Relationship between Principals' Democratic Leadership Style and Students' Conformity to Rules in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT:

This study sought to examine the relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and students' conformity to regulations in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the Social Control theory by Hirschi (1969). The study adopted a correlational research design. The target population was 338 principals, 338 deputy principals, 3426 teachers and 116,374 students in 338 public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. 100 schools were selected using stratified random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select 100 Principals, while proportionate and simple random sampling was used to select 346 teachers and 383 students. Ten per cent of the Deputy Principals were selected. Questionnaires were used to collect data from Principals, teachers, and students, while interviews were used to collect data from Deputy Principals. Test-retest reliability revealed a coefficient of 0.70, indicating that the instruments were reliable. The findings revealed a statistically significant between principals use of democratic leadership style and students' conformity to school rules ($r=0.334$; $p<0.05$). It was concluded that the democratic leadership style, when used by principals in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya, enhances students' conformity to school rules. The findings will help school principals to fully embrace democratic leadership style to enhance students' conformity to school rules. The study also recommends that the administration develops a process for handling students' non-conformity issues in a calm, consistent and supportive manner. The study also recommends, principals should involve all stakeholders, for instance, teachers, students and parents in developing school rules and policies that affect students.

Key Terms: Democratic, Leadership, Style, Conformity, Rules

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INTRODUCTION

Stakeholders in education in Nakuru County have expressed great concern over high levels of students' non-conformity to school rules (Education task force, 2015). The Quality Assurance and Standards Officer Nakuru County (2018) further confirms that there have been several reported cases of students' non-conformity to school rules related to the destruction of school property, absenteeism, truancy, cheating in examinations, mass walkout from schools, teenage pregnancies, drug and substance abuse, stealing, fights, bullying, coming to school late among others. From the background of the study, it is clear that there is a problem of students' non-conformity to school rules. Efforts have been made by various task forces and subsequent implementation of their recommendations. However, students' non-conformity to rules continues to occur in public secondary schools. This problem will lead to high indiscipline levels among students if not addressed and thereby continue to cause poor academic performance. This study was undertaken to establish the relationship between principals' leadership styles and students' conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

The principal, by virtue of being a leader in a secondary school, is the foundation around which many aspects of the school revolve. Bierly et al. (2016) observe that it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that students conform to school rules at all times for the institution to achieve its goals. Nzuve (2013) states that although leadership is a shared responsibility, the leadership style used by the principal largely determines the conformity of students to school rules. Kendra (2017) identifies three major leadership styles used by principals in school. These are autocratic leadership style, where the leader makes the decisions independently with little or no support from the team members even if their contribution would be

beneficial. Democratic leadership style according to Kendra (2017), emphasizes the participation of both the leader and the group members in the decision-making process. This implies that decisions about institutional issues are arrived at after consultation and communication with various stakeholders. Finally; Laissez-faire leadership style is where the leader gives complete freedom to the members to make decisions without leadership input. This means that the principal tends to avoid power and authority.

A survey of the National Union of Teachers in England by Neill (2008) found that students' non-conformity to school rules was on the increase. A similar study by Hayden (2009) noted deviance and violence in schools in England. This seems to indicate that student's worldwide exhibit some form of non-conformity to school rules. Bonny (2012) found that Kenyan secondary schools have rules and regulations designed to assist students in conforming to the expected norms of the society. This means that students' conformity to school rules is essential in moulding students to be better citizens in their countries and the world at large. However, research by Bonny (2012) found that some students fail to abide by the school rules. Kuria (2012), Rianga (2013) and Mbogoria (2012) established that principals' leadership styles have a considerable influence on students' conformity to school rules. This means that the use of an appropriate leadership style can significantly influence students' conformity to school rules. The studies done seem not to agree on the leadership style that most predicts students' conformity to school rules. The Quality Assurance and Standards Officer Nakuru County (2018) agrees with the report of a task force formed by the Director of Education, Nakuru County (2015) reported high levels of students' non-conformity to school rules. This study was undertaken to establish the relationship between principals' democratic leadership

