ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BULLYING AND DROPOUT RATES AMONG PUPILS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SABATIA SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between bullying and school dropout rates. a number of children of school going age are not attending school in Public Primary Schools in Sabatia Sub-County. In all public primary schools, the annual average rate of dropout has been 4.1% and this is an implication that about 4.1 % of students are not able to finish their schooling. Surveys give varying causes of the dropout menace in various parts of Kenya. By the time this study was being born, little effort had been done to establishing the extent to which bullying has contributed to school dropout rates in Vihiga County, The study employed the group dynamic theory and mixed methods approach to determine this relationship. it targeted 31,703 pupils in classes 5 to 8 and a 100 public primary schools in Sabatia Sub-County together with their 87 dropouts of the previous year. To select respondents of the study, multistage sampling technique was used in three stages; simple random sampling of 30 public primary schools in the research area, saturated sampling of all the 3,201 pupils in classes 5 to 8 in the selected schools and convenience sampling of 6 drop-outs. Three instruments were used for data collection; a questionnaire a document guide and a Focus Group Discussion guide validity and reliability was ensured through piloting. Qualitative data was analyzed through frequency counts and quantitative data done using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. the Findings revealed that there was a strong positive, moderate positive and weak positive relationship between the observed drop-out rates and physical, verbal and emotional bullying cases respectively. It was concluded that the both physical and verbal bullying significantly contribute to high number of school dropout cases. The study recommended that stakeholders in the education sector should formulate policy that can identify and crack down on all forms of physical and verbal bullying in public primary schools in Sabatia Cub-County.

Key Words: Relationship, Bullying, Dropout Rates.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying refers to negative comments or action physically or psychologically done repetitively over time among perpetrators and victims (Juvenon, 2014). This implies that a person becomes "a victim of bullying when he or she is exposed repeatedly over time to negative actions by one or more individuals and is unable to defend him or herself (Olweus, 2004). United Kingdom records highest rates of bullying especially in secondary schools as opposed to other states in Europe. nearly half of UK secondary school pupils (46%) think that bullying is a problem in their schools and is caused by students' language difficulties, skin color, race and religion (Lipsett, 2008). the scenario is even worse in England where about 48 percent of students believe that bullying is a major problem in school, as opposed to 43 percent and 32 percent of students thinking similarly in

Scotland and Wales respectively. There is no doubt that bullying trespasses on the children's right to privacy, freedom and security as it negatively impact on the victims psycho-social, emotional, physical, as well as educational wellbeing (Lipsett,2008).

In South Africa, every child is entitled to protection from neglect or degradation. Bullying is also predominant in schools Kenya. a research was conducted in 17 public secondary schools by Africa Mental Health Foundation found that bullying in Kenyan schools is higher than trends around the world (Ndetei, Ongecha, Khasakhala, 2007). it revealed that through bullying, 82% of the learners had their belongings stolen, 63 percent were physically beaten and 64 percent blackmailed or threatened. In a most recent case, Kenyans were horrified after details leading to the early retirement of a principal in one of the country's leading national schools emerged. The brutal stories of bullying and mistreatment of Form One students at the Alliance High School, a national school of great repute in Kenya left many with a bitter taste in their mouths.

Wagachira, (2015), in her study to establish the causes of increased girl child dropout in mixed public secondary schools in Muranga County, found that bullying was among the factors that made the girl child to dropout as it caused the learner to lose self-esteem and get scared of going to school. In addition, studies relating to dropout rates in Vihiga County by Ichaminya, (2013) and Injendi, (2015) enlisted various factors influencing dropout rates of learners, however the bullying aspect and its impact on dropout rates is not evident. This is in spite of media reports raising red flags on the issue of bullying that most recently affected top national schools including one from the region (Odhiambo and Nyabundi, 2017).

