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Influence of the social environment and teachers' correctional strategies on pupils' socio-emotional development in primary schools in Kericho County, Kenya

By Amanyama A. K; Ngeno, G. K. and Sitienei, E

Abstract

Socio-emotional development of children is greatly influenced by the environment that these children grow in with teachers having the most significant source of influence. The study focused on the influence of teachers' correctional strategies on pupils' socio-emotional development. The objective was to establish the correctional strategies used in public and private primary schools and their influence on pupils' socio-emotional development. The purpose of this study was to provide a link between teachers' correctional strategies, pupils' perception of these strategies and their socio-emotional development. The objective of the study was to establish the correctional strategies used by teachers in primary schools and their influence on pupils' socio-emotional development in Kericho County. The study was informed by the Gestalt theory's key concepts and principles. The ontological assumption and the epistemological paradigm of this research were relativism, realism, and pragmatism respectively. This was a mixed research and it employed a survey study design which used highly structured questionnaires to collect quantitative data and the open ended questions and focus group discussions to collect qualitative data. The target population in this study was 189,946 pupils (95815 boys and 94131 girls) learning in 512 primary schools found in Kericho County and 4955 teachers in these schools. A sample size determination formula and systematic sampling technique was used to sample 50 deputy head teachers, 219 heads of guidance and counseling teachers and 384 pupils. A pilot study was conducted to ensure reliability of the instruments which was estimated using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. The reliability coefficients computed for teacher counselors, deputy head teachers and pupils' questionnaires were; 0.96, 0.89 and 0.94 respectively. Analysis of data was done using descriptive and inferential statistics and was aided by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The findings indicated that the correctional strategies used have an influence on pupils' socio-emotional development. It was also established that teacher-counselors and pupils have positive perceptions to supportive and preventive correctional strategies as opposed to corrective ones. The Government, all educational stakeholders, policy makers, school administrators, and teachers are expected to use the findings in formulating and implementing relevant correctional strategies for enhanced pupils' socio-emotional development. The findings are also important as a basis for future research on ways of enhancing pupils' socio-emotional development.

Key words: Correctional Strategies, Socio-Emotional Development, Social Environment

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1.0. Background

It is important to note that although peer relationships and peer influence have great potential to contribute to healthy psychosocial development, peer relationships can also be a source of risk to misbehavior (Brendgen, Vitaro & Bukowski, 2000). This is a key factor that should be put to consideration by teachers when correcting pupils who may exhibit unwanted behaviour. Managing pupils' behavior is a challenge for all teachers and as Cline, Gulliford and Birch (2015) note, difficult behavior is by no means a new phenomenon in schools. Punishment, risks teaching the pupils a yet more complex and subtle set of difficult to manage behaviors (Kearney, 2007). Teachers strive to maintain children's behavior through a number of ways. However, it is important to mention that some of the strategies have far reaching negative effects than benefits.

The ban on corporal punishment as a main method of managing pupils' behavior ushered in the use of strategies like detention as one of the most common form of punishments in schools in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Singapore, Canada, Australia, and South Africa (Aloka & Bojuwoye, 2013). Sugai and Horner (2002) identified that the retreat to punitive approaches in schools, characterized by restatements of rules associated with linked threats of punishment, is indeed highly likely to increase the rates of very undesirable behaviors it aims to diminish, in addition to creating a climate that distracts from the instructional focus that a school is primarily aiming to promote. Alternatively, at the school level, teachers do incorporate rewards of various types into social reinforcement such as teacher praise or peer encouragement.

This should only be necessary in circumstances where the pupil's skills level and accomplishment are not of a high enough standard for them to yet be a reinforcer in themselves (Cline, Gulliford & Birch, 2015). Peer counseling is used because children spend a lot of their free time in companionship with their peers, valuing them highly as they are persons who they feel they can trust, by whom they feel understood and with whom they share values, attitudes and interests (Quane & Rankin, 2006). Peer relationships therefore represent a vital source of emotional support for young people, as well as a major influence on their behaviour, attitudes and knowledge (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005).

