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

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| ***Abstract:*** *Stakeholders in Education in Nakuru County, Kenya have expressed great concern over the high levels of students’ non-conformity to school rules in secondary schools. This shows that there is a problem of students’ non-conformity to school rules. This study sought to investigate the relationship between principals’ democratic leadership style and students’ conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. 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 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 116374 students in 338 public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used to select 100 schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 100 Principals, 34 Deputy Principals, 346 teachers and 383 students’ councils. 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 above 0.70 indicating that the instruments were reliable. The finding showed that both teachers and principals responses indicate a high positive relationship between principals use of democratic leadership style to enhance students’ conformity to school rules related to learning(r=0.334;p< 0.05. It was concluded that democratic leadership style when used by principals in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya has a significant positive relationship to students’ conformity to school rules. This implies that when a principal uses democratic leadership style, students are likely to conform to school rules. The study recommends that principals should adopt democratic leadership style to enhance students’ conformity to school rules. Finally, school administration should develop a process for handling students’non- conformity issues in a calm, consistent and supportive manner in accordance with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology guidelines and school policy. The findings of the study will help education policy makers to come up with strategies of enhancing students’ conformity to school rules.*  ***Key words: Democratic, leadership, style Conformity, school Rules*** |

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1. Background of the Study**

The principal by virtue of being a leader in a secondary school is the foundation around which many aspects of the school revolve. Bierly, Doyle and Smith (2016) observe that it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that students conform to school rules at all times in order 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. Moreover, Democratic leadership style according to Kendra (2017) emphasizes participation of both the group members in decision making process .Finally; Laissez-faire leadership style is seen as the one where the leader gives complete freedom to the members to make decisions without leadership in put.

A survey of National Union of Teachers in England by Neill (2008) found that students’ non conformity to school rules was on the increase. Bonny (2012) found that Kenyan secondary schools have rules and regulations designed to assist students conform to the expected norms of the society. 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 appropriate leadership style can greatly influence students’ conformity to school rules. The studies done seem not to agree on the leadership style that most predict students’ conformity to school rules.

The task Force formed by the County Director of Education Nakuru County Kenya (2015) agrees with the report of Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, Nakuru County (2018) reported high levels of students’ non conformity to school rules in the County. This suggests that there is a problem of students’ non conformity to school rules. Therefore this situation necessitated the present study to investigate whether there was a relationship between principals’ leadership styles and students’ conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

**1.2****. Statement of the Problem**

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) furthermore confirms that there have been several reported cases of students’ non conformity to school rules related to destruction of school property, absenteeism, truancy, cheating in examinations, mass walk out 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 still continues to occur in secondary schools. This problem if not addressed will lead to high indiscipline levels among students 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.

**1.3. Research Objective**

(i)To determine the relationship between Principals’ democratic leadership style and students’ conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

**1.4. Research Hypothesis**

**H01:** There is no statistically significant relationship between Principals’ democratic leadership style and students’ conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

**2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.1 Principals’ Democratic Leadership Style and Students’ Conformity to School Rules**

Democratic leadership style comprises of decentralization of authority, participatory planning and mutual communication by the leaders and their subordinates (Animut (2014). On the other hand, Muhammad, Irfanullah and Qamar (2015) affirm that leaders who use democratic leadership style encourage students to participate in decision making process. Muhammad *et al* (2015) further state that a democratic principal 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 has the final say, thus should gather information from students and the staff before making the final decision.

Tschannen and Gareis (2015) observe that democratic leaders have an influence on the management of students and teachers. The authors further observe that where subordinates feel trusted and involved in decision making process, productivity is very high. This implies that principals should strive to involve all stake holders in decision making process if they expect high productivity. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (2003) further notes 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 scholars did not look at the relationship between Principals’ democratic leadership style and students’ conformity to rules in public secondary school which the current study sought to explore.

In another research, Owiti (2016) found that 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 that affect them makes 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*)* associates 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 democratic leadership style is applied by principals. However other studies have noted that the style is not effective in all situations. This study seeks further investigation to determine the relationship between principals’ democratic leadership and students’ conformity to rule in public secondary school.

**2.2 Students’ Conformity to School Rules**

In educational institutions, students must conform to school rules for effective implementation of the prescribed curriculum. One of the rules related to learning is that students must do all assignment given by subject teachers. Gregory and Weistein (2008) established the existence of defiance, insubordination and disrespect among students in the USA High schools. Koss (2011) observes that cheating in examinations is a worldwide phenomenon. The author indicates that 80% 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 % of participants had been bullied, 33.1% were bullies and 64.7% had been involved in relational bullying while retaliation for bullying in the past was 51.1%.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, Mbugua and Sang (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. This implies that there is some form of non-conformity to school rules whose causes needs to be investigated. In conclusion students’ conformity to rules 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’ leadership styles and students’ conformity to rules related to their welfare.

**2.3 Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on the social control Theory by Travis Hirschi (1969). The theory posits that people follow 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 to non-commitment to rules and regulations. The authors opine that some students may perceive rules and regulations as infringement on their freedom while others may see them as liberating.

