

EXPLORING THE CAUSES OF SELECTED CONDUCT DISORDERS AMONG SCHOOL-GOING ADOLESCENTS IN UGANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The study's main issue was the causes of selected conduct disorders among adolescents in school. Adolescent conduct disorders emanate from a variety of factors that include social, economic, school, genetic status and parental factors. The purpose of the study was to explore the causes of selected conduct disorders among adolescents in school. The study was qualitative, explorative and phenomenological in nature. The study participants were parents and teachers. Data were collected using online (WhatsApp) focus group discussions due to restrictions brought about by COVID-19 that made physical interaction risky. Data were analysed in an integrative manner using findings from the two countries from parents and teachers, and thematically using themes generated from the outcomes of the online discussions. Findings indicate that conduct disorders among secondary school adolescents are a result of developmental, parental, school, social and academic factors. The study concludes that conduct disorders are recognised among the secondary school adolescents in Uganda and South Africa and pose a challenge to education and affect the proper functioning of schools. From the findings and conclusions, the researchers recommend hands-on parenting, adolescent psycho-social services, guidance and counseling services in schools, career guidance based on students' needs, academic strengths and aspirations, positive peer groups and moderation of punishment at home and at school. This has implications on the need for dynamics in parenting, teacher-student relationships and psycho-social services that are detrimental in building healthy developmental milestones that have a direct impact on behavior and conduct among adolescents.

Keywords: Conduct, Disorders, School-going, Adolescents, Uganda, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent conduct disorders, which come in mild, moderate, severe and profound degrees are a big challenge to parents and teachers partly due to their ability to disrupt normal functioning in terms of academic, personal and social aspects, and which is a disturbance to society in general (Kadhuba, 2018; Mugenyi, 2021). These disorders manifest in the form of aggressive, deceitful, destructive and rule-violation behaviours (Mugenyi, 2021). Cases of conduct disorders in schools usually lead to student suspension or expulsion (Okaba, 2019) partly because they negatively affect academic achievement which has implications on educational completion (Finn, Fish & Scott, 2008).

One factor that has been blamed for increase in conduct disorders is family related factors that include social, economic and parenting styles. Conduct disorders are categorised under psychosocial problems which are associated with a lack of a strong support system in the life of an adolescent (Pratt, 2003). The family is the first habitat for adolescents and what happens in adolescents' conduct as they grow has a huge bearing on how they behave, and this has been appreciated in research done as early as the 16th and 17th centuries in more developed continents (Powers, 2013). The earlier centuries witnessed studies on the role of those similar factors on conduct disorders in the 1950s in geographical areas of Africa, South America and Asia (Bai & Foscenca, 2019). The home is a foundation of what a child portrays at school and vice versa, hence both environments feed into each other as far as influencing school-going adolescents' conduct is concerned. The home's socio-economic status and style of parenting, at one point or another, affect a student's conduct, but especially in circumstances when the school environment has played its role (Arifin, Wahab, Teh, & Otman, 2018). In a study conducted by Mawusi (2013), a long-standing relationship between socio and economic factors and outcomes related to parenting styles and learning output in Africa exists. In Uganda, specifically, several sources, such as Muzaki, (2018) and UNICEF (2019) have argued that socio-economic factors, parenting styles, school environment and conduct disorders are inter-connected. Studies in South Africa have also established that parenting styles, school environment, community's role, financial background of the learners and conduct disorders are intertwined (Nhambura, 2020; UNICEF, 2019). A dysfunction in any of these attributes may adversely affect this population, hence a need to explore how these and more factors shape conduct disorders (Darin-Mattsson et al., 2017). Contextually, conduct disorders are behavioral challenges that can exist among adolescents portrayed through failure to adhere to rules and behave in a socially acceptable manner (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry [AACAP], 2013). These may include home, school, peer and personal factors (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017; McLoyd, 2015; Muzaki, 2018; Mahuro & Hungu, 2016; UBOS, 2017; Muhereza, 2016). However, what is noted in these studies is the limitation to specific factors.

Most of the adolescents' time is largely spent on socialisation with peers (Lam, McHale & Crouter, 2014). Those in boarding schools experience school as home which becomes their natural habitat where both positive and negative behaviours are birthed and shaped (Miller, 2013). Such events have been portrayed through the common existence of several school strikes in Uganda and South Africa (Okaba, 2019, Nhambura, 2020). A vast number of urban schools in both Uganda and South Africa function in differing settings including slums, trading centers, outskirts, among others with salient and peculiar conditions such as shortage of the much needed amenities and facilities which become a breeding environment for aversive conduct-grooming behaviours. Teachers who do not provide a favourable environment definitely receive outcomes like aversive conduct of learners (Sirima & Poipoi, 2010).

