

Influence of School Environment on Students' Behaviour in Kenyan Secondary Schools

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Abstract: *There are various reasons that cause students to engage in anti-social behaviour. Some of the reasons include school factors, school curricular, personality of the students, teachers, head teachers, and violation of basic human needs. Poor leadership and poor classroom management may frustrate the students to the point of them becoming aggressive or taking revenge in order to seek audience. This revenge takes various forms such as bullying, insults and assaults, arson, stealing and drug abuse. The study examined complaints students have about their schools in terms of facilities, school environment, and behaviour of the members of the school community. The study was guided by Maslow's human needs theory. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 649 participants. The study concludes that failure to provide basic needs to students and to create a conducive learning atmosphere in schools frustrates students who in turn go on strike and destroy school property. The study recommends that there should be forums for training the youth and teachers about conflict management.*

Keywords: Influence, school, environment, behaviour

1. Introduction

Globally, societies would like to mould and socialize their youth to be responsible citizens so that they can take societal roles in future. There are various agents of socialization such as family, church, school, peers, community, media and so on. Apart from the family, the school plays a great role in moulding the lives of children since these children spend most of their time with the teachers. That means that the school is given the responsibility to teach the youth the attitudes, beliefs, and cultural values of the society. Apart from the academic skills, the school is also a place where students interact with one another, their teachers, and educational administrators. During this interaction, sometimes conflict arises. This happens because students bring different ideas, goals values, beliefs, and needs to the school where they are learning. If these expectations are not met and handled carefully, students become frustrated, and sometimes use violence in order to air their grievances. This usually happens because when students come to school, they do not have all the social skills that they need to collaborate effectively with the other members of the school community. Therefore, teachers should teach these students the appropriate communication skills, leadership qualities, trust, and conflict management skills. They should also teach them how to manage their emotions. This teaching is necessary because most conflicts are caused by poor human relationships. This usually happens when one group tries to dominate the other by exercising some authority. That is, each group wishes to maximize its influence and control in relationship with the other. This is a struggle for dominance, whether in a corporate office or a region of the globe, and is not resolvable in the first instance, often resulting in a victory and a defeat or a tense stalemate and deadlock. Power conflict is often distinguished by the use of negative power, through behaviour, such as, threat, deception, or manipulation, as opposed to tactics of positive power such as persuasion, and the use of valid information, and a consideration of the pros and cons of alternative actions. Relationship problems often fuel disputes and lead to an unnecessary escalating spiral of destructive conflict.

In Kenya the escalating violence in schools is a concern for educators and the general public alike. It seems that students have not acquired the skills of peaceful conflict resolution and therefore spend a lot of time and energy in negative interactions with peers and teachers rather than in attaining the goals of the curriculum. These negative interactions often lead to punishment such as time-out, in-school suspension, suspension from school, corporal punishment, and sometimes, expulsion. These punishments waste a lot of students' energy and time while they should be studying in order to get a good grade in the examinations. Completion of secondary school with a good grade is a basic requirement for entry into the work force, middle level colleges, and universities. Thus, schools should teach these social skills that the students require so that they can be absorbed in the job market.

2. Relationship between Teachers and Students

Teachers spend most of their classroom time working with groups although traditionally, little, if any, of their formal training is devoted to understanding the nature of group dynamics. They should learn the principles and techniques that help in discovering and improving social interaction and social influences, particularly those within the classroom. This is important because most educational problems of the world revolve around interpersonal relations, and not conquering the physical environment. Teachers need to create a warm atmosphere in the classroom that extends to the physical, emotional, psychological, and social as well as the academic aspects of the school. Being truly professional involves the belief that teaching transcends the classroom and requires of teachers that they take an active interest and have a duty in participating in issues that affect educational, national and global policies. In other words, the profession of teaching needs to see itself as a profession for citizen education, a citizen education that reaches beyond the nation state. Teachers' lack of proper training can cause students' deviance as a result of the way in which they interact with them at school, particularly in the classroom. For example, some teachers lack good communication skills and have

little regard for students' feelings. Students from schools affected by unrest in Kenya have cited discontent with the school administration and disputes with teachers. For example, Siakago Boys Secondary School in Embu District, Eastern Province, destroyed property as they protested at alleged high-handedness of the school's administration. In Nyangwa Secondary school in the same province, students staged a sit-in demanding the removal of their administrators for meting out corporal punishment for petty offences. Students at Lenana High school in Nairobi Province went on strike and cited bullying by senior students, the administration's failure to listen to their grievances, and the deputy principal's high-handedness (Mwai, 2008:5). Students at Maseno school are sexually molested and beaten by senior students (Mutembei, 2017)

Furthermore, apart from high-handedness, some teachers in Kenya fail to observe societal values. The media has several times reported that teachers in some parts of the country, especially male teachers, are guilty of luring girls into love affairs; even girls who are under 18 years old. Cases of male teachers marrying their own students before they have completed school are rife (Raju, 1973:50; Mwaniki and Mathoo, 2008:12). Some of them have turned female students into sex prey in exchange for better grades. It is not surprising therefore that some students have been rebelling against a repugnant authority that has no value or respect for the education act, government policies, and dignity.

