

Effect of School Affective Environment on Psychosocial Well-being between Pupils in Public and Private Primary Schools in Kiambu County, Kenya 2017

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ABSTRACT: The study examined and compared the effect of school affective environment on psychosocial well-being between pupils in public and private primary schools. The study was conducted in Kiambu County and targeted a school population of 260,459 comprising of headteachers, teachers and pupils. Causal-Comparative research design was employed. A sample size of 384 was drawn from accessible population using stratified, simple random and purposive procedures. The computer program-the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were presented in tables and measures of central tendency that established differences between public and private schools in terms of psychological interventions during and after classroom tuition. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between private and public primary schools. Public and Private school affective environment had equal and positive impact on psychosocial well-being of pupils. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should strengthen guidance and counseling services in primary schools by training more teacher counselors to cope rising pupil population, changing societal norms and lifestyles that could negatively affect pupils psychologically.

KEY WORDS: School Affective Environment, Psychosocial Well-being, Public Primary Schools, Private Primary Schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

School environment is a micro-system that encompasses physical, academic, social and affective environment. It is a convergence of factors that are psychological, sociological and educational. The multidisciplinary nature of the four components of the school environment determines the quality of education offered in schools. Each component has a specific role to play in the determination of educational outcomes. School affective environment facilitates teaching and learning, equips pupils with essential life skills, values for personal adjustment in the school and the larger society.

The study sought to investigate the effect of school affective environment on psychosocial well-being between pupils in public and private primary schools. Specifically, the study aimed to find out whether the school affective environment promotes holistic education in primary schools by creating appropriate emotional climate. The study was guided by a formulated objective that was to determine whether there was a difference in effect of school affective environment between public and private primary schools. Firstly, the study examined the school affective environment and its effect on psychosocial well-being of pupils. Secondly, a comparative statistical analysis established the whether there was a difference between the two categories of schools in affective environment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of studies related to school affective environment indicate that positive and negative feelings of a school child hinge on self-concept, self-esteem and empathy. The emotional state of a pupil in a school setting depends on the ego. A boost of child's ego leads to high self-esteem and positive attitude whereas deflation of the ego leads to low self-esteem and negative attitude towards teachers, peers and academic subjects. According to studies on the social world of children, a child who has received adequate training in social skills, problem-solving, empathy-training and esteem-building acquires emotional well-being that boosts self-esteem, self-confidence, self-expression and relates well with peers, teachers, other adults and invariably pursues education with vigor (Hurrelmann, 2009).

Hamre and Pianta (2005) conducted a study in Baltimore in eastern seaboard of USA using a random sample of 744 children aged between 4 and 13 years on teacher-child interaction to assess teacher's sensitivity and responsiveness to children's emotional needs, cues and an extent to which teachers promote self-concept development or scaffold performance skills. Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)-an observation measure of quality of several dimensions of teacher-child interaction was used. The study concluded that quality of teacher-child interactions on daily basis is the primary mechanism for cognitive development and emotional support for enhancement of child's self-concept.

The National Objectives of School Curriculum of Kenya emphasize production of a holistic individual (Nyongesa, 2005). School children are expected to learn how to positively express and control the emotions of happiness, excitement, sympathy, anger and hostility even in the face of an adversary in acceptable manner (Denzin, 2000). The school promotes the emotional well-being of the pupil through display of love and recognition within and outside the classroom (Birdsall & Hubert, 2000). Aswani (2009) points out that lopsided provision of education with more emphasis on academic achievement and less on emotional-building has led to emergence of frustrated antisocial adolescents, incidences of juvenile crime and neurotic illness. Teachers are expected to institute psychological interventions once they notice emergence of abnormal behavior of pupils by counseling and esteem-building (James, 2003)

Kinai (2010) emphasizes that juvenile delinquency in schools can be curbed by provision of guidance and counseling services. The Wangai Commission of Education Report (2001) on student discipline and unrest in Kenyan secondary schools in 1990s recommended the need to strengthen guidance and counseling in schools by equipping teachers with skills and knowledge that enable effective handling of learners. This was followed by the Kenya National Conference on Education and Training (2003) that recommended a national wide programme to be instituted for professional training of teachers on guidance and counseling. Primary school teachers were to undergo pre-and in-service training in guidance and counseling. The Kenya Sessional Paper No.1 (2005) provided the general guidelines on guidance and counseling in schools. Gitumu (2014) argues that the policy has not achieved much as the primary school system has a negligible number of trained teacher counselors to cope with rising large pupil population in the country.

