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VOICES FROM THE STUDENTS: DISSATISFACTION AND VIOLENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Specifically, the paper sought to establish how aspects such as parenting, school management and administration, students' behavior and peer pressure influence arson attacks in secondary schools in Kenya.

Purpose: The paper was to establish factors influencing dissatisfaction and violence caused by students' voices in Kenyan secondary schools.

Methodology: Documentary analysis was done on scholarly studies done during a similar scenario in their schools.

Results: The parenting style adopted by the parents also play an important part in how the child adapts to the school environment. Students serve as important sources of information that otherwise are not available regarding implementation and experiences of educational change.

Conclusion: It is important to allow the students to contribute to educational issues.

Suggestions: Often student input can lead to an increased focus on improving school climate, such as improvements in advisory period structures and life skill curricula (Fielding, 2001). Students' voice can also influence teacher training, and ongoing staff development. When teachers and teachers-to-be learn how to listen to their students, teachers begin to remove the stereotypes and labels that can be so easily attached to students.

Keywords: Unruly behavior, Discipline, Violence, Dissatisfaction.



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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This analysis was done in order to help curb the ongoing students' unrest and the burning of school property in secondary boarding schools. With the emergence of the need to present opinions, ideas, and views, students usually engage in unruly behavior aimed at seeking attention from the management to listen to them. Some of the commonly known students' malpractices aimed at venting grievances include; vandalism, unrests, arson attacks, and damage of property.

INTRODUCTION

In their study that sought to find out "fire-setting" behavior. Burton, McNiell and Binder (2012) defined arson as a criminal offense where one deliberately sets on fire or sets practices of burning property or a building belonging to another. According to the National Fire Protection Association, arson cases contributed to a loss of property worth \$729 million in 2014 compared to \$663 million which was up 10% lower in 2013. Juvenile aged 18 years and less accounted for 27.9% of those arrested in America for committing arson related crimes in 2013 (Federal Bureau of Investigation National Office, 2015). The U.S department of Justice observed that arson cases involving adolescents involve elements of curiosity, low level of intent, or maliciously using fire as a weapon to instill fear (U.S Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011).

Juvenile in England, as opposed to United States engage in a few arson attacks because of strict rules and regulations governing the conduct of juveniles. Kocsis (2002), reporting for the Australian Institute of Criminology observes that arson attacks in schools in developed countries are lower compared to cases reported in developing countries because of structured guidelines set to regulated behaviors in the former compared to the latter.

Regionally, South African arson cases involving juvenile were higher as compared to related cases in developed economies. In East Africa, arson cases have been on the increase especially in the wake of the 21st century. In recent cases of arson attacks in schools were experienced in Uganda, Masaka school went ablaze in 2012 killing 5 students and leaving more than 50 foreign students stranded (Jjingo, 2012). Closer home, in Moduli district in Tanzania, more than 100 students of Lowasa secondary school escaped death by a whisker after their hostel burnt, destroying property of unknown estimate value. In Kenya a dormitory in Bombolulu girls went on fire in 1998 that killed 26 girls who were asleep at the time the fire started

(Kasami, 2016). A commission of inquiry that was set up revealed that the cause of the fire was electricity fault; however, there were allegations that the fire was intentionally started. In 2010, students of Endarasha Boys Secondary School consciously set their school dormitory on fire killing two students who failed to escape because the dorm was locked from the outside.

After releasing the 2015 KCSE National Examination Results, the Cabinet Secretary of Education Science and Technology, Dr. Fred Matiang'i cancelled the results of more than 7000 secondary and primary students. This prompted the ministry and other stakeholders to come up with policies that would curb the increased cases of exam cheating. The announcement of the new rules and policies rolled down in the month of May 2016 triggered a series of arson attacks in schools with the first case experienced a few weeks later when students of Itierio Boys High school in Kisii County torched their school. This happened because students alleged to have been denied a chance to watch premier league football matches (Akoko, 2017).

STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

Discipline is important for order and realization of set goals in any school. Parenting plays a significant role in student's behavior and discipline. Children in both rural and urban settings expects parents to adequately provide material, financial, guidance, opportunities affectionate and corrective support in their daily activities. When this is done to the satisfaction of the child, a feeling of satisfaction is developed within the child.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To contribute the right strategy in curbing student strikes in secondary schools in Kenya.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is causing strikes in schools?

REPORTS

Perspectives on Voices from students

Students target their schools because their grievances tend to be school-based. The most commonly cited complaints among students include principals' overly authoritarian, "highhanded" and unaccountable styles of management, poor quality school diets and inadequate learning resources, including teaching. Many of these criticisms reflect suspicions about how school budgets are being allocated.

The overwhelming majority of school arson cases have occurred in boarding schools across the country, including boys' schools, girls' schools, and mixed schools. Schools that perform well and those that perform more poorly on national examinations have all been affected.

Why are boarding schools such common targets?

Some of this is explained by prevalence: nearly 80% of Kenya's secondary schools are boarding schools. However, students explain that boarding schools are targeted because life for them in these schools is very harsh (Cooper, 2014).

