
STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL RULES AND REGULATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF ONE SCHOOL IN KENYA

Dr. Mettoh Jepchirchir Hellen*

SCHOOL of Education, Bomet University College, P.O Box 701-20400, Bomet, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate students' attitude on school rules and regulations with regard to formulation. Being a qualitative study, Data was collected by means of unstructured interviews on 6 participants while research methodology was case study. The study found out that the students generally exhibited the desire to participate in the formulation of school rules and regulations. They felt that if they were involved, they would have been happy, cooperated, felt contented and appreciated the school rules and regulations. From the results, the researcher concluded that the students were not involved in the formulation of school rules and regulations. On the basis of the findings, the researcher recommended that the administrators ought to involve the students even through the students 'council in the formulation of school rules and regulations.

Key Words: Students, Attitude, School, Rules, Regulations, Formulation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Davis (1994) asserts that rules help create a predictable atmosphere that limits classroom disruptions and encourage children to be self-controlled. Griffin (1994) contends that formulation of rules and regulations without seeking students' opinion may lead to conflict, which may finally render some rules ineffective. Mckenzie and Rutto(2010) posit that one way to establishing a truly democratic society is to ensure greater student participation in the rule making process as well as provide democratic based mechanisms for change. Students should be taught to comply with school regulations because of their awareness of the meaning of and need for such regulations. Waldron (2005) claims that, school rules meant to maintain discipline were usually said to be established without student input or consultation. This approach may be counter-productive as students recognize their lack of 'voice' and challenge the rules they feel are unfair and which disadvantage them.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Kenyan secondary schools have been experiencing cases of student unrests. In the year 2000 and 2001 for example, many schools in Kenya went on strike (Kingala, 2002). Githinji (Oct. 2012) also cites seven schools shutting down in Embu over unrest. While Chemutai and Chumba (2014) found out that students' council members were excluded from key decision-making areas of their schools. Besides, Mati, Gatumu and Chandi (2016), posit that ownership of school rules

and regulations was realized by student participation in decision making or formulation of school rules and disciplinary issues among other things. Thus an endeavour to understand students' attitude on school rules and regulations would reveal their opinion.

1.2 Research Question

The question that guided the study was:

What is the students' attitude on school rules and regulations with regard to formulation?

1.3 Justification

There is persistence of students' behaviour problems in schools despite the presence of school rules and regulations. Sithole(2008) argue that student involvement in decision making on formulation of school rules was debatable.

1.4 Assumption of the Study

The participants were honest.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The research adopted Etzioni (1961) compliance theory which argues that rules are one kind of power applied by the school authority structures to regulate students' behavior, movement, and activities in the school so that goal attainment is facilitated.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Formulation of School Rules and Regulations

Mckenzie et al. (2010) argue that the school code of conduct must be compiled in cooperation with all the relevant persons (teachers, learners and board of Governors and Parents Teachers Association) and must be revised regularly. While Davis (1994) asserts that one way to involve students in formulating rules is to have them brainstorm as a class or in small groups on why they came to school and their main goals for learning. Huddleston (2007) states that students should be involved in all areas of school life. Besides, Ndakwa (2000) posits that at times it is advisable to involve students while making decisions that affects them. Children need to be taught that it is their responsibility to make appropriate decisions as they will be held accountable for their actions. Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) posit that although there were attempts to include students' views in decision making, such attempts were only tokenistic and did not extend to core issues of school rules and regulations. Students were only allowed to participate in student welfare issues but were deemed to be immature and therefore unable to participate in administrative issues such as formulation of rules and regulations. Simatwa (2012) suggested that opportunities for student participation should go beyond specifically student-related issues and extend to wider aspects of school life especially concerning school rules and regulations. Kinyanjui (1976) argue that there is evidence that students are not being involved in the formulation of school rules. Thus student participation is often confined to issues concerned with student welfare and not in core governance issues such as school rules (Magadla, 2007). Aggrawal (2004) adds that while student representatives may not participate in matters relating to formulation of school rules and regulations, their participation should be ensured in all other academic and administrative decisions taken by these bodies.

The reviewed literature reveals the neglect of qualitative data on students' attitude on the formulation of school rules and regulations.

3. RESEARCH APPROACH

3.1 Study Area

The research was carried out at a peri-urban mixed secondary school in North-Rift Kenya.

3.2 Research Design

As a social constructivist research, the study adopted qualitative research design. The researcher carried out an in-depth investigation of the complex and dynamic phenomena that was not easily quantifiable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a).

3.3 Philosophical Orientation of the Study

The study engaged relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology. Crotty, (1998) opines that people construct their actions and meanings in different ways that provide different realities while constructivist epistemology is about construction of knowledge as people interact in their natural settings.

3.4 Research Methodology

The research adopted case study methodology.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) define case studies as strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity or process, on one or more individuals where researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time.

3.5 Research Methods

Stacy and Miles (2007) argue that methods can be thought of as research action.

i. Selection of Participants

The target population for this study was Form 4 students at a peri-urban mixed secondary school in North-Rift Kenya. This was a purposive study and the researcher picked the first three girls and the first three boys from the class register (Ministry of Education (2012) assisted by the class teacher. Patton (2015) argues that the logic and power of qualitative purposeful sampling derives from the emphasis on an in-depth understanding of specific cases.

ii. Data Collection Instrument

The study engaged unstructured interviews. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 5), unlike

“The spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversations,” a research interview “is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose.”

iii. Piloting

Nunan (1992) suggests that “because of potential problems in the use of the interviews...it is very important that interview questions are piloted with a small number of subjects before being used” (p. 151). Piloting was done at a peri- urban mixed secondary school in South Rift Kenya.

iv. Data Collection Procedures

Permission was sought for from relevant offices as Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors,

County Director of Education, principal of the study school, class teacher and consent from the participants.

v. Ethical Considerations

Stake (2005) observes, that “Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (p. 459). Data collection procedure was done ethically through seeking for permission from relevant authorities. To protect the identity of the participants the researcher used pseudonyms as follows; John, Joshua, James, Jane, Janice and Joyce. The name of the school was also not disclosed.

vi. Trustworthiness of the Study

a. Validity of the Study

The researcher used ‘the member check’ meaning that the researcher provided an opportunity for the participants to comment on the findings (Creswell, 2009).

b. Reliability of the Study

The researcher achieved this by cross checking the transcripts to ensure that they did not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription as advanced by (Gibbs, 2007).

4. DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected was analyzed thematically. (Modified, Attride-Sterling, 2001 & Mettoh, Oct. 2020). The research question was: What is the students’ attitude on school rules and regulations with regard to formulation?

Analysis stage A: Reduction of the text about students’ attitude on school rules and regulations with regard to formulation. The researcher began the analysis by reducing the collected data.

Step 1: Coding the collected data about students’ attitude on school rules and regulations with regard to formulation.

Data on students’ attitude on school rules with regard to formulation was broken down with the aid of a coding framework based on the salient issues that arose in the study as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Presenting, Dissecting Codes and Identifying Basic Themes for school rules and regulations formulation

Codes	Dissected	Basic Themes Identified
Chance	Possibility	1. When given opportunity to air our views, own consequences
Add	Join	2. Administration behave like they know it all but we can team
Unappealing	Unenjoyable	3. I will not delight in breaking a rule that I made
Irrational	Baseless	4. I mean it is illogical and we need to come together
Collaborated	Included	5. Students be represented
Incorporate	Agent	6. Students' council can act on our behalf to propose
Regarded	Priority	7. When students are given chance life at school is acceptable
Chose	Determine	8. Let students' council select what is best for us
Guide	Model	9. Teachers to just lead the process of rule making
Include	Encompass	10. Be involved in the formulation
Remove	Delete	11. Erase the rule, I cannot make by 6.30 am
Respected	Appreciated	12. I mean we are grown-ups and we will feel honoured

Step 2: Identification of Themes for school rules and regulations formulation

The identification was done by abstracting themes from the coded text to get basic themes, organizing themes and finally a global theme as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Theme Extraction and Systemization for formulation of school rules and regulation

Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Theme
1. When there is possibility for us to air our views	Appreciate	Involvement
2. We can join the administration	Cooperate	Involvement
3. I will enjoy to own a rule that I formulated	Happy	Involvement
4. It is baseless we need to come together	Cooperate	Involvement
5. Include us	Cooperate	Involvement
6. Students' council to be our agent	Contentment	Involvement
7. When we are given priority life is good	Appreciate	Involvement
8. Let students' council determine what is best for us	Contentment	Involvement
9. Teachers to just model the process	Appreciate	Involvement
10. Be encompass	Happy	Involvement
11. Will like delete of 6.30 am prep	Happy	Involvement
12. Teachers ought to appreciate us		

Step 3: Construction of Thematic Networks for school rules and regulations formulation
 The researcher went through the codes to identify themes. These themes were arranged from basic, organizing and finally a global theme was obtained. This culminated into web-like networks referred to as thematic networks as shown in figure 1.

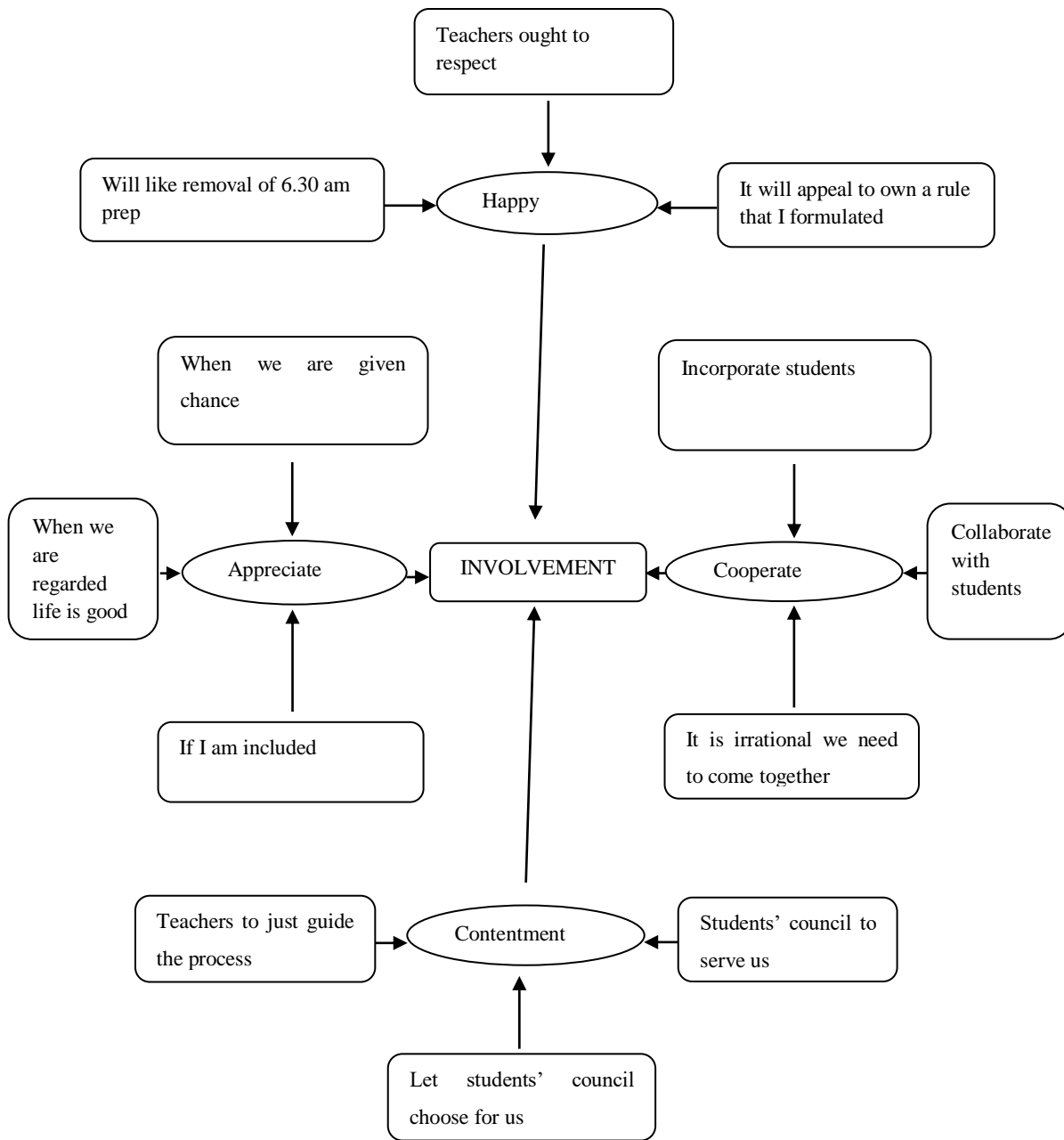


Figure 1: Structure of Thematic Networks for Students’ Attitude of School Rules and regulations with Regard to Formulation.

Analysis Stage B: Exploration of the text for students’ attitude on school rules and regulations with regard to formulation. The interviews obtained information for students’ attitude on school rules and regulations with regard to formulation. The exploration of the text by the researcher was done through interpreting and discussing thematic networks.

Step 4: Interpretation and Discussion of Thematic Networks for Students' Attitude on School Rules and Regulations with Regard to formulation as in Figure 1.

The participants were asked to give their views on students' attitude towards school rules and regulation with regard to formulation, and the following global theme emerged-students desired involvement in the formulation of school rules and regulations. The organizing themes that emerged were: They would have felt happy, cooperated, felt contented and appreciated if involved.

i. Organizing Theme for School Rules and Regulations making students happy

According to the participants, school rules and regulations could have made students happy if they participated in the formulation of school rules and regulations, if 6.30 am prep was removed and if teachers respected them.

When students were asked if they were to be involved in the formulation of school rules, some respondents asserted as follows:

Joyce posits that *"Students should not be sidelined during the formulation of school rules since some rules are formulated without considering the circumstances on the ground, when prep is to start at 6.30, without considering the distance of the students being day scholars, I mean it is difficult and there is need for consensus."*

Jane also opines that *"If my opinion was sought for, I would erase the rule for morning preps and feel good, I mean I cannot make by 6.30 am."*

While Joshua argues that *"When you complain about morning prep during class meetings the class teacher does not take you serious and if you persist in complaining you are dealt with individually. I mean we are grown-ups and we would feel honoured if listened to."*

According to Lutomia and sikolia (2006) a student may break the rules because he/she wants the teacher's attention.

Besides, John asserts that *"If they do not want us to cross the fence and buy food at lunch hour, then the quality of school food ought to be improved, I mean we pay fees and we need high quality food we won't mind if the food is locally produced so long as it is of better grade, let food be appetizing, we will eat it and not cross-over for outside food."*

Janice also argue that *"When we are involved we can even suggest on how food should be cooked I mean we are the ones to eat."*

The administration ought to discuss the school budget with the students so that they understand issues surrounding their food preparation. Ryan (2006) notes that school budget is one of the areas that members of school community (including the students) need to be involved in.

While James laments that *"If I am to make suggestions on how I am to be punished when I break a specific rule then I will own it."*

ii. Organizing Theme for School Rules and Regulations making students to be contented

According to the participants, school rules and regulations could have made students to be contented if the students' council chose what was best for them, if students' council served them and if teachers just guided the process of rule-making.

Jane posits that *"Represent students to avoid resentment"*

While John argues that *"students' council can represent us so that they can propose the kind of punishments for specific mistakes for equality sake."*

This student implied that students' representation is ideal in the formulation of school rules and regulations. Karlin and Berger (1972 p. 26) argue that *"We feel students should have some voice in the establishing of ...school rules and regulations ...through the general organization or... the students' government."*

James suggests that *"It is in order for students to participate in the formulation of school rules since they will be able to air their views."*

Ndakwa (2000) argues that teachers may decide to establish rules or allow their students to assist in formulating them. Teachers who involve their children in the rule making process are certain that students are more likely to follow them.

Joshua contends that *"teachers should only be there to lead the process of the formulation of school rules and allow us to participate even through the Students' council."*

Davis (1994) asserts that students ought to be assisted in consolidating rules into three or five basic rules like; be respectful, be safe, be humble, be honest. After the rules have been decided upon, have the students sign a copy of them and display a copy. Review and define each one as needed. Students are more likely to follow the rules if they are clearly stated and understood.

Janice claims that *"I will not delight in breaking a rule that I made, neither will I feel bitter when I am punished."*

Lundy (2007) concludes that children's views were neither sought for nor listened to.

Joyceposits that *"Since the people who observe the school rules are students, let them decide what is best for them, or allow the students' council to represent us."*

Chemutai et al. (2014) also found out that students' council members were excluded from key decision-making areas of their schools.

The School Parliament (Baraza) in Starehe Boys' Center was an exemplary example of Griffin's management principles put to practice. He describes it thus: *"During it, there is a type of parliamentary immunity, enabling any boy to bring suggestions, voice criticism or to challenge*

any act of authority which seems to him to be unnecessary or unjust. No subject is prohibited, up to and including my own conduct at the school” (Griffin,1994:73).

iii. Organizing Theme for School Rules and Regulations making students to cooperate

According to the participants, school rules and regulations could have made the students to cooperate if administration avoided irrationality, collaborated with them and if they incorporated their opinion in rule making.

Jane laments that *“Students’ opinion should be represented in the formulation of school rule to make the students to take the responsibility”*

While Joyce argues that *“When students views are regarded in the formulation of school rules and regulations, they will just study harmoniously”*

Markham and Aveyard (2003) comment that both learning and decision-making in schools ought to be student-centered.

Joshua believes that *“The administrators behave like they know it all yet they can team with us.”*

From this argument, it is clear that the administrators rarely include the students on matters of rule-making. Sithole (2008) laments that the most popular approach was that students must remain passive and receive instructions from parents and teachers and this led to students' protests.

John argues that *“I will own the rules and regulations that I took part in the formulation, I mean how can I act against myself?”*

Mutua (2004) found out that there was a tendency among some teachers and school leaders to define the issues which affected students quite narrowly. Student consultation and decisionmaking was often limited to aspects of school life that affected students only and which had no immediate relevance to their discipline, like playgrounds, toilets and lockers.

Janice posits that *“When students’ council represent us we become peaceful and own.”*

James laments that *“Students should not be under-rated some have good suggestions given chance, the administration should involve us in the formulation and stop being illogical.”*

Sithole (2008) opines that students can participate but only to a certain degree.

iv. Organizing Theme for School Rules and Regulations being appreciated by the students.

According to the participants, school rules and regulations could be appreciated by the students if they were given chance, if they were included and if they were regarded.

Janice posits that “if I am given a hearing in the formulation of school rules and regulations I will say no to morning preps and move on.”

While James claims that *“When we are given an opportunity to air our views, we own the consequences.”*

Joshua opines that *“When the students’ council is involved in the formulation of school rules, students will not view school with negativity but accept rules and regulations.”*

Cook-Sather (2006), argues that where representatives of students participate in formulation of the school rules, the student body is faced with the obligation to comply with them. The students feel that they are partners in the formulation process and so they are obliged to obey the rules agreed upon.

John also laments that *“The school rules are formulated by the administration and teachers and they do not see our participation as important and they even disregard the views of the members of the students’ council.”*

Joiner (2003) notes that meaningful student involvement is where a student member of the board governing is elected by the whole student body, with no interference from administrators, teachers, or others.

Njozela (2008) also points out that principals and other stakeholders should not under-estimate the contributions of students especially if they are given the opportunity to develop their skills and their level of maturity.

Jane laments that *“When students are given chance to participate in the formulation of school rules, life at school will be acceptable.”*

While Joyce argues that *“Students should be given an opportunity to participate in making of school rules since some of them have opinions that can contribute positively towards improving the welfare of the school.”*

Bäckman and Trafford (2007) assert that the term democratic denotes that school governance is founded on values centered on human rights, empowerment, involvement and participation of all stakeholders.

5. CONCLUSION

From the results, there is evidence that the students are hardly involved in the formulation of school rules and regulations.

6. RECOMMENDATION

School administrators ought to involve the students in the formulation of school rules and regulations even through the students’ council.

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