A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS PARAMETERS ON STUDENTS' UNREST BEHAVIOUR IN MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA

Peter M. Kithuku[1i],
Ruth W. Thinguri[2]
[1]Mount Kenya University,
School of Education,
Thika, Kenya
[2]Dr., Mount Kenya University,
School of Education,
Thika, Kenya

Abstract:

Students' unrest behavior is a common catastrophe in many secondary schools in Kenya. Many school utilities such as buses and buildings have been destroyed. Out of this, many of the students losing their property, others getting injured and worse still leading to death and total disability as well psychological stigma. This has come up as a result of poor students' connectedness to the school hence resulting to unrest behaviors. This study therefore critically analyzes the relationship between school connectedness parameters on students' unrest behaviors in Makueni County. The methodology used in the study was critical analysis to critique the relationship between school connectedness parameters and students unrest behaviors in Makueni County. The study employed non-interactive research design as the researcher used available documents to back the methodology. The findings of the study will be used by policy makers and school administrators, behavior modification personnel and curriculum developers to help the students improve their connectivity to the school hence reducing their unrest behaviors. The study results will equip the secondary school teachers and principals with knowledge and skills to improve student's school connectivity. This will reduce the students' unrest behaviors in Makueni County.

Keywords: connectedness, parameters, unrest behavior, students

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[i] Correspondence: email peterkithuku1970@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

When students are well connected to their school social and physical world, they are likely to develop well. In the school setting, students interact with, socialize and share problems and experiences. This shapes their personality when they interact with teachers and other significant persons who are role models in different school settings. In the school students meet the school counselors who infuse health and nutrition values to them. The counselors influence school success, support better personal health and mental well-being. The school environment includes people, facilities not limited to other students, teachers, administrators, study rooms, activities, school rules as well as school policies. Students who are well connected to their school will develop intimacy to the school, are well nurtured and linked to the school environment, have feelings of acceptance as well as increased participation in the school activities, have the feelings that school personnel including teachers and administrators are caring and concerned with their physical and psychological well-being. Students will develop positive relationship amongst themselves. Students who feel connected to their schools do not engage into risky behaviors such as use of drugs and substance abuse, are never engaged in aggression behavior such as bullying others, trafficking drugs in the school as well as attempting suicide. Students are drawn from risky environments such as alcohol and substance abuse and overprotection such students are safeguarded by school connectedness. Connectedness of students to their school improves their academic performance and creates appositive attitude towards the school. Such students are likely to display good physical well-being hence actualizing their dreams in education till their full potential. Likewise students who lack a sense of belonging and connectivity to the school are likely to experience emotional distress hence increasing their possibilities and susceptibility to aggression. (Davidson P., Tusiel E. & Black A., 1983).

2. Statement of the problem

Despite the rationale of having smooth learning in Makueni County, some elements of schools in Kenya have reported high numbers of cases of students' unrest behavior. The overall problem is that the impact of school connectedness and students unrest behaviors is not well understood. If understood it is not addressed as a major issue. Major concerns of the study are in regard to school environment, culture, school rules and regulations and competences of both the teaching and non-teaching staff.

2.1 Purpose of the study
The purpose of the study was to critically analyze the impact of schools connectedness parameters on secondary school students' unrest behaviors in Makueni County. This is in line with the objectives of education which focuses on the impact of school's environment, school culture and school rules and regulations in Makueni County.

2.2 Objectives of the study

1. To critically evaluate the impact of schools connectedness on students unrest behaviors in Makueni County.
2. To critically establish the impact of school environment on student unrest behavior in Makueni County.
3. To critically examine the impact of school culture on students unrest behaviours in Makueni County.
4. To critically investigate the impact of school rules and regulation on students unrest behaviors in Makueni County.

2.3 Research questions

1. What is the impact of school connectedness on students' unrest behavior in Makueni County?
2. What is the impact of school environment on students' unrest behavior in Makueni County?
3. What is the impact of schools culture on students' unrest behaviors in Makueni County?
4. What is the impact of school rules and regulations on students' unrest behavior in Makueni County?

