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Options to the Use of Suspension and Expulsion in Kenyan Institutions: A Literature Review

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This article compared the effectiveness of punitive strategies such as suspension and expulsion to mitigate behaviour disorders in Kenyan schools. Behaviour disorders witnessed in Kenyan schools include externalising and internalising behaviour disorders. Externalising behaviour disorders include bullying, aggression, disruption, acting out, fighting, violence, destruction of property, cheating, and stealing among others. Internalising behaviour disorders include depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, immaturity, negative talk, substance abuse, loneliness or guilt, sadness, suicidal feelings, nervousness, and irritability among others. Suspension and expulsion are the zero tolerance (ZT) strategies used in our institutions to curb behaviour disorders. Zero tolerance measures are guidelines for providing the harshest retribution possible to every student who goes against the laid down regulations. Corporal punishment is also used as a punitive measure in our institutions despite its prohibition in the Children's Act 2001. Corporal punishment was recognised to offer minor data on appropriate action to take but only educate the person on the inappropriate behaviours to avoid. This article found that solitary disciplinary practices like suspension and expulsion may further prohibit poor academic performance and dropout. The article further found out the importance of training the heads of learning institutions on how to manage inappropriate behaviour disorders and the incorporation of other strategies such as guidance and counselling and the involvement of parents. Thus, it encourages Kenyan institutions to adopt School-Wide Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), which is a non-condoning approach used in controlling school violence and misbehaviour of students that have shown positive results in an unsystematically controlled trial research to

control school violence and misbehaviour of students. This article also found out the need for a Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA) before intervening for a behaviour disorder. The aim of an FBA is to collect wide and particular data so as to comprehend the exact purpose of the student's inappropriate behaviours.

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INTRODUCTION

School discipline involves the rules, regulations, and strategies used to ensure and promote good student behaviour and practices. It is vital as it helps learners achieve academically solid gains and allows them to be well-adjusted and happy (Kagama & Kagoiya, 2018). Students' discipline must be maintained in the classroom to ensure conducive learning (Prasetyarini et al., 2021). It impacts the education process of learners by creating a stress-free environment and improving their motivation to achieve better grades (Bodo, 2020). Simba et al. (2016) carried out a study on the relationship between discipline and academic achievement and concluded that there was a moderate positive relationship that accounted for the differences in learners' academic achievement. Therefore, discipline is a moral value and a powerful tool necessary for survival in life. A student cannot accomplish the goals of life without it. However, discipline is not achieved in one day as it takes a while to acquire, and the best time to learn it is from childhood.

On the other hand, indiscipline in a school involves disrespecting school authority, disobeying set rules and regulations, and refraining from maintaining set standards of behaviour (Simba et al., 2016). Some of the indiscipline behaviour associated with students include shouting, truancy, fighting, threatening teachers, cheating, bullying, and snatching other students' property, among others (Kagama & Kagoiya, 2018). In the United States, a study conducted in an elementary and high school in West Virginia indicated that approximately 29.6% of the students in the research had one or more unacceptable behaviour (Whisman & Hammer, 2014). This issue of indiscipline is also evident in Africa because various countries, such as Tanzania, Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana, have reported severe cases of indiscipline (Simba et al., 2016). According to Njoroge and Nyabuto (2014), indiscipline is also a significant issue facing schools in Kenya. A study conducted in Kenya by Gakure et al. (2013) noted that 70% of the selected teachers reported indiscipline cases in primary schools located in Gatanga District. Thus, indiscipline in schools is a global problem requiring serious attention to ensure improved behaviour and better grades among Kenyan schools. If students are not

disciplined, they may find themselves unable to implement their plans in real life, which may cost them significantly.

Principals and head teachers have a vital responsibility to ensure discipline is maintained in school (Redempta, 2010). In general, all educators must ensure discipline is maintained at all times. They must mitigate the violations of school rules to make sure that the culture of teaching and learning are maintained. They use several strategies to manage student indiscipline, grouped into preventive behaviour modification techniques and punitive strategies (Kagendo, 2009). Preventive behaviour modification strategies include involving the learners in learning activities, using learner-centred methods, guidance, counselling, and involving parents in indiscipline cases. In Kenya, the main ways used to deal with indiscipline include guidance and counselling (45%), suspension (26%), and involving parents (13%) (Ekombe, 2010). Punitive strategies are also called zero-tolerance (ZT) policies, and the most effective measures include suspension from school, casual work, and corporal punishment (Government of Kenya, 2001). Therefore, this paper aims to compare which strategies (between preventive behaviour modification strategies and punitive strategies [suspension and expulsion]) are the most effective in managing students' indiscipline and their impacts on students' learning process.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION MANAGING BEHAVIOUR DISORDERS

Punitive or ZT policies advocate that students should be expelled or suspended after displaying inappropriate behaviours or threats, especially when a student has a weapon or drugs. However, these policies demonstrate no positive impact on the studying environments, school climate, or school safety. According to Flick (2011), punitive measures do not modify the dangerous and disruptive behaviours of students. Instead, students may even become more dangerous due to such disciplinary actions. Even though these students may no longer be a threat to school after expulsion, their problems often increase and may frequently endanger others outside the school. This is because some expelled students may continue to carry grudges toward those still in school. They are also

more likely to associate with similar students and pose a real danger in society. The fire at Nyeri High School in 1999 is a good example of negative peer influence (Wasonga, 1999).

Punishment may stop the reoccurrence of inappropriate behaviour, but it does not guarantee a positive outcome (Vaughn et al., 2007; Lee & Axelrod, 2005). Even though punishment is considered worthwhile, various justifications against it exist, claiming that it usually causes unnecessary effects such as fear, antagonism, and discontent (Vaughn et al., 2007). Punishment teaches the individual what not to do but does not guide the individual on what to do. The individual who orchestrates discipline is likened to it and viewed with negativity. Fear of punishment often leads to avoidance behaviour. Even after prohibiting physical punishment by the Children's Act (2001), it is still used in Kenyan schools. Parents and teachers frequently use punishment. However, teachers are unfamiliar with the repercussions of punishment and cannot effectively implement a more positive approach (Vaughn et al., 2007; Flick, 2011). It is often motivating to the person who administers it and constantly rewarding if it changes the negative behaviour as discipline and punishment are not similar. Punishment may bring about a more immediate reduction of aggressive behaviour, while discipline may require more time; punishment can be demoralising, while discipline can maintain respect; punishment may have no long-term effect, while discipline teaches skills that may be used in the future (Flick, 2011). In the past, corporal punishment was promoted and supported as a primary means of enhancing school behaviour standards.

Various published studies indicate that ZT strategies are not likened to security at school, contentment with the institution's administration, or limited time dedicated to discipline (NASP, 2002; Brown et al., 2013; US ED-School climate, 2014; Skiba, 2014). They tend to disrupt academic performance, increase negative habits and the probability of upcoming deferment and dismissal, and negatively affect subsequent revenue and job opportunities (NASP, 2002; APA, 2008; Skiba, 2014). Overall, suspension and expulsion can lead to low academic performance for both dismissed and non-dismissed learners and increased dropouts in addition to

untimely high school graduations. Dismissal from school may cause more behavioural deficits in educational institutions and antisocial behaviours. (Martinez, 2009; US ED-School climate, 2014; Perry & Morris, 2014). These ZT strategies may also increase the discriminatory application of school discipline and restrict access to free and appropriate education (NASP, 2002).

Effectiveness of Suspension and Expulsion in the Management of Behaviour Disorders

According to Hoffman (2014), APA (2008), Boccanfuso (2011) and Heilbrun et al. (2015), the rates of student dropout increase with the use of suspension and expulsion. ZT Policies do not improve the studying environments, school climate, or school safety. According to Skiba (2014), APA (2008), and NASP (2002), the available evidence suggests that ZT policies tend to disrupt academic performance, increase negative behaviour and the likelihood of future suspensions and expulsions and may also negatively affect future earnings and employment opportunities. Zero-tolerance policies advocate that students should be expelled or suspended after displaying inappropriate behaviours or threats, especially when a student has a weapon or drugs. According to Flick (2011), punitive measures do not modify the dangerous and disruptive behaviours of students. The evidence suggests that these students may even become more dangerous as a result of such discipline. They may no longer be a dangerous threat after expulsion, but their problems often increase and may frequently endanger others outside of school.

