

Stealing Among Students in Single Sex Public Boarding Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Problem Behavior

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Abstract

This paper reports students, teachers, deputy principals and District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer's (DQASOs) views on the extent to which stealing is a problem behavior among students in public secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county. The study assesses stealing as a problem behavior among students in public secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county using descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study consisted of 5,796 students, 267 teachers, 1 DQASO and 12 Deputy Principals in the 12 (seven boys' and five girls' public boarding secondary schools) single sex public boarding secondary schools in the sub-county. A sample size of 497 consisting of 361 students, 119 secondary school teachers, 1 DQASO and 7 Deputy Principals was used. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedule. The findings showed that stealing was a prevalent behavior problem among students in in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county as several cases of stealing had been handled by teachers in schools depriving students' quality time for teaching-learning activities. Further, the findings revealed that the most culpable class of students likely to engage in stealing in boys' public boarding secondary schools were Form II's while in girls it was the Form III's. Based on the findings it is suggested that the Kenyan Government through the Kenya institute of Curriculum Development to ensure that the value of integrity is mainstreamed in the basic education curriculum in all the subjects so as to address stealing and other vices in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county.

Key words: Stealing, problem behaviour; prevalent, single sex public boarding schools

Introduction

Schools are providers of formal education, an important process that each individual has to undergo in life today. Education therefore should be comprehensive, holistic and not just mere dictation of ideas or offering of formulas to be stored in the brain and mastering skills of answering question at the end of the course (Durka, 2002). Thus, formal education aims at shaping desirable behaviors among students and fading the undesirable ones. However, this key role of education has not been fully attained as students' behavior in schools is a prevailing problem affecting public boarding secondary schools in many nations in the world (Yahaya, Ramli, Hashim, Ibrahim, Rahman, & Yahaya, 2009). Many public boarding secondary schools have to deal with inappropriate behaviors among students, including stealing behavior. Stealing is a covert activity as many instances of stealing are not directly observed (M'Phail, 2008). Children, as they steal, consciously hide the behavior from the property owner ensuring that nobody notices them. M'Phail (2008) further noted that adults too rarely admit knowing about stealing behavior perpetuated by their children.

Research shows that, stealing among students is still a problem behavior in many public schools, in America. The National Crime Prevention Council (n.d) observed that young people between the ages of 12 to 17 in America are far more likely to be victims of property crimes than adults. At this age, most of the young people are expected to be in school in accordance to the No Child is Left Behind Act (Cortiella, 2006).

Robert, Zhang, and Truman (2012) in their recent report on the indicators for crime and safety, further observed that 85 percent of public schools in America recorded one or more incidents of stealing that had taken place during the 2009–10 school year. A survey by Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics (2012), also reported that one in three boys and four girls admitted stealing something in 2012. Similar situation is evident in schools in Africa today. Idu and Olugbade, (2011) identifies various forms of antisocial behaviors among secondary school students in Nigeria inclusive of stealing problem, which contradict African cultural values and morality.

In Kenya students' success in education is pegged on excelling in exams which challenges the achievement of holistic education. Thus many public secondary schools in recent times have witnessed tremendous growth, in incidents of problem behaviors. This, according to Wanza (2012), shows that the Kenyan education system is lacking something and needs an overhaul. It implies that the emphasis should not only be academic but more so on shaping learners' behavior. Ojowi and Simatwa (2010) pointed out several infractions, stealing among students being one of them, that require guidance and counseling in secondary schools in Kenya. Thus stealing behavior could be a significant problem affecting the school life of students in public boarding secondary schools. According to Wamalwa (2012) the trend of theft of books in both primary and secondary schools in Trans Nzoia County has greatly increased. While condemning the incidents Bishops of different denominations in the county suspected that some teachers were taking part in the activity by giving the thieves the necessary information (Kimaiyo, 2012). This is a clear indication to the kind of dilemma in which students find themselves in when even those they are supposed to emulate are associated with stealing activities.

Statement of Problem

Each school in Kenya has a set of rules and regulations which act as a code of discipline to guide and govern the behavior of students, failure to which is regarded as misbehavior (Nyongesa, 2007). Despite the fact that much effort has been put in to enhance desirable behaviors in schools, research shows that stealing among students in schools is still a significant problem affecting the school life of many students (Yahaya et al., 2009). In addition, Hamasi (2010) observes that in spite of the measures highlighted by the Ministry of Education to shape students' desirable behaviors, schools are not working effectively. Therefore, it is obvious that administrators in schools have stressful time when trying to fade stealing behavior among students in schools. It is with this regard that the study sought to determine the extent to which stealing is a problem behavior among students in public secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county.

