

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN LEADERSHIP; A SURVEY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS ASSOCIATIONS AT KISII UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: *The objective of this study was to assess the importance of diversity management in leadership of professional students associations in Kisii University. Diversity management is a multi-faceted phenomenon that continues to evolve as the world becomes a global market. It is critical to understand how student leaders in the context of this study deal with issues of diversity especially in view of the ethnic twist to many aspects of governance in Kenya. The term diversity was defined as recognizing, understanding and accepting individual differences irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, culture, age and knowledge. The Literature reviewed attempted to link the various dimensions of diversity management to leadership performance. The target population of the study comprised all the student professional associations. A purposive sample size of six associations was taken. The population was 17 professional associations comprising 731 student members. The key findings indicated that only ethnicity and respect had statistically significant relationships with professional leadership. Further studies can be done to include more members and all students not only those who are members of professional associations. Ethnicity portrayed negatively has been a source of serious conflict and also a determinant for access to resources. Positive ethnicity should be emphasized in these associations to avoid carrying the wrong ethic into their future workplaces.*

Keywords: *diversity management practices, leadership, student professional associations*

INTRODUCTION

Diversity management has been a real concern for organizations that need to improve their bottom line and for those firms that want to make differences matter. University students are a major pool of future employees and they comprise the leaders for tomorrow's organizations. Their leadership competences are developed as they go through college in their professional associations where they articulate and try to live out their professional beliefs. These associations provide the opportunity and platform for the leaders to develop and carry out their vision for the groups in terms of career objectives as well as industry norms. They also provide opportunity for the leaders to practice their people management skills. In the course of carrying out leadership they have to manage diversity since students are drawn from all walks of life with visible and invisible differences. Visible differences include sex, background, age, disability while invisible differences include personality, attitude and work style.

Harnessing of these differences creates a productive environment in which everyone feels valued as their talents are fully utilized and in which organizational goals are met. Therefore, diversity can be generally being defined as recognizing, understanding and accepting individual differences irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, culture age differences, and expertise knowledge.

Ferlenius (2004) defined diversity management as the strategic process to manage a diverse workforce including the fight against stereotypes prejudice and all kinds of discrimination due to the individual perceptions and assumptions-in the manner to maximize the benefits and minimize the barriers of different opinions, behaviors and attitudes of human beings within a company. The fight against stereotypes could be very relevant in a Kenyan public university situation where the ethnic sense of belonging is higher than the sense of citizenship to the nation. This could be made worse as the study was conducted after a very volatile election period in 2017.

There exists a primary and secondary category of diversity. The primary category consists of the genetic characteristics that affect a person's self-image and socialization in and in which an individual has little influence on such as age, gender, ethnicity, while the secondary category consists of learned characteristics that an individual acquires and modifies throughout life including education, marital status, parental status, religious beliefs and work experience.

Dealing with diversity and individual differences has to be included among the most important issues challenging all managers in the quest for higher performance and organizational competitiveness. Getting students to incorporate diversity management of the student organizations will go a long way to impact organizations that they will join in the future.

Organizational leadership and diversity management

To get the desired transformation from managing diversity will need Leadership in a global environment will need organizational participants to be contextually aware of prevalent cultures among the members. Cultural awareness and competence are essential for effective leadership in the context of diversity. Cultural intelligence is the ability to behave appropriately in cross-cultural settings, an ability that encompasses cognitive (knowledge), emotional and behavioral dimensions. Individuals and groups may hold diverse cultural inclinations and these must be understood in order to create an inclusive and effective work environment.

Leaders can inspire organizations to become more inclusive with respect to their diverse workforce. In this case leaders of student associations must aspire to deliberately become more inclusive in their leadership style. Ensuring diversity representation in the membership is just an initial step towards inclusion. Inclusion reflects the extent to which members perceive that they are part of the communication systems, informal networks and part of decision-making processes of the association. Leaders have an important role in inspiring an organization to become more inclusive and creating an organizational culture of inclusion. Commitment to diversity and inclusion can only come from the leaders by not ignoring differences between individuals and groups whom they lead.

Statement of the Problem

Embracing and managing diversity in modern organization is an essential part in building a successful organization. Leaders need to spend the necessary time needed to fully understand the issue of diversity management and this can best be nurtured in a university leadership setting where the participants of the student associations are drawn from various diverse backgrounds.

