The Role of Student Council Leadership in Promoting Discipline and Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract: *This study sought to examine the role of student councils' leadership on the academic performance of public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was guided by systems theory and path-goal theory. A mixed-methods research approach was adopted. The total target population was 2,673 comprising 234 teachers, 2400 students, and 39 principals from 39 public secondary schools with a sample size of 293. The study was guided by both probability and non-probability sampling techniques that included purposive and systematic random sampling. Collection of data was done using interview guide for principals and questionnaire for teachers and students. A pilot test was conducted in two public secondary schools in the sub-county. The research instruments were validated by experts with knowledge on instructional leadership from Tangaza University Analysis of quantitative data was done using descriptive statistics, which included frequency distributions and percentages and was generated by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Data was presented in form of bar graphs, pie charts and frequency tables. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic approach and was presented using narratives and direct quotes. The study found that student council leadership in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County positively contributes to academic performance and the overall school environment. Peer mentorship involvement in school operations contributed significantly to students' personal and academic development. Most teachers and students agreed that student council involvement in peer mentorship, discipline, and communication with administration positively impacted academic performance. However, there was variability in student involvement and perceptions, particularly in communication with the administration and discipline. The study also revealed challenges faced by student council leaders, including balancing leadership responsibilities with academic work, negative attitudes from some students, and inconsistent support from teachers and administration. The study concludes that student council leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing academic performance in public secondary schools, particularly through peer mentorship, discipline, and communication with administration.*

Keywords: student councils' leadership, academic performance, communication, peer mentorship, discipline and administration

1.1 Background of the study

Student council is a body of student leadership in schools elected by students to represent their views in the school administration (Hills & Hains, 2023). It is a group of students who are elected by their peers

to participate in specific areas of school governance (Fletcher, 2005). A student council is a representative structure for students who work in partnership with school management, staff, and parents for the benefit of the student's performance (Griebler, 2014). To be on the students' council, a student must have good morals and act as a positive role model to their peers (Perry, 2022). Students' council leaders are expected to collaborate with the school administration.

Effective student council leadership is essential for schools' academic performance (Momanyi & Mwalwa, 2021). Nduta (2018) noted that when student councils are effectively involved in the administration of a school, students' performance improves. The author further ascertains that the student council is important in advocating for the entire students' needs and interests in the school (Nduta, 2018). It represents the student body and serves as a voice for their needs and interests through effective communication with the administration (Kilonzo & Kanori, 2017). The student council further performs assigned activities such as maintaining the discipline of other students in the school, inducting new students, being role models to other students, supervising group discussions, and following up on homework for learners who find it challenging to complete their homework on time (Perry, 2022). Discipline plays a crucial role in shaping individual character, fostering a positive academic culture, and contributing to the total well-being of individuals in various aspects (Lumanija, 2020). Mostly, when student council leadership is involved in decision-making in the school, they can voice out what might be affecting the academic performance of their specific schools (Wesley, 2019). The study by Wesley (2019) on participation in decision-making at university established that student involvement in decision-making is essential in raising the standards of students' discipline, and the academic performance of students in the Netherlands schools. Through the students' involvement in making rules and assisting the school administration in the running of the schools, the learners are in a position to achieve their academic performance (Ikiugu & Maithya, 2021).

In Sweden, the student council is involved in decision-making in matters that pertain to the education of learners (Mellander, 2017). The schools in Sweden allow students to express their opinions through communication with the school administration, which is crucial for promoting critical thinking, fostering engagement, encouraging creativity, building confidence, and creating a sense of community among the learners. This approach makes students feel connected to the learning process as a whole, which leads to improved academic performance. However, though Swedish schools encourage communication with students and teachers by discussing how to improve education quality for better academic performance, communication barriers and the absence of effective student leadership have sometimes been a challenge to the students' councils (Morange & Barchok, 2017).

The incorporation of student councils into the decisions made in schools is important for academic performance in Scotland (Mcwatt, 2018). Student leaders are encouraged to help the school administration create a safe and respectful environment in-group discussions (Griebler, 2014). As leaders, they encourage all group participants to share their opinions and ideas respectfully, promoting a positive and collaborative environment essential to enhancing learning and academic performance (Wambua et al., 2019). The involvement of students in leadership helps in close monitoring of schools' activities and ensures rules and regulations are followed for the better academic performance of the students (Kirera, 2015). A study carried out in Germany by McKenna (2016) stated that the development of clear and consistent regulations by school administrators, instructors, and students results in a secure learning environment that supports the learners' successful learning outcomes. McKenna expounds that

student council in Germany is fundamental in upholding discipline standards, ensuring that students follow school rules and regulations, and participate in group discussions (McKenna, 2016). This approach helps in improving the academic performance (Gregorio, 2019). Related findings reveal that the students' council in Finland is a significant component of the school system that improves students' academic performance (Shatilya, 2014). The study further pointed out that in schools where student councils are involved in mentoring new students and are actively engaged in guiding others, the academic performance of learners tends to be effective.

Student council leadership plays a vital role in the administration of the school. A study conducted by Njaramba (2022) about students' leadership roles and their impact on academic performance in China established tension between academic goals and leadership responsibilities. The study revealed that student leaders bear the burden of having to juggle between their academic work and their leadership roles, and in both, they are expected to perform well (Njaramba, 2022). The current study will focus on how the student leaders' involvement in peer mentorship, students' discipline, and communication with the school administration affect the academic performance of the school in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya. The cordial relationship between students' council leadership and school administration contributes to the smooth running of the school. A study by Ndifon (2021) in Nigeria found a relationship between school involvement of students' councils in following rules and regulations, induction of new students, and improvement in the academic performance of the students. The study further noted a significant relationship between the cooperation of students with the school management and teaching effectiveness which greatly improves students' academic performance (Ndifon, 2021). Students' council leaders play a vital role in inducting new students into the school's culture such as participation in group discussions, debates, and general cleanliness (Wambua et al., 2019).