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on the social control theory. The social control theory originated from Travis Hirschi born in 1935. Social theory is stemmed from social disorganization perspective. The theory bases its arguments on the central principle that deviance behaviour results from an absence of social control or restrains (Clinard & Meier, 2004). The social bonds that people form to, pro-social values, pro-social people, and pro-social institutions, end up controlling our behavior when we are tempted to engage in criminal or deviant acts such as stealing. Social control theory has four interrelated forms of social bonds namely: - attachment (level of psychological affection one has for pro-social others and institutions), commitment (the social relationships that people value, which they would not want to jeopardize by committing criminal or deviant acts), involvement (the opportunity costs associated with how people spend their time) and belief (degree to which one adheres to the values associated with behaviors that conform to the law). Hirschi's social control theory purports that deviant acts such as stealing results when one's bond to the society is broken or weakened. However this Social control theory purports that attachment to the pro-social people weakens delinquency behaviors such as stealing. Furthermore research indicates that the social bonds of attachment, commitment, involvement and belief are effective antecedents to deviant acts such as stealing among adolescents. It is with this support that the researchers grounded the study on this theory.

Literature Review

Stealing incidents among students by nature are very secretive, which makes it difficult for a teacher to detect the culprit. It is a common behavior among students but very upsetting and inappropriate. Stealing behavior appears to start at an early age and it is common among the youth and adolescents. Taylor, Kelley, Valescu, Reynolds, Sherman & German (2001) assert that stealing appears to start generally in children or adolescence before 15 years of age. Further, research findings consistently show that problem behavior during childhood is the strongest predictor of adolescent and adult problem behavior (Grant, Potenza, Krishnan-Sarin, Cavallo & Desai, 2011).

Stealing among students in public secondary schools is associated with other anti-social behaviors. A self-report survey carried out by Grant et al (2011) established that anti-social behaviors such as alcohol and drug use, regular smoking which are addictive and socially unacceptable were associated with stealing. According to this survey students involved in stealing are more likely to perform poorly academically and they are significantly associated with fighting and carrying of weapons. Lowry, Lowry, and Adams-Aburime (2001) on examining students' perceptions of school environment in a small rural high school in North Carolina established that there was prevalence of stealing as a lot of things got lost in the school.

In Kenya, Ndeti, Ongecha, Khasakhala, Syanda, Mutiso, Othieno, Adhiambo and Kokonya, (2007) studied the prevalence and frequency of bullying in Nairobi public secondary schools. The study established that students, especially in junior classes, suffered bullying in form of stealing. The study further revealed that there was high prevalence of both public boarders and day scholars having their belongings taken away by their schoolmate. However the boarders had their belongings taken much more frequently than the day scholars. The study further revealed that students' belongings disappeared on play grounds for the day scholars and in the classes and dormitories for the boarders. However, a study by Okwemba (2007) established that those who lost their belongings rarely told their parents or guardians about it but instead they told them that they could not remember where they had left their belongings. According to Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011) in their study in South Africa they established that stealing is highly significant and a common offence committed by learners in school.

Studies on delinquency in schools have also pointed stealing among students as a common problem. Nyabongi (2012) asserted that stealing is a common delinquent behavior among secondary school students in Tongaren, Bungoma County and primary pupils in Kisii central district respectively. Results yielded by these studies show that the commonly stolen items by students include money, pens, books, school uniforms, underwear, soap, food, shoes, and beddings particularly in boarding schools. A more recent study by Shadrach (2011) revealed that there was stealing among students in public schools in Makadara district in Nairobi County.

Theft of school property and students belongings by students has been a recurring issue in public secondary schools. Stealing is not an everyday occurrence by any means, but it does happen from time to time. There is no doubt that, the incidents of stealing among students in public schools pose a great challenge to the school administration. A study by Kirui, Mbugua and Sang (2011) which sought to determine the challenges facing head teachers in security management in secondary schools in Kisii County established that stealing of schools' and students' property was one of the security challenges faced by the head teachers in managing schools. It was also ranked by prefects (63%) as the key challenge in their line of duty. This implied that students regarded it as a serious security challenge in the schools compared to other security challenges revealed by the researchers such as drug abuse (23.8%), destruction of property (17.4 %), and assault (5.3%). The study under review determined the challenges facing head teachers in security management while the present study established the factors influencing stealing behavior among students in public boarding secondary schools.