3. Head Teacher as a School Manager

A head teacher of a school is a very crucial person since he makes sure that the values and the goals of the school are accomplished (Nyongesa, 2007; Hoy, 2008; and Eshiwani, 1993). He makes sure that the environment and the school climate is conducive for proper learning. That is why, proper training is necessary in order to avoid inappropriate and ineffective methods of human management. School administrators should be concerned with the differences and struggles among members in positioning themselves and groups in ways that highlight various interests (Usher and Edwards, 1994:7). Conflicts in schools sometimes emerge as a result of differences that exist among administrators, teachers, students in classroom practice, educational ideology, competition for resources and power relations within the organization. Head teachers should therefore be well trained in managerial and leadership skills so as to manage these conflicts.

In every organization, decisions are made and implemented. Rules are formulated and set up to govern and regulate these decisions and actions. This is done in order to ensure uniformity among the members of staff and the students. On admission to secondary school, students are given a brochure containing the school code. The consequences of breaking these rules are made clear. The penalties meted out to the offenders are also clarified. Breaking a rule or a regulation is an offence and the offender should be punished. Therefore, rules must be observed and obeyed for the school to be orderly and to enable the head teacher to run it smoothly (Dillon and Maguire, 2010:56). School rules should have a purpose that is clear to all the stakeholders, should be enforceable, and should be beneficial to the

students and society. When drawing up the rules, the head teacher should involve the teachers and the students since the rules are meant for them. This will make them observe and obey them comfortably. When meting out punishment, one should identify the root causes first and deal with them. Some head teachers address the symptoms and are surprised when the same conflict recurs. The purpose of managing conflict is to develop desirable behavior among students. Therefore, proper techniques should be used for effective achievement.

Lincoln (2002:11) asserts that violence in schools, random shootings, acts of intimidation, and senseless hate crimes are unnecessary and inappropriate patterns of behaviour. Abusive and controlling actions demonstrate thoughtlessness, indifference, intolerance, and a lack of respect for others. According to her, the core of the problem is to find out and reveal the reasons for such acts and then to treat this type of meaningless behaviour with effective intervention skills using conflict resolution and communicative strategies. Disputes of any nature, whether they are episodes of violence or incidents of rage against society, must be resolved in a non-violent manner. In responding to volatile situations, intermediaries can present ways to effectively cool down heated conflicts and find solutions using compromise and negotiation techniques. Mediation skills play a critical role in downplaying differences between relevant issues.

4. Effect of Social Change on Students' Behaviour in Kenyan Schools

The social change that Kenya has been experiencing has brought about a breakdown of traditional counseling that was offered to the youth in the olden days. In many communities in Kenya, the role of counseling of children and the youth was placed on the grandparents. Socio-economic change has seen parents move to the urban areas leaving grandparents behind in the rural areas. Grandparents provided the youth with intimate contact which facilitated introduction to sound moral behaviour. The exodus to urban areas in search of 'white collar' jobs shifted the responsibility for counseling to parents who lack the skill and the knowledge. Consequently, parents leave this responsibility to teachers who also lack the skill because they are not trained. According to Katola (1995), Nyange (1992), and Nyaga (1988), parents have neglected their responsibility to counsel their children. Children are left on their own to adopt behaviour that they find in peers, community members, markets, towns, and so forth. This lack of proper guidance is reflected in the unacceptable and unethical behaviour that is found among the youth which causes a lot of social distress and disruption of school activities. With the introduction of western education, Christianity, and colonial governance, traditional guidance mechanisms such as taboos, stories, proverbs, riddles, songs, and poems were weakened as the Kenyan society became socially restructured (Jomo Kenyatta, 1968). These socio-cultural changes have ignored traditions, and value systems that held community members together. Consequently, the youth lack proper guidance as they try to discover themselves, and the environment they live in. For example, they lack guidance in what to adopt in mass media and adult

