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## Assessment of Students' Participation in Making Decisions on their Welfare Matters towards improving Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Meru County, Kenya

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### Abstract

The discipline of students in secondary schools is a global concern. Research has shown that failure to involve young people in decision making affects their conduct and behaviour. The government of Kenya directed all schools to embrace democracy by applying students in making decisions. Nevertheless, despite this initiative, most public secondary schools in Meru County have continued to report many cases of indiscipline, leading to the disruption of learning and property loss. This study aimed to determine the effect of involving students in making decisions regarding their welfare matters on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County. It was guided by the Bandura's social learning theory and applied a descriptive survey research design to select ten principals, 196 deputy principals, and 384 student leaders. A stratified sampling technique was applied in selecting the schools. Individual schools in each category were selected systematically. Two students' leaders and deputy principals from the sampled schools were selected to participate in the study. Data were collected using questionnaires, documentary analysis, and interviews. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and factor analysis were computed. Ordinal logistical regression was conducted using SPSS to test the research hypothesis, while the thematic technique was used to analyze the qualitative data. The study noted many cases of indiscipline in most public secondary schools in Meru County. Only a few of schools were involving students in making decisions on their affairs. Partial involvement was noted in a sizeable number of schools. Poor involvement was attributed to the unrealistic demands from students, weak systems, lack of elaborate policy and structures for involvement. Despite the dismal participation of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters, it individually accounted for 74.6% variation in the students' discipline in public secondary schools. Clear policy framework from the Ministry of Education was critical in guiding the areas of involvement and how principals should involve students' leaders in making a decision on students' matters in the school. Principals should also devise creative methods of soliciting, vetting and moderating ideas from the students. The findings have implications on policy, structures and practices on the involvement of students in the decision making in public secondary schools in Kenya.

**Keywords:** *Student affairs, students and decision making, students' leadership, the democratization of education, students' discipline*

## 1.0 Introduction

The significance of students' discipline on education achievement cannot be overemphasized. Discipline can be described as a status where one demonstrates behaviour and conduct that is orderly and consistent with standards, rules or codes (Kashyap, 2021). According to Njogu et al. (2017), discipline is a behaviour that is acquired after consistent following of rules and regulations. In the context of a secondary school, the discipline of a student refers to the state of consistent obedience and compliance with the set rules and standards of conduct which results in acceptable behaviour. If student behaviour falls short of the expectations, one is regarded as being undisciplined.

The main indicators of indiscipline among students included truancy, riots, absenteeism, fighting, violence, students being arrested because of breaking the law, harassment and bullying. It is also characterized by suspensions and expulsions cases. Any deviation from the expected conduct should be addressed using various corrective methods to discourage misbehaviour. The deviation to the discipline of secondary school students is usually enforced through punishment, guiding and counselling, and involving parents or guardians. Extreme cases are addressed by suspending or expelling the culprits.

Globally, there have been several reported cases of students indiscipline in various countries such as Malaysia, Canada, India, Sweden, Ghana, Nigeria, and Botswana, among others, which are characterized by the burning of school properties, fighting, trouncing, killing, raping, rioting, beating and injuring of teachers, threatening, bullying, vandalizing, disrespecting the authority, drug abuse, physical and verbal confrontations among other forms of disobedience (Sadik, 2018; Azmir & Nizah, 2017; Sandqvist, 2014; Ofori, et al., 2018; Ali et al. 2014; Miline & Aurini, 2017).

In Kenya, there have been numerous cases of indiscipline among students in public secondary schools. For example, the worst outcomes of such patients have been fire and death in St. Kizito, Bombolulu, Kyanguli, Upper Hill secondary school, Endarasa secondary school, Moi Girls, and Stephjoy secondary school. Another recent case was where a student stabbed the principal with a wooden plank on the head. Knoester (2015) blamed it on the changes in the Kenyan education system, which has increased the democratic space. Even in Meru County, several disturbing cases of indiscipline among students of public secondary schools have been reported (Aboo, 2016; Kiplagat & Oruko, 2015; Mutunga, 2012; Njogu et al., 2017; Republic of Kenya [ROK], 2019). Ndung'u (2018) specifically pointed the sixty-three public secondary schools in Meru County, which reported students' unrest and riots during the first two weeks of July 2018. Some of these claims had not been empirically proven. This situation necessitated the execution of this study to examine the extent to which the students' participation in making decisions on their welfare matters improves their discipline in public secondary schools of Meru County.