Teachers are expected to institute psychological interventions like individual or group counseling when they notice abnormal pupil behavior to forestall development of borderline and narcissistic personality disorders (Gruse & Daniel, 2007). The common features of borderline personality disorders are; unstable view of one's self and instability in relating with other people and those of narcissistic personality are; pervasive pattern of grandiosity, hypersensitivity to the evaluations of other people and lack of empathy (Mahoney & Lyddon, 2001). According to Barnett & Hillard (2001) personality borderline disorder syndrome is characterized by bouts of irritability, self-destructive acts, impulsive anger and extreme mood shifts. The syndrome as includes lack of clear identity, lack of deep understanding of other people, poor impulse control and inability to tolerate anxiety. Teacher counselors are expected to apply therapeutic interventions in pupils who seem to display maladaptive behavior. Kinai (2010) states that person-centered psychotherapy-a form of individual counseling developed by Carl Rogers is appropriate for individual pupil academic and behavioral modification. According to Rogers as cited by Kremer & Dietzen (2001) a person-centered approach promotes self-acceptance and self-actualization through reflection of feelings, genuineness, accurate empathy and unconditional positive regard. The teacher counselor is expected to attend the emotional content of the pupil through exploration and self-disclosure to dispel negative feelings that inflict the ego (Gray, 2002 & Njoka, 2011). The Adlerian group counseling technique is appropriate for class academic and behavioral counseling (Cowie & Sharp, 2002). According to Adlerian concept of human determinism as cited by Corey (2002), humans are not merely determined by heredity and environment, rather they are foundations and building blocks of life and that people have the capacity to influence and create events. Behaviorism favours nurture over nature by stating that human beings are minimally limited by heredity and easily changed by experience. Academic and behavior group counseling of children enhances the element of inter-relatedness and a sense of urgency to create one's own unique identity (Mahler, 2002).

Pupils in primary schools are expected to be involved by teachers in formal and informal stress-inoculation training, empathy-training, assertiveness and sensitivity-training. Maichenbann (2005) developed stress-inoculation technique for treating anxiety related stress. Stress-inoculation helps the client to change pessimistic thinking to optimistic thinking in stressful situations (Barnett & Hillard, 2001). Elementary school teachers use stress-inoculation technique to handle pupil anxiety-inducing situations (Kremer & Dietzen, 2001). Maichebann (2005) conducted a study on treatment of writing anxiety. The subjects were assigned to one of three conditions. The first condition combined stress-inoculation training with writing instruction; the second condition combined writing instruction with inter-personal attention and the third condition (control group) involved no treatment. The subjects in the first two groups reported reduction in anxiety levels that were greater than those reported by subjects in the control group. Accurate empathy is important in everyday informal counseling (Brooks, & Gerstein, 2001).

Kremer & Dietzen (2001) conducted a study on empathy-training whereby some adolescents were assigned to special empathy-training groups and others to non-training control group. The program lasted for four weeks. The subjects were then observed on videotapes as they discussed common peer problems. Adolescents who had received empathy-training were more empathetic in responses than those who had not. The findings were re-assessed a year later and confirmed the same results.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Design

As a comparative study between public and private primary schools, the study employed Causal-Comparative research design as it was found be appropriate for facilitation of comparison of causative factors there-in school affective environment and the analyzed research findings of the two categories of schools. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedule. The qualitative research enabled the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the school affective environment as sub-variable of school environment using descriptive statistics.