Peer relationships have the potential to foster positive or negative health behaviours and development in a way that an adult would not be able to, depending on the behaviour and the roles modeled by the fellow peers (Ueno, 2005). Particularly peers that are regarded as highly popular have an influencing effect on other like-minded young people (Hoffman, Monge, Chou, Valente, 2007). In addition, peer relationships contribute to the acquisition of general social skills and competencies and the formation of autonomy and self-identities during the developmental period of an adolescent; developing these is essential to successfully deal with issues that arise when transitioning into adulthood (Quane & Rankin, 2006). Peers have an equally strong influence on the social development of an individual child. Social influence is the

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effect others have on individual and group attitudes and behavior (Berkman, 2000). The social influences on adolescent are exerted through social context, social networks, and group membership that operate mainly on social norms which are the patterns of acceptable beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Kameda, Takezawa, & Hastie, 2005). Social context determines opportunity for social interaction through social network formation. In its simplest form, a social network is a map of all of the relevant ties between individuals and groups (Valente, Gallaher, & Mouttapa 2004). A child's social network consists of all the people and groups with whom she/he has contact and the nature and extent of social interactions. The formation of each child's social network is largely determined by shared social context such as neighborhood, school, church, and family (Wilcox, 2003). Social networks are important to a child because they share information and shape each other's perceptions of social norms.

A child's group membership to family, religious, school or peer is a particularly powerful socializing experience and often changes their perceptions, opinions, and behavior to be consistent with standards or expectations (norms) of the group (Forgas & Williams 2001). Social-emotional development of adolescents extends beyond friendship relations and encompasses also the broader peer group (Hansen, Steenberg, Palic & Elklit, 2012). Therefore, imitating risk behavior of peers in similar positions may be seen as a manner to impress one's best friends, especially when it is noticed that this behavior is valued by the friends they share. However, more indirect mechanisms such as exposure to similar social experiences and socialization from other peers in the network equally contribute to the social development of the adolescents. Adolescents' contact with best friends are more frequent, intense and intimate (Giordano, 2003), and so one can expect that they are also more influential. Not only status characteristics on this homophile dimension can interact with peer influence, also heterophilic status characteristics may be of importance, such that adolescents may be influenced stronger by peers of high social status or popularity in the peer network. For example, peers who are highly liked by most pupils and disliked by few may be more influential (Pearson & Michell, 2000). Boys are quick to take opportunities to distinguish themselves from girls and the male peer group defines what is not male at an early age and those behaviors are discouraged or not used (Patterson, Dishion, & Yoerger, 2000). Peer groups can positively affect one's development, and social skills such as empathy, teamwork, leadership, and sharing.

These groups can have a positive influence on a child's life, behaviors, academic performance, and motivation (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). Children and adolescents without strong family connections, or at least a positive connection with other adults in their life, face a higher risk of negative influence from peer groups (Juvonen & Graham, 2001). If the child or adolescent has not been able to form bonds with positive peer groups, it is more likely they will be perceived as distant and different from their peers, making them feel more like outsiders. Lower standards of acceptance often exist in less positive peer groups, making it easier for people to join. Unfortunately, many such groups often engage in self-destructive and antisocial activities (Brendgen, Vitaro & Tremblay, 2000). Consistent with self-reports of lower resistance to peer influence among adolescents than adults (Steinberg, 2008), observational data point to

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the role of peer influences as a primary contextual factor contributing to adolescents' heightened tendency to make risky decisions.

Furthermore, one of the strongest predictors of delinquent behavior in adolescence is affiliation with delinquent peers, an association that has been attributed in varying proportions to peer socialization (Dishion, Bullock, & Granic, 2002). In its most acceptable form, the peer group is a healthy coming-of-age arbiter, by which children grasp negotiating skills and learn to deal with hostility and to solve problems in a social context (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). These are some of the factors that a teacher must consider while designing correctional strategies for enhanced pupils' socio-emotional development.

2.0. Statement of the Problem

There are many factors that come into play in as far as pupils' socio-emotional development is concerned. For instance, peers play a major role in socialization alongside the parents, the media and the school. It has been said that peer interaction is not a preparation for life, it is life itself. It is widely accepted that membership in peer groups is a powerful force during adolescence. These groups provide an important developmental point of reference through which adolescents gain an understanding of the world outside of their families. Failure to develop close relationships with age mates, however, often results in a variety of problems for adolescents – from delinquency and substance abuse to psychological disorders. As children progress through adolescence, they build knowledge bases that help them navigate social situations. For example, by facilitating peer feedback regarding alternative solutions to problems as they arise, teachers exhibit a nonjudgmental role that enhances socio-emotional development and learning. There is need to establish whether teachers put into consideration all these factors and the established legal frameworks as they correct pupils that exhibit unwanted behavior. It is important to examine whether the correctional strategies used by teachers are appropriate and that they do enhance pupils' socio-emotional development.

3.0. Purpose of the Study

This study was important since it sought to establish the link between the correctional strategies used by teachers in primary schools and pupils' socio-emotional development. It is hoped that the research's finding will go a long way in improving correctional strategies used for pupils' enhanced socio-emotional development.

4.0. Objective

To establish the correctional strategies used by teachers in primary schools and their influence on pupils' socio-emotional development in Kericho County.

5.0. Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey study design. In survey research design, a survey is used to obtain a description of a particular perception. A descriptive research determines and reports the way things are. This study employed a mixed methods approach where both qualitative and

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quantitative data was needed to generate insight into the complex social phenomena under study hence mixed -mode designs that combine features of qualitative and quantitative designs and collect both types of data were used. Teddle and Tashakkori (2009) assert that mixed methods are a vehicle for improving the quality of inferences that are drawn from both the qualitative and quantitative methods. Highly structured survey questionnaires collected quantitative data and the open -ended questions were used to collect qualitative data that generated unexpected insights into the subject matter under study.

In this study, probability sampling technique was used where a systematic two stage case selection was developed. In the first stage, the schools to be involved in the study were selected. The study used cluster sampling to select the schools. In this case, the schools were selected as per the percentage of the number of schools in each sub-county in relation to the county. This involved the ordering of the sampling frame according to admission numbers of the pupils and selecting the participants at regular interval through the list. According to Bhattacharjee (2012), systematic sampling involves a random start and then proceeds with the selection of every K^{th} element, where $k = N/n$ where k is the ratio of sampling frame size N and the desired sample size n . This study adopted a quantitative and qualitative methodology to document and analyzes the teacher counsellors' and pupils' perception of the correctional strategies used on pupils' socio - emotional development. Data was further analyzed using Statistical Package for Social sciences (SPSS) software version 21. The analyzed data was presented using frequency distribution tables, pie charts and tables.

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6.0. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Correctional Strategies used by Teachers in Primary Schools

Correctional Strategies	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean
Canning	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	20 (40%)	13 (26%)	10 (20%)	3.41
Guidance and counseling	24 (48%)	21 (42%)	4 (8%)	–	1 (2%)	1.59
Manual work to pupils	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	20 (40%)	11 (22%)	13 (26%)	3.55
Suspension	–	–	3 (6%)	20 (40%)	27 (54%)	4.48
Expulsion	–	–	–	9 (18%)	41 (82%)	4.82
Detention/ retention of pupils	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	7 (14%)	17 (34%)	23 (46%)	4.16
Verbal warning	25 (50%)	10 (20%)	12 (24%)	3 (6%)	–	1.86
Slapping/pinching	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	9 (18%)	7 (14%)	29 (58%)	4.16
Behavior modification programmes	8 (16%)	16 (32%)	24 (48%)	2 (4%)	–	2.40
Training pupils to be assertive and air their grievances appropriately	17 (34%)	23 (46%)	7 (14%)	3 (6%)	–	1.92
Use of rewards/ tokens when desired behavior is observed	18 (36%)	13 (26%)	15 (30%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	2.14
Recognition through certificates, open appraisals on assembly and clapping for pupils	27 (54%)	11 (22%)	8 (16%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	1.82
Withdrawal of privileges when an undesirable behavior is exhibited	4 (8%)	9 (18%)	24 (48%)	10 (20%)	3 (6%)	2.94
Apology in front of others	6 (12%)	14 (28%)	20 (40%)	6 (12%)	4 (8%)	2.76
School rules to help in guiding pupils on desirable behavior	27 (54%)	17 (34%)	5 (10%)	–	1 (2%)	1.62
School prefects help in correction	6 (12%)	10 (20%)	17 (34%)	12 (24%)	5 (10%)	3.00
Overall mean						2.91

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Results in Table 4.3 show that 4(8%) participants indicated caning as a correctional strategy that is used always, 3(6%) participants indicated that the correctional strategy is used often, 20(40%) participants indicated sometimes. The mean of this was 3.41 an implication that teachers use corporal punishment to correct pupils though not in big magnitude. The results imply that the Governments ban on corporal punishment is heeded by teachers though not in totality.

The findings also imply that guidance and counselling is used as correctional strategy. A total of 24(48%) participants indicated that the correctional strategy is used always, 21(42%) participants indicated often. A mean of 1.59 was obtained an implication that guidance and counseling is used for correction of pupils to a large extent. In this case, guidance and counseling is used to help pupils deal with the challenges they face in school, mold their behavior and enhance their socio-emotional development.

Findings further indicate that manual work is used as correctional strategy, with 2(4%) participants indicating that the correctional strategy is always used, 4(8%) participants indicated often, and 20(40%) participants indicated sometimes. The mean of this was 3.55 an implication that this correctional strategy is not used extensively. On the other hand, majority of the participants indicated that suspension is rarely used; 27(54%). This also applies to expulsion which had a mean of this was 4.82 an implication that the correctional strategy is never used.