The most common mistake leaders make is applying the same management style for each person on their team. This results in poor management which has negative impact to the organization from low morale to high labor turnover to the organization.

Due to the concept of globalization and the diffusion of technological advancement, diversity management concept and its significance in the success of the organization has become imperative. The earlier future organizational participants embrace diversity the better it will be for the institutions that eventually receive them. Diversity by its definition attempts to celebrate people for who they are their backgrounds and what makes them unique. The purpose of this study was to find out how exposed leaders of the university professional associations are to diversity management and the extent to which they embrace diversity management practices in their leadership roles.

Objectives

The main objective of the study was to assess the importance of diversity management in leadership to foster inclusion in associations. Specifically the study sought to identify the challenges association leaders face in managing diversity, the methods and approaches used in implementation of diversity and to evaluate the effects of embracing diversity management in the association.

Significance of the Study

Management of diversity has gained a lot of momentum in the recent past and organizations that do not give it priority have actually been affected in their business. Organizations need to go further than affirmative action and in the process of so doing they need to bring on board all the employees. When students embrace diversity in the leadership professional associations in campus they will be a better intangible resource for the organization. This is deemed to happen as they carry out their leadership roles of nurturing and developing their chosen professional skills.

The study was undertaken at Kisii University in Kisii, Kenya where various select student associations were studied. They included Accounting Students Associations (ASA), Law Students Association, Human Resource Students Associations, Actuarial Students Associations (TASS), Cooperative Students Association (COPSA), and Computing Students Association.

The study was limited to Kisii University main campus, therefore restricting us to only the professional students' associations' leaders and members present in Kisii main campus. It must also be noted that the findings of the study will reflect the perceptions of the various students' associations available in Kisii University only any generalizations must take this into account.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study considered the role of various theories in understanding diversity management. Institutionalization theory recognizes that in order to determine an organization's structure one cannot separate the social environment found within an organization. Organizations held to similar norms and regulations tend to develop similar administrative structures. Rules and regulations lend legitimacy to organizational structures. This implies that as organizations embrace diversity management they will institutionalize diversity practices and hence give legitimacy to the management of diversity in the organization and it will be a normal thing to do. Businesses and organizations that are more diverse gain competitive advantage compared to organizations that are homogenous. Diversity management competencies are a source of competitive advantage as they are an intangible resource that is unique and inimitable for an organization. This is in line with the Resource Based View as proposed by Porter. The consultant approach to managing diversity argues that employers who better understand the needs of their diverse customer base by creating diversity in the workplace have the advantage of translating these perspectives from the diverse employees into economic success.

In this study diversity dimensions studied included inclusiveness in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion. It is worth noting that building a diverse workforce can enhance an organizations social competitiveness. Since diversity within an organization spurs creativity and innovation. Diverse groups also make better decisions as diversity promotes robust critical evaluation of solutions. Managing diversity is more than just simply acknowledging differences in people, it involves recognizing the value of differences, combating discrimination and promoting inclusion in the organization. It involves not only the effects of diversity within an organization but also the levels of openness to dissimilarity characteristics among the organization member work groups. Essentially managers in organizations need to identify and understand the emerging trends in diverse workforce management in order to reduce and minimize the negative impact a diverse workforce may have in an organization.

Diversity management initiatives require new ways of thinking. The management of diversity includes planning, setting priorities for actions and setting commercial targets in all the activity areas with influence in the organization. For the purposes of understanding all the members should be taking the necessary time to learn and know more about the different values, ideas and views to practice the policy of integration rather than exclusion in all means of communication in the organization. It should be considered as one of the strategic objectives in the mission of an organization and translate in all of its aspects including in leadership, management practices and production improvement. The factors supporting the implementation and application of diversity management is a change in thinking which requires control, knowledge and understanding of the demographic changes in members of the organization. Changes in thinking require a successful command where the leadership change requires a new approach and formulates a new vision and continuous support to achieve them (Harper, 1998). The success of the change depends on the commitment and conviction of the administrative leadership of the organization.

The idea of job mobility is given attention in empirical literature in terms of characteristics of promoted workers. The extant literature is not consistent for gender influencing promotion either negatively or positively. Promotion rates were also found to positively vary with firm growth. The consequences of promotion are measured in terms of wage growth. Intra-firm mobility is determined by the firm while inter firm mobility is directly determined by the worker. Wages are strong determinants of the process of search and mobility. Other determinants include education, ability and job experience. Women have greater challenges as compared to men and take longer to change firms when it is assumed that all workers are endowed with the same characteristics.

Human capital is defined as a set of characteristics in which workers can invest in and increase their own productivity. General human capital increases the marginal productivity of employees across firms while specific human capital increases the marginal productivity more where the worker is located. Further specific human capital affects the workers' productivity and the firm profitability. A promotion is a consequence of human capital investment. When employees are aware they can be promoted or develop without being hindered it becomes an incentive for them to exert effort without the need for any formal contract with the firm (Ferreira, undated).

Everyone asserts that workforce diversity is smart business; it opens markets, lifts morale and enhances productivity. Thomas and Ely (1996) argue that there have been attempts to increase diversity in the workplace. They posit that managing diversity in organizations is premised on two paradigms: assimilation paradigm and differentiation paradigm. These paradigms are differentiated on their premise, strategy and contribution to

perceived competitiveness. The scholars argued that diversity could be unleashed to increase profitability but to achieve this fundamental change in the attitudes and behaviour of management is required.

To many people workplace diversity is about increasing racial/tribe/ethnic, gender or class representation or basically recruiting people from traditionally unrepresented identity groups. Their research found that organizations take only one of two paths in managing diversity. The assimilation approach that encourages the assumption of “we are all the same” and it emphasizes equality and fairness. Companies/organizations that operate on this assumption believe that the main virtue these identity groups bring in is knowledge of their own people. In their paper they argue that diversity should be understood as the varied perspectives and approaches to work those members of different identity groups bring. They bring different, important and competitively relevant knowledge and perspectives on how to actually do the work. In essence, diversity is not just about how a person looks or where they come from.

The other approach is the access and legitimacy paradigm that emphasizes the celebration of differences and tries to match diverse employees to niche markets. It doesn't influence mainstream work and employees may feel exploited and excluded from opportunities. When focusing on the assimilation approach leaders will use equal opportunity, fair treatment, recruitment and compliance to legal requirements. Such firms go beyond affirmative action by looking at how well they complied instead of how much they let the employees be themselves. This approach has leaders who value due process and equal treatment. The firms are often bureaucratic with tight control processes for monitoring, measuring and rewarding employees' performance for example the army. This approach increases demographic diversity and fairness in the organization.

This method is limited as it built on the implicit assumption that we are all the same or we aspire to be the same. This paradigm fails to explore how these differences can generate effective diverse ways of working, leading, managing people and learning. It also ensures that important differences among employees do not count. It denies employees the opportunity to openly acknowledge and identify with their work related but culturally based differences.

The access and legitimacy/ differentiation paradigm celebrates and accepts difference. The firms that have adopted this paradigm generally operate in an environment that has witnessed diversity among customers and employees. The approach is market based and has potential for competitive advantage. It thrives on niche markets and emphasizes the role of cultural differences without analyzing those differences to see how they affect work. They actually push individuals into specific corners already predetermined through niches without understanding what the individual's capabilities are. Firms are not keen to learn skills, beliefs or practices in order to capitalize on diversity in the long run.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A Descriptive research design was used in this study. This research design is particularly useful since it portrays an accurate profile of persons, events, and situations; it is also seen as an extension of exploratory research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2000). Furthermore, descriptive analysis minimizes data collection biases.

The target population of the study comprised all the student professional associations and their members but a purposive sample size of six associations was done by selecting the most active associations. Active in the sense that they had the purpose of this study the total number of professional students associations present in Kisii University is 17 consisting a total number of 731 student members (a member being one who has paid all the subscriptions and membership fee). The sample size for the research paper consisted of 6 associations out

of 17 professional students associations. 4 leaders and 3 members from each of the selected professional associations made the sample size totaling to 42 respondents.

The selected professional students associations include; Accounting Students Association (ASA), Cooperative Students Association(COPSA), Law Student Society(LSA), The Actuarial Students Association(TASS), Human Resource Students Association(HRSA), Computing Students Association(CSA). Primary data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaires. The data was analyzed with the help of Microsoft Excel and SPSS-software. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used to analyze the data. The reliability test was done using Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Test and it was used to determine if the variables measured the same construct. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of reliability for the scales was 0.860 indicating that the scales were reliable and could be used in the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The response rate was 71.4% and according to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) a response rate of 50% is considered adequate, 60% is good and 70% is excellent. Therefore a 71.4% response rate of this study was good enough for analysis.

