

KEMI Journal of Educational Leadership and Management

KJELM

[ISSN 3079-4048]

Volume: 2 Issue: 3 | Nov-2026

Relationship between role clarity and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya

Said Abubakar Sheikh[1]

Mount Kenya University, Kenya[1]

Corresponding Author Email: Saidsheikhbana@gmail.com

Cite this article in APA

https://doi.org/10.68147/b76a4ab2

Copyright: ©2026 by the author(s). Open access under CC BY.

Abstract

Student councils provide a platform for student representation, participation and collaboration with school administration. Their effectiveness, however, depends on members' understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This study examined the relationship between role clarity and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya. Specifically, it investigated the influence of defined roles and responsibilities, role expectations, operational guidelines, training, accountability and supervision. Guided by Role Theory and Path–Goal Theory of Leadership, the study adopted a mixed-methods descriptive survey design covering all 15 public secondary schools. A sample of 189 respondents was targeted, of whom 179 participated, representing a 95% response rate. Data were collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and analysed through descriptive, regression and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that clearly defined roles, operational guidelines, training and orientation, and accountability and supervision had significant positive relationships with student council effectiveness. The regression model explained 83.4% of the variation in effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.834$), with guidelines and policies ($\beta = 0.595$) and training and orientation ($\beta = 0.334$) emerging as key predictors. Role expectations were not statistically significant when other factors were controlled. Qualitative findings emphasised written procedures, leadership development, reporting mechanisms and administrative support. The study concludes that effective student councils require clear operational frameworks, structured capacity building and supportive accountability mechanisms. It recommends strengthening school policies, providing

regular leadership training and mentorship, and enhancing administrative supervision to promote meaningful student participation and effective school governance.

Key terms: Role clarity, Student Councils, Student Leadership, School governance, Role theory

1.0 Introduction

Student councils have been known to give students in schools a formal means of voicing their opinions, representing other students and engaging in school governance. Through these school councils, children are able to participate in decisions that have a significant impact on their lives, which is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Article 12 which states that children have the right to express their views on matters affecting them. There are formal arrangements in place in different countries to facilitate learner participation. The School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005, for example, are a set of regulations that govern school councils in Wales, and South Africa's South African Schools Act 1996 allows for learner representation in the form of Representative Councils of Learners (The School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005, 2005; Republic of South Africa, 1996).The examples illustrate the need for formal structures to involve students. But the presence of a council will not ensure effective participation, however. Council members should also be familiar with the roles of councils and the way councils work.

The student councils in secondary schools in Kenya have been linked to improved involvement of students in school governance. In Kenya, the framework of student council (SC) was introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2009 as a replacement to the common prefect system by teachers and to improve the involvement of students in school governance (Ministry of Education, Kenya, 2009). The purpose of the framework was to foster democratic leadership and to minimise incidents of student unrest.

In Kenya, the Basic Education Act, 2013 and the Basic Education Regulations, 2015, promote learner participation in decision-making processes in schools (Republic of Kenya, 2013, 2015). The Ministry of Education has also released the Handbook of Kenya Secondary School Student Councils which outlines the procedures for the establishment, election, functions, and operations of School Councils. There is recognition in these frameworks of the importance of student councils to encourage participatory leadership, communication and democratic governance in schools.

Student councils in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County are expected to represent the learners and get involved with teachers and school administrators. In order for them to do this effectively, council members must be aware of their limits of authority, expectations of others and their duties. Therefore, it became important to explore how their roles are defined, communicated and supported in the school management system.

This study is based on five aspects of role clarity, namely (i) clearly defined roles and responsibilities; (ii) role expectations; (iii) guidelines and policies; (iv) Training and orientation; and (v) Accountability and supervision. Roles and responsibilities make it clear the duties and scope of council members' authority. Role expectations are what members of the council expect from each other and what fellow students and school administration expect of the council. Guidelines and policies give direction to how councils should operate and training and orientation assists members to understand and do their work. Accountability and supervision create opportunities to monitor performance, to guide and ensure that members perform within their responsibilities. The study examines the relationship between the above five dimensions of role clarity, with student council effectiveness in public secondary schools of Mvita Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya. The study aims to produce evidence that can contribute to the strengthening of student leadership and school governance in the study area, by studying these relationships.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Student councils give students a chance to speak up stand for students and take part in how the school is run. For these groups to do their jobs well the members must know what they are supposed to do and get help from the school staff. Just because there is a student council does not mean it is working the way it should. Previous studies in Kenya have examined different aspects of student councils and school governance. Kyalo et al. (2017) studied how student councils help put school rules into practice in secondary schools across Kathonzweni Sub-County. Koech (2024) looked at the wins and hurdles that student councils face when trying to solve student disputes in schools, in Kericho County.

These studies give insights into the participation of students and the functioning of student councils. The reviewed literature did not however establish the relationship between the five dimensions of role clarity namely clearly defined roles and responsibilities, role expectations, guidelines and policies, training and orientation and accountability and supervision on effectiveness of student council in public secondary schools in Mvita sub-county, Mombasa County. Whether expectations about roles impact the effectiveness of the councils is not known, and it is unclear what the interaction is with the other factors. The gap is important, as school leaders and education decision-makers must have information to inform them how to support school councils. The outcomes could contribute to an improvement in the explanation of roles, the setting of rules, the provision of training, and the supervision of student councils, in the area.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between role clarity and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya.

1.3 Specific Objectives

To determine the relationship between clearly defined roles and responsibilities and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya.

To examine the relationship between role expectations and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya.

To establish the relationship between guidelines and policies and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya.

To assess the relationship between training and orientation and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya.

To evaluate the relationship between accountability and supervision and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

What is the relationship between clearly defined roles and responsibilities and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya?

To what extent are role expectations related with student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya?

