to peer counselors, which allowed later identification and handling of behavioral issues. Equitable enforcement of school rules and regulations that were fashioned in inclusive processes was found to strengthen students' sense of ownership and adherence. Over 80% of respondents to the survey agreed that student councils' involvement in the development of policies contributed to a reduction in cases of unrest and increased adherence to school standards. However, the research also showed that student councils face significant challenges hindering their effectiveness, including opposition from peers, intervention from parents, lack of assistance from administrators, and social stigma. Regression analysis findings showed that student council contributions ($\beta = -0.275$, $p = 0.020$), peer counseling ($\beta = 0.364$, $p = 0.004$), and student leaders' challenges ($\beta = 0.591$, $p < 0.001$) explained 67.4% of the variability in student discipline combined

Key words: Kenya, Schools, Students councils, Discipline , Kangundo, Machakos County

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1.0 Introduction

Indiscipline in public secondary schools has remained a significant theme for worldwide educational concern, attracting various stakeholders, such as parents, donors, trade unions, Ministries of Education, and social organizations. Indiscipline, from a global perspective, is not only associated with the regulation of misconduct but also related to the nurturing process for accountability, mutual respect, and moral comportment for learners (Chansa, 2022). Current trends seem to portray rising figures of indiscipline scenarios around the world, creating anxiety for appropriate strategies for managing situations that support positive learning environments. The stakeholders' attention has, therefore, moved from the traditional punitive measures to preventive and participation strategies for developing self-discipline, moral judgment, and social responsibility for learners.

On a global basis, it has been found that sound discipline management requires more inclusive governance frameworks that allow for student participation in governance. For example, in the European continent, Austria's School Education Act and Portugal's National Education Act provide a guarantee for students' participation in educational governance, including discipline (Messiou et al., 2022). Student representation on boards is formalized in Spain, while in Finland and Switzerland, consultation with student councils is mandatory for any issue that impacts student well-being (Cato, 2018). The educational policies in Denmark also strongly support student well-being through surveys, thereby ensuring social inequality and disengagement prevention (Messiou et al., 2022). Additionally, studies in Greece demonstrate how inclusive governance leads to a better learning environment through shared discussion arenas that bring administrators and students together to tackle discipline problems (Foykas, 2024).

Regionally, several Sub-Saharan African countries continue to face the issue of involving students in the governance of learning institutions. Despite the existence of student councils in nearly every educational system, their relevance is impaired by lack of recognition, poor policies, and the prevailing top-down leadership paradigm. For example, in South Africa, student participation in governance at learning institutions is extremely low, leading to a lack of connection for many students in matters related to disciplinary issues (Nishiyama, 2017).

Concerning the Kenyan government, disciplinary practices in educational institutions continue to pose important educational and social questions. Against the backdrop of ensuring people-centered participation in decision-making, the incidence of unrest and vandalism in educational institutions keeps rising. Tragic events like the fire at Moi Girls High School in 2017, in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, killing ten pupils, the fire at Maranda High School in 2021, and the fire that claimed the lives of 59 people at Kyanguli Secondary School in 1991, demonstrate the seriousness of having poor disciplinary structures (Kamau, 2017). Other sad events, like the fire at St. Kizito Secondary School, in the district of Meru, where male pupils attacked a girls' dormitory, culminating in rape and murder, pose a clear

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indication that both moral and disciplinary structures lack functionality. Muindi (2012) asserts that such tragedies can largely occur because of lack of student participation in decision-making, poor communication structures, and lack of structured discussion forums for student grievances. To address the issue, the Kenyan government, through the Ministry of Education, has advocated for the incorporation of student councils in learning institutions to provide democracy, discipline, and social well-being for pupils (Gathura et al., 2021; Rose et al., 2024). It has also been documented that learning institutions with functional student councils exhibit lower disciplinary offenses and better interactions between pupils and tutors (Mwangudza & Mbirithi, 2023). Despite the efforts, problems still lie in the functionality and functionality of the student council, lack of training, and inactivity arising from support from the learning institution's administration (Wanjiku, 2024

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Indiscipline in secondary schools has remained a challenge for teachers, parents, the Ministry of Education, and other stakeholders in Kenya's educational sector. Despite various efforts directed at ensuring that acceptable behaviors from students are adopted, unrest, strike, arson, bullying, and vandalism, among other forms of indiscipline, continue to occur. The various behaviors have resulted in financial losses, destruction of properties, disruption of programs, and psychological trauma for both learners and staff.