Many secondary schools in Kenya are experiencing a lot of disciplinary problems requiring intervention of guidance and counseling. Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) examined the role of guidance and counseling in promoting students discipline in secondary schools in Kisumu. The study identified theft among students as a disciplinary problem experienced in mixed schools in the area. This study intended to see whether the same applied to single sex public boarding secondary schools. Almost all schools have guidance and counseling departments but these departments are run by teachers who are not qualified in guidance and counseling (Kirui et al, 2011). Hence it is challenging for the entire school fraternity to handle this anti-social behavior. Lutomia and Sikolia, (2002) in a research carried out in western part of Kenya found out that there were many theft cases in schools with new comers and victims of theft being warned to be careful and to lock their boxes well. This is an indicator that to some extent, the authorities accept their failure to do away with stealing behaviors in schools.

Thus stealing in Kenyan public secondary schools is a delinquent behavior and a form of indiscipline and bullying among students. The reviewed literature indicates that there is stealing among students in secondary schools in some parts of Kenya. However, there is very scanty literature available that has been conducted to establish whether stealing is a prevalent problem behavior among students in public single sex boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county and the possible factors influencing them to steal from schoolmates which this study focused on.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used to establish whether stealing is a problem behavior among students in public secondary schools in Kenya. Descriptive survey research design has been described by Best and Kahn (2006) as a form of research design that presents the existing conditions, beliefs, opinions, practices and perceptions the way they are, in order to develop an interpretative meaning. The choice of descriptive study was also made based on the fact that the researchers intended to gather ideas, views and perception on stealing behavior among students. The target population for this study consisted of 5,796 students, 267 teachers, and 12 Deputy Principals in the 12 (seven boys' and five girls' public boarding secondary schools) single sex public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county. The target population also included the Trans-Nzoia West Sub-county Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (DQASO). The target population was as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Table showing the target population

School Type	Target Population for schools	Target Population for students	Target Population for teachers	Deputy Principals
Boys schools	5	3069	132	5
Girls schools	7	2727	135	7
Total	12	5796	267	12

Sources: Trans-Nzoia West Sub-County Educational Offices (2013).

A sample is a group of units, items or respondents selected to represent a total population. According to Orodho (2004), sampling is the process of selecting a group of cases in order to draw conclusions about the entire population. The study used probability sampling design to sample 7 schools. To decide on the number of schools in each stratum the researchers adopted the method of proportional allocation as suggested by Kothari (2004). The researchers therefore selected 3 boys' and 4 girls' public single sex boarding secondary schools using simple random sampling technique. A table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for determining sample size from any given population was used to come up with a sample of 361 students (191 boys and 170 girls) from the selected schools. The students' sample size in each sampled school was divided into three to get the sample size per class (Form II to Form IV). The Form I students were not included in the study as they had just reported in schools. In sampling the students in each class, the researchers then used systematic random sampling technique in which the eighth name in the list of students in the admission register was selected by the researchers to participate in the study. A total of 7 deputy principals, 119 teachers and one DQASO were sampled using non probability sampling designs. Using purposive sampling technique, the researchers selected all the class teachers from form II to form IV (63), all the teacher counselors (7), all the teachers in disciplinary committee (35), seven (7) boarding master/mistress and seven (7) game master/mistress in the selected schools. Therefore a total of one hundred and nineteen (119) teachers were selected from the seven sampled schools, which was 44.57% of the total teachers' population in public single sex boarding secondary schools in the sub-county. The deputy principals (7) from the participating schools were purposively selected to participate in the study. This is because in most cases they are the ones who deal with discipline cases in the schools. They are also influential in modifying students' undesirable behavior. The DQASO for Trans-Nzoia West Sub-county was automatically included in this study as they deal with schools' welfare and have knowledge on the issue under study. Table 2 shows the sample size of the study.

Table 2: Table showing the sample size

School type	Sample size for school	Sample size for students	Sample size for teachers	Sample size Deputy Principals
Boys schools	3	191	51	3
Girls schools	4	170	68	4
Total	7	361	119	7

The researchers developed questionnaires for teachers and students, interview guide for Deputy Principals and the District Quality Assurance and Standard Officer, and document analysis guide to collect data from the sampled respondents. This triangulation enabled the researchers to obtain a variety of information on the same issue thus achieving a high degree of reliability as the deficiencies of a single method study were overcome. Validity and reliability in qualitative paradigm are referred to as credibility and dependability respectively (Mertens, 2005). The researchers used source and method triangulation, member check, peer review and participants verbatim accounts to ensure credibility and dependability of the research instruments. The researchers used experts in the field of educational psychology to validate the instruments. In establishing the reliability of questionnaires, the researchers used Cronbach Alpha technique under internal consistency technique to test the reliability of questionnaires for teachers and students. Their reliability is as summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Reliability statistics of teachers' and students' questionnaires

Questionnaires	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach' Alpha based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Teachers	0.925	0.926	48
Students	0.826	0.830	48

Table 3 shows that the Cronbach reliability coefficient for teachers' questionnaire was 0.925 and 0.826 for students' questionnaire. Since both reliability coefficients were above 0.7, the researchers was able to confirm that the instruments: questionnaire for teachers and questionnaire for students were reliable (Mcmilan & Schumacher, 2010).

