

ASSESSMENT OF NEXUS BETWEEN FEATURES OF SCHOOL CULTURE AND STUDENT DEVIANCE IN SCHOOLS WITHIN BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Whereas many schools have been known to exhibit strong school cultures that seem to drive academic excellence, deviant behaviour in schools continues to be a matter of global concern. Knowledge of the role school culture plays in mitigating deviance is vital for any prevention programme yet this has been missing. The study sought to address this gap by examining influence of features of school culture on student deviant behaviour in secondary schools of Bungoma County, Kenya. A sample size of 79 secondary school management was used from a study population size [N] of 504. Mixed research design was employed while sampling strategy was a blend of multiphase, stratified and purposive sampling. The data for the study was obtained through questionnaire, interviews, document analysis and direct observations. Results were analyzed using cross-tabulations, frequency tables, Chi square and simple linear regression. The sampled features of school culture were being applied in schools within Bungoma County and Chi-square tests revealed a significant relationship between features of school culture and student deviant behaviour prevalence in schools. However, regression analysis revealed a weak to moderate relationship between features of school culture and deviance levels. The study concludes that features of school culture influences student deviant behaviour prevalence hence other than direct punishment of deviants, school cultures with features loaded with preventive and corrective aspects should be embraced. The findings strengthen empirical view to education sector towards packaging school culture as an important variable to mitigate student deviance.

Keywords: School, culture, student deviance, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

School culture from an organizational perspective refers to patterns of shared values, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs over time which produces behavioral norms that are adopted to guide day to day activities within an organization (Schein, 2004). It therefore shapes organizational procedures, unifies organizational capabilities into a cohesive whole, and provides solutions to the challenges faced by the organization, thereby hindering or facilitating the organization's desire to minimize deviance (Ahmad, 2012; Ng'ang'a & Nyongesa, 2012). The role of school culture in minimizing deviance is well articulated by Richwood (2013) who posited that a school culture where academic success and the motivation to learn is expected, respected, and rewarded naturally motivates students to learn and issues of deviance are minimal. They further noted that a strong or effective school culture characterizes an effective school which is characterized by an atmosphere where students, for example, learn to love learning for learning's sake, especially insofar as it evolves into academic achievement. Citing Blum (2005) and Libbey (2004), Richwood (2013) asserted that an effective school culture facilitates school connectedness, that

is, members' sense of belonging to a school, school involvement, or school attachment and has therefore a minimization effect on deviance given the enhanced adaptability into their school's social fabric. This assertion is supported by Gilman, Meyers, & Perez (2004) and Angus, Doris & Steve (2009) together with Caspi & Moffitt (1995). Other than being heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic profile and rated the third most populated County after Kakamega and Nairobi respectively (CRA, 2011), Bungoma County has a poverty prevalence rate of 53%, a scenario likely to drive many youth both in and out of school into deviance (ROK, 2013). This deplorable state is worsened by the fact that Bungoma County is rated among five Counties with largest numbers of deprived children (UNICEF, 2013) and that education standards in the county have been fluctuating based on the national examination: KCPE and KCSE ranking (Munda & Odebero, 2014; KNEC, 2012; 2013). Studies by Simatwa (2012) and Chumbe *et al.* (2015) on management of student discipline in secondary schools confirmed that Bungoma County, previously the larger Bungoma District, was among regions in Kenya that were experiencing many cases of student deviance in schools. Deviant behaviour is harmful for the school and students in all its forms (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007). There was therefore serious need to empirically interrogate this County's scenario in terms of school culture and how its features impacted on deviance prevalence. As posited by Angus, et al., (2009), citing DuFour & Eaker (1998), sustainable optimal student achievement in schools is realizable under effective schools on the premise of a strong school culture. This study was an empirical attempt to fill this gap as it sought to examine how features of school culture within the context of school environment influenced deviance among students in secondary schools of Bungoma County. This study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of Human Development which stresses process-person-context-time interrelatedness (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). The interrelationships of variables within the school as an organization and the range of variables within the micro systems and meso systems segments of the Bioecological Model was a premise upon which this study examined the nexus between features of school culture and student deviance in schools using Bungoma County, Kenya as a case reference.

METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm that informed this study was a Pragmatic approach which is a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies (Creswell, 2012; Cohen, Marion & Morrison, 2011). The study was conducted using mixed methods research design that comprised of concurrent triangulation, correlation and phenomenology to address the study objective. School culture, by nature, is a multi-faceted, complex and multidimensional phenomenon that can be better explored when several different methods are applied (Bahar & Esin, 2013; Schein, 2004). Bronfenbrenner's model was used to guide the study. A sample size of 79 out of possible 504 composed of school management staff from 252 schools was used. A mixture of sampling techniques was used, that is, multiphase and stratified sampling was used to select schools while purposive sampling was used to select school management staff. The data for the study was obtained through questionnaire, interviews, document analysis and direct observations. Descriptive statistics: cross-tabulations and frequency tables was used to analyze the data while inferential statistics was mainly by chi-square and simple regression. The schools selected were based on the following strata: rural and urban schools; national, extra County, County schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

School cultures as posited by Hongboontri and Keawkhong (2014) are not only unique and distinctive but also have an influential effect in terms of shaping and re-shaping what people do, think and feel. Citing Peterson (2002) and Barth (2002), Bahar and Esin (2013) averred that school culture aids learning of both staff and students above all known agents of learning. This assertion is supported by Brinton (2007) and Detert *et al.*, (2001) who argued that school cultures' unique and distinctive characteristics distinguished by shared basic assumptions, norms and values drive schools' performance especially when anchored on proper guidance of staff and students' behaviour. School cultures have been variously classified along a continuum of application as either weak/bad/toxic/negative or moderate/neutral or strong/good/health/positive (Ghamrawi, 2013; Kaplan & Owings, 2013; Stoll, 2000). In this study, the researcher sought from the respondents their ratings along this continuum. The sample selected comprised of school management staff segmented into head teachers and deputy head teachers. Proximal processes as posited by Christensen (2010) and situational perspective (Tudge *et al.*, 2009) of seeing behaviour necessitated the analysis by positions in schools so that the study brings out perspectives of each player. The school management was asked to evaluate application of 10 listed features of a positive school culture in their respective schools. The selected features were modeled on best schooling practices and culture from reviewed literature that other previous studies had relied upon (Cotton, 2000; Hongboontri & Keawkhong, 2014). Tables 1.1 and 1.2 capture their responses. The weights given to the options were: score zero for "not applicable", score 1 for "uncertain", score 2 for "least applicable", score 3 for "applicable" and score 4 for "most applicable". The sample segment for the study subjected to this question was school management comprised of head teachers and their deputies which was 79 respondents. Hence the lowest score, being for "not applicable" is zero (0×79) and the highest score, being for "most applicable" is 316 (4×79) while grand total score for applicability rating of school culture was 711 ($0+158+237+316$). Uncertain response was excluded on the applicability rating continuum because it does not reflect applicability. In terms of percentage for positive response in the context of applicability ratings, maximum score for least applicable is 22.2% ($2 \times 79 = 158$; $158/711 \times 100\%$); maximum score for applicable is 33.3% ($3 \times 79 = 237$; $237/711 \times 100\%$); maximum score for most applicable is 44.4% ($4 \times 79 = 316$; $316/711 \times 100\%$) and summation of weighted score being 100% ($22.2\%+33.3\%+44.4\%$). The higher the percentage score respondents gave was interpreted as more applicability of that feature of school culture within the school setting of the county. However, based on weighted scales, between 1% and 22% was interpreted to mean that feature of school culture was least applicable, between 23% and 33% was interpreted to mean that school culture feature was applicable while between 34% and 44% was interpreted to mean that school culture feature was most applicable. Whereas all the ten listed features of positive school culture were applied in schools of Bungoma County in varying intensity or scale of applicability, only five were in the cluster of most applied. This can be interpreted to mean schools had a between moderate to strong school culture being practiced or applied.

Table 1.1 School Management's Self Evaluation on application of listed features of School Culture

Feature of a Positive School Culture	Rating of Features of School Culture			Total
	Least Applicable	Applicable	Most Applicable	
An inspiring vision, backed by a clear, and challenging mission	0 (0)	21 (27)	58 (73)	79 (100)
A curriculum, modes of instruction, assessments and learning opportunities that are clearly linked to the vision and mission and tailored interests of the students	0 (0)	29 (37)	50 (63)	79 (100)
Sufficient time for teachers and students to do their work well	8 (10)	23 (29)	48 (61)	79 (100)
A pervasive focus on student and teacher learning, coupled with a continual, school-wide conversation about the quality of everyone's work	8 (10)	55 (70)	16 (20)	79 (100)
Many opportunities and venues for creating culture, discussing fundamental values, taking responsibility, coming together as a community and celebrating individual and group success	8 (10)	37 (47)	34 (43)	79 (100)

