

# Effect of Emotion Focused Coping Techniques of Stress Management on Secondary School Student Leadership in Kenya

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**Abstract** There are many factors in student leadership which predispose student leaders to high levels of stress. This include; students discipline, communication, enforcing school rules, decision making and balancing leadership and academic roles. The increase in student leaders stress is alarming thus the need to focus on stress management techniques that they employ. This study assessed the effect of emotion focused coping techniques of stress management and secondary school student leadership in, Kenya. The study hypotheses stated that there was no significant effect of emotion focused coping techniques and secondary school student leadership. Emotion focused coping technique is a personal effort to deal with negative feelings caused by a stressful event and may include venting, rumination, emotional support and religion. Student leadership refers to the roles that student leaders participate in within the school setting which involve, communication, Students discipline, coordination decision making, Planning, and monitoring of student's activities. The Cognitive Appraisal theory was applied in the study. The research designs used were descriptive and correlational in nature. The target population was 4143 respondents out of which were 3825 student leaders, 159 head teachers and 159 deputy head teachers within 159 secondary schools in Kenya. Stratified random sampling technique and saturated sampling technique were used to select 1275 student leaders, 53 deputy head teachers and 53 head teachers as respondents for the study. Data was harvested using questionnaires and interview schedules. Pearson r correlation, percentages and frequency counts was used in data analysis. Study results indicate that there was weak positive correlation between emotion focused coping techniques and student leadership [ $r = .197, n=1126, p<.05$ ]. The study also revealed the existence of a weak effect of emotion focused coping technique on student leadership. In the current study, it was recommended that student leaders require training in stress management techniques, emotional awareness and leadership training.

**Keywords:** *emotion focused coping techniques, stress management techniques, student leadership*

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## 1. Introduction

According to the United Nations International Children's Educational Fund [UNICEF] [36] student leadership is recognised worldwide as it plays a significant role in the management of secondary schools where student leaders are expected to perform a number of tasks such as enforcing student's discipline, decision making, communication, coordination, and monitoring students activities. Ji and Seo [19] reveal that secondary school student leaders consistently report high to moderate levels of stress due to pressures in their leadership but few studies have assessed stress management techniques that they employ, more so the use of emotion focused coping techniques. While, Student Government Association (2012:32) defines student leadership as the responsibilities

bestowed on student leaders in running the affairs of the student's body, Agaba (2015:1) on the other hand, report that student leadership refers to the roles that student leaders participate in within the school setting which involve, communication, Students discipline, coordination decision making, Planning, and monitoring of student's activities. In Africa, for instance, Arekenya (2012:7) and Godia (2012:15) reveal that secondary school student leaders are elected yearly and they are expected to perform numerous tasks which could create a lot of stress in their lives. Such tasks include decision making, communication and maintenance of discipline among students. The same sentiment is shared by Ali, Dada, Isiaka and Salmon (2014:6) in a study among student leaders in Lagos asserting that student leaders are under pressure to provide exemplary leadership among students in their schools and they struggle to live up to the expectation of teachers, the school management and the

students body whom they represent. According to Ndungu and Kwasira (2015:29) the Kenyan situation is not any different with the rest of developing countries in regard to the importance accorded to student leadership in secondary schools in relation to efficiency in student leadership. This is explained by Bundo (2012:12) reporting that secondary school student leaders in Kenya are assigned a number of tasks such as representing the student's welfare through enforcement of student discipline, communication, planning and acting as link persons between the students and the school administration. Additionally, a similar sentiment is shared by Mukiri (2014:28) who report that with a new leadership role, the pressure for excellence and the rigorous course work, striving becomes even more complex for student leaders in Kenya, when their leadership roles are not well defined and clearly structured, thus the heightened stress among student leaders.

Besides, American College Health Association (2012:2) asserts that emotion-focused coping techniques involve transformation of the feelings of an individual in relation to their overall evaluation of the stressful event. Furthermore, Lian and Tam (2014:22) show that emotion focused coping technique is a personal effort to deal with negative feelings caused by a stressful event and may include venting, rumination, emotional support and religion. However, according to APA (2012:4) when people engage in rumination or over thinking, they are trying to think their way out of the uncomfortable emotions to escape feelings of uncertainty by wearing a mask, which result in actions that enhance the denial of the problem.

A survey study in USA, American Psychological Association [APA, 2015] [3] reports that too much stress affects the physical and the affective wellness of an individual depending on their interpretation of the situation as either within their capacity and resources. Moreover, Aselton [8] indicate that stress occurs when a person thinks that the expectations placed on them over run their coping abilities. Besides, Lovelace [23] explains that stress management techniques means emotions, behaviours and thoughts that people use to adjust to the pressures and changes they experience in life. Furthermore, Chao [13] assert that such stress management techniques include the use of emotion focused coping, problem focused coping and avoidant focused coping techniques.

Emotions is a vital part of how individuals manage stress. This is illustrated by Kumar [20] who assert that people who are not conscious of their feelings at any given time may either act to stress negatively or positively. Secondly, Sharmila [33] explain that emotion focused coping technique is an individual's attempt to deal with negative feelings evoked by a stressor, like venting, rumination, emotional support and religion. Comparatively, Aselton [8] show that emotion focused coping technique is a personal resolve to work on unpleasant feelings emanating from stress.

Nevertheless, Chao [13] in his study among college students and Nekzada and Teketse [30] research findings on work place stress and its management are in agreement that emotion focused coping is one of the stress management techniques that people use to reduce the unpleasant effect of stress. Interestingly, evidence from

findings by Taylor [35] and McLeod [26] indicate that emotion focused coping only provide short term relief with poor outcome in regard to performance in the long run. In as much as there are different views on the benefits of emotion focused coping techniques, there is limited findings on the effect of emotion focused coping on student leadership.

A study conducted in New York University assessing high school students stress and coping mechanisms by Leonard, Gwadz and Cleland [21] report that high school students are facing increased level of stress that not only affects their overall performance and wellness, but may also lead to burn out which could continue throughout the college years if not monitored. Although, the study has unearthed, alarming stress among students, it did not offer any insight on stress management techniques used by students and student leaders who have to deal with challenges of leadership as well. The current study therefore sought to assess effect of emotion focused coping techniques on student leadership.

On the other hand, result findings by M Gomezulu, Wamba and Shawa [27] report that secondary school students go through high academic stress and express this through emotion focused coping techniques such as venting and emotional fatigue, which in end contribute to poor academic results. Although, M Gomezulu, Wamba and Shawa [27] study reveals the negative effect of venting on academic performance, it offers limited insight on student leaders who have to contend with leadership and academic stress. The current study therefore sought to assess effect of emotion focused coping techniques on student leadership.

Earlier research by Borchard [9] and Grohl [16] report that emotion focused coping techniques such as religion and prayer are used by many people to relieve stress and depression. Thus, Borchard [9] show that students who have a strong religious root are better skilled in managing stress. Similarly, Grohl [16] shows that spirituality is beneficial as it enhances good health and wellness for everyone through hope and belief system thus reducing stress. Despite, the fact that Borchard [9] is agreement with Grohl [16] on the significant role of religion as a buffer against stress, its link with student leadership is an area that needs further exploration since students have to deal with negative feelings caused by their perceived stress. The current study therefore, sought to assess the effect of emotion focused coping techniques and secondary school student leadership.

Findings by Zhang [37] in a longitudinal study on stress coping among adolescents, assert that emotion focused coping techniques that border on negative feelings and thoughts increase stress as they involve venting of feelings and over reaction, seeking emotional support on the other hand leads to regulation of feelings and seem to reduce stress. In as much as Zhang [37] indicate that the use of venting is likely to increase the level of stress as compared to emotional support, there is little clarity on the effect of venting and emotional support in regard to student leadership. The current study therefore, sought to assess the effect of emotion focused coping techniques and secondary school student leadership.

Conflicting evidence exist on whether emotion focused technique is adaptive or harmful to individuals. While

Sincero [34] argues that emotion focused technique help people to regulate their feelings towards a stressful situation, Contrada and Baum [14] on the other hand, expresses a different opinion showing that emotion focused techniques can be both adaptive and maladaptive. Whereas, Contrada and Baum [14] are of the opinion that venting of emotions and rumination are ways of negative emotional response, Sincero [34] presents a contrary argument that use of emotional support has positive results as it reduces the level of stress to allow the individual to focus on best way to deal with the stressor.

Research studies reveal that, though, stress among teenagers in secondary schools is on the rise, many of them lack the ability to manage stress. For example, [24,25] report that while 42% of students report moderate stress, 27% indicate that they are emotionally overwhelmed to the extent of reporting psychological strain and even burn out. While, these studies report students emotional strain and inadequacy in managing stress, there is limited insight on student leaders who have to contend with the complexity of their double roles in leadership and academic expectations. Therefore, the current study sought to assess the effect of emotion focused coping and student leadership.

Several studies reveal that consistent emotional support from friends, teachers and relatives is positively correlated with reduced level of stress and average performance among students. These studies show that emotional support not only allows an individual to take a short break from the stressful situation and think of other ways to approach stress. Thus the use of emotional support by students as an outlet for the negative feeling resulting from stress [26,27] Despite, the importance of emotional support among students, little insight exists on its use and effect among student leaders. The current study therefore sought to assess the effect of emotion focused coping and secondary school student leadership.

Multiple studies indicate that venting as an emotion focused coping technique has to some extent been associated with increased level of stress among students. Firstly, Amy and Heath [5] report that venting, is the outward expression of feelings in one's interaction with friends and family and when used with moderation can be healthy as it allows a person to ventilate as they ponder on how to handle the stressful situation. On the contrary, Lovelace [23] and Contrada and Baum [14] are in agreement that if venting turns in to rumination, where the person consistently expresses negative feelings about a stressor, it increases the level of stress and reduces performance. However, not much is known about venting and its association with secondary school student leadership. The current study therefore sought to assess the effect of emotion focused coping and secondary school student leadership

According to Indumili [17] student leadership is a platform for young people in secondary schools to participate in the affairs of their schools by nurturing their leadership and communication skills through a sense of responsibility and accountability. Moreover, the focus of the current study was on the following aspects of student leadership; discipline, decision making, communication and monitoring students activities.

However, globally student leadership is riddled with a lot of complexities for student leaders who seem to be

facing the same challenges as the other students whose welfare they are supposed to uplift. For example, in Britain and USA, studies by Student Government Association [32] and United Nations International Children's Educational Fund [UNICEF,] [36] report a high rate of indiscipline in secondary schools which could imply that student leaders may be incapable of dealing with issues of discipline as they also go through the same challenges as the students that they are meant to guide with very little exposure, inadequate skills in self-awareness and emotional resilience on their part.

Although student leaders are expected to show exemplary leadership once elected, student leadership poses a great challenge to secondary school student leaders in Africa. Previous research studies findings by Arekenya [7] and Agaba [1] reveal that in Nigeria and Rwanda secondary school student leaders who have been entrusted with instilling discipline among students, decision making, communication and many issues in operations in school are not skilled in stress awareness, thus end up with high level of stress.

Furthermore, studies in Kenya [17,32,33] adds that the intention of student leadership is to empower student leaders to promote the welfare of all students through maintenance of discipline, decision making, monitoring and evaluation of student activities and creating an atmosphere in which leadership and academic excellence can be realized in a friendly school environment. Despite, the involvement of student leaders in the above mentioned tasks, limited information exists on stress management techniques they employ. The current study therefore sought to assess effect of emotion focused coping techniques on student leadership.

Studies by Boyd [11], Indimuli [17] and Maina and Njoroge [25] reveal that secondary school student leaders in Kenya have the responsibility of enhancing students discipline. Thus ensuring that school rules and regulations are adhered to. Comparatively, while Boyd [11] and Indimuli [17] in separate research studies concur that indiscipline among students is on the rise and students strikes in Kenya secondary schools have continued unabated. Far worse, Maina and Njoroge [25] in their study postulate that with cases of violence and burning of schools which have persisted to the extent that some student leaders have lost their lives, resigned from leadership position and experienced burn out, a heightened level of stress exists among student leaders due to indiscipline in secondary schools. This may be a sign that there is a gap in student leadership in line with the stress management techniques that they use. The current study sought to assess the effect of emotion focused coping techniques and student leadership.

Students strikes in Kenya secondary schools is a matter of national concern. For instance, Odiwuor [31] and Momanyi [24] report that strikes in secondary schools in Kenya reached its peak in June 2016 where over 100 schools were burnt, property worth millions of shillings lost and a number of students got injured in the fires. Surprisingly, the above reports add that persistent strikes are a sign that the situation is beyond the control of student leaders who are at the helm of managing students discipline. Thus the gap in stress management techniques they use, more specifically the use of emotion focused coping techniques.