Additionally, loss of valuable time for learning has resulted from unrest, thereby affecting the performance and image of educational institutions. To tackle such problems, various reforms were introduced by the Ministry of Education to encourage participative governance in learning institutions. The first major reform was the formulation of the Kenya Secondary Schools Student Council (KSSSC) in 2009. The other major reform that was implemented was the Basic Education Act, formulated in 2013. The major intention behind formulating the aforementioned acts was that through student councils, learners will be given a clear platform to contribute towards maintaining discipline, communicating, and creating accountability in learning institutions.

Conversely, despite the existing measures,-indiscipline still perpetuates in most secondary schools, including those in the Sub-County, Machakos County. This can be attributed to various issues, including lack of knowledge on how the concept of student participation through the student council affects the level of discipline in the institution. The existence of student leadership structures does not, in any way, highlight the efficiency of the student council in managing disciplines.

On a global scale, student participation in school governance has been identified as a critical dimension in managing discipline. Student participation, through student governance, has largely been hampered by a lack of autonomy and resource enabling in developing countries, including Kenya, where, despite a widespread acceptance of the notion of participation in managing schools, little information exists on how student participation actualizes this framework in enhancing discipline in public secondary schools.

This scenario has brought a knowledge gap that exists both in the practice and concept of participative leadership in managing disciplines. Little empirical research has been carried out on the level at which student governance contributes towards curbing indiscipline, how school rules and regulations shape its efforts, and the particular difficulties it encounters in carrying out its mandate. It is from this background that the study will seek to explore the significance and relevance of student councils in promoting discipline in the various public secondary schools in the Sub-County, Machakos County. The study will provide a

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contribution that will seek to address the gap by evaluating the effectiveness of student councils in controlling discipline, the significance of school policies in ensuring that discipline is adhered to, and the challenge that inhibits student councils from carrying out their duties.

1.2 Research Objective

To investigate the role of students council in curbing indiscipline in secondary schools in Kangundo Sub- County, Machakos County.

1.3 Research Question

How do student councils help curb indiscipline in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county, Machakos County?

2.0 Review of the Related Literature

2.1 Empirical Literature

Students are the direct beneficiary of educational services, hence, side-lining them in electing their leaders can be disastrous. Most secondary school students are adolescents characterized by the desire to be heard, involved, and participate in decision-making. Most adolescents are sensitive to their rights and can react at the slightest provocation. In that connection, creating an environment in the school is critical in ensuring that learners can express their interest in issues relating to their education. The first stage of developing student leadership is the creation of systems that allow the democratic process of election and the engagement of students in the process of creating school policies and regulations (Sofo, 2016). The election of students who are considered by them to be leaders is largely considered as an essential element of educational democratization. In fact, the involvement of students in school leadership elections has been consistently found to be the key avenue of bringing about democratization in schools (Muthoka et al., 2018). These processes enhance accountability regarding school laws and at the same time increase the involvement and success of students in extra-curricular activities (Muthoka et al., 2018).

Lyons (2018) explored the topic of student leadership focusing on the training and induction programmes. In spite of the fact that the study did not directly investigate the electoral mechanics, it also emphasized the importance of the capacity-building intervention. The results of the observations showed that student leaders of the same caliber were significantly more reliable, responsible, and effective with the right training and induction. These kinds of training strengthen the skills of peers in academic, sociality and extracurricular platforms consequently promoting the disciplinary rule.

Waldron (2020) placed leadership among the students as being studied in the state of Michigan, explaining how leadership is produced. Results showed that most of the leaders were elected by current student leaders with only a few. It is important to note that the kind of training they offered to prepare students with their roles was minimal. Waldron, therefore, embraced detailed leadership training and mentoring regardless of service tenure and rank. In their analysis involving secondary and post-secondary institutions in Malaysia, Tan and Adams (2018) determined several sets of leadership configurations, including human resource frame and structural frame. They suggested a transition towards a multi-framed leadership philosophy, in a bid to enable a democratic spirit and striking a balance among leadership practice.

