Status of Peace Club Activities in Public Secondary Schools within Kisumu County, Kenya

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Abstract

The occurrence of student unrest has been on the rise in Kenya and beyond. This has prompted the introduction of Peace Clubs in Kenyan schools. However, despite these efforts, many schools still experience student unrest. This study, therefore, sought to examine the status of Peace Club activities in schools. The study used a theoretical framework informed by contingency theory and integrative negotiations, and peer mediation theory. The study applied a descriptive survey research design with a sample size of 584 respondents. The researcher used focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaires to collect primary data, while reviewed publications and reports from the County Director of Education office were used to obtain secondary data. The study applied to content and face validity checks to ascertain the relevance of the research data collection instruments, while reliability was ascertained using the split-half method. The data were then cleaned and coded using descriptive statistics, and the results were presented using frequency distribution tables, percentages, pie charts, and bar graphs. The study found that Peace Club activities didn't exist in most of the schools; most students didn't know about Peace Club activities. In schools where they existed, most of them were not active. It was concluded that the nonexistence and/or inactivity of Peace Clubs activities contributed to the student unrest experienced in schools. The study recommended a modification of the existing policy on the creation of Peace Clubs in schools and the conduction of regular supervision to ensure full implementation of Peace Clubs in schools.

Keywords: *Peace; Club; School*

INTRODUCTION

Peace in its entirety encompasses good forms of behaviour, values, and attitudes which determine one's way of life, thus enabling them to show respect for life and observe freedom from violence, solidarity, tolerance, and justice among different groups of people living together (Ajala, 2003). This is in tandem with Hicks (1988) and (Abbas, 2013), who grouped all these aspects of peace into three objectives: developing attitudes, acquiring knowledge, and skills development. Notably, Ajala (2003), Abbas (2013), and Hicks (1988) fall short of outlining where and how best these objectives can be achieved. UNESCO (2005) also observes that Peace Clubs involve the promotion of various skills, knowledge, and values necessary for behavioural change geared towards minimizing violent acts among learners, either structural or overt in nature, thus providing lasting solutions to the existing conflicts. This promotes peaceful coexistence at various levels of peace: peace within oneself, between two or more groups, nationally or internationally. Both UNESCO (2005) and UPEACE (2006) are in agreement that Peace Clubs provide a mechanism through which knowledge can be acquired and values, behaviours, skills, and attitudes developed with the aim of enabling students to find out and have a proper

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understanding of the sources of conflicts both locally and globally. Peace Clubs assist learners in developing the right approaches to handle the problems of their lifetime; use nonviolent approaches to resolve conflict hence attainment of justice; appreciate multiculturalism and observation of human rights and respect for all irrespective of race, religion, gender, and economic status (UPEACE, 2006).

Peace Clubs require broader and well-coordinated campaigns in society for them to remain relevant and bear fruits (Abbas, 2013). Otherwise, students won't take them seriously as they perceive them to be irrelevant in their lives (Bar-Tal, 2002). Therefore, it is prudent to move away from the notion that Peace Clubs and other peace initiatives should only be conducted within the vicinity of learning institutions. Instead, there should be an all-inclusive approach to the promotion of peace both in schools and in the entire society without limiting it to schools alone (Abbas, 2015). This can be achieved through the introduction of programmes such as television programmes, filming, circulation of peace literature, and use of mass media to reach the wider society with peace messages (Abbas, 2013). This approach is deemed suitable since societies vary in nature and composition hence the need to use an array of methods to propagate the concept of peace at different levels in society (Bar-Tal, 2002).