2.4 Significance of the study

The findings would help educators, administrators as well as policy makers in making important decisions on improving school connectedness and reducing students' unrest behaviors in secondary schools in Kenya. The study results may also be applicable in other counties as well as the whole country. With the determination of data, secondary school administrators can push for reforms with the legislators and the ministry of education to come up with strategies and policies that improve school connectedness and impact on students' unrest behavior positively. This would in turn improve the students' academic performance. The study findings would be important for school restructuring in Kenya where there is serious students' unrest behaviors in secondary schools. It is necessary for educators to understand school connectedness parameters including school environment, school culture, school rules and regulations as well as competences of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

3. Theoretical framework

According to guidelines by connectionism theory postulated by Barber, B. & Olsen J. (1997), it posits that, connectedness is the establishment of linkage and board between various events, those individuals who are not accorded time and space in activities of their preparedness, they end up getting frustrated, annoyed and stressed. At the same those individuals who are not ready to participate in school activities if forced, the results will be both annoying and frustrating. This theory states that, there is a strong positive relationship between a stimulus and ma response. The latter is intensified by

frequent use. Despite this, disuse or infrequent use is likely to weaken connection between a stimulus and a response. This may end up extinguishing the connectedness. This may contribute to the students' unrest behavior. The school should help the students learn the correct connections by training them to connect their past experiences with those of present and the future. The students can use the methods they used in the past to solve a current problem or the problems they are likely to face in future.

4. Research methodology

This study applied descriptive deductive methodology of research with a critical analysis design. Using this methodology, the researcher extends his critiques as pros and cons of evaluating school connectedness parameters on student unrest behavior. According to Barber, B. & Olsen J. (1997), the critical method facilitates the resolution of students' psychological issues which emanates as a result of poor school connectedness of many students resulting to delinquent behaviors of students in Makueni County. This method of study facilitated the researcher's development on the recommendations for the strategies on which the school environment would be restructured to accommodate students' needs, increase their connectedness to the school and reduce their unrest behaviors in Makueni County.

5. Critique literature review

5.1 The impact of school connectedness on students' unrest behavior in Makueni County

According to Elsenberg N. & Brown, T. (2004), students who are well connected to their school beliefs that the school personnel including teachers, peers and other significant persons in the school care about their presence and survival. Majority of students who do not adopt in healthy behaviors perform poorly in academics. This gap can be bridged by positive school connectivity. Individuals with proper school connectivity, rarely engage in many undesirable behaviors such as premarital sex, drugs and substance abuse, violence and involvement with misleading companies. Good student-school connection is likely to improve academic performance leading to better grades and scores. Good grades contributes to praises and commendations from teachers as well as parents. This also attracts envy from peers. They promise a good future as well as adjustment to the school. Students who are performing well will keep off from any disciplinary actions. This leads the students to self-actualization in education and social settings.

According to Barber, B. & Olsen J. (1997) school connectedness is very crucial parameter to students is very crucial to students who want to develop strong social attachments to their peers, school administration and school environment. The students who endanger most in developing poor or no school connectivity are those with special needs, transgender with problems of their sexual awareness, homeless students, those students with history of truancy as a result of unavoidable circumstances such as

terminal illnesses not or limited to asthma and HIV/Aids. Supportive family units and school personnel which is sensitive, caring school environment, school culture, school rules and regulations and competence of teaching staff should bear in mind a variety of students' dynamics so as to help them strengthen their connectivity to the school.

5.2 The impact of school environment on students' unrest behavior in Makueni County

Students need to develop a sense of connectedness to their school surrounding so as to develop well. Schools are not only academic settings to the students. The school is also a socializing agent for the students where they discuss their problems. They also interact with both teaching and non-teaching staff who are adult role models with superior experiences. They also interact with the school counselors who enrich them with health matters and information on nutrition and participate in co-curricular activities. These connections influences the school success, support better personal health such as decreased alcohol and substance use and better mental wellbeing. The school surrounding will include personnel areas of interest and policy structures such as fellow students' council, staff members and other school calendars. (Barber, B. & Olsen J., 1997).