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Across the African continent, democratization of education through student leadership has been less developed, which is evidenced by the limited literature on student appointments, roles, and their effect on student academic performance (Bwankarikari, 2016; Ambuga & Omollo, 2017; Onditi, 2018). Boakye (2012) identified two democratic models operative in Ghanaian secondary schools, direct (participatory) democracy (students are involved in decision-making through their representatives) and representative democracy (students elect their leaders). Nevertheless, both models were undergoing under-utilization where scant student's involvement is noticed in institutional affairs. Considering that student are key players in the classroom, there was advocacy to strengthen policies that support active involvement of students.

Saitis and Saiti (2017) found that in many schools a task orientation was practiced thus affecting interpersonal relationships as well as the degree of participation of students in administration. Certain principals opposed the inclusion of students in management meetings, citing reasons to do with overconfidence, violations of confidentiality or sub-optimal decision making. Consequently, they suggested limits on student involvement to issues of welfare, rather than sensitive issues of administration. Although this account helped in elucidating the principal perspectives, it did not make propositions to reduce the challenges identified.

More recently, Kuranchie and Affum (2021) have noted the central role that student leadership play in secondary education in Ghana in response to the democratization is at stake. Their research documented a structured electoral framework incorporating nomination, vetting, supervised voting and ballot tallies. Furthermore, inducted elected leaders were given training and induction before taking office. This procedure not only reflected democratic tenets, but it ensured that leader possessed requisite skills and values to mentor their peers successfully.

In Kenya, Ogweno et al. (2016) have found weak student engagement in decision making processes in public secondary schools in the city of Nairobi, as it has been documented that principals do not adopt mechanisms such as democratic elections of student leaders. A minority of the institutions had adopted the student council model. In schools where students participated in the school, the cases of indiscipline ended lower than those in schools where students never came into the picture. Nonetheless, the study only partly examined electoral procedures and hence brings contradictory results. In a complementary investigation, Chemutai et al. (2020) has investigated student unrest in Kericho County and has concluded that levels of unrest and arson were high in schools whose leaders were appointed by principals or teachers as compared to schools whose leaders are elected councils. The authors call for strengthening election policies and more awareness in order to bring about a substantial participation of students in school governance.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Social Systems Theory, which was developed in 1968 by the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy, seeks to represent, explain and predict social behaviour of organisations. It states organisations are systems made up of multiple subsystems that depend on each other, each having a defined objective to achieve though working together. Each sub-system performs a specific function but is also connected to other sub-systems thus giving continuity in affording the functioning of the complete system. Inputs to these systems are picked up in the broader environment which is called the supra-system. In the context of schools, such inputs include students, teachers, resources, and money, and the result of this is outputs; that is,

beings modularized with knowledge, skills, and values that can give a positive contribution to themselves and to the community.

Okumbe (1999), says that the Social Systems Theory was an offshoot of social theory generally that explains human relations and social transformation in an organization. Organisations can be seen as social systems because all organisations involve people working together towards common goals (Dalger, Nigel E. & Horvat, Peter O., 1989). School is also categorized as a social unit, it consists of principals, teachers, supporting personnel and student councils, each of these having a role to perform which is clearly unique but related to the function of creating a favorable environment for learning and discipline. Though sub-systems will vary in their areas of specialization and responsibilities, none can be said superior or inferior as each is uniquely useful in fulfilling the system's overall goals. For example, although in the administrative hierarchy, principals seem to be placed on a pedestal and student councils at the bottom rung, the input of student councils is just as important to keep the discipline. Moreover, as a result, administrators should collect and appreciate the student councils regardless of the status of positions.

The theory also emphasizes the idea of multi-causation - a principle under which a change occurring in one element of the system automatically means one is affecting another element of the system or, possibly, the system as a whole. Just as one incorrectly behaving organ is likely to disturb the functioning of the whole human body, a dysfunctional student council is likely to create a ripple effect in the school atmosphere. For example, disfunctional councils could initiate riots which result in property loss or loss of human life.

Within this context, the principal, who is the managerial micro-sub system, is responsible for coordinating, planning, controlling and facilitating activities in order to increase operational effectiveness. This includes defining school goals, ensuring that the responsibilities of different actors are clear, assigning tasks and roles, and defining job descriptions well so as to prevent role confusion or conflict.

In addition, principals should ensure properly reinforced channels of communication in both directions, have fair school rules and regulations, exercise neutrality, and offer proper and full-fledged training to pupil leaders to improve them. Social Systems Theory emphasizes the interdependence of people within organizations, the impact of external environments on organizational structure and function and the impact of external stakeholders on internal activities.

