

Effects Of Students Suspension On Their Sociological Wellbeing In Boarding Secondary Schools In Nakuru County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

When corporal punishment and caning as a way of disciplining students was banned in Kenya in year 2000, the Ministry of Education replaced it with Guidance and Counseling services. However, many schools lacked professional counselors to cater for the huge increase in indiscipline cases. Some schools opted to use suspensions for minor and major indiscipline. This decision did not consider the effect of student's suspension on academic work and psychosocial wellbeing of the students. This study therefore investigated the effects of student's suspension on their academic work and their psychosocial wellbeing in boarding secondary schools in Nakuru Municipality of Nakuru County. The study was guided by two theories, Behavioral theory by Skinner and social learning by Albert. The survey search design was descriptive which was used in seven boarding secondary schools in Nakuru municipality. A purposive sample size of 145 suspended students from a total population of 3917 students from the 7 boarding schools was used, A purposive sample of two teachers, one from each of the following departments namely: the guidance and counseling department and the disciplinary committee in each of the seven boarding schools were interviewed. The data was collected using questionnaires that were administered to the students while an interview schedules was used for the teacher counselors and discipline teachers. Descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, and tables, were used to analysis data. From the findings, it's an indicator that stealing of other students' properties; disobedience/defiance and breaking of school rules and regulations are the major causes of suspension. Further, evidence revealed that students' suspension negatively affected their psychosocial wellbeing and their academic work. The findings of this study will help the educators to think of other alternative measures in correcting students' behavior without affecting their psychosocial wellbeing and denying them their academic activities in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals which is Education All (EFA). The findings may be used as a basis for strengthening guidance and counseling services in schools. They would also be useful to the Ministry of Education in the designing of programmes and projects.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Suspension exclude students from school for a period of time. The period varies from a few days to a maximum of fourteen days depending on the severity of the indiscipline. Some schools all over the world use suspensions of students as a form of punishment, without considering the effects on their psycho-social wellbeing and academic work.

Students who are found stealing or in possession of other students property, taking drugs, fighting, disobeying school rules, participating in strikes or school unrest are likely to be suspended. In 1997, about 3.1 million students were suspended from American schools (Massachusetts, 1998). In Massachusetts, 37% of students who were suspended from 1966 to 1997 did not receive alternative education in other schools or special programmes (Massachusetts, 1998). A fifteen year old student from Woodson School in Fairfax committed suicide after suspension. He was

accused of taking a capsule which had effects of marijuana which was so much for him to comprehend. A student in the same school also committed suicide in 2009. a day before returning to school for her hearing, the suspension affected her psychologically and she felt going back to the same school would make her misfit as could she would be labelled as a criminal (Donna, 2011).

When students are at home, very little may go on in terms of correcting their behavior since the parents might be busy and therefore lack the time to talk to them. After suspension, the students may find themselves with too much work to cover. This may traumatize them and make them feel rejected. Consequently, they may repeat the same or commit worse off mistakes so that they can remain out of class. Fear, peer conflict, peer rejection, victimization and labeling produces psycho-social problems, social withdrawal, anxiety, depression and affection problems which in turn lead to reduced motivation , low concentration and school avoidance. (Bush Ladd Herald 2006). In numerous occurrences, some suspended students may be of average or below average ability. Their absence from school affects their social wellbeing and academic work (Penning, 2009).

Correcting behavior is necessary as long as this does not violate the students" education rights and their social wellbeing. The suspended students do the same examination with the others, whether or not they attended the required academic hours. This traumatizes some students and it can lead to a suicidal ideation, alienation, social and emotional imbalances and Sociological problems. Two students suspended for fighting claimed that the Beaufort school denied them their right to an education because it offered them no help in academic activities they missed when they were suspended for months. The two students were stressed up, depressed, had low self esteem, withdrawal from others and were not able to cope with academic work. The case attracted interest from civil rights and education groups in North

Carolina and around the country (Me Powell 2011). They contended that it was not good for a school to suspend students and leave them to languish for months without schooling. They noted that students had a constitutional right to sound and basic education (McDowell, 2011).