Demographic characteristics of the participants

The demographic characteristics of the participants were analyzed on the basis of age, gender and education level. The finds are in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

Item	category	frequency	percentage
Gender	male	17	56.67%
	Female	13	43.33%
Age	18-20	6	20%
	21-22	9	30%
	23-24	13	43.33%
	25 and above	2	6.67%
Education level	certificate	0	0
	Diploma	0	0
	Degree	30	100%

The results in Table 1 show that 56.67 percent were male while 43.33% were female, 20% were between age 18 to 20 while majority of the respondents were between age 23 and 24. All the respondents interviewed were pursuing degree programs. This implies that the association membership is drawn from the undergraduate students pursuing bachelor’s degrees in various disciplines.

Period of membership

The respondents were asked to state how long they have been members in the association. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Membership duration

Years	Frequency	percentage
0-1years	8	26.67%
2-3 years	17	56.67%
4 years and above	5	16.67%

Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents 56.67% were in their second and third year of study. This implies that this is the most active period as the students consider themselves as ongoing and key stakeholders in association activities. The fourth years were the least represented at 16.67% implying they were maybe trying to transition to other things that focus them out of school activities.

Analysis of diversity related items

Respondents were asked to respond to statements that relate to inclusion of gender in the association on a scale of 1 to 4. Where 1 is strongly disagreeing and 4 is strongly agree. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Responses to items on gender

	Strongly agree	agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Fair treatment is given to all members whether male or female	13	14	2	1
The association doesn't discriminate while registering members on gender basis	9	11	9	1
Ladies vying for leadership positions are given equal opportunities	10	18	1	1
I'm positive about gender diversity in my association	8	19	1	2

Table 3 findings indicate that majority of the respondents were positive about gender diversity in their associations, this is clear because more than 27 respondents comprising 89.6% agreed there was positive gender diversity in their association. This finding were in contrast to a study carried out by Leonard (2003) in which they found that gender based inequalities in organizations are reinforced and justified by stereotypes and biases that describe positive characteristics therefore a higher status to males. These results portray that the students who are members of the professional associations believe that gender inclusivity is practiced. The study findings further indicate that when registering new members there was no discriminate based on gender where 11 respondents comprising 36.6% agreed that this was the practice. However on this argument, 9 respondents comprising 30% disagreed that there was no discrimination based on gender when registering new students. These mixed signals imply that registration of members should be an area where inclusivity of both gender needs to be looked at. It was noteworthy that fair treatment is given to all where 14 respondents comprising 46.6% felt that fair treatment was a practice of the organizations without discriminating against either gender.

Responses to items on age as an aspect of diversity

The respondents were asked to state their age. The findings are indicated in table 4.

Table 4: Responses to items on age diversity

	Strongly agree	agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Associations in Kisii University accommodate members of all age bracket	12	15	2	1
Age difference creates conflict among members of the association	3	5	8	14
There is lack of bonding and interaction among members of different age group	2	8	11	9
I'm positive about age diversity in my association	11	16	2	1

Table 5, shows that majority of the respondents were positive about age diversity in their associations 36.67% strongly agreed and 53.33% agreed that the associations were accommodative to all members regardless of age. More than 73% of the respondents disagreed strongly disagreed that there was conflict in their associations due to age differences. This can be attributed to the fact that the age representation in the associations is basically within youth hence their ideologies may not significantly differ in spite of the age ranges presented.

Responses to ethnicity of the Members

Ethnicity is one of the variables that characterize diversity. Respondents were asked questions with regard to ethnicity and their responses are shown in table 6.

	Strongly agree	agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The association does a good job in attracting and registering members from different ethnicity	8	16	5	1
Leadership opportunities are equal for all members of different ethnicity	11	19	0	0
The different languages used to communicate during meetings don't create problems	7	17	4	2
During meetings I develop low self-esteem due to my ethnicity	4	2	9	15
Association leaders include members of different ethnicity in problem solving and decision making	8	15	4	3
I'm positive about ethnic diversity in my association	10	17	3	0

Table 6 findings indicate that ethnicity of members does not affect the association leadership, problem solving, use of language in meetings and members were satisfied that there was ethnic diversity in their associations. On membership diversity more than 86% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that they felt that their association leaders did a great job in attracting and registering members from different ethnic groups. This is commendable because the level of identification with one’s ethnic group has been on the rise. This is a positive development showing that cohesion is possible when people are pursuing common goals. Similarly respondents were positive that leadership opportunities were equally available to all members of different ethnic groups. Majority of the respondents disagreed on developing low self-esteem during association gatherings due to their ethnicity. Overall, the respondents were positive about ethnic diversity in their associations. Jackson (2004) argued that, ethnicity can bring about communication problems and conflict if not handled well the responses indicate that, this is not the case in Kisii University professional students associations.