Though the theory is not focused on particular interpersonal relationships and loyalty as factors that drive productivity, it states that environmental changes do directly impact the functioning of organizations. This study puts these principles to use in assessing the efficacy of good co-ordination, proper training, role definition, and good relationship among student councils, administrators and broader community of student in the mainstreaming of discipline in secondary schools. Because schools are social systems with different sub-systems including students' councils, the theory provides a suitable perspective to analyse their roles.

The current study is grounded in this theory because it elucidates the interdependence that exist between the school administration and the student councils in achieving disciplinary results. It provides a theoretical approach through which the organization, language and actualized roles of the stakeholders can be systematically scrutinized as an element that has led to a well-organized disciplinary system. The theoretical framework in turn supports the claim that without schools working in harmony, every subsystem, such as student councils, should be actively involved in the process of maintaining discipline. As a result, the study uses Social Systems Theory to analyze the relationships between student councils and other

participants through the teacher, administrator and students and hence explain mechanisms of promoting behavioral responsibility and institutional stability.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a road map that helps to use every element of a study in order to answer a certain research issue (Abutabenjeh and Jaradat, 2018). The most common methodological frameworks that are used in the social sciences are correlational, experimental, descriptive survey, and phenomenological (Qutoshi, 2018; Bhat, 2019). These frameworks may be represented as models that aid in the production of solutions to research issues (Creswell, 2014). Essentially, research designs represent procedural schemata which guide researchers to devise empirically based decisions, manage assumptions, and control the line of inquiry (Schindler, 2019).

In line with such an understanding, Kothari (2014) argues that a research design entails the specification of the limits of data collection according to intervention in such a manner that they resonate with the purpose of the research besides being effective.

The current study is a traditional descriptive-correlational research. The descriptive element helped to arrive at data by having completed individual questioning of the respondents in their natural surroundings (Creswell, 2014). The correlational component studied statistical associations between variables, hence making the outlook of predictions on extrapolation of one variable to another (Kalla, 2011). Based on it, the design not only determined the presence of substantial relations between variables but also the degree to which changes in one variable influence another (Creswell, 2014). Particularly, the researcher examined how student councils affect disciplinary measures in state secondary schools.

The data gathered included the attitude, preferences, views and perceptions of the respondents hence the descriptive design. The given variables were divided into four constructs forming their independent variables: (1) roles of the student council; (2) disciplinary actions by the student council; (3) challenges faced by the student council; and (4) strategies of improving student council leadership. In comparison to experimental research, the correlational design does not allow manipulator of variables in the study, costs, time, and the analysis as well cross-analysis of emergent patterns in student discipline in Machakos County, Kangundo Sub-County, Kenya.

3.2 Target Population

A population is a reference to the whole group of individuals, institutions, or cases that have characteristics of interest to the aim of the study (Schindler, 2019). The target population is a sublimit section of this group, on the basis of which the researcher plans to obtain research results (Asiamah et al., 2017; Mack, 2019). The focus group in the present research included secondary schools. The respondents included principals, deputy principals and Students of Form Four. Principals and their deputies had been chosen because of their direct experience in student discipline, whereas Form Four students had been selected because of their long history of service at school and the expectations placed on their objectivity.

The schools were grouped as boys boarding, girls boarding, mixed boarding and mixed day schools. According to the Kangundo Sub County Director Education (2020), there were 24 public secondary schools in the region each housing a principal and a deputy principal. It had a student population of about 8,790 students, inclusive of 1,780, Form Fours.

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3.3 Sample size and Sampling Procedures

Sampling is the idea of the process of obtaining a portion of a population to represent the entire population for a research study (Atitwa, 2013). Brook (2013) and Jwan (2010) state that the descriptive studies generally include a sample size that encompasses 10 to 30 percent of the population. The 24 leaders constituted the student councils (UNICEF/KSSHA, 2013). In this study, 8 principals, 8 deputy principals, 234 Form Four students, 82 members of student council were sampled, making a total of 332 respondents. Each category (boys and girls boarding schools and in turn day schools) was represented (proportionally) by the principals and deputy principals: boys: boarding (1), girls: boarding (1), mixed boarding (2), mixed day schools (4).

