EFFECTS OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MUTARE URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MUTARE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the Effects of Deviant Behaviour on academic performance in Mutare Urban Schools in Mutare District. This study used the descriptive survey as a design for the research study. The main instruments used were the interview and observation. Purposive sampling was adopted. Three primary schools were selected. A pilot study was used on one school to improve on the clarity and relevance of the instruments. The study came up with the result that deviant behaviour has a very detrimental effect on academic performance. It also revealed that most teachers use corporal punishment as a means of managing deviant behaviour in schools. The heads use exclusion as the last resort to pupils who have chronic deviant behaviour. The use of the collaborative method in curbing deviant behaviour was discussed by some of the respondents at great depth as a possible remedy for deviant behaviour in schools.

Keywords: Effects, Deviant Behaviour, Academic Performance, Primary schools.

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to explore the challenges faced by schools in implementing discipline in Mutare Urban Primary Schools. Discipline in schools is an international framework which is intended to improve the quality of education systems. Discipline has taken a center stage globally according to the UN Secretary General’s study on violence against children (UNGA resolution 57/190) that is rooted in children's human right to protection from all forms of violence. There are many ways through which the school enforces discipline. For children in many countries, corporal punishment is a regular part of the school experience, and it is also a form of child abuse. According to Amanuel. (2009), children come into this world helpless and unable to fully develop without us adults. As teachers, our job is to nurture them and teach them how to decent lives. Bear (2011) stated that worldwide, school violence wears many faces. It includes gang activity, locker thefts, bullying and intimidation, gun use and assault, just about anything that produces a victim. The number of pupils being excluded or playing truant is increasing every year in the country. Bambara et al. (2009) concurred with the above when they said teachers complain that bullying is a serious problem and that pupils are becoming more and more violent. Disciplining students, particularly those with chronic or serious behavior problems, is a longstanding challenge for educators. At the heart of this challenge is the use of punitive versus supportive disciplinary practices. In recent years
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reaching and damaging consequences for children and can limit their horizons. This is not a problem to be ignored. A good school behaviour policy, agreed and communicated to all staff, communities, pupils, parents and careers consistently applied is the basis of an effective approach to managing behaviour. Teachers need to feel that they have the support of the school leadership in applying the behavior policy (Osher et al. 2010). This research answers the following questions:

1. What make up a deviant in a school setup?
2. What causes deviant behaviours found among students?
3. What are the effects of deviance in the academic performance of the students?
4. How can we reduce the effects of deviance in school?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research intended to investigate the topic, “Management of Deviant Behaviour in Mutare Urban Schools in Mutare District”. This was prompted by the fact that deviant behaviour has been increasing in schools in recent times. From the literature reviewed, punitive and positive forms of disciplinary measures are still means and forms of effectively disciplining of pupils.

A sample of 30 teachers, 3 school heads, 3 Education Inspectors and one District Education Officer from Mutare District were involved in the study. The teachers were randomly selected from the three schools to form the sample. The qualitative approach was used because the researcher was convinced that the method would yield the most usable data. The instrument was developed and piloted by the researcher in order to eliminate any ambiguities and errors before its distribution. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher himself. That personal involvement yielded positive results of one hundred percent returns.

It was not any easy research to carry out because school heads were generally defensive and unwilling to divulge information. It was observed that some teachers were for continued use of corporal punishment but could not admit to its use since they are aware it had been banned by P35 of 1999. Banning corporal punishment was said to be conflicting with cultural norms which promote the beating of the African child. Responses from the study indicated that it was actually the parents who urged teachers to beat the children because it is acceptable by the societies they are coming from. Teachers have generally commented that the banning of corporal punishment has made pupils to be so commonly indisciplined. However, it is also common knowledge that the use of the cane has some adverse effects on pupils.

Through the questionnaires, an in depth interview, observational checklist and document analysis, the researcher established that besides the use of corporal punishment, teachers also resort to other means in managing deviant behaviour in their classes. Guidance and counseling an array of other means were identified for the management of deviant behaviours of pupils in schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Student deviance in school setup

In response to the question on problems they normally face regarding students’ welfare, 70% of the respondents cited poor background and their not having food, stationery, late to school not being able to pay their fees and regular absenteeism from school. Lack of discipline and
failure to abide to school rules is a common phenomenon which was observed in the
schools. 20% of the respondents cited parent’s negligence as a problem facing children. 30%
highlighted having to walk long distances to school. 10% cited lack of interest in school work
as a problem affecting student welfare. 5% of the respondents indicated that children who
come from child headed households are not stable.