models in their community. Oduor (1990:25) observes that efforts to teach moral values to the youth are a matter of urgency because the future of every society depends on the type of children it is bringing up. In Kenya's secondary schools, guidance and counseling is usually offered only to form four students as career choice. Teachers assume that students in lower classes only require counseling when a problem arises. Therefore, teachers-cum-counselors concentrate more on academic matters than on students' behaviour. As a result, students with behavioural problems are not given any attention and this gives rise to deviant behaviour and depression as students lack someone to consult. In addition, with today's socio-economic change and technology, the world is complex and is full of challenges. Therefore, the youth need to be taught survival skills that will help them handle their problems. They also need to be handled with care because they are already stressed by school work, peer pressure and home expectations. O'Toole (1999:11) concurs with this statement when she writes that understanding personality development is important in assessing any threat made by someone in that age group. An adolescent's personality is still developing at this age.

During adolescence, young people are likely to engage in what adults perceive as strange behaviour. They struggle with vulnerability and acceptance with questions of independence and dependence, and with how to deal with authority, among other difficult issues. For example, they receive conflicting messages from adults who keep on telling them to grow up and then reminding them that they are not yet adults (Dillon and Maguire, 2010:155). School administrators should understand that students do not necessarily behave in a disciplined manner because someone in authority is in control. It is within the students themselves to discover the virtue of discipline. The strict control of students through rules and regulations as well as punishments for those who break them does not necessarily motivate them to think in a disciplined manner. Instead, the administrators should control the conditions and the social environment under which they permit their students to pursue their interests. Some of the students' interests which they try to pursue are basic human needs. Biological needs for food, water, and shelter are basic and must be met before higher needs can be satisfied for social attachment, self-esteem, creativity, understanding, self-actualization, and spiritual transcendence (Maslow, 1970) in Opotow (2006:515).

Discipline is an essential element in the creation of a prosperous school community which performs properly in

order to give positive training to its future citizens. Hence, schools should be sensitive to the needs of their members and should organize programmes in order to cater for the needs of each member of the institution. These should include the academic and non-academic needs. When these needs are satisfied, the students will be contented and satisfied and they will have no need to cause trouble. This view is in agreement with Maslow (1970) cited in Steinberg (2005:84-85) who argues that if each level of basic human needs is satisfied, the next level of needs becomes dominant and all the energy is directed towards satisfying those needs. If the effort to satisfy the needs is for some reason blocked, the person is frustrated. Frustration could lead to aggressive behaviour. This could be one source of students' unrest in Kenya. That is, when students fail to get better services such as entertainment, leisure, games, medical attention, proper implementation of curriculum, adequate coverage of syllabus, and other related services, they riot in order to air their grievances. Burton (1997:19) supports this view when he points out that the human needs that are frustrated by institutions will be pursued in one way or another. Individuals are prepared to go to extreme lengths to defy systems in order to pursue their deeply felt needs.

5. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to establish influence of school environment on students' behaviour in Kenyan secondary schools. The specific objectives sought to:

- 1) Establish students' complaints about school environment.
- 2) Determine students' satisfaction with school facilities.
- 3) Investigate changes students would like to be made in schools.

6. Research Design

In order to achieve these objectives the study used a descriptive survey design. Data was collected and analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select participants from different categories of schools. The study used questionnaires to collect data from 649 respondents. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies, and chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance.

7. Findings and Discussions

The first objective sought to establish students' complaints about school environment. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' perspective on complaints in schools

School Category	Boys boarding		Girls Boarding		Mixed Boarding				Mixed Day/Boarding			
	Male		Female		Male		Females		male		Female	
Frequencies	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
In effective teaching	153	2.56	176	1.84	89	2.21	48	2.02	98	1.99	73	1.88
Chronic absenteeism by teachers	154	2.35	175	1.91	89	2.11	48	1.85	96	2.10	72	1.71
Mismanagement of school resources by Head teacher	154	1.89	176	1.87	91	2.03	48	1.65	96	2.07	72	1.89
Students demand free education	152	2.99	177	2.55	90	2.88	47	2.60	95	3.45	73	2.42
Head teachers chronic absenteeism	154	1.67	176	1.85	90	2.06	48	2.02	95	2.16	73	1.95
Head teachers lack of transparency in finance matters	155	2.35	177	2.32	90	2.17	48	2.31	95	2.08	73	1.95
Head boy High handedness	150	3.06	172	2.47	89	2.49	48	2.27	90	2.96	73	2.58
Rules too strict	153	3.13	177	2.88	90	2.88	48	2.75	96	3.20	73	2.82