According to APA (2008); US ED-School climate (2014); Skiba (2014); Brown et al. (2013); NASP (2002), various researches that have been conducted indicate that zero-tolerance policies are not associated with feeling safer at school, contentment with school management, or staff spending less time on discipline. Overall, suspension and expulsion are associated with low academic performance, increased dropout, and reduced timely high school graduation. According to US ED-School climate (2014); Borgwald (2012), Martinez (2009); Perry & Morris (2014), the suspension may also lead to more behavioural deficits in school and juvenile delinquency. High levels of solitary disciplinary measures can negatively influence academic

achievement for suspended and non-suspended students. According to NASP (2002), Zero tolerance strategies may increase the discriminatory application of school discipline and they may also restrict access to a free and appropriate education.

A study carried out in Kenya by Onyango et al. (2016) on the effectiveness of exclusion in the management of student behaviour problems in public secondary schools in Kenya found out that expulsion tended to isolate the students, wasted a lot of time, increase rebellion among the students, and caused truancy and failure among the students.

Impact of Corporal Punishment as A Behaviour Modification Tool

According to Vaughn et al. (2007) and Lee & Axelrod (2005), punishment may stop the reoccurrence of inappropriate behaviour, but it does not guarantee a positive outcome. According to Vaughn et al. (2007), there are some justifications against the use of punishments as it is worthwhile and it usually causes unnecessary effects such as fear, antagonism, and discontent. In our Kenyan set up corporal punishment is still administered (Mweru, 2010). Punishment teaches the individual what not to do but does not guide the individual on what to do. The person who orchestrates punishment is often associated with it and viewed with negativity. Punishment needs to be refocused as it is not generalisable across various setups. Fear of punishment often leads to avoidance behaviour. Despite the banning of corporal punishment in Kenya by the Children's Act (2001), the use of caning or corporal punishment persists in our Kenyan schools.

According to Vaughn et al. (2007) and Flick (2011), punishment is frequently used by parents and teachers as teachers are unfamiliar with the repercussions of punishment and they are unable to effectively implement a more positive approach. It is often motivating to the person who administers it and often rewarding if it changes the negative behaviour as discipline and punishment are not similar.

According to Flick (2011), there are many behavioural strategies that might be helpful but involve punishment or a negative approach to behaviour management. Some of the techniques

include ignoring, time out, overcorrection, and response cost that may reduce negative behaviour. Ignoring behaviours continuously will reduce them and lead to their eradication. Time out as a measure removes the child from a position of receiving motivation from his misbehaviour. There are various forms of overcorrection like restitution overcorrection and positive practice overcorrection. In restitution overcorrection, the student is expected to improve the state of the surroundings in comparison to how it was prior to the misconduct. Positive practice correction entails a learning opportunity to engage in appropriate behaviour; for instance, when a student makes a mistake when spelling a given the word, he may be asked to rewrite it several times. Response cost is the withdrawal of positive reinforcers such as points or tokens after misconduct. According to Janney & Snell (2000), positive behavioural support that involves teaching acceptable behaviour in order to change the unwanted behaviour in the selected setting can be used to modify behavioural disorders. Positive behavioural support is also recommended by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004).

ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

Schools can replace ZT policies with evidence-based approaches, which can boost the institution's environment together with the learner's behaviour, including beneficial behavioural measures and resources in addition to community and psychological rights. According to Vaughn et al. (2007), some of the behavioural techniques that can be used to increase positive student behaviours include positive, rewarding, behaviour contract, and the Premack principle. Positive rewarding is the administration of positive feedback after showing positive behaviour. Behaviour contracts are spoken or jolted arrangements between the learners and the educators that specify the targeted behaviour together with its outcomes. Premack's philosophy creates a chance for positive behaviours to the educators and learners to act as stimulants for behaviours that educators require and additional behaviours which are justifiable to educators not to the learners. Some methods for decreasing unwanted behaviours include; ignoring, punishment, and time out. According to Allen et al.