How do guidelines and policies relate to student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya?

In what ways is training and orientation related to student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya?

Is accountability and supervision related to student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya?

2.0 Literature Review

This section discusses the Theoretical framework of this study, the Conceptual Framework and the Empirical Literature of the study.

2.1 Theoretical framework

This study is guided by two theories. These theories are Role Theory and Path–Goal Theory of Leadership. Both theories help explain the importance of clear responsibilities and the support student council members need to carry out their duties.

2.1.1 Role Theory

Role Theory provides an understanding of people's actions based on the expectations imposed on their social or organizational roles. Linton (1936) coined the terms social roles and stressed the importance of roles in the shaping of behaviour. Subsequently, Kahn et al. (1964) concluded that there is a negative effect of role ambiguity; role ambiguity may result in a decrease in performance, and Rizzo et al. (1970) showed that role ambiguity and role conflict can negatively impact effectiveness within organizations. Student Councils require student members to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, authority and expected behaviours to be effective in their leadership role. Although student leaders might be aware of what is expected of them, they still require training, guidance and feedback on all aspects that they are involved with. For this reason, the study also examines training and orientation, as well as accountability and supervision.

2.1.2 Path–Goal Theory of Leadership

Path–Goal Theory of Leadership was developed by House (1971). The theory describes how leaders can facilitate the efforts of others to attain their performance goals by making it clear what actions need to be taken, offering assistance and helping them to mitigate potential obstacles to good performance. A school can help student councils to be aware of the rules of the school, to know about their roles, to be trained and educated on how to deal with issues, and to be given guidance when problems occur when the school administrators and teachers support them. This support can assist student leaders to perform the role better. The theory thus serves as a foundation to study guidelines and policies, training and orientation, as well as accountability and supervision.

The two theories complement each other. Role Theory explains the importance of understanding one's duties and the expectations attached to a position. Path–Goal Theory, in turn, helps explain the importance of guidance and support in carrying out those duties. Together, the theories guide this study's examination of the relationship between the five dimensions of role clarity and student council effectiveness.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the proposed relationship between the study variables of this study. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework adopted in this study.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables Dependent Variables

Role Clarity Effectiveness of Students' Councils

Roles and responsibilities	
• Written role description	
• Defined duties	
• Authority boundaries	
Role expectations	
• Awareness of expectations	
• Understanding stakeholder demands	
Guidelines and Policies	
• Student council constitution	Student Council Effectiveness
• School governance procedures	• Decision making Effectiveness
	• Leadership Performance
Training and orientation	• Communication Effectiveness
• Leadership training	• Conflict resolution
• Orientation programmes	• Council functionality
Accountability and supervision	
• Reporting mechanisms	
• Mentorship and monitoring	Intervening Variables
	• School Type
	• School Size
Note. Source: Researcher (2024)	• Administrative Support
	• School Culture

Role clarity with its five dimensions is the independent variable of this study while Student council effectiveness is the dependent variable and is measured through decision-making effectiveness, leadership performance, communication effectiveness, conflict resolution, and council functionality. Intervening variables are also shown and these are school type, school size, and administrative support, which may affect the relationship between role clarity and student council effectiveness. The arrows indicate the relationships examined in this study.

2.3 Empirical Literature

2.3.1 Defined Roles and Responsibilities

Sousa and Ferreira (2024) conducted a review on student participation in democratic school management. They found that formal support for student involvement does not always lead to participation in decision-making. Their results stress the need to look closely at how student participation's are organized and carried out in schools. Research on student leadership in secondary schools shows that when leadership roles are clearly defined and students take active parts in school governance there are improvements in discipline, communication and problem-solving (Mwagi & Monda 2023; Kyalo et al., 2017). However the studies mentioned above assume that defined roles are effective. They do not often examine whether the quality or the way these roles are communicated differs, across school settings.

2.3.2 Role Expectations

Role expectations are all of the things that school leaders, teachers, other students and council members expect student leaders to do. If these expectations are well explained to members, this might help those to better understand their duties. But, if a member knows what to expect doesn't always equate to having the support that they require to live up to their expectations. Clear expectations by stakeholders leads to increased competence in leadership (Tackett et al., 2022). On the other hand, weak coordination between student leaders and school administration may restrict the effectiveness of student councils in contributing to the school governance (Koech, 2024). A critical gap emerges here: while previous studies identify expectations as a factor, few have empirically tested whether awareness of expectations alone is sufficient for effectiveness, or if it requires tangible support structures.

2.3.3 Guidelines and Policies as Structural Drivers

Guidelines and policies can help explain how student councils should operate what duties student council members must do and what steps student councils should follow. These rules can give a point of reference, for students, teachers and school administrators. However having written policies does not mean everyone will understand them or use them the way. Clear policy frameworks and student participation in implementing school rules enhance institutional effectiveness (Kyalo et al., 2017). Studies of Kenyan secondary schools indicate that institutions with structured leadership policies tend to report higher levels of student participation in school governance (Simiyu, 2025). However, empirical research also shows that policy implementation often varies across schools due to differences in resources and administrative commitment (Simiyu, 2025).

2.3.4 Training and Orientation

Training and orientation play a role in any school setup. The value of training depends on what's taught how it is taught and whether it connects to the actual responsibilities of student leaders. Vinokur et al. (2024) look at training in the areas of school leadership social relationships and conflict management. Their article shows how training can help teachers gain the knowledge, attitudes and hands-on skills they need to handle conflicts improve communication and build relationships, in the school environment. Leadership development and mentorship programs have also been shown to make student councils and student governance more effective (Simiyu, 2025).

2.3.5 Accountability and Supervision

Accountability and supervision can help student council members understand what their duties are and give them feedback on how they're doing. It is also important that supervision does not control everything. Students need space to take charge make decisions and grow as leaders. Much control can stop them from learning how to lead on their own. So a balance is needed—support but freedom to try, fail and improve. Accountability systems are highlighted as critical for ensuring effectiveness. Student leaders' responsibility is encouraged through regular reporting and performance reviews as they are provided with structured feedback and clear mandates in supportive school environments (Koech, 2024). However too much supervision is said to impede student autonomy and too little is said to provide the guidance needed (Wößmann et al., 2007). The tension implies a need to investigate the balance between accountability and empowerment in the particular cultural context of Mvita Sub-County.

2.3.6 The Research Gap

Most prior studies in Kenya treat the five dimensions of role clarity as equally influential or discuss them in isolation. There is a scarcity of empirical research that simultaneously analyzes these five dimensions to determine their differential predictive power on council effectiveness. It is still not clear whether role expectations have the level of impact as structural factors such as written guidelines and formal training in the resource-limited setting of public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County. Also while global research highlights the importance of these factors in theory local studies often show different results. This study addresses this real issue by moving beyond general descriptions to empirically isolate which specific components of role clarity are related to the effectiveness of student councils in schools.

3.0 Research Methodology

This section discusses the research design, the target population and sample size, the research instruments used, the data collection procedures employed and the Data Processing and Analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods descriptive survey design. This design was suitable since it allowed the researcher to gather data concerning role clarity and its role on the effectiveness of student councils, without any manipulation of variables. The design enabled the gathering of data of a comparatively big number of respondents and giving a precise definition of the current situation of the public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County.

3.2 Target Population and Sample Size

The target population comprised 360 participants from all the 15 public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County. These included 15 principals, 15 deputy principals, 30 teachers and 300 student council members. The schools are located in the five wards in the sub county which are Majengo, Tononoka, Ganjoni, Tudor and Mji wa Kale. The sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane’s formula:

n =	**N**			
n =	1+N (e)2			
360	**=**	**360**	**=**	**189**
1 + 360(0.052)	=	1.9	=	189

where n represents the sample size, N is the target population of 360, and e is the margin of error. Using

a margin of error of 0.05, the resulting sample was approximately 189 participants.

Table 1

Sample Size

Respondents	Target Population (N)	Sample size (n)
Principals	15	15
Deputy Principals	15	15
Teachers	30	30
Students Council members	300	129
Total	360	189

Note. Source: Researcher (2025).

Table 1 shows the sample size of this study. All principals, deputy principals, and teachers were included through a census approach because their numbers were relatively small and manageable (15 principals, 15 deputy principals, and 30 teachers). Including all members of these categories ensured comprehensive representation of school administrators and teachers involved in student council activities. However, the population of student council members was considerably larger (300 members). Therefore, stratified random sampling was adopted to obtain a representative sample of 129 while ensuring practicality in data collection. Stratification by school type (boys', girls', and mixed schools) helped ensure that student council members from different school contexts were adequately represented.

3.3 Research Instruments

Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides were used to collect data from the respondents of this study. The questionnaire items were adapted from constructs used in previous studies on role clarity and leadership effectiveness. Following the principles proposed by Beaton et al. (2000), some items were modified to suit the context of public secondary schools in Kenya while retaining their original meaning and content. The answers to the questionnaire were analyzed using the five-point Likert scale where:

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

To verify the relevance of the problem a pilot study was carried out in a similar public secondary school that was not within the study area but contained around 10% of the sample population. The pilot test was used to assess the clarity, relevance and consistency of the questionnaire items. Prior to the main study, feedback from the pilot study allowed for some minor revisions which identified ambiguous questions. Internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, with the obtained level of 0.78 being higher than the recommended level (0.70). The development of questionnaire items from the theoretical dimensions of role clarity identified in the literature and the correlation of items with the study objectives were used to enhance the construct validity. The instrument and interview guide were subsequently piloted with experts in educational leadership and research methodology for content validity and relevance with the study objectives.

3.4 Data Collection procedures

Data collection followed a systematic procedure. First, ethical clearance and research permits were obtained from Mount Kenya University and NACOSTI. Permission was then sought from the County Director of Education to allow for the field work. After receiving the permission from the Director of Education, fieldwork was conducted between 18 September 2025 and 20 October 2025. Throughout this time, the researcher visited the chosen public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, distributed questionnaires to the respondents, and carried out interviews with selected participants. The first stage of data collection involved the distribution of structured questionnaires among all respondents in order to collect quantitative data. Afterwards, the respondents were required to participate in a series of semi-structured interviews aimed to further explain and interpret the answers given by them in the questionnaires. Therefore, all 179 respondents who completed the questionnaires also participated in the interview process. The respondents comprised 15 principals, 15 deputy principals, 25 teachers and 124 student council members. This approach enabled the researcher to triangulate quantitative results with qualitative explanations obtained from the same participants. The completed questionnaires were collected, and the interview data was obtained and recorded with the participants' permission.

3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze quantitative data in SPSS Version 28. Descriptive statistics (in this case, means and standard deviations) were used to describe the perceptions of the respondents on the dimensions of role clarity and council effectiveness. Additionally, Pearson correlation was used to explore how strong and in which direction the relationships were between each dimension of role clarity and student council effectiveness. Regression Coefficient analysis was then performed to determine the relative predictive power of the five independent variables (roles, expectations, guidelines, training, accountability) on the dependent variable. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used for the qualitative analysis of the data obtained from semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was conducted in line with the six steps suggested by Braun and Clarke, 2006. Responses to questions were transcribed and reviewed several times to become familiar with the data from interviews. Initial codes were given to meaningful statements around role clarity and effectiveness of student councils. These codes were then categorized and then clustered into the study goals with the corresponding themes. Themes were checked, revised and elaborated in accordance with the quantitative results.

