

Original Research Article

THE ROLE PLAYED BY STUDENTS' GOVERNMENT IN MANAGING DISCIPLINE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

The study aimed at assessing the role played by students' government in managing discipline in public secondary schools in Bukoba municipality, Kagera, Tanzania. This study adopted the Behaviourist Theory by Skinner in 1904 with a convergent parallel research design supported by a mixed methods research approach. The participants were 120 (i.e., 15 HoSs, 15 HBs, 15 HGs, and 90 SLs). Data collection instruments were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings have indicated that, prevalent student's misbehaviours are the use of abusive words among students and to teachers and stealing of others' property; others are students' absenteeism in school without excuse, lateness to school and failure to complete assignments and exercises provided by the teacher. In regard to the involvement of students' leaders in the formulation of rules and regulations, findings have established that, students' leaders are not given an opportunity by the teachers to provide their views on the already prepared school rules and regulations or students' participate in the preparation of school rules and regulations. On the issue of the challenges encountered by students' leaders, findings show that, students' leaders are challenged with irregular meetings which interfere with academic calendars, lack of feedback from teachers and failure by the students to take instructions from the council. Other challenges failure to complete class assignments and exercises on time, lack of cooperation from students and lack of enough time to engage in private studies. On the last aspect of strategies employed by students' leaders in alleviating indiscipline cases in public secondary schools, students' responses have shown that, students' leaders inflict corporal punishments to their deviant fellow students or verbal warnings or guidance and counselling groups. Based on the findings above, suggestions and recommendations for practice and further researches are provided.

Key Words: Role, students' government, students' discipline, management, public secondary school

1. INTRODUCTION

The discipline of students in schools all over the world needs more attention from various education stakeholders including teachers, parents, donors, organizations and the whole

community (Emekako, 2016). Mlay (2017) and, Liguluka and Onyango (2020) argue that, students' discipline in schools is a pillar of effective teaching and learning which results in improved academic performance, upholds students' moral values (Mpokera, 2019), creates good school image leading to the production of quality education (Simelane, 2017).

According to Nnebedum and Akinfolarin (2018), discipline is an act of behaving in accordance with values, beliefs, rules and the code of conduct of a certain society or the school with the purpose of not to compel individuals to obey without questioning, but to help them control themselves, develop love and trust relationships between individuals; discipline, therefore, is the determination and implementation of rules that enable individuals to respect rights and freedoms of each other (Yavuzer, 2016).

Studies establish that, ineffective management of indiscipline cases in schools can cause negative consequences not only to teachers and students but also to the whole community (Kamau, 2017; UNESCO, 2016). For example, Moigua (2019) argues that, students fail to follow specific instructions from the authorities, leave the classrooms without permission, become dishonest to authorities and friends, and vandalism of properties while Manasi and Andiemba (2021) are of the views that, students become violent leading to property destructions and loss of lives of some people.

Global studies indicate that, where students' governments have been involved in the management of students' discipline by the school administrations, the respective schools have experienced the great reduction of students' deviant behaviors. For example, In Austria, Slovenia, Switzerland and Finland, secondary schools very often, collect and incorporate students' voices in any decision made in schools including management of students' discipline

issues (Cato, 2018). In Zambia, Mbonyonga (2018) established that, students' councils were involved in the decision-making process about school route and on management of students' discipline. They were involved in the making of school rules, maintained discipline by enhancing good behaviour by initiating a campaign against vandalism of school property and graffiti. A similar case was in Kenya, where Ikiugu, Maithya, and Kisirkoi (2021) submitted that, strikes in schools, failure to adhere to school rules and regulations, students' absenteeism, teenage pregnancy cases, drugs, vandalism, pre-marital sexes and mobile phones have decreased due to the involvement of students' councils in the management of students' discipline.

