



# HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP EXPERIENCE AS MOTIVATOR FOR SEEKING STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN TVET INSTITUTIONS IN LAKE REGION, KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

Kenya government's interest is realized in TVET institutions evident in enhanced support by way of funding for projects and increased enrolment, training of TVET tutors and management, and formation of TVETA, to fill the job skills gap towards Vision 2030. However, one component that has been overlooked is student leadership that links TVET management with the beneficiaries, the students, for focused operations towards individual specific TVET institutional goals. This is evident in student unrest and uncoordinated activities which together lead to general failure to achieve expected outcomes. In unravelling the underlying courses, it was realized that overall, less than 3% of students apply for consideration for leadership, only 15% of them were formerly students' council members in their high schools hence 85% had no formal institutional leadership experience. Therefore administrative vetting for appropriateness based on academic performance and discipline records does not result in quality contestants due to the small size of the pool of applicants from which to qualify candidates for election campaign. Despite the enticing monetary allowances and other non-monetary incentives for students' council membership, a preliminary survey revealed that out of the 81 TVET students (formerly high school students' council members) only 39(48%) would wish to serve in college leadership position. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to establish the extent to which high school students' council membership experience was a motivator for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions in Lake Region. The study was based on optimal anticipation model of decision making (Gollier & Muermann, 2010). The population consisted of 12 Deputy Principals (Administration) and 81 TVET students (formerly high school students' council members). Census method was used to select 10 Deputy Principals (Administration) and 71 TVET students (formerly high school students' council members). Instruments of data collection were questionnaire for 71 TVET students, and interview for 10 Deputy Principals and 20 TVET students (formerly high school students' council members). Validity of instruments was ensured by subjecting the tools to expert scrutiny while reliability was established through test-re-test method for 2 Deputy Principals and 10 TVET students whereby Pearson-r of 0.7 and above at a p-value of 0.05 was considered acceptable. The study finding was that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between high school students' council membership experience and motivation for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions. One way ANOVA revealed that at  $F = 0.106$ ,  $df = 71$ , with a significance level of 0.042 at a p-value of 0.05, the set hypothesis that there was no relationship between the 2 variables was rejected. Therefore, the curriculum should include a compulsory leadership training course for all students at the initial stages after admission into TVET institutions given that TVET institutions have no control of the high school experience. The findings can be significant for TVETA in coordination and supervision, TVET curriculum designers and TVET management in ensuring availability of appropriate management skills and attitudes for students seeking student leadership in TVET institutions.

**KEY:** TVET; TVETA; Student Leadership; Students' Council; Lake Region; Vision 2030

**TVET:** Technical Vocational Education and Training

**TVETA:** Technical Vocational Education and Training Authority.

**LAKE REGION:** Siaya, Kisumu, Homabay, and Migori Counties in Kenya

**TVET STUDENTS:** Current TVET students who were formerly high school students' council members

## BACKGROUND

Students' council membership is key to institutional goal achievement. According to Otieno (2013) in high school scenario, it plays the following roles:

- i. Promoting communication within school
- ii. Contributing to developing of school policy
- iii. Supporting educational development
- iv. Supporting progress of other students
- v. Getting things done
- vi. Motivating and inspiring
- vii. Developing other students and themselves
- viii. Representation
- ix. Liaison with student councils in other schools

In this regard, school councilors being a major arm of school administration, Kuh (1983) listed the roles of an effectiveness in responsibility to include the following:

- i. Planning
- ii. Organizing
- iii. Directing
- iv. Coordinating
- v. Controlling
- vi. Evaluating
- vii. Supervising

It can be concluded that Otieno (2013) and Kuh (2003) agree that all the identified facets of students' council role aim at maintaining school discipline towards achievement of set organizational goals. In Nigeria, Rosen(1997) cited in Nelson(2002) identified the following evident disciplinary flaws; defiance to school authority, class disruption, truancy, fighting, use of profane language, damaging school property, dress code violations, theft and leaving school without permission. In addition, there were insubordination, and physical fights ( Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader (2004) which polluted collegial operational environment.

