



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH
(Scholarly Peer Review Publishing System)

STUDENTS' INDISCIPLINE: A REFLECTION ON THE CAUSES OF MISBEHAVIOR AMONG LEARNERS IN KENYAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The issue of learners' misbehavior in the school environment has evoked concerns among key stakeholders in education provision worldwide. The purpose of this study was to identify the main causes of misbehavior among learners. The specific objectives of the study were; determine common indiscipline cases in schools, identify the causes of learners' misbehavior according to the school administrators, seek from teachers why learners misbehavior and determine from causes of indiscipline as per the student leaders. The respondents of the study were; school administrators, teachers and student leaders. The study revealed that; the common indiscipline cases in schools are; sneaking out of the school compound, drug abuse, thefts and vernacular speaking. The study further found that the main causes of student indiscipline in the schools are; over-protective guardians, peer pressure, inconsistency of punishments, poor parental care drug abuse, and drug abuse. The study recommends that; the main stakeholders in schools should in a participatory approach probe into the root causes of identified students' indiscipline in schools with an aim to reverse the trends

Key Words: learners' misbehavior, causes of misbehavior, student leaders

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A fundamental issue when attempting to probe indiscipline amongst learners is to understand its cause. When addressing the issue of indiscipline in schools, one should be cautious because, the symptoms of indiscipline in schools are easily recognizable, but the causes are more subtle (Beebejaun-Muslum, 2014; Mariene, 2012; and Ozigi, 1978) hence, they give example of symptoms of indiscipline as; pupil's demonstration (peaceful or violent), general unrest, mass disobedience, deliberate breaches of school rules, drug use, delinquency, drunkenness, stealing, truancy, absenteeism, persistent lateness, bullying or laziness. On the other hand, he says that there are many causes of indiscipline, including such factors as bad and inadequate food, ineffective teaching, bad staff behavior, authoritarian methods of administration, harsh school rules, the influence of home or society, harshness of school prefects, unsatisfactory curricula, poor examination results or poor communication between the school administration staff and pupils. Onyechi and Okere (2007), Okinda et al (1995) assert that indiscipline in schools can be caused by: negative teachers, parents who are unable to bear the burden of school fees, politicians who may want heads whom they can control and manipulate, lazy and incompetent heads, Weak heads who try to please students at the expense of other teachers, and negative influence by other students.

The above causes of indiscipline have somehow been summarized by Mohapi (2013) and Tabitha (1986) indiscipline of students has causes that exist in schools, in the society and in the psychological state of student. One would therefore say that indiscipline amongst learners has a multiplicity of causes that emanate from the environment i.e. Society and school where the learner was brought-up and is studying respectively, which ultimately influence the psychological state of the learner negatively. According to Beebejaun-Muslum (2014) and Farrant (1980) environment like the blacksmith's forge, tempers and alters our natural characteristics,

environment moulds and alters us according to the treatment given. A Conclusive fact would therefore be that student's indiscipline is a manifestation of what is happening in the school and society at large yet unfortunately they have little control over this.

Different scholars concur that it is difficult to quantify the degree of contribution of the school and society in inculcating discipline or otherwise indiscipline to the learner. However, it's apparent that the school plays a critical role in educating (facilitating acquisition and development of desired knowledge, skills and attitudes) to the learner through the school curriculum. In the school context the Head Teachers Manual (1975) emphasis is made very clear that the Head bears the ultimate responsibility for all school discipline.

As the Heads Manual put it, the head teacher is responsible for school discipline because the smooth running of a disciplinary system depends on a well-defined basic policy established by the head in the consultation with the staff. This policy must be enforced fairly and consistency by all persons in authority. To this extent, a head teacher becomes a cause of indiscipline if he or she is ineffective in his or her entire leadership and managerial roles. Ndakwa (2013) and Bruce & Shelley (1971) document that, factors often pointed as causing school discipline problems are arbitrarily imposed authoritarian methods, disorderly classrooms, and in decisiveness or favourism and unfairness on the part of the school staff members.