Declining performance in K.S.C.E	152	2.24	177	1.76	90	2.57	48	2.27	93	2.89	71	2.52
Shortage of teachers	155	2.36	177	2.09	90	2.72	48	2.79	97	3.02	73	2.68
Frequent transfer of teachers	151	2.90	176	2.44	89	2.61	48	2.71	96	2.63	72	2.44
Suspension of students	154	3.66	176	3.44	90	3.30	47	3.57	95	3.55	72	3.19
Prefects too harsh	156	3.28	176	3.08	91	2.63	49	2.78	97	3.19	73	2.60

The results presented in Table 1 show that ineffective teaching (M=2.56), demand for free education (M=2.99), high handedness of the head boy (M=3.06), strict rules (M=3.13), frequent transfer of teachers (M=2.90), suspension of students (M=3.66) and harshness of the prefects (M=3.28) were major causes of conflicts in all categories of Schools.

Table 2: Chi-square test of Students' perception on complaints in different types of schools

	Value	df	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	267.812 ^a	234	0.064
Likelihood Ratio	286.632	234	0.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.442	1	0.506

Table 2 shows that the chi-square values for differences in schools on complaints was ($\chi^2=267.812$, $df=234$, $p=0.064$). Since the p-value is greater than 0.064, then it means that there was no significant statistical difference on the perceptions of the complaints by students from different categories of schools. The analysis indicated that there were similar complaints such as strict rules and harshness of the prefects.

Table 3: Chi-square test on perception on complaints based on gender

	Value	df	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	107.663 ^a	78	0.015
Likelihood Ratio	129.543	78	0
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.659	1	0

The data in Table 2 indicate that the chi-square value on complaints was ($\chi^2=107.663$, $df=78$, $p=0.015$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, then it means that there was significant statistical difference on the perceptions of the complaints by girls and boys. This means that boys and girls had different complaints about their schools. The study shows that more boys than girls complained of ineffective teaching and declining performance of school, while more girls than boys complained of head teachers' chronic absenteeism and head teachers' lack of transparency in financial matters.

The second objective sought to determine students' satisfaction with school facilities. The information is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Level of Satisfaction with the members of staff and school facilities: Students' perspective

Category of schools	Boys Boarding		Girls Boarding		Mixed boarding				Mixed day/Boarding			
	Male		Female		Male		Females		male		Female	
Gender	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M
Frequencies												
Classrooms	157	3.46	178	3.27	91	3.13	49	3.04	99	3.38	73	3.62
Behaviour of teachers	157	3.26	178	3.81	91	3.88	49	3.86	98	3.90	73	4.08
Support staff	154	3.70	178	3.66	91	3.89	49	3.90	98	3.95	73	4.27
Toilets	154	2.29	178	2.70	91	2.51	48	2.73	99	3.04	73	3.40
Dormitories	156	3.24	177	3.60	91	3.18	49	2.88	98	3.17	73	2.86
Dining halls	155	3.12	178	3.37	91	2.99	49	2.76	98	2.91	73	2.90
workshops	153	3.10	174	2.61	91	2.74	49	2.71	98	2.70	73	2.79
Play grounds	154	3.47	177	2.81	91	3.42	49	3.27	98	2.92	73	3.12
Library	156	3.18	178	3.12	91	2.93	48	2.67	97	2.99	73	2.88
Laboratories	154	3.45	178	3.45	91	3.53	49	3.24	98	4.06	73	3.90
Text books	155	3.11	178	3.51	90	3.38	48	3.58	98	3.12	73	3.64
School bus	156	3.56	178	3.45	91	3.29	49	3.55	99	4.24	73	3.90

The information contained in Table 4 shows that in Boys Boarding Secondary Schools, the students were satisfied with support staff (M=3.7) and school buses (M=3.56). The boys were moderately satisfied with classrooms (M=3.46), teachers' behaviour (M=3.26), dormitories (M=3.24), dining halls (M=3.12), workshops (M=3.10), play grounds (M=3.47), library (M=3.18) and laboratories (M=3.11). In Girls Boarding Secondary Schools, the students were satisfied with the behaviour of teachers (M=3.81), support staff (M=3.66), dormitories (M=3.60) and laboratories (M=3.51). The students were moderately satisfied with classrooms (M=3.27), toilets (M=2.70), dining halls (M=3.37), workshops (M=2.61), play grounds (M=2.81) and library (M=3.12). In Mixed Boarding Secondary Schools, boys were satisfied with behaviour of teachers (M=3.88),

support staff (M=3.89) and laboratories. The girls are satisfied with behaviour of teachers (M=3.86), support staff (M=3.90) and the text books found in schools (M=3.58). In Mixed Day and Boarding Secondary Schools, boys were satisfied with the behaviour of teachers (M=3.90), support staff (M=3.95), laboratories (M=4.06) and school bus (M=4.24), while girls were satisfied with classrooms (M=3.62), behaviour of teachers (M=4.08), support staff (M=4.27), laboratories (M=3.90), text books (M=3.64) and school bus (M=3.90).