In Uganda and South Africa, the problem of conduct disorders among school-going adolescents is prevalent in both urban and rural secondary schools which has proved to be a threat to not only the schools but to the community as well (Kadhuba, 2018; Nhambura, 2020). Conduct disorders is a rarely researched area especially among African adolescents because of the difficulty in defining what conduct disorders are and their indicators. The few studies that have been conducted, like that done by Mugenyi (2022) have been on younger generations such

as those in elementary school, a population that limits the link between full blown adolescence and conduct problems and disorders. Specifically, few studies, if any, have researched conduct disorders among school-going adolescents in Uganda and South Africa, the gap this study intended to bridge. In the year 2019 alone, over 200 cases of conduct disorder-linked behaviours such as aggression, deceit and rules violation were registered in just one of the divisions in Kampala, Uganda (Disciplinary Books for Selected Schools, 2019) while South Africa's conduct disorder prevalence is recorded to be at 4 percent by Kleintjes, Flisher, Fick, Railoun, Lund, Molteno and Robertson (2009). Media reports show that conduct disorders of the disruptive nature are on the increase in South African high schools. In 2008, the South African Human Rights Commission conducted a study on violence in schools among students and established that the rate of violence in several schools in the country is shockingly high (South African Human Rights Commission, 2008). Based on current media reports, the disruptive behaviour in South African schools has doubled if not tripled. Nhambura (2020) established that in South African North-West Province, schools were no longer safe havens for both learners and teachers due to learner violence. Such a picture is particularly disturbing and warrants a study to be carried out on conduct disorders of school-going adolescents in South Africa.

Studies conducted by Sirima and Poipoi (2010), Miller (2013) and Odhiambo (2011) on school-related factors and their link with conduct disorders argue that conduct is influenced by schools and their surroundings but these studies do not exhaustively unravel the role of factors external to the school jurisdiction such as parent-related and socio-economic ones. Most studies have also proved to be more quantitative in nature, for example, those done by Mugenyi (2022) who analysed the relationship between home factors, school factors and conduct disorders and, therefore, limited in their assessment of causes of conduct disorders, hence, the necessity for a qualitative exploration of factors. Moreover, conduct disorders must be investigated to avoid their persistent existence and adverse effects on academic performance, school dropout rates and career-related fields (Finn, Fish & Scott, 2008). It is against this background that the researchers endeavored to explore what causes these conduct disorders among students in this sensitive human development stage in Uganda and South Africa. The study's boundaries of conduct disorders focused on their behavioural and cognitive aspects which present themselves persistently as manifestations that lead to abuse of others' rights (Njendu, 2014). The selected conduct disorders were destruction and violation of rules (Muhereza, 2016) as given by the Diagnostic Statistical Manual for Mental Retardation 5th edition (DSMMR-5). Psychologically, adolescence is a period of storm indicated by enormous affective turmoil (Scherf, Behrmann & Dahl, 2012). The transition from childhood to adulthood comes with physical, emotional, cognitive and social changes proved to be stressful to adolescents of school going age (Timalsina, Kafle & Timalsina, 2018). Behaviour shift is significantly noticeable as adolescents struggle to control their conduct hence conduct disorders. The study therefore sought to explore the causes of destructive and rules' violation conduct disorders among school-going adolescents in Uganda and South Africa.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Ogundele (2016), some social and economic factors explain learners' lifestyles both at home and school. If these factors are not carefully attended to, disorders emerge (Propper & Riggs, 2007). They include poverty, deprivation, lack, inadequacy and have a significant link with adolescent conduct problems (Propper & Riggs, 2007). A family's social position and economic standing influences one's conduct (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018). Status is determined by family's income, level of education, occupation and overall lifestyle (Hauser & Warren (1996); Ormrod (2011) and Schulz (2005) and can as well stretch into cultural, political or social lifestyles (Buchmann, 2002 & Schulz, 2005). The other markers include tangible belongings, like, boats, cars, houses, digital equipment and appliances (Park, 2008; Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Ogundele (2016) argues that if young people are socially and economically deprived, behavioral disorders may emerge and what parents can or cannot offer both socially and economically can lead to children's delinquency through disobedience and aggression (Duan, Guan & Bu, 2018) which are key traits of conduct disorders.

Social and economic status is key in shaping the lifestyle of parents and their adolescent children thus influencing the latter's conduct as they intermingle with the rest of society (Ogundele, 2016; Raudino, Woodward, Fergusson & Horwood, 2018). According to Hosokawa and Jacobus (2018), a low social and economic status influences adolescents' conduct in a home rather than the academic setting. Low socio-economic status has a significant relationship with conduct disorders (Piotrowska, Stride, Croft, & Rowe, 2015; Chauan, 2002; Mirembe, 2014). Higher family social status lowers prevalence of conduct disorders but the strength of the significance of this relationship depends on the conduct disorder subtype that is under investigation. Social and economic status increases cases of conduct disorders though there is an inverse relationship between the former and latter especially when mediating variables such as gender (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004) largely due to evolving sex roles and motivations.

Parents and styles of parenting are a social and home environment trigger for the genesis and persistence of conduct disorders among adolescents. Initially, this role is in terms of children's growth and development but transcends into parenting techniques that can be positive or negative while handling children who later become contributors and assets to the nation (Samina & Almas, 2015). Styles of parenