

Influence of Self -Regulation on Resilience in School Adaptation in Post War Context, Mt.Elgon Subcounty, Bungoma County, Kenya

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Abstract

Self-regulation is among the resiliency factors identified by most studies that act as a buffer and regulatory mechanisms through which children mediate their interpersonal relations and self-esteem. As an internal characteristic it combines with external environmental context and person-environmental transactional processes to manipulate trauma occurrence. Resilience is the ability to succeed despite barriers that make it difficult for the students to succeed. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of self-regulation on resilience and school adaptation of children in Mt.Elgon sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya. Self-regulation Questionnaire (SRQ) was used to collect data. The sample consisted of 100 children aged 9 to 17 years, who were in school. The data revealed that self-regulation was low hence the children seemed to have a deficiency in this protective factor. More significantly, evidence from this study shows that the depleted personal resources (self-regulation skills) as a result of experiencing traumatic events early in life (such as war) can pose a tremendous challenge in school adaptation. This renders children vulnerable and helpless in navigating through school to attain academic achievement. As a result, children continue to struggle to cope with traumatic experiences of bad situations as well as adapting to the school environment.

Key words: *Self-regulation, Resilience, School Adaptation, Trauma*

Introduction

Globally, war conflicts are on the increase, and the impact of these conflicts on the world populations including children is immense. Children exposed to war go through adverse experiences that are traumatizing which are likely to affect their development hence adaptation to school. Additionally, children exposed to the effects of war have been found to develop more socio-emotional and behavioral problems, struggle academically and eventually drop out from school more often than children not in war zones (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012 ; Joshi, & Lewin, 2004)). This exposure to war conflicts may pose considerable threat to the optimal development of a child thus likely to affect school adaptation.

Optimal development in children is partly manifested in good cognitive abilities, problem solving skills, effective emotional and behavioral regulation, positive self-concept (Masten, & Obradovic, 2006). Conflict advertently interferes with development of this construct that

are important in school adaptation (Joseph, 2004). War exposure can lead to disturbances in cognitive functioning, emotional difficulties such as depression and anxiety, and behavior and peer problems which has both direct and indirect effects to school adaptation (Broekman, 2011)

Cognitive problems associated with exposure to war violence comprise trauma which is one of the most direct threats to the developmental task of school adaptation and affect academic achievement. Trauma from wars not only impairs competencies in cognitive functioning such as emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships but also denies children the environment that can foster cognitive development. Trauma affects the developing brain in that the brain structures that regulate emotion, memory, and behavior can be smaller in size thereby affecting learning and development. The spiral effects of developmental delays are manifested in aspects of academic competence such as poor reading ability and poor social skills such as self-regulation which have a bearing on school performance. Consequently, studies link exposure to war adversity with lower IQ scores, poorer language skills, decrements in visual-motor integration skills and problems with attention and memory (Acknicar, 2013; Chukwuorji & Chukwuedozie 2010).

However although all children in a war zone experience war effects personal factors such as self-regulation skills mediate the on the outcome of school adaptation resilience expected that personal factors will mediate to some find new strength to transcend adversity and their limits, while others remain resilient.

Self-regulation as a protective factor

Self-regulation is defined as the capacity of the individual to delay or suppress behavior, tendencies and desires, abide by social rules, control and regulate emotions, focus on goal-directed stimuli and maintain attention (Baumeister, 2007). Developmental theorists define self-regulation as ability to activate, monitor, and inhibit behaviour, attention, emotions or cognitive processes in a flexible and adjustable way as a response to internal or external stimuli, for the achievement of desired outcomes (Joormann, Carver, Johnson, 2012). Another definition of self-regulation is the ability of the child to control physical functions and emotions, direct and focus attention (Shonkoff, 2012).