The formation of students' council leadership is meant to assist in the school administration (Kilonzo & Kanori, 2017). Effective student councils contribute to the academic performance of any school (Nduta, 2018). A study in South Africa by Kamla (2014) contended that the birth of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) was one of the changes that improved students' discipline and academic performance in schools. Kamla further established that student councils are assigned roles such as the induction of new students and participation in the formulation and implementation of school rules. Consequently, school managers follow up to ensure that student leaders execute their rules effectively (Ikiugu & Maithya, 2021). This has consequently improved students' efforts to study and effectively perform academically (Wambua et al., 2019). Student Unions have been recognized for their contributions to student education in South Sudan (General Students Union, 2022). The Unions were regarded as foundations that allowed debates about the promotion of leadership, inclusivity, and academic excellence among the students (General Students Union, 2022).

A study by Lumanija (2020) about the roles of student council involvement in the monitoring discipline in public secondary schools in Bariadi District, Tanzania, established that student councils play a significant role in enforcing school rules. The student council acts as a role model for positive behavioral change among students, which consequently leads the students to be focused, work hard, and improve their academic performance (Lumanija, 2020). The Kenya Secondary Schools Students' Council (KSSSC) was conceived in 2008 against the background of finding a solution to students' indiscipline in the schools (UNICEF, 2017). This was meant to provide a better environment for teaching and learning in schools (Nduta, 2018). Following the ban on corporal punishment in 2001 (RoK, 2001), the Ministry

of Education (MoE) and the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association (KSSHA) proposed the Student Council concept, where an autonomous team of student council leaders would be expected to help in ensuring social control in the schools (UNICEF, 2017).

A well-established student council creates an ideal learning environment and uplifts the academic performance of learners (Nduta, 2018). Students' council leadership, being one of the effective components in school administration, contributes to the academic performance of the students (Momanyi & Mwalwa, 2021). For example, they enhance the rules and regulations for better academic performance (Ikiugu & Maithya, 2021). Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya is not exceptional in embracing student council leadership to aid in their effective performance (Kirera, 2015). However, a study by Otuoro (2021) revealed that the performance of secondary schools in the area is a great concern among school stakeholders, such as parents and the community.

A study by Wamiru (2017) noted that the performance in public secondary schools of Nakuru County is of concern. According to the study, Lamudia public secondary schools' performance deteriorated for five consecutive years (Wamiru, 2017). In 2013 the mean grade was a C (4.50 points), 2014 the mean was a D (3.4 points), 2015 the mean grade was a D (2.6 points), 2016 the mean grade was a D- (2.00 points), and in 2017 the mean grade was E (1.4) points (Wamiru, 2017). Otuoro (2021) noted that in Nakuru County, 19 out of the 21 schools experienced a drastic decline in academic performance in the 2021 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Further, Wamiru (2017) found that the County got a mean score of 1.4 in the 2017 KCSE, down from 2.6 in 2015. This was so following the KCSE grading system, of a 12-point scale, with 12 points being the highest score and 1 being the lowest. These grades range from A to E, as seen in Table 1

Table 1: The KCSE Grading System

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Points	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Source: Kenya National Examination Council.

Following the KCSE grading system, the mean score of 6.8 as noted by Wanjiru (2018) is grade C, whereas the university cutoff point by Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Services (KUCCPS) is 7.0, grade C (Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Services, 2021). This is a clear indication that the number of students who qualify to join the university is very low as indicated in Figure 1, public secondary schools in the Naivasha sub-county have a low record of performance in KCSE (Kenya National Examinations Council, 2021). This raises the question of whether students' council leadership is involved in matters that pertain to the academic performance of students (Ikiugu & Maithya, 2021). Studies are scarce regarding how students' council leadership effectively contributes to academic performance in schools in terms of their involvement in peer mentorship, students' discipline, and communication with administration in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County (Kirera, 2015). The scarce literature raises the question of whether students' council leadership contributes to the academic performance of students (Momanyi & Mwalwa, 2021). This makes the study urgent and viable.

Thus, the current study aimed to investigate the contribution of student councils' leadership on academic performance in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya. This research aimed to address the gap in the literature regarding the effectiveness of student council leadership in enhancing academic performance. Specifically, the study examined how student council involvement in peer mentorship, discipline, and communication with administration affects student academic outcomes. By focusing on these key areas, the research sought to provide insights into the potential role of student councils in improving the academic performance trends observed in the region. The findings of this study could contribute to a better understanding of how to leverage student leaders to enhance academic performance, potentially informing educational policies and practices in Kenyan secondary schools and beyond. Moreover, this research aimed to shed light on the mechanisms through which student councils can effectively contribute to creating a conducive learning environment and ultimately boost academic achievement.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Student leadership is a credible factor in improving students' academic performance. Ikimat and Wafula (2021) opine that when school administration involves student leadership by supporting them in their roles such as guiding, mentoring their peers, and participating in the discipline improves academic performance. Student councils in Kenya were introduced in 2008 to enable students to be part of the schools' management and ensure that their interests are taken into consideration. This would enable students to express their needs, enhance communication, and collaborate with the administration to improve learning for positive academic performance. Regrettably, discipline in schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, has been on the decline as reported by Githinji (2019). In addition, Wanjiru (2018) found that the county recorded a mean score of 3.5 in the 2017 KCSE, down from 6.8 in 2015. Otuoro (2021) noted that 19 out of the 21 schools performed poorly in the 2021 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), scoring a C- or less. Naivasha Sub-County particularly recorded a mean grade of D (3.6 points) (Ministry of Education, 2024). This decline in academic performance is a concern that, if not addressed, is likely to have negative consequences. For instance, there might be limitations on students' access to higher education and scholarship opportunities, which may reduce their chances of pursuing advanced degrees or obtaining better job prospects in the future. This decline in academic performance has raised questions among stakeholders, such as parents, as to whether or not student council leadership discipline contributes to students' academic performance in the Naivasha Sub-County. There is a scarcity of literature that links academic performance with students' council leadership in terms of their involvement in peer mentorship, students' discipline, and communication with the administration. It is from this perspective that the study sought to find out the interplay of these variables and how they contribute to academic performance in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.3 The Study Objective

This study was guided by the following objective:
To examine how student council leadership promotes discipline and academic performance in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County Nakuru County, Kenya

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will help the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) to encourage principals to involve students in the management of schools,

which will consequently improve discipline and their academic performance. This will help to minimize instances of indiscipline and students failing exams. The study will benefit school administration, particularly principals, in effectively considering students' involvement in school decisions. The teachers will also have ample time to prepare students for examinations. The involvement of students in the decisions of the school through the students' council will enable the learners to own the decisions made, which improves their discipline as well as their performance.