According to Hicks (1988) and Abbas (2015), peace programmes have been initiated in schools through various approaches, namely: introducing it as a single subject, spreading it across the existing curricula, and giving it the entire school approach. This is in tandem with Ouma (2014) and Abbas (2015), who argue that the recommended approach is to have it introduced as a single subject, at least for a start, to enable both learners and teachers to have a glimpse of the experiences, knowledge and prerequisite skills needed for the successful execution of the Peace Clubs in schools. However, none of them speaks about the activities that are the pillars in the practice and implementation of peace programmes. The main objective of Peace Clubs in schools, therefore, is to bring out, strengthen, and better the understanding of students about peace and conflict management (Abbas, 2015). Ouma (2014) further observes that for effective peace clubs, developers should focus on not only the concept of peace but also the way this content is delivered to the learner. Generally, the study of peace should be comprehensive enough to handle the quantity as well as the quality of the content delivered (Abbas, 2013). In as much as published literature is important in enhancing and embracing the culture of peace, peace instructors should also consider using games activities, role-plays as well as learning approaches that bring learners together (Crow & Karim, 2000).

The wave of student unrest, at varying degrees, has hit various countries in different parts of the world, including Kenya. This has captured the attention of global leaders who, through various avenues such as UNESCO and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), have tried to bring it to an end. In Kenya, it has captured the attention of national leaders and various stakeholders in the education sector, who have made public statements condemning students' unrest and malicious damage to school possessions. As a result, the Kenyan government introduced Peace Education Programmes and, subsequently, Peace Clubs in schools with the aim of inculcating a culture of peace in learners at a tender age so that they grow up as peaceful citizens. Peace Clubs are known for their effectiveness in the enhancement of multiculturalism, respect, and bearing with the other party's goals of divergent views of people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds with a view of encouraging cordial relationships within and outside the school environment. However, despite all these efforts by the government, the students' unrest is still on the rise. In an attempt to address this, studies have been conducted by Kibui et al. (2014), Kipyego (2013), and Vundi et al. (2014), among others. However, the literature reviewed revealed that despite these efforts by researchers, not much research had been conducted to assess Peace Clubs and the management of student unrest within Kenyan schools. Therefore, this study sought

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to assess Peace Clubs and the Management of Students unrest in Public Secondary Schools in Kisumu County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Albert (2002), globally, conflicts in learning institutions have become rampant. This has created crises as far as learning and teaching processes are concerned (Ramsbotham et al., 2016). Most governments, in an attempt to resolve this state of affairs, have resorted to the introduction of Peace Clubs with a view of minimizing such conflicts (Vogler, 2017). Falade et al. (2011) posit that Peace Clubs are today being incorporated into school programmes in the majority of countries around the globe. In a number of nations, Peace Clubs have taken different forms, such as Global Understanding and Human Rights, Conflict Resolution Education, Education for Environmental Sustainability, Global Education, Education for Social Justice, and Life Skills Education, among others. The nature, as well as the scope of Peace Clubs, is determined by societal issues and problems in different nations of the world (Albert, 2002).

According to Irina (2012), getting educated on matters of traditions and taking a vital role in the institution's cultural diversities help in building self-trust and personality among learners. As such, rejoicing and involvement in cultural life must be made accessible to each and every learner in learning institutions without any amount of bias to students whose relatives can participate in cultural activities but all students without considering factors like where they are from or family status (Igbuzor, 2011). This gives them an opportunity to develop creativity in handling conflicts, improving how they relate with the community at large as well as contributing economically to the community; this has proved to be advantageous at a personal level as well as a community level (Jay & Marie, 2001).

UNDP (2016) concurs with Crook (1997a) that embracing one's culture is a crucial requirement for collaboration, multi-linear, and for worldwide shared strategies that assimilate traditions into peace-creating methodologies and plans. He concurs with Vestal (1994), who suggests an array of actions geared towards anticipation and stoppage of clashes, such as training for amity, different cultural negotiations, elevation and sustaining traditional diversity, nurturing of global collaboration in science and technological know-how and media broadcast as well as the employment of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) in preventing and stopping conflicts. These items stress the need to develop equity, equality, expression, rights, and human worthiness (Kessels & Nemr, 2016). This is in tandem with Jay and Marie (2001), who state that traditional legacy takes a pivotal position in the resolution of conflicts, particularly after the clashes have ended. In such cases, it mostly turns out to be a solid mark and instrument for the reconstruction of the communities involved in the conflict, allowing them to aggressively do away with the rhythm of conflicts, thus helping to bring calmness and restoration of peace. The reconstruction of Warsaw's Old Mostar Bridge and Old Town, as well as the inclusion of the two into the World Heritage List, are observable efforts aimed at enhancing conflict resolution as well as a means of getting out of the conflict's pain (Crook, 1997b).

