

Research Article

Determinants for Student Violence against School Administration: Implications for Quality Instruction in Kenyan Schools

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of student riots against school administration in Secondary schools in Vihiga County Kenya. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 26 secondary schools used in the study where a total of 156 Form 2 students and 104 C.R.E teachers were used as respondents. Other respondents were curriculum teachers, head-teachers and the sub county Quality Assurance and standards officers in Vihiga County. Data collection instruments included both open and closed ended questionnaire for CRE teachers and Form 2 students. Interview schedules were used for head-teachers, director of studies and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Observation checklist was used to ascertain the type of instructional media in use. Schemes of work were examined to establish the types of teaching methods.

The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was organized into themes. On the other hand quantities data was analyzed and presented in form of distribution tables and pie charts. Findings of the study revealed that most schools experienced both physical and emotional violence. Excessive powers given to prefects brew hatred and contribute to unrest.

Further-more, the study found out that whereas CRE instruction had the capacity to deal with student violence, both students and teachers rank this lowly only focusing on social issues that affect students. The teachers perceived lack the passion and drive to influence the students character formation stood out prominently. This is because they don't realize that through instruction social evils in schools could be addressed.

The study therefore concluded that school administrators live in the past and administer schools with scanty knowledge of the 21st century student they claim to manage. The skills employed to address student grievances are at cross purpose with the aspirations and the youth understanding of the concept of democracy in the school system. It was therefore recommended that although an instructional approach may not be a panacea to dealing with unrest, it provides a long lasting attitudinal and moral paradigm to support the communities from which they sprung that equally have acute moral decadence challenges.

Keywords: Student Violence, Character Formation, School Administration.

Introduction

Students continue molesting, torturing and bullying others in schools despite various government proclamations and edicts. Researchers show that violence has been in existence in schools in Kenya for a long period of time. According to Omari and Mihyo (1991) to many it is easy to attribute the crises to immaturity of students, pubertal rites of passage, conflict of generations epitomized by an unconscious hatred and rejection of authority (the famous Freudian Oedipal Complex) yet all these are an oversimplification of a quite complex phenomenon that teases and frustrates those who attempt to grasp its essence.

Disruptive behaviour in schools such as absenteeism, drug abuse, riots and bullying among others, pose serious risks to the smooth running of the school to the students personal security. According to Bruno (1974), in any disruptive behaviour, there are the rioters and the group representing civil authority. In the riot, the prevailing emotion is anger and the general feeling is often 'Lets get them, let us pay them back'. Students want to punish perceived intimidative school administration for the ills committed to them and teach fellow students for betrayal, especially when a section of the students appear to be used by the school administration.

The nature of disruption changes with the norms of the school and what is expected of pupils. Violence is indeed widespread and remains a serious ethical problem (Lawrence *et al.*, 1985). That is why Spergel (1980) argues that when a child is displaying anti-social behaviour, one cannot just say 'stop', one also has to teach him/her pro-social skills. Thus the curricula that teach non-violent ways of resolving conflict could be a promising and everlasting preventive strategy.

According to Zwier and Vaughan (1984) school environment had a hand in violent behaviour of students. They perceived violence as a natural response to schools that are too large and impersonal. Further-more schools that did not enforce rules fairly and consistently used punitive ways in resolving conflicts and imposed unimaginative and non-meaningful curriculum that also enhanced violence. However they were not specific on the forms of violence that were manifested in such school environment. They also touched on curriculum but in a general way.

Joong (2000) studied school violence and safe school policies in Ontario secondary schools. He performed an exploratory study to examine the current state, causes and effects of school violence, violence prevention programmes and safe school policies in Ontario secondary schools. The study found out that the main causes of violent acts at schools were general put-downs, peer group pressure, frustration and drugs. Both students and teachers claimed that sexual harassment was indeed common.