After being certain that the instruments were valid and reliable, the researchers proceeded to the sampled schools for the actual data collection. In each sampled school, the researchers explained the aim of the research to the heads of the schools to secure their approval and consent to conduct the study. The researchers then had self-introduction to the relevant participants, explain the purpose of the study and obtain their consent to participate in the study. In each sampled school, the participants filled the questionnaires and the researchers collected them on the same day. As the participants were filling in the questionnaires in each sampled school the researchers proceeded to conduct an in-depth interview guide with the Deputy Principal. After collecting data from schools, the researchers proceeded to interview the DQASO on the date that had been arranged for appointment.

The researchers used descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and percentage to summarize the data. The findings were presented in form of tables, pie charts and graphs. The researchers then categorized the qualitative data into themes.

Results

The data collected from all the respondents was analyzed and reported under the following sub-headings.

Demographic information of respondents

The demographic information of interest to the study was on gender and age of the respondents, and on the professional qualification and experience of the teachers, deputy principals and DQASO. This information was necessary in order to get the background information about the respondents' characteristics and experiences in assessing the factors that influence students' stealing behavior in public boarding secondary schools in the district.

Gender of respondents

The study sought for data on the gender of the respondents in order to find out the representation of both sexes in the study. The data obtained from the field regarding sex of the respondents were analyzed and presented in Table. 4

Table 4: Distribution of teachers by gender

	DQASO		Deputy Principals		Teacher		Students	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Male	1	100	3	43	70	59	191	53
Female	-	-	4	57	49	41	170	47
Total	1	100	7	100	119	100	361	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

Table 4 shows that, whereas the DQASO in the district was male, the deputy principals are fairly distributed in terms of gender. The deputy principals who participated in the study were 4 female while the male were 3. Thus the responsibility of sanctioning discipline within the schools which participated in the study was bestowed on both male and female since deputy principals handle disciplinary matters in their respective schools. Table 4 also shows that, there is no major disparity in the distribution of teachers who participated in the study in terms of gender. The male teachers were 59% while the females were 41% implying that most of the departments in public boarding secondary schools in the district were headed by male teachers. However it was impressive to note that the government policy on gender mainstreaming in the public sector where no gender should hold more than two thirds of the available positions has been implemented in the district (Republic of Kenya, 2011). The gender issue in the distribution of teachers in the district is also well reflected according to the Ministry of Education (MOE) policy of giving equal opportunity to both male and female (Republic of Kenya, 2011).

Table 4 also shows that 53% of the students who participated in the study were male while the female were 47%. This finding implied that boys' boarding schools were more populated than girls' boarding schools in the district which impacted on the schools negatively as confirmed during the survey where the DQASO was quoted saying:

“Most of the boys’ boarding schools in the district are congested and the dormitories are overcrowded. That is why stealing is rampant in some schools in the district and hence there is need of professionalism in dealing with stealing among students in our school...”

Thus the boys' students are more than girls in the area of the study despite there being more girls than boys' boarding schools. This disparity was not however expected to affect the study in any way.

Age of respondents

The study was interested in establishing the age of the DQASO, deputy principals and teachers. The data was analyzed and presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by age

Age	DQASO		Deputy Principals		Teachers	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Below 30	-	-	-	-	36	30
31 – 35	-	-	-	-	27	23
36 – 40	-	-	2	29	19	16
46 – 50	-	-	1	14	7	6
51 – 55	-	-	-	-	6	5
Over 55	-	-	-	-	2	2
Non- response	-	-	-	-	4	3
Total	1	100	7	100	119	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

Table 5 shows that, out of the seven (7) deputy principals four (4) were aged between 41-45 years and one (1) was aged above 46 years of age. Two (2) of them were aged between 36-40 years. This finding suggests that most of deputy principals were advanced in age. This implies that for one to be appointed a deputy principal one must have served as a teacher for a given duration of time hence making them get to deputy headship at an advanced age. The deputy principals therefore were of mature age (above 36) which placed them at good position to shape students' desirable behaviour. Table 5 further shows that only a third of teachers (30%) were less than thirty years of age. Thus, many teachers (70%) were above thirty years of age and hence were mature and able to support, monitor and effectively fade stealing behavior among students, hence facilitating bonding of the students to the schools.