Source: Field Data, 2016; **Note:** The figures in parentheses are percentage frequencies n=79

Table 1.2 School Management's Self Evaluation on application of listed features of School Culture

Feature of School Culture	Rating of Features of School Culture					Total
	Not Applicable	Uncertain	Least Applicable	Applicable	Most Applicable	
Close, supportive teacher-student and student-student relationships	0 (0)	8 (10)	24 (30)	25 (32)	22 (28)	79 (100)
Leadership that encourages on-the-job learning and adaptation	24 (30)	0 (0)	0 (0)	29 (37)	26 (33)	79 (100)

to change						
Data-driven decision-making systems about progress toward the vision and organizational change	0 (0)	13 (17)	24 (30)	24 (30)	18 (23)	79 (100)
Unwavering support from parents	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (17)	66 (83)	0 (0)	79 (100)
County support for multiple school designs visions and missions	0 (0)	8 (10)	8 (10)	38 (48)	25 (32)	79 (100)

Source: Field Data, 2016; Note: The figures in parentheses are percentage frequencies n=79

Table 2 Rating on Applicability Continuum of listed features of School Culture by School Management.

Feature of School Culture	Scaled Weighted rating %	Rank
An inspiring vision, backed by a clear, limited and challenging mission	41.49	1
A curriculum, modes of instruction, assessments and learning opportunities that are clearly linked to the vision and mission and tailored to the needs and interests of the students	40.37	2
Sufficient time for teachers and students to do their work well	38.95	3
A pervasive focus on student and teacher learning, coupled with a continual, school-wide conversation about the quality of everyone's work	34.46	5
Many opportunities and venues for creating culture, discussing fundamental values, taking responsibility, coming together as a community and celebrating individual and group success	36.99	4
Close, supportive teacher-student, teacher-teacher and student-student relationships	29.68	8
Leadership that encourages and protects trust, on-the-job learning, flexibility, risk-taking, innovation and adaptation to change	26.87	10
Data-driven decision-making systems that draw on timely, accurate, qualitative and quantitative information about progress toward the vision and sophisticated knowledge about organizational change	27.01	9
Unwavering support from parents	31.51	7
County flexibility and support for multiple school designs, visions, missions and innovations	32.34	6

Source: Field Data, 2016; Note: The figures in parentheses are percentage frequencies n=79

As shown in the tables 1.1 and 1.2, the columns reflect the numbers and percentage rating of respondents for each listed feature of school culture. The most applicable features with over 40% rating of applicability were an inspiring vision, backed by a clear, limited and challenging mission at 73%; a curriculum, modes of instruction, assessments and learning opportunities that are clearly linked to the vision and mission and tailored to the needs and interests of the students at 63%; sufficient time for teachers and students to do their work well at 61% and many opportunities and venues for creating culture, discussing fundamental values, taking responsibility, coming together as a community and celebrating individual and group success at 43%. The scaled calculation and subsequent ratings along an applicability continuum is as shown in Table 2. As captured in the table, the top five features were rated 34% and above. This was interpreted to mean they were most applicable within schools in study area, while the rest fell into the rating cluster of applicable. This can be interpreted to mean a moderate school culture as an influencing element within school set up from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's model applied to this study. The study further tested the following hypothesis: There is no significant influence of features of school culture being practiced on student deviant behaviour in Bungoma County Schools.