The responses from principals, deputy principals, teachers and student council members were aggregated for analysis as all groups had provided information on study variables, namely role clarity and student council effectiveness. It was not the intention of this study to compare perceptions between the groups of respondents, rather it aimed to determine the overall relationship between the above mentioned variables in the public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County. A common questionnaire format and measurement scale was employed, so the responses were aggregated to give a holistic picture of the study constructs.

The qualitative results were triangulated across responses from principals, deputy principals, teachers and members of the student council to strengthen the trustworthiness of the qualitative results. The findings from the interviews were corroborated with responses to the questionnaires that were also gathered from the same people, thus lending credibility to the study. Consistency of interview guide for all participants increased the dependability, and themes and interpretations were based directly on participants' responses to promote confirmability.

The study was mainly based on self-reported questionnaire data, so there was a possibility of common

method bias that may have affected the relationships between the variables in the study, because the same data collection tool and source were used. In an attempt to minimize this risk, quantitative results were supplemented by qualitative results from the interview data obtained from principals, deputy principals, teachers and student council members. More than one respondent category and data triangulation were used to enhance the findings' credibility. However, further research may include other sources of information including observations and school records to further reduce the potential for common method bias.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance and research permits were obtained from the relevant institutions, and permission was sought from the County Director of Education. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were informed the purpose of the research, what their participation involved and their right to decline participation or withdraw in accordance with the approved research protocol. Adult participants were required to provide informed consent before taking part in the study. For student council members below the age of 18, parental or guardian permission and the learners' assent were required where applicable under the approved ethical procedures and research protocol.

Confidentiality was maintained by protecting participants' personal information and avoiding the use of their names or other identifying details in the research report. Completed questionnaires, interview recordings and transcripts were handled in accordance with the approved data protection procedures, with access restricted to authorised persons. The information collected was used for the purposes of the study and reported in a way that protected participants' identities.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings for the study from field data.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

Results of quantitative research have been provided in terms of the response rate, demographic characteristics, reliability of instruments used, descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analyses relating to the effects of role clarity on the student council effectiveness. Table 2 below illustrates the response rate for all the respondents based on their respective categories.

Table 2

Response Rate

Respondents	Sample size (n)	No. of responses	Response rate
Principals	15	15	100%
Deputy Principals	15	15	100%
Teachers	30	25	83%
Students Council members	129	124	96%
Total	189	179	95%

Note. The source is field data

As shown in Table 2 above, a total of 189 questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents, which included 15 Principals, 15 Deputy Principals, 30 Teachers, and 129 Students' Council members. Out of these, 179 were duly completed and returned, representing an overall response rate of 95%. Table 3 displays the demographic characteristics of the 179 respondents, including gender, school type, school size, and the number of student council members.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=179)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	83	46%
Female	96	54%
Total	179	

Note. Source: Field Data

Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of the 179 respondents where it is indicated that 96 (54%) were female, while 83 (46%) were male. This shows that female respondents constituted a slightly larger proportion of the study sample than male respondents.

Table 4

Characteristics of Participating Schools (n = 15)

School Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Boys Schools	7	47%
Girls Schools	5	33%
Mixed Schools	3	20%
Total	15	

Note. Source: Field Data

Table 4 indicates that the study involved 15 public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County. Of these, 7 (47%) were boys' schools, making them the largest category of participating schools. Girls' schools accounted for 5 (33%), while 3 (20%) were mixed schools. This distribution shows that boys' schools constituted the largest proportion of the participating institutions, followed by girls' schools and mixed schools. The inclusion of all three categories provided representation of different school types in the study, allowing the researcher to examine student council effectiveness across boys', girls', and mixed public secondary schools.

Table 5

Enrollment size of the schools

School Size	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 500 students	10	67%

500-1000 students	5	33%
Over 1000 students	0	
Total	15	

Note. Source: Field Data

The findings in Table 5 indicate that most participating schools had an enrolment of fewer than 500 students. Specifically, 10 (67%) of the 15 schools fell within this category, while 5 (33%) had an enrolment of between 500 and 1,000 students. None of the participating schools had an enrolment exceeding 1,000 students. This distribution shows that the study mainly involved small-sized schools, followed by medium-sized schools. The findings suggest that student council effectiveness was examined primarily in schools with relatively low student enrolment, with some representation of schools having larger student populations.

4.2 Quantitative data Presentation

This section presents the quantitative data presentation where Reliability Test, Descriptive Statistics, Pearson Correlation and Regression Analysis Results are presented.

4.3 Reliability Test

To carry out an inferential statistics, a reliability test through Cronbach Alpha was carried out to ascertain the internal consistency of the questionnaire items under the respective variables.

Table 6

Cronbach Alpha results

Scale	Cronbach’s Alpha
Roles & Responsibilities	0.778
Role Expectations	0.753
Guidelines & Policies	0.791
Training & Orientation	0.755
Accountability & Supervision	0.798
Effectiveness of Students Councils	0.827
Average	0.78
Overall Reliability	Acceptable (≥ 0.7)

Note. Source: Field Data. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable.

Table 6 demonstrates that the alpha values of all the six variables used are above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70. The overall Cronbachs Alpha was 0.780 and this implies that the tool was reputable and that the items were always appropriate to measure the constructs that were to be measured. Table 4 demonstrates the reliability test results using Cronbach's Alpha to ascertain the internal consistency of the questionnaire items.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 reveals the descriptive statistics of the study variables, the mean scores as well as the standard deviations. Results were obtained based on a five point Likert scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree,2 =Disagree,3 Neutral,4= Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The mean values reflect how far respondents concurred with the statements that reflected each variable, whereas the standard deviation reflects the degree of variance in the responses of the respondents.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics from the respondents

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Roles & Responsibilities	4.08	0.84	Agree
Role Expectations	4.1	0.74	Agree
Guidelines & Policies	3.84	0.83	Agree (moderate)
Training & Orientation	4.1	0.73	Agree
Accountability & Supervision	3.99	0.76	Agree
Effectiveness of Student Councils	3.76	0.77	Agree

Note. Source: Field Data

Generally, a mean score above 3.5 indicates agreement among respondents regarding the statements presented in the questionnaire. As shown in Table 7, all variables recorded mean scores above 3.5, suggesting that respondents generally agreed that clearly defined roles and responsibilities, role expectations, guidelines and policies, training and orientation, accountability and supervision, as well as student council effectiveness, were evident within their schools. These descriptive results reflect respondents' perceptions.

