AN ANALYTICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL LAXITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS’ DISCIPLINE IN NAIVASHA SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents indiscipline is one of the greatest parental concerns especially in Kenya where the belief that parental inheritance should go to good hands. Most of the adolescents discipline has been left in charge of teachers because it is assumed that learners are busy and in safe hands of teachers who are struggling to complete the overload curriculum. Therefore in most cases, the teacher is believed to be in full control of the adolescents' discipline resulting to parental laxity and leiz-vez attitude about their children's whereabouts. Many parents favour boarding schools more where teachers are expected to keep the students occupied and involved in school curricular and co-curricular activities, hence assumption that discipline is fully taken care of. Such expectations are fading away according to studies and experiential examples. The media reports highlight many indiscipline cases leaving no doubt that there is indiscipline among many school adolescents. This study investigated types of indiscipline acts that are associated with parental laxity. The study respondents were head teachers, parents, teachers and secondary school age adolescents from randomly sampled secondary schools.

Key words: Adolescents, indiscipline, school, parental laxity and teachers, children.

(a) 1.0. Introduction

In the recent past, the Kenyan media has highlighted many cases of indiscipline among adolescents and youth who are still part of the learners. This no doubt raises interest within many Kenyans considering that many of these youngsters are in school and need to complete their studies. Completing school curriculum contributes to the successful performance of the learners and even their future careers. When students are influenced by indiscipline acts, they cannot commit their time to their study and thus cannot perform as expected. Students’ unrest and strikes started before independence, (Republic of Kenya, 1999).

According to the same report, ten strikes had taken place between 1960 and 1963, in Nyanza province. These were peaceful class walk-outs and class boycotts. By 1970s, school strikes according to the same report took a violent turn, resulting to destruction of school property. In Western Kenya for example, boys went on strike in 1974 and destroyed property worth Kenya shillings 750,000 because a school generator was malfunctioning. (Republic of Kenya: 1999) In the 1990’s, school unrest and strikes became more violent and destructive to property and human life. Students planned strikes in advance and the teachers found it difficult to contain order in schools and police became a common feature in schools.
The Kenyan system of education has a wide and congested curriculum (Bogonko 1998), such that the content is a problem to complete even for the very serious learners and so is more challenging for a learner whose time is wasted through other irreverent activities. This study investigated types of indiscipline acts that are associated with parental laxity resulting to indiscipline among adolescents in Kenyan secondary schools.

According to child development theorists, adolescents behaviour is an outcome of their upbringing.

Many studies that have been carried out about child upbringing especially in developed world indicate that the child’s behavior changes as they develop but that their basic behavior is a result mainly of their upbringing. According to McDevit& Ormond (2002), a child builds into what they learned at home. In consent to this (Bogonko 1989) admits that decency in speech and exemplary behaviour are passed onto the child by the parent (Bogonko 1989)

2.1 Statement problem

The greatest challenge to the parents in this century is how to raise responsible and disciplined adolescents amidst changes introduced to the culture through media, western lifestyles like foods, drinks, forms of education, religion and the culture of get-rich quickly syndrome involving corruption in Kenya. It is a challenge for adolescents to get educated and as youth get no gainful employment due to increasing numbers of youth competing for meager opportunities. Those who aspire to get the few employment positions have to work hard throughout their school terms.

Hard work is a requirement for success juxtaposed with the background of adolescents' love for idleness due to the culture of house-helps working in many elites homes. Majority of the adolescents do not like hard work, a requirement for successful academic achievement. The Kenyan education system is examination based at all levels and demands good performance for a hopeful employment. Consequently, education calls for full participation of the learner and total involvement throughout school and even holiday sessions. It becomes a teething problem for a student who gets involved in indiscipline such that his concentration is interfered with.

3.0. The object of the study

The study investigated types of indiscipline acts associated with parental laxity.

4.0. Research question

(b) In order to investigate how parents' laxity contributes to adolescents' indiscipline in secondary schools, in Kenya, the following question was asked:

What indiscipline forms are associated with parental laxity among students in Naivasha sub-county selected high schools?

5.0. The study rationale
The rationale of this study is to elicit information which will be significant in informing the stakeholders on indiscipline forms associated with parental laxity among students in selected schools in Naivasha sub-County?