Table 5: Chi-square test on students' satisfaction with the school facilities based on different types of schools

	Value	df	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	240.496a	210	.073
Likelihood Ratio	261.636	210	.009
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.034	1	.045

The data presented in Table 5.24 show the chi-square test results on the satisfaction of the students from different categories of schools. The chi-square test was done to determine whether students from different schools were satisfied with the same facilities, resources and other aspects of the schools in the same way. The analysis indicated that the chi-square value was ($\chi^2=240.496$, $df=210$, $p=0.073$). Therefore, the students from different categories of schools were satisfied with the same facilities in schools.

Table 6: Chi-square test on satisfaction with the schools environments based on gender

	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	69.512 ^a	70	.494
Likelihood Ratio	86.180	70	.092
Linear-by-Linear Association	.133	1	.715

The data shown in Table 6 indicate that the chi-square value was ($\chi^2=69.512$, $df=70$, $p=0.494$). This shows that there was no significant statistical difference between the satisfaction of the boys and that of the girls about the school environments. According to the findings, boys and girls were satisfied in the same way by the school bus, laboratories, support staff, and behaviour of teachers. The third objective investigated changes students would like to be made in schools. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Students' suggestions on changes to be made in schools

Responses on changes to be made in schools	N	(%)
Improve school infrastructure (Bus/Dormitories/Library/ Classrooms/Swimming pool/Toilets)	205	22.7
Changing the school program	120	13.3
Revise school diet	74	8.2
Review the school rules	71	7.9
Improve the school's performance	62	6.9
Improve the schools discipline/eliminate drug use	58	6.4
Adding extra-curricular activities	45	5.0
Review teaching staff	42	4.6
Engage the students more to understand them	42	4.6
Make morning preps optional	23	2.5
Stocking up the library and/or offering revision material	18	2.0
Fair treatment of all students	15	1.7
Review the prefect powers	15	1.7
Solve water problems	13	1.4
Refurnishing the school	11	1.2
Respect all religious groups	10	1.1
Landscaping the school compound	10	1.1
Rewarding achievement among students	8	0.9
Efficient/accountable use of school resources	8	0.9
Change the school into a "boarding only" institution	7	0.8
Reduce school fees	7	0.8
No changes/Same as the current head teacher	7	0.8
Introduce functions for students to socialize	5	0.6

Make the school environment conducive for everyone	4	0.4
Make sure syllabus is completed on time	4	0.4
Making the school co-ed (Mixed)	3	0.3
Install satellite TV (DSTV)	3	0.3
Separate boys from girls	2	0.2
Improve security in school	2	0.2
Assist the less fortunate students	2	0.2
Improve student-teacher relations	2	0.2
Introduce open forums	2	0.2
Ensure kitchen is clean and hygienic	1	0.1
Improve hygiene in the toilets	1	0.1
Install a public phone within school	1	0.1
Review the support staff	1	0.1
Total responses	904	100.0

The results shown in Table 7 indicate some of the changes participants would like to be made: improve bus/dormitories/library/classrooms/swimming pool/toilets (205: 22.7%), change the school programme (120:13.3%), revise school diet (74:8.2%), and review the school rules (71:7.9%). These suggestions indicate that students are not happy with school' facilities and environment.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The root cause of conflicts in schools according to students was due to mismanagement of school funds by the head teachers (M=3.5) and declining performance in K.C.S.E (2.99). The results on the degree of satisfaction with school staff, and facilities show that the majority of the students are satisfied with the support staff (M=3.89) and behaviour of teachers (M=3.7). Participants expressed moderate satisfaction with the way school funds were used, and with textbooks, classrooms, dormitories, playgrounds, dining halls, library, workshops and toilets. Others mentioned inadequate furniture, congested dormitories and inadequate playgrounds. A lack of conducive environment makes students unhappy and since administration is reluctant to offer any solution, the students go on strike in order to draw authority's attention. This revelation concurs with Maslow (1970), Kriesberg (1973), Burton (1997), Steinberg (2005), Opatow (2006), and Bradshaw (2007) arguments that basic human needs act as a driving force behind human behaviour and a lack of fulfillment of these needs cause conflicts as individuals look for ways to acquire them. The study recommends that on admission to school, students should be provided with a guide on school rules and violence prevention. They should also be allowed to exercise their creativity on conflict resolution in schools.

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