### 1.1 Statement of the problem

The adoption of a democratic approach in the running of schools was intended to enhance inclusion and hence contribute to improving the discipline of learners. According to the Ministry of Education, students of secondary schools should be allowed to make decisions on matters affecting them and be subjected to alternative methods of enforcing discipline other than corporal punishment (Khatete & Matanda, 2014). Notably, the inclusivity and participation in making decisions on matters affecting students is expected to create a sense of involvement and provide a reasoning platform which should create a good cohesion between the school management and the students. This is viewed to contribute to good discipline among students.

However, this is not the case for public secondary schools in Meru County considering the numerous cases of students' indiscipline, such as the burning of properties worth millions of shillings, strikes and chaos—which have been reported severally despite adopting mechanisms for averting indiscipline (Aboo, 2016; ROK, 2019). If the indiscipline among students is not addressed, the destruction of properties will continue, which will likely affect educational achievement in the long run.

Previous studies on students' misconduct such as Fisher and Hennessy (2015), Ozcan et al. (2020), Aryati, Mauliy and Thoyibi (2020), Matovu and Atim (2020), and Wanyama (2016) have focused on internal and external determinants for indiscipline. Still, they have not linked democratic emphasis regarding the participation of students to the discipline of students in public secondary schools in Meru County. In this study, an aspect of education democratization of allowing students' involvement in deciding on matters affecting them is assessed to determine how it affects students discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County. It is against this that the study sought to determine the effect of involvement of students in making decisions on students' affairs matters on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The arguments in this study were guided by the Bandura's social learning theory. Indeed, involving students in decision-making is a democratic engagement that allows student's voice in the school governance system. It demonstrates freedom of information and expression critical in a democratic decision-making process (Enes, 2016; Maingi, 2015; Smith, 2013). In practice, students are expected to participate in all areas and matters that affect them directly except in examinations, grading, teacher appointment, and recruitment of subordinate staff. Mncube (2017) suggested that students develop rules, motivation programs, teaching approaches, and learning curricula. Other areas of involvement include deciding the nature of assignments, science congress projects, among others (Huddleston, 2016).

The nature of students' participation can be passive or active (Huddleston, 2016; Murage, 2017; Aggrawal, 2015; Jeruto & Kiprof, 2011). Regardless of the nature of participation, involving students in decision making has been described as beneficial to both students and the administration. It help to achieve education democratization, encourage the development of openness, self-assurance, independence, and self-confidence; create a sense of ownership, enhance the development of metacognitive skills, and fathom collaboration which does not affect students' conduct and behaviour but also influences their academic performance (Harrison et al., 2016; Mithans et al., 2017; Irsheid; 2018). According to Enes (2016), involvement usually influences young people's sense of responsibility, takes a collective viewpoint, develops a pro-social attitude, embraces democratic principles and mechanisms, and builds participatory and inclusive school culture, hence a high sense of social responsibility. The lack of student's inclusion in the school's administration has been found to cause indiscipline among several countries globally, including Kenya (Wairagu, 2017). In Turkey, minimal students' involvement in making decisions was reported (Erdol, 2018) and was attributed to frequent riots, burning and destruction of property, go-slows and rebelliousness among students (Mason, 2015).

A global view on students' participation in decision-making shows the significance of the matter in the school's running. The effectiveness of this practice was found to have its roots in the family units in England; hence, many schools are proactively involving students in decision-making (Davey et al., 2010). Davey and other authors stressed that teachers, parents and the community include children in participatory decision-making forums to ground their negotiating, thinking, networking and decision-making skills. Examples of developed



countries where high schools allow the participation of students in decision-making include Jordan, Australia, Slovenia, and Turkey. Many high schools in countries collaborated with student leaders to develop academic policies, curriculum development, academic programs, sports, school health programs, and discussing discipline (Erdol, 2018; Irsheid, 2018; Mithans et al., 2017). In addition, Erdol noted fewer female students in the high ranks of student council positions than male counterparts.