Students who are well connected to their school will feel they are part of the school, feel accepted, are happy at the school, like the school, have interest to participate in school activities, beliefs that teachers have fair judgment towards them and develops positive relationship with fellow students. Such students rarely engage into risky behaviors such as use of cigarettes, marijuana, alcohol and involvement in aggressive acts such as physical fighting, caring weapons as well as attempting suicide. Students with chronic problems such as undesirable behaviors deep rooted from their homes are safeguarded by school connectedness. Students who are well connected are likely to do well in school and are likely to complete their academic cycle successfully. Students' connection to their school has a strong influence to their psychological health. Students who have poor sense of belonging have the likelihood of experiencing distress emotionally. This increases their chances of vulnerability to unrest behavior in the school. (Barber, B. & Olsen J., 1997)

5.3 The impact of school culture on students' unrest behavior in Makueni County

As stated by Barber, B. & Olsen J. (1997), school culture refers to an innate flourishing of visions, values, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, feelings and traditions developed by the school. These are manifested in the peoples' social cultural beliefs and their physiological adjustment to gaps and limitations. Effective organizations such as schools should come up with culture as a part of a planned strategic effort. The school development plan should aim at improving academic Excellency, and a sense of responsibility, intensity and urgency. School improvement effort cannot be realized and maintained effectively without addressing school culture and academic standards as well as how they relate to each other. Creating academic press and developing school culture are key issues in addressing students' unrest behaviors in Makueni County. It

takes commitment and consistency from the whole school, team-ranging from students, teaching and non-teaching staff as well as administrators. Teachers should have friendly talks with students in and out of the classrooms aiming at building and maintaining a high standards of positive interaction between the two parties. This would also show genuine interest in the school lives, their activities and goals.

5.4 The impact of school rules and regulations on student unrest behaviors in Makueni County

According to Barber, B. & Olsen J. (1997), for effective management of students' discipline, secondary schools should have effective rules and regulations. Rules and regulations gives students the direction they need and helps them feel that the school is their safe and friendly environment. Rules identifies general expectations and standards of students' behavior. The numbers and kind of rules vary from school to school and from one class to another. School rules should state clearly the students general conduct in the school. Students should be, made active partisans in developing the rules and regulations. This gives them a sense of honourship and respect to the rules.

Designing and implementing rules and regulations in a school significantly influences students' behavior and learning. Students should not be imposed to fit in to already formulate rules and regulations which they have not contributed to. They should be involved at all levels of their formulation. The school administration should take time and explain to the students the importance each and every rule and regulation. Involving in the entire process of making rules and procedures they are likely to own them since they will value their input and contributions. Imposing rules and regulations to the students without involving and welcoming their contribution may be a source of unrest behaviors in the school. (Barber, B. & Olsen J., 1997).

6. Conclusion

Students' unrest behavior in Makueni County has become common and a threatening issue in Kenya. This has resulted to destruction of the school and students property, worse still many students have been injured and many reported losing their lives. This has been contributed by poor student connectedness to the school. Connectedness is crucial for students who are not involved in school social structure hence experiencing isolation. . Those at a greater risk are the students with special needs, the orphans and those who are chronically truant. This calls for inclusive school environment, school culture, as well as school rules and regulations. If those far areas are well addressed, the results would contribute to increased school connectedness and reduction of student unrest behavior in Makueni County as well as in the whole country.

6.1 Recommendations
The researcher recommends the following:

1) There is need for the Kenyan Government though the relevant ministries to develop a clear frame work on the procedures to follow when developing school rules and regulations.
2) The school administration through the principals should involve the students in the process of making rules and regulations.
3) The school administration should create a trusting and caring relationship between the student and members of staff to enhance communication and improve students' connectedness in the school.
4) The Ministry of education through teacher development should provide teachers with professional awareness, training and skills to make them achieve diverse psychosocial and emotional needs of the students.
5) Secondary schools should establish firm guidance and counseling body to handle students issues which may cause conflict and unrest behavior if not addressed.

References

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