Table 2 Deviant Behaviour in Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deviant behaviour</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug abuse</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise making</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mocking</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offensive language</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in love affairs</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common deviant behaviours in the primary school were bullying and noise-making
as highlighted by 100% of the respondents. 90% of the respondents indicated that stealing is
prevalent in their schools. Lying was found to be common in most schools and this was
shown by 70% of the teachers. Drug abuse and cheating were fairly common as indicated by
50% of the teachers. 40% of the respondents cited fighting as a deviant behavior in the
schools. The use of foul language was uncommon in the primary schools as indicated by
30% of the respondents. Mocking others and vandalism were seen not that common as only
20% of the respondents highlighted. The least common deviant behaviour was engaging in
love affairs as indicated by 15% of the teachers. This is because the primary school students
are young and have not yet started engaging in love affairs.

Causes of deviant behaviour

90% of the respondents noted that peer pressure and not loving schooling lack of schooling
caused deviant behaviour. Home background was also indicated as a cause of deviant
behavior by 60% of the respondents. Furthermore, lack of parental guidance and the
prevalence of child-headed families were highlighted as the other cause of deviant
behaviour. 80% of the respondents indicated that poverty was a cause of deviant behavior in
schools. Poor teaching methods were highlighted by 25% of the respondents. Attention-
seeking was reported also as a cause of deviant behaviour by 15% of the respondents. Strict
rules in schools were cited by 20% of the respondents as a cause of deviant behaviour. It was
observed by the researcher that some dropouts are being readmitted in schools and they do
not easily adapt to rules and regulations of the school. In school every teacher is expected to
observe specified institutional rules and regulations. Teachers who do not observe these
specified behaviours such as school timings, teaching assignment and desired behaviour with
students and colleagues, can also be classified as deviants.
In the school situation, following school timings, teaching classes regularly and behaving properly with students and colleagues are basic expected school norms. Merrell, Ervin & Gimple-Peacock (2012) highlight that, individuals’ anti-social behaviours are shaped by the influence of their co-workers as they found significant relationship between the level of anti-social behaviour exhibited by newly inducted individuals, and that which was exhibited by their co-workers. They visualized that the newly recruited teachers usually work honestly in the beginning of their career but after some time they also indulge in the same type of deviant behaviour. Weak monitoring system in education does facilitate continuity in deviant behaviour. Professional training and due incentives do play important role to develop an important role in promoting positive behaviours and desired practices. This is in line with Amanuel (2009) who states that profoundly ill discipline and violent student’s behaviour - teacher contributed -are detrimental and disturbing not only to an individual or students, but also to effective learning and teaching in the classroom. Students who present uncontrolled violent anti-social behaviour lack exhibiting of self discipline. Merrell, Ervin & Gimple-Peacock (2012) also argued that from his research evidence, commitment to school or its teachers is even stronger than that with the family in predicting delinquency. Poor school performance, not liking school or being weakly attached to school, low educational and occupational aspirations have a strong association with delinquency. From the held interviews it was revealed that school experiences are not only directly associated with delinquency, but also more correlated with delinquency than other institutional factors, especially family relationships. After the implementation of seven years compulsory primary education, youngsters are required to finish at least primary education. Every day they spend eight hours in school, how they perceive the school life greatly affects their attachment to the setting. If a student fails to be strongly attached to school in developing relations with teachers and schoolmates, participating in school activities, conforming to the rules and codes of school, they may be more vulnerable to temptations outside. The Zimbabwean education system gives strong emphasis on one's academic achievement. It fails to have ample provision for teaching of basic working skills and the cultivation of a sense of achievement among students. When we imagine a student who has learning problems, he/she enters school ill-equipped to succeed. Thus, he/she would begin to experience failure, becomes frustrated and often plays truancy. Generally failure in education breeds disillusion and resentment which in turn would lead to rebellious behaviour that can be a contributing factor to precipitating disruptive behaviour.

**Effects of deviant behaviour on academic performance**

On the question of the effects of deviant behaviour on the academic performance of students 100% of the respondents said that these students perform badly, resulting in low pass rate and failure. They further commented that it leads to poor concentration during lessons and students won’t realize their full potentials because learning time is lost when students get punished. Deviant behaviour also affects other students negatively since the teacher will be concentrating on one individual at the expense of the rest of the class. For example, a bullied child may be affected negatively as fear is instilled in him/her and may not concentrate in class resulting in that child performing poorly.