Self-regulation is an important set of skills that children develop from infancy through adolescence. These skills are internalizing, organizing functions that filter, coordinate, and temporarily organizes experiences. They include attention controls, strategic planning, regulation of goal-directed behaviors, self and social monitoring, abstract reasoning and emotional regulation (Bauer and Baumeister, 2011; Mcewan, 2012). Self-regulation (the motivation and ability to control one's emotions and behaviors in potentially stressful situations) affects children's ability to adapt to and learn in formal school settings

From the social cognitive theory that guides this study, self regulation mechanisms provides the potential for self directed changes in their behaviour such as school adaptation. In this study, we refer to self-regulatory skills such as delaying gratification, following instructions, and inhibiting impulsive or aggressive behavior as behavior regulation (Zimmerman, 2007) that can enhance resilience to school adaptation.

Self-regulation develops through early experiences and social interactions, where caregivers and other significant individuals structure and shape children's trajectories (Trentacosta, & Shaw, 2009). Development of this self-regulatory skills is gradual over the course of childhood and into adolescence with self-regulatory competence initially developing from

social sources and subsequently shifting to self-sources in a manner that is reminiscent of a traditional apprenticeship ((Trentacosta, & Shaw, 2009). In other words development of self-regulation is a product of reciprocal determinism as argued by Bandura (1986). For example, Effeney , & Bahr (2013) suggest a three stage developmental sequence in which learners move from being regulated by others (e.g., instruction and guidance from a teacher) to being able to perform the task with limited guidance (e.g., hints) before reaching a level of internalization or mastery. This has the implication that social environment as well as personal factors and behavior of individuals as they develop through stages are important about development of self-regulation. Through live experiences and vicarious learning children develop self-regulatory skills (Schunk, 2001)

Adaptive development depends upon children's ability to manage their reactions and specifically, their task-related behaviors in the school context. Remembering and using information, attending to and understanding what others are saying, directing motor actions, and persisting toward goals are all indicators of adaptive behavioral regulation (Effeney, Carroll & Bahr, 2013; Murray, Rosanbalm, Christopoulos&Hamoud, 2015). Research has revealed that self-regulation is a marker of adaptive development (Obradović, and Masten, 2006). As a result, significant differences in behavior regulation exist among children when they enter formal schooling among other things (Matuga, 2009) Deficits in behavior regulation may cause social and academic adjustment difficulties in school (Mcewan, 2012). Therefore, it is important to understand the function of behavior regulation in enhancing resilience in school adaptation process.

Many researchers (e.g., Judge, Erez, Bono &Theresa, 2002; Hamil, 2003; Sautelle, Hattie, 2015)) Zimmerman,2007) have found self- regulation to be one of the factors that influence resilience to school adaptation. Effective self-regulated learners actively set goals, decide on appropriate strategies, plan their time, organize and prioritize materials and information, shift approaches flexibly, monitor their learning by seeking feedback on their performance and make appropriate adjustments for future learning activities (Effeney& Bahr ,2013; Splan,, Brooks & BrooLyes,2011; Murray,2015).Therefore self-regulation is an important aspect of learning and the extent to which school students become self-regulators of their own learning influences school adaptation and their academic success (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2007). Positive outcomes of a self-regulated child include: higher academic achievement, school engagement, peer social acceptance and avoidance of negative behaviors (Whitesell, Mitchell, & VITPT, 2009; Taha, Graham, Kumwenda , 2012)

A research with young children has shown that early developing executive functioning and self-regulatory abilities in pre-school children predict 'positive adaptation to school' (and the development of early academic abilities (Blair &Razza, 2007; Maginness ;2007). In another study early emotion regulation ability, specifically, have been implicated in young children's capacity to follow instructions, focus attention and co-operate with teachers and peers (Howes, Phillipsen, & Peisner-Feinberg, (2000). At the same time, a growing number of studies have demonstrated that metacognitive and self-regulatory abilities are learnt and are highly teachable. Morrison,Claire Cameron,Ponitz &Megan M. McClelland (2012)provided a meta-analysis of a range of studies across the primary school age-range, for example, and revealed impressive effect sizes for interventions teaching self-regulation strategies to children in this age-range.

Self-regulated learning has been linked to engagement in many tasks (Whitebread & Basilio, 2012; Stephanie, Freia, & Rainer, 2014), effective study habits, effort, and pro-social

behavior in the classroom (Cred é & Kuncel, 2008); and course grades (Duckworth & Seligman (2005). Muhammad, Naeemullah& Nadeem, 2010; Morrison, Claire Cameron, Ponitz & Megan, 2012; Matuga, 2009).