style and students' conformity to school rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Democratic leadership style comprises of decentralization of authority, participatory planning and mutual communication by the leaders and their subordinates Animut (2014). Muhammad et al. (2015) affirm that leaders who use the democratic leadership style encourage students to participate in the decision-making process. Muhammad et al. (2015) further state that a democratic principle makes the students aware of everything that pertains to their welfare, shares decision making, and problem-solving responsibilities. This, therefore, implies that the principal should be a coach who gathers information from students and the staff before making the final decision. Tschannen and Gareis (2015) observe that democratic leaders influence the management of students and teachers. The authors further observe that where subordinates feel trusted and involved in the decision-making process, productivity is very high. This implies that principals should strive to involve all stakeholders in the decision-making process if they expect high productivity. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (2003) further note that a democratic leader shares authority, responsibility and decision making processes with the subordinates. This means that a democratic leader values the opinions of others. The leader must be an excellent communicator and a good listener for the effective management of the school. The studies by Tschannen and Gareis (2015) and Tannenbaum and Schmidt (2003) looked at the influence of democratic leadership style and productivity. The current study was undertaken to establish the relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and students' conformity to rules in public secondary schools.

In another study, Owiti (2016) found that the democratic leadership style had a positive impact on students'

conformity to school rules. This is in agreement with Alexander (2018) who points out that dialogue and involvement of students in decision making on matters affecting them make the students own the school policies since the students are self-directed and will always support school administration. Ali et al. (2014), however, differs with Owiti (2016) and Alexander (2018) on the idea of students' participation in decision making. Ali et al. (2013) associate non-conformity to school rules to too much freedom given to students. This shows differing opinions on which style most predicts students' conformity to school rule. In conclusion, democratic leaders allow students to participate in the formulation of school rules. Most studies have established high conformity by students to school rules when a democratic leadership style is applied by principals. However, other studies have noted that the style is not effective in all situations. This study sought further investigation to determine the relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and students' conformity to rule in public secondary school.

In educational institutions, students must conform to school rules for effective implementation of the prescribed curriculum. One of the regulations related to learning is that students must do all assignments given by subject teachers. Gregory and Weinstein (2008) established the existence of defiance, insubordination and disrespect among students in the USA High schools. This implies that non-conformity to school rules challenges the power and authority of a teacher. Koss (2011) observes that cheating in examinations is a worldwide phenomenon. The author indicates that 80 per cent of high school students in the USA admitted having cheated in examinations. This is a clear indication that a majority of students in high schools have not conformed to examination rules. There are many reported cases of non-conformity to rules related to bullying and fighting in Nigeria secondary schools. Omoteso (2010) reported that 88.1 per cent of participants

had been bullied, 33.1 per cent were bullies and 64.7 per cent had been involved in relational bullying while retaliation for bullying in the past was 51.1 per cent. This shows a great majority of students have not conformed to the rule of not bullying others. Drug survey in Kenya by NACADA (2012) found that one out of three students abuse one or more drugs. This clearly shows that some students have not conformed to school rules not to abuse drugs and alcohol.

Kirui et al. (2011) established that schools in Kisii County, Kenya reported students' non- conformity by flouting safety and security rules. The authors noted cases of theft, students fighting in school, arson attacks, and vandalism, among others. Cheloti et al. (2014) established that principals and the deputy principal were to blame for not allowing the students to participate in the decision-making process. This implies that students have not conformed to rules related to their welfare. In conclusion, students' conformity to regulations relating to safety and security, provision of school meals and use of school facilities, have been violated. The causes of such violations are not clear hence need to establish the relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and students' conformity to rules related to their welfare.

This study was based on the social control Theory by Hirschi (1969). The theory posits that people follow the rules and regulations because of the social bond. Jenkins (1997) and Stewart (2003) observe that social bond is a sense of belonging or social ties that make one conform to rules and regulations in the organization. The authors further observe that if the bond is not strong enough, it results in non-commitment to rules and regulations. The authors opine that some students may perceive rules and regulations as an infringement on their freedom while others may see them as liberating.

Kwayu (2014) states that school rules represent an important control mechanism to which the students conform to. The author establishes that there are four social bonds in the conventional society; attachment to others, commitment to conformity, involvement in conventional activities and belief in the value of legitimacy of the convention. These four elements may determine how students behave in school (Stewart, 2003). In a school setting, the principal should seek to strengthen the social bond of students through involving them in the formulation of rules. Jenkins (1997) looks at a school as an essential mechanism of social control. The school principal can control students' behaviour regardless of other significant background factors. Despite researches that support the tenets of social control theory, some scholars like Gibbon (1994) have questioned whether the notions of self-control as proposed by Hirschi (1969) can explain more offending severe behaviour. Social control theory critics contend that the theory may be better able to explain minor offences but does not adequately account for more serious offences. The theory was preferred for this study because the principal by virtue of being a leader in a secondary school is the foundation around which many aspects of the school revolve. It is the responsibility of the principal to create strong social bonds among students to ensure their conformity to school rules.