4.5 Pearson Correlation Results

Table 6 presents the Pearson correlation results. All components of role clarity exhibited strong positive correlations with the effectiveness of students' councils, all significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 8

Pearson Correlation results

Scale	**Pearson r**	**p-value**
Roles & Responsibilities (RR)	0.601	< 0.001
Role Expectations (RA)	0.694	< 0.001
Guidelines & Policies (GP)	0.876	< 0.001
Training & Orientation (TO)	0.823	< 0.001
Accountability & Supervision (AS)	0.734	< 0.001

Note. Source: Field Data

Table 8 shows that Guidelines and policies showed the strongest correlation (r = 0.876), followed by training and orientation (r = 0.823), then Accountability and orientation (r= 0.734) indicating that these components are most strongly associated with student council effectiveness. Role expectation and Role and responsibilities had r=0.694 and 0.601 respectively.

4.6 Regression Analysis Results

4.6.1 Diagnostic Assessment

To assess the suitability of the regression model, collinearity diagnostics were examined.

Table 9

Collinearity Statistics

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF
Roles & Responsibilities	0.612	1.634
Role Expectations	0.535	1.869
Guidelines & Policies	0.421	2.376
Training & Orientation	0.468	2.137
Accountability & Supervision	0.578	1.729

Note. Information is from fieldwork data

Table 9 shows that Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) ranged from approximately 1.634 to 2.376 and tolerance values exceeded 0.10, indicating no evidence of severe multicollinearity.

Table 10

Collinearity Diagnostics

Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index
1	5.412	1
2	0.351	3.927
3	0.148	6.047
4	0.06	9.499
5	0.022	15.684
6	0.007	27.809

Table 10 shows that the highest Condition Index (27.809) is below the critical threshold of 30. This confirms the absence of severe multicollinearity among the independent variables.

4.6.2 Model Summary

Table 11

The Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.913	0.834	0.829	0.319

Table 11 indicates the Model summary report. The Model summary results showed an R value of 0.913 and an R^2 of 0.834, indicating that 83.4% of the variation in the effectiveness of students' councils was explained by roles and responsibilities, role expectations, guidelines and policies, training and orientation, and accountability and supervision. The adjusted R^2 of 0.829 further confirmed the stability of the model.

4.6.3 ANOVA

Table 12 shows the ANOVA results of the regression model.

Table 12

The ANOVA results

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	92.415	5	18.48	181.28	< .001
Residual	17.635	173	0.102		
Total	110.1	178			

Note. Dependent Variable: Effectiveness of Students' Councils (n = 179)

The ANOVA results indicates that the regression model was statistically significant, $F=181.276$, $p<0.001$, demonstrating that the independent variables jointly predicted the effectiveness of students' councils.

4.6.4 Regression Coefficients

The regression coefficients analysis examined the relationship between the five dimensions of role clarity and student council effectiveness in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County. The analysis assessed the direction, strength and statistical significance of each predictor in explaining student council effectiveness, while controlling for the other predictors included in the regression model. Table 13 shows the regression coefficients.

Table 13

Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std.Error	Standardized Beta	p-value	Significance
Roles & Responsibilities	0.11	0.048	0.12	0.022	Significant
Role Expectations	0.024	0.060	0.023	0.687	Not significant

Guidelines & Policies	0.552	0.050	0.595	<0.001	Highly significant
Training & Orientation	0.349	0.055	0.334	<0.001	Highly significant
Accountability & Supervision	0.121	0.054	0.12	0.029	Significant

The results showed that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between roles and responsibilities and student council effectiveness (B = 0.11, beta = 0.12, p = 0.022). The p-value was under the significance level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship. The results indicate that if the roles and responsibilities of students' council members are clearly defined, students' council work will be more effective. By having members know their role they are better equipped to undertake council work, to speak on behalf of the students in their council and help to meet the goals of the council.

Role expectations had a positive but statistically insignificant relationship with student council effectiveness (B = 0.024, beta = 0.023, p = 0.687). However, because the p value was above 0.05, there was not sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the role expectations predicted the effectiveness of the students council separately in the regression model. The finding suggests that simply setting up some expectations regarding how students' council members should perform cannot be taken as a sufficient condition of ensuring the effectiveness of the students' council. Such expectations would need to be fully supported by specific duties, assistance, practice, training, and supervision.

It was also observed that there was a significant positive relationship between guidelines and policies and the effectiveness of the student council in the schools under study (B = 0.552, beta = 0.595, p < 0.001). From the above findings, one could suggest that it is important to have guidelines or rules in place at the school to make sure that student council members understand their power, duties and limits within the school. Such guidelines will help to avoid any misunderstandings and also assist in decision-making process.

Training and orientation also was positively correlated with student council effectiveness (B = 0.349, beta = 0.334, p < 0.001) and the correlation was highly statistically significant. This discovery implies that providing the students council with the appropriate information and skills could be correlated with performance. Members can be trained and oriented to their duties and develop leadership, communication, conflict resolution, decision making and procedures for addressing students' concerns. The results thus indicate the need for an orientation for the members of the student council and training for them to help carry out their duties. Schools can have orientation programmes for new members as well as further training during their term of office.