Responses to sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is one of the dimensions of diversity. Respondents were asked to respond to issues on diversity and sexual orientation. The results are in Table in 7.

Table 7: Responses to sexual orientation

	Strongly agree 4	Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1
Members are not discriminated based on their sexual orientation	30	15	0	2
Equal leadership opportunities are given to all members regardless of their sexual orientation	16	12	0	2
Bonding and interaction among members isn’t affected by difference in sexual orientation	11	17	2	0
I’m positive about sexual orientation diversity in my association	13	15	1	1

Majority of the respondents overwhelmingly agreed to not being discriminated on the basis of their sexual orientation. Equal leadership opportunities are also given to all members regardless of their sexual orientation, 53.33% strongly agreed and 40% agreed forming majority of the respondents. On the question of bonding and interaction among members majority of the respondents agreed on not being affected by difference in sexual orientation of the members. The respondents strongly agreed that there was positive sexual orientation diversity in their associations. This signified that difference in sexual orientation of members in professional students associations in Kisii University doesn’t create conflicts.

Responses to religious diversity

The study sought to find out the extent to which religion affected diversity management among the student associations. The results are in Table 8.

Table 8: Responses to religion

	Strongly agree	agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Members are not discriminated based on their religion	14	16	0	0
Leadership opportunities are available to all members regardless of their religion	14	15	0	1
I face low self -esteem due to my religion	4	1	6	19
I feel accepted in my association regardless of my religious beliefs	9	20	1	0
I am positive about religion diversity in my association	11	17	2	0

Majority of the respondents felt that they were not discriminated in their associations on religious belief basis, majority of the respondents also felt that leadership opportunities were available to all members regardless of their religion. The members disagreed with having low self-esteem due to their religion. The respondents felt positive about religion diversity in their associations. From the study and analysis of the responses, it is evident that religion diversity doesn't create any problems in professional students associations of Kisii University. This is a good indicator of healthy interactions among the association members.

Responses on items to respect for people

Table 1: Responses on items to respect for people

Items	Strongly agree	agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
Opinions of members are respected and considered during decision making	12	12	5	1
There is respect among junior and senior members in the association	17	9	2	2

Majority of the respondents agreed to opinions of members being respected and considered during decision making in their associations. Only 20% of the respondents disagreed that member opinions were taken into account during decision making. Similarly the respondents agreed that there was respect between the junior and senior members of the associations. Respect is critical because when there is respect then there is trust and trust enables people to work together knowing that each one is holding out for the good of the others. In the process the association's goals are achieved without a lot of acrimony and conflict.

Responses to items on leadership

The study sought to find out how leadership affected diversity management. The leadership attributes are considered on three fronts namely; member empowerment, member enrollment and a robust association. The results are in Table 10.

Table 10: Responses to items on leadership

	strongly agree	Agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
Members empowerment				
I'm fully committed to associations duties and activities as a member	8	12	10	0
Leaders in our association empower members toward academic excellence	5	12	9	4
I try to contribute towards association activities	8	18	4	0
I intentionally expend a great deal of effort in carrying out my duties	7	13	10	0
I feel that my leadership style is reflective of my abilities	4	12	12	2
Members enrollment				
There is continuity in members enrollment	8	19	2	1
Members enrollment is the core objective in my association	7	4	15	4
The is no limit to the amount of members enrollment	5	22	3	0
Membership registration fee is affordable to all students	8	11	8	3
Membership is open to all students regardless of their career path	4	5	18	3
Robust association				
My association is one of the strong association in Kisii university	10	8	11	1
I'm fully committed towards strengthening my association	9	19	2	0
All members are aware of the importance of a strong association	7	12	11	0
My association is one of the active associations in Kisii university	11	7	10	2

Leadership effectiveness was measured in terms of association leader’s ability to empower their members, to attract a lot of students and how strong and active an association is. Majority of the respondents felt that leaders in their associations empowered them towards academic excellence and this made members to do their best to contribute towards associations activities. There was continuity in members’ enrollment in their associations and the associations had no limit on member enrollment and membership was open to all students regardless of their career path as indicated by their degree of study.