Professional qualification of DQASO, Deputy Principals and Teachers

The study collected data on the professional qualifications of the respondents. The purpose of this data was to find out if the DQASO, teachers and deputy principals in the district had attained the academic levels expected to equip them with adequate knowledge on discipline matters in schools. The data obtained was analyzed and results are as summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents by Professional qualification

Qualification	DQASO		Deputy Principals		Teachers	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Diploma in education	-	-	-	-	38	32
BED	1	100	5	72	20	17
BA with PGDE	-	-	1	14	6	5
Masters in Education	-	-	1	14	55	46
Total	1	100	7	100	119	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

Table 6 reveals that the majority of deputy principals (72%) were graduates whereas (28%) were postgraduates. This could be due to the fact that both public and private universities in Kenya have constituent colleges in the area such as Moi University, Kisii university, Mount Kenya University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology among many others. This has motivated many teachers to go for higher education. This implies that most of deputy principals were well equipped with knowledge and skills to head their respective departments and handle problem behaviors among students in their schools effectively. This finding corroborates with that of Hamasi (2010) who observed that Diploma teachers are rarely deployed to headship positions as it may be hard for them to control majority of the teachers who are holders of Bachelor of education degree and hence may underrate them.

It was encouraging to find out that most of the teachers in the district had acquired higher academic qualifications. Table 6 reveals that 46% had Masters Degree while 17% had a Bachelors' degree in education and 5% had a post graduate degree in education. This suggests that teachers in the district were adequately equipped with knowledge on academic matters. The finding concurs with that of Heyneman (1976) who observed that teacher's academic and professional qualifications have significant influence on students' behavior formation and academic achievement. The findings implied that most of the teachers and deputy principals in the district were highly qualified and thus able to translate and implement MOE policies and guidelines with a lot of professionalism.

It was motivating to find out that the DQASO was a graduate with a Bachelor of Education Degree. This higher education was an added value and advantage to being grounded in school administration and particularly students behaviors. It is no wonder the officer was so much interested in participating in the study citing it as unique, geared towards stealing behavior modification and with stamina of academic improvement in the district. The DQASO was quoted saying:

"If schools can control stealing among students in the district, public boarding schools will have more conducive environment for studies, then we shall be talking of academic excellence in the district as no time would be wasted on solving behavior problems..."

The academic qualification of the teachers, deputy principals and the DQASO implied that they were all in positions of influencing students' behavior positively.

Respondents' years of service in the current station

A follow up question was asked on the years of service of the DQASO, deputy principals and teachers in their current stations. The aim of seeking this data was to find out if they were adequately exposed to activities of behavior management in their respective institutions and to assess if they would be in a position to give more factual information on a specific behavior in their institutions. Furthermore, the more one stays in a station the more informed he/she becomes as far as issues of students' behaviors are concerned. Data from the field on the same were analyzed and the results tabulated in Table 7.

Table 7: Respondents' years of service in their current station

Years	DQASO		Deputy Principals		Teachers	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1 - 5 years	1	100	2	29	78	66
6 - 10 year	-	-	3	42	19	16
11 - 15 years	-	-	2	29	10	8
16 - 19 years	-	-	-	-	10	8
Non – response	-	-	-	-	2	2
Total	1	100	7	100	119	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

Findings in Table 7 show that the DQASO was newly posted in the district and as such, had an experience of less than 5 years of work in his current working station. Similarly, two (2) of the deputy principals were also newly posted and had less than five years of service in their current station. Such a scenario could have come about due to the government's practice where by teachers promoted to deputize are posted to new stations where they work shortly awaiting their promotion as head teachers. Unfortunately such a move is undoing as far as student behavior is concerned. Despite this, majority of them (42%) had served in their current station for a period of between 6 and 10 years and two of the deputy principals had served for at least eleven years. This suggested that, they clearly understood the institutional management and especially inappropriate behaviors that existed in their respective schools. Majority of the teachers (66%) had been teaching in their current schools for a period of less than five years implying that most teachers in the district were new in their schools. This showed that they were not conversant with problem behaviors of students. Only 16% of them had been in their current station for a period of between six and ten years despite them being the ones expected to give guidance to the younger teachers as far as students' discipline is concerned. This implied that many schools had few teachers who had the experience to deal with problem behaviours emanating from students.