There exists a statistically significant and positive relationship between accountabilities and supervision and the effectiveness of student council (B= 0.121, beta = 0.120, p= 0.029%). The p-value was <0.05, hence statistically significant. This finding shows that the effectiveness of student council can be increased by ensuring that there is an appropriate form of supervision and accountability measures which will enable the members to perform their roles, follow procedures, and be accountable for the decisions they make and their actions. Student council can be assisted by guidance from the teachers or school authorities on how to achieve their objectives. The results indicate that there needs to be appropriate systems in place at schools for the monitoring of student council activities and provide students with enough autonomy to fulfil their leadership roles.The outcome demonstrates the significant role that giving student councils clear operating parameters and policies could have in the future. But the regression analysis does not provide proof that these policies directly lead to increased effectiveness, it is

a statistical relationship.

4.7 Integrated Presentation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

This section discusses the questionnaire and interview data to get an insight into the relationship and link between role clarity and student council performance in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-county. The questionnaire data illustrates the statistical links between the study variables, while the interview data sheds light on the experiences of the study participants with these issues.

4.7.1 Defined Roles and Responsibilities and Student Council Effectiveness

The regression analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between clearly defined roles and responsibilities and student council effectiveness ($\beta = 0.120$, $p = 0.022$). This indicates that student councils operated more effectively where members were familiar with their responsibilities and functions.

The interview findings support this result. Respondent P01 explained, “We have every student leader aware of their role, which makes for faster decision-making and less redundant tasks.” Furthermore res[pendent T01 also observed that clear arrangements made it easier for staff to work with student leaders on discipline and welfare programmes.

These responses help explain why clearly defined roles may be associated with better council performance. When student leaders know their tasks well, they are in a good position to prepare activities, take decisions and cooperate with teachers. The quantitative and qualitative results thus highlight the need to clarify the specific duties of leaders for all members of the council.

4.7.2 Role Expectations and Student Council Effectiveness

Unlike the other dimensions, role expectations did not show a statistically significant relationship with student council effectiveness in the regression analysis ($\beta = 0.023$, $p = 0.687$). Although the interview findings suggested that schools had expectations of their student leaders, meeting these expectations was not always easy.

Respondent DP01 explained, “We gauge their leadership by how well they represent student concerns without being confrontational.” SCM01 mentioned, “It can be hard to balance academics and being a leader, but we do our best.”

The implication of the student leaders’ responses is that apart from being expected to represent the fellow students, it is equally important for them to perform well academically and to maintain good discipline. However, knowing what is supposed to be done does not mean that students have sufficient support, guidance and time. This could shed light on the reason why role expectations did not serve as a statistically significant predictor in the regression analysis.

4.7.3 Guidelines and Policies and Student Council Effectiveness

Among the five dimensions, guidelines and policies had the largest standardized regression coefficient value ($\beta = 0.595$, $p < 0.001$), which suggests that the variable had the strongest statistical association with the effectiveness of the student council.

The interviews provide further insight into this finding. Respondent P02 stated, “The school has a constitution that outlines the duties and limits of student leaders.” This shows how written rules can help student leaders understand their responsibilities and the boundaries of their authority. However, respondent T01 pointed out that “Sometimes communication is slow because messages must pass

through several offices."

The interview findings therefore show that formalized policies provide great assistance, but it is also confronted with challenges while implementing them. Formal written guidelines may certainly help councils to operate within an agreed framework, but also procedures for communicating matter. The findings support the conclusion that clear policies, together with effective communication, are primary considerations in how student councils operate and therefore have a positive relationship..

4.7.4 Training and Orientation and Student Council Effectiveness

Training and orientation also had a positive and statistically significant relationship with student council effectiveness ($\beta = 0.334$, $p < 0.001$). Its standardized coefficient was the second largest in the regression model, after guidelines and policies. The interviews help illustrate the possible value of training. Respondent SCM02 explained, "The training we received helped us listen before reacting." The obtained responses may imply that training is helpful for student leaders in dealing with disputes in a calm manner and listening to the opinions of others. The respondents also mentioned that orientation provides students with knowledge concerning communication and conflict resolution.These results support the findings obtained through the quantitative research. The research shows that training and orientation can teach student leaders to understand their tasks and acquire good practical skills for implementing them.

4.7.5 Accountability and Supervision and Student Council Effectiveness

Also, the regression results indicated a positive and statistically significant relationship between accountability and supervision and student council performance ($\beta = 0.120$, $p = 0.029$). This means that the accountability mechanisms and appropriate supervision impacted the effectiveness of student councils.

The interview data provides concrete examples of those mechanisms. One of the interviewees, T01, said "Each project is sponsored by a teacher who makes sure it follows the rules of the school." This exemplifies how the monitoring provided by the teacher can help student leaders realise their work in accordance with school procedures. The interviews also demonstrate that the school administration employs reporting and meetings on a regular basis to oversee the work of councils.

The results imply that the student councils need to combine supervision with freedom. Hence, supervision may help student leaders maintain their accountability, while being given the freedom to make decisions and carry out their activities may allow them to learn how to lead.

4.8 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between role clarity and effectiveness of student councils in public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, Kenya. The following discussion is based on the specific objectives of the study and relate to findings of the study.

4.8.1 Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities and Student Council Effectiveness

The first objective sought to determine the relationship between clearly defined roles and responsibilities and student council effectiveness. Results indicated that there was a statistical significant positive relationship between clearly-defined roles and responsibilities and student council effectiveness. This indicates that student councils are more effective when members of the council are aware of their responsibilities, powers and areas of responsibility. The qualitative results also revealed that clearly defined roles minimized role overlap and improved coordination amongst student leaders.