## 2. Research Design

The study used descriptive and correlation research designs. Descriptive survey design was used to collect data from the participants in its natural setting. The design involves the use of questionnaires and interviews as instruments for data collection. This design was significant for the current study as it is a fact finding tool used to express the truth about individual perceptions and attitudes. On the other hand, correlation design which compares two or more characteristics from the same group enabled the researcher to assess whether or not and to what degree a relationship exists between emotion focused coping techniques of stress management and student leadership. Quantitative method was used to harvest data from the student's leaders on emotion focused coping techniques and student leadership and qualitative method was used to gather data on the perception of head teachers on stress management techniques in relation to student leadership. The focus of the study was secondary schools in Kisumu County, Kenya. The target population was 4143.

Stratified random sampling technique and saturated sampling was used to sample 1275 student leaders, 53 deputy head teachers and 53 head teachers in secondary schools in Kisumu County respectively. Instruments were validated through face and content validity. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires and interview schedules. Questionnaires designed for student leaders were in form of a self-report on a rating scale with 11 items on emotion focused coping techniques and 13 items on student leadership. Moreover, the in-depth interview schedules was designed for head teachers to obtain data on stress management techniques employed by student leaders and its effect on student leadership. Reliability of the instruments was determined as Cronbach Alpha of  $\alpha = 0.7$ . Piloting of the study was done in 5 schools. The instruments for data collection were, questionnaires and interview schedules. Pearson r correlation, regression, ANOVA and percentages were used to analyse data on emotion focused techniques on student leadership. Qualitative data was transcribed, categorized in to themes and sub themes in regard to emerging themes.

**Table 1. Sampling Frame for Respondents**

| Sample Unit          | Sampling Method              | Target Population | Sample Size | Percentage |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|------------|
| Head teachers        | Saturated sampling           | 159               | 53          | 33.3%      |
| Deputy head teachers | Saturated sampling           | 159               | 53          | 33.3%      |
| Students Leaders     | Stratified and Simple Random | 3825              | 1275        | 33.3%      |
| Total                |                              | 4143              | 1381        | 100%       |

## 3. Results and Discussions

Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the null hypothesis that: "there is no statistically significant effect of emotion focused coping techniques of stress management on secondary school student leadership in Kenya". The P value was set at .05. Since the correlation results shown in Table 2, indicate that the P

value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was therefore concluded that there is statistically significant effect of emotion focused coping techniques on Secondary school student leadership.

**Table 2. Correlation between Emotion focused Coping and student leadership**

|                    |                     | Emotion focus | Student leadership |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Emotion focus      | Pearson Correlation | 1             | .197**             |
|                    | Sig. (2-tailed)     |               | .000               |
|                    | N                   | 1126          | 1126               |
| Student leadership | Pearson Correlation | .197**        | 1                  |
|                    | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000          |                    |
|                    | N                   | 1126          | 1126               |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Furthermore, the findings on Table 2 established that a weak positive correlation exists between emotion focused coping techniques and student leadership [ $r = .197$ ,  $n=1126$ ,  $p<.05$ ], hence the implication that secondary school student leaders who used emotion focused coping techniques were less effective in student leadership. Past research, however, provides conflicting information on the effect of emotion focused coping on student leadership. First, although Taylor [35] and McLeod [26] are in agreement that that emotion focused coping only provide short term relief with poor outcome in regard to performance in the long run, Chao [13] and Nekzada and Tekeste [30] report that it decreases the harmful effect of stress.

Besides, to determine whether emotion focused coping techniques was indeed a significant predictor of task performance, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. ANOVA –Effect of Emotion Focused Coping Techniques on student leadership**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | Df   | Mean Square | F      | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|------|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 7.550          | 1    | 7.550       | 45.411 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 186.874        | 1124 | .166        |        |                   |
|       | Total      | 194.424        | 1125 |             |        |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: student leadership

b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotion focused.

From Table 3, it is revealed that emotion focused coping technique of stress management was a significant predictor of secondary school student leadership [ $F(1, 1124) = 45.411$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .039$ ,  $R^2_{Adjusted} = .038$ ]. This means that student leaders who used emotion focused technique realized a significant variation in their leadership performance. Thus from the results on Table 3, it was evident that although emotion focused coping technique of stress management, had significant effect on student leadership, it only accounted for a small amount of the variance (3.8%) on secondary school student leadership.