The boarding school, like prison, can be considered a "total institution". This idea refers to a situation where all aspects of life occur in the same place, with the same cohort and according to a stringent schedule. This regime is enforced by a single authority according to an overarching "rational" plan. In practice, boarding school life is often experienced by students as excessively rigid and authoritarian.

The majority of school fires are set in students' dormitories, thereby also destroying students' own personal belongings (Cooper, 2014). The rationale given by students is that the destruction of their dorms means that they will be sent home and given some respite from their intensive boarding school lifestyles. Kenyan students have learned that arson works as a tactic to express dissatisfaction and opposition. To change this lesson, the government needs to open peaceful and effective channels for

young people's perspectives to be taken into account, both in education and government. Otherwise, we can likely expect more fires in future.

Are parents failing in terms of students' discipline? Can this influence the arson attacks in Kenyan Secondary schools?

It is quite shocking and heart-wrenching that students were busted in Sam's Discotheque in Eldoret where 500 underage revelers were arrested. The incident is an embarrassment to all parents and the nation as a whole. The blame has been shifted to the police for having slept on the job. But before pointing fingers at police officers, it is crucial and equally vital we ask these questions: Who are these minors? Do they have parents? Were their parents aware of their whereabouts? Since when did parental responsibility shift to police officers?

However, I presume that the owner of the club is also a parent and some of the employees there are also parents. That they allowed in minors so that they can reap profits from them is irresponsibility of the highest order. Parents no longer guide their children and no longer discipline them. Worse still, parents fear their children nowadays to the extent that when they are away from home, they feel a sigh of relief.

There are two primary schools of thought regarding parenting- modern and traditional parenting. Traditional parenting is rooted in an archaic and authoritarian style of parenting. It is a parental understanding and responsibility observed from previous generations. Traditional parenting focuses on raising children to become responsible and functional adults who positively contribute to society and their families. The philosophy of traditional parenting is to be affectionate and loving towards their children while having a sense of power over them to ensure obedience and responsibility. Traditional parenting has a lot more restrictions and boundaries over their children. As a result, they tend to say no to a lot more than modern parenting.

Unlike traditional parenting, where a child “belonged to the society” when it comes to discipline, in modern parenting, a child belongs to the family or the parents. The modern parents are not taking collective responsibility for all children in the society. Therefore, they are only linked to their own kids such that they have a negative perception when another parent or even a teacher punishes the child. Thus, the parents tend to defend their children in even when the student deserves a severe punishment. This in turn, affects the discipline of students in school.

When the modern parenting route is taken, parents often misunderstand the balance of discipline and the difference between being involved in their kids’ life and being too involved. As a result, modern parenting leads to a rather permissive style of parenting (Watabe and Hibbard, 2014). Permissive parenting usually occurs because one or both parents were raised in a traditional and rather strict environment and vowed not to expose their children to the same environment. Unfortunately, this leads to a different extreme, and children are allowed to do anything. Permissive parenting usually creates somewhat spoiled children who cannot deal with a scenario where they’re denied something. In turn, this can lead to many tantrums and worse. Thus, parents become slaves to the child, where the child is the one in control rather than the parents. With this mentality in mind, the students go back to school, and they think that they have the right to control everything in school, which may result in emotional imbalance.

This results to violence and dissatisfaction among the students hence causing the students to be uncontrollable by the school administration. The school also puts strict policy measures to control the students’ misconduct and through this, students make efforts of striking and burning schools to interrupt with the strict school rules and regulations.

It is apparent that indiscipline in students is a worldwide problem and that parents have an important role to play in the discipline of their children. The parenting style adopted by the parents

also play an important part in how the child adapts to the school environment. The question, “Does the parent’s behavior and parenting style affect the behavior of their child in school?” needs to be addressed. It is important therefore to study the role of the parents in resolving discipline problems of the secondary school students.

Discipline is important for order and realization of set goals in any school. Parenting plays a significant role in student’s behavior and discipline. Children in both rural and urban settings expects parents to adequately provide material, financial, guidance, opportunities affectionate and corrective support in their daily activities. When this is done to the satisfaction of the child, a feeling of satisfaction is developed within the child. However, any mismatch between the said provisions and a child’s expectations cause dissatisfaction that affect children-parents’ relationship. However, due to changing demands concerning cost of living and societal expectations, a remarkable shift can be noted on the amount of time children spend with their parents. This in turn affects parents’ ability to control and supervise students’ activities. In addition, this has affected parents’ ability to engage in activities with their children which in turn has affected level of parent-child relationship, bonding, and parent’s knowledge of children’s behaviour (Devine, Ho & Wilson 2000).

A number of indiscipline cases among children could be attributed to absent parents who abdicated their parental responsibilities to house helps. Hence, children lacked adequate parental guidance in their character formation. Kabiru (2006) emphasizes the need for parents to instill discipline in their children at the family level. He observes that parents contribute to children’s indiscipline in many ways; by being bad role models and by avoiding parental responsibilities such as teaching their children good behaviour.