The study also found out that the ministry's violence-free school policy in (1994) had not been fully implemented in all schools. The study therefore concluded that on-going ministry support for intervention programmes, plus a combined effort by students, parents, teachers' administrators and the police was required to make schools safe for children.

Newson and Newson (1976) on the other hand studied the normality of violence in homes and found that over fifty percent of the parents interviewed smacked their children for disobedience. More boys than girls were punished in this way. They further claimed that perhaps this helps to explain why boys tend to be more physically violent to their colleagues in school. Equally Pizzey (1974) asserts that boys who either witnessed or were targets of violence in the home became aggressive and destructive whereas girls grew more passive and withdrawn. This study found contributed to violence in schools. Bandura (1969) quips that the authority which used harsh physical discipline, tended to make children replicate this behaviour and mete it out to colleagues or to school authority.

The Daily Nation, in its issue of 21 May 2001 examined the chronology of protest and destruction in schools in Kenya. It highlighted that devil worship; homosexuality and drug abuse were rampant in schools in Central province. It therefore asserted that disturbances were caused by students under drug influence or those captivated by external forces as a

result of devil worshipping. Currently, the illuminati phenomena is terrorizing schools although school principals are shy to speak out.

The Provincial Education Board [P.E.B] Central Province [2001] on the other hand, conducted a survey in Nyeri, Nyandarua, Kiambu, Kirinyaga, Muranga, Maragwa and Thika following the stakeholders' concern over increased cases of student unrest in the province. The upshot was that student disturbances were impacting negatively on academic performance. In their report entitled "Report on causes, effects and remedies of indiscipline in secondary schools in Central Province," the document blamed teachers and parents for failing to instil discipline in the learners. The report revealed causes as: political interference and feuds among community members, school boards with vested interest also created chaos as they incited students to riot to achieve their goals.

The report showed that teachers and parents had failed to provide proper guidance. Some parents pampered their children with money and failed to provide proper direction to enable the children lead a disciplined life. Worse, some parents always supported their children even when the latter had made grievous mistakes, in many schools; teachers were unwilling to listen to students' grievances. Corporal punishment was common and elicited antagonism between teachers and students. When the best teachers were transferred and replaced by those rejected elsewhere, students were likely to protest the decision. Some of the cases of unrest cited included Giakanja secondary school in Nyeri, where more than 500 students burnt their Dining Hall, shattered classroom windows. They also invaded surrounding farms, destroyed crops and stole property. Students of Kahuho Mixed Day Secondary School in Kiambu District rioted protesting indecent dressing by a female teacher.

A number of strategies were suggested to remedy the situation, including strengthening guidance and counseling programmes in schools. The teachers were asked to provide role models while head-teachers were told to minimize powers of the prefects. The Sunday Nation issue of 5th August 2001 reported that Kenyatta University Vice-Chancellor George Eshiwani had blamed caning ban for unrest in schools. He therefore asked the ministry to act fast to arrest the situation. In the same newspaper, Andrew Harding, wrote an article titled "Kenyan schools spare the rod". He said that a wave of unrest, arson and anarchy had engulfed Kenya's schools due to the halt in corporal punishment.

Wangai Committee (2001) while investigating student discipline and unrest in secondary schools acknowledged that decay in moral values and norms of the society to a great extent, influenced the behaviour and character of students. The task force revealed that the culture of violence had been introduced and institutionalised in the society. The violence at home, streets and almost everywhere replicated itself in schools since a school was a micro-society. In mixed secondary schools due to moral decay, some teachers were involved in love affairs with their female students which brought about conflict and tension if male student happened to harbour interest in the same girls. It, therefore, recommended that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should appoint teacher-counselors who are responsible and of high integrity for every public school. Little effort has been realized until in 2017, the Ministry of Education has began toying with possibility of employing Chaplains to coordinate spiritual and moral issues in schools.