Parents will benefit from a smooth running of schools as indiscipline cases are minimized and students' performance improve. The findings of the current study will add to existing knowledge by providing additional literature concerning contribution of student leaders in academic performance. The study findings will be a foundation for scholars interested in conducting studies related to the contribution of students' leaders in peer mentorship, discipline, and communication in academic performance. The findings will enhance the researcher's knowledge regarding student councils' leadership on academic performance.

1.5 Scope and Delimitations of the Study
The study focused on how students' council leadership contribute to peer mentorship students' discipline and communication on academic performance of public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County. Naivasha Sub-County was considered due to a notable decline in academic performance. The study targeted students, teachers, and principals. Mixed method was to collect data. It concentrated on the contribution of peer mentorship, students' discipline, and communication with the administration on academic performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).

1.6 Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework shows how variables are related to each other. The independent variable is student councils' leadership. The sub-variables are peer mentorship, discipline, and communication with the administration. The dependent variable is the student's academic performance. The conceptual framework further shows students' attitudes towards school leadership and examinations as an intervening variable, as illustrated in Figure 1.
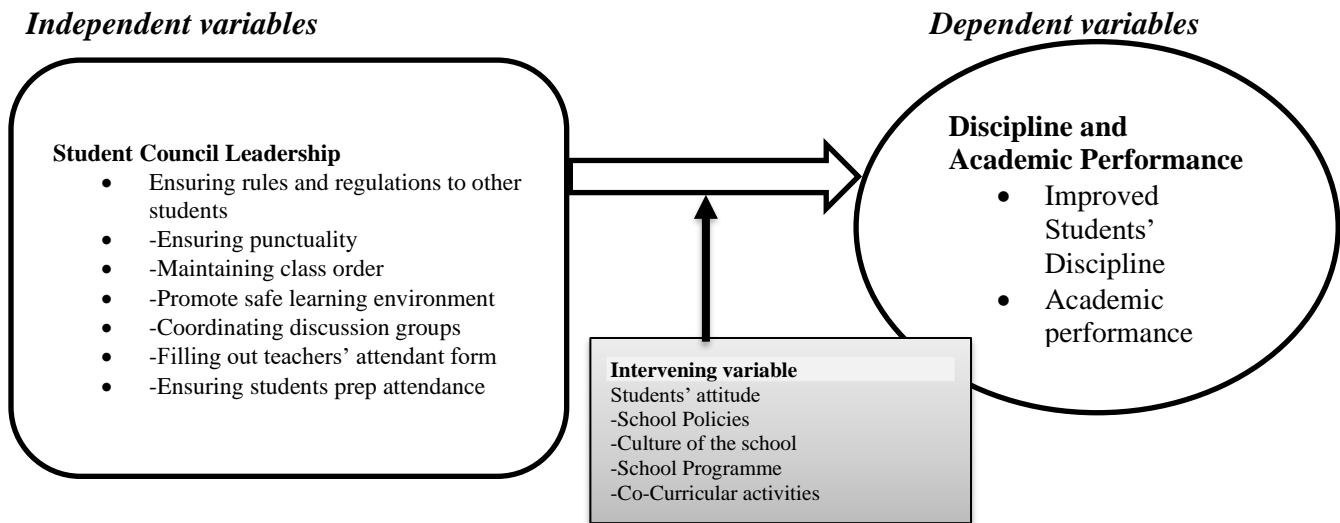
Independent variables   *Dependent variables*

Student Council Leadership
- Ensuring rules and regulations to other students
- -Ensuring punctuality
- -Maintaining class order
- -Promote safe learning environment
- -Coordinating discussion groups
- -Filling out teachers' attendant form
- -Ensuring students prep attendance

Discipline and Academic Performance
- Improved Students' Discipline
- Academic performance

Intervening variable
Students' attitude
-School Policies
-Culture of the school
-School Programme
-Co-Curricular activities

Figure 1: *The Conceptual framework*
Source: *Researcher, 2024*

1.7 Literature review
In this section, the theoretical framework and empirical review are presented.

1.7.1 Theoretical Framework
The study was anchored on systems theory (ST) and path-goal theory (PGT). The system theory was developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1940s, while path-goal theory was developed by Robert House in 1971.

This study adopted the system theory (ST) because the school as a system is made up of multiple components, such as school principals, teaching and non-teaching staff, and students who worked together to achieve the school's objectives. This means a system is a set of activities laid out in collaboration to accomplish a specific goal. Mostly, each system has unique needs that contribute to the whole system. According to Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1973), systems theory is described as a collection of independent pieces that operate together in an integrated way to achieve a purpose. According to Lai and Lin (2017), the systems theory refers to a two-pronged approach where different ways are used to achieve the same aim. The subsystems are expected to work closely with each other. That means when an organization expands, it gains more subsystems that should cooperate to convert inputs into outputs. Additionally, they asserted that the interdependencies are complex, and a little change in one subsystem could have significant consequences elsewhere in the organization.

The work of the principal within the systems theory is to align the units and make each unit play its role effectively. According to systems theory, components of each system are structured in a hierarchical order, and components are interdependent with one another in the system to the extent that one component cannot function without the support of other components (Lai and Lin, 2017). A school, as an organization, is made up of numerous subsystems that work together to accomplish tasks and produce an output. If one of the inputs into the system fails to perform, then the overall

performance of the system is affected. For example, if the student council in a school performs its duties effectively with the available resources, then the students' performance is likely to be effective. Furthermore, if the school principals ensure that the students' council is involved in mentoring others, maintaining harmonious communication with the administration, and is part of the team that establishes school rules, among other managerial functions of the school, all these will contribute to the smooth operation of the school as a system and will enable effective academic performance. Just as the malfunctioning of one organ in a human body will negatively affect another organ or even the whole body, a change in the functioning of the students' council system will affect the entire school system. That is why school unrest caused by ineffective student council involvement in school decisions may lead to the destruction of school property, affect learning, and even lead to the loss of human life (Mukiti, 2014).

However, critics have it that the systems approach to management lacks universality, and its precepts cannot be applied to all organizations. One of the weaknesses of systems theory, according to Hussain (2021), is its lack of universality, which leads to inefficiency. For example, in a school, there are subsystems with different activities to be accomplished. According to Hussein (2021), another weakness of the theory is its lack of prescription. This is because it fails to include concrete actions to take in specific circumstances. The problem with systems theory is that it promotes a life model that assumes the needs of individuals and groups are met at the same time, which can lead to unrealistic expectations. To offset the weaknesses of systems theory, the current study adopted the path-goal theory that emphasizes on motivation. In the different subsystems motivating factors are different though aimed at achieving a common goal.

This theory is appropriate for this study because it empowers the school principals, teaching and non-teaching staff, and students to work together as a system to achieve the school's objectives. As noted by Lunenburg (2010), the main components of an open social system had to work together to realize the desired goals. Therefore, the principal of the school is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that all subsystems, including the students' council, worked together to improve students' academic performance. The school received resources, such as finances, teachers, students, parents, and collaboration from society, as inputs. By applying the ST, educational institutions can cultivate a culture of effective leadership that translates to the improvements of students' achievement. Therefore, the ST theory provides a blueprint to school principals in establishing best communication practices that shape, support, guide and improve the students' academic performance. The ST theory is therefore considered to be relevant to examine the role of student council leadership in promoting discipline and academic performance in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya.

The study also anchored on path-goal theory because the theory explains the leadership traits and motivation, which demonstrates a perfect balance between behavior, need, and context (EPM, 2019). Northouse (2016) explains that the path-goal theory focuses on how leaders motivate their followers to achieve set objectives. The theory advocates for the motivation and reward of subordinates when the set targets are achieved. The leader's motivation for followers are achieved through defining goals, clarifying the path, removing obstacles, and providing support (Northouse, 2016). The path-goal theory states that a leader's traits and behaviors can directly affect the satisfaction, motivation, and performance of his or her subordinates. According to the theory, the

success of a leader is determined by their ability to promote satisfaction among their followers (Dunaetz, 2018). The leader should provide direction and encourage the subordinates to achieve the set goals. A study by Kilonzo (2017), argued that the main task of the student councils is to help run the school on behalf of the school administration. The leader is therefore expected to address the issues that hinder the students from attaining their targets. A leader removes obstacles that might hinder the achievement of the goals of the subordinates (EPM, 2019). Leaders who make use of the path-goal theory may exhibit four types of leadership behavior: customer-oriented, directive, supportive, and participative (Dunaetz, 2018).

In the context of this study, a student leader who is achievement-oriented focuses on encouraging other students by challenging them to achieve high goals. The subordinates are encouraged to pursue their highest level of performance, and the leaders believe in their ability to perform. The leader encourages and supports followers to keep improving their performance, which can be done through peer counseling and guidance. Directive leaders provide students with clear guidelines and clarify the expectations of their followers. They guide followers on the best way to perform the tasks at hand (Mwaisaka, K'aol, & Ouma, 2019). A leader with a supportive leadership style considers the needs of the followers (students). The supportive student leaders through practices such as peer mentorship, and induction of new students create a friendly environment where other students can easily approach them for any guidance needed to perform well in their academics. A participative leader involves subordinates in the decision-making process and considers their input to improve the decisions. In a school setting, student leaders can show other students how to effectively perform academically through activities such as being involved in peer mentorship, induction of new students, counseling and guiding students regarding school rules and regulations, and communication with the administration concerning matters that affect other students. The leaders may remove obstacles to the effective students' academic performance by providing the support needed, for example, through effective communication with the administration and providing feedback to the students on matters that affect them; and regular support by providing counseling and guidance to students who may be in need.

However, critics have it that path-goal theory has strengths and it also has some weaknesses. For example, Bans (2021) noted that the theory is a complex one because research has not been able to prove that it truly works in the real world. Participation in taking up the responsibility is a challenge when teamwork is not valued. In most cases, the leader is expected to make use of more than one style of leadership, depending on subordinate and environmental characteristics which is difficult for most leaders. It is also observed that every responsibility lies with the leader, as it is the leader who is expected to define the goals, clarify the path, remove obstacles, and provide support. If there are several subordinates with a vast variety of characteristics, the leader may be stressed out.

This theory is appropriate for this study because it empowers leaders to gain knowledge regarding their leadership styles and the other styles that they can adapt to influence and motivate their followers to achieve the set goals. Northouse (2021) advocates understanding leadership as approachable and friendly. The leader is expected to address the human needs, well-being, equality, respect, and acknowledgment of followers creating aesthetic learning conditions. In the context of the current study, the theory allows student leaders to adopt the leadership styles that

can enable them to effectively lead other students to effectively perform in academics. The PGT theory is therefore considered to be relevant to examine the role of student council leadership in promoting discipline and academic performance in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.7.2 Empirical review

Student council leadership plays a key role in promoting discipline and academic performance in public secondary schools. By acting as a bridge between students and school administration, the student council helps to maintain order and foster a positive learning environment. The students' council, being a sub-group in the school, ensures students adhere to the rules at all levels for effective academic performance. They also encourage good behavior by setting an example and contributing to a disciplined school culture. Student councils often engage in peer mentorship, guiding fellow students in academic and personal growth. Their involvement in decision-making processes, particularly around school policies and student welfare, boosts communication, which positively impacts students' focus and performance in academics (Malaba & Chui, 2023).

In the USA, student councils exist at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, though generally, student councils are more prevalent in high schools. Involvement at the lower levels has proven to be beneficial in that when students reach higher grades, they have already learned how to conduct formal meetings, discuss problems, and make decisions. A study was conducted by Claver et al. (2020) on the Motivation, Discipline, and Academic Performance in Physical Education: A Holistic Approach from Achievement Goal and Self-Determination Theories. The study applied the achievement goal theory and self-determination theory to form the theoretical framework on which the study was based. A total of 919 high school students took part in the study by filling out semi-structured questionnaires. The data was later compiled using M Plus statistical software for structural equation model prediction. The findings of the study pointed to the critical importance of task-based motivation among the students. They also emphasized the need for psychological autonomy as well as an emotional connection between the mentor and their mentee. These elements were observed to reinforce the relationship between the mentor and their peers while strengthening the resolve to stay in school and pursue academic excellence. The study recommended more intervention programs that facilitate motivation and mentorship to help students have better cognitive and behavioral outcomes in the long term. As much as the study highlighted the various aspects affecting academic performance among students, the focus was only on one subject. This excluded the attitudes of the students in other subjects, denying the researcher the opportunity to have a wholesome view of other subjects. Therefore, this study aimed to focus on the entire learning process without focusing on any particular subject.

As Jemma (2021) pointed out, students in the USA elect class presidents to serve for a maximum term of one academic year with the option of seeking re-election. The presidents are mandated to ensure that concerns relating to the class are presented for debate at the student council's forum. Additionally, the president has the responsibility of presiding over cabinet meetings and consolidating class activities, which improves order in the schools and their overall student performance. McKenna (2016) conducted a study in Germany and noted that the involvement of student leadership in the development of school policies leads to clear and consistent policies, developed by school officials, teachers, and students, which meet expectations and promote a stable school setting, leading to a safe educational environment and academic achievement if well followed. Schenk et al. (2020) observe that the involvement of

students in the governance issue of the school promotes a sense of belonging and inclusiveness among students. The article further argues that a lack of student participation in their governance is likely to lower the standards of discipline by fanning rebellion. The students feel excluded and silenced, hence resort to unconventional methods of resolving their issues. Ng'etich (2020) noted that authoritative teachers who work without involving students negatively impact the learners by reinforcing the belief that only adults or teachers have the capacity to find solutions. This is also reflected in academics where students are likely to form attitudes that some concepts are only best understood by teachers and not students when the majority or all of them fail (Schenk et al., 2020).

A study by Bukaliya (2012) in Zimbabwe investigated the effectiveness and relevance of the students' council in addressing student concerns, student conduct, how teaching is conducted, or any other interests by students in public secondary schools. Findings established that the students' councils were not effective in maintaining student discipline or mentoring others due to their shortcomings. In particular, the study found that the student councils rarely held consultative meetings with their respective students. Students' grievances were obtained through suggestion boxes, but these had not been deliberated upon, laying the ground for potential indiscipline cases and disruption to smooth learning. While this study by Bukaliya explains the roles of students' councils, it is not clear how students' involvement in the running of school influences students' performance, hence the need for the current study that sought to look into how students' councils' involvement in discipline influences students' performance.

Involvement of students in school administration and activities through student councils has been embraced by many schools in Kenya. Kilonzo and Kanori (2017) conducted a study aimed at establishing the influence of student councils' involvement in the implementation of school rules and policies among students on their discipline in public secondary schools in Kathonzweni Sub-County. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was 30 public secondary schools in Kathonzweni Sub-County. The results of the study indicated that schools where a student council was not involved in implementing school rules were characterized by higher levels of indiscipline than those that involved students in implementing school rules. It is also established that involving student councils in implementing school rules influences students' discipline. This study highlights the importance of students' council involvement in school administration but does not clearly bring out how the involvement of students influences the academic achievement of learners. This study aimed to establish if student leadership in discipline management has any impact on academic performance.

Kirera (2015) conducted a study on challenges faced by prefects in managing students' discipline in secondary schools in Buuri Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. The research design used in this study was a descriptive survey in which respondents filled out questionnaires. The study established that prefects in secondary schools are important due to the role they play in bridging the gap between the administration and students. Being a prefect in secondary school is an added responsibility on top of the academic work. The study revealed that prefects face threats from fellow students, that school administration does not train prefects, and that prefects lose command, especially when they do not perform well academically. The study recommends induction courses for prefects after they are democratically elected by other students. The school administration should also work closely with prefects to enable them to overcome their challenges. Though the study looked at students' leadership, it did not address aspects of students' leadership such as involvement in peer mentorship, discipline,

communication with administration, and how such factors influence students' academic performance, hence the need for the current study to fill the gap.

Ikiugu and Maithya (2021) conducted a study about the impact of student councils' involvement in school policy formulation on school discipline in public secondary schools in Meru County. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach where questionnaires were used to collect data from heads of guidance and counseling departments and presidents of student councils, while interview schedules were used to collect data from deputy principals. The findings indicated that students' council involvement in policy formulation was statistically associated with the level of students' discipline in secondary schools. This was supported by the log odds result, where a one-unit increase in student council involvement in policy formulation improved the odds of the level of discipline being satisfactory. An improvement in student councils' involvement in policy formulation increases the probability of satisfactory discipline in secondary schools. This study, however, concentrated on the discipline of students and did not discuss how students perform because of students' council involvement, which is a gap that the researcher sought to cover in this study.

1.8 Methodology

This study used a convergent parallel mixed method approach in the study. The approach enabled the researcher to examine the role of student council leadership in promoting discipline and academic performance. It also helps the researcher to collect data from various respondents namely: principals, teachers and students. These assist in getting a wider view and deeper understanding of the research problem. The study took place in Naivasha Sub-County, which is located within Nakuru County. Naivasha had a population of about 224,141 covering about 425.48 square kilometers. Its neighbors were Kajiado South, Lari, Narok East, Gilgil, and Nyandarua South Sub-Counties. Naivasha Sub-County had eight wards, namely: Mai Mahiu Ward, Olkaria Ward, Viwandani Ward, Naivasha East Ward, Lake View Ward, Bashara Ward, Maela Ward, and Hells Gate Ward (NG-CDF Naivasha, 2021) (see Appendix A). There were 39 public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County. The choice of the sub-county for this study was due to a decline in academic performance in KCSE examinations. Since student councils play a vital role in the management of schools, the researcher sought to find out whether student councils influenced students' academic performance in the Naivasha Sub-County.