**Effects of Deviant Behaviour in school**

Commenting on the question of deviant behaviour in the school in general, it was said by the respondents that, it has become a big problem in schools and is also increasing. The change in parenting styles, methods used to curb indiscipline, economic meltdown and negative social
media has played a major part in increasing deviance in the school. There is need for schools to put emphasis on discipline in order to promote pupils’ safety, classroom efficiency and improve the learning environment. Children are confusing their rights with deviant behaviour hence they need to be taught their rights and school rules to reduce deviant behaviour. According to observations, apart from this, different teachers may formulate their own set of visible and invisible rules in the classrooms. This is supported by Hargreaves (1975) who demonstrated the level of sophistication required of pupils to adapt their behaviour to the nature of school. Pupils may find themselves in trouble with one teacher for a behaviour which is tolerated by another. Actually, they do not have adequate social skills to tackle the changing demands by various students.

**Preventing Pathogenic deviant behaviour**

On how to prevent retrogressive or pathogenic deviance in a school, 100% of the respondents recommended guiding and counseling students with deviant behaviour. 70% of the respondents indicated that the school staff should not work alone but should also engage parents in the learning of their children. Thus the school staff and parents should work hand in glove in order to create a good rapport in managing deviant behaviour amongst the students. 30% of the respondents cited the creation of a caring school environment as an important measure to curb deviance in a school. This can be achieved by engaging pupils in worthwhile activities that would make them like school activities and desist from deviant behaviour. 90% of the respondents indicated that formulating school rules together with the students will assist in moulding good characters. Making use of prefects to ensure that these rules are observed will reduce deviance in the school. This can also be enhanced through the engagement of a disciplinary committee that will ensure that rules are being observed. 15% of the respondents cited the reward system as a means of instilling discipline.

**Possible remedies of deviant behaviour in a school**

Teachers came up with various methods they use to curb deviant behaviour in their classrooms. 80% of the respondents indicated that they use corporal punishment to manage pupils who misbehave. Although this method has been banned the teachers are still using it. The researcher discovered that this negative form of discipline is dehumanizing as students have to be subjected to being bitten with a stick. The government policy on Corporal Punishment Director P35 of 1999 and New Constitution of Zimbabwe has banned the use of corporal punishment. Teachers favour this method stating that it a fast and effective method to curb deviant behaviour as it enables them to quickly deal with misbehaviour.

![Use of Corporal Punishment](image-url)
From the fig above 20% of the respondents indicated that they do not use corporal punishment because it inflicts pain and brings about erratic violence that could erupt anytime because of in-built anger. Therefore corporal punishment will not bring about effective discipline. Some respondents indicated that corporal punishment has negative impact on the growth of pupils. Expanding on these views that were given, corporal punishment was the most dehumanising method of dealing with misbehaviour. It was also said to cause irreparable damage on pupils’ mental health. Corporal punishment was therefore perceived as a harmful and ineffective measure for dealing with pupils’ behaviour.

Ways of managing deviant behaviour

70% of the respondents regarded manual punishment as an effective measure for dealing with deviant behaviour. Teachers gave examples of digging at the garden, sweeping the classroom, picking papers or litter, watering the garden, digging trenches and cleaning the toilets as the form of punishment they give, depending on the gravity of the deviant behaviour. Commenting on the use of manual punishment, the respondents viewed it as a method after which, if administered properly, will make offenders not to commit the offence again. 30% of them discredited the use of manual punishment because it consumes most of children’s learning time and hence the child loses learning time and it would end up affecting the results of the child.

Detention and isolation

70% of the respondents said detention and isolation were seen as a viable form of punishment for curbing deviant behaviour. Mcqueen (2002) observed that detention after school is the most commonly used procedure for curbing deviant behaviour. Mcqueen (2002) suggested that detention must be administered with seriousness. Hence, teachers who send pupils to detention must provide work for them to do. This will obviously keep it from being a time to sleep or create other disturbances. Contrary to this view, Varna (2003) said that, “detention may not prove to be an effective form of discipline because children will tend to associate school environment with discomfort.” This is said to lead pupils into developing a negative attitude towards school work. When it is used, punishment would worsen the matter instead of correcting it. The respondents indicated that when they send children to detention they do not give them school work; it is just an empty room where the child is just isolated. Thus they feel the child will not commit the same deviant behaviour. 30% of the respondents who were against the use of detention and isolation said that when the child eventually moves out of the education cycle he/she would have been prepared for the world of isolation and becomes a brewed criminal.