A head teacher who fails to consult intensively at different levels and forums with his or her student, staff, guardians, PTA, and BOG on the establishment and enforcement of school rules and regulations will be promoting indiscipline in the school. Olembo and Cameron (1986) stress that, the head teacher must realize that his school is a social institution where both teachers and students interact for special purposes. For these purposes and objectives to be realized, there is need for some restrictions. The head teacher must determine and administer together with students and teachers the policies, restrictions and discipline. The participation of all stakeholders is essential. On their part, Okinda and Owuor (1995) note down that many head teachers make a crucial error in that they ignore their juniors and only pay homage to the senior officer, they forget that success will depend on the support of others; teachers, students, parents, the community, Ministry officials and the subordinate staff. Indeed, Ochieng' (1997) acknowledges and advices that the successful functioning of institution is not one man's job, it calls for instillation of team work spirit.

The "Task Force on Student Discipline and unrest in secondary schools" (2001) noted that where students are not involved in the formulation of school rules, there is lack of ownership resulting in resentment and ultimately open defiance. (Some schools) rules are undemocratic, vague and oppressive and were at times applied selectively. In some cases, these rules were not documented and that schools were operating on existing traditions. On the basis of the above, recommendation 108 of the "Task Force" was that, school rules be reviewed from time to time and students be involved in their formulation, the draft school rules should be presented for discussion in the open forum (BARAZA). Once the rules have been adopted, every student should be given a copy to be signed in the presence of the parent/guardian as binding contract.

Griffin (1994), notes that lack of communication is the greatest single factor causing school strikes. In a school environment therefore lack of consultative forums for the review of school rules and regulations can leads to existence of; absolute, unpurposeful, unenforceable rules and regulations that act as spring board for proliferation of indiscipline. Indeed, Griffin(1994) recommends to the head teachers that they should explain "Why" if you make a new rule, explain why it is necessary if you are having a problem in filling a teacher vacancy, or in obtaining much needed equipment, or in providing the usual food and what actions you have been attempting to overcome it. When this is done students feel that they are trusted and can be relied on, consequently, they give loyal support. Failure to do this leads to the inevitable result of misunderstanding and ill will which culminate to indiscipline.

Okumbe (1998) uses the analogy of the "Hot stove rule" as advocated by McGregor (1960) to illustration on how to impose disciplinary action without generating resentment (indiscipline). Thus, the five main principles of setting good disciplinary actions (punishment), hence; a disciplinary action should be applied immediately, must be consistently applied, must be objective, should be impersonal, must avoid entrapment and should allow right of appeal. In support of these principles, a document by the Ministry of Education entitled "Training for School Management, a series of training modules for head teachers and trainers" (2000, P.29) provided that as for as possible, staff, parents and the school committee should be in a agreement on the type of punishment that is given where rules are broken. Indeed, Olembo and Cameron (1986) recommend that the head teacher should make sure that all his teachers know exactly what punishment they can give to a pupil for what reasons and the procedure they should follow. Thus, a school should have a punishment policy and the head teacher is to make sure that all teachers go by it.

Thus, a major cause of indiscipline in schools is not only due to lack of consistency in checking indiscipline among students but also due to inconsistency in application of (known) disciplinary actions to offenders. Where lack of consistency in checking indiscipline is exercised by the administration, this have the unfortunate effect of tricking down to all members of staff, so, some will punish unreasonably severely while others will not punish, some will decide to advice while others will openly reprimand, others will even decide to ignore indiscipline behavior. To this extent, Roberson (1986) caution that, every time a rule is broken without a penalty, it becomes more difficult subsequently to enforce it, by extension Mbiti (1984) observed that there is no point in having rules or setting goals in connection with discipline unless we have some way of enforcing them. Consequences must accompany all rules and

regulations. If a consequence always follows certain behavior, the child will learn to connect the two and pattern his behavior accordingly.