Responsibilities held by teachers

The study also sought to determine the responsibilities held by teachers in their respective schools. Data on the position held by teachers was deemed vital because teachers are directly involved in students' school life most of the time. It was therefore assumed that these teachers were well placed to provide relevant factual information on stealing behavior among students in their respective schools. Data collected was analyzed and is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Distribution of teachers by responsibility

Teacher Responsibility	Frequency	Percent
Class Teachers	63	53
Teacher Counselors	7	6
Disciplinary Committee	35	29
Boarding Masters/Mistresses	7	6
Games Masters/Mistresses	7	6
Total	119	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

Table 8 reveals that all the teachers who participated in the study were entrusted with important responsibility centered on behavior formation of students. The majority of the teachers (53%) were class teachers. The other responsibilities were teacher counselors (6%), disciplinary committee (29%), Boarding Masters /Mistress (6%) and Games Masters/Mistress (6%). Teachers holding these responsibilities ensured that the students adhered to the school rules. Despite this, document analysis revealed that the disciplinary committee was more utilized than guidance and counseling in all the schools as the records were up to date. This was confirmed by one of the deputy principals who had the following to say in an interview with one of the researchers:

“...most stealing cases are dealt with, by the deputy principal and the disciplinary committees but teachers who are responsible in guiding and counseling students are never involved...”

This implies that guidance and counseling departments in the schools were either ineffective or not utilized.

Prevalence of stealing in schools

The researchers sought to establish the extent to which stealing behavior was a problem among students in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West Sub-County. Several questions were posed to the respondents to give them guidance. The information was presented as explained in the following sub-sections.

The existence of stealing in public single sex boarding secondary schools

The researchers sought to know whether stealing behavior existed among students in their respective schools. The data collected was analyzed and is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Responses on existence of stealing behavior in schools

Existence of stealing	DQASO		Deputy Principals		Teachers		Students	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Yes	1	100	7	100	104	87	316	88
No	-	-	-	-	4	3	34	9
Non - Response	-	-	-	-	12	10	11	3
Total	1	100	7	100	119	100	361	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

The findings in Table 9 show that 87% of teachers and 88% of students concurred that stealing behavior existed in their respective schools. This was also confirmed by the one of the deputy principals who had the following to say:

“...there are a lot of theft cases among the students in our school. There is no week that will pass without my office handling a case involving theft”.

This finding implied that stealing behavior which is a criterion for social disorder really existed among students in schools within the sub-county and it needed to be dealt with. The finding further implies that there was absence of social control in the schools studied in the district. Such state of affairs necessitated strengthening of social bonds among the students.

Stealing behavior among students in public boarding secondary schools

The study further enquired on the frequency of stealing behavior in the public boarding secondary schools, in which the participants were required to rate the occurrences on a scale of 1-4; where 1= very common, 2=common, 3=rare and 4=very rare. Data collected from the field was statistically analyzed and the results were as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Prevalence of stealing behavior in schools

	Teachers		Students	
	F	%	F	%
Very common	26	22	103	28
Common	63	53	181	50
Rare	17	14	53	15
Very rare	5	4	14	4
Non response	8	7	10	3
Total	119	100	361	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

The findings in Table 10 reveal that a majority of the teachers (53%) and students (50%) believed that stealing behavior was very common in their school. This was supported by one of the deputy principals who said:

“Stealing among students is so common in our school. It has become a daily norm and it calls for all the stakeholders i.e. parents, teachers, the church and school management to come together and device a way on how we can curb this menace.”

These findings implied that stealing behavior was a common experience that students went through in public boarding secondary schools in the sub-county. An analysis on the punishment books revealed that majority of the disciplinary cases dealt with in the schools were stealing cases. This indicates that students did not conform to the social norms of their schools hence there was need for clinical interventions.

In spite of these revelations the DQASO had the following to say:

“Stealing in schools within sub-county is not a prevalent problem to a large extent. Many schools have measures in place to deter the stealing behavior in their schools. The schools have created strong social bonds among students and hence make a majority of them not to steal their colleagues’ property....”

This means that although stealing among students was not a problem to a large extent, it was still a problem which needed to be dealt with in the schools in the district. An interview with one of the deputy principal clearly indicated that most students have no respect for their fellow students’ personal effects and at times stole for the sake of earning revenge. She had the following to say:

“...some students when they appear before the disciplinary committee for having been found stealing defend themselves by saying that they ventured into stealing as a revenge mission for having lost their items too.”

On analyzing the punishment record books it was observed that students were also involved in a broad range of anti-social behaviors such as rudeness to teachers and prefects, boycotting lessons, untidiness, noise making, hooliganism, disorderly behavior, fighting, bullying newcomers, cheating in examination, disobeying teachers and prefects, sneaking from school, possession of phones while at schools which was prohibited in the school rules, use of abusive language, and reporting late at school and in classes. This pervasive pattern of behavior is an indication of disregard for, and violation of rights of other fellow students in the school which may be resulting from absence of parental love as Frances and Ross (2001) pointed out in the study.