The secondary schools in Africa region were noted to have numerous students' indiscipline cases which were attributed to various factors. One of such factors was a failure to involve students in making decisions. In some instances, the government intervened by providing directives. For example, in South Africa, all secondary schools were required to include learners in all administrative decision-making facets in the school as a strategy to curb indiscipline (Mncube, & Harber 2014). Key reasons for the non-inclusion of students in the decision making include the perceptual barriers where students are seen as immature to handle strategic decisions or viewed as problematic, school culture and teachers' orientation (Glover, 2015).

Literature from Africa further indicates that students are involved in decision-making in their schools at varying degrees (Wambua et al., 2017) and different areas. The schools that had active involvement of students in decision making reported how it helped them to curb restlessness (Kindiki, 2015; Mueller, 2018) assisted the student to develop critical thinking (Muskin, 2015) and was instrumental in bridging the gap between school administration and students Maingi (2015). Common areas noted in many schools included participatory decision making in coming with co-curricular activities, formulation of school rules and regulations, supervision of peers, timekeeping issues (Glover, 2015; Nyamu, 2020; Mwikali, 2015). However, fewer students' participation in the management of school finances, physical resources and staff personnel (Kagendo, 2018).

The preceding discussion points out the deficiency in the structural systems and gaps in the policies guiding the involvement of students' leaders in making decisions on their welfare matters. Another detriment noted was the school culture and teachers and principals' orientation which largely determined or moderated the extent to which students were involved in making decisions on their welfare matters in public secondary schools.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study was conducted in Meru County, where the units of analysis were public secondary schools. A correlational research design was applied in the investigation. Schools were stratified proportionally into categories, and hence questionnaires were distributed to 196 deputy principals, 384 student's leaders and ten principals who were purposively selected and interviewed accordingly. The document analysis was done by checking through the book where discipline cases of students were recorded. The SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data generating percentage, mean, standard deviations and factor analysis. The ordinal logistic regression analysis was used to test the hypothesized relationship between variables. Data from interviews and documents were analyzed using the thematic technique. The findings were presented using tables, figures and narratives.

#### 4.0 Results and Discussion

This study sought to determine the effect of involvement of students in making decisions on students' affairs matters on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County. The questions in the questionnaire (in Likert scale format) were presented to respondents.

#### 4.1 Response Rate

The study had distributed 196 questionnaires to deputy principals, out of which 182 (92.9%) were returned. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed to students, from which 284 were returned, representing 74.0 per cent. All the targeted principals and the County Education Officer responded to the study. The good response rate was attributed to adequate preparation and training of research assistants (Kothari, 2014).

#### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics on Students Discipline

Various statements related to students' discipline in public secondary schools were presented to respondents on a five-point Likert scale. The sentiments focused on indicators that included classroom distractions by students, finishing off assignments, respect of students, truancy, cases of drug abuse, and vigilance in attending to the allocated duties, damaging of school properties, riots, and obedience to school prefects.

**Table 1: Deputies' responses on aspects of determining students' discipline in public secondary schools**

Sentiments on deputies' discipline in public secondary schools (N = 182)		Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Factor	loading	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Error	Statistic	Error
There are fewer classroom distractions in the school	.983	3.25	1.274	-.232	.180	-1.063	.358
Students in the school respect their teachers	.592	2.51	1.131	.563	.180	-.907	.358
Students are more vigilant in attending to their cleaning duties in the school	.636	2.45	1.059	.991	.180	-.050	.358
There are fewer cases of drug abuse among learners in the school	.447	2.38	.931	1.127	.180	.975	.358
Students in our school obey prefects	.677	2.31	1.105	.817	.180	-.328	.358
There are fewer cases of students staying away from the school (truancy)	.625	2.27	1.152	.782	.180	-.351	.358
Learners in the school usually finish the assignment on time	.568	2.25	1.087	1.007	.180	.242	.358
There are fewer cases of students damaging school property	.631	2.12	.912	1.227	.180	1.736	.358
Summated mean		2.44					
KMO = .861							
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = .000							

A factor analysis indicated that most aspects of students' discipline in public secondary schools loaded very well. Each indicator had a factor Eigenvalue above 0.5; with a KMO value of .861 and Bartlett's test of sphericity being significant ( $p = .000$ ). Only one mechanism, 'there are fewer cases of drug abuse among learners in the school whose Eigenvalue (.447) was below 0.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). This provided confidence that the loading of most aspects on students' discipline in public secondary schools was acceptable in the analysis.

The results show that although the majority of aspects were acceptable for analysis, most deputies (mean = 2.44; 88.8%) disagreed with positive sentiments on the overall discipline level of students in public secondary schools in Meru County. Only in two aspects where more than half of deputies agreed with the feelings; that is, there are fewer classroom distractions in the school (mean = 3.25; standard deviation = 1.274), and students in the school respect their teachers (mean = 2.51; standard deviation = 1.131). Most deputies indicated that there are more cases of students staying away from the school (truancy), learners in the school usually don't finish the assignment on time, and more cases of students damaging school property. This shows that students' indiscipline in public secondary schools in Meru County is real and apparent.

Data gathered through observation on selected discipline metrics indicated conspicuous cleanliness of the school compound, good grooming among students, fair response to bells, and cleanliness of the windowpanes in most public secondary schools in Meru County (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Results on observation on students' discipline based on selected metrics**



Nevertheless, the observation may not have reflected the actual state of affairs in the school when all students are in the compound. This is because; only four students were in the school when data was collected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of the principals who were interviewed also reported cases of noise making in the classrooms, refusal to take notes, disrespect for prefects, disorderliness, and lateness for classes. Many principals attributed the indiscipline to the banning of corporal punishment in schools. One principal lamented, "The days when a teacher would walk with a cane and restore order very fast are no longer there". Another principal said, "Students know that even if they disobey school rules, the teachers cannot do anything."

The data gathered from the schools' disciplinary books for the last year further confirmed the prevalent cases of indiscipline among public secondary school students, where most incidences mentioned in the above discussion were categorized as minor cases. The minor issues included lateness (66), improper dressing and untidiness (38), noise-making (32), unattended duties (29), vernacular language (29), unfinished assignments (26), absenteeism (17), vulgar language (15), and lack of respect to prefects 10 cases. Information gathered from documents further indicated various ways used by schools to address the aforementioned minor cases. The methods were manual punishment, guidance and counselling sessions, dialogues involving parents, verbal warning, suspension, writing an apology letter, canning, and withdrawal of some privileges in the school.

The problem of drug abuse was also prominently mentioned by deputy principals in an open-ended question as one of the major challenges affecting secondary schools' democratization. Kute (2014) also reported violence and fighting among students in the USA, which was termed one serious school crime. As noted by Kiboiy (2013), the indiscipline cases include drug abuse, rudeness to other students and teachers, refusal to do punishments, and absenteeism. It seemed that the major issues attracted weighty actions in most public secondary schools. The standard methods of handling significant indiscipline cases across most public secondary schools were suspension, parental involvement, guidance and counselling, manual punishments, expulsion, BOM meetings, police involvement, and dialogue. Non-corporal punishment ways of addressing indiscipline mostly dominate the above list. However, the study by Gitari (2015) downplayed the alternatives to corporal punishment, citing rampant growth of students disrespect to teachers and prefects and many strike cases. From the information gathered through document analysis, the cases of indiscipline among students were evident characterized mainly by lateness, improper dressing, noise-making, unattended duties, drug abuse, violence and fighting, sneaking, disrespect to teachers, theft and absenteeism. Most schools seemed to have adopted manual punishments, guidance and counselling services, dialogues, parental involvement, expulsion, and BOM meetings in worst scenarios to address these cases.

#### **4.3 Results on involving students in making decisions on students affairs matters in public secondary schools in Meru County**

The general objective was to determine how involving students in making decisions on students' affairs matters on their discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County. Various sentiments on the involvement of students in making decisions on students' affairs matters (in Likert scale ranging from 1 – 5) were presented to respondents. The study wanted to know whether students are involved in: making the decision on the choice of subjects taught in the schools, drafting of the school routine programs, deciding type of meals taken, deciding the kind of extra-curricular activities to have, choosing the type of punishment to receive upon committing an offence, and in the writing of school rules and regulations.

Information gathered from deputy principals was presented first, followed by the findings from students. In both cases, the results were summarized and presented in descending order of mean values, as shown in Tables 2 and 3.



**Table 2: Responses from deputy principals on the involvement of students in making decisions on students' affairs matters in public secondary schools in Meru County**

Sentiments on the involvement of students in making decisions on students affairs matters (N = 182)	Factor loading	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error
Students are allowed to participate in the drafting of school rules and regulations	.867	2.79	1.376	.135	.180	-1.256	.358
Students are involved in deciding the type of extra-curricular activities to have in the school	.740	2.51	1.131	.563	.180	-.907	.358
Students are involved in deciding the type of meals taken in school	.706	2.45	1.059	.991	.180	-.050	.358
Students are involved in drafting the school routine programs	.725	2.38	.931	1.127	.180	.975	.358
Students are allowed to choose the type of punishment to receive upon committing an offence	.841	2.31	.989	1.033	.180	.365	.358
Students are involved in the choice of subjects taught in the school	.656	2.16	1.105	.817	.180	-.328	.358
Summation		2.26	0.987				
KMO = .837							
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = .000							

Data collected on this construct was somehow skewed as indicated by the skewness statistics and Kurtosis values which were beyond -2 and +2 for normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014); hence, the data did not exhibit normality. Factor analysis in Table 2 indicates that most sentiments as perceived by deputy principals on the involvement of students in making decisions on students affairs matters in public secondary schools loaded very well, where all occurrences had a factor Eigenvalue above 0.5; with an overall KMO value of .902 and Bartlett's test of sphericity being significant (P=.000). This shows that all indicators on the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters were weighty, and all of them were worth considering in the analysis.

All aspects of students' involvement in making decisions on student affairs in public secondary schools showed a summated mean value of 2.26 and a standard deviation of 0.987. This meant that only 82 (45.2%) deputy principals agreed with the aspects of the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters in public secondary schools. Surprisingly none of the indicators showed a mean above the average of 2.5. This generally indicates a high level of disagreement with the student's involvement in making decisions on student's affairs matters in public secondary schools. This means that according to the majority views collected from the principals, involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters was not a common practice in most public secondary schools in Meru County. Responses from students on the same aspects were sought and the findings presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Responses from students on the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters in public secondary schools in Meru County**

Sentiments on the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters (N = 284)	Factor loading	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error
Students are involved in deciding the type of extra-curricular activities to have in the school	.645	4.25	1.032	-1.469	.145	1.549	.288
Students are allowed to participate in the drafting of school rules and regulations	.543	3.92	1.216	-.896	.145	-.295	.288
Students are involved in the drafting of the school routine programs	.648	3.77	1.276	-.842	.145	-.480	.288
Students are allowed to choose the type of punishment to receive upon committing an offence	.756	3.69	1.264	-.495	.145	-.951	.288
Students are involved in deciding the type of meals taken in school	.563	3.52	1.320	-.424	.145	-1.134	.288
Students are involved in the choice of subjects taught in the school	.517	3.49	1.338	-.564	.145	-.881	.288
Summation		2.17	1.005				
KMO = .799							
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = .000							

The results in 3 show a general concurrence of the students' views with those of deputy principals. All indicators of the constructs loaded very well; Eigenvalues were above 0.5, with an overall KMO value of .881 and Bartlett's test of sphericity being significant ( $P=.000$ ). Data collected was, however, observably skewed as indicated by the skewness statistics and Kurtosis values which were beyond -2 and +2 for normal univariate distribution; hence, data for this construct did not exhibit normality.

The results show that all aspects of involving students in making decisions on student's affairs matters in public secondary schools showed a summated mean value of 2.17 and a standard deviation of 1.005. The mean values are conspicuously below the expected average of 2.5. This meant a general disagreement (mean is below 2.5 in each case) by most students on all aspects of involving students in making decisions on student's affairs matters in public secondary schools. It also indicates a low level of student involvement in making decisions on student's affairs matters in public secondary schools in Meru County. This finding concurs with the results gotten from deputy principals. This generally implies that the democratization of education, which is expected to be realized through the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters, is less evident in most secondary schools in Meru County. The preceding findings were not consistent with Wambua et al. (2017), who reported a high level of involvement of students in making decisions on various matters affecting learners in secondary schools.

Additionally, the study by Hakiza (2017) did not agree with the findings of this study. Hakiza found out that student council leaders in secondary schools in Uganda were involved in decision making on students affairs' matters. The practice of involvement was described to have had to thwart planned strikes. However, the study by Kamau (2017) made observations similar to the one noted by the current research. According to Kamau, many students did not participate in formulating school rules and regulations, welfare matters, diet schedules, and co-curricular activities at their schools.

Interview data gathered from principals attributed this to unrealistic demands from students, which the school budget cannot sustain. The few principals who supported the idea of involving leaders in students' affairs matters revealed different approaches to involving students. Some principals solicited new ideas from students by holding "let us talk special meetings" where important students' affairs issues were discussed. In some cases, suggestions are forwarded through guidance teacher counsellors, prefects, and class teachers. The students' affairs matters handled were diverse. They included games & sports, diet, clubs, school rules & regulations, motivation programs for students and teachers, routine programs, punishment, academic performances, student-teacher relationships, health, spiritual needs, and psychosocial needs.

**Table 4: Model fitting information for the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters and discipline of students**

Deputies' responses	Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Pseudo R-Square (Nagelkerke)
	Intercept Only		865.995			
Final		618.398	247.597	4	.000	
Students' responses	Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Pseudo R-Square (Nagelkerke)
	Intercept Only		2710.893			.109
Final		2678.174	32.719	4	.000	
Link function: Logit.						

Table 4 shows  $p = 0.000$  from both deputy principals and students, which is less than 0.05 for each case, hence rejecting the underlying null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the baseline model and the final model. The baseline model (Intercept only) is the model without any independent variables (predictors), while the final model is the one with all possible independent variables. The results in Table 4 shows that the model has a statistically significant predictive capacity, which means that, involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters statistically and significantly, explain the variations in the discipline of students in public secondary schools in Meru County.

Further, the model summary in this result shows that involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters predicts 75.6% and 10.9% (deputy principals and students responses, respectively) of the variations in the discipline of students in public secondary schools in Meru County as indicated by the Nagelkerke R square values. However, the results are based on one independent variable: the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters; hence, the inclusion of other predictors in the model may result in a high Nagelkerke R square value.

Having obtained a valid goodness of fit information, the study further sought to establish goodness of fit with the fitted model. In ordinal logistic regression, the Pearson Chi-square goodness-of-fit test is used to determine whether a model exhibits a good fit of the data; that is, it tests whether the observed data has the goodness of fit with the fitted model. The decision rule is to reject the underlying null hypothesis if the P-value is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis states that the observed data is having the goodness of fit with the fitted model. Table 5 shows the result on goodness-of-fit based on responses from both deputies and students.

**Table 5: Goodness-of-Fit for the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters and discipline of students**

Deputies' responses		Chi-Square	df	Sig.
	Pearson		1012.142	1868
Deviance		490.848	1868	1.000
Students' responses	Pearson	30241.196	27240	.000
	Deviance	2376.417	27240	1.000
Link function: Logit.				

The results in Table 5 show  $\chi^2$  (df 1868) = 1012.142;  $p = 1.000$  and  $\chi^2$  (df 27240) = 30241.196,  $p = .000$  for deputy principals and students respectively. In this case, therefore, the



study fails to reject the null hypothesis for data gathered from deputies, that the observed data from deputies is having the goodness of fit with the fitted model. This means that the model for deputies and not for students fit the data very well. This implies that the data from deputies on the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters is fit for predicting the discipline of students in public secondary schools in Meru County.

The model based on students' data is not fit for predicting students' discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County. The findings reported from students on the model indicate that they may have exaggerated their views on involvement matters in making decisions on student's affairs matters; hence, the model based on data from deputy principals was considered the most reliable one in determining the parameter estimates on the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters on the discipline of students in public secondary schools. The parameter estimates are critical in showing how the independent variable is influencing the dependent variable. The parameter estimates results based on data from deputies (reliable model) are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Parameter estimates for the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters and discipline of students**

		Responses from deputies					95% Confidence Interval	
		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Location	X1	4.633	.365	160.650	1	.000	3.916	5.349

Link function: Logit.

From Table 6, it can be observed that a marginal increase in the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters positively increases the logit of the students' discipline. This means that as the scores of the independent variable increase, there is an increased probability of falling at a higher level on the dependent variable while holding all other factors constant. The result shows that involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters is statistically significant predictor of students' discipline, where, for every one unit increase on the involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters, there is a predicted statistically significant increase of 4.633 ( $P=.000$ ) in the log odds likelihood (logit) of falling at a higher level on the students' discipline.

Since the p-values in Table 4 and Table 6 were less than alpha level ( $p<0.05$ ), then the fourth null hypothesis of this study which stated that 'involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters did not affect students' discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County' was rejected, and concluded that involving students in making decisions on student's affairs matters had a statistically significant effect on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County. Involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters on its own as an independent variable account for 74.6% of the variation in the discipline of students in public secondary schools.

The results show that although there were weak systems of involving students in making decisions on student's affairs matters, the failure to apply them has repercussions on their discipline. Failure to involve students in making decisions on student's affairs matters diminishes the spirit of democracy, which is envisaged in secondary school education and is likely to harbour indiscipline behaviour among learners. The findings concur with those of Jeruto and Kiprop (2011), who also reported a lack of active involvement of students in making decisions concerning students matters, hence the unwarranted riots and unrest in most

public secondary schools in the County. Barongo (2016) strongly argued that involving students in decision-making created a sense of ownership and significantly impacted their discipline level in public secondary schools in Kisii Central Sub-County.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

The involvement of students in making decisions on student's affairs matters was not a common practice in most public secondary schools in Meru County. It was clear that many schools partly involved students in making such decisions. This was attributed to weak systems and partly due to unrealistic demands by students, which the school budget could not support. The study noted that, in many instances, if a school failed to yield to such demands, it resulted in strikes and unrest in some schools. Some schools were, however, involving students in decisions. The common methods used included holding "let us talk special meetings" where important students' affairs issues are discussed. In other cases, suggestions were forwarded to the school management through guidance teacher counsellors, prefects, and class teachers. The areas of involvement included games & sports, diet, clubs, school rules & regulations, motivational programs for students and teachers, routine programs, punishment, academic performances, student-teacher relationship, health, spiritual needs, and psychosocial needs. Despite the dismal involvement of students in making decisions on students' affairs matters in public secondary schools in Meru County, it was found to have a statistically significant effect on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County.

### **6.0 Recommendations For Policy and Practice**

Principals should devise creative methods of soliciting ideas from the students. Some of the methods for consideration included holding structured dialogues with the students. Such meetings should engage students, school management, guidance teacher counsellors, prefects, and class teachers. The areas of involvement included games & sports, diet, clubs, school rules & regulations, motivational programs for students and teachers, routine programs, punishment, academic performances, student-teacher relationship, health, spiritual needs, and psychosocial needs. The collected ideas should be moderated concerning the approved school budget and seek to convince students. To achieve this effectively, principals should conduct training and inductions to students' leaders and other stakeholders to educate them on interrogating ideas and making appropriate decisions.

The findings of this study should inject changes in the manner in which students are involved in decision making. The results have emphasized the adoption of democratic practices in all matters that affect students. The findings of this study also have enormous implications on legislation and policy framework regarding students' participation in decision making in public secondary schools in Meru County. The Ministry of Education should develop a comprehensive policy that effectively addresses the education democratization aspects intending to improve students' discipline in public secondary schools. Further implications are noted on the Ministry of Education's monitoring systems in all public secondary schools to ensure compliance.

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