This study adopted a correlational research design. This design accredited the researcher to evaluate the degree of relationship that exists between two or more variables. The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The County is divided into eleven administrative Sub- Counties namely; Nakuru East, Nakuru West, Naivasha, Rongai, Subukia, Njoro, Molo, Nakuru North, Kuresoi South, Kuresoi North and Gilgil. The study population comprised of 338 principals, 338 deputy Principals, 3,426 teachers and 116,374 students (County Education office Ministry and TSC, 2018). The study

adopted a stratified random sampling procedure. In Nakuru County, there are 11 sub Counties which formed various strata of the study. The sample for schools was obtained through the formula given by Nassiuma (2000). This gave 100 schools which were randomly selected. The researcher used 10 per cent formula given by Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) to sample Deputy Principals. Thus a sample of 34 Deputy Principals was selected. The Principals, teachers and students were sampled using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. Thus 346 teachers and 383 students were

sampled. To obtain the sample for each school from each sub-county, proportionate and simple random sampling was computed as shown in table 1 and 2. Factor analysis was computed to ensure construct validity. It was observed that all items were valid as they were retained after factor loading above 0.30. The researcher used a test-retest reliability method to test the instruments. A correlation coefficient of the two sets was computed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The correlation of 0.70 was obtained and was acceptable as reliable (Stephanie, 2016).

Table 1: Sample Size for public schools and Teachers in Nakuru County

Sub-county	Number of schools	The sample size for schools	Number of teachers	The sample size for teachers	Number. of teachers sampled
Njoro	43	13	325	33	3
Nakuru East	18	6	480	48	8
Nakuru West	9	3	240	24	6
Naivasha	35	10	360	36	7
Rongai	43	13	375	38	3
Nakuru North	34	10	548	55	6
Subukia	22	7	180	18	3
Gilgil	35	10	302	31	3
Molo	33	9	310	32	4
Kuresoi North	32	9	150	15	2
Kuresoi South	34	10	156	16	2
TOTAL	338	100	3426	346	

Source: Author (2018)

Table 2: Sample Frame for public schools and Students in Nakuru County, Kenya.

Sub County	Number of Public Schools	Number of sampled schools	Number of students in Each sub-County	Sample of students	Number of students sampled in each school
Njoro	43	13	8816	29	3
Nakuru East	18	6	11351	37	9
Nakuru West	9	3	5520	18	9
Naivasha	35	10	12876	42	5

Rongai	43	13	13539	45	6
Nakuru North	34	10	15357	51	6
Subukia	22	7	7143	24	5
Gilgil	35	10	13016	43	5
Kuresoi South	34	9	7193	24	3
Kuresoi North	32	9	9446	31	4
Molo	33	9	12117	39	6
Totals	338	100	116374	383	

Source: Author (2018)

RESULTS

The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and students' conformity to rules in public secondary

schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The objective was analysed using percentages and correlation analysis. The following analysis was computed according to teachers' Data regarding principals' democratic leadership style.

Table 3: Principals 'Democratic Leadership Style (According to teachers' Data)

Statement	N	SD Strongly Disagree	D Disagree	N Neutral	A Agree	SA Strongly Agree
Most students in the general population are lazy	282	5.0%	12.8%	14.2%	40.1%	28.0%
For one to be a good leader, you have to provide guidance without pressure.	282	7.4%	13.8%	19.1%	23.0%	36.5%
Most students want frequent and supportive communication from their principal.	282	4.3%	11.3%	14.9%	38.7%	30.9%
Principals help students accept responsibility for their behaviour in school.	282	4.6%	9.9%	11.0%	32.3%	42.2%
It is the principals' job to help students' find their passion	282	4.6%	13.5%	14.9%	39.0%	28.0%
In general, it is best to leave students alone to make their own decisions.	282	5.7%	13.1%	11.3%	39.4%	30.5%

Democratic leadership style entails involving subordinates in the decision-making process. Republic of Kenya (2013) the Education Act requires the principals to involve students in the formulation of school rules and regulations.