The findings are expected to be crucial to the school administration in identifying what forms of school indiscipline are related to parental laxity and thus make an effort to give parents an opportunity to take part in their children’s discipline. Other stakeholders namely, religious institution and the ministry of education will benefit from the knowledge while formulating school discipline guidelines.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. DISCIPLINE FROM THE EYE OF THE LAW

The Child’s Act ((2001 Section 13 (1) of the Kenyan law, allows only a parent has a right to instill discipline measures to their children. This contradicts the expectations where a teacher is at the same time expected to be in full control of the adolescents discipline without having any mechanism to enforce it, The Child’s Right Act guards children against physical and psychological abuse. Under this Act, (2001 Section 13 (1) children have plenty of freedom. This is different from the traditional socialization in Africa where a child was not expected to exercise her/his right by appealing against a disciplinary action, (Okumbe 1998). In this new scenario, if teachers physically discipline a child, they are liable to be taken to the court of law by parents or guardians. It is only the parent who has the authority to discipline his/her own child, yet the policy excludes the parents’ role, or is rather unspecific on this within schools setting.

As already noted, in the Kenyan Head’s Manual for secondary schools in Kenya, the head teacher is in charge of discipline, and all serious disciplinary matters should be referred to him (Chap. 5, Section C on School discipline), (ROK, (1980). The BOG and the head teacher with the counsel of Director of education can suspend a student due to indiscipline. Against such background, it is difficult for teachers to fully control adolescents’ discipline. It is parents who have the full responsibility yet the parents are too busy for their children, (ROK 2001).

The Kamunge led committee (ROK 1988), reviewed philosophy, objectives and policies of Kenyan education to ensure their relevance with the changing political- social-economic and cultural demands of the society. Among its several recommendations, was that education should train and develop individuals skills for self-management, self-employment time management and positive attitudes about life, (Republic of Kenya, 1988). This implies that an educated person needs to be self-disciplined through the learning process. Looking at the adolescents’ indiscipline, one asks a very basic question: Is the Kenyan system of education instilling these values to the adolescents? Who is in charge of discipline at school if teachers are limited by law from instill discipline and the parents are too busy to do it?

From a USA/CNN/Gallup Poll, (Brooks & Goldstein 2001) conducted in the United States, majority of the American parents confessed that it was more difficult to raise up good and responsible adolescents than it was two decades ago. This is due to numerous changes which have influenced the child upbringing methods and techniques. In the African traditional setting, children were made to emulate the actions of others to assimilate feelings, morals and ideas of those around them to conclusively acquire the communal identity, (Sifuna 1992).
In Kenya ill behaviour, disrespect of authority, and strikes in secondary schools have been blamed on the moral decadence and decline in values in the society, (ROK 2001), noting also the great influence of external factors on adolescents' discipline. In the view of child upbringing experts like Dobson (2002), a child's upbringing is a very powerful guiding force for an adolescence behaviour molding even in the height of peer pressure. This is because according to McDevit & Ormond (2002), a child builds into what was learned at home.

2.2 Indiscipline in secondary schools
School riots and violence had turned schools into battle fields where teachers had to run for their safety and search for government help to manage school strikes. Several incidents of concern have been reported, for instance in Nyeri district some students planned and locked 4 prefects in their cubicles and burnt them to death while asleep. In a mixed school in Meru district, 19 girls were fatally gang raped in their dormitories by their male colleagues. (Republic of Kenya, 2001). The Former president Hon. Daniel Arap Moi visited the school, terming the incident as national tragedy after which he appointed a committee to investigate causes of students’ unrest strikes and violence (Republic of Kenya 2001). (ROK)

The worst of such strikes and violence took place in a school in Machakos District (Machakos County) in the 1990s where 68 students perished in a strike that involved arson, (ROK, 2001). Due to the magnitude and massive destructions of these violent strikes, the minister for education then appointed a Task force in July 2001 (ROK 2001) to investigate causes of student indiscipline in secondary schools. Guidance and counselors were in-serviced as the government put measures to curb these disturbances but from what is visibly witnessed, student unrest and violent strikes are still taking place.

The strikes and violence after the 2007 general election were the worst in the history of Kenya. Of the 290 secondary schools that were involved in violent strikes, half of the number was burnt down, destroying school property worth millions of shillings. Due to the great concern that gripped the whole nation, President Kibaki directed the ministry of education, Boards of governors of schools, and Parents’ teachers Associations to work closely together, involving students to bring down the secondary schools indiscipline (The Nation reporter, 2008) now cabinet moves to end school riots: Daily Nation 1st August 19, 2008 pg.1 column 2-5). In the same directive, parents were to pay for the school damage as they were to blame for their children's actions. This is evidence that secondary school indiscipline has been an issue of great concern to all stake holders including the country’s leadership.