Kwayu (2014) states that school rules represent important control mechanism to which the students conform to. The author establishes that there are four social bonds in the convectional society; attachment to others, commitment to conformity, involvement in conventional activities and belief in the value of legitimacy of 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 important mechanism of social control. The school principal has the ability to 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 serious offending behaviour. Critics of the Theory 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.

**2.4. Conceptual Framework**

**Principals’ Leadership Styles**

* Democratic

**Students’ Conformity to School Rules**

* Related to learning
* General school rule
* Related to co curricula activities
* Rules related to their welfare
* Ministry of Education and school policies
* Parental upbringing
* Influence of mass media
* Negative peer pressure

**Figure 1: Conceptual Frame Work**

**Source Author (2020)**

**3.0. METHODOLOGY**

**3.1. Research Design**

This study adopted a correlational research design. This design enabled the researcher to assess the degree of relationship that exists between two or more variables.

**3.2. Location of Study**

The study was conducted 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.

**3.3. Population of Study**

The study population comprised 338 Principals, 338 Deputy Principals, 3426 teachers and 116374 students (County Education office Ministry and TSC, 2018).

**3.4. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

This section covers the various sampling techniques and sample size for the study.

**3.4.1 Sampling Procedure**

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% formula given by Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) to sample Deputy Principals. Thus a sample of 34 Deputy Principals were selected. The Principals, teachers and students were sampled using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. Thus 346 teachers and 383 students were sampled respectively. To obtain the sample for each school from each sub county, proportionate sampling was computed as shown in table 1 and 2.

**Table 1: Sample Frame for schools, Principals and Teachers**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sub county** | **Number of schools** | **Sample size for schools** | **Number of teachers** | **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 (2020)**

Table : 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 (2020)**

**3.5. Instrumentation**

Questionnaires were used to collect data from, principals, teachers and students while interviews were used to collect data from the Deputy Principals.

**3.5.1 Validity of the Research Instrument.**

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.

**3.5.2. Reliability of Research Instruments**

The researcher used test- retest reliability method to test the instruments. A correlation coefficient of the two sets was computed using the Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The correlation of 0.70 was obtained and was acceptable as reliable (Stephanie, 2016).

**4.0. RESULTS**

## 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

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 analyzed using percentages and correlation analysis.

### 4.1.1. Principals’ Democratic Leadership Style (According to teachers Data)

The following analysis was computed according to teachers regarding principals’ democratic leadership style

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statement** | **N** | **SD** | **D** | **N** | **A** | **SA** |
| It is fair to say that most students in the general population are lazy | 282 | 5.0% | 12.8% | 14.2% | 40.1% | 28.0% |
| Providing guidance without pressure is the key to being a good leader. | 282 | 7.4% | 13.8% | 19.1% | 23.0% | 36.5% |
| Most student 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 % 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 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% 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 of this study indicate that principals should help students accept responsibility for their behaviour as stated by 74.5% of the respondents. The study findings reveal revealed the students in public schools in Nakuru County have not been adequately involved in decision making process. This therefore could explain the reasons why students flout rules that have been formulated by the management to manage students’ behavior.

**4.2.3 Principals’ Democratic Leadership Style (According to Principals’ Data)**

Table 4: Democratic Leadership Style according to Principals

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statement** | **N** | **SD** | **D** | **N** | **A** | **SA** |
| It is fair to say that most students in the general population are lazy | 82 | 4.9% | 4.9% | 14.6% | 37.8% | 37.8% |
| Providing guidance without pressure is the key to being a good leader. | 82 | 4.9% | 13.4% | 15.9% | 22.0% | 43.9% |
| Most student 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% of the principals observed that most students in the general population were lazy. The study also revealed that 65.9% 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 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% of the respondents who state that students should be left alone 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% 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 in the art of decision making, they will be creative and will also adhere to school rules.

**4.5 Correlation Analysis**

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

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Democratic Leadership Style** |
| Students’ Conformity To Rules | Pearson Correlation | .334\*\* |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| N | 364 |
| \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | |

The findings in Table 5 both teachers and principals responses indicate a high positive relationship between principals use of democratic leadership style to enhance students’ conformity to school rules (r=0.334; p< 0.05. The current study has shown a significant positive relationship between principals use of democratic leadership style and students conformity to school rule.

**4.6 Hypothesis Testing**

**H02: 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 using the rule such that when the p value is less than 0.05 alpha, it was rejected. The findings in Table 4 indicates that there is a statistically significantrelationship between principals democratic leadership style and students’ conformity to school rules (r=0.334; p< 0.05.) Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05 alpha, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative accepted.

**4.7. Conclusion**

It was concluded that democratic leadership style when used by principals in schools has a significant positive relationship on students’ conformity to school rules .This suggests that when a principal uses democratic leadership style students are likely to conform to school rules.

**4.8. Recommendations**

1. The study recommends that principals should adopt democratic leadership style to enhance students’ conformity to school rules.
2. The study also recommends the administration to develop a process for handling all discipline problems in a calm, consistent and supportive manner. The principals and teachers should that all behavior problems of students are handled in accordance with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology guidelines and school policy.
3. The study also recommends that principals involve all stakeholders for instance, teachers and students in developing rules and policies that affect them. This is part of the proactive measures that can be undertaken to minimize number of non-conformity issues.

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