The results of this study are consistent with the role propositions that suggest that people perform better

when role ambiguity is reduced, and role expectations are known. The findings are similar to those of Aas et al. (2020) who investigated the process of school leaders reflecting on the meaning of their roles and their engagement in group coaching to explore role clarity and leadership identity. While their study was on school leaders and not student councils, it does offer some interesting theoretical and empirical support for the need to understand the role and responsibilities of school leaders. This is in line with the study by Mwagi and Monda (2023) which found that when students' leaders are involved in school leadership processes, they help to enhance school discipline and academic achievement. This study builds on the above finding by establishing that role clarity is not only a facilitator of leadership development but also has a strong relation with the effectiveness of the student councils in the context of public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County.

4.8.2 Role Expectations and Student Council Effectiveness

The second objective examined the relationship between role expectations and student council effectiveness. When the effects of the other dimensions of role clarity were controlled through regression analysis, role expectations was found to have a positive but a statistically insignificant relationship with student council effectiveness. This finding suggests that while student leaders may know what is expected of them being aware of expectations may not be enough to make student leaders more effective. According to the findings obtained from interviews, a number of student leaders faced challenges in managing their leadership duties consistently along with their responsibilities. Hence, this implies that the expectations should indeed be backed with the means such as training, mentorship, and procedural framework. The findings are broadly consistent with Aas et al. (2020), who argued that understanding expectations attached to leadership positions contributes to role clarity and leadership development.

4.8.3 Guidelines and Policies and Student Council Effectiveness

The third objective was to determine the relationship between the guidelines/policies and effectiveness of student councils. There was a strong positive correlation between the effectiveness of student councils, and how policy and regulations were within the school. The more formal the policies, procedures and governance were within schools, the more effective the student councils became.

This was supported by the qualitative data as the interviewees stated that having a formal policy made them aware of who had power, what their role was and enabled them to move forward when making decisions. These findings are in line and agree with the work of Mifsud and Wilkins (2025) who pointed out how important formal structures and processes are within an institution.

The data supports Role Theory as having written guidelines can reduce confusion around leadership roles. The data also supports the Path-Goal theory as guidelines are important to give direction and clarity on how goals can be achieved. This study shows that guidelines and policies have a high level of predictive value, meaning students councils may be more influenced by formal governance structures rather than personal expectations.

4.8.4 Training and Orientation and Student Council Effectiveness

The fourth objective assessed the relationship between training and orientation and student council effectiveness. The results demonstrate a significant and positive correlation between training and orientation and effectiveness of student councils. Student leaders who received leadership training and orientation had a perception of being more effective in undertaking their duties.

The qualitative data show that training improved communication, conflict resolution, problem solving and

confidence in leadership amongst student council members. These are in agreement to Mwangudza and Mbirithi (2023) who investigated student leadership and disciplinary management in public secondary schools within Kaloleni Sub-County, Kilifi County. The authors found that there were deficiencies in student leadership training and that training should be improved to improve the effectiveness of student leaders. Similarly, Simiyu (2025) found that there was a significant positive correlation between leadership training and effectiveness of student councils, therefore they recommend greater investment in training, mentoring and orientation for student leaders.

These results also align with the Path-Goal Theory. This theory demonstrates that leaders become more effective when receiving support, guidance and opportunities to develop their capacity. In this instance, training appears to give student leaders the practical skills required to complete their leadership roles. Hence, training and orientation was the second most significant predictor of student council effectiveness behind guidelines and policies.

4.8.5 Accountability and Supervision and Student Council Effectiveness

The fifth objective sought to determine the relationship between accountability and supervision and student council effectiveness. The results showed that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between accountability and supervision and effectiveness of students' council. The participants indicated that regular reporting, consultation with the school administration and mentorship by teachers contributed positively to students' council.

This is aligned with Mallei-luti (2023) who found that student leaders participating in governance of schools correlated with improved learner discipline. Mwagi and Monda (2023) also observed that active participation of student leaders correlated with improved discipline and academic performance. In addition, the qualitative results indicated effective supervision should be balanced so that student leaders are given guidance whilst still having enough independence. If too much supervision is provided, it would inhibit leadership development. However, if too little supervision is provided, accountability will be compromised. This is supported by Path-Goal Theory.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusions of the findings, the recommendations and then the areas of further research.

5.1 Conclusions

The study determined the relationship between role clarity and effectiveness of students council in the public secondary schools of Mvita Sub-County. Clear division of duties and responsibilities was found to have a positive and significant relationship with effectiveness of student councils. The results of the interviews also showed that clear responsibilities of student leaders helped to improve their understanding of what they were supposed to do and how they could better collaborate with the school staff.

This regression analysis did not yield a statistically significant independent relationship for role expectations with student council effectiveness. The interviews revealed that the participants had an understanding of what was expected of student leaders, but also identified the challenges of balancing being a student with being a student leader. This implies that knowledge of expectations is not enough to ensure effective functioning of the council.

In terms of guidelines and policies, the findings also showed a significant relationship with student council effectiveness. School constitutions, written rules and procedures were also cited as valuable sources of

information for student leaders by interview participants. These findings show that there is a need for clear and well understood procedures to operate student council.

The results also showed that there was a positive and a statistically significant relationship between training and orientation and the effectiveness of the student's council. Participants reported improved ability of student leaders in practical skills of communication, leadership and conflict resolution after the training. The findings thus suggest the importance of developing students to become responsible leaders.

When it comes to accountability and supervision, it was found that it was also positively and significantly related to student council effectiveness. The results of the interviews indicated that frequent reporting, consultation with school leaders and teacher patrons were also significant. These were seen as useful in supporting student leaders to fulfil their duties.

In general, the results showed that there were four dimensions in role clarity which had statistically significant positive relationships with student council effectiveness, namely: role clarity, guidelines and policy clarity, training and orientation clarity, and accountabilities and supervision clarity. Role expectations did not significantly have any relationship with Student Council effectiveness when considered separately.