2.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the background information reviewed, some scholars have alleged that students graduating from Kenya's 8-4-4 system have not displayed evidence of attaining adequate skills and knowledge for self-reliance. The 8-4-4 system is deemed to be a *Failed Philosophy*. It is argued to have been the best system of education that never was (Ngome 2004; Kabita and Ji, 2017; Kendall 2007; MOEST 2015; KICD 2017; Makau 1985; Milligan 2017; Ogutu 2017 and Wanzala, 2017). The researchers in this paper argue that despite Kenya's CBC being aligned with Kenya's development needs and Africa's Agenda 2063 that aims to address continental's youth employment through skills revolution, lessons learned from implementation intricacies of 8-4-4 system ought to be the guiding principles in actualizing the next agenda in Kenya's education. The country should not allow the hiccups that were witnessed in the implementation and execution processes that characterized 8-4-4 curriculum. The researchers propose that since CBC is a paradigm shift, it requires trade-ins from all stakeholders, beneficiaries and adequate time for training personnel, preparation of necessary materials and adequate piloting. Any oversights in these processes may lead to implementation haemorrhages that can rock the very education legacy Kenya is yearning to secure for her future citizens' lives.

3.OBJECTIVE

In January 2003 the NARC (National Rainbow Coalition) government implemented the free primary education program with the aim of providing more opportunities to the disadvantaged school age children (Otach, 2008).This initiative aimed at creating positive outcome which could result in significant increase in enrolment in a majority of the schools (Otach, 2008). the main

objective of this research was to determine the relationship between physical bullying and drop-out rates among pupils in public primary schools in Sabatia Sub-County

3.METHODOLOGY

The study employed the group dynamic theory and mixed methods approach to determine this relationship. it targeted 31,703 pupils in classes 5 to 8 and a 100 public primary schools in Sabatia Sub-County together with their 87 dropouts of the previous year. To select respondents of the study, multistage sampling technique was used in three stages; simple random sampling of 30 public primary schools in the research area, saturated sampling of all the 3,201 pupils in classes 5 to 8 in the selected schools and convenience sampling of 6 drop-outs. Three instruments were used for data collection; a questionnaire a document guide and a Focus Group Discussion guide validity and reliability was ensured through piloting. Qualitative data was analyzed through frequency counts and quantitative data done using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

4.LITERATURE REVIEW

Student dropout refers to the children who leave school or college before they complete their studies MoES (2003). Students, who leave the school system without completing a grade or level, are commonly referred to as dropouts. The National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES), describes a dropout as a person who has not graduated from high school and is not currently enrolled in fulltime secondary education (*Achoka, J.S.K. (2007)*. Physical bullying can be described as negative physical acts committed constantly over time between bullies and victims. Several studies have attempted to address this form of bullying among schools (Glew *et al.* (2005) correlates bullying and psychological adjustment to academic performance in elementary schools in the United States. he found out that nearly 30% of the students experienced bullying in the schools.

Nadine, (2014) carried out a study on the impact of bullying on academic success for learners with and without exceptionalities in the USA. His findings indicated that these exceptional learners were more prone to bullying and were afraid of attending school because of the insecure environment, thereby preventing their academic success. There is no doubt that these students were bullied more than their counterparts because of their conditions given that they even lack necessary social skills to enable them protect themselves and stand up to the perpetrators. most importantly, this research finding provided light on how learning institutions and parents can support those learners who are battling with bullying. The findings revealed that bullying has a negative effect on academic success but had more interest on the differences between learners with and without exceptionalities. Furthermore, the kind of data collection method was limited to interview guide which does not allow for quantitative estimations and therefore views collected without any empirical evidence renders the results weak in application(Barney,2004). The current study seeks to have strong empirical findings on the impact of physical bullying on academic performance of learners.

A study by Maqsood, (2012) aimed at establishing the effect of bullying on the performance of learners at primary level of the students in Sindh, Pakistan. At least 65% of the respondents attributed school dropout to physical bullying. It was recommended that various seminars need to be organized to help in communicating new methods to deal with learners at primary level and to

increase their understanding of the rate of bullying into the school environment. These findings are weak in conclusion since the empirical impact of bullying was not established. The study examined the differences in bullying between different schools but failed to establish strong statistical facts on the measure of this effect.