Rebuking and verbal reprimand

Rebuking and verbal reprimand are frequently used by teachers as indicated by 80% of the respondents. This approach my result in immediate conformity by the pupils and it is not time-wasting as the child would not lose learning time. The 20% who were against rebuking and reprimand pointed out that it can be disastrous as it destroys the child’s self-concept and esteem. Consequently the child might begin to hate the teacher and lose his/her will to learn. Agreeing with the above line of thought, Mcqueen (2002) commented that criticism often leads to students’ reactions that are more disruptive than corrective. Amanuel (2009) further stated that correction should be given automatically, willingly and with respect for the student
can trigger some effort to improve or desist from displaying deviant behaviour. Corrective measures are thus more effective than criticism.

**Referring to higher authorities**

Being referred to the deputy or the head was mostly used by female teachers as indicated by 50% of the respondents. This method shifts the burden of disciplining the child from the teacher to the administrator who will go on to administer disciplinary measures. The respondents highlighted that they usually referred gross deviant behaviour like stealing, truancy and bullying. Some teachers refer petty issues to the deputy or head of which students will end up undermining the teacher’s authority. Those who were against referral stated that it can disrupt the performance of administrative duties.

**Table 3 Guidance and Counseling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidance and Counseling</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N)</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guidance and counseling**

80% of the respondents stated that they used Guidance and Counseling in helping pupils with deviant behaviour. They pointed out that it is a very good and effective method which will not destroy the child’s self esteem but will mould the child into practicing good behaviour. It is one of the positive ways to curb deviant behaviour. 20% of the respondents were against the use of guidance and counseling because it is time-consuming. While serving one child the teacher leaves fifty pupils without the practitioner. Some of the teachers indicated that they do not have the requisite qualification to conduct the session.

**Written apologies**

Written and spoken apologies are not widely used by the teachers as only 30% said that they used them. They stated that this method is most effective for first time offenders or students who rarely get into trouble. This apology is said to place the individual in an embarrassing position and forces them to think about their action and reduce the probability of the action to recur.

**Managing Deviant Behaviour**

In a focus group discussion it was revealed that in order to ensure students are well-behaved, they are guided by rules and regulations on performing their duties at school. However, all sampled schools have in general, 18 prescriptive rules concerning dress, personal decoration and interpersonal behaviour. As Amanuel (2009) mentioned the degree of stringency with which schools enforce these rules is positively associated with levels of pupil absenteeism and delinquency. If the school controls students strictly, negative effects might naturally follow. For teachers, the first stage in identifying potential troublemakers is the pupil infringing school rules. The content and implementation of rules always create conflicts between teachers and students. In a focus group discussion one of the respondents said:-
In order to show their authority in the hierarchy, some teachers may develop strategies to control students so as to prevent possible challenges from them. Teachers stereotype individual pupils according to their capacity to create trouble. During recess and lunch time, teachers may discuss students in the staff room and further confirm their labels on particular students. The comments may spread among teachers. Even those who have not participated in those past episodes will hear the messages.

Once a student gains a reputation for trouble-making, a positive teacher-student relationship is difficult to form. And even if a pupil demonstrates a genuine improvement in conduct, it is hard for teachers to believe and accept. (Bird et al. 1980) This has to a certain extent, negatively affected the youngsters development. According to observation, schools, in order to match the goals of the system, may adopt some practices which have made a substantial contribution to the level of disaffected behaviour manifested and to the quality of the education experience of the students in their charge. Notably were the powers and the prefects authority with that cannot allow a student to question an authority even when beaten by a school prefect, the prefect is always right phenomena does not go well with the common students whose rights could feel infringed by the prefects acting on the blessing of the teachers or the administration. Those students who fail to survive in the system may withdraw from distressing experiences at school. Some people have to be punished as failure with school work or conflict with a particular teacher. Eventually, they may be more vulnerable to the bad influences in society.