5.2 Recommendations

1. School Administration

The School administration should ensure that there are clear role definitions for the students in the student council. Role definition can be done by having a role description in writing, a leadership guide, and holding meetings where students can understand their roles and lines of reporting.

2. School-Level Guidelines and Procedures

Schools should look at their current student council constitution, policies and procedures to ensure they can be improved to give clear guidance on how student leaders are chosen, decisions made and accountability.

3. Training and Orientation of Student Council Members

The schools should also provide structured orientation and leadership development programs to new students councils members by providing refresher training throughout their term which must include leadership roles, communication, conflict resolution, decision making and advocacy.

4. Mentorship, Accountability and Support

This can be achieved through ensuring that there are mentors in the form of teachers or any other members of staff specifically assigned to the students who are student leaders in the school's councils. This can be accomplished through having meetings between school administration and the student council all the time in the term

5. Student Participation in School Governance

The school management ought to provide avenues like team building sessions through which the students can actively participate in the school governance process. This engagement between the student councils and the school administration could enhance communication.

5.3 Areas for Further Research

Further research can be carried out into other counties and school settings to see if similar trends occur. Longitudinal studies could be carried out to show any changes in the relationship over time. Comparative studies can be carried out by comparing public and private secondary schools to gain a wider understanding of the impact school context can have on the relationship.

References

1. Aas, M., Andersen, F. C., & Vennebo, K. F. (2020). How school leaders can gain role clarity and grow their leadership identity? Research in Educational Administration & Leadership, 5(2), 518-551. https://doi.org/10.30828/real/2020.2.7
2. Beaton, D. E., Bombardier, C., Guillemin, F., & Ferraz, M. B. (2000). Guidelines for the process of Cross-Cultural adaptation of Self-Report measures. Spine, 25(24), 3186–3191. https://doi.org/10.1097/00007632-200012150-00014
3. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
4. Bush, T., & Middlewood, D. (2005). Leading and managing people in education. SAGE Publications Limited.
5. House, R. J. (1971). A path-goal theory of leader effectiveness. Administrative Science Quarterly, 16(3), 321-339. https://doi.org/10.2307/2391905
6. Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity. Wiley.
7. Koech, B. C. (2024). Successes and challenges of student councils in mitigating student conflicts in secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya. Science Mundi, 3(1), 143–156. https://doi.org/10.51867/scimundi.3.1.15
8. Kyalo, K. D., Kanori, E., & Njagi, L. W. (2017). Influence of student councils' involvement in implementation of school rules and policies among students on their discipline in public secondary schools in Kathonzweni Sub-County. Journal of Education, 1(1), 38–46. https://stratfordjournalpublishers.org/journals/index.php/journal-of-education/article/view/14
9. Linton, R. (1936). The study of man: An introduction. D. Appleton-Century Company. Mallei-luti, R. M. (2023). Influence of student leaders' participation in school governance on learners' discipline in public and private secondary schools in Machakos sub county, Kenya [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nairobi]. http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/164820
10. Mifsud, D., & Wilkins, A. (2025). A Systematic review of school governance literature between 2000 and 2023. Leadership and Policy in Schools, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2025.2539791
11. Ministry of Education. (2009). The Kenya secondary school student councils handbook. Government Printer
12. Mwagi, R. K., & Monda, E. (2023). Influence of student leaders involvement in enhancing school discipline on academic performance in Kisii South Sub-County, Kenya. East African Journal of Education Studies, 6(3), 34–43. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.6.3.1449
13. Mwangudza, R. M., & Mbirithi, D. M. (2023). Student Leadership Influence on The Management of Student Discipline in Public Day And Boarding Secondary Schools in Kaloleni, Kilifi County, Kenya. International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education, 2(3), 204–225.
14. Republic of Kenya. (2013). Basic Education Act, No. 14 of 2013.

https://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/BasicEducationAct2013No14of2013.PDF

15. Republic of Kenya. (2015). The Basic Education Regulations, 2015 (Legal Notice No. 39 of 2015). https://new.kenyalaw.org/akn/ke/act/ln/2015/39/eng%402015-04-17/source.pdf
16. Republic of South Africa. (1996). South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996). Government Gazette, 377(17579). https://www.gov.za/documents/south-african-schools-act
17. Rizzo, J. R., House, R. J., & Lirtzman, S. I. (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. Administrative Science Quarterly, 15(2), 150-163.
18. Simiyu, P. (2025). Capacity development, an indispensable determinant of student councils' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Siaya County, Kenya. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 9148–9158. https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.909000756
19. Sousa, I., & Ferreira, E. (2024). Students' Participation in Democratic School Management: A Systematic Literature review. Journal of Social Science Education, 23(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.11576/jsse-6333
20. Tackett, J. L., Reardon, K. W., Fast, N. J., Johnson, L., Kang, S. K., Lang, J. W. B., & Oswald, F. L. (2022). Understanding the leaders of tomorrow: The need to study leadership in adolescence. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 18(4), 829–842. https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916221118536 The School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005, SI 2005/3200 (W.236). https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2005/3200/contents/made
21. United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Retrieved March 16, 2026, from https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child
22. Vinokur, E., Yomtovian, A., Marom, M. S., Itzchakov, G., & Baron, L. (2024). Social-based learning and leadership in school: conflict management training for holistic, relational conflict resolution. Frontiers in Social Psychology, 2. https://doi.org/10.3389/frsps.2024.1412968
23. Wößmann, L., Lüdemann, E., Schütz, G., & West, M. R. (2007). School accountability, autonomy, choice, and the level of student achievement: International evidence from PISA 2003 (OECD Education Working Paper No. 13). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/246402531617