Moreover, to estimate the level of effect of emotion focused coping techniques on secondary school student leadership, regression analysis was carried out and the results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Model Summary on Regression Analysis of effect of Emotion Focused Coping Techniques on student leadership**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .197 <sup>a</sup> | .039     | .038              | .40775                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotion focused coping technique

b. Dependent Variable: student leadership.

The model shows that emotion focused coping techniques accounted for 3.8% as signified by coefficient of 0.038 (adjusted R Square Value). This implies that variability of emotion focused coping techniques explains 3.8% of the variance in the student leadership. Although this is a weak, it is a sizeable amount of influence caused by one independent variable. Therefore, emotion focused coping technique only provides a little relief in regard to student leadership. Though, the current findings is agrees with the results reported by Nekzada and Teketse [30] and Sharmila [33] that emotion focused coping techniques contributes to reduced stress thus enhancing performance, results by Taylor [35] and McLeod [26] on one hand indicates a contrary opinion showing that emotion focused coping technique offers short term relief but is harmful in the long.

Hence it is evident in Table 4 that if emotion focused coping techniques was increased by one standard deviation the perceived scores in the level of student

leadership would increase by only .197 standard deviation units. This implies that, although emotion focused coping techniques had significant positive effect on student leadership; the effect was quite small. The current results, could be supported by previous research study findings by Contrada and Baum [14] showing that the use of emotion focused techniques can be beneficial and harmful at the same time. The findings of the current study therefore presume that while some student leaders use emotion focused coping techniques like receiving emotional support from loved ones as well as using positive cognitive appraisal which minimizes stress and enhance student leadership, the use of negative emotion focused techniques such as rumination and venting led to escalation of stress and poor task performance. Moreover, research study by Leonard, Gwadz and Cleland [21] report that many individuals believe that while the use of venting provides a quick relief, it leads to the maintenance and escalation of negative feelings thus intensifying the level of stress.

The results presented in Table 5 reveal that only 40% of the student leaders talked to someone about the negative feelings evoked by the stressful event. These may be a pointer to high level of stress among student leaders. The findings were not consistent with previous research that showed that seeking emotional support was positively correlated to better performance and reduced level of stress [27].

**Table 5. Response on Indicators for Emotion focused Coping Techniques**

| Statements                                                                                            | Most often     | More often     | Moderately often | Less often     | Least often    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| I seek emotional support from friends or relatives when I am stressed                                 | 212<br>(18.8%) | 339<br>(30.1%) | 41<br>(3.6%)     | 453<br>(40.2%) | 81<br>(7.2%)   |
| I let my feelings out when I am in a stressful situation                                              | 395<br>(35.1%) | 313<br>(27.8%) | 33<br>(2.9%)     | 266<br>(23.6%) | 119<br>(10.6%) |
| I look for sympathy and understanding from someone when I am stressed                                 | 166<br>(14.7%) | 106<br>(9.4%)  | 25<br>(2.2%)     | 548<br>(48.7%) | 281<br>(24.9%) |
| I get upset whenever I am exposed to a stressful event                                                | 403<br>(35.8%) | 564<br>(50.1%) | 29<br>(2.6%)     | 85<br>(7.5%)   | 45<br>(4.0%)   |
| I seek Gods help when I am going through stressful moments in life                                    | 17<br>(18.2%)  | 13<br>(11.9%)  | 539<br>(20.5%)   | 554<br>(20.2%) | 3<br>(28.9%)   |
| I feel a lot of emotional distress and I find myself expressing those feelings whenever I am stressed | 362<br>(32.1%) | 412<br>(36.6%) | 27<br>(2.4%)     | 271<br>(24.1%) | 54<br>(4.8%)   |
| I look for solace or comfort in my religion any time I am stressed                                    | 86<br>(7.9%)   | 289<br>(25.7%) | 26<br>(2.3%)     | 445<br>(39.5%) | 280<br>(24.9%) |
| I talk to someone about my feelings on what is stressing me                                           | 182<br>(16.2%) | 269<br>(23.9%) | 37<br>(3.3%)     | 493<br>(43.8%) | 145<br>(12.9%) |
| I pray more than usual whenever I am stressed                                                         | 371<br>(22.9%) | 150<br>(13.3%) | 47<br>(4.2%)     | 499<br>(44.3%) | 59<br>(5.2%)   |
| I make fun of the situation when I am stressed                                                        | 26<br>(2.3%)   | 35<br>(3.1%)   | 47<br>(4.2%)     | 570<br>(50.6%) | 448<br>(39.8%) |
| I put my trust in God when I am going through a stressful moment                                      | 14<br>(8.4%)   | 540<br>(30.0%) | 20<br>(8.8%)     | 534<br>(40.2%) | 18<br>(12.6%)  |