In Tanzania, studies continue to indicate that, indiscipline cases in public secondary schools are rampant and in all these instances, the management of the same were under teachers, parents and school boards. For instance, Liguluka and Onyango (2020) (Ulanga district-Morogoro), Mpokera (2019) (Dodoma Urban and Chamwino districts-Dodoma) and Beyanga (2018) (Ngara district-Kagera). Despite, student's governments are a statutory requirement in every public secondary school and they were available, studies indicate that, the same were less involved in maintaining their fellows' discipline. For example, Simeo and Tangi, (2022) in Ilemela district public secondary schools found that, teachers were not involving students' leaders in curbing student's indiscipline cases. This situation motivated the researcher to assess effectiveness of students' governments in managing discipline in public secondary schools in Bukoba municipality, Kagera, Tanzania.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to assess *the role played by students' government in managing discipline in public secondary schools in Bukoba municipality, Kagera, Tanzania.*

Specifically, the study sought to address the following specific objectives:

1. To identify prevalent student's misbehaviours,
2. To find out the extent of student's government involvement in the formulation of rules and regulations,
3. To analyze the challenges encountered by the student's leaders in handling students' disciplinary matters, and
4. To explore various strategies employed by students' leaders in alleviating indiscipline cases.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Prevalent Student's Misbehaviours

In Turkey, Çetinkaya and Koçyiğit (2020) conducted a study on the “disciplinary cases at the high schools.” The findings showed that, fighting, possessing or smoking tobacco products, disrupting the course flow, behaving rudely and disrespectfully, molesting, insulting and slandering friends with words and behavior, cheating, absenteeism without excuse, behaving inappropriately against national and moral values, not complying with the provisions of regulation of dress, information technology offenses, carrying tools for gambling, damaging school, taking and using others' belongings without permission, bringing and using wounding or killing tools in the educational environment, ruining the order in the dorm and using or keeping addictive substances were indiscipline cases occurring in schools. Beyanga (2018) conducted a study in Ngara district, Kagera, Tanzania, on the “effects of indiscipline on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools.” The findings of the study revealed that, abusive

languages, love engagement affairs and theft cases were found to be indiscipline cases in schools.

3.2 Involvement in the Formulation of School Rules and Regulations

In Indonesia, Prasetyarini, Hikmat, and Thoyibi (2021) conducted a study on “strategies to cope with students’ discipline problems in senior high schools.” The study established that, teachers were not involving students in setting classroom rules. Ikiugu, Maithya, and Kisirkoi (2021) conducted a study in Meru County, Kenya on the “impact of students’ council’s involvement in school policy formulation on school discipline in public secondary schools.” The findings revealed that, students’ councils were not involved by the school administration in the formulation of school rules and regulations concerning students’ discipline. In Tanzania, Lumanija and Mkulu (2020) conducted a study in Bariadi district council on the “roles of students’ council involvement in management of discipline in public secondary schools.” The findings revealed that, students’ councils were highly involved in enforcing school rules and regulations.

3.3 Challenges Encountered in Handling Students’ Disciplinary Matters

Mboyonga (2018) conducted a study in Zambia on the “role of student representative councils in curbing students’ riots in selected secondary schools.” The major challenges which affected the efficacy of student councils were bureaucracy, adult domination, tokenism and teachers’ oppositions; others included lack of feedback and training, and irregular meetings which interfered the academic calendar. In Tanzania, Kambuga and Omollo (2017) conducted a study in Arusha region on the “students’ leadership role and challenges in secondary schools.” The study divulged that, students’ leaders missed some lessons while attending their fellows’ matters and failed to complete class assignments on time.

3.4 Strategies Employed by students' leaders in Alleviating Indiscipline Cases

Magdalene, Michael, and Maurice (2019) conducted a study on the “students’ conceptions of role of guidance and counselling in discipline management in secondary schools in Kenya.” The study found that, students were suspended and/or expelled from schools if they committed grievous offences. Further, they were excluded from class, knelt down, caned or did manual work. In Tanzania, Simeo and Tangi (2022) conducted a study in Ilemela district, Mwanza on the “strategies used by heads of secondary schools in managing students' discipline for academic achievement.” The study revealed that, strategies employed by students’ leaders in alleviating indiscipline cases in public secondary schools, students’ responses have shown that, students’ leaders inflict corporal punishments to their deviant fellow students or verbal warnings or guidance and counseling groups and strong rules and regulations were enacted.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 120 informants participated in the study. These included: 15 HBs, 15 HGs, and 90 SLs. Table 1 below, summarises the total respondents who were involved in the study.

Table 1: Sample of the Study

Respondents' Category	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Head Boys (HBs)	15	12.5
Head Girls (HG)	15	12.5
Other Students' Leaders (SLs)	90	75.0
Total	120	100.0

The study used simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Simple random sampling technique was used to get 15 HoSs and 90 SLs. This technique was useful because it gave a chance for each and every respondent being equally included or excluded in the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 15 HBs, 15 HGs and 15 GSs. This technique was used

because the researcher to with the researcher their personal experiences, feelings, thoughts, aspirations, attitudes and perceptions about the reality on the roles played by students' government in managing students' discipline in schools.

