

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENT BEHAVIOUR IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT: *The focus of this paper is to review, examine and discuss the main factors that influence the behaviour of the secondary school students who are adolescents. The adolescent student is often in a difficult phase of his/her life and, therefore, important people in his/her life may negatively influence his/her behaviour at school. Factors that are related to the external system of his/her life are considered in this literature study. The study reveals that the school, the family, the peer pressure, the community and the new media negatively impact on the student behaviour. It concludes that these same systems should endeavour to teach socio-emotional skills to the students: this is likely to enhance their social competence. This may help eliminate student disruptive behaviour: this problem is a socio-emotional problem that requires socio-emotional approaches.*

KEYWORDS: Factors, Adolescent, Disruptive Behaviour, Socio-Emotional Problem

INTRODUCTION

Education is the medium by which an individual achieves success in his/her life, in the society and in the world, and it lays the foundation of personality (Kumar, 2017). According to the Mauritian Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2014), the secondary school provides an education that enables the fulfilment of the four pillars of the Delors Report, namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. It should also provide the adolescent student with the necessary skills that allow him/her to adjust easily and smoothly to the rapid physical, emotional, mental and social changes (Garcia & Santiago, 2017). Indeed, the adolescence represents the period between 13 and 19 years old (Naganandini, 2017) when students manifest an identity crisis that may have an impact on their mental make-up and attitudes towards people and circumstances (Mutemeri & Gudyanga, 2008; Nealis, 2014). Indeed, this critical phase of their life may also affect the quality of their relationships with educators, the principal, the school superintendent as well as with their school mates (Kumari & Kumar, 2017).

In addition to the modification of their behaviour due to the transition phase of their life, secondary school students also change their behaviour on account of many other factors that are external. Dupper (2010) maintain that students misbehave because there are mismatches between their needs and the socio-environmental factors that are within their immediate environment. Student misbehaviour is not only the naughty behaviour of the student but also the behaviour that disturbs the effective teaching and learning process (Ghazi, Gulap, Muhammad & Khan, 2013) and that interrupts the saner and safer school environment (Schleicher, 2015).

Student misbehaviour is a source of worry for all school stakeholders (Gutuza & Mapolisa, 2015; Marais & Meier, 2010; Ramjanally, 2015). It is a multifaceted and complex school problem that is manifested in various forms (Ali, Dada, Isiaka & Salmon 2014). The various

common forms of student misbehaviour are late coming, bunking classes, drug and alcoholic abuse, bullying, love affairs, vandalism, assault on the school prefects, insult on educators, wearing the wrong school uniform, use of the mobile phone, smoking, writing or using foul language in class, work not done, class disruption and immoral acts (Gutuza & Mapolisa, 2015; Ghazi, Gulap, Muhammad & Khan, 2013; Ngwokabuenui, 2015; Jeeroburkhan, 2016). Student misbehaviour, however, is linked to academic performance and vice versa (Olley, Cohn, Cowan, 2010; Madziyire, 2012). The principal's role is to design and implement the most effective learner discipline management strategies in order to instill a positive school climate. However, to be successful as an effective learner discipline management leader in his/her school, the principal must understand the various causes of student behaviour that are predominant in the school.

Purpose of the study

Since disruptive behaviour from secondary school students is a major and persistent administrative problem as well as a public health problem, it is of utmost importance to review the existing literature on the problem. It is always basically recommendable to determine and understand the root causes of a problem when people aim at controlling it or preventing it from worsening. Indeed, when it comes to student discipline, there is often a blame game whereby parents shift the responsibility to the parents and vice versa, or principals is ineffective in dealing with student misbehaviour due to a lack of knowledge about the potential causes of this lack of discipline in their school. A sound knowledge of the causes of indiscipline in the Mauritian context is the fundamental knowledge that the principals, in particular must have to be successful school leaders. The purpose of the paper is to review the causes of student misbehaviour in secondary schools with adolescent students. Such a review allows the principals, educators, superintendents, parents and the higher educational authorities to decide on the possible disciplinary strategies and interventions that may be adopted and implemented in order to maintain or restore positive behaviour among secondary school students through a comprehensive school-wide positive discipline framework that would require the collaboration of all of these stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on the external and school-related factors that influence the behaviour of the students of secondary schools. They are factors that emerge from within the immediate environment of the adolescents. These factors are related to the external system, namely the school, peer pressure, the family, the community and the media. They are the social systems in which students are influenced by other people in their daily life (Marais & Meier, 2010).

The school

The school is the place where adolescents spend most of their daily time, interacting and socialising with others. It is the natural social setting for them. However, it is also in this socio-temporal space that the student behaviour is influenced. In fact, the characteristics of the school may impact on the ways in which the students behave with others. Panchoo (2016), Ugboko & Adediwura (2012), Ramharai, Curpen and Mariaye (2012), Pascal (2015), Gutuza and Mapolisa (2015) and Edinyang (2017) found the following school features that encourage students to misbehave: overcrowded classroom; too much harsh discipline measures; student

alienation; the feeling of disempowerment from the principal to deal with indiscipline; lack of effective leadership from the principal; inadequate supervision; absence of the teaching of social, creative, communication and interpersonal skills; lack of student voice and choice in their learning; the feeling of rejection by students; lack of care from friends, educators and the principal; lack of extracurricular activities and sport activities; the banning or controversial use of corporal punishment; and absence of academic support for students with academic and behaviour problems.

Besides, the educator is also a factor that influence the student behaviour negatively. Students may manifest disruptive behaviour when he/she makes ineffective use of innovative pedagogies; shows little interest in students; does not provide academic feedback and guidance; does not communicate effectively; fails to plan in a proactive manner; uses punitive or reactive measures; teaches an irrelevant curriculum; comes late to class; uses the mobile phone in class; does not have the leadership and authority to discipline the mischievous students; adopts a self-defeating attitude to the problem of a lack of discipline (Gambo & Muktar 2017; Daly, Der-Martirosian, Ong-Dean & Wishard-Guerra, 2011; Wolhuter & Russo, 2013; Rampa, 2014; Gitome, Katola & Nyabwari, 2013; Silva, Negreiros & Albano, 2017).

The end of character education in state secondary schools is also a contributing factor to student misbehaviour. Disgrace (2016) found that educators fail to inculcate positive and good behaviour among students, and this is likely to have an impact on what the students conceive as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In the same vein, Silva, Negreiros and Albano (2017) add that the absence of religiousness has encouraged students to deviate from cultural and traditional patterns and social norms. Following the Student Rights Contestation period (1969-1992), the *Tinker v Des Moines Independent Community School* in 1969, the *Goss v Topeza* case in 1975 and the *Bethel v Frazer* case in 1986 in USA, the students' rights are recognised and there has been a fall in the school authority to discipline students (Arum, 2005; Schimmel, 2006; Moyo, Khewu & Bayaga, 2014).

Furthermore, many countries have ratified the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989), the African Charter on the Rights of the Child (1990), based on which they have passed on various legislations to protect the rights of the child as each nation has such a human rights obligation (Save the Children, 2017). Violation of human rights distorts academic performance and prevent the effective and smooth process of personality development (Manzoor, 2017). Also, corporal punishment is found to be associated with lower IQs, smaller vocabularies, poor cognitive development (Portela & Pells, 2015). This has led to the banning of corporal punishment in schools. However, according to Save the Children (2017), poor student discipline is to the result of the failure to inflict corporal punishment; yet educators and even parents believe that corporal punishment is effective in teaching a lesson as it is a behaviour modification strategy (Mugabe & Maposa, 2013). In this legal context, principals and educators do not take the risk of prosecution for child abuse and they feel that their power to discipline students has been reduced; they feel disempowered (Coetzee, 2010).

Peer pressure

Adolescents are more likely to give in to peer pressure and manifest unacceptable behaviour that may have a negative impact on themselves or on others (Gallani, 2015). Besides, Lukman and Kamadi (2014) argue that the peer group pressure influences what the adolescent values, knows, wears, eats and learns. Bezuidenhout (2013) maintains that adolescents display disruptive behaviour in groups, not individually. This is based on the Social Learning Theory

which posits that adolescents learn to display socially unacceptable behaviour when they interact with other people. Besides, growing adolescents take up their peers at school as their role models as their parents are no more considered as role models to them (Ndakwa, 2013; Esiri, 2016).

With peer pressure, students may take drugs, alcohol, tobacco and weapons, bully other students who are not part of the group or who do not fit the group, and involved in illegal gang activities (Gitome, Katola & Nyabwari, 2013; Temitayo, Nayaya & Lukman, 2014). They also often break the school rules to show their disapproval of the school authority and to challenge it; therefore, they are mainly involved in antisocial behaviour (Johnson, 2012). In fact, according to Fosch, Frank and Dishion (2011), there are two processes that impact on the student behaviour: coercion and contagion. Coercion is an interpersonal exchange during which the student uses an aggressive behaviour to escape experiences he/she does not like; whereas, contagion is a process in which students mutually reinforce themselves through aggressive behaviour and sharing their mutual emotional patterns.

The family

Some characteristics of the family have an impact on the adolescent behaviour at school (Oloyede & Adesina, 2013). Child neglect and abuse by family members, exposure of the child to parental criminal activities and behaviour and acts of violence, the availability and use of dangerous weapons and drugs at home, divorce or remarriage of either parent are some of the family situations that negatively impact on the adolescent's behaviour (Adigeb & Mbua, 2015; Magwa & Ngara, 2014; Seegopaul, 2016). Adegboyega, Okesina & Jacob (2017) add that the attachment theory explains that parental attachment affects the behaviour of the student; indeed, when the parents and the child develop negative relationships and the educators and the child develop unhealthy relationships, then the child manifests a lack of positive behaviour.

Because adolescence is considered as the "storm and stress" period categorised by parental conflicts, mood disruptions and risk behaviour (Fiest, 2013), the three types of parenting styles, namely flexible, permissive and authoritarian styles have an impact on the adolescent behaviour (Garcia & Santiago, 2017). According to Garcia and Santiago (2017), flexible parents offer warmth and control equally and therefore the adolescent understands the necessity to obey to rules and they become self-discipline; permissive parents are too kind to their children to such an extent that they accept their behaviour decisions – they cannot discipline them and, out of ignorance, they inculcate lawlessness and anti-social behaviour in them (Mouton, 2015); authoritarian parents impose rules that are non-negotiable and when children do not obey they are punished. Too much authority on the adolescent may decrease the self-concept, and the ability of problem-solving and effective communication (Rahman, Shahrin & Kamaruzaman, 2017).

The family, therefore, acts as a socialising agent. It is evident that students may develop a certain alienation to others at school depending on the restrictive-permissive parental behaviour – dependence-independence; ascendance-submission; and cooperation-competition (Kumari & Kumar, 2017). This has an impact on the adolescents' social skills and attitudes.

Moreover, the socio-economic status of the family may influence the behaviour of the adolescent. Khaliq, Baig, Ameen & Mirza (2016) found that there is a moderate positive relationship between parental income/status/occupation and the adolescent's academic performance and behaviour. In the same vein, Sonali (2016) confirmed that students from low

socio-economic status have a greater academic stress and therefore behaviour problem than those with high socio-economic status. Arum and Ford (2012) add that the broader the economic inequality and social distance among adolescents at schools, the more disruptive they are.

The lack of parental involvement in the school activities also may encourage students to be disruptive. In fact, parents cannot leave the responsibility of disciplining students onto the school only; they should collaborate with the school (De Atouguia, 2014). Parental participation helps develop a positive sense of efficacy into learners whose self-esteem is raised and therefore, they manifest less disruptive behaviour (Garcia & Santiago, 2017; Masabo, Muchopa & Kuoth, 2017). It is thus obvious that a lack of parental participation and support in the enforcement of school discipline is likely to contribute to learner misbehaviour (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012; Khumalo, 2012). However, educators and the principal do not welcome parental involvement (Masabo, Muchopa & Kuoth, 2017) and they limit it to voluntary social events, fundraising and orientations (Chikudo, 2016; Jodut, 2015). So, there is likely to be more disruptive behaviour among students of secondary schools.

Community

The community in which the student lives may be socially disorganised. When there is poverty, low employment and education opportunities, gang activities, drug activities and crimes and the absence of cohesion among neighbours and community networking, the community is dysfunctional (Peterson & Morgan, 2011; Gambo & Muktar, 2017). As a result, there is a divergence between the values of the family and the values of this disorganised community, and the school fails at synchronising them. Such a situation causes the adolescents to lack social competence such as pro social behaviour and emotional regulation (Vijila, Thomas & Ponnusamy, 2013). Besides, they may have inadequate respect for the cultural and traditional norms and manifest a low self-esteem. Adolescents with low self-esteem cannot handle their emotions and behaviour; they are disoriented (Naganandini, 2017). So, it is obvious that student indiscipline in schools is a reflection of signs of disorders in the community which surround the school and the society at large (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, 2015).

The Media

Adolescents are millennials and therefore their daily life at home, at school and even in their peer group is technology-driven. The new media dominate their lives (Council on Communications and Media, 2013). They are constantly involved in the “multi-tasking” process: they attend to the lesson and they also send messages, chat on the social network and even view YouTube on their mobile phones at the same time (Miller, Berg, Cox, Carwile, Gerber, McGuire, Votteler & Williams (2011). Moreover, adolescents overconsume the social media, and they may suffer from behaviour risks such as bullying, click-forming, sexting, Facebook depression, anxiety, sever isolation, and self-destructive behaviours (O’Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson & Council on Communications and Media, 2011). Besides, video games play is associated with increased aggressive behaviour from adolescents (Holferth, 2010) and an overconsumption of media violence through video games and TV causes adolescents to become more verbally and relationally aggressive with other adolescents and they develop less prosocial behaviour (Gentile, Coyne & Walsh, 2011). Also, the mass media easily inculcate deviant behaviour and practices among adolescent students who develop a wrong image of sex, love and affection and a glorified picture of violence in society (Ngwokabuenui, 2015).

Adolescent behaviours are therefore negatively influenced by media in the current era of rapid technological changes (Beebejaun-Muslum, 2014).

Recommendations

From the foregoing paper review and accompanying discussions on the literature on the student behaviour and the factors that influence it among secondary school-going adolescents, it is obvious that adolescence is indeed a period of life when the students find it difficult to make the appropriate and socially acceptable behaviour; they are themselves influenced by people who form part of their daily life, namely the family, friends or peers, the principals, the educators and other adults in the school premises as well as in the community around the school. They are also strongly influenced by the numerous forms of media that invade their daily life. All these people directly or indirectly have an impact on their individual behaviour and their interpersonal and social relationships with them. Adolescents are often emotionally unstable if they lack self-concept, self-confidence, self-awareness, self-worth, self-satisfaction and self-value (Rahman, Shahrin & Kamaruzaman, 2017) on account of the factors examined in the literature in this paper. The intertwining of these relationships give rise to the problem of disruptive behaviour in secondary schools.

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education or the higher educational authorities sets up a school-based unit for educational psychologists, social workers, public health officers and special educators who may work collaboratively with the general education educators to identify, intervene and refer the cases of students who are at risk of manifesting disruptive behaviour. Besides, the school should use a team approach among the school, the family and the community and welfare officers so that a global approach is adopted to prevent and eliminate behaviour problems at school. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education should work on a training programme that would provide the educators, the parents, the school superintendents and parents with the necessary information and preventive tools on sex education, drug addiction, violence acts, parental guidance in monitoring closely the age-appropriate screen times on mobile phones, internet, TV and video games. The school administration must also monitor closely the use of technological devices on the school compound which provides free Wi-Fi connection to the student body. The access to internet should be restricted only to educational resources. Parents should also be trained on parenting styles and parental support to their child on education and school matters.

The school should also teach the five components of the Social Emotional Learning (SEL), namely self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, decision-making and relationship management to adolescent students. These are the fundamental skills that they must learn, develop and practice in order to develop and manifest positive social-emotional behaviour.

Most importantly, the school must not control or attempt to modify the student behaviour by means of reactive or punitive disciplinary strategies, but by means of proactive strategies such as the teaching of self-discipline. The adolescent with disruptive behaviour at school should not be the cause of the problem, but part of the solution to the behaviour problem.

Following the findings of this study, the principals and educators should consider the learner who manifest a lack of discipline as someone who needs guidance, good models, care, psychological help and the acquisition of social and emotional skills to manifest positive behaviour. So, the school must set up different structures that will cater for these different needs and guidance to students.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines and discusses the main factors that may influence the secondary school student behaviour based on the literature. The student is a vulnerable person who is easily influenced by the school, his/her own family, his/her peers at school or in the community, the disorders in the community and the modern or new media that is part and parcel of his/her life. For the adolescent to have a sustainable positive behaviour, he /she must receive the appropriate guidance from the school, the family, the peers, the media and the community. Each of these social systems must be child-focused and operates positively and collaboratively to the benefits of the student. From the review of the literature, it is now obvious that disruptive behaviour is a socio-emotional problem that may be solved only by having recourse primarily to the teaching of socio-emotional skills so as to increase the student's social competence and self-discipline.

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