Suspension in schools is used as a mechanism to deal with indiscipline students. Out of school suspension is ineffective because it lacks follow-up. Little or no time is spent on correcting students' maladaptive behavior and on compensating for the academic instructional time lost during suspension. The suspended students suffer emotional and social problems which lead to poor performance in academic work (Sanders, 2001). Students go through a lot sociological problems. Fenning (2007) found that after suspension the students felt alienated and got stressed up. When they were unable to cope with academic work, they developed low self esteem and some even ended up dropping out of school.

Excessive suspension of students resulted in increased socio-emotional problems, avoidance of teachers, stigmatization among peers and in academic work (Stinchcomb. 2006). Mam' students who exhibited poor behaviour that warranted suspension also exhibited poor academic performance. Linda Nelson (1979) also found that the suspended students scored far below their grade level. According to Dilling (1979) some schools switched from out of school suspensions to in schools suspensions since they found that misbehaving students often struggled with school work. Out of school suspensions made them lose instructional days. They, therefore, lagged behind in academic work. Some students became depressed; they lost interest in learning and withdrew from other students while some dropped out of school (Moorman, 2011). Suspensions were found to have a negative effect on students socially.

Behavioral specialist for-Buke county schools in America said positive behavior interventions and support helped to change students' behavior

(Baorman, 2011). The students' academic work is therefore not interfered with. Lowman said that the school system needs to find other alternative ways other than suspensions for instance, in school suspension with well established programmes (Moorman, 2011).

In Fairfax County in Maryland, America, a girl was suspended for taking a pill in school. During the two weeks of suspension, she watched television and studied a handbook on heroin and other illegal drugs despite the fact that school work was sent to her online Micheal (2009). Students' suspension rates have raised dramatically with the new millennium challenges. According to Mongei(2010)_n 29 students were suspended from Umthwalumc High School in South Africa on suspicion that they were homosexuals. While in Uganda, parents protested over the suspension of 300 students from Lira Secondary School who had sympathized with a few students who had been suspended for fighting in school Oketer. (2010). Suspension increased dramatically in Siakago Public school systems where over twenty thousand students were suspended in 2003. The major causes of suspension given by principals were fighting, lack of respect for teachers, and the violation of zero tolerance policies (<http://www.warren.com>).

Corporal punishment was banned in Kenya in 2000 and replaced with Guidance and Counseling as a means of dealing with students with maladaptive behavior Siringi, (2000). However, many schools opted to use suspensions for minor and major indiscipline cases. In Ndarasha School in Nyeri Kenya, students were suspended after setting a dormitory ablaze and; consequently, killing two students Moses, (2010). In 2008, there were many cases of school unrest and many students WERE suspended from schools. The exclusions of students from school, by school authorities, never considered the effects of suspensions on the academic work and the social wellbeing of the students suspended. Suspensions

of students mean that one misses all learning activities for some time. This may be a burden to the suspended student. This study, therefore, investigated the effects of student suspension on their academic work and psychosocial wellbeing. The Children's Right Act has changed the mode of punishment in schools. When a student misbehaves, he or she is not supposed to receive corporal punishment as a means of correcting misbehavior. It is against this background that the proposed study analyzed the effects of students' suspension on academic work and the psychosocial wellbeing of the suspended students, livery child has a right to education. Any problem affecting education and the psychosocial wellbeing of a child needs to be identified and addressed. This study, therefore, intended to determine the effect of student's suspension on their social wellbeing and academic work in secondary schools and give recommendations.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- i) To determine the effects of students' suspension on their social wellbeing in boarding secondary schools of Nakuru Municipality in Nakuru County,

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives the description of the research methodology which includes: the research design, the study location, target population, sampling procedures and the sample size, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. It would help the researcher to get the feelings of the students and also to determine the influence of suspension on the subjects of the study. Results obtained from descriptive survey were compiled using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) computer package version 14 and then generalized to the larger population.