The class of students mostly involved in stealing behavior

The study further sought information on the class of students likely to be involved in the stealing behavior at their respective schools. The data was analyzed and tabulated as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Prevalence of Stealing Behavior by Class of Students

Class	Teachers		Students	
	F	%	F	%
Form 1	3	3	23	6
Form II	33	28	137	38
Form III	40	34	148	41
Form IV	18	15	53	15
Non - response	24	20	0	0
Total	119	100	361	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

According to Table 11, teachers responses clearly demonstrates that Form III's were the most likely culprits of stealing from their schoolmates, while according to the students the most likely culprits of stealing behavior in public boarding secondary schools were Form II's. The teachers rated Form III students (34%) as the most culpable, probably because the gravity of their cases warranted reporting them to the teachers to deal with the matter. On the other hand the students rated Form II students (41%) as the most culpable suggesting that they could be more conversant with their fellow students' behavior and also probably could be, the cases of theft emerging from them were resolved among the students and thus not warranting the knowledge of the teachers.

The finding implied that stealing problem was at its peak among the Form II and Form III students. Therefore, the students need to be actively involved in legitimate school-related activities in order to reduce stealing behavior among them. The social control theory suggests that if students are actively involved in legitimate school-related activities they will not spend the same time in deviant behavior such as stealing from their fellow schoolmates.

The class and gender most likely to engage in stealing

The researchers further wanted to establish the class and gender most likely to engage in stealing behavior. A cross tabulation between class and gender most likely to engage in stealing was done and the results presented as shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Cross tabulation of class and gender most likely to engage in stealing.

Gender	Male		Female		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Form 1	13	7	10	6	23	6
Form II	86	45	51	30	137	38
Form III	73	38	75	44	148	41
Form IV	19	10	34	20	53	15
Total	191	100	170	100	361	100

Note: F = Frequency; % = Percentage

According to the students from the schools sampled in the area of study, the most culpable class of students likely to engage in stealing in boys' public boarding secondary schools were Form II's (45%) followed by Form III's (38%). In the girls' public boarding secondary schools, the findings show that Form III classes (44%) would be the most culpable to stealing behavior followed by Form II (30%). The findings indicate that stealing behavior in boys' public boarding secondary schools is at the peak in Form II classes while in girls' public boarding secondary schools it is in Form III classes. This is an indication that the onset of stealing behavior among boys is at an earlier age than that of the girls. The study established that 38% of students in Form II classes and 41% of students in Form III classes were most likely to be involved in stealing from their schoolmates in single sex schools. A number of students in Form IV in both boys' (10%) and girls' (20%) public boarding secondary schools in the sub-county were also likely to be involved in stealing behavior. This finding concurs with Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie and Saylor (1999) whose study established that stealing behavior was higher among males in higher grades. Grant et.al (2011) also observed that stealing behavior starts generally in children or adolescences. Thus teachers who are viewed as people who can solve all problems that an adolescent faces at school, need to be sensitive to effectively work and model desirable behavior among students experiencing the turbulence of adolescence, putting in mind that they are dealing with persons from diverse social-economic backgrounds and with different personalities. Given such a scenario, teachers need to build a positive relationship with students in order to influence their behavior positively. Such friendly environment will create students' attachment to the teachers and the school which will work against stealing behavior as purported by the social control theory.

4.3.5 The items commonly stolen by students in public boarding secondary schools

The researchers further enquired on the kind of items that the students were likely to steal from each other. A list of items was presented to the teachers and the students to rank on a scale of 1- 4 where 1= very common, 2= common, 3= rare, and 4= very rare. The scale was coded and descriptive statistics were then used to analyze the data. The findings from the data collected were as shown in Table 13 and 14.