Source: Field data (2016)

It was evident that 68.7% used, venting and rumination. This shows that student leaders in Kenya experience high levels of emotional stress but more often use emotion focused coping techniques that are negative. The present finding is concurrent with Zhang [37] study results showing that emotion focused coping techniques such as venting, impulsivity and rumination are maladaptive due to negative emotions and thoughts thus an increase stress.

The results of the current study did not show that religion is a strong buffer against stress as only 38.4% looked for divine help and 36.2% prayed more than usual. Surprisingly, 52.8 % of the student leaders admit that they do not often seek God and 49.5% found it difficult to pray whenever they are stressed. The current result finding is inconsistent with previous research showing that many people turn to religion when they are stressed as it leads to reduced level of stress [18,19]. However, nine out of every ten 90.4% (1018) of student leaders who participated in the current study rejected the assertion that some of them try to cope with their stress by making fun of the situations. This is corroborated by the in-depth interviews for head teachers that point out that a number of student leaders experience emotional stress and are often upset and sentimental during such moments (head teacher 8).

“In my school there are a number of students who are emotionally reactive and become easily upset when they experience undue pressure to perform”

Of the same opinion was head teacher (51) who pointed

out that a number of student leaders were always apprehensive when subjected to a lot of stress.

“Some student leaders are constantly worried and go through emotional outburst to the point of some making a decision to resign from their leadership responsibilities”

Although past research findings by, Leonard, Gwadz and Cleland [21] show that high school students manage stress through venting, it is a worrying trend as it can result in to burnout, which may persist through higher levels of education.

In regard to student leadership, a report from the student leaders reveal that 49.0% were less effective in offering fair discipline to students, 54.8% were not able to effectively address students on school assemblies and in other occasions and only 11.1% held an opinion that they were effective in student leadership. Although, past research implies poor management of discipline among students which is reflected in the increased number of strikes and violence in secondary schools in Kenya [34], the current study gives more insight on the adverse challenges of student leadership. Moreover, previous studies reveal the high expectations meted on student leaders in providing exemplary leadership in the management of discipline, communication and decision making among students [28,34] the current study findings give a contrary picture of the student leaders efficiency in their leadership roles. Thus, the present study results indicate that student leaders are ineffective in their leadership functions.

**Table 6. Response of Students Leaders on indicators of Student Leadership**

| Indicators of Student leadership                                                                                          | VLE<br>1    | LE<br>2     | ME<br>3     | HE<br>4      | VHE<br>5    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| I ensure school rules and regulations are followed by all students.                                                       | 100 (8.9%)  | 196 (17.4%) | 486 (43.2%) | 300 (26.6%)  | 44 (3.9%)   |
| I give fair and commensurate punishment to indiscipline students.                                                         | 25(2.2)     | 583 (51.8%) | 294(26.1%)  | 124(11.0%)   | 100 (8.9%)  |
| I follow school rules and set a good example for other students to emulate.                                               | 139 (12.3%) | 24 (2.1%)   | 500 (44.4%) | 391 (34.7%)  | 72(8.4%)    |
| I clearly communicate what I want from other students.                                                                    | 86 (7.6%)   | 242(21.5%)  | 486(43.2%)  | 198 (17.6%)  | 114 (10.1%) |
| I am an active listener who focuses on the needs and problems of students.                                                | 50 (4.4%)   | 513 (45.8%) | 289 (25.7%) | 124 (11.0%)  | 150 (13.3%) |
| I am able to address students on school assemblies and in other occasions.                                                | 112 (9.9%)  | 124 (11.0%) | 567 (50.4%) | 198 (17.6%)  | 125 (11.1%) |
| Prior planning of all students activities is the norm.                                                                    | 80 (7.1%)   | 290 (25.8%) | 460 (40.9%) | 148 (13.1%)  | 148 (13.1%) |
| I make sure that all students are punctual, responsible for their duties and if one fails, corrective measures are taken. | 76(6.7%)    | 265 (23.5%) | 552 (49.0%) | 187 (16.6%)  | 46 (4.1%)   |
| I monitor and evaluate the students' performance in my area of operation.                                                 | 72(6.4%)    | 302 (26.8%) | 413 (36.7%) | 186 (16.5%)  | 153 (13.6%) |
| I ensure each department in the school apart from the school administration is running smoothly.                          | 24(2.1%)    | 300 (26.6%) | 489 (43.4%) | 146 (129.7%) | 167 (14.8%) |
| I recognize the abilities of students and delegate duties appropriately.                                                  | 100 (8.9%)  | 312 (27.7%) | 366 (32.5%) | 203 (18.0%)  | 145 (12.9%) |
| I usually make timely and realistic decisions.                                                                            | 126 (11.2%) | 303 (26.9%) | 200 (17.8%) | 196 (17.4%)  | 301 (26.7%) |
| I set realistic goals and meet targets and deadlines.                                                                     | 111 (9.9%)  | 366 (32.5%) | 400 (35.5%) | 124 (11.0%)  | 125 (11.1%) |