3.3 Study Location

The study was carried out in seven boarding schools, (three for boys and four for girls) in Nakuru Municipality. The schools selected were National and Private Boys' and Girls' schools since there are no Provincial or District boarding schools in Nakuru Municipality. Boarding schools in Nakuru Municipality were chosen not days since students in day schools go home every day and instead of suspending those with maladaptive behavior they can be requested to be accompanied by their parents as they come to school.

3.4 Population

The population of the study included suspended students and discipline teachers who were the Deputy Principals charged with discipline in schools according to Ministerial directives, the teacher counselors' in charge of guidance and counseling expected to deal with maladaptive behavior. 145 suspended students were used as respondents, seven Deputy Principals and seven Teacher Counselors from seven boarding schools in Nakuru Municipality of Nakuru County were involved. The total population was 3917 students from the seven boarding schools but the accessible populations of 145 students who had been suspended was used from the seven boarding schools in Nakuru Municipality, Nakuru County. Two teachers were selected, one from the Guidance and Counseling department and the discipline teacher.

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The researcher used purposive sampling to identify the location of the study and in selecting the sample population for the research. Boarding secondary schools in Nakuru Municipality were chosen. Purposive sampling of suspended students was done in forms two and three. Simple random sampling was used to select form two and form three students who were at the adolescent crisis stage. At this stage, due to peer pressure, they might misbehave and thus were more likely to be

suspended. A sample of seven deputy teachers in charge of discipline and seven teachers in charge of guidance and counseling were purposively selected in the seven boarding schools. To obtain the desired sample size, the researcher adopted the sample selection formula using the table cited by Kathuri and Pals (1993). A sample size of 145 was obtained from the population of 228 suspended students from the seven boarding schools out of a total population of 3917 students.

3.6 Instrumentation

The researcher used questionnaires and interview schedules as tools of data collection. One set of close-ended questionnaire was prepared for the students. The questionnaire was structured to measure the effect of suspension on their psychosocial wellbeing and academic work. The questionnaires were divided into Bio data, causes of suspension, and effects of suspension on psychological well being, social well being and academic work.

The instruments were piloted to sample of 20 suspended students, one discipline teacher and one teacher counselor from two boarding schools one boys and one girl within Nakuru municipality. Piloting enhances the reliability of the instruments. The researcher used interview schedules to interview the discipline teacher, and the guidance and counseling teacher in each of the seven boarding schools within Nakuru Municipality. The respondents who were the suspended student were presented with the questionnaires within two days.

3.6.1 Reliability and Validity

The researcher developed the questionnaire and interview schedule by critically analyzing the objectives of the study and the literature review. The researcher also sought the expertise of the Supervisors from the Department of Psychology, Counseling and Educational Foundations and the Faculty of Education and Community Studies of Egerton University to ensure validity.

The reliability of the student's questionnaire and the interview schedule was verified through a pilot study in two boarding schools; one for boys and the other one for girls within Nakuru Municipality. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was then determined. A reliability coefficient of about 0.7 was taken as acceptable for reliability of the instrumentation. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency and to determine reliability of the instruments (Kathuri & Pals, 1993).

3.7 Data collection procedure

Upon approval of the research proposal the researcher got a letter from department of psychology, Counseling and Educational Foundation and the Faculty of Education and community studies of Egerton University which she took to the provincial Education Officer to seek for permission to collect data. A letter was written to principals of schools where data was to be collected. The researcher visited the seven

boarding secondary schools and was permitted to collect data. With the help of the teacher counselor and the class teachers questionnaires were distributed to Form II and III students who had even gone on suspension. The suspended students filled the questionnaires and the researcher picked them after three days. Teacher counselors and the teachers in charge of discipline in the seven boarding schools using an interview schedule questions.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data collected through questionnaires was analyzed descriptively using percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations. Data collected from interview schedule was analyzed descriptively using the information given by the seven deputy teachers and seven teacher counselors.

Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 14. The data collected.

Results and discussion

Common Social Problems among Suspended students

	N	Std. Deviation	Mean
Relate well with fellow students	144	2.3750	.95986
Respect other people's opinions	142	2.8310	1.00334
Chooses friends wisely	142	3.8239	1.02659
Is able to manage peer pressure	142	2.3451	1.01090
Relate well with parents and family	142	3.0352	.94089
Is not aggressive (towards students and staff	140	3.9714	.95166
Handles conflicts with fellow students and staff well	143	2.1469	.91896
Manages sexuality well	144	2.0764	.92426
Always follows school rules/regulations	142	3.8451	.77456
Always uses civil language and is courteous when relating with others	143	2.9091	.84678
Mean of means	145	2.4903	.52232

As shown in Table 7, the results revealed that suspended students experience a lot of social problems. The relationship between suspended students and other students, family members,

administrators and teachers is poor. From the responses, some social problems are very common in a majority of the suspended students. On whether they relate well with other fellow

students, the mean is 2.3750 and a standard deviation of 0.95986. This shows that suspensions make students not to relate well with fellow students. On whether they can manage peer pressure, the mean, 2.3451 and a standard deviation of 1.01090 indicating a variation of .94896. The great variation revealed that suspended students are not able to relate well with others therefore have a lot of problems with fellow students and teachers. The mean - indicated that suspended students are not able to manage peer pressure well since suspension alienates them from others who may label them as criminals. Responses on relationship with family members and parents had a mean of 2.0352 and a standard deviation of .94896. On whether they can handle conflicts with fellow students and staff well, a mean of 2.1469 and standard deviation of .91896 showed that students had a lot of conflict with students and teachers. Response on whether they always followed school rules and regulations had a mean of 1.8091 and a standard deviation of 0.77456. From Table 7, it is evident that suspended students are aggressive towards other students and staff as indicated by a mean of 2.9714. On whether they respect other people's opinions, the response had a mean 2.8239. This response shows clearly that suspended students are very careful on how they respond to people's opinions and the friends they associate with for fear of suspension or being implicated in other misbehavior even when they are not involved. This makes them live in isolation.

As observed from the responses, suspended students are not able to relate well with fellow students. The other students see them as criminals and they fear to associate with them for fear of being suspended or being beaten. These findings concur with Malm's (1989) assertion that in the socialization of children; parents incorporated a belief in the efficacy of fighting to resolve problems. Students will keep off from suspended students for fear of being beaten up. According to Jenkin (1996), for many students, violence is an

appropriate response to threat. Jenkin argued that violent acts are committed as a consequence of poor socialization at home and at school. Handling conflicts with fellow students and staff is also a problem since they are seen as bad students, and whenever something bad happens they are the first suspects. Charles (1992) concurs with this and says that people focus on suspended students as the source of problems and nobody wants to associate with them. He acknowledged that social and cultural influences had contributed a lot to students' suspension.

The relationship with parents and family members is also affected. When the students are suspended, the parents are stressed up because the students are at home while others are continuing with learning activities. The society also labels the suspended students criminals. This makes them feel rejected. They, therefore, see no need of following school rules and regulations since nobody acknowledges whatever they do. Suspended students harbor bitterness and see administrators as bad people who should not be obeyed. This finding concurs with that of Stinchcomb (2006) which assert that in-school and out of school suspension make students exhibit an increase in social emotional problems, avoidance of school staff, stigmatization among peers and a decline in academic work.

This is also supported by Penning (2007) who claimed that frequent suspensions make students rebel against school systems and each other. In Forming's research, he found out that suspensions alienated students from parents and other family members. Suspended students had negative feelings about themselves when in school and some dropped out of school. He also found that frequent suspensions made some students gang up as criminals as labeled by the society. These gangs finally ended up in prison.