The number of students chosen intentionally was form four as they would give mature and reliable responses. Purposive sampling was regarded as the most appropriate choice because it allows being objective and concentrates on those participants which are the most acquainted with the investigated phenomenon (Robinson, 2014; Dudovsky, 2015). The school principals provided the list of Form 4 students and leaders. Also, the number of student leaders was selected randomly, 2 students at every level of the program (Forms 1-4) at 24 schools.

Study population and sample by school type

Type of School	Number of Schools	Number Sampled	Percentage (%)
Boarding boys	3	1	33.3
Boarding girls	4	1	25
Mixed boarding	6	2	33.3
Mixed day	11	4	33.3
Total	**24**	**8**	**31.1**

Source: Education office, Kangundo Sub-County.

Samples size

Group	Target Population	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Principals	24	8	33.3
Deputy Principals	24	8	33.3
Students' Council	276	82	30
Form Four Students	780	234	30
Total	**1,104**	**332**	**31.6**

Instruments are the tools used to collect empirical evidence used in research studies. The research methodology toolkit adopted in the research involved the use of semi structured interviews and structured questionnaires. Such tools were aimed at respecting data type of interest, design of study, time limits and the overall aim of the research. Since the research objectives were to study the role of a student councils within the discipline of the public secondary schools of the Kangundo sub-country, the research instruments were to be oriented to evoke the perceptions, attitudes and opinions of participants. This therefore meant that the most appropriate path towards the acquisition of the requested level of information was the use of questionnaires and interview.

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3.4 Research Instruments

A questionnaire is a statistical-processing instrument, that means a set of structured or unstructured questions adapted to the research objectives, and intended to produce information concerning a certain phenomenon (Oliveira et al., 2018). Narrative-open these items are open-ended questions that can be included in questionnaires. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) note that questionnaires can be inexpensive to implement, easy to conduct and universal due to their standardization.

There were few challenges to expect in filling in the instruments since majority of the target population in this study were literate. To this end, two versions of the questionnaire were designed one that was targeted at deputy principals and another to student leaders. The first part was able to obtain the demographic data and affiliations of the respondents with the institution, but the rest of the data collection process was structured based on the key constructs of the study. Most of the questions were close-ended, built on a five-point Likert scale, and a few open-ended questions were also included to gather more information. These arrangements, which were informed by the conceptual framework, led to the achievement of credible quantitative descriptive information (Bhat, 2019).

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained a permit from the National Council of Science, technology and innovation (NACOSTI) that will allow her to carry out the study. The sub-County Education officer was requested for permission to allow the researcher to carry out research in the Sub-County. The researcher used formal visits to the principals of the sampled schools and sent a correspondence message to the schools that informed the principals about the study. It involved the researcher conducting the pre-research visits to get used to the institutions and build rapport with respondents before the actual data collection process.

All schools were also administered follow-up activities within the allotted period after which the data were gathered out of the principals, deputy principals guide and counseling teachers and three students, each respectively in an institution using duly prepared questionnaires. During the research period, the researcher distributed the questionnaires among the principals, deputies, teachers, and students to be completed and then reclaimed them (Len, 2000).

Principals and deputy principals were to be given questionnaires to complete so that they can provide information about the place of student councils in instilling discipline and in order to obtain their opinions about the challenges that face such councils. The respondent teachers provided information regarding problems occurring when student councils are not properly implemented. Similarly, student-based survey questionnaires ensued data on school-based disciplinary practices as reported and implemented by student councils. The finished instruments were then placed in the state of accuracy and completeness and was then archived ready to be subjected to the evaluating analysis.

The Directorate of board of post graduate at Lukenya University provided the researcher with a letter authorizing him to conduct the study. Additionally, a letter of authorization from NACOSTI was obtained by the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher then extracted the relevant financial data from the collected documents and databases to analyze it.

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4.0 Findings and Discussions

The study sought to assess students' perceptions regarding the role of peer counselling in enhancing discipline within their school environment. The student cohort was presented with a variety of statements, and responses were recorded by using a Likert-type instrument (Table 4.4). The above analysis showed that attitudinal orientations towards guidance and counselling services were generally positive, with the mean values showing a value growing above 4.00 in the scale, which is approved as a strong agreement amongst the participants. Most of the respondents (56.6 % indicated agreement, 34.3 % indicated strong agreement) agreed that guidance and counselling resources were readily available in their school, with an average score of M=4.25 (SD= o.610). Such an outcome implicates that students find their institutional context sufficient to support counselling programs.

Students also stated confidence in the teacher dedication to the counselling process with 52.0% reporting agreement and 34.3% reported strong belief that teachers are willing to counsel the students in guidance and counselling despite the temporal pressures which are involved. Mean of M=4.21 (SD=0.663) supports an interpretation of high educator-support in strengthening counseling activities.

Regarding the outcomes of counselling, students agreed that the process helps them make sound value judgments and decisions. With 50.5% in agreement and 34.8% strongly agreeing, the statement that counselling helps students decide what is right, responsible, and realistic attained a mean of 4.20 (SD = 0.676). This underscores the perceived developmental role of counselling in promoting self-awareness and ethical behaviour.

Interestingly, the statement that "group counselling is rarely practiced in this school" also received high levels of agreement (51.0% agreed and 35.9% strongly agreed), with a mean score of 4.23 (SD = 0.664). This implies that while students recognize the value of counselling, group counselling is not commonly implemented, suggesting a potential gap in service provision. Contrary to negative attitudes that might undermine counselling efforts, students strongly rejected the notion that teachers consider guidance and counselling services a waste of time.

A combined 88.4% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, yielding a mean score of 4.29 (SD = 0.663), the highest among all items. This indicates that students perceive a high level of institutional support for counselling services. Moreover, students acknowledged that behavioural problems among learners could be linked to the lack of proper counselling. With a mean score of 4.21 (SD = 0.680), the statement that misbehaviour can be attributed to the absence of appropriate guidance and counselling was supported by 49.5% agreement and 35.9% strong agreement, reinforcing the perceived preventative role of counselling.

An interesting 52.0% of those surveyed replied in the affirmative and 36.4% in the affirmative that more favourable school discipline results with individual counselling leading to a mean score of 4.255 (SD = 0.649). The observation underscores the role played by individual counselling sessions in dealing with behavioural problems of students. Regarding the quality of counselling relationship, nearly 47.0 per cent of students agreed and 36.4 per cent strongly agreed to the idea that guidance and counselling provide a supportive environment, which is warm, and accepting. This one had a mean score of 4.20 (SD 0.703), which validated the fact that counselling is associated with the development of a caring and empathetic environment. Lastly, the assertion that guidance and counselling has enabled students to cope with their problems showed the lowest top mean score of 4.04 (SD =0.644) but it is positive. Although 58.6 per cent of people indicated that they agreed, only 22.7 per

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cent strongly agreed. These statistics indicate that despite the general expectation that counselling is positive in nature, its role in empowering students might not be well actualised among the entire student population.

The present results imply that, peer-counselling programmes in schools must be formalised as part of the disciplinary control practices of schools. Early identification of behavioural issues and their mitigation can be improved by training peer counsellors and incorporating them with the teacher counsellors. Further, the expansion of group counselling programs will probably promote team building, understanding, and collective problem-solving among the student body consequently leading to the development of a positive school culture. The policymakers would thus consider investing more resources in guidance and counselling departments to enable capacity building and sustainability.

Table 4.1: Students perspective on role of peer counselling in enhancing discipline

Statement	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
There is adequate resources for guidance and counselling	9.1	56.6	34.3	4.25	0.61
Teachers are willing to subject students to Guidance and Counselling despite its demand in terms of time.	13.6	52.0	34.3	4.21	0.66
The counselling process helps students to make value judgments about their own behaviour and decide to do what is right, responsible and realistic	14.6	50.5	34.8	4.20	0.67
Group counselling is rarely practiced in this school	13.1	51.0	35.9	4.23	0.66
Teachers consider guidance and counselling services a waste of time	11.6	48.0	40.4	4.29	0.66
Cases where learners do not behave according to accepted standards can be attributed to lack of appropriate guidance and counselling	14.6	49.5	35.9	4.21	0.68
Better discipline outcomes in this school are realized through individual counselling	11.6	52.0	36.4	4.25	0.64
Guidance and counselling denotes the presence of a helping relationship characterized by warmth and acceptance	16.7	47.0	36.4	4.20	0.70
Guidance and counselling has empowered students in this school to own and manage their problem	18.7	58.6	22.7	4.04	0.644
N = 198					

Source: Field Data 2025

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4.2 Regression Results

To assess the influence of various factors on student discipline, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The model included three predictor variables: the role of the students' council in enhancing discipline, the role of peer counselling, and the challenges faced by the students' council. The dependent variable was a composite measure of student discipline, derived from multiple Likert-scale items assessing obedience, punctuality, attendance, uniform compliance, and general behaviour.