On the issue of punishment, the Head's Manual (2000) recommends that, each school should have a system of punishment which is applied fairly and consistently in the school. Wangeri (1986) cautioned that; when punishing students for observable (overt) behavior, one should look beyond this to understand the covert behavior (motivational) states that lead to mis-behavior. By attempting to analyze the cause of behavior i.e. "Behavior analysis" we are able to pinpoint and address motivational state that leads to mis-behavior. For instance, students who are openly reprimanded for making noise during night preps in poorly lighted classroom will be frustrated and will consequently take the slighted opportunity to project their frustrations. They can refuse to attend to their meals under the pretext that the food is badly cooked, will bully the junior and weaker students purporting that they are arrogant, they can organize a boycott of classes, strike or even burn the administration block under the pretext that there are no enough books in the school library. The point here is that, punishing mis-behavior is not an end by its self rather it can be a cause of further mis-behavior unless the original motivational states that lead to mis-behavior is comprehensively addressed. There is evidence in our schools that little effort is done to identify and address the motivational state that lead to mis-behavior.

It is usually said that teachers are the greatest assets to the head who want to succeed. Ministry of Education (2000) stresses this fact by noting that the key to effective management is the ability to encourage and motivate your staff. If the relationships within the school are poor and staff feels that their efforts are not appreciated, even the most carefully planned programme for checking learners' misbehaviors will fail. This is because Indiscipline among learners in a school can emanate from poor co-operation extended by the teachers to their head teacher due to demotivation of teachers by their head teacher. A head teacher who is not; open, sincere and honest with teachers, and who also fails to create an atmosphere of; reconciliation, understanding co-operation and good-will creates very fertile grounds for teachers' withdrawal resulting into passive support in the formulation and the enforcement of school rules and regulations. By extension, a head teacher who is not strict and fair to all his staff, have favourites among his staff, considers ethnic and unprofessional factors when delegating responsibilities and making internal appointments etc will be demotivating teachers among his staff who cherish professionalism in their teaching fraternity.

Koech Education Commission (1999) observed that, the increase in the anti-social behavior in schools is due to inadequacy of handling guidance and counseling throughout the country. An effective administrator should aim to check indiscipline in their institution by being ready to listen, guide and effectively motivate the guidance and counseling teachers. Thus, in an institution where the administration cares less to establish a motivated, guided and vibrant guidance and counseling department/committee, then it is undisputable that the learners will be deprived of the much needed advice, counsel and guidance which essentially check indiscipline in a school.

According to Ozigi (1978) and Mariene (2012), prefectorial system is one of the most effective ways of involving pupils directly in the administration of the school because they are constantly in touch with other students. However, a demotivated prefect body irrespective of being made-up of the best student leaders will not be effective in its roles but rather will engage itself in disciplinary practices such as vernacular speaking against school rules and regulation. These have the effect of enhancing indiscipline in the whole school. Thus, where the administration does not have a system of motivating, supporting, and directing its prefect body, indiscipline will persist in the school. Glasser (2005), Griffin (1994) advised that, head teachers should not only be train and motivate their prefect body in their schools but also they should maintain close positive working relationships with the prefects. Having a close positive working relationship with prefects would mean having frequent consultative meeting of addressing challenges and problems they face, reviewing the events of the week and planning for any special activities or event in the week ahead.

2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to establish the main causes of learners' misbehavior from the key stakeholders in a school. The objectives of the study were;

- a) Determine common indiscipline cases in schools
- b) Identify the causes of learners' misbehavior according to the school administrators
- c) Seek form teachers why learners misbehavior
- d) Determine from causes of indiscipline as per the student leaders

3. METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study used descriptive survey design. From a target population of twelve (12) schools, the study used stratified sampling to obtain a representative sample of eight (8) secondary schools in the study location and through purposive sampling; respondents of the study were obtained. The respondents in the sample schools included; school administrators, teachers and students leaders. By administering questionnaires, data were obtained from respondents. Data obtained were subjected to analysis using the descriptive statistics to enable the study come up with conclusions and recommendations for the existing situation.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before soliciting for information relating to the main causes of indiscipline amongst the learners, it was wise to inquire from the school administrators whether in their stations there was any form of indiscipline. The school administrators' responses are captured in table 1