To test this hypothesis, chi square (χ^2) tests were done to compare the features of school culture being practiced and various variables/types of deviance as an indicator of student deviant behaviour in Bungoma County Schools. Two features with weighted average rated above 40% as captured in Table 2 were picked for tests against student deviant behaviour. Tables 3 and 4, present a summary of the Chi-square test coefficients, degrees of freedom and the significance values for each of the variables. As indicated in Table 3, the results of the Chi-square tests showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between student deviant behaviour and an inspiring vision with clear mission as a feature of positive school culture that affects deviant prevalence in schools. All the listed eight types of deviant behaviour showed a statistically significant relationship. Thus, drug, alcohol and substance abuse ($\chi^2= 77.38$, $df=6$, $p<0.05$); theft ($\chi^2= 81.23$, $df=8$, $p<0.05$); property vandalism ($\chi^2= 1.33$, $df=6$, $p<0.05$); promiscuity ($\chi^2= 1.25$, $df=8$, $p<0.05$); class boycotts ($\chi^2= 35.12$, $df=6$, $p<0.05$); exam cheating ($\chi^2= 88.54$, $df=8$, $p<0.05$); sneaking ($\chi^2= 1.70$, $df=6$, $p<0.05$); rudeness ($\chi^2= 1.82$, $df=8$, $p<0.05$). On the basis of these tests, it is conclusive that there is a statistically significant relationship between student deviant behaviour and an inspiring vision with clear mission as a feature of positive school culture. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 3 Results of Chi-square tests on association between Inspiring Vision with clear Mission and Student Deviant Behaviour.

Type of Deviance	Chi-square Value	df	Sig.
Drug, alcohol and substance abuse	77.38	6	0.00
Theft	81.23	8	0.00
Property Vandalism	1.33	6	0.00
Promiscuity	1.25	8	0.00
Class boycotts	35.12	6	0.00
Exam cheating	88.54	8	0.00
Sneaking	1.70	6	0.00
Rudeness	1.82	8	0.00

Source: Field Data, 2016

Table 4 Results of Chi-square tests on association between a Curriculum that is well executed besides alignment to vision of the school and Student Deviant Behaviour.

Type of Deviance	Chi-square Value	df	Sig.
Drug, alcohol and substance abuse	80.59	6	0.00
Theft	57.95	8	0.00
Property Vandalism	1.06	6	0.00
Promiscuity	1.01	8	0.00
Class boycotts	27.56	6	0.00
Exam cheating	74.41	8	0.00
Sneaking	1.28	6	0.00
Rudeness	1.34	8	0.00

Source: Field Data, 2016

As indicated in Table 4, the results of the Chi-square tests showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between student deviant behaviour and an inspiring vision with clear mission as a feature of positive school culture that affects deviant prevalence in schools. All the listed eight types of deviant behaviour showed a statistically significant relationship. Thus, drug, alcohol and substance abuse ($\chi^2=80.59$, $df=6$, $p<0.05$); theft ($\chi^2=57.95$, $df=8$, $p<0.05$); property vandalism ($\chi^2=1.06$, $df=6$, $p<0.05$); promiscuity ($\chi^2=1.01$, $df=8$, $p<0.05$); class boycotts ($\chi^2=27.56$, $df=6$, $p<0.05$); exam cheating ($\chi^2=74.41$, $df=8$, $p<0.05$); sneaking ($\chi^2=1.28$, $df=6$, $p<0.05$); rudeness ($\chi^2=1.34$, $df=8$, $p<0.05$). On the basis of these tests, it is conclusive that there is a statistically significant relationship between student deviant behaviour and a curriculum that is well executed besides alignment to school's vision as a feature of positive school culture. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The null hypothesis was further explored by conducting a simple regression analysis to predict strength and direction of relationship between features of school culture and prevalence of student deviant behaviour using specific variables. The findings are as captured in Tables 5 to 7.

As indicated in Table 5, R^2_{adj} was 0.05, $F=22.95$, $p<0.05$; beta weight = 0.23. The results of the regression indicated that inspiring vision with clear mission is a significant predictor of student deviant behaviour, which is explained by 5% of the variance. The results suggest existence of other variables in the school setting that explain the remaining 95% of the variation in student deviant behaviour prevalence. By examining the beta weight in Table 5, it is evident that although the variance in student deviance was significantly accounted for by inspiring vision with clear mission as a feature of positive school culture, this is a weak relationship as it is less than the decision criterion of coefficient range 0.3 to 0.7. In spite of the weak strength in relationship, it is evident and therefore conclusive that inspiring vision with clear mission positively influences student deviant behaviour on the account of theft. It is probable that the significant relationship could be explained by curvilinear relationship between the two variables as asserted by Kutner, et al. (2004). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 5 Regression of Inspiring Vision with Clear Mission feature of positive School culture against theft as a variable of Student Deviant Behaviour