The Basic Education Act of 2013 provides opportunity for students to elect themselves and participate in decision making process in schools. Although these policy reforms are well intentioned, the power of and influence that students representatives wield in policy-making is

what worries. While some student representatives may view formal representation in governance structure and committees as learning opportunity, rubbing shoulders in “proximity of adult policy makers” activist students may seek more than a voice and rather see as an opportunity to express student power.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design. A total of 26 secondary schools in Vihiga County participated in the study. Teachers who teach Religious Education and form 2 students were involved. Stratified sampling technique was used to ensure all parts of the County are represented. Simple random sampling was used to identify the teachers and students. A total of 104 teachers and 156 students were selected as respondents.

Questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. Out of 104 questionnaires for teachers sent out a total of 85 respondents accepted to participate. This represented a response return rate of 81.7%. For students, all the questionnaires were filled and a total of 100% response rate was achieved. Some teachers indeed declined to participate for fear of victimization from school administration or generally fear to talk about student violence against school administration. This unfortunately was the scenario despite the assurance on confidentiality and that the views given was to be used purely for academic purpose. Data collected was therefore analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings and Discussion

To ascertain the causes of student riots against school administration in Vihiga County CRE teachers and students, were asked to provide information on this social and ethical problem.

Table 1. CRE Teachers Ranking of Causes

No	Statement	Mean	Rank
1	Limited instructional media resources for teaching CRE as a cause of students dots against school administration	7.50	9
2	General inadequate curriculum supervision	6.36	8
3	Rigid school administration on student complaints	2.62	1
4	Ineffective guidance and counseling programmes	3.54	2
5	Lack of corporal punishment	5.38	7
6	Culture of violence in the wider society	5.20	6
7	Failure of school administration to organize talks on social and ethical issues affecting students	4.80	4
8	Poor child rearing patterns in the society	4.46	3
9	Lack of co-operation between home and school	5.10	5

From table 1 above, the teachers ranked rigid school administration on student complaints as the most prominent cause of student violence against school administration. The second ranked cause was ineffective guidance and counseling programmes. The least ranked cause was limited instructional media resources for teaching CRE. The second least ranked cause was general inadequate curriculum supervision. From the findings, it could be discerned that teachers seemed not to see the relationship between instruction and student character formation. From the teachers perspective, violence is not a product of poor teaching and learning conditions rather viewed as a basic welfare problem brought about by the absence of

amenities. This agrees with Aluede (1996), Denga (1982) and Samson (1967) who agrees that deliberate refusal by school administration to grant audience and academic stress precipitates student's violence against school administration in Nigeria. According to Peter and Ebimobowei (2015), students demonstrate over food, religious sentiments, water, light in halls of residence, poor hygienic conditions, frequent harassments, removal of hard working teachers, unconfirmed rumours and insecurity by cultist.

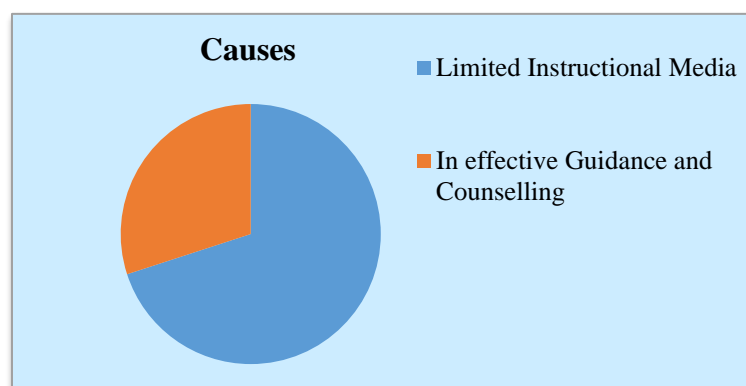


Figure 1. Least ranked causes of student violence in schools

From the teacher's point of view, instructional reasons seldom lead to disaffection among the students. In this case whether the school has adequate instructional resources or not matters life. Sampled teachers, the crop of students in schools today have their own aspirations that must be understood. Solutions that are instructional in nature may not address the challenges of student violence.