Relationship Between Diversity management and Leadership

To establish this relationship, Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used. The coefficient indicated the direction, strength and significance of the bivariate relationship among all variables that were tested. The interpretation of the correlation coefficient was done as shown in Table 11 based on the description put forth by Hair, Money and Page (2007). The direction of the relationship can be positive or negative as the coefficient ranges between 0 - ±1.

Table 11: Interpretation of Pearson’s Product Moment correlation coefficient r

Coefficient range	Strength of association
0.91-1.00	very strong
0.71-0.90	high
0.41-0.70	moderate
0.21-0.40	small but definitive relationship
0.01-0.20	slight almost negligible

The summary of the correlations between diversity management aspects and leadership is presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Correlations between Diversity management aspects and Leadership (n = 30)

Aspect	r	R²	P-Value	Remarks
Gender	0.266		0.156	Not significant
Age	0.069		0.717	Not significant
Ethnicity	0.391*	0.153	0.033	Significant
Sexual Orientation	0.193		0.308	Not significant
Religion	0.161		0.396	Not significant
Respect	0.690**	0.476	0.000	Significant

** - Significant at 0.001 *significant at 0.05 level

The results presented in Table 12 show that there was no statistically significant relationship between gender, age, sexual orientation and religion (n= 30 p-value 0.156, 0.717, 0.308 and 0.396 respectively) with leadership. This is a crucial finding because gender issues are highly publicized in the general literature. It seems from these findings that students do not look at the issues of gender, religion, sexual orientation and age as variables that impact leadership. This is in complete contrast with the current contextual environment in business and politics where policies are made in view of these. The results indicate that ethnicity had a positive but slightly significant relationship with leadership (n=30 p-value 0.033 r = 0.391 R²=0.153) implying that 15.3 percent of the change in leadership can be attributed to ethnicity. This is a good explanation of the trends in university where ethnicity is a major determinant of who is elected to lead the students with majority of the student leaders coming from the more populous ethnic groups. A major finding of this study is the correlation between respect and leadership (n=30 p-value 0.000 r = 0.690 R²=0.476) implying that 47.6 percent of the change in leadership was influenced by respect. The study tested for respect between the leader and followers and the leaders respect for subordinates. This implies that respect is a great attribute if you must manage a diverse group of people. The findings indicate ethnicity plays a role but mutual respect is what keeps the leader and the group in existence as it pursues its objectives.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The majority of the participants were male (n =17) this shows that the views shared in the study may have a skewed male approach to the issues under study. This is a perspective that represents society as we know it as put forth by Kossesk and Lobel (2005) who found that from the entire workforce across the world 58% are men. In regard to age majority of the respondents were between the age of 21-22 comprising 30% and those between the age of 18-20 comprised 20%. This is significant because of the finding that ethnicity plays a role

on leadership implying that something must be done to change the mindsets early for inclusivity in all areas. All the respondents were students pursuing various degree programmes. As for membership period, most of the respondents, 17(56.67%) had a membership period of 2-3 years in the associations, followed by 8(26.67%) had a membership period of 0-1 years finally 5(16.67%) had a membership period of 4 years and above.

Gender, age, sexual orientation and religion did not have any statistically significant relationship with leadership. This is a good indication for inclusivity and good diversity management among the groups. There was a significant positive relationship between ethnic diversity and leadership in student associations' and thus ethnic diversity has an influence on leadership. Similarly there was a positive relationship between respect for people and leadership. The results showed a strong relationship between respect for people and leadership implying that respect for people greatly influenced leadership in Kisii University professional students associations. Respect has to do with the self-concept and self-esteem of individuals and for organizations to succeed this must be given priority.

Recommendations

Further studies can be done including more members and all students not only those who are members of professional associations. Ethnicity portrayed negatively has been a source of serious conflict and also a determinant for access to resources. It is recommended that positive ethnicity be emphasized in these associations to avoid carrying the wrong ethic into their future workplaces. Deliberate efforts should be done to train these leaders on the virtues of embracing diversity management. It should be an ongoing exercise for all students. Kisii University is a rural based university the study can be done in the urban universities and a comparative study can be done between the TIVET institutions and universities.

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