The school, that is expected to mould students to be good citizens, ends up producing criminals in the society. Parents of suspended students are

stressed, feel angry with their children and cannot trust them anymore. Michael (2009) concurs with this and says that out of school suspensions also affect the psychosocial well being of the parents who project the anger to their children. Administrators suspend student without considering the psychosocial effects on the parents' side. As shown in table 7, results revealed that suspended students feel rejected by parents, fellow students, administrators, and teachers. They see the world as a harsh place for them. When on suspension, students engage in other activities and associate with groups with the same problem. These findings concur with Michael (2004) who gives an example of girl who had more time during her suspension to read more on illegal drugs and to associate with drug traffickers.

The feeling of rejection may result in ideation of suicide. The feeling of rejection may result in ideation of suicide as shown in table 7 the results revealed that suspended students do not relate well with parents and family members. They are also aggressive toward other students and staff. They feel rejected and this may lead to ideation of suicide. These findings concur with that of Donna Donna (2011) who found out that a fifteen year old student who was suspended from Woodson School in Fairjay, who was an all round student in academic and extra-curricular activities committed suicide during suspension. The students had bought a capsules know as JW11 018 with marijuana effect. They were suspended for taking hard drugs .They missed participating in foot march which was their second family .Their emotional descent was steeper than anyone imagined and its painful finality brought light to negative effect of suspension on their social wellbeing.

4.5.1 Deputy Principals Teachers in Charge of Discipline and Teacher Counselor's views on the effect of students' suspension on their social well being.

Information generated from the counselors and deputy principals in charge of discipline indicated that suspended students exhibited fear and insecurity. Many alienated themselves from other students and teachers for fear of being victimized or reminded of their past. The suspended students feel loneliness, despair and rejection by peers and teachers. These findings concur with those of Raffaele (2003) who noted that student suspensions make suspended students feel rejected by their peers and that many form friendships among themselves. He further noted that when adolescents are alienated from others for sometimes, they identify themselves as members of a deviant peer group and they have a 70% chance of arrest within two years.

The seven teacher counselors interviewed were of the view that suspension should be replaced with other alternative measures which do not subject students with maladaptive behavior to a lot of negative social problems. Walker (2006) asserts that alternative programs such as improved collaboration and communication between school administrators, students, parents, law' enforcement officers, mental health professionals and counselors helped in developing alternative programmes to suspensions to deal with students with maladaptive behavior.

Conclusion and recommendations

Summary

- i) The findings showed that students' suspension affected their psychological wellbeing as indicated by the mean of 2.7848 which is above the threshold mean of 2.5

Conclusion

Suspensions affected students negatively in their psychosocial wellbeing

5.4 Recommendations

- i) The management of schools needs to be reviewed and restructured in order

to cope with students who misbehave. Students need to be part of decision making and problem solving initiatives in order to reduce suspensions,

- ii) Schools should have student's open forums/ *barazas* once a week where they could air their views and concerns without fear of victimization. This reduces tensions and unwanted behavior among students, hence a reduction in suspension cases,
- iii) In-school suspension programs need to be incorporated in schools to address students' misbehavior without interfering with academic work,
- iv) There is need to introduce alternative learning centers (safe schools) with well established in school suspension programs, professional counselors and teachers to deal with those students who are suspended from schools,
- v) Schools need to carry out a pre-suspension and post suspension assessments to try and minimize the rate of students' suspension so that the students' academic work and their psycho-social wellbeing are not interfered with,
- vi) There is need to improve collaboration and communication between students, teachers and the administrators in order to avoid strikes and school unrest,
- vii) The policy makers, educators, health and social agencies, and professional counselors need to look into the students' behavior in schools before implementing any disciplinary measures, to deal with students with maladaptive behavior, other than suspension,
- viii) Educators should develop effective disciplinary strategies to prevent the occurrence of misbehavior through effective instructions and

classroom management therefore maximizing students' opportunity to learn, changing unwanted behavior and reducing disciplinary issues which lead to suspension.

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