Detention/retention of pupils as correctional strategy is also not used largely with 2(4%) participants indicating that the correctional strategy is used always, 1(2%) participants indicated often, 7(14%) participants indicated sometimes, 17(34%) participants indicated rarely and 23(46%) participants indicated never. The mean of this was 4.16. This implies that the correctional strategy is never used. Other correctional strategies like, slapping and pinching are not used.

It was also noted that more than half of the respondents; 25(50%) participants indicated that verbal warning as a correctional strategy was always used by teachers to correct pupils. This is a common correctional strategy and the mean of 1.86 implies that this is one of the key correctional strategies used by teachers and it has an influence on pupils' socio-emotional development. The analysis further revealed that behaviour modification programmes were used to correct pupils with majority of respondents; 16(32%) indicating often, and 24(48%) participants indicated sometimes. The mean was 2.40 an implication that teachers in primary schools have embraced the use of preventive correctional strategies in behavior management and enhancement of pupils' socio-emotional development. The pupils are also trained to be assertive and air out their grievances appropriately, 17(34%) participants indicated that the correctional strategy is used always, and 23(46%) participants indicated often.

Positive reinforcement in the form of rewards from teachers is a distinctive form of pupils behaviour management approach. On how often rewards are used when desired behaviour is exhibited, 18(36%) participants indicated always, 13(26%) participants indicated often, and 15(30%) participants indicated sometimes. The mean of this was 2.14 an indication that teachers greatly used rewards as an intervention to behaviour management. Findings also indicated that teachers use recognition through certificates, open appraisals on assembly and clapping for pupils is used, 27(54%) participants indicated that it is used always. Contrary to rewards, the

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findings in the study revealed that pupils are subjected to punishment-based approaches, involving significant deprivation and degradation. There was an indication that teachers used withdrawal of privileges when undesirable behaviour is exhibited, with 24(48%) participants indicating sometimes. However, it should be noted that there is an evidence base that shows deleterious effects of a negative sanctions-based approach in schools (Maag, 2012). On how often apology in front of others is used as correctional strategy, 14(28%) participants indicated often, 20(40%) participants indicated sometimes. The mean of this was 2.76 an implication that this correctional strategy is used.

School rules are used to guide pupils, 27(54%) participants indicated that it was used always, 17(34%) participants indicated often, 5(10%) participants indicated sometimes. The findings revealed that school prefects were used to help in correction, 6(12%) participants indicated that the correctional strategy was used always, 10(20%) participants indicated often, 17(34%) participants indicated sometimes. The mean of this was 3.00 an implication that although all schools have prefects, their role in correction of pupils was minimal. Teachers need to strengthen this aspect since the establishment of pupils' leaders is intended to give pupils an opportunity to acquire the sort of communication, planning and organizational skills which will be of benefit to them in their future lives. Research indicates that student counsels can improve academic standards and reduce dropout rates in schools (Department of Education and Science, 2002).

The overall mean of 2.91 is an implication that teachers use various correctional strategies in a bid to mold pupils' socio-emotional development. Children follow a typical continuum of social and emotional skills acquisition. Further analysis of the findings established that these correctional strategies have a positive influence on pupils' socio-emotional development.

7.0. Conclusion

The study concludes that physical punishment, suspension, expulsion and detention have negative impact on learners' socio-emotional development and so teachers should desist from applying these correctional strategies. This is an important step towards enhancing learners' holistic development. To achieve a balance in pupils' socio-emotional development, teachers need to balance all the appropriate correctional strategies. The study revealed positive pupils' perception on some correctional strategies, for instance, guidance and counselling correlated highly with pupils' ability to develop effective communication skills with a positive significance of 0.80. Rewards helped pupils to have a positive self-concept. The correlation was a positive significance of 0.217. However correctional strategies like physical beating, manual work, expulsion, detention and suspension correlated negatively with pupils' socio-emotional development of applying essential life skills. The study concludes that rewards reinforce the desired behavior among pupils and should be used by teachers. In Gestalt, contact is necessary for change and growth. When a child makes contact with the environment, change is inevitable.

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8.0. Recommendation

Further research is recommended on other developmental aspects of pupils other than socio-emotional development, for instance, mental or psychological, and physical development. The study recommends the use of peer counseling in pupils' behavior management. Specifically, positive correctional strategies should be encouraged as opposed to the physical ones. Teachers should understand that pupils need be understood holistically in order to apply appropriate correctional strategies for optimal development of learners' socio-emotional development.

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