Table 1: Common Indiscipline Cases as Per the School Administrators

Indiscipline Forms	Frequency (f)	Cumulative (cum)	Percentage (%)
Sneaking	11	11	35.5
Drug abuse	7	18	22.6
Vernacular speaking	3	21	9.8
Truancy	1	22	3.2
Thefts	3	25	9.8
Improper dressing	1	26	3.2
Lack of facilities	1	27	3.2
Bullying of weak students	1	28	3.2
Forgery	1	29	3.2
Boycott of school program	1	30	3.2
Failing to do assignments	1	31	3.2
Total	31	31	100%

Table 1 apparently shows that all school administrators concurred that they had indiscipline cases in their schools. According to the Table 1, the three most serious or rather common cases of indiscipline were: sneaking from the school compound (11) 35.5%, drug abuse (7) 22.6% and both theft and vernacular speaking which were ranked equally i.e. each having a frequency of 3 or (9.8%). The findings of this study on the various cases of student indiscipline is in agreement with the works of Mariene (2012) who found out that before students engaged in unrest they first showed myriad of cases of indiscipline symptoms.

When the school administrators were provided with four well documented causes of indiscipline amongst learners and requested to rank them in the order of 1-4 as it would apply in their institutions, their responses are shown in the table 2.

Table 2: Causes of Students' Indiscipline as Per the School Administrators

Indiscipline cause	Ranking							
	1		2		3		4	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
Poor student teacher relationship	2	15.4	6	46.2	5	38.5	1	7.7
Poor teaching	-	-	-	-	6	4.6	7	53.8
Lack of facilities	3	23.1	6	46.2	1	7.7	3	23.1
Over-protective guardians	8	61.5	1	7.7	1	7.7	2	15.4

Table 2 reveals that over-protective guardians were ranked by eight (61.5%) as contributing mostly to students mis-behavior, lack of facilities and poor-student-teacher relationship were ranked in the second position by six (46.2%) of the respondents, however, five (38.5%) compared to one (7.7%) of the respondents ranked poor student-teacher relationship and lack of facilities in position 3 thus, indicating that poor student-teacher relationship had more gravity than lack of facilities in the school as a cause of student mis-behavior. Table 2 also shows that poor teaching was ranked by majority seven (53.8%) as contributing least to student mis-behavior. These findings are in consensus with Onyango, (2008) and Kabiru, (2007) who found that

Because students came from different family backgrounds, economic status, cultures and values, this contributed towards their indiscipline.

Using an open-ended question, the researcher sought teachers' view on the main causes of indiscipline in their schools. The numerous responses of teachers are summarized in table 3.

Table 3: Causes of Indiscipline among learners according to the Teachers

Indiscipline Cause	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Poor diet	1	1.2
Peer pressure	7	8.5
Corporal punishment withdrawal	4	4.9
Lack of outings	1	1.2

Inconsistency of punishments	8	9.8
Drug abuse	5	6.1
Closeness of school to home/town	3	3.7
Lack of support from parents	1	1.2
Poor cooperation from parents	2	2.4
Poor role models (teachers)	3	3.7
Lack of respect of teachers	1	1.2
Unstrict teacher on duty	2	2.4
Admission of weak pupils	1	1.2
Poor administration	4	4.9
Weak prefect bodies	2	2.4
Truancy after physical punishment	1	1.2
Lazy students	3	3.7
Lack of guidance and counseling	3	3.7
Teachers laxity	3	3.7
Ignorance of school rules	2	2.4
No rewarding of desirable behavior	1	1.2
Inconsistency by administration	2	2.4
Over-protective guardians	1	1.2
Lack of facilities	1	1.2
Lack of religious morals	2	2.4
Poor student-teacher relationship	2	2.4
Very harsh prefects	1	1.2
Influence of powerful support staff	1	1.2
Poor background/parental care	8	9.8
Day-scholars	2	2.4
Admission of indiscipline transfer costs	4	4.9
Total	82	100