Table 2. CRE Students Ranking of causes of Student riots against School Administration

No	Statement	Mean	Rank
1	Limited instructional media resources for teaching C.R.E	7.11	7
2	General inadequate curriculum supervision	5.37	5
3	Rigid school administration on student complaints	1.58	1
4	Ineffective guidance and counseling programmes	3.14	3
5	Lack of corporal punishment	5.18	4
6	Culture of violence in the wider society	5.67	6
7	Failure of school administration to organize talks on social and ethical issues affecting students	2.09	2
8	Poor child rearing patterns in the society	7.16	8
9	Lack of co-operation between home and school	75.8	9

Analysis of table 2, reveals that students regarded rigid school administration on student complaints as the most serious cause for student riots against school administration. The second ranked factor was failure of school administration to organize talks on social and ethical issues that affected students. On the other hand students did not see any relationship between home and school to influence their conflicts with school administration. Therefore, they ranked lack of co-operation between home and school, last. This is further demonstrated graphically below:

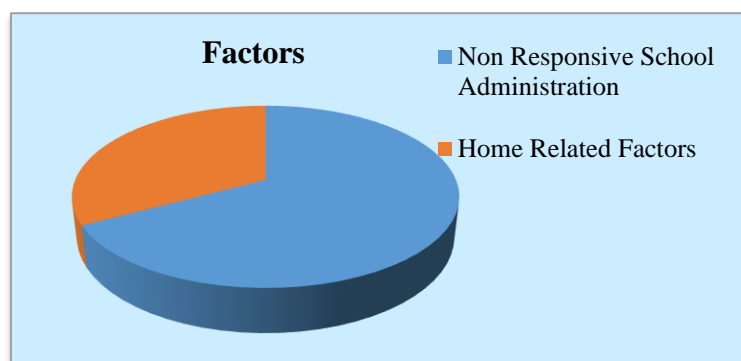


Figure 2. Students views on causes of riots against School Administration

Students in schools should be made to participate in school issue that affects them. This gives a sense of belongings as opined by Adesanya (1989). Findings from tables 1 and 2 above revealed that there was a strong relationship between the type of school administration and levels of violence. Both students and teachers ranked rigid school administration as the most prominent cause.

Instruction-related causes were not viewed as significant in terms of frequency and seriousness of these riots. The impact of rigid school administration means that students in Vihiga do not have room to express their feelings. When there are strict rules then there are chances that students may react violently. But interestingly as much as student demands are met, the threshold keeps rising and ultimately a mismatch widens without the notice of school managers. This leads to an inevitable violent explosion in form of school riots, fires and destruction of school property.

Conclusion

However much the reasons for protests may appear valid to protestors, protests and violence never create heroes or winners. All those involved and affected unfortunately turn to become villains. This is because there is psychological devastation and trauma, malicious destruction and vandalism in the school. Parents incur extra cost and unfortunately schools end up graduating half-baked morons at secondary school level who are academically and morally weak and of undesirable character.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusion above, the study makes the following recommendations for schools in Kenya, generally and Vihiga County in particular. These concerns both policy as well as practice

- i) Efforts should be made to have flexible and student-friendly administration that is conscious of learners needs. Where possible class teachers under the guidance of school Principals should organize for a face - to - face between students and teachers.
- ii) Prefects' excesses ought to be checked because they expose themselves to unforeseen harm from fellow students. The worst are those perceived to be close to school administration. The Basic Education Act 2013 grants some rights to students in the overall school decision making process. Irrespective of the rationale for such policy, careful consideration of immediate and long term implications and weighing the context of its application.
- iii) Schools in Kenya should adopt and domesticate Griffins Starehe School parliament approach in dealing with student discipline where students are involved in the administration and selection of school prefects. This of course will succeed if reflective paradigms in

management are employed. Although this is already in practice in many schools, its implementation more often than not contributes to friction and discontent.

Conflicts of interest: There is no conflict of interest of any kind.

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