4.2 Instruments for Data Collection and Analysis

A list of well-structured and close-ended questions were used to collect quantitative data from students' leaders. This instrument was employed because it reduced bias and it helped to collect information in a very short time within a large group of people (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Semi-structured interview guides were used to gather qualitative data from HBs and HGs. This instrument was opted for because it enabled the researcher to probe more information (Ruslin *et al.*, 2022) which would not have been collected from questionnaires.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Prevalent Students' Misbehaviours

Findings regarding the computation of descriptive statistics on prevalent students' misbehaviours are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Prevalent Student's Misbehaviours (n=135)

Activities	Responses		Interpretation
	M	SD	
Use of abusive words to friends and teachers	3.86	1.28	Agree
Stealing of others' property	3.79	1.32	Agree
Absenteeism in school without excuse	3.78	1.30	Agree
Lateness to school	3.70	1.19	Agree
Failing to complete assignments and exercises	3.64	1.24	Agree
Noisemaking in class	3.54	1.32	Agree
Fighting	3.51	1.22	Agree
Examination malpractices	3.43	1.26	Agree

Source: Field Data Analysis (2023)

Findings show that, students perceive that, prevalent student's misbehaviours in public secondary schools arise from use of abusive words among students and to teachers (M=3.86, SD=1.28) and stealing of others' property (M=3.79, SD=1.32). These findings are supported by the majority of HoSs who argued through interview that, students at their schools steal other students' properties and use impolite languages to their fellow students as evidenced in the following narration:

"In the school I am studying, the prevalent misbehaviours exhibited by students are truancy, fighting, making noise in classes, lateness to school and failure to do exercises provided to them by the teachers." (HG-B, 14 May, 2023, 09:25 A.M).

5.2 Involvement of Students' Government in the Formulation of Rules and Regulations

Findings regarding the computation of descriptive statistics on involvement of students' government in the formulation of rules and regulations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Student's Government Involvement in the Formulation of Rules and Regulations (n=135)

Activities	Responses		Interpretation
	M	SD	
Students' leaders are given an opportunity to provide their views on the already prepared school rules and regulations	2.63	1.45	Disagree
Students' leaders participate in the preparation of school rules and regulations	2.40	1.36	Disagree
Students' leaders are allowed to make rules on co-curricular activities (sports, games or cultural trips).	2.29	1.37	Disagree
Students' leaders are allowed to formulate rules concerning the design of school uniforms	2.26	1.33	Disagree
Students' leaders are given an opportunity to give proposals before school rules and regulations are prepared	2.24	1.31	Disagree

Source: Field Data Analysis (2023)

Findings show that, students' leaders are not given an opportunity by the teachers to provide their views on the already prepared school rules and regulations (M=2.63, SD=1.45) and also do not participate in the preparation of school rules and regulations (M=2.40, SD=1.36). Furthermore, students' leaders are not allowed to make rules on co-curricular activities (sports, games or cultural trips) (M=2.29, SD=1.37), allowed to formulate rules concerning the design of school uniforms (M=2.26, SD=1.33) or given an opportunity to give proposals before school rules and regulations are prepared (M=2.24, SD=1.31). Findings from interview responses by majority of the HBs and HGs indicate that, student's government involvement in the formulation of rules and regulations students is not done in schools because the school rules and regulations available at schools are already set by the government as it is in the following quotation:

"We are not involved in the formulation of school rules and regulations. The reason is simple. This is because the government has already formulated the same and there is no room for more opinions." (HB-C, 15 May, 2023, 08:00 A.M).