Keim (2006) observes that the role of sports, art and cultural exchange in cultivating a culture of cooperation and peace among learners cannot be over-emphasized. His observation is reaffirmed by Schulenkorf and Spaaij (2016), who argue that as a result of their global acceptance, sports and games can go beyond any sort of inhibitors by bringing together both students and community members from diverse ethnic backgrounds, thus imparting them the social skills and abilities to handle, in a peaceful way, conflicts that may occur amongst them.

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Rogers (1994) argues that peer mediation is a logical and linear procedure whereby students agree to meet one another to handle their collisions or any kind of fights that might come up within the learning environment. It is, therefore, an organized course of action that is planned by two impartial individuals (students) to offer a solution to an existing conflict (Abbas, 2016). An intervention is an intentional procedure; if both parties locked up in a conflict conclude that the individual in question wouldn't like to proceed with the conflict resolution to the next stage, the person in question (mediator) doesn't need to (UNDP, 2016). In such an occurrence, the contention is typically managed by the institution's standard control strategy. Peer mediation is appropriate for minor disputes, while major disputes, including attacks and any form of harassment, are not reasonable to be handled using this approach; instead, they need to be taken to a peace instructor quickly for immediate intervention (McWilliam, 2010).

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design

The study employed the use of a descriptive survey research design. The use of this research design was deemed suitable because it enabled the researcher to assess the status of Peace Club activities in public secondary schools. This was very important to the study since the researcher would be required to analyse the data obtained from public secondary schools with the view of providing the best approaches to handling student unrest and, at the same time, looking at the study objectives. The design is deemed fit because of its ability to describe characteristics of phenomena, opinions, attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of persons interviewed.

Table 1. Sampling Frame (Respondents)

Respondents	Target Population	Sample Size	%
BOM Representatives	225	20	8.89
School Sponsors	225	20	8.89
Principals	225	20	8.89
Teachers	2.666	140	5.25
Students	88.493	384	0.43
Total	**91.834**	**584**	

Data Collection

In data collection, the researcher made use of questionnaires, interview schedules, and the Focus Group Discussion method. The questionnaires were designed differently to suit the needs of teachers and students. In both cases, the questionnaires were divided into part A, which had five (5) questions related to the demographic information of the respondents, while part B addressed the status of Peace Club activities in secondary schools. For instance, respondents were asked, "What is the status of Peace Club activities in your institution? Tick [√] appropriately." Very Active (5) Active (4) Not Active (3) Does Not Exist (2) I Don't Know (1)

In addition to the questionnaires, the researcher also employed the use of interview schedules to interview another category of respondents. The interview schedules were divided into part A, which had seven (7) questions related to the demographic information of the respondents, and part B, which addressed the status of Peace Club activities in secondary schools.

Having been granted permission by the school principal, the researcher issued questionnaires to the teachers and students before conducting a focus group discussion with another set of students. The

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researcher then wound it up by conducting interviews with the school principal and, finally, the sponsors and representatives of the Board of Management. The researcher also used secondary sources of data for triangulation purposes so as to heighten the dependability and credibility of the data obtained from respondents.

