

STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVE ON DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS IN KENYA'S SECONDARY SCHOOLS

AGNES WANJA KIBUI

University of Nairobi, Kenya

ABSTRACT

Students exhibit negative behaviour in schools because they lack the social skills necessary to use in order to meet their basic needs. The skills that are necessary to interact in a constructive and cooperative manner may not have been developed in students for various reasons. For example, changes in the traditional family structure have reduced children's exposure to parents who model societal moral values. In most cases, especially in the urban set up, both parents work, and have limited time to interact with their children. In other cases, children have limited exposure to positive adult models in the society who are trained in resolving conflicts. In addition, changes in popular modern culture expose children to negative models of conflict resolution. For instance, popular movies and television shows often portray violence as a glamorous and effective way to solve grievances and disputes. All these limited constructive social skills among the youth have become a major concern for parents, educators, government, and society. This study recommends that it is necessary to improve students' interactive skills by training them in positive behaviour so that they can become responsible citizens. In this way, teachers will spend less time dealing with disciplinary problems, and hence leave more time to assist students with academic pursuits.

KEYWORDS: Stakeholders, Perspective, Discipline, Schools

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of administrators in schools is to develop motivated teachers who are actively engaged in teaching and learning, open to new ideas, and approaches, and committed to students, and who accept social and educational changes over the lifetime of their careers. Hence, students and teachers have a great role to play in order to ensure that proper discipline is maintained in schools. A positive school climate with all stakeholders acting cooperatively creates feelings of satisfaction and productivity among the workers and this reduces conflict. That means, all the stakeholders should have proper instructions and guidelines on how to perform their duties. Unfortunately, in Kenya, there seems to be a communication gap between the administrators and the students that creates unnecessary conflict between them (Karega Mutahi, 2008:21). Although, officially, all schools including schools in Kenya have codes of behaviour, and have very clear boundaries that define appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, methods of maintaining discipline are not always successful. The indiscipline of students is common in most of the schools in Kenya, although the majority of schools manage to keep this within tolerable limits. The school's aim is to civilize students in order for them to be responsible citizens in future. Therefore, teachers must cultivate civility towards students. Globally, the school is an organization of values, and the outcome of the value judgments of the members of staff, when translated, results in the values of the school'

corporate life. In order for the teachers to succeed in cultivating these values in the students, they need good working conditions. Many schools in Kenya lack security and proper working conditions for teachers.

Discipline in Kenyan Secondary Schools

The field of education in Kenya limits personal achievement as a precursor of self-worth and has the perception that students must earn their right to belong. That is, society believes that belonging and self-esteem should be earned through academic or physical achievement, appearance, and other socially valued criteria. This perception causes conflict between the administrators and students on one hand and sometimes between teachers and the administrators as schools are busy competing with each other academically in order to be the best in the national examinations. Most of these schools do not value co-curricular activities. For instance, students at Kahuhia Girls' Secondary School in Muranga County of Central Province boycotted classes and took to the streets when the administrators denied them a chance to hold the co-curricular activities of a beauty contest and roughed up a male teacher who had organized the event (Mwangi 2011:2). This denial of students to exploit their talents frustrates their needs for self-actualization which implies that every person has abilities that warrant specific development within themselves. That means that education should avoid making uniformity for all students the criterion for achievement, as some students are gifted in certain areas and not others.

The climate of a school depends on the nature of personal relationships. These relationships should be founded on self-respect between the headmaster and members of staff, between the head teacher and students, among teachers and among students. That is, everybody in the relationship respects everybody in it. This condition will only be felt if it is first evident among the adults in the school community especially the head teacher and the teachers, since they are the ones who interact with the students in all aspects of school life. Authority in the school should be known to exist as a source of security, encouragement, and motivation and not as a source of resentment and frustration. In addition, schools should have enough instructional materials and provide a comfortable teaching atmosphere for the teachers. Unfortunately, teachers in developing countries such as Kenya, perform their duties under unfavourable working conditions. For example, they live in poor housing conditions; there is limited transportation, electricity, healthcare, and other essential facilities, especially in rural public secondary schools. Sometimes, they lack helpfulness, friendliness, love, trust, recognition, and respect from the head teachers especially if they are seen as a threat because of their academic qualifications. Their salaries are very low and they enjoy limited fringe benefits that make them threaten to go on strike every now and then. As a result, they transfer these frustrations to their students who in turn transfer them to the administrators such as the school head teachers or school property (Bell and Stub, 1968: 269).