According to Pareek (2010), democratic leadership is administration by consensus through consultation with parents and students. The study findings reveal that 68.1 per cent of the respondents agreed that most students in

the general population were lazy and therefore needed guidance from the principal. This implies that students in public secondary schools in Nakuru County were not adequately involved in the decision-making process because they were perceived to be lazy. The study results also indicate that students want frequent and supportive communication from their principal as affirmed by 69.6 per cent of the respondents. This implies that the students were not adequately consulted through communication in the decision-making process. Ratego (2013) affirms that schools whose leaders are democratic will produce high

team spirit, togetherness, and high conformity to organizational ethos by team members. The results indicate that principals should help students accept responsibility for their behaviour, as stated by 74.5 per cent of the respondents. The study findings revealed that the students in public secondary schools in Nakuru County had not been adequately involved in the decision-making process. This, therefore, could explain the reasons why students flout rules that have been formulated by the management to manage students' behaviour.

Table 4: Democratic Leadership style According to Principals' Data

Statement	N	SD Strongly Disagree	D Disagree	N Neutral	A Agree	SA Strongly Disagree
Most students in the general population are lazy	82	4.9%	4.9%	14.6%	37.8%	37.8%
For one to be a good leader, you have to provide guidance without pressure.	82	4.9%	13.4%	15.9%	22.0%	43.9%
Most students want frequent and supportive communication from their principal.	82	4.9%	4.9%	14.6%	37.8%	37.8%
Principals should help students accept responsibility for their behaviour in school.	82	3.7%	7.3%	12.2%	29.3%	47.6%
It is the principals' job to help students' find their passion	82	3.7%	4.9%	15.9%	40.2%	35.4%
In general, it is best to leave students alone to make their own decisions.	82	4.9%	4.9%	12.2%	39.0%	39.0%

Study findings in Table 4 indicate that 75.6 per cent of the principals observed that most students in the general population were lazy. The study also revealed that 65.9 per cent respondents further stated that the students needed guidance without pressure. This means that principals

should provide direction to students in order for them to come up with a code of conduct that is in line with legal provisions in education. Similarly, principals revealed that students should be guided on how to accept responsibility for their behaviour in school. This view is affirmed by 78 per

cent of the respondents who state that students should be allowed to make their own decisions. Karori et al. (2013) established that leaders who use this style encourage creativity, cohesion and high conformity by students to school rules. Findings also reveal that 75.6 per cent of the respondents stated that the principals' job was to help find their passion through discovery. This means that if students are given permission to explore the art of decision making, they will be creative and will also adhere to school rules. In conclusion, the findings indicate that students in Nakuru County have not been involved adequately in the decision-making process; thereby, this could explain why students were flouting school rules.

In testing the nature of the relationship between democratic Leadership Style and students' conformity to rules, Pearson's correlation test was computed. The following are the finding of the analysis:

Table 5: Relationship between Democratic Leadership Style and Students' Conformity to Rules Overall (Teachers' and Principals' Data)

		Democratic Leadership Style
Students' Conformity To Rules	Pearson Correlation	0.334**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	364
**. Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 –tailed).		

The findings in Table 5, both teachers and principals responses Indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and students' conformity to school rules ($r=0.334$; $p<0.05$). This means that when principals use democratic leadership style in Nakuru County, students conform to school rules.

There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and students' conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The null hypothesis was tested and results indicated that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' democratic leadership style and students' conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County Kenya, ($r=0.334$; $p=0.000$). Since p is less than 0.05 Alpha, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The results of this study indicate that 68.1 per cent of the teachers' respondents agreed that most students were generally lazy and therefore needed guidance without pressure from principals. This view was affirmed by 69.6 per cent of the teachers' respondents who reported that students want supportive communication from their principals. This implies that students have not been adequately involved in the decision-making process by principals because they are considered to be lazy.

The results mean that the students in public secondary schools in Nakuru County have not been adequately involved in the decision-making process by principals because they are considered to be lazy. Schools, whose principals are democratic, encourage high team spirit, cohesion and high conformity by students to school rules.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was concluded that the democratic leadership style, when used by principals in schools, has a significant positive relationship on students' conformity to school rules ($r=0.334$; $p<0.05$). This suggests that when a principal uses democratic leadership style students are likely to conform to school rules. Based on the findings, the study recommends that principals should largely adopt a democratic leadership style to enhance students' conformity to school rules. The study also recommends that the administration develop a process for handling

students' non-conformity issues in a calm, consistent and supportive manner. Finally, the study recommends that principals involve all stakeholders, for instance, teachers, students and parents in developing school rules and

policies that affect students. This is part of the proactive measures that can be undertaken to minimize cases of students' non-conformity to school rules.

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