Just like in high schools, student councils play a key role in tertiary institutional goal achievement. In a study by Irungu (2016) on factors that attract students to vie for student leadership in public Universities in Kenya revealed that as regards initial administrative responsibilities in secondary schools, leadership positions in schools are largely influenced by the school administrators. High premium is on general show of good conduct and respect to both the students and school authority. About 82% of the respondent student leaders were in various leadership roles in their secondary schools whereby 64% of the student leaders had been involved in the three key areas of school administration, namely sports at 25%, general administration at 21% and accommodation 18%. From this finding, it may be concluded that student participation and involvement in school administration may have been a vital precursor to their leadership interests at the tertiary level.

Similarly, Irungu(2016) sought to find out the reasons for interest in student leadership at the university. This was done by asking students to list the factors that prompted their interest in leadership positions in the respective student unions. Among the reasons were:

- i. to protect students interests from dictatorial administrators
- ii. Pressure from students for quality and committed leadership
- iii. To bring about visionary leadership to student organizations
- iv. To bargain for and champion the rights of the students
- v. To participate in student leadership as a training and learning experience
- vi. An opportunity for personal development in political and economic terms
- vii. Preparation for future roles in national politics
- viii. Await some of the students expected financial gains in leadership
- ix. It was prestigious to be a student leader at the university
- x. Develop a culture of dialogue and constructive consultations by students and university administration
- xi. Improve the bad public image of university students
- xii. Change the students' mentality to understand university administration, not to be seen as opposition
- xiii. Bring back the lost glory of the students governing council

Based on Irungu (2016) the explanations point out a positive attitude and endeavor by the students to bridge the university administration- student body gap towards a harmonious co-existence. Though indicated by only 24% of the respondents, it also reveals that students and college administration by-and-large seem to have the same goals evident student intention on nurturing a reconciliatory and consultative approach to solving problems on campus. Noteworthy is the fact that Ngoyani ( 2000) in a synthesis of media coverage of student unrest in Tanzania found that about 90% of the student leaders had studied in mainstream Provincial and National secondary schools before joining the university. He attributed such coincidence to the climate established by the tradition of such schools, whereby it would be expected that the students would develop behavior attributes that are likely to espouse leadership inclinations (Ngoyani, 2000). In addition, Zaccoro et.al(2004) indicated that there were some innate leadership characteristics in certain which keep overriding those of competitors whether the opportunity presents itself or not. Such dominant characters tend to lead through the various levels at different institutions, hence the expectation that such students who belonged to the high school student councils should look forward to joining the students' council in tertiary institutions.

TVET reforms arose out of government's educational reforms reported in Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 (Republic of Kenya, 2012) with the aim of an industrialized nation by 2030. According to Wakiaga (2019) the government decided to address the misconceptions about training for blue collar jobs by investing heavily in TVET realized in enhanced and focused funding towards vision 2030. In this regard, it is noted that Finland which is a global stellar example of TVET ranks fifth worldwide in Most Innovative Economies (MIEs) according to Bloomberg's 2017 Innovation Index. To this end, government has increased funding, is publicizing TVET institutions to enhance enrolment, has offered bursaries and loans to enrolled students, and is consistently training tutors, and institutional managers as supervised and coordinated by TVETA (Republic of Kenya, 2012). As reported in The Star (12/4/19), the government had allowed for double of 78,000 university intake to 171,500 for TVET institutions for the year 2019 followed with increased funding for institutional and training projects besides bursaries and loans for students, and training schedules for tutors and managers. However, only national policy and efforts cannot make Kenya realize its industrialization dream, hence the importance of investigating whether the activities in the individual TVET institutions are geared towards the commitment to Vision 2030. Key among this being, student leadership which links management intentions and operations with student learner coordination and activities for institutional objectives, the reason underlying this study. As guided by policy, the students' government comprises of the following nine key offices and office bearers with designate functions (Maina, 2015):

- i. The executive chairman
- ii. The executive vice chairman
- iii. The secretary general
- iv. The treasurer
- v. Ladies' representative

Other offices are tailored according to needs of individual colleges to make up Students' Representative Council. This may include but are not limited to; Director Welfare, Director Academics, Organizing Secretary, Director Sports, and Director Entertainment. The council operates through committees comprised of relevant selected members from across the student population; for instance, the Director sports' committee is made up of representative leaders of various sports



disciplines within a college. In a university setting, there are 2 organs, the Students Governing Council and the Committees of the union. The former consists of the executive, constituency representatives, year representatives, religious representatives, representatives of clubs and associations, non-resident students, sports and entertainment and corporate members. The latter are a creation of the executive and may consist of but not limited to the Academic Affairs Committee, Welfare Committee, Finance Committee, Students' Center Committee, External Affairs Committee, Sports and Entertainment Committee, Editorial Committee and Discipline Committee (Barasa, 2002).