Table 13: Ranking of student responses on commonly stolen items in schools

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Plates	361	1	4	2	0.828
School shirt/ blouse	361	1	4	2	0.804
School shorts/trousers	361	1	4	2	0.77
Spoons	361	1	4	2	0.954
School sweaters	361	1	4	2	0.842
Geometrical sets	361	1	4	2	0.957
Pens and pencils	361	1	4	2	1.028
School blazers	361	1	4	2	0.93
Games kit	361	1	4	2	1.109
Socks	361	1	4	2	1.105
Personal Text books	361	1	4	2	0.875
School skirts	361	1	4	2	1.148
Ties	361	1	4	2	1.125
Personal under wears	361	1	4	2	1.089
School text books	361	1	4	2	0.966
Pocket money	361	1	4	3	1.021
Personal exercise books	361	1	4	3	1.031
Shoes	361	1	4	3	1.006
School vests	361	1	4	3	1.116
Washing soap	361	1	4	3	1.058
Petty coats	361	1	4	3	0.98
Mattresses	361	1	4	3	1.051
Bathing soap	361	1	4	3	1.11
Bed sheets	361	1	4	3	0.994
Bed covers	361	1	4	3	1.026
Beddings	361	1	4	3	1.042
Blankets	361	1	4	3	0.917

Note: N = Sample Size; Min = minimum; Max = Maximum; Std Dev = Standard deviation

Table 14: Ranking of teachers' responses on commonly stolen items in schools

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Pens and Pencils	119	1	4	2	.872
School shirt/ blouse	119	1	4	2	.901
School shorts/trousers	119	1	4	2	.949
Pocket money	119	1	4	2	.927
Personal Text books	119	1	4	2	.775
Spoons	119	1	4	2	1.023
Socks	119	1	4	2	.928
Games kit	119	1	4	2	.934
School sweaters	119	1	4	2	.994
School text books	119	1	4	2	.934
Cups	119	1	4	2	1.012
Plates	119	1	4	2	1.049
Personal exercise books	119	1	4	2	1.019
School skirts	119	1	4	2	1.006
Geometrical sets	119	1	4	2	.972
Ties	119	1	4	2	1.089
School blazers	119	1	4	3	1.075
Shoes	119	1	4	3	1.019
Washing soap	119	1	4	3	.996
Petty coats	119	1	4	3	1.098
Bathing soap	119	1	4	3	.971
Personal under wears	119	1	4	3	1.005
Personal vests	119	1	4	3	1.003
Bed sheets	119	1	4	3	.823
Blankets	119	1	4	3	.873
Beddings	119	1	4	3	.854
Bed covers	119	1	4	3	.777
Mattresses	119	1	4	4	.691

Note: N = Sample Size; Min = minimum; Max = Maximum; Std Dev = Standard deviation

From Table 13 and 14 the mean for items presented to students and teachers for ranking was between 2 and 3. The findings revealed that the commonly stolen items by students in the sampled schools were: school shirts, blouses, shorts, trousers, sweaters, blazers, socks, school skirts, ties, games kits, personal under wears, plates, spoons, geometrical sets, pens, pencils, personal text books and school text books, as they had a mean of 2. These findings agree with Nambaka (2007) who established a similar situation in Bungoma County, Kenya. The findings further demonstrated that stealing took place in the dormitories, classes, dinning and in play grounds similar to Ndeti et al (2007) findings in Nairobi Public schools, Kenya. Such a scenario infringes the rights of students to safety and militates against effective teaching and learning activities (Mackay, 2011). It also traumatizes the victim as it negatively affects concentration during learning process.

The responses from both students and teachers also show that, pocket money, personal exercise books, shoes, vests, washing soap, petty coats, mattresses, bathing soap, bed sheets, bed covers, and blankets were rarely stolen as indicated in Table 13 and 14. The researchers also had the privilege of observing some of the items stolen by students. From the items stolen it was established that most students stole items meant to improve their academic life such as stationeries and school uniforms. This implies that the vice of stealing was done at the expense of behavior formation as the items stole from each other were useful to them in their classes where teaching and learning activities take place. This scenario also implies that either parents are not providing adequately for their children at school or schools could be putting more emphasis on academics than behavior formation aspects which are equally vital in educational process.

Conclusion

The study established that stealing was a prevalent behavior problem among students in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county as several cases of stealing had been handled by teachers in schools depriving students' quality time for teaching-learning activities. Students steal a variety of personal items from their schoolmates. Based on this finding one can conclude that students steal to improve their academic life at the expense of behavior formation because they steal stationeries and school uniforms. However some steal for fun to bully the newcomers and to antagonize the higher achievers. This shows that issue of problem behaviors among students has not yet been fully addressed by the government of Kenya in single sex public boarding secondary schools despite its efforts to promote quality and relevant basic education.

Recommendations

The study recommended that the Kenyan Government through the Kenya institute of Curriculum Development should ensure that the value of integrity is mainstreamed in the basic education curriculum in all the subjects. In addition, the school administration and teachers with the support of parents should sensitize the students on the value of honesty and respect of other peoples' property which will reduce stealing among students and eventually curb the behavior. This can be strengthened by training of school prefects and peer counselors who will work hand in hand with teachers to curb the behavior as young people easily respond to their peers.

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