Table 3 indicates that, the two main leading causes of indiscipline are; inconsistency of administration of punishment to students and poor pupils' background or parental care, each contributing to indiscipline by 8(9.8%). Closely followed by these causes is peer pressure 7(8.5%) and drug abuse 5(6.1%). Table 3 further indicates that; withdrawal of corporal punishment, poor administration and admission of indiscipline transfer students, all contribute to indiscipline equally by 4(4.9%). By extension, table 3 reveals that there were some other minor causes of indiscipline but whose cumulative effect is significant. These findings are similar to those of Ponfua (2015) who established that parental over protection of children and poor value system contributed significantly to students' indiscipline.

The researcher also felt that since student leaders play a critical role in the management of student's affairs and are always in touch with the teachers and school administrators, they were also well placed to recognize causes of indiscipline in their different schools. Table 4 shows causes of student indiscipline according to the prefects (student leaders).

Table 4: Causes of Indiscipline as Per the Student Leaders

Indiscipline Causes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Peer pressure	20	20.8
Drug taking (abuse)	14	14.6
Lazy students	4	4.2
Badly behaved teachers	5	5.2
Bad influence from other school	2	2.1
Poor student-teacher relationship	4	4.2
Home and fee related problems	3	3.1
Poor student-student relationship	8	8.3
Lack of respect to prefect	4	4.2
Unserious guidance and counseling teacher	7	7.3
Failure to punish wrong doers	3	3.1
Simple/easy punishment to wrong doers	4	4.2
Lack of facilities	1	1.0
Unstrict teachers	3	3.1

Struggle for their rights	3	3.1
Showing-off amongst students	4	4.2
Unavailability of school administrators	2	2.1
Inconsistency of punishment	6	6.2
Libido	1	1.0
Poor academic performance	1	1.0
Unknown school rules and regulations	3	3.1
Lots of freedom	1	1.0
Theft	1	1.0
Total	104	100

As reflected in the table 4, student leaders felt that indiscipline in their schools was mainly as a result of five cause; peer pressure 20(20.8%), drug abuse 14(14.6%), poor student-student relationship 8(8.3%), unserious guidance and counseling teachers 7 (7.3%) and inconsistency of punishment administration 6(6.2%). Several remarks were made to illustrate this, such as;

- *"Students copy other bad behavior from her fellow student"*
- *"Drinking/taking of drugs such as alcohol after sneaking"*
- *"There is lack of punishment for a particular offence"*
- *"Student lack adequate guidance and counseling"*
- *"Student are not punished regularly after breaking the school rules"*
- *"Students want to show off i.e. differentiate themselves from others"*

It is noted in table 4 that even after guidance and counseling teachers 7(7.3%) are said to be lax with their work, student leaders further perceived that: badly behaved teacher, lack of strictness by teachers and poor student-teacher relationship each contribute to indiscipline by 5(5.2%), 3(3.1%) and 4(4.2%) respectively. Student leaders also directly blamed their school administrators or otherwise teachers for cause of indiscipline emanating from; unknown school rules and regulations 3(3.1%), failure to punish identified wrong doers 3(3.1%) and use of simple/easy (ineffective) punishment to the wrong doers 4(4.2%).

The findings of this study on causes of indiscipline as according to the student leaders is in agreement with the study by Ndakwa (2013) who found out that students influenced (peer pressure) one another towards being indiscipline. Indeed, Carter and McGoldrick (2005) observed that, as children grow older the importance of parents' decreases as a reference group and as a model for conformity and they begin to relate more with their age mates.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research finding of this study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions.

- (i) The common indiscipline cases in schools are; sneaking out of the school compound, drug abuse, thefts and vernacular speaking
- (ii) The main causes of student indiscipline in the schools are; over-protective guardians, peer pressure, inconsistency of punishments, poor parental care, drug abuse, and drug abuse.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that; the main stakeholders in schools should in a participatory approach probe into the root causes of identified students' indiscipline in schools with an aim to reverse the trends

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