On the other hand poor self-regulation has been linked to high rates of expulsion, most dramatically in pre-school classrooms (Mcewan, 2012; Whitebread & Babilio, 2012). Studies also reveal that adolescents who do not regulate their emotions and behavior are more likely to engage in risk-taking and unhealthy behaviors, such as drug use, antisocial behavior, abnormal eating habits and obesity (Smith & Beggs, 2016; Shonkoff, & Garner, 2012). As children and youth develop the capacity to regulate their emotions and behavior represents a shift from vulnerability to resilience. The ability to self-regulate is the foundation for compliance with accepted standards of conduct at home, school, and later, in the workplace. Self-regulation is often thought of as a dual process —cognitive and social-emotional (Blair, & Razza, 2007; Zimmerman, 2007).

Cognitive self-regulation is the degree to which children can be self-reflective, and can plan and think ahead. Children with these strengths are in control of their thoughts, and are able to monitor their behavior, evaluate their abilities, and are able to adjust their behavior, if necessary (Trentacosta, & Shaw, 2009). For example, if a self-regulated child knows there is an upcoming test, he or she chooses to study to be ready for the test, instead of hanging out with friends. Social-emotional self-regulation is the ability to inhibit negative responses and delay gratification (see Zimmerman, 2007). An individual with this ability is able to control his or her emotional reactions to positive and negative situations, as in the case of a child who can resist his immediate inclination to erupt into anger when a peer skips in front of him in the lunch line. This agrees with studies by Morrison, Ponitz, & McClelland (2012) citing Eisenberg, Smith, Sadovsky, & Spinrad (2004); Howse et al., (2003) which link children's effective management of their emotions to positive behavioral and academic outcomes.

However, exposure to traumatic incidents such as war affects children's self-regulation. Studies by Ndeti et al, 2007; Papadopoulos, 2007; Rothe, 2005 Rutta, 2012) revealed that there exists positive relations among war experiences and children's development of behavioral regulation. A study by Shonkoff & Garner (2012) found that stressful situations interfere with attention span of learners while experiencing a traumatic event early in life can have detrimental effects on children's affective, cognitive, behavioral, physiological, relational, sensory-motor and social regulation abilities. Shonkoff, (2012) commenting on stressful early environments suggests how they may shape particular patterns of brain activation and behavior. This has the implication that environment that is characterized by violence as was in Mt Elgon in Bungoma County in Kenya may adversely affect development of self-regulation in children.

Studies on post-traumatic stress disorders demonstrate deficits in abstract reasoning, problem solving, and flexibility in thought process and frustration tolerance and link this with poor regulation skills (Garmezy, 2001; Gartrell, 2011). Taha, Graham, Kumwenda *et al.*, (2012) found out that war-related experiences expose children to unacceptably high levels of stressors, including higher rates of learning difficulties, and high school drop-out, among children from war zone areas families (Ying, Lin and Jiang; 2014; Zolkoski, S& Bullock; 2012). Understanding how children navigate in such situation in order to adapt to school is crucial.

Research Design

The study was an embedded design mainly a correlational model. Embedded design is a mixed method design in which one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type (Creswell, 2006). In this research qualitative data mainly from phenomenological approach was used to support correlational data. Resilience is subjective and it is only through expressing personal views as experienced as children interact in the school system and their personal attributes (self-regulatory skills) and resilience in school that one could begin to understand the resilience level. A phenomenological approach aims at in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern it which cannot be arrived at by use of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007). At the same time there was needed to quantify the relationship between the selected attributes to be able gauge the strength. For this reason, embedded design was found to be most appropriate

Sample

The study utilized a sample of 100 participants (children) and eight teachers. To choose the study respondents, purposive, and stratified random techniques were adopted. Mt.Elgon sub-county has four Districts. Two Districts out of the four were purposively sampled taking into consideration the impact of ethnic war on each of them. Further, four schools, two primary and two secondary within this geographical clusters were purposively sampled taking into consideration age, gender and the population density. Illustrated below are the sample distribution of the questionnaires and the FGD's respondents according to age and gender.

Methodology

For this study, participants were given five items answered on a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents were rated how true each item is for them, ranging from 1 (*not at all true for me*) to 4 (*really true for me*). A sum or average of the items was calculated. Higher scores indicated ability to self-regulate. Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analyzed with the aid of the

Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted on the collected data. Logistic regression was run to find out the correlation between self-regulation and resilience levels. Qualitative data from interviews and FGD's was transcribed verbatim, coded on item – by –item and analyzed thematically as per research objectives and according to the emerging themes. This involved examination of common emerging themes from the in depth information generated by the respondents. Presentations were

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Relationship between Self-regulation and Resilience levels of children Influencing school adaptation

Logistic regression was run to find out the correlation between self-regulation and resilience levels in school adaptation. In logistic regression the independent variables predict the values of dependent variables. The test was used because of the dichotomous nature of dependent variable. It was also used because there was no inter-correlation among the predictors. The results of regression test are shown in the table below

Table 4.8 – Logistic model for resilience on self-regulation predictors

<u>Variable Name</u>	<u>Parameter Estimates</u>	<u>Std. Error</u>	<u>Wald χ^2</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>p-value</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>	<u>95 % CI</u>	
Intercept	3.9324	1.4829	7.0322	1	0.008**	-	-	-
Stuck with activity till done	-0.3171	0.2088	2.3066	1	0.128	0.728	0.484	1.096
Concentrate on one activity at a time	-0.3255	0.2007	2.6303	1	0.100†	0.722	0.487	1.070
Talk calmly without losing control	0.1077	0.1856	0.3372	1	0.562	1.114	0.774	1.602
Aware of feelings before letting them out	0.2243	0.2071	1.1724	1	0.278	1.251	0.834	1.878
Find a way of sticking to goals and plans	-0.3388	0.2305	2.1595	1	0.142	0.713	0.454	1.120
			<u>Chi-sq.</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>p-value</u>			
	Likelihood Ratio		9.8796	7	0.100†			
	Wald		8.7300	7	0.2726			

† $p < 0.1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

From Table 4.6.1, the model that used to test self-regulation and resilience is significant at $p = 0.008$. However none of the variables tested were found to be significant. There was no correlation between self-regulation and resilience levels with $X^2 = 9.8796$ $df = 7$ $p = 0.100$. All indicators of self-regulation had no significant effect on resilience on school adaptation. This is against the background of understanding that many researchers (e.g., Maureen & Kamloop (2015); Kinniburgh, Blaustein & Spinnazola (2005); Mcewan (2012); Dias, José, Castillo, & Moilanen, (2014); Zimmerman, (2008); Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011) have found self-regulation to be one of the factors that influence resilience to school adaptation. Effective self-regulated learners actively set goals, decide on appropriate strategies, plan their time, organize and prioritize materials and information, shift approaches flexibly, monitor their learning by seeking feedback on their performance and make appropriate adjustments for future learning activities (Saverimuthu, 2015; Shehu J. & Mokgwathi, 2008; Jaffee & Gallop, 2010). Self-regulation is an important aspect of learning and the extent to which school students become self-regulators of their own learning influences school adaptation and their academic success (Effeney, 2013; Morrison et al., 2012; Matuga, 2009; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011).

Effeney, (2013) citing., Pintrich, (2000); Svinicki, (2010); Zimmerman, (2008); Zimmerman & Schunk, (2011) observed that effective self-regulated learners actively set goals, decide on appropriate strategies, plan their time, organize and prioritize materials and information, shift approaches flexibly, monitor their learning by seeking feedback on their performance and make appropriate adjustments for future learning activities.

Similarly, the social cognitive theory that informed this study posits that individuals self-organizing and self-regulating rather than reactive organs shaped by the environment or driven by concealed inner impulses (Bandura, 2006). As a result application self-control practices demonstrate that people are able to regulate themselves.

The findings to the contrary seem to agree with prior research by Bellamy, (2004). Baummeister & Vohs, (2007); Betancourt & Tanveer, (2008); Campbell, (2014) who found that children experiencing risk due to neighborhood violence have poorer self-regulation and academic achievement than those not experiencing such risks. The findings seem to suggest the power of environmental determinism in which the self-regulation of individuals can be inhibited by opportunities within the environment. The current study has shown that the children had low self-regulation in relation the activities that would build resilience to school adaptation. They are limited in ‘concentrating on an activity at a time’, ‘could not set their plans and goals’, ‘could not stick to an activity’ and yet these are tasks that promote resilience in children. However, reflecting on the environment and targeted population of this study, it is possible that the development of self-regulation was strangled at an early age of development of children. Stressful situations have been known to affect development of self-regulation negatively.

Stressful situations require constant attention to and maintenance of intense emotional information, leaving little opportunity for the intellectual exploration and learning that a stimuli-rich environment affords (Copeland, et al., 2007; Ebling, 2002; Gartrell, 2011). Therefore, experiencing a traumatic event early in life can have detrimental effects on children’s affective, cognitive, behavioral, physiological, relational, sensory-motor and social regulation abilities (Bellamy, 2004; Burstow, 2010).

For example, Taha, Graham, Kumwenda *et al.*, (2012) observe that war-related experiences expose children to unacceptably high levels of stressors during a critical time in their psychological development. In their study they found out that stressors such as loss of secure environment impede on the growth and development of children. Children are also likely to develop behavioral disorders due to negative emotions experienced such as pain, anger, and bitterness. In addition, (Blair, 2007) notes that stronger negative emotional reactions (e.g., anger and anxiety) may impede children’s ability to regulate their behavior in school settings where they need to deploy attention and persist in their work. Further, Maureen et al.,(2015) observed that variability in emotion regulation is related to, and may challenge or enhance, children’s ability to manage their task-related behavior hence reducing resilience in school adaptation

Therefore, though not expected the findings of the study are not surprising given the background of the children who took part in this study. It will be recalled that the children who took part in this study have lived in a protracted conflict war zone and are direct or indirect victims of war violence and or witness to various horrors associated with war and are thus called war affected children This early exposure to conflicts could have affected development of their self- capacity and thus adaptation to school system.

From applied developmental perspective Murray et. al (2015) observe that self-regulation enactment is influenced by a combination of individual and external factors including biology, skills, motivation, caregiver support, and environmental context. Accordingly, these factors interact with one another to support self-regulation development. Reflecting on the targeted population for this study where the sample was drawn from, it is possible to argue that the participants were deprived in many aspects that appear to have compromised both

biological and external support system thus affecting their self-regulation development. For proper development children need parents to give them love, they have basic needs which must be provided for, they need role models to emulate and more importantly security that could provide the learning environment to shape their response to different situations. However, to a larger extent these are compromised in war times.

Protracted war environment are marked by high, poverty, insecurity and uncertainties that challenge one's capacity to regulate them, rather it is the situations at hand that dictate how people behavior. For instance children could be playing but all of a sudden they here gun shot. Common sense would dictate that they will run away for survival. This could be a reflex action due to of fear of being gunned down. An environment riddled with conflict as it were in Mt. Elgon, the children may not find a safer place to shield themselves hence conditioned to be hyper vigilant. This negates the construction of self-regulation which is only possible when individuals have some degree of control of their lives.

The behaviorist further argues for both classical and operant conditioning to attain self - regulation. Through positive and negative reinforcement children learn how to control themselves. Uncertainties of war complicate the shaping process as children may lack people who could monitor and shape their behavior to facilitate developmental of self-regulation as they grow. For example parents are assumed to be proximal forces of development for young people. However, children in war zone may grow up without reliable care givers.

According to Vygotsky's (1978) view on socio cultural account, higher psychological functions are a product of social interaction and not merely a result of maturation or a construction through the child's experience alone. Thus, caregivers play a fundamental role in the development of children's cognition and self-regulation. They first have the full responsibility over the task regulating children's actions through language and other tools (Perry, 2001; Persson, 2009)

Whitebread & Basilio (2012) observed that self-regulation develops through early experiences and social interactions, where caregivers and other significant individuals structure and shape children's trajectories. War events are disturbing and in most cases they rupture the social structures that act as safety nets for children thus interfering with development of self-regulation skills. Moreover, successfully self-regulating depends upon environmental influences and interactions with others as well as child factors and predispositions. In essence, relationships are important for development of self-regulation.

Heaton (2013) observe that self-regulation is motivated by desire to control self to fit in a desired group. This he describes as the social brain which develops pro-social attributes that facilitate interaction. The implication is that the society in which the children grow up from has a significant role to play in development of self- regulation. The society in Mt Elgon region of Kenya then was riddled with violence and could not offer such a possibility. The wars ruptured the social structures such us the family, the church and the peer group that offer a sense of belonging to the children. Hence the children lacked the environment that could facilitate optimal growth hence limiting the development of self-regulation.

Joormann, Carver& Johnson (2012) arguing from bio-behavioral perspective, observe that self-regulatory is associated with better health and relationship among other factors. Accordingly, self- regulation unfolds within the bodily organism which requires effective nourishment for successful development. Although this study did not examine the health issues of the children sampled, evidence from war tone regions suggests that such environment are prone to high poverty that may compromise the nutritional needs. In other

words, it is unlikely that the children in the area of study grew up in an environment with resources that would facilitate self-regulation development.

From psychodynamic perspective the theorist Adler (1870) observed that social interest was key to motivator of behavior. Accordingly, social identity is one of the key aspects in development of self-regulation. This is influenced by feelings that one's life is consistence and is headed for meaningful direction, social inner solidarity with ideals and values of some groups, feeling of social support and validation. This requires that that the inner sense of sameness and continuity be meaningful to significant others and corresponds to their perceptions and expectations. However, social solidarity including the values that bound the society to give children direction in development is all violated in the war experiences. Continuity in development is shrouded with uncertainty; hence children are likely to remain stunted in their emotional and cognitive growth. This will in turn interfere with the development of self-regulation skills that lay a significant role in school adaptation.

Reflecting on the population of this study, the social environment appears to have been harsh and unpredictable to the extent that the growing children appear to have lacked any motivation for self-regulation. For example the children in the study did not find a way of sticking to goals and plans, social standards that serve as a guide line to development of self-regulation appear to have been largely missing as people struggled for survival. Hence it's not surprising that the children in Mt.Elgon measured low on self-regulation skill.

In general, self-regulation is a crucial skill which uniquely predicts early school success. However, based on the results of this study and the discussion of the findings, children are only able to regulate themselves in a secure and predictable environment that will enable them to engage in goal-directed behavior such as organizing behavior, controlling impulses and solving problems constructively. Children in Mt.Elgon seem not to have had a secure environment that could foster this self-regulation. The implication is that the children may lack some characteristics that foster school adaptation.

From the findings children were not 'aware of feelings before letting them out' and that they could not 'talk calmly without losing control'. This implies that many of the children in Mt.Elgon were unable to manage emotions. Interviews with teachers revealed some of these characteristics as exemplified by the following excerpt:

...Apollo often fights with the other children. They would hit each other, he usually stays angry for the entire day, and would not apologize. He does not have a close relationship with his sister and does not play with his younger brother. He often speaks to the other teachers. According to the teacher Apollo would often be naughty, especially in class. She describes his behavior as "wild." He is jealous, aggressive and fights with the younger children. His

As can be seen from the quote some children have anger that is difficult to control. Apollo does not seem to be sensitive about others an indication of poor social skills. What is described as wild behavior could mean disruptive behavior that that does not argur well with school adaptation. Such a pupil could be disruptive to the others making learning not only difficult for him but the rest of his classmates. Many researchers such as Bennett,2015; Sautelle et al., 2015; Richard et al., 2004; Kinniburgh, Blaustein & Spinnazola, 2005) have contended that self-regulation extends to managing emotions.

Similarly, Buckner, et al., (2003) links children's effective management of their emotions to positive behavioral and academic outcomes. In contrast, children who cannot control their emotions are more likely to act out, behave aggressively, and oppose the perspectives and requests of others (Mcewan, 2012; Kain, 2010). For example, children who are easily angered will have more difficulty concentrating on school work than those who can effectively modulate their emotional reactions as exemplified in the quote below;

..... I didn't like them, when I think about it I find it difficult to even answer questions in class. I tell myself that I will sit down and read but something tells me to leave the desk and go out...