(2005), positive behavioural support encourages an individually-centred and moral-inspired approach. It stresses the removal of challenges by assisting in developing new habits or expertise or by relaunching those which had disappeared or disrupted.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) recommends positive behavioural support (PBS). It involves teaching acceptable behaviour to change the unwanted behaviour in the selected setting to modify behavioural disorders (Janney & Snell, 2000). PBS focuses on forming personalised interventions that occur within a harmonised school-wide support. The PBS interventions accentuate on prevention of unwanted behaviour through a productive scholarly programme to boost one's livelihood. Teachers can work with other professionals, parents, and students to prepare behaviour support plans (Sugai et al., 2000). These plans describe the unwanted behaviours and how the environment can be changed to improve their behaviour. PBS is a behavioural psychology approach to modifying student behaviour (Carr et al., 1994). It involves teachers and students identifying unwanted behaviour, imitating positive behaviours, and providing clear repercussions for the unwanted behaviour in the classroom. Schools specify, instruct, and support students' positive behaviours (Janney & Snell, 2000). Studies have indicated that penalising learners in an unpredictable manner with no favourable substitute is unproductive and provides temporary answers.

Many schools have adopted ZT policies to mitigate the increase in conflict, misbehaviour, or substance abuse. Likewise, some institutions are using alternative programs that stress communal, behavioural, analytical competence building, personality literacy, or selected behavioural resources for learners who are susceptible to aggressive or unwanted behaviour (Child trends, 2007). Several pieces of research indicate that programs using a non-punitive approach to school discipline have had positive impacts on student behaviour and academic achievement (Flick, 2011). On the other hand, resource persons advocate for a strict perusal of the institutional isolatory rulings and likely changes in ZT policies (Black, 2015). For example, School-Wide Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a

framework created to reinforce understanding of behavioural requirements at school. It is the most commonly used beneficial behaviour support in America (Child trends, 2007). It is a multi-systemic way of institutional regulation with three levels. The three-level model involves primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Various studies highlight that different methods that have been found efficacious primarily emphasise primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (Osher et al., 2001; Rutherford et al., 2002; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Primary prevention measures focus on all learners in an institution, while secondary intervention measures focus on those learners who are at risk of developing behaviour problems. Tertiary intervention programs are individualised for the targeted learners with unwanted behaviours as part of the school-wide Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) models.

Primary prevention programs focus on teaching rules and positive behaviours and evaluating the school environment to identify and prevent problems before they occur (Rutherford et al., 2002). They also focus on the required feedback to unwanted habits, re-teaching required behaviours via behaviour reinforcement groups. (Rutherford et al., 2002). They involve educating learners on behavioural requirements, reinforcing beneficial behaviour, giving continuity of likely repercussions due to unwanted behaviour, and collecting information for decision-making purposes. According to Gresham (2004), primary interventions are implemented the same way for every student, either daily or weekly. Based on need, these interventions may include a school-wide bully prevention program, academic resources, social skills, and other areas.

Secondary prevention strategies involve developing behaviour support programs for learners having behavioural problems, institutional awareness, reinforcement of learners' behavioural objectives, and collaborative disciplinary support (OSEP, 2005; Sugai et al., 2000; Sprague et al., 2000; Bradley, 2007). They target students at risk of behavioural problems or those displaying early signs of behaviour problems, including those with poor academic skills and not responding to the primary prevention program. They consist of specific interventions that are consistent with the

school-wide behavioural expectations. That group usually consists of about 5 to 15 % of the total school population. According to Gresham (2004), the importance of secondary intervention is to minimise recurrent episodes of unwanted behaviours and poor school results by using customised methods that give more reinforcement for groups of about ten or more students. Common secondary prevention practices include contingency contracting, conflict intervention of misbehaviour in advance, self-management techniques together with remedial academic programs.