The total target population was 2,673 comprising 234 teachers, 2400 students, and 39 principals from 39 public secondary schools. The study used probability and non-probability sampling techniques that included purposive and systematic random sampling. The study used purposive sampling to select 13 principals out of 39 for the data collection of the study. There are 234 teachers in 39 public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, therefore, this study used systematic sampling to select 40 teachers in 39 schools for the data collection of the study. Also, there are 2400 students in 39 public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, therefore, this study used systematic sampling to select 240 students in 39 schools for the data collection of the study.

Data collection instruments and procedures included a questionnaire and an interview guide.
The collection of data was done using an interview guide for principals and a questionnaire for teachers and students. A pilot test was conducted in two public secondary schools in the sub-county. The research

instruments were validated by experts with knowledge of instructional leadership from Tangaza University Analysis of quantitative data was done using descriptive statistics, which included frequency distributions and percentages and was generated by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Data was presented in the form of bar graphs, pie charts, and frequency tables. Qualitative data was analyzed using a thematic approach and was presented using narratives and direct quotes.

1.9 Findings
Response Rate of the Participants
The researcher distributed research instruments to different participants in the study. The research instruments consisted of questionnaires that were distributed to teachers and students. The questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data. Also, the interview guide was conducted to collect qualitative data from the principals in the selected schools for the study. Table 1 presents a summary of the response rates of the different participants in the study.

Table 2: The Response Rate of the Participants

Category	Target participants	Response rate	Percentage (%)
Students	240	234	97.5%
Teachers	40	39	97.5%
Principals	13	8	61.5%
Total	293	281	96%

Source: *Field data, 2024*

Table 2 showed that out of the 40 questionnaires distributed to the teachers, most were returned 39 (97.5%). This indicated that the participants were ready to participate in the study. Out of the 240 questionnaires distributed to the students, almost all of them were returned 234 (97.5%). This indicated that the participants were willing to take part in the study. Additionally, that out of the 13 principals who were sampled for the study 8 (61.5%) were available for the interview. Four of them did not participate since they were out for official matters while three were in for meeting within the school. The three categories had a response rate above 50%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda, (2013), a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting of data.

Demographic Information of the Participants
The participants were required to provide their personal information such as gender and work experience. The researcher aimed to examine how the personal characteristics of the respondents are related to student council leadership promotes discipline and academic performance.

Distribution of Gender of the Teachers and Students
The respondents were asked to indicate their gender to determine whether there was a difference between male and female participation in the study. The findings are shown in Figure 2.
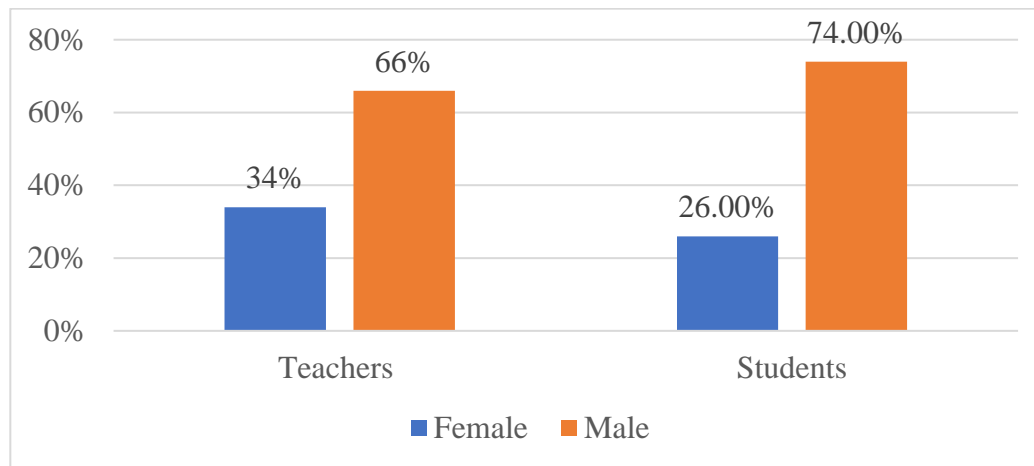
Figure 2: Distribution of Gender of the Teachers and Students
Source: Field data, 2024

As indicated in Figure 2, 34% of the teachers who responded were female while 66% were male. Similarly, 26% of the student's participants were female and 74% were male. This implies that although both genders were represented in public secondary schools in Navasha Sub-County, Nakuru County, male teachers were more than female teachers, and male students were more than female students. This highlights the subject of gender imbalance, which may bring issues such as stereotypes and biases related to academic performance. Schools must prioritize gender balance, as diverse genders can bring unique insights, approaches, and ways of addressing various educational challenges. Having teachers of different genders exposes students to a wider range of ideas, problem-solving strategies, and perspectives. This diversity helps enrich their learning experience and supports better educational outcomes by offering various approaches and viewpoints.

Distribution of Teachers According to the Experience
Under this item, the educators were asked to provide their years of service in schools as a measure of their professional experience. This was to help find out whether they had acquired more knowledge and skills over the period of their service. This was done to establish whether their experience could have helped them, apply various techniques to improve student council leadership promotes discipline and academic performance. The findings are presented in Figure 3.
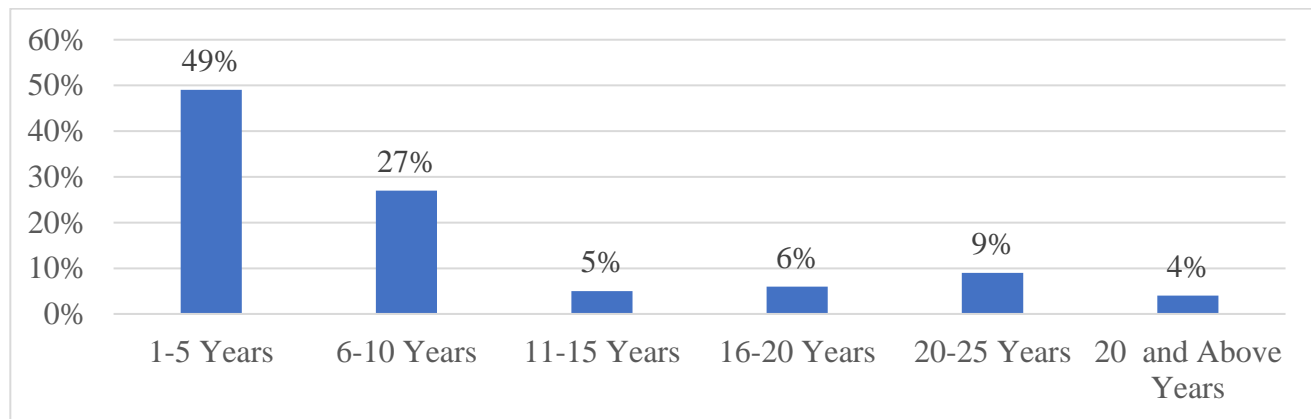
Figure 3: *Distribution of Teachers According to the Experience*
Source: Field data, 2024