Since students do not have an effective forum to air their grievances, they take revenge on the wrong targets and the consequences are sometimes very disastrous. For example, on October 18th 2010, form one students burnt down a dormitory of Endarasha Boys' High School citing unhappiness with the administration. Two students were burnt beyond recognition (Ngige, 2010:9). On September 14th 2011, a fire razed a dormitory in Kangema High School in Central province and destroyed property worth millions of Shillings. This incident was reportedly prompted by students who were demanding to be allowed to go home following the teachers' one week strike but the administration refused to let them go. In the same month, thirteen students of Good Shepherd Academy, Gilgil, in the Rift Valley Province, were sent home over plans to burn a dormitory.

The students went on the rampage on 28th September, 2011 after the management denied them their mid-term break. In 2016, during second term, students set fire to more than 120 secondary schools across Kenya (Cooper, 2016). These elements of discontent and conflict bear negatively on the teacher's role and the students' achievement.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is the view of psychologists who emphasize that behaviour is learned through experiences with the environment and that cognitive factors influence learning. This is derived from Skinner's theory of behaviourism and operant conditioning. According to Bandura (1991), we learn extensively by observing what others do. Observational learning, also called modelling, is learning that occurs when a person observes and then repeats someone else's behaviour. Many of our successful adjustments involve our exposure to competent models who display appropriate behaviour in solving problems and coping with the world.

As students grow up, they observe countless numbers of models such as parents, teachers, friends, and people on television who engage in many different types of behaviour. In adult life, they continue to be exposed to many different models, some serving as positive models of adjustment, others as negative ones. Bandura and Walters (1963) stress the mechanism of imitation and explain that children acquire a great deal of knowledge about how things are done in the world by watching the behaviour of other people and matching it. For example, parents and their children are remarkably similar in the values and attitudes they hold and in the mannerisms and behaviour they display. Social learning theorists argue that while some of these things are consciously taught, others are learned by the child simply through the process of observation. According to Bandura and Walters (1963), and Bandura, (1991), aggression is not inborn (innate). It is learnt through imitation of social models and other forms of social behavior as well as constructive ways of dealing with conflict. According to Sandy (2006), the ability to imitate another's behaviour depends on the characteristics of the model, the attention of the observers, memory processes, and the behavioural capabilities. The behaviour being imitated must be attractive to the observers.

Students in schools have been exposed to many models in families, schools, communities, and the media. Furthermore, the adolescent age is the period when they are trying to discover their biological and physical developments, and the type of personalities they would like to be in future. Hence, since adolescence is a sensitive stage of development for the youth, the psychosocial environment is very important for these students. The psychosocial environment comprises factors such as values, motivation, preferences, and conditioning history. Some of these students have been exposed to poor models in the media, and community. Therefore, the negative learned behaviour might be the source of conflict as these students try to assert their behaviour and personality on other students. Nasibi (2006; Graca, 1996; Lincoln, 2002) support the same view that understanding adolescent personality development is important in assessing any threat made by someone in that age group. At this age, an adolescent's personality is not yet crystallized - it is still developing. During adolescence, young people are likely to explore or engage in what adults perceive as strange behaviour. Adolescents struggle with vulnerability and acceptance, with questions of independence and dependence, with how to deal with authority among other difficult issues. According to 1999 Institute of Medicines (IOM) Report on Adolescents, in O'Toole (2002:11), violent criminal activity generally peaks between the ages of 15-17.

Objectives

The primary goal of the study was to establish student and teacher's objectives on disciplinary problems in Kenyan's schools. The specific objectives sought to:

- Investigate students, head-teachers and counsellors views on disciplinary problems in Kenya's secondary schools.
- Establish the nature of disciplinary problems in different categories of secondary schools.
- Examine the nature of disciplinary problems in secondary schools based on gender.

Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design with a mixed methods approach. Data was collected and analysed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. Random and purposive techniques were used to select respondents. Six hundred and forty nine (649) students were selected from four (4) provinces of Kenya out of eight (8). The student age ranged from fourteen (14) to eighteen (18) years. Sixteen (16) headteachers and sixteen (16) teacher counsellors were purposely selected. The study used questionnaires and interviews to collect data from the participants. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies, means, cross-tabulation, and chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first objective sought to investigate students, head teachers and counsellor's views on disciplinary problems in Kenya's secondary schools as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Head Teacher's and Counsellor's Perspective on Theft Cases in Schools

| Do Students in Your School Steal from One Another? | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 13 | 92.90% |
| No | 1 | 7.10% |
| Total | 14 | 100% |

The analysis presented in Table 1 shows that most of the head teachers (92.9%) indicated that there was theft in their schools, while 7.1% indicated that there were no cases of theft in their schools. Similarly, all the guidance and counseling officers (100%) indicated that theft was common in their schools. The study deduces that theft is a common misdeed in secondary schools.

Table2: Involvement in Destruction of School Property by Students: Students' Perspective

| Nature of School | Boys Boarding | | Girls Boarding | | Mixed Boarding | | | | Mixed Day and Boarding | | | |
|------------------|---------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Male | | Females | | Male | | Female | |
| Responses | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Yes | 17 | 11.0 | 13 | 7.3 | 13 | 14.3 | 5 | 10.2 | 9 | 9.1 | 2 | 2.7 |
| No | 137 | 89.0 | 164 | 92.7 | 78 | 85.7 | 44 | 89.8 | 90 | 90.9 | 71 | 97.3 |
| Total | 154 | 100 | 177 | 100 | 91 | 100 | 49 | 100 | 99 | 100 | 73 | 100 |

The analysis presented in Table 2 indicates the following: 17 (11%) of the students in Boys Boarding Schools had been involved in the destruction of schools property; 13 (7.3%) in Girls Boarding Schools, more boys 13 (14.3%) than girls 5 (10.2%). In Mixed Boarding Schools and Mixed Day and Boarding Schools, 9 (9.1%) boys and 2 (2.7%) girls had destroyed property. This shows that more boys than girls destroy school property. Most of the boys who destroy school property are from Mixed Boarding Schools.

Table 3: Overall Disciplinary Problems in Schools - Students' Perspective

| Nature of School | Boys Boarding | | Girls Boarding | | Mixed Boarding | | | | Mixed Day and Boarding | | | | Average | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|----------------|------|----------------|------|---------|------|------------------------|------|--------|------|---------|------|
| | Male | | Female | | Male | | Females | | Male | | Female | | F | M |
| Responses | N | Mean | N | Mean | N | Mean | N | Mean | N | Mean | N | Mean | | |
| Threats | 150 | 2.39 | 176 | 2.16 | 91 | 2.24 | 48 | 1.85 | 96 | 2.47 | 71 | 2.14 | 2.05 | 2.36 |
| Rumours | 146 | 2.71 | 177 | 3.05 | 91 | 2.59 | 49 | 2.86 | 95 | 2.66 | 71 | 2.61 | 2.84 | 2.65 |
| Verbal fighting | 148 | 2.50 | 176 | 2.41 | 90 | 2.34 | 49 | 2.35 | 97 | 2.52 | 70 | 2.13 | 2.29 | 2.45 |
| Physical fighting | 146 | 2.30 | 177 | 1.77 | 90 | 2.33 | 49 | 2.24 | 97 | 2.38 | 70 | 1.86 | 1.95 | 2.33 |
| Isolation by peers | 148 | 2.21 | 174 | 2.55 | 89 | 2.34 | 48 | 2.54 | 95 | 2.54 | 71 | 2.31 | 2.46 | 2.36 |
| Theft | 146 | 3.23 | 177 | 3.18 | 90 | 2.69 | 49 | 3.20 | 97 | 3.36 | 72 | 3.07 | 3.15 | 3.09 |
| Teasing/insults | 149 | 2.83 | 177 | 2.80 | 89 | 2.33 | 49 | 2.88 | 97 | 2.77 | 71 | 2.61 | 2.76 | 2.64 |
| Rudeness | 144 | 2.71 | 177 | 2.82 | 90 | 2.63 | 47 | 2.96 | 96 | 2.71 | 72 | 2.50 | 2.76 | 2.68 |
| Peer pressure | 146 | 2.76 | 177 | 2.76 | 89 | 2.81 | 48 | 3.10 | 94 | 2.84 | 71 | 2.62 | 2.82 | 2.80 |