5.3 Challenges Encountered by Student's Leaders in Handling Students' Disciplinary Matters

Findings regarding the computation of descriptive statistics on challenges encountered by student's leaders in handling students' disciplinary matters are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Challenges Encountered by Student's Leaders (n=135)

Activities	Responses		Interpretation
	M	SD	
Irregular meetings which interfere with academic calendars	3.78	1.36	Agree
Lack of feedback from teachers	3.76	1.31	Agree
Failure by the students to take instructions from the council	3.64	1.29	Agree
Failure to complete class assignments and exercises on time	3.63	1.29	Agree
Lack of cooperation from students	3.62	1.37	Agree
Lack of enough time to engage in private studies	3.61	1.34	Agree
Teachers' oppositions	2.22	1.34	Disagree

Source: Field Data Analysis (2023)

Findings show that, students' leaders encounter several challenges in school as they were analysed by the students. These challenges have been found to be that, students' leaders have irregular meetings which interfere with academic calendars (M=3.78, SD=1.36, lack of feedback from teachers (M=3.76, SD=1.31 and failure by the students to take instructions from the council (M=3.64, SD=1.29). These findings are in line with the interview responses from the majority of HoSs who argued that:

"We are not involved in the formulation of school rules and regulations. The reason is simple. This is because the government has already formulated the same and there is no room for more opinions." (HB-C, 15 May, 2023, 08:00 A.M).

Other challenges students' leaders encounter include failure to complete class assignments and

exercises on time ($M=3.63$, $SD=1.29$) and lack of cooperation from students ($M=3.62$, $SD=1.37$). These findings are in support by the interview responses from the majority of HGs who reported that:

“My fellow students’ leaders fail to complete various assignments provided by their teachers simply because they are burdened by leadership obligations.”

(HG-A, 16 May, 2023, 08:15 A.M).

They also lack enough time to engage in private studies ($M=3.61$, $SD=1.34$). These findings are supported by the interview responses from the majority of HoSs who indicate that:

“Students’ leaders encounter several challenges in my school. They lack sufficient time to take private studies and some of students bully them.” (HoS-

F, 16 May, 2023, 08:20 A.M).

5.4 Strategies Employed by students’ leaders in Alleviating Indiscipline Cases

Findings regarding the computation of descriptive statistics on strategies employed by students’ leaders in alleviating indiscipline cases are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Strategies Employed by Heads of Public Secondary Schools in Alleviating Indiscipline Cases (n=135)

Activities	Responses		Interpretation
	M	SD	
Report on indiscipline and minor disciplinary issues to parents/guardians	3.98	1.20	Agree
Use verbal warnings to the defiant students	3.89	1.27	Agree
Motivational programs spotting the best-disciplined students and propose them to be awarded by the administration	3.78	1.34	Agree

Source: Field Data Analysis (2023)

5.2.4 To Identify Various Strategies Employed by Students' Leaders in Alleviating Indiscipline Cases

The findings show that, students' leaders employ various strategies in alleviating indiscipline cases in public secondary schools. Students' responses have shown that, heads of public secondary schools use corporal punishments to discipline their fellow students ($M=3.89$, $SD=1.27$). The findings above are also supported by the assertion by the majority of the HGs who argued that, among the common strategies used by the same in alleviating indiscipline cases at schools include infliction of corporal punishments to students as indicated in the following quotation:

"Some students do not adhere to our instructions. We were allowed by our teachers to discipline defiant students by giving several strokes or other heavy punishments in order to deter their bad behaviours." (HG-G, 16 May, 2023, 08:25 A.M).

Another HG added:

"We use guidance and counselling groups to students with bad behaviours....."
(HG-H, 16 May, 2023, 08:30 A.M).

Findings show that, some HoSs use verbal warnings to defiant students ($M=3.78$, $SD=1.34$). Heads of schools also report indiscipline and minor disciplinary issues to parents/guardians ($M=3.74$, $SD=1.26$). This finding is supported by interview responses from the majority of HBs who argued:

"I sometimes give several warnings to the defiant students before further actions are taken. If they rectify their bad behaviours, they are encouraged to

continue in that direction; but when they fail, I involve teachers.” (HB-I, 16
May, 2023, 08:35 A.M).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Prevalent Student’s Misbehaviours

Findings from students’ responses have shown that, prevalent student’s misbehaviours in public secondary schools were the use of abusive words among students and to teachers and stealing of others’ property. These findings are in line with the findings of Çetinkaya and Koçyiğit (2020) who reported that, insulting and slandering friends with words and taking and using others’ belongings without permission were indiscipline cases occurring in schools. This study is also supported by the one of Beyanga (2018) who also reported that, abusive languages and theft cases were some of the indiscipline cases prevailing in schools. Furthermore, other students’ misbehaviours included students’ absenteeism in school without excuse, lateness to school and failure to complete assignments and exercises provided by the teacher. These findings concur with those of Ndaita (2016) who reported that, prevalent students’ misbehaviours at schools were noise making and failing to complete assignments; others were sneaking out of school and stealing another students’ property. Mwangi and Kiriimi (2023), and Matimba and Mwansa (2023) have recently found that, students’ misbehaviours in secondary schools have been, among others, truancy, rudeness among students and teachers and fighting; others have been failing to complete school work and theft. Other findings include noisemaking in class, fighting and examination malpractices. These views are in line with the findings of Amaewhule and Nukan-Adebayo (2019) who reported that, examination malpractices, fighting, lateness to school and noisemaking were the common students’ indiscipline cases. These findings are also supported by