The findings in Figure 3 show that (49%) of the teachers had experience for 1-5 years, (27%) for 6-10 years, (5%) for 11-15 years, (6%) 16-20 years, 21-25 years (9%) and (4%) had more than 20 years of experience. This shows that having teachers with varied levels of experience in teaching offer multiple benefits. For example, teachers with different levels of experience bring diverse perspectives to the learning environment. Newer teachers might introduce fresh ideas and innovative teaching methods, while seasoned teachers often possess a profound understanding of using various techniques to improve student council leadership, discipline and academic performance. This range of perspectives enriches the educational experience for students and aids teachers in developing various techniques that enhances student council leadership, discipline and academic performance.

With limited experience, teachers may lack exposure and an effective understanding of various techniques to improve student council leadership that promotes discipline and academic performance. They might struggle to effectively navigate complex situations, such as poor communication and or lack of teacher cooperation during student's involvement, and may find it challenging to use various techniques to improve student council leadership, discipline and academic performance. Additionally, their ability to mentor and guide students in the student leadership process could be compromised. Welsh (2023) argues that experience comes from practical knowledge gained through working with teachers and learners in various situations over time. Therefore, teachers need a wide range of experience to use various techniques to improve student council leadership, discipline and academic performance.

Role of Student Council Leadership in Promoting Discipline and Academic Performance
The study objective sought to determine whether student leader's involvement in the students' discipline contributes to academic performance in public secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County. Teachers rated the items using the scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, and Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The teachers' responses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Involvement of student leaders in the students' discipline

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Student council involvement in the running of school influences students' academic performance.	107	45.7	90	38.5	20	8.5	14	6.0	2	1.3
Student council involvement in developing school policies helps in academic performance.	74	31.6	94	40.2	36	15.4	26	11.1	4	1.7
The involvement of the student council in the decision-making promotes a conducive learning environment.	95	40.6	111	47.4	8	3.4	20	8.5		-
Involvement of the student council in inducting school culture to new students improves academic performance.	57	24.4	126	53.8	27	11.5	14	6.0	10	4.3
Students' council involvement in coordinating discussion groups help students improve academically.	61	26.3	127	54.6	10	4.3	34	14.7		-
The student council's involvement in the supervision of daily chores creates a conducive learning environment.	102	43.6	89	38.0	13	5.1	13	5.6	18	7.7
The students' council deliberates on issues that affect students' academic performance.	93	39.7	64	27.4	12	5.1	49	20.9	16	6.8
Student council involvement offers them the opportunity to take up leadership roles and be responsible.	102	43.6	95	40.6	7	3.0	30	12.8		-
Student council involvement offers them the opportunity to take up leadership roles and be responsible.	99	41.3	80	34.2	19	8.1	34	15.4		-
Student council assignment of duties helps them to gain self-confidence.	55	23.5	68	29.1	52	22.2	50	21.4	9	3.8

Source: *Field Data, 2024*

As seen in Table 3, there is a significant majority of teachers (87.2%) either strongly agreed (35.9%) or agreed (51.3%) that student council involvement in the running of the school influences students' academic performance. Furthermore, 61.5% of teachers either strongly agreed (23.1%) or agreed

(38.4%) that student council involvement in developing school policies helps in academic performance. The data also showed that a substantial proportion of teachers (84.6%) either strongly agreed (28.2%) or agreed (56.4%) that the involvement of the student council in decision-making promotes a conducive learning environment. Student leaders being part of the subgroup, are expected to participate in maintaining a favorable environment for learning.

The study also revealed that the involvement of the student council in various aspects of school life contributes to improved academic performance and a positive learning environment. According to Table 12, 87.2% of teachers either strongly agreed (35.9%) or agreed (51.3%) that the involvement of the student council in inducting school culture to new students improves academic performance. Additionally, 74.4% of teachers either strongly agreed (23.1%) or agreed (51.3%) that students' council involvement in coordinating discussion groups helps students improve academically. Moreover, 76.9% of teachers either strongly agreed (35.9%) or agreed (41%) that the student council's involvement in the supervision of daily chores creates a conducive learning environment.

The study also found that the student council's involvement in addressing issues that affect students' academic performance and offering leadership opportunities is crucial. According to Table 3, 69.2% of teachers either strongly agreed (30.8%) or agreed (38.4%) that the students' council deliberates on issues that affect students' academic performance. Additionally, 66.6% of teachers either strongly agreed (38.4%) or agreed (28.2%) that student council involvement in policy formulation enhances the discipline of students.

Lastly, the study revealed that student council involvement helps in building self-confidence among the students. According to Table 12, all teachers (100%) either strongly agreed (51.3%) or agreed (48.7%) that student council assignment of duties helps them to gain self-confidence. This finding highlights the importance of student council involvement in fostering personal growth and development among students, which can ultimately contribute to improved academic performance.

