

**AN ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEADERS' INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION
MAKING IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KILIFI COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess student leaders' involvement in decision-making in public secondary schools in Kilifi County, and how leadership practices, or student behaviour influenced their involvement. The Ministry of Education had directed that all secondary schools form and facilitate student councils. Literature indicates that in spite of student councils being formed with the goal of participating in decision-making, most of the time their decisions were not taken into consideration, or they were not involved in key decisions. The research was conducted in public secondary schools in Kilifi County. A mixed methods approach was used. Survey design was used as well as phenomenological design. The sample size was selected from a target population of 118 public secondary schools from Kilifi County using cluster sampling. Piloting of the instrument was done in two public secondary schools in Kilifi County. First, the schools were clustered into sub-counties then random sampling was used to identify 30% of the schools to be included in the study. Ten student leaders and the principals of the selected schools responded to a questionnaire with open and closed ended questions. Further, Focus group discussions were held in one school in five sub-counties with a group of form three students. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the findings as well as inferential statistics. The reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach coefficient alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.6 was obtained. To ensure content validity and reliability of the research instruments the items were reviewed by the supervisors. The focus group interview data was coded into four major themes: the type of decisions the student council made, leadership practices and student behaviour that influenced the participation of student leaders in decision making, and the achievements that have been realized. The answered questionnaires were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as percentages, frequencies, mean and Chi-square test. Different forms of data representation techniques such as tables, charts, and graphs were employed. The study found out that 61% of student leaders made decisions on their own though the teachers joined them occasionally. 36% were consulted when the schools needed to change policy and 63% said that their views were taken seriously by school management. They had also achieved improvement on student behaviour and better performance. However, it was noted that lack of interest in student council activities influenced the leaders in the decision-making and schools had no budget to fund the student council activities. The study recommended that the ministry of education should set modalities to ensure the activities of the student council including but not limited to training are funded and student councils are represented in all decision-making forums in the school. Further research should be done to find out the perceptions of other students on the involvement of SCMs in implementation of school rules and to assess the effects of student leaders' involvement in decision-making on academic performance.