As a legal entity, the union is responsible to management in the following areas:

1. Assisting management in determining decisions that affect the student body
2. Serving as a communication link between the student body and management
3. Consulting and debating with the student body on issues of mutual interest
4. Guiding the students responsibly

This is to a large extent the same as responsibilities high school students' council members play as listed in Otieno(2013). The question is, Why the reluctance to vie for college student leadership position among such experienced students? Could there be past experiences that discourage students who were formerly student councilors in high school from such pursuits?

## MODEL UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

This study is based on optimal anticipation model of decision making (Gollier & Muermann, 2010). This involves a trade-off between anticipation and disappointment whereby a person makes a decision based on certain experience-inspired preferences. Such decision maker's preferences are considered over his beliefs about the nascent probability of winning in addition to the perceived likely outcomes of chance (a lottery). Therefore, a decision maker will rationally choose subjective probabilities to balance the utility from anticipation, and the disutility from disappointment. According to Ying, Dyer and Butler (2014), past experiences act as a preview-lever of future expectation balance between disappointment and anticipation, given that ones' drive builds upon beheld extent of failure or success. In relation to this study, this model applies given the high school students' management council membership experience which may have either been positive or negative thereby influencing the drive to further belong to yet another students' management council in the future. This is hinged on a resulting bias based on one's belief formation, which may be optimistic (the chance of negative outcome being less than that likely for others), or otherwise failure oriented as expressed in pessimism.

## HYPOTHESIS

There is no statistically significant relationship between high school students' council membership experience and motivation for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions in Lake Region, Kenya.

Following are responses from TVET students regarding their experiences as members of high school students' councils and their anticipation towards tertiary institutional leadership opportunity as shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1. TVET Students' Responses about their Personal Leadership Experience in High School in Lake Region.**

<b>Statements on High School Students' Experience</b>	<b>Council Membership</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>BA</b>	<b>MN</b>
My relationship with my high school administration (headteacher, deputy headteachers, heads of department) in respect of my duties as manager		4	23	29	15	<b>2.23</b>
My relationship with teachers in respect of my high school duties as student manager		11	27	29	4	<b>2.81</b>
My relationship with fellow high school mate students' council members		0	21	25	25	<b>1.94</b>
My relationship with ordinary high school students we supervised and coordinated		0	5	58	8	<b>1.96</b>
Availability of high school management tools to facilitate performance of my duty		0	26	45	0	<b>2.50</b>
Level of motivation from my high school teachers in support of duties performed		6	23	26	16	<b>2.27</b>
The ease with which I performed duties as per my high school responsibilities		6	16	42	7	<b>2.30</b>
Enjoyment of performing my high school duties as a student and manager		3	14	54	0	<b>2.23</b>
Approval of performance of my high school duties from significant people in my life specifically parents and/or guardians		3	16	35	17	<b>2.10</b>
<b>AVERAGE MEAN</b>						<b>2.26</b>

KEY:

E-Excellent=3.6-4.0; Very Good experience

G-Good=2.6-3.5; Good experience

A-Average=1.6-2.5; Unpleasant experience

BA-Below Average=1.0- 1.5; Bad experience

The average mean score of 2.26 (Unpleasant experience) shows that these high school former students rated their experience of membership to the students' council as average. The highest individual rating was their relationship with teachers at 2.81(Good experience) while the lowest was their relationship with fellow council members at 1.94 (Unpleasant experience). As regards support, ordinary teachers were the most friendly to high school student council members judging by 17(85%) of TVET student respondents who were interviewed. As said, they offered counselling and listened to these students unlike the school administrators (headteachers, deputy headteachers and heads of department) who, according to 20(100%) TVET student respondents, were not understanding. Some 10(100%) Deputy headteachers (administration) in TVET student respondents were emphatic that based on their realm of responsibility of deputy principals in any institution they expected strictness to observe realization of school objectives through school students' council members. This may have lead some students' council members in high school not to like the job. There was agreement by 6(30%) Deputy headteachers (administration) interviewed that it was difficult to force students who are assumed to have some high school leadership experience to vie for leadership positions in TVET institutions. Some 10(100%) Deputy principals (administration) said that they offered equal opportunity for those aspiring to leadership position.