The tertiary prevention measure is the most individualised and rigorous program created for learners who show the most challenging behavioural problems that clearly affect learning, are alarming and troublesome, and may require that they be placed in social isolation for behaviour therapy (Flick, 2011). It aims to recognise and reduce the occurrence and magnitude of these behavioural disruptions. Tertiary prevention is implemented to support children with more serious behaviour problems, and it includes more intense, individualised intervention, often with family or community involvement, as guided by a functional behavioural assessment (FBA) which is a way of finding out why children are involved in unwanted behaviour and how that behaviour relates to the environment (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2002). FBA is the most productive tool for boosting the institution's environment and minimising conflict (Vaughn et al., 2007). There are several vital steps in designing an effective FBA: defining the unwanted behaviour in precise behavioural terms, gathering, and analysing information, recording the incidents and behaviours that happen before the unwanted behaviours and the repercussions, and developing a guess as to why the behaviour is occurring and developing a behavioural intervention plan to remediate on the unwanted behaviour (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2002; Shippen et al., 2003; Flick, 2011).

FBA often involves assessing the curriculum, instructional, and motivational reinforcers concerning the students' behaviour, physical classroom structure, the individuals present in the classroom, current health issues, educational subject, and work demands (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2002; Flick, 2011). It can provide information to

develop a guess as to why a student engages in the behaviour when the student is likely to show the behaviour and situations in which it is least likely to occur. It uses a variety of techniques to perceive what is behind unwanted behaviours. This includes looking at non-scholarly factors that might lead to a child's frustration while learning. Understanding what is behind unwanted behaviour can help you and the schools find ways to change the behaviour. The basic idea behind this approach is that the child's behaviour serves a function; thus, a child may act in a certain way to get to an intended outcome or goal. Some of the purposes of unwanted behaviours include seeking recognition, avoiding, seeking retaliation, and power, for sensual stimulation, among others (Evans & Meyer, 1985; Janney & Snell, 2000; Flick, 2011).

Research has shown beneficial results of SWPBIS (Horner et al., 2010). Various researches have explored the effects of SWPBS administration on the whole institutional environment and security and improved scholarly learners' results, such as minimising unwanted behaviour and ameliorating communal and scholarly performance. In contrast to ZT strategies, positive disciplinary strategies focus on increasing desirable or acceptable behaviours by improving the student environment instead of decreasing unacceptable behaviours through punishment. According to Bos and Vaughn (2006), positive approaches may promote a healthy student-teacher relationship, while using punitive approaches may deter the learner-teacher relationship. Incorporating alternatives to ZT policies into schools' discipline and behavioural interventions can significantly impact the school environment and student learning (NASP, 2002). Schools applying positive approaches have shown decreased cases of unwanted behaviours by 20-60%, leading to better scholarly performance for all students.

CONCLUSION

In this review, ZT measures like suspension and expulsion were ineffective in managing behaviour disorders. They tend to disrupt academic performance, increase negative behaviour and the possibility of future suspensions and expulsions, and detrimentally impact future generations' wages and job opportunities. ZT policies disrupt the

studying surroundings, institution's environment, or institution security, as some expelled students may carry grudges against those left in school. Kenyan institutions need to determine the root cause of the behaviour disorder in question through the Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA), which determines the reasons behind the challenging behaviours found in Kenyan institutions, such as drug abuse, and destruction of property through fires, among others. The review encourages our Kenyan institutions to adopt School-Wide Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), a non-condoning method used in controlling institutions in addition to misbehaviour of students has shown positive results in an unsystematically controlled trial research. Kenyan schools should enforce such rules and regulations with the community's support and the parents. Learners should be involved when making such positive rules and regulations to own them. Schools can use psychologists, and counsellors, among others to investigate and create regulatory laws and beneficial behaviour instructional approaches. Productive options for zero tolerance strategies involve families and community resources. A wide systemic approach to reducing school violence needs parental involvement, classroom behavioural approaches for unwanted behaviour, early assessment of extreme behaviour problems, functional assessment, individual behaviour support plans, school-wide discipline, and behavioural planning.

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