2.3 Parental involvement in secondary schools
Almost all schools have visiting days when the parents come to school to see their children instead of the latter going home. These are appropriate days for teachers and parents to share information concerning individual students' discipline profile. Unfortunately such days are usually packed with discussions on school development with priority given to improvement of facilities and academic standards and other financial responsibilities, sideling discipline matters.

According to parliamentary committee on education and investigation of strikes and unrests in secondary school, (ROK, 2008) students are exempted from the venue where teachers and parents discuss, the major issues concerning them. Such days are essential for teacher-parent partnership in discussing discipline as well as student academic progress. Discipline is however assumed to be a minor issue while academic performance is prioritized because parents
argue that academic performance determines career and the future of their children. Therefore parents’ days are not devoted for students’ discipline as would be thought, (Republic of Kenya, 2008). This leaves teachers to be the overall in charge of discipline, yet legally they are limited. This causes disparities in the discipline of the adolescents.

2.4 Education and discipline in Kenya

Brown and Hiskett (1979) observe that emphasis on traditional education was placed on life skills whose major focus was to orient the adolescents to the accepted standards and beliefs governing correct behavior that would make an individual a productive member of society. The 8-4-4 curriculum is overloaded, is individualistic and emphasizes grades leading to aspiration of white collar jobs but relegates subjects that instill moral values (Bogonko, 1998).

The Commission (ROK 1991), also states that one of the objective of education is to develop an individual to fit well in their society and to grow to mental capacity to effectively contribute to the social-economic development of his nation.

2.5 Parenting styles

Parents’ upbringing style is important for the outcome of an individuals’ behaviour. In the family setting, a child is expected to learn behaviours that are beneficial to the person during the rest of their lives as has been noted earlier. Upbringing varies from family to family and depicting cultural differences but basically the major techniques of child rearing are meant to instill socially accepted behaviour. Epstein & Sheldon (2002) present different parenting styles, some of which are more effective than others in molding the behaviour of the young.

Ryan, Stiller, Lynch, (1994), and Bowlby, (1982, 1973) in Ormond & Dewitt (2002) observe that children gain experience with their primary care-givers, the parents in this case. Children begin to form an internal understanding or mental representation of what relationships with other people are usually like.

Elicker, Engund&Stroufe, (1992) in Ormond and MacDevitt (2002) note that influence of peers, become increasingly important as children grow and develop, not necessarily replacing parents’ influence but constantly influencing their choice of dress, music, and their leisure time management. According to the above named scholars, parental influence consistently remains a strong source of support and guiding the adolescent in upholding core values. They further observe that how a child was guided and disciplined becomes the cornerstone in how they display themselves even at crossroads of other challenges in life. In this perspective a child who had constant positive role models at the home setting will display the same even at school environment and will avoid negative influence from the peers. In Kenyan situation, such an adolescent will be expected to dialogue with teachers instead of burning or destroying property.

On the basis of the home relationship, the youngsters understand the typical relationship to form with other individuals, particularly with other adults, such as teachers. Ryan et al (1994) further observe that early attachment of the young within the family provides security which is associated with positive long-term behaviour outcomes. A student who relates well with his parents and has respect for them, will very much avoid confrontation with a teacher at school because he has internalized positive ways of relating with adults and adolescents as prepared by home experience. Ryan et al (1994).
Positive role models at an early age of a child remain a child’s strongest influence even beyond adolescents. Ormrod, as noted in (Bandura 1986) Parents in this case are viewed as powerful role models indirectly communicating messages of appropriate behaviour through the actions they exhibit. In addition he notes, children have a capacity for imitation of what they observe, attend closely to what is said and done by other people.

2.6 Theoretical framework

The study was guided by a sociological theory of socialization whose proponent is George Mead (Ballantine & Hammack 2008) Mead’s theory adapts a model for individual development of personality which begins at an age where a child interacts with their first care taker. The theory suggests that individual behaviour and attitude to life are formed at the family base at the child's early life.

According to Mead, the child becomes aware of other people and tries to mimic those significant to him/her. In the relevance of this study, this is when the child learns love, attitudes, knowledge, language and behaviour from the earliest caretakers, within the family. The child's first stage of personality formation is called preparatory stage in which a child observes their surroundings and innocently mimics what they see and hear.

Mead refers to his second model of child development as the play stage at which a child acts what they see within their environment. At this stage, children will act their parents talk, fight with a spouse or act a doctor who treats them. At this stage a child may learn language and attitude or even copy habits and beliefs that are long lasting.