Data Analysis

Once the data-gathering exercise was over, the data was organized into two categories: quantitative and qualitative data. The raw quantitative data (obtained through questionnaires) was carefully examined for any errors and/or omissions that were corrected appropriately. Qualitative data were analyzed by gathering the materials (notes and documents) as well as printing the transcripts used to collect data. The researcher then marked the source before reading through the data ostensibly to understand it. The researcher then created the initial codes, which were then reviewed and combined into themes in a cohesive manner. Thereafter, the responses in the completed questionnaires, Focus group discussions, and interview guides were then coded, tabulated, analyzed, and computed into descriptive statistics using SPSS version 24.0. The results of data analysis were presented in the form of percentages, frequency distribution tables, pie charts, and bar graphs (Saldana, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

It was paramount that the study was conducted with a lot of care with the aim of upholding both academic and universal morals and ethics. Ethical research is characterized by the credibility of information and must not, in any way, hurt the researcher or the participants (Kothari, 2004). Before embarking on the data collection exercise, the researcher obtained permission to conduct research from the relevant authorities. The researcher sought the consent of each and every participant in the study by explicitly explaining the purpose of the study so as to allay any fears that there could be about providing the researcher with the required data. As such, no participant was forced to take part in this study. Those who took part did so of their own volition (Butler, 2002). The researcher also observed anonymity, confidentiality, and reciprocity. The researcher ensured that he dully credited direct quotes from other researchers' publications or verbatim quotations to minimize plagiarism.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In a general perspective, Peace Club activities in public secondary schools within Kisumu can be summarized as shown in Figure 1.

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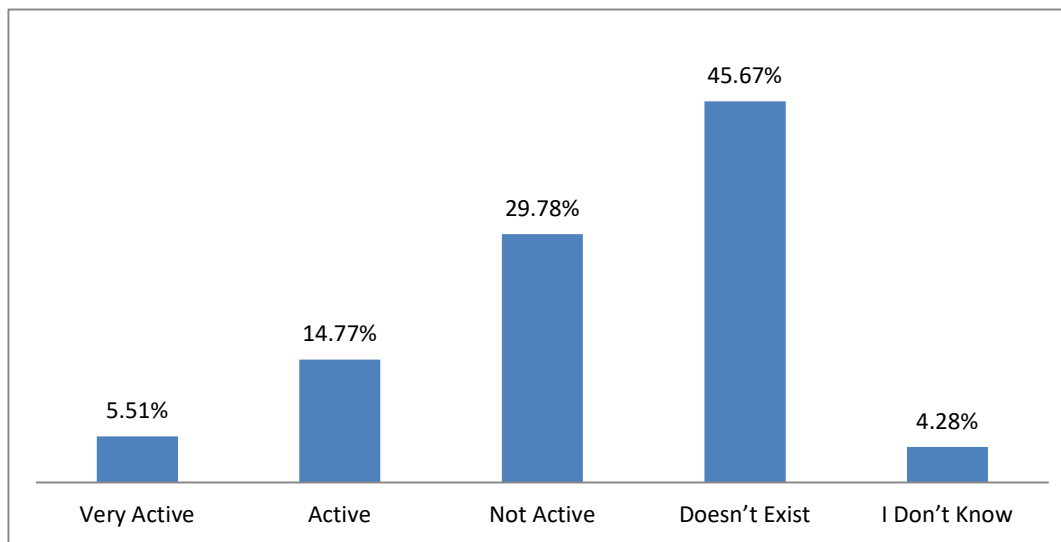*Joshua Oluoch Owande*

Figure 1: Responses on the Status of Peace Club activities in Public Secondary Schools

Figure 1 shows that (45.67%) of respondents indicated that the Peace Club activities under study didn't exist in their schools. This was followed by 29.78% of the respondents who indicated that the Peace Club activities under study were not active in their schools, while 4.28% didn't know about the Peace Club activities under study. However, 14.77% of the respondents indicated that these Peace Club activities were active in their schools, while 5.51% indicated that these Peace Club activities were very active in their schools.

In summary, the majority of the respondents indicated that the Peace Club activities under study didn't exist in their schools, followed by the respondents who indicated that the Peace Club activities under study were not active in their schools, while a few respondents indicated that they didn't know about the Peace Club activities under study. However, few respondents indicated that these Peace Club activities were either active or very active in their schools.