3.2 Population and Sample

The study targeted a school population of 260,459 comprising of head teachers, teachers and pupils in Kiambu County. The County had comparatively large number of primary schools that constituted 3% of primary schools in the country and almost equal numbers of public and private schools (496, 438). Owing to the large population, a sample size of 384 of respondents was drawn from an accessible population of 41,609 consisting of 39,963 pupils and 1535 teachers in 111 schools in Thika West and Ruiru Sub-Counties. The sample consisted of 20 headteachers, 20 class teachers, 342 pupils and 2 members of School Board of Management.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

The study used stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques to select respondents. The 111 primary schools were categorized according to public (stratum) and private (stratum) schools. Stratified random sampling was used select 10 schools from the 49 registered public schools and 10 from 62 registered private primary schools. The 20 head teachers and 20 standard 7 class teachers in the schools were considered as respondents. Simple random sampling was used to obtain 342 pupils from standard 7 classes who acted as respondents. 174 pupils were obtained from public and 168 from private schools.

3.4 Data Analysis

The computer program-the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was used to analyze the data. The researcher intended to establish the effect of variables in affective environment on psychosocial well-being of pupils using descriptive statistics. In descriptive statistics, the computed results were interpreted against the 5 levels of the Likert-scale. The items (statements) were scored on the 5 point Likert-scale which measured the constructs by determining the means ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree where; 5- meant Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Undecided, 2-Disagree and 1-Strongly Disagree. The Likert-scale had discrete cut-off points to distinguish strong, average and low personal opinion or feeling. Any mean score between 1.0 and 2.5 meant (disagree) being an indication of low opinion or feeling about the phenomenon being measured. Scores between 2.6 and 3.4 were considered average (undecided) and scores ranging 3.4 to 5.0 were considered strong opinion (agree). The maximum score was 5.00 which indicated great effect (strongly agree) and any score below 2.5 indicated little effect (strongly disagree). Statistical analysis using descriptive statistics determined the means of each item. Interpretations of descriptive statistics by Likert-scale are presented in Table 1.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study compared the school affective environment of public schools to that of private schools in terms of application of psychological interventions during and after tuition, provision of guidance and counseling services.

Table 1

Interpretation of Descriptive Statistics by Likert-scale

Mean Scores	Interpretation
1.0-1.79	Strongly Disagree (SD)
1.80-2.59	Disagree (D)
2.60-3.39	Undecided (UN)
3.40-4.19	Agree (A)
4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 1 shows the cut-off points and the interpretations of statistical results. Mean scores of analysed data and interpretations on effect of school affective environment on psychosocial well-being between pupils in public and private schools are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Effect of School Affective Environment on Psychosocial Well-being between Pupils in Public and Private Primary Schools

Statement	Schools	Head	Class		Pupils		
		Teachers' mean	Interpretation	Teachers' mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Teacher's appreciation of my good behavior encourages me	Public	4.33	SA	4.90	SA	4.47	SA
	Private	4.50	SA	4.60	SA	4.38	SA
Teachers' encouragement has enabled me to have positive attitude towards school activities	Public	4.56	SA	4.80	SA	4.14	A
	Private	4.60	SA	4.60	SA	4.27	SA
I find pupils who have been counseled by teachers improve their well-being	Public	4.44	SA	4.60	SA	4.22	SA
	Private	4.50	SA	4.30	SA	4.05	A
I find pupils who have been rewarded by school administration feel encouraged	Public	4.67	SA	4.90	SA	4.32	SA
	Private	4.70	SA	4.70	SA	4.30	AS
I participate in school activities when I am in high spirits	Public	4.63	SA	4.80	SA	3.84	A
	Private	4.70	SA	4.40	SA	3.55	A
Love for one another in school has enabled me to have good relationship with other pupils	Public	4.33	SA	4.50	SA	4.24	SA
	Private	4.70	SA	4.40	SA	4.39	SA
I find pupils who have lost their loved ones and are comforted by colleagues come back to normal state	Public	4.33	SA	3.90	A	4.00	A
	Private	4.40	SA	4.20	SA	4.72	SA