Source: Field data (2016)

VLE-Very Low Effectiveness, LE-Low effectiveness, ME-Moderate effectiveness, HE-High Effectiveness, VHE- Very High Effectiveness

It is evident from the opinion of the student leaders on Table 6 that student leaders were less effective in leadership performance. Moreover, this is reiterated by the head teacher's opinion that student leader's performance of their tasks was ranging from dismal to average was also reiterated by the head teachers as summed up by two head teachers.

"A number of student leaders register poor performance in their duties whenever they are stressed" (head teacher 25). On the same note, head teacher (28) pointed out that "student leaders neglect their duties when faced with challenges".

This is contrary to the high expectations bestowed on the student leaders by the school administration and the students that once elected, student leaders have to show exemplary leadership [31,32].

The findings from the in depth interview with the head teachers show that, although student leaders were inducted on their duties and leadership training was offered occasionally by different secondary schools within the county, there was no uniform and consistent policy on induction, leadership training as each school offered what they felt was good for their students, head teacher (30).

"In as much as all the secondary school in the county elect and induct student leaders there is no clear structure on training and induction of students and each school therefore haphazardly carry out such trainings"

While past research by Ndungu and Kwasira [29] has established that student leaders are affected by numerous challenges which puts them in a dilemma on who turn to cope with stress emanating from suspicion and disrespect by students to overload of academic and leadership responsibilities, in the current study, the head teachers admit that the plight of the student leaders is even more alarming due to stress from the tedious leadership responsibilities some to the point of burn out or resigning from their duties (head teacher 12).

"It is unfortunate that a number of student leaders become frustrated by the pressure put upon them by students and teachers to the extent that some request to resign from their posts yet others experience burn out."

In sum, the current study reports that secondary school student leaders in Kisumu County, Kenya are stressed and those among them who use emotion focused coping techniques only realize a little improvement in student leadership.

This study established the effect of emotion focused coping techniques of stress management on secondary school student leadership. The study reports that emotion focused coping techniques accounted for only a significant effect of .038 of the variation in student leadership in secondary schools. Thus revealing a weak effect of emotion focused coping on student leadership. Moreover, a good proportion of student leaders present moderate to low ability in student leadership. This is due to the fact that emotion focused coping techniques of stress management has a weak positive correlation with student leadership ranging from average to low effectiveness in leadership performance.

Besides, the study showed that student leaders in secondary schools in Kisumu County, Kenya were stressed as 69% experienced emotional stress and were

upset most of the time. A majority of student leaders used emotion focused coping techniques like venting, rumination, criticising, acting out feelings and emotional support from friends and relatives any time they are stressed. Report from the interviews with the head teachers reveals that student leaders have higher levels of stress to the extent that some resign from leadership due to burnout.

The findings of this study have significant implications for interventions since majority of the student leaders use emotion focused coping techniques which are maladaptive, thus are highly stressed and register dismal to moderate performance in their leadership. Therefore, the necessity to inculcate stress management techniques that are relevant in enhancing secondary school student leadership. It is recommended that student leaders should be trained on stress management techniques in order to nurture personal awareness, emotional maturity and leadership skills. Such programs could be organized at school and County levels respectively. Secondly, the head teachers in collaboration with the Ministry of Education should come up with relevant programmes that help student leaders to enhance their leadership by nurturing emotional wellness.

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