The information contained in Table 3 shows the findings of the most common cases of conflicts in schools. The responses were rated using a Likert scale of five units labelled 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. According to the scale, 1 represented never, 2-rarely, 3-sometimes, 4-often, and 5 very often. The findings show that threats were rarely experienced in schools. They are more common in Boys' Boarding Schools with a mean of 2.39. Most of the respondents rated rumours as a common problem in Girls' Boarding Schools which occurred sometimes (M=3.04). Overall, rumours were rated with a mean of 2.77 as a problem in secondary schools. Verbal fighting was high in Boys' Boarding Schools compared to the rest of schools with a mean of 2.50 and 2.41 in Girls' Boarding Schools. Generally, verbal fighting was rated with a mean of 2.40. This implies that it occurred rarely in schools as a form of conflict. Physical fighting was more prevalent although rarely experienced in Boys Boarding Schools (M=2.30) and Mixed Boarding Schools (M=2.30). The study found that the problem of physical fighting was very minimal in Girls' Boarding Schools compared with the other schools. It had a mean of 1.77. In Girls' Boarding Schools, there were more cases of peer isolation than in the other schools with a mean of 2.55. The findings of this study indicate that theft was a major problem especially in Boys' Boarding Schools (M=3.23) and in Mixed Day and Boarding Schools (M=3.25). The study established that insults/teasing are sometimes a problem in both Boys Boarding Schools (M=2.83) and Girls Boarding Schools (2.80). Rudeness was experienced more in Girls' Boarding Schools. Overall, it was rated with a mean of 2.73 which implies that it was a problem only at times.

This shows that it is not a major problem. The pressure from peers was rated with a mean of 2.80 which indicates that it was a problem experienced in secondary schools.

Objective two sought to examine the nature of disciplinary problems in secondary schools based on gender as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test on the Nature of Disciplinary Complaints by Students Based on Different Categories of Schools

| | Value | df | Sig. (2-Sided) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-----|----------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 165.482 ^a | 165 | .475 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 176.543 | 165 | .255 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .188 | 1 | .665 |
| N of Valid Cases | 641 | | |

The findings contained in Table 4 show the chi-square values for differences in schools was ($\chi^2=165.482$, $df=165$, $p=0.475$). Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, it shows that there was no significant statistical difference in the nature of disciplinary problems experienced in different schools. The problems were the same in all the schools. These were threats, verbal fighting, theft, insults, peer pressures, rudeness and isolation from peers.

Objective three sought to examine the nature of disciplinary problems in secondary schools based on gender as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test on the Nature of Disciplinary Problems Based on Gender

| | Value | df | Sig. (2-Sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|----------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 56.673 ^a | 55 | .412 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 68.086 | 55 | .111 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .102 | 1 | .749 |
| N of Valid Cases | 640 | | |

The findings contained in Table 5 show the chi-square test results on the disciplinary problems experienced by boys and girls in schools. The study sought to understand whether there was any significant statistical difference in the disciplinary problems of boys and that of girls. According to the findings, the chi-square values for disciplinary problems between boys and girls was ($\chi^2=56.673$, $df=55$, $p=0.412$). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, then it means that there was no significant statistical difference of the disciplinary problems between and boys and girls. This means that boys and girls had the same disciplinary cases such as verbal fighting, theft, teasing/insults and peer pressure.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The most common types of disciplinary problems are threats, rumours, verbal fighting, physical fighting, peer isolation and insults. Students do not mind punishment which entails teachers explaining the reasons why they punish them, and the students understand the role of punishment in maintaining discipline. The positive attitude of the students towards discipline indicates that the school rules are clear to the students. Students have been taught to accept responsibility for their options and abide by schools' enforcement of a "zero tolerance" policy for violence that results in immediate suspensions or expulsions.

Discipline requires collective responsibility from students, teachers and parents, and all these parties must play their roles effectively.

The study recommends that teachers should involve students in conflict resolution. Students have more information on the causes of conflict and can play an important role in coming up with solutions to the problems they encounter. If students are given opportunities to air their views on issues affecting their schools, they become cooperative during resolution of crises.

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