The model was statistically significant, $F(3, 36) = 20.6$, $p < 0.001$, indicating a good fit for predicting discipline based on the selected variables. The findings show that the three predictors explain approximately 67.4% of the variance in student discipline (Table 4.10). Specifically, student council role had a statistically significant negative association with discipline issues ($\beta = -0.275$, $p = 0.020$), indicating that stronger student council involvement corresponds with improved discipline (fewer issues).

Peer counselling had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.364$, $p = 0.004$), suggesting that robust peer counselling systems enhance student discipline. Challenges facing the student council emerged as the most influential factor ($\beta = 0.591$, $p < 0.001$), meaning that the presence of unresolved challenges significantly worsens discipline outcomes. The regression results are presented in Table 4.10.

The regression results underscore that active student councils and robust peer counselling programs play a critical role in maintaining school discipline. The findings suggest that schools where student councils are empowered and properly integrated into governance experience fewer disciplinary issues. Strengthening peer counselling mechanisms also leads to better student behavior and emotional adjustment.

However, the significant negative effect of council challenges highlights the need for schools and policymakers to address systemic obstacles such as lack of administrative support, inadequate training, and peer resistance. Addressing these barriers can enhance the council's efficiency and create a more collaborative environment for discipline management. These results point to the necessity for institutional investment in student leadership development, continuous mentorship, and policy frameworks that formalize student councils' role in decision-making and discipline enforcement.

Multiple regression results for predictors of student discipline

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Beta (β)	*t*	*p*-value
(Constant)	3.021	0.316		9.566	0.00
Student Council Role (X1)	-0.221	0.091	-0.275	-2.427	0.02

5.0 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

The study revealed that both students and deputy headteachers recognize peer counselling as a vital tool in promoting responsible behaviour among students. Over 70% of student respondents agreed that individual counselling helped them make value-based decisions, a finding echoed by 90% of deputy headteachers who believed peer counselling empowered students to manage their behaviour effectively. These findings align with Kariithi et al. (2022), who emphasized that peer counselling interventions significantly contribute to behavioural management in schools.

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Similarly, Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) found that peer counsellors play a crucial role in enhancing student discipline by addressing issues such as absenteeism, truancy, and drug abuse. However, the limited use of group counselling, as reported by 52% of students, suggests that peer support mechanisms are underutilized. This underutilization may reflect a lack of trained personnel, time constraints, or inadequate infrastructure, as noted by Viashima et al. (2024), who highlighted the need for sensitization of school administrators on the benefits of peer counselling. Peer counselling was identified as a vital component of the student discipline system. Principals unanimously acknowledged that peer counselors were more approachable and effective in addressing sensitive issues such as bullying, substance abuse, and mental health concerns. These findings are consistent with research by Wanjugu (2022), who highlight the therapeutic value of peer-based interventions in fostering emotional support and early detection of behavioral problems.

5.2 Conclusions

This study explored the role of peer counselling, student councils, and school rules and regulations in promoting student discipline in public secondary schools. The following key conclusions were drawn:

i. Student councils are instrumental in enforcing discipline and mediating peer conflicts, especially when democratically elected and well-supported. Their effectiveness is amplified when they are visibly recognized, formally trained, and integrated into governance structures.
ii. Both students and deputy principals recognize peer counselling as a valuable tool for fostering responsible behaviour and emotional regulation. However, its impact is constrained by inadequate institutional support, limited training, and underutilization of group counselling methods.
iii. Despite their potential, student councils often face peer resistance, social stigma, lack of administrative support, and external interference from parents and the community. These challenges hinder their authority, morale, and overall effectiveness.

5.3 Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and school administrations should invest in well-resourced counselling units, train more school counsellors, and promote the integration of group counselling in school routines. Student leaders should be formally recognized through visible identifiers (e.g., uniforms and badges), structured roles, and leadership training programs. Safe, confidential reporting channels should be established to support their work.

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