A TVET student (formerly high school students' council members) noted that it would not be fair to discriminate against their compatriots who never had the opportunity for leadership at high school by denying them exposure. Upon interview, 2(5%) TVET students (formerly high school students' council member) were looking forward to the forthcoming college elections as participant candidates. Some 11(55%) others were not looking forward to leadership position given the bad experience they had while serving in high school. Following are responses regarding anticipation for leadership opportunity in TVET college in Table 2.

**Table 2. TVET Students' Responses about their Anticipation for Leadership Opportunity in TVET Institution in Lake Region.**

<b>Statements on Anticipation for Leadership Opportunity in TVET Institution</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MN</b>
I am looking forward to campaign period for this year's institutional leadership at this institution	1	4	8	58	<b>1.32</b>
Once leadership campaign period is declared, I will actively participate at this institution	3	3	7	58	<b>1.41</b>
I am looking forward to declaring my candidature for a suitable leadership position in this institution	0	4	5	62	<b>1.25</b>
I have already identified a suitable leadership position that I hope to vie for in the coming institutional election	3	3	19	46	<b>1.48</b>
I have already observed with keenness the institutional leadership challenges the current office holders undergo	5	3	12	61	<b>1.61</b>
I have already noted ways through which the college leadership challenges arise and is strategizing on how they can be overcome	1	8	20	52	<b>1.70</b>
If given a chance, I would gladly take over a leadership position in this institution	0	2	24	45	<b>1.40</b>
I believe I can be a successful leader given the chance to show my skills in this institution	2	0	6	63	<b>1.17</b>
<b>AVERAGE MEAN</b>					<b>1.42</b>

KEY:

SA-Strongly Agree=3.6-4.0-; Encouraging

A-Agree=2.6- 3.5; Satisfactory

D- Disagree= 1.6 -2.5; Discouraging

SD-Strongly Disagree=1.0- 1.5; Bad

The average mean score of 1.42(Bad) shows that these high school former students rated their experience of membership to the students' council was very unpleasant. The highest individual rating was their have already noted ways through which the college leadership challenges arise and is strategizing on how they can be overcome at 1.7 (Discouraging) while the lowest was their looking forward to declaring my candidature for a suitable leadership position in this college at 1.25(Bad). Some 7(70%) Deputy Principals explained that it was necessary to explain to TVET students during induction the need to sharpen their leadership skills and the benefits there-of both within TVET institutions and beyond the training period. However, 1(10%) Deputy Principal said that this should be a 'free market' with equal chances allowing environmental forces to shape the activities of TVET students, adding that weak leadership should be addressed through mentorship and induction for all students upon admission.

To establish the strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables data summarized in Table 1 and Table 2 was subjected to ANOVA. The findings were as displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3: ANOVA for high school students' council membership experience versus motivation for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions in Lake Region Scores**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	69.300	7	.039	.106	.042
Within Groups	17.295	64	.193		
Total	86.595	71			

The data provided in Table 3 shows the analysis of variance for relationship between high school students' council membership experience and motivation for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions scores for teachers with transfer intention. It reveals statistically significant evidence about there being a positive relationship between relationship between high school students' council membership experience and motivation for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions. One way ANOVA reveals that  $F = 0.106$ ,  $df = 71$ , with a significance level of 0.042 at a p-value of 0.05. Whereby increase in value of high school students' council experience results in increase in value for motivation for student leadership in TVET institutions. Hence we reject the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between relationship between high school students' council membership experience and motivation for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions in Lake Region, Kenya.

## CONCLUSION

There is a positive significant relationship between high school students' council membership experience and motivation for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions in Lake Region, Kenya.

## RECOMMENDATION

Given that TVET institutions have no control of the high school students' council experience, the curriculum should be designed to include a compulsory leadership training course for all students at the initial stages after admission into TVET institutions. The findings can be significant for TVET curriculum designers and TVET management in ensuring availability of appropriate skills and attitudes for seeking student leadership in TVET institutions.



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