Parenting, the world over, has a great impact on the child right from birth. Social development is the process whereby children acquired their social

roles, values and behaviors. The process of social development relies heavily upon the influence of the environment. Parents, peers, teachers and others, exert an undeniable impact upon the growing child. The process of this interaction process is the multifaceted behavior repertoire referred to as personality

Correct discipline stated that influences in the development of good character should be taught early in life and continued throughout life. As a child grows, he will acquire the behavioral principles in all areas of life which helped him face the responsibilities and crisis that life brought to him. Wanja (2014) gives the following variables as determining the current characteristics of the growing lack of discipline:

1. **The social cultural context** – society was moved by rapid change and social disorganization, violence and insecurity which affect young children.
2. **Family** – family problems were on the increase; separation, divorce, indifference and lack of care for the education of the children.
3. **Models** – the bad examples given by adults, parents and friends, often with serious problems and antisocial behaviors of their own, disturbed children.
4. **Methodology** – methods used in disciplining children were often inadequate due to improvisation and lack of objectives. These confused children.
5. **Interpersonal communication** – family communication had deteriorated and there was lack of sincere dialogue, poor information and little desire to listen.
6. **The media** – messages from advertising and other forms of mass communication promoted hedonism, consumerism and materialism and trapped many young people.
7. **Faulty extremes in disciplines** – excessive control, inadequate supervision and complete permissiveness, without correct

norms or principles, tended to disorient children.

KEY POLICY GUIDELINES ON STUDENT EMPOWERMENT: POLICY FEEDBACK.

According to the Education Act of 2001 chapter 211, Section 56 on education regulations, the teacher is responsible for management of students' discipline by formulating rules and regulations that govern the conduct of learners (Government of Kenya 2001). The constitution of Kenya under the Education Act, provides a legal framework within which the head teacher and students should follow with regard to disciplinary matters. For instance, the procedure to be followed by head teachers before suspending a student in a public school. As that is not enough, the Basic Education Act of 2013 empower the cabinet secretary of education science and technology to formulate policies that seek to enhance discipline among students.

After the enactment of the education act of 2001, which provided for the rights of children against corporal punishment, the ministry of education science and technology banned the use of corporal punishment to regulate behavior in schools. School heads and their management were limited in the way they managed the affairs of students in school thereby prompting students to engage in indiscipline cases, which were aimed at destroying school infrastructural development belonging to the Ministry of Education. Cases of school unrests, drug and substance abuse among other juvenile vices have been on the increase since then because lack of effective disciplinary measures to regulate behavior. Kenyan system of education works in such a way that it favors students who performed highly in national examinations thereby forcing students to use any means possible including cheating to pass examinations. High cost of living that has seen parents pay high school fees including other costs to fund learning of students makes them to exert pressure to the children to pass examinations.

The wake of the 21st century has seen many students access information via the social media and through television sets installed in their schools. Such accessibility to information enhances aggressive behavior among learners, which makes them engage in violent crimes. In a move to curb increased cases of examination cheating, the cabinet secretary of education science and technology unveiled strict rules, which triggered an increase in the arson attacks in boarding secondary schools.

EFFECTS OF STUDENTS' VOICES ON SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.

Students have the greatest stake in their education but little to no say in how it is delivered. This lack of agency represents a lost opportunity to accelerate learning and prepare students for a world in which taking initiative and learning new skills are increasingly paramount to success. In particular, young people often are willing to raise issues that adults might not see or avoid. Students not succeeding in the current system, including those failing subjects or at risk of dropping out, can offer particularly insightful advice on problems with school structure and culture. Struggling students tend to cite structural and classroom procedures that hamper learning, the lack of opportunities to build caring relationships with adults, and blatant discrimination as being the actual problems (Nieto, 1994). Student voice efforts can lead to increased interest in institutionalizing student input into the decision-making process, including the development of standing committees on curriculum planning, staff development and discipline committees. Involving young people also can improve the quality of implementation of reform efforts.

CONCLUSIONS

Students serve as important sources of information that otherwise are not available regarding implementation and experiences of educational change. Often student input can lead to an increased focus on improving school

climate, such as improvements in advisory period structures and life skill curricula (Fielding, 2004). Students' voice can also influence teacher training, and ongoing staff development. Cook-Sather's (2009) research, for example, has examined ways for student voice to inform the practice of teachers in training, including encouraging teachers to rethink who is an authority of educational practice. When teachers and teachers-to-be learn how to listen to their students, teachers begin to remove the stereotypes and labels that can be so easily attached to students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends:

1. It is important that the educationists organize for open forums for the students to discuss with their teachers on the best educational programs and practices in their institutions.
2. Parents should be encouraged to attend workshops to learn more on the best parental styles for their own benefit and that of the community.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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The author has acknowledged all sources under the reference section

Author's BioNote

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Disclaimer statement

This work is my own personal documentary analysis. The title is; Voices from the students. The areas included in the work: introduction, literature review, results, recommendations and conclusion.

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