**Collective Management of Deviant Behaviour**

All our teachers and administrators need to set and implement much higher standards of discipline and academic achievement in all our primary schools. Zimbabwe is generally rich in human capital with enough progressive knowledge and information. What is needed is sound leadership and action at every level of education, starting at the home and school! In an interview one respondent said:

> Anti-social behaviours are shaped by the influence of their co-workers, as they found significant relationship between the level of anti-social behaviour exhibited by newly inducted individuals, and that which was exhibited by their co-workers. They visualized that the newly recruited teachers usually work honestly in the beginning of their career but after some time they also indulge in the same type of deviant behaviour.

This clearly shows that weak monitoring system in education does facilitate continuity in deviant behaviour. Professional training and due incentives do play important role to develop an important role in promoting positive behaviours and desired practices.

Focus group feedback expressed need to impose a greater level of God given responsibility and accountability on parents and students themselves for achieving excellence. We demand much too little of our parents and students for taking charge of the learning and disciplining of their children. Now we are experiencing the brutal consequences of parental neglect and lack of accountability at home. Our media houses and churches need to be part of this urgent struggle to ensure that parents take charge of their home and children daily! It must be absolutely clear to us all that the problems of deviance and academic underachievement must be confronted and solved at home and within the local school. This takes very hard and
stubborn work daily with God’s help. The key stakeholders are our parents, teachers, school administration and students themselves. We are the ones responsible for solving these problems on a daily basis. This is where the solution must be found!!

Also, each school must have a strategic management and development plan which focuses on dealing with and solving all issues of discipline, classroom management, academic and technical performance, security and other operational matters. Our mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other family members are the persons who must first educate, discipline and nurture each child in Godly love at home. The family is the first school. We need to restore this basic principle in education. Furthermore, each school must have the required expertise within the school management and staff to develop, put into operation and evaluate the school’s strategic management and development plan and to implement solutions. And this can only be possible by increasing substantially the number of training opportunities for our teachers, lecturers, vice principals and principals at The Bachelors, Masters and PhD levels in a wide area of specialties to include the academic, technical and vocational subject areas. This will ensure that all our pre-schools, primary and secondary school teachers and lecturers are professionally trained and qualified to teach before they enter the teaching service.

CONCLUSIONS

- The research revealed that the majority of teachers in Mutare urban schools in Mutare District use punishment as one of the means used by teachers to manage deviance in their classes.
- Though punishment comes in numerous forms, teachers share the varying views as regards to the use of and effects of corporal punishment.
- While the problem of corporal punishment was quite prevalent, it was also observed that like any other form of punishment, it can equally harm pupils if not reasonably administered.
- A close association between lack of discipline and failure rate/poor academic results on the part of pupils was also established.
- The poor results could be attributed to the inability to administer disciplinary measures.
- Frequent disruption of the teaching was also observed.
- Most respondents agreed that instead of beating the pupils, they would rather send the pupil to the head’s office. At the office the child is made to wait for hours since the head is involved in many other disciplinary issues.
- Most respondents identified gaps related to guidance and counseling. Comments made in support of these gaps were that the teachers were not that professionally knowledgeable in this area so that they cannot really help the child with serious deviant behaviour.
- The disciplinary committees in the schools are not operating that well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- After a careful analysis of the responses and comments made by the respondents, it is imperative that the following recommendations be made:-
- There is an urgent need for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to educate teachers on measures for handling deviant behaviour by organising workshops, seminars or short courses on effective management of deviant
behaviour in schools. Some of these staff-development courses could be school-based so that so that teachers could feel motivated and inspired in disciplining pupils.

- The disciplining of pupils should involve school heads, teachers and parents. The heads should not be seen as the only people who implement disciplinary procedures in the school. Functional disciplinary committees should be established in all the schools. They should be comprised of the deputy head, teachers and pupil representatives. All the above mentioned people should work hand in glove in the improvement of good behaviour in the school.

- The home environment of the pupil should be assessed as this might be the greatest contributor when it comes to the management of deviant behaviour.

- Teachers are urged to also seriously consider some form of interactionist approaches like guidance and counseling when dealing with cases of pupils’ misbehavior as these are equally good and effective measures in the attainment and maintenance of discipline among pupils.

- Teachers to always seriously consider the most appropriate measures before they rush to punish pupils, anyhow. As such, the nature and seriousness of the offence should determine the kind and severity of punishment.

- There should be clear rules and regulations on school safety for pupils.

- The use of tangible rewards for good behaviour, regardless of grade level or individual needs and without emphasizing other strategies that promote self-discipline can also be used.

- Teachers should teach students the skills that will promote appropriate and independently guided behaviour.

REFERENCES