These findings tend to agree with Sayed and Novelli (2016), who observe that teachers assume a significant position with respect to peace-building in societies and, more particularly, in schools. It is on this basis that the national, regional, and international actors have placed teachers and education quality, as well as the teaching process, at the heart of any future global agenda. Although there are varied views regarding targets and indicators that can be used to measure the quality of education and the expertise of teachers, it's very important to train teachers in conflict resolution. During an interview with the BOM representative, it emerged:

> *Training programmes in Peace Building have not been very successful both for the teachers and the student leaders. Sometimes the schools and/or the individual participants are expected to foot the expenses incurred during training hence limiting attendance and participation since not all are capable of raising the fees. Lack of Training Programmes in Peace Building puts the teacher at risk in the sense that the teacher will not know how to handle students from diverse backgrounds (Interview with a BOM Representative of Lisana secondary school on 08/05/2019).*

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These findings clearly indicate that sports are very important in the quest for a peaceful learning atmosphere. This is confirmed by the largest percentage of schools that embrace sports for peace, irrespective of their status. This concurs with Keim (2006) and Schulenkorf and Spaaij (2016), who posits that the role of sports, art, and cultural exchange in cultivating a culture of cooperation and peace among learners cannot be over-emphasized. Owing to the universality of sports, it is capable of crossing any barriers hence becoming a common ground for students from diverse origins together with the members of the community. During an interview with a school principal, it emerged that:

Due to the geographical location of our school (Nandi-Kisumu boundary), our school is usually affected by border clashes. One of the approaches that have always worked well for us is sports for peace, spearheaded by KEDHAP-local NGO in the area. Such sports activities draw students from two sides of the ethnic divide and present them with an opportunity to put aside their differences and interact (An interview with a Principal of Achego Girls' secondary school within Muhoroni on 05/05/2019).

The findings concur with Baker et al. (2016), who posit that students should take part in sports and other outdoor activities where they can freely interact within and outside their learning institutions. This allows them to learn from one another as they cooperate in sports, celebrate their rich, diverse cultures during cultural weeks, and enhance their talents through art. However, this is not the case in most schools whose main focus is academic excellence. They tend to have very fixed time schedules for academic activities hence leaving no time for extra curricula activities that promote good understanding and coexistence among the learners.

Therefore, it is paramount that governments and ministries in charge of education take a keen interest in the development of curricula that factor in Peace Education with a view to introducing Peace Clubs in schools. Peace Clubs, through various activities conducted, help to bring up learners who embrace peaceful virtues such as forgiveness, understanding, sharing, and humility, amongst others. As such most schools with active Peace Clubs rarely experience violent conflicts and student unrest. This can be directly attributed to the peaceful virtues instilled into the learners from tender ages. For instance, they are given opportunities to take part in decision-making, conflict resolution, arbitration, and mentorship programmes which all together shape their behaviours and equip them with skills in conflict resolution and management. In the long run, in the event of any misunderstanding among the learners or between the learners and the school administration, both parties will always find it worthy of pursuing nonviolent approaches to the conflicting situation; hence peace prevails. This is contrary to what is likely to happen in schools that don't have Peace Clubs, where learners know very little about nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution. For a peaceful learning institution, Peace Clubs should be prioritized in schools.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, Peace Club activities didn't exist in the majority of the schools. In the schools where they existed, majorities were not active. It was noted that in some schools, respondents didn't know about Peace Club activities. The absence of or presence of inactive Peace Clubs in schools is a clear indication that such schools and the community around remain in conflict grounds whose time has not yet come. The frequent student unrest experienced in most Kenyan schools can be attributed to this lack of or inactiveness of peace Clubs in such schools.

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LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

Peace Clubs in schools provide a lot of significance not only to the students but also to the entire school management; thus, there is a need to conduct more research to establish the connection that exists between learners' participation in Peace Clubs and school academic performance.

During the study, it was observed that schools have varying student populations. Therefore, there is a need to find out if this variation in population influences the management of student unrest in public secondary schools in Kenya.

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