The Game is Mead's third model of a child's development. The model stage is referred to as the game stage. Mead takes the word game symbolically to mean the world and the people a child interacts with. In this case the child takes the world as a game which has rules to go by and learns to deal with those they interact with by applying the rules of their upbringing to those they interact with. If a child was exposed to negative observations and practices, they will use them as this is what they learned at their basic stage of life. The theory in relation to the study implies that a negative upbringing results to an individual whose behaviour is unacceptable to the society.

In supporting the same concept, Kendall (2001) observes that socialization is essential for the survival of society and that the kind of a person we become depends significantly on the particular and social group that surrounds us at birth and during early childhood. (Bandura & Walters1965) in agreement with the foregoing argue that a child primarily learns from his environment in the course of interacting and observing others. In this concept, if a child had learned acceptable morals, within their home background then it is possible to display the same at his school age and later.

Kibera and Kimukuti (2007) note that exemplary behavior from parents and other grownups contributed significantly to inculcating the required behavior in a growing child. Although this fact is viewed from the traditional upbringing, the fact remains relevant in this age. If an individual was not properly guided, they will be uncooperative within the school setting and are the most likely to participate in violence and other anti-social behaviour when
they are adolescents. (Mc Dewitt & Ormund (2007)) argue that a child’s first life experiences have the strongest influence, on behaviour of an individual even later.

FIGURE 1.1: Conceptual framework in relation to mead’s theory

- Parental nurturing in primary socialization
- Child internalizes parents’ values
- School rules and regulations internalized
- Peer, media, religious & other influences
- Negative behaviour outcome
  - Indiscipline adolescent
  - Socially unacceptable adolescent
- Positive behaviour outcome
  - Disciplined & cooperative adolescent
  - Socially acceptable adolescent
The idea is developed from George Mead’s Theory of personality development and influenced by literature review on child developmental theorists.

Conceptual framework reflects the positive early socialization of the child and which results to an individual who internalizes gradually positive values of his home background and those of other agents that influence a growing child. The child may internalize negative or positive values depending on the parental style of upbringing. If the home background impacted the individual positively, such a person will be a discipline individual but if a child was negatively impacted, they will be indiscipline and with negative behaviour.

3.0 Research method

Descriptive survey design was employed in the study due to its appropriateness in gathering much information from deputy head teachers, parents and students on parental role in school discipline. Naturalistic design helped the researcher study the phenomena as they naturally occur in the field allowing the researcher to describe the state of affairs as they exist and without assuming control over what is happening (Kothari1991).

3.1 Data analysis

The collected data was prepared for analysis by organizing, coding and entering it in the software programme package for social science analysis (SPSS, Version .10). Pie charts, percentages and frequencies were used to represent the data. The quantitative data outcomes from the coded closed-ended items were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Further, the data was interpreted and discussed in relation to the research questions.

3.1 Study findings and recommendations

Summary of responses on forms of indiscipline due to parental laxity

1. Both parents and deputy head teachers were in agreement that there were forms of indiscipline associated with parental laxity.
2. Some forms of students’ indiscipline associated with parental laxity included use of abusive language, being rude to the teachers, and drug and substance use which may lead to students to unrests.
3. Students explained that parents fail in their responsibility in the following: parents failure to provide guidance and counselling to their children, parental negligence, strained teacher-parent relationship and lack of parental role models.

Recommendations to school administration.

1. Ensure full involvement of parents in school planning and decision making to cultivating discipline to the required level.
2. Schools should use participative approach to integrate parents in school community. This approach can reduce significantly most of indiscipline cases among students in public schools.
3. The administration needs to launch through the ministry of education guidance and counselling for teachers and strengthen guidance and counseling departments in their school.
Both parents and deputy head teachers were in agreement that there were forms of indiscipline associated with parental laxity.

**Recommendations to parents**

1. Schools from different local catchments can organize seminars for parents recollections to develop different programs responding to their needs of being and acting as role models among their children.
2. Due to technological advancements adversely affecting the adolescents, behavior characteristics, parents need to be well versed with what occupies their children most of the time.
3. Parents must learn cautiously skills to administer discipline more effectively than the media they are now competing with.
4. Both teachers and parents need to be disciplined in order to discipline children.
5. Parents should think of a better alternative than leave their children to strangers.
6. Parents need to control and monitor their children from early age, and what media programs their children watch and listen to.
7. Parents need to create time to be with their children and also to demonstrate good behavior as role models.

**Recommendation to the ministry of education**

1. Since formal education emphasizes competition and individualistic perception to life, curriculum should emphasize moral aspect, hard work and commitment towards self and positive social activities.
2. The evaluation of an individual should include other measures such as behaviour and not only academic excellence.
3. Formulate a policy where the parent takes more responsibility over their children's indiscipline instead of giving this burden to the teachers.

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