Results showing statistical comparison by the overall mean scores on effect of school affective environment on psychosocial well-being between pupils in public and private schools are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Effect of School Affective Environment on Psychosocial Well-being between Pupils in Public and Private Primary Schools According to Group Statistics

Schools	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Public	192	4.1884	.69585	.05009
Private	188	4.1124	.79671	.05765

Table 2 shows the effect of school affective environment on psychosocial well-being of pupils according to statistical analysis of responses of headteachers, class teachers and pupils in both public and private schools. According to Table 2 headteachers, class teachers and pupils expressed a strong view that appreciation of good behavior of pupils by teachers and school administration boosts the morale and self-esteem of pupils. This view is implied by mean scores ranging from 4.33 which meant strongly agree by headteachers in public schools to 4.60 implying strongly agree by class teachers in private schools. This response supports the view expressed by Gruset and Daniel (2007) that self-concept and self-esteem are boosted by teachers' encouragement and emotional support. The results also indicate that counseling services were offered to pupils in both public and

private schools and the counseled pupils showed improvement in behaviour as implied by means ranging from 4.05 meaning agree by pupils in private schools to 4.60 implying strongly agree by class teachers in public schools.

These results are consistent with findings in a study by Rhodes (2007) on whether a five-month school based cognitive behavior counseling on ninth graders could positively change a high risk group of students with low grades, poor attendance and discipline problems. The study compared 20 students who received interventions and 20 who did not receive interventions. Students who were counseled showed remarkable patterns of positive change in academic motivation and self-efficacy in behavior. They also attained significantly higher final academic grades.

The statistical results on the affective component of the school environment further implied that pupils underwent counseling at equal measure in both public and private schools. Similarly, both public and private schools provided care and attention to the vulnerable and aggrieved pupils in accordance to the interpretation of means ranging from 3.72 which meant agree by pupils in private schools to 4.40 implying strongly agree by headteachers also in private schools. This confirms the view by (Corey, 2000, Hamre & Pianta, 2005) that the school is supposed to promote emotional well-being of the child through display of love and recognition within and outside the classroom. Reward and recognition has direct motivation associated with personal satisfaction. According to Pianta *et al.* (2007) the emotional climate of an institution is created by the teachers and school administration. Aswan (2009) asserts that psychological interventions such as tokens and other forms of rewards boost pupil's motivation and enhance self-esteem due to recognition. This is consistent with the principle of classical and operant conditioning using stimulus response principles and techniques for modern teaching. Other studies related to guidance and counseling of learners and consider counseling services essential in esteem-building and refrain from bad behavior include (Cowie & Sharp 2000, Aswani, 2009, Kinai, 2010 & Ndeke, 2012). However, comparison between public and private school affective environments as depicted by results of Group statistics in Table 3 show public schools had overall mean score of 4.1884, std.deviation of .69585 and private schools 4.1124, std.deviation of .7961 on the research objective, "To determine whether there is any difference in effect of school affective environment between pupils in public and private primary schools". The statistical difference between the two categories of schools was negligible implying that headteachers, teachers and other education stakeholders created equal affective environments.

Further examination of the effect of school affective environment on psychosocial well-being between pupils public and public schools, revealed that the school management inculcated positive attitudes in pupils through demonstration of love, appreciation and concern of other peoples' welfare especially at time of distress and bereavement. It was also revealed that the schools offered counseling services to pupils but were not as intense like those offered to adolescents in higher institutions of learning as primary schools. Teachers substituted this gap with psychological interventions such as rewards, praise, recognition, love and empathy that boosted motivation, self-concept and self-esteem of the pupils.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that application of psychological interventions during and after classroom tuition by teachers were at equal measure in both public and private primary schools. Pupils' psychosocial well-being of pupils in the school was enhanced by headteachers, teachers, school proprietors and School Boards of management by providing care and attention to the pupils' welfare that boosted psychological constructs such as self-esteem, positive self-concept and empathy.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommended to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) that there was need to strengthen guidance and counseling services in primary schools by training more teacher counselors to cope with rising pupil population, changing societal norms and lifestyles that could negatively affect pupils psychosocially.

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