Wafula, 15

One of the teachers had this to say;

...a number of this children still have issues...they are naughty, when you leave class they jump out, some will not mix easily, most are trouble makers, you' find them in fights, in coarse jokings, like form two class has many issues, even their class mean grade is down, give them assignments they will not finish on time....

In another excerpt;

....some of friends' characters are not good. but I have always told them not to drink alcohol. In fact some even smoke. There are those who like being absent from school. I don't think I need I a girl- friend ...just because others have, no, I need to learn hard and help my mother.

Donald, 15

In FGDs the children had the following to say;

...we saw this things happen, those ones we don't talk about it. When I remember how my brother disappeared and my father was killed I cannot play with someone from that community, how? Can I really allow them to join our discussion groups? I just go away, but...anyway... I don't see why I should talk to them.

FGD, 3

Some children had been suspended from school as indicated in the quote below;

...Michael and Jonah is a nuisance. They spunk others, make a lot of noise, I have talked to them severally. Even the deputy has punished them hoping they change don't know how to live with others well. They fight, steal and snatch bread, pens... from others...about once or twice they have been on suspension ...

From the above quotes some children display aggressive characters that are known to interfere with the learning environment. They are engaged in truancy, are naughty and they don't value studying. They seem to be defiant to school authority. For example Michael and Jonah were not keen on maintaining healthy relationships with the peers. Others were abusing

drugs and still some had lives were riddled with hate and unforgiveness (FGD). Such kinds of behaviors do not only affect the children's academic performance, but it also disrupts the normal learning environment and is a pointer to a child who lacks self-regulation skills. Mcewan (2012), observed that poor self-regulation has been linked to high rates of expulsion, and classrooms.

On the contrary self-regulated learners will engage in many tasks required of a student to earn high course grades such as; concentrating on difficult new concepts, attending to the teacher rather than joking with classmates, practicing skills repeatedly to the point of fluency, working on homework alone rather than socializing with friends (Troy, 2011; Blair, & Razza, 2007; Kinniburgh et al., 2005). Bruele, (2014) observed that there is an association between self-regulation and course grades mediated by effective study habits, effort, and pro-social behavior in the classroom.

From the aforementioned, it is clear that exposure to traumatic events such as war affects the development of self-regulation skills in children. The narratives of the affected children (i.e. Wafula), teachers and from FGD's as evidenced by the excerpts above appear to demonstrate they were not able to regulate themselves. Arguably, the exposure to war had de-capacitated them thereby making it difficult to influence resilience and adjustment to school. Therefore there is great need to focus on promoting the development of self-regulation in early childhood since it is critical as it has a key role in learning, development and socialization.

Summary

Self-regulation is an important aspect in school adaptation and it has also been credited to play a promotive role in resilience. Self-regulation skill was found not to be significant in relation to resilience in school adaptation. Self-regulation is a key variable for healthy functioning but could be adversely affected by social environment that is unpredictable. Therefore these results were not surprising though not expected given the background of the children who took part in this study. As discussed in the study experiencing a traumatic event early in life can have detrimental effects on children's effective, cognitive and behavioral, physiological, relational, sensory-motor and social regulation abilities. Therefore the study observed that there is great need to focus on promoting the development of self-regulation in early childhood since it is critical as it has a key role in learning, development and socialization.

CONCLUSION

Evidence from this study shows that the depleted personal resources (self-regulation skills) as a result of experiencing traumatic events early in life (such as war) can pose a tremendous challenge in school adaptation. This renders children vulnerable and helpless in navigating through school to attain academic achievement. As a result, children continue to struggle to cope with traumatic experiences of bad situations as well as adapting to the school environment. Therefore interventions should focus on strengthening institutions that enhance resilience in children such as the family, school, and community. This may serve as a compensatory factor that could counter-balance the negative effects of growing up in a protracted war environment marked poverty, insecurity and uncertainties that challenge children's capacity to regulate them hence affecting development of their self- capacity and thus adaptation to school system.

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