Single R	0.06				
Adjusted R square	0.05				
Std. Error	0.86				
	df	Sum of squares	Mean square	F	Sig. of F
Regression	1	17.22	17.22	22.95	0.00
Residual	398	298.53	0.75		
Variables in the Equation					
Variables	B	Standard error of B	Beta	t	Sig. of t
Theft	0.11	0.02	0.23	4.79	0.00
Constant	3.02	0.05		62.60	0.00

a) Predictor/independent Variable: Inspiring Vision with Clear Mission

b) Dependent Variable: Theft

Table 6 Regression of Inspiring Vision with Clear Mission feature of positive School culture against Property Vandalism as a variable of Student Deviant Behaviour

Single R	0.12				
Adjusted R square	0.11				
Std. Error	0.86				
	df	Sum of squares	Mean square	F	Sig. of F
Regression	1	39.12	39.12	52.14	0.00
Residual	398	298.63	0.75		
Variables in the Equation					
Variables	B	Standard error of B	Beta	t	Sig. of t
Property Vandalism	0.15	0.02	0.34	7.22	0.00
Constant	2.27	0.05		47.02	0.00

a) Predictor/independent Variable: Inspiring Vision with Clear Mission

b) Dependent Variable: Property Vandalism

As indicated in Table 6, R^2_{adj} was 0.11, $F = 52.14$, $p < 0.05$; beta weight = 0.34. The results of the regression indicated that inspiring vision with clear mission is a significant predictor of

student deviant behaviour, which is explained by 11% of the variance. By examining the beta weight in Table 6, the beta weight value reveals a moderate relationship that is within the decision criterion of coefficient range 0.3 to 0.7. It is evident that the variance in student deviance was significantly accounted for by inspiring vision with clear mission as a feature of positive school culture. It is evident and therefore conclusive that an inspiring vision with a clear mission positively influences student deviant behaviour on the account of property vandalism. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 7 Regression of Inspiring Vision with Clear Mission feature of positive School culture against Promiscuity as a variable of Student Deviant Behaviour

Single R	0.11				
Adjusted R square	0.11				
Std. Error	0.88				
	df	Sum of squares	Mean square	F	Sig. of F
Regression	1	39.40	39.40	51.10	0.00
Residual	398	306.87	0.77		
Variables in the Equation					
Variables	B	Standard error of B	Beta	t	Sig. of t
Promiscuity	0.16	0.02	0.34	7.15	0.00
Constant	1.80	0.05		36.82	0.00

a) Predictor/independent Variable: Inspiring Vision with Clear Mission

b) Dependent Variable: Promiscuity

As indicated in Table 7, R^2_{adj} was 0.11, $F = 51.10$, $p < 0.05$; beta weight = 0.34. The results of the regression indicated that an inspiring vision with a clear mission is a significant predictor of student deviant behaviour, which is explained by 11% of the variance. By examining the beta weight in the Table 7, the beta weight value reveals a moderate relationship that is within the decision criterion of coefficient range 0.3 to 0.7. It is evident that the variance in student deviance was significantly accounted for by an inspiring vision with a clear mission as a feature of positive school culture. It is evident and therefore conclusive that an inspiring vision with a clear mission positively influences student deviant behaviour on the account of promiscuity. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that although on a varying intensity or scale of applicability, all the ten listed features of positive school culture were rated positively on an applicability continuum at a threshold of 23%, implying that they were all being applied in schools within Bungoma County. The study also established that Bungoma County schools had a between moderate to strong

school culture. Out of the ten, five were in the category of applied indicating a moderate culture while the remaining five were in the mostly applied category as per the ratings of respondents. The five features that were rated highly indicate existence of a strong and/or a positive culture within schools of Bungoma County. It was also evident that school members were tuned into acting in compliance with school features and enforcing strategies outlined to guide the school operations. These findings corroborate with those of Angus et al. (2009) on health schools driven by positive school cultures besides being in agreement with Kilmann et al. (1985) as cited by Maslowski (2001) on weak cultures. Features of school culture could positively predict student deviant behaviour. The evident prediction could be linked with what Boisnier and Chatman (2002) together with Valentine (2004) averred that strong cultures create stability and improve bottom-line performance of students through minimized deviance. However, the small percentage of R^2 adj. together with a weak and moderate relationship based on Beta weight values pointed to existence of other factors within the school system that influenced deviance among students (Borbara, 2005; Stoll, 2000). The study recommends that in order to mitigate prevalence of student deviant behaviour in Bungoma County schools, there is need to establish and embrace school culture features that interface “within” school and “outside” school environments as prescribed by Bronfenbrenner’s model.

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