those of Atunde and Aliyu (2019) who reported that, bullying among students and teachers and cheating in examinations were the most prevalent misbehaviours in schools.

6.2 Involvement of Student's Government in the Formulation of Rules and Regulations

In regard to the involvement of students' leaders in the formulation of rules and regulations, findings have established that, students' leaders are not given an opportunity by teachers to provide their views on the already prepared school rules and regulations. This finding agrees with the findings of Ikiugu, Maithya, and Kisirkoi (2021) who reported that, students' councils were not involved by the school administration in the formulation of school rules and regulations concerning students' discipline. Contrary views are provided by Fekadu (2019) who reported that, students were involved in the formulation of the school rules and regulations concerning students' discipline. Findings continue to show that, students' leaders do not participate in the preparation of school rules and regulations. This finding is supported by the findings of Akech, Ngwacho, and Nyatuka (2022), and Prasetyarini, Hikmat, and Thoyibi (2021) who reported that, teachers were not involving students in setting classroom rules. Contrary to the findings above, Lumanija and Mkulu (2020) reported that, students' councils were highly involved in setting and enforcing school rules and regulations. Furthermore, students' leaders are not allowed to make rules on co-curricular activities or allowed to formulate rules concerning the design of school uniforms. This observation concurs with that of Vasquez and Javillonar (2021) who reported that, students' leaders were not involved in the choice of school uniforms and design the situation which led to the violation of school uniform policy at schools. They are not given an opportunity to give proposals before school rules and regulations are prepared. This finding is contrary to that of Maingi, Maithya, Mulwa and Migosi (2017) who reported that, students were involved in the formulation of school rules the situation that led to high levels of students'

discipline.

6.3 Challenges Encountered by Student's Leaders in Handling Students' Disciplinary Matters

On the issue of the challenges encountered by students' leaders, findings from students have shown that, students' leaders are challenged with irregular meetings which interfere with academic calendars and lack of feedback from teachers. These views are in line with the findings of Kuria and Muthui (2019), and Mboyonga (2018) who reported that, encounter teachers' oppositions; lack of feedback from teachers and irregular meetings which interfered their academic calendar. Students' leaders are also challenged with failure by the students to take instructions from the council. This finding is supported by the findings of Nekesa (2018) and Murage (2017) who reported that, the challenges experienced by the students' council in maintaining discipline among students were lack of cooperation from their fellows and failure by the students to take instructions from the council. Other challenges students' leaders encounter include failure to complete class assignments and exercises on time, lack of cooperation from students and lack of enough time to engage in private studies. These findings are in line with those of Murage, Njoka, and Gachahi (2019), and Kambuga and Omollo (2017) who reported that, students' leaders missed some lessons while attending their fellows' matters, failed to complete class assignments on time and lack of teamwork among students and students' leaders. These observations are also supported by Chumo, Ochieng, and Kipkoech (2017) who reported that, students' leaders performed poorly because they used much of their time dealing with indiscipline cases among students' drug abusers.

6.4 Various Strategies Employed by students' leaders in Alleviating Indiscipline Cases

On the last aspect of strategies employed by students' leaders in alleviating indiscipline cases in public secondary schools, students' responses have shown that, students' leaders inflict corporal punishments to their deviant fellow students or verbal warnings or guidance and counselling groups. These observations are supported by Luti-Mallei *et al.*, (2023) who reported that, student leaders' have been participating in school peer counseling programs. They also employed spies to gather information which would create an unpeaceful school environment. Other observations were made by Paul (2020) who found that, students' leaders were given permission by teachers to punish their indisciplined fellow students.

Findings have shown that, students' leaders employ various strategies in alleviating indiscipline in schools. It is suggested that, the same should use guidance and counselling and abandon corporal punishments

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