Studies of children in many European countries and in America have consistently found that bullying can have a negative impact on school functioning, self- perception, and academic achievement (Boulton, Smith, & Cowie, 2010). Somatic effects such as headaches and stomach aches are also common among victims (Due, 2005). Becoming a victim can make a child vulnerable to psychological distress, depression, irritability, anxiety, loneliness, and a sense of helplessness (Peskin, Tortolero, & Baumler, 2007). In a study on coping with verbal and social bullying in middle school, Donoghue, Almeida, Rocha and Callahan, (2014) examined the predictions made by students in two middle schools about the ways that they would cope with becoming a victim of verbal and social bullying. They also analyzed influences for coping strategies and student willingness to seek help when bullied at school. Data was collected from 159 children in grades six through eight. The main findings of this research indicated that middle school students predicted adaptive coping strategies for themselves if they were verbally or socially bullied, but that their predictions varied by both gender and recent victimization status; and that students who expected to engage in more adaptive coping strategies were more willing to report bullying at school.

Verbal bullying is any slanderous statement or accusations that cause the victim undue emotional distress, (Bolton, 2005). Example of verbal bullying include directing foul language or profanity at the target, using derogatory statements or deriding the person's name it may also involve commenting negatively on someone's looks, clothes and body. According to UNESCO, (2017) the underlying causes of school violence and bullying include gender and social norms and wider contextual and structural factors. A victim in the short term may feel depressed, anxious, and angry and have excessive stress. This argument is corroborated by Kaltiala & Rantanen, (2000) who state that bullied children feel as though their life has fallen apart and have a significant drop in school performance. This could easily lead to dropout.

In a study on verbal abuse and cognition in the developing mind by, Reema, Miriam & Babu, (2015) a group of 90 highly verbally abused and 90 lowly verbally abused children were compared on tests of cognitive development. The results indicated that the highly abused children scored lower than the low abused children on all the tests. In attention and simultaneous processing tasks, the younger children in the high abused group performed better than the older children, suggesting better attention strategies and an absence of negative thought in the younger groups of high-abused children. Girls performed better than boys on the attention task. These results suggest that verbal abuse is associated with less favorable neuro-psychological functioning.

There are a number of sociological and psychological theories that relate various factors to pupil dropout rates. This study was guided by Olweus, (2014) Group Dynamic Theory that postulates that there are three types of bullying. The group dynamic theory directly links bullying to school dropout rates. It defines the aspects underlying bullying such as aggression and abnormal behavior by some individuals. This makes them uncomfortable to coexist with others or adversely affect others through any form of harassment as proposed by Murkowski, (2001) and Bolton, (2000).

Therefore, it "emerges from an interaction of complex factors related to individual characteristics of a youth, relationships with their peers and adults, and school community norms" (Gladden, 2014).

The group dynamic perspectives that were proposed include "integrity, homogeneity, and other evolutionary changes which are viewed in a group as goals that are entailed in a dynamic perspective" (Murkowski, 2001). The achievement of these objectives is given high value by the group affiliates. Therefore people or children that cannot attain these goals usually face victimization and exclusion from such groups by the members. Therefore, the rejected children become anxious or socially isolated because of they are incapacitated to meet the anticipated requirements within the group.

The resultant effect of their rejection could be exit from the groups, in the present case; the results could be school dropout. This theory therefore links bullying to dropout, such that, the children that are bullies could find it difficult to stay in a school due to their need to dominate others and in the cause falling victim of punishment and finally dropping from school. In addition, the victims of bullying, such as those who are harassed may find the environment unfriendly due to the challenges that they face in schools and thus end up dropping from the same schools.

5.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that there was a strong positive correlation between physical bullying and learners' dropout rates. It was therefore concluded that physical bullying significantly contributed to the number of school dropout cases being recorded in Public Primary Schools in Sabatia Sub-County. Basing on the findings of this study, physical bullying was proven to correlate closely to the Dropout Rates in Sabatia Sub-County, the Ministry of Education should identify and crack down on all forms of physical bullying including but not limited to the ones highlighted in this study. This may minimize cases related to pupils dropping out of school.

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