Involvement of student Council Leaders in Promoting Discipline and Academic Performance
Table 4 summarizes student responses to statements about student council involvement in various aspects of school life and its impact on discipline and academic performance. The responses are categorized into five levels of agreement: Strongly Agree, Agree, and Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Table 4: Involvement of student Council leaders in promoting discipline and academic performance

Statement	Strongly Agree f %	Agree f %	Undecided f %	Disagree f %	Strongly Disagree f %
Student council involvement in the running of school influences students' academic performance.	107 45.7	90 38.5	20 8.5	14 6.0	2 1.3
Student council involvement in developing school policies helps in academic performance.	74 31.6	94 40.2	36 15.4	26 11.1	2 1.7
The involvement of the student council in the decision-making promotes a conducive learning environment.	95 40.6	111 47.4	8 3.4	18 8.5	-
Involvement of the student council in inducting school culture to new students improves academic performance.	57 24.4	126 53.8	27 11.5	14 6.0	10 4.3
Students' council involvement in coordinating discussion groups helps students improve academically.	61 26.3	127 54.6	10 4.3	34 14.7	-
The student council's involvement in the supervision of daily chores creates a conducive learning environment.	102 43.6	89 38.0	13 5.1	13 5.6	16 7.7
The students' council deliberates on issues that affect students' academic performance.	93 39.7	64 27.4	12 5.1	49 20.9	16 6.8
Student council involvement offers them the opportunity to take up leadership roles and be responsible.	102 43.6	95 40.6	7 3.0	30 12.8	-
Student council involvement offers them the opportunity to take up leadership roles and be responsible.	99 41.3	80 34.2	19 8.1	34 15.4	-
Student council assignment of duties helps them to gain self-confidence.	55 23.5	68 29.1	52 22.2	50 21.4	9 3.8

Source: Field Data, 2024

According to the findings in table 4, a majority, 84.2% (45.7+ 38.5) agree that the student council's involvement in school administration has a beneficial impact on academic performance. While a significant 26.5% are unsure or disagree, the majority (71.8%) agree that student council involvement in

policy creation improves academic success. Ikiugu and Maithya (2021) state that improvement in student councils' involvement in policy formulation increases the probability of satisfactory discipline in secondary schools. In an interview, one Principal said:

> *Student council handles light indiscipline cases and reports the deviance. The student leaders are also encouraged to balance responsibility and academic performance (Principal C, 18/72029).*

The majority (88.0%) strongly agree that having the student council participate in decision-making fosters a positive learning environment. Wokadala (2016) notes that the school's success is associated with effective leadership where teachers and students are involved in decision-making and policy implementation. Effective student leadership is essential for the academic performance of learners. Reinforcement of positive behavior reflects surpassing accomplishments and leadership.

Student council involvement in introducing school culture helps academic success as the majority (78.2%) agree with considerable (11.5%) undecided and (10.3%) disagreement. While 14.7% disagree, the majority (80.9%) agree that the student council's coordination of discussion groups contributes to academic performance. While 13.3% disagree, a significant majority (81.6%) agree that having the student council oversee activities fosters a favorable learning atmosphere. A majority (67.1%) agree, while a sizable portion (27.7%) disagree, that the student council discusses matters pertaining to academic performance. A vast majority (84.2%) agree that student council involvement provides leadership and responsibility opportunities, with 12.8% disagreeing. 75.5% of respondents agreed that student council involvement offers them the opportunity to take up leadership roles and be responsible, which is a strong positive reaction.

Based on the findings, the study shows that most participants believe that student council involvement improves both the academic performance of students and the school atmosphere overall. This is especially true when it comes to the administration of the school, policy creation, decision-making, and discussion group coordination. However, there are differing opinions on several points, such as how it affects self-esteem and how much the council discusses academic matters. The student council members maintain class order, report indiscipline cases, solve some of the raised issues, engage in group discussions, participate in peer teaching, are involved in decision-making, discuss issues that hinder performance, hold meetings on academic performance, and punish those who break the rules.

1.10 Conclusion

The study concluded that the role of student council leadership in promoting discipline and academic performance was also viewed favorably by most respondents. Teachers and students agreed that student council involvement in school operations, policy development, and decision-making contributes to a conducive learning environment and enhances students' leadership skills. This supports the idea that giving students a voice in school governance can lead to better academic outcomes and a more positive school climate. However, there were varying degrees of agreement on specific aspects, such as the impact on self-confidence and the extent to which the council deliberates on academic issues. This variation suggests that while student council involvement in discipline management is generally effective, there may be room for improvement in certain areas, perhaps through more clearly defined roles and responsibilities for student leaders. The study also concluded that involving student councils in various school operations, policy development, and decision-making processes can create a conducive

learning environment and enhance students' leadership skills and self-confidence. This aligns with path-goal theory, which suggests that effective leadership involves guiding and supporting followers toward achieving their goals.

1.11 Recommendation

The study recommends that school principals should consistently implement and ensure equal student involvement in student council activities to improve students' discipline and academic performance. This involvement will help create more inclusive selection processes for council members, establish rotational leadership roles, and provide opportunities for a wider range of students to participate in council-led initiatives. By broadening participation, schools should ensure that the benefits of student leadership are more equitably distributed among the student body, potentially leading to improved academic performance.

The school principals should also strengthen peer mentorship programs by addressing the areas of uncertainty, particularly concerning the avoidance of risky behaviors and the improvement of study skills. This could involve developing more structured mentorship programs with clear guidelines and objectives, providing training for peer mentors on effective strategies for addressing these specific issues, and implementing regular evaluation measures to assess the effectiveness of these programs. Additionally, schools could consider incorporating evidence-based practices from successful peer mentorship programs in other contexts, adapting them to suit the specific needs and cultural context of schools in the Naivasha Sub-County. By refining these programs, schools can potentially enhance their impact on academic performance and student well-being.

Lastly, the study recommends developing strategies to improve communication between student councils and the administration, as well as providing professional development opportunities for student leaders. This could involve establishing regular, structured meetings between student council representatives and school administrators, creating clear channels for feedback and idea-sharing, and implementing transparent processes for addressing student concerns. Professional development for student leaders could focus on enhancing their leadership skills, improving their communication abilities, and deepening their understanding of their roles in influencing school policy and environment. This could be achieved through workshops, leadership retreats, or mentoring programs pairing student leaders with experienced educators or community leaders. By investing in these areas, schools can potentially create more effective student councils that are better equipped to positively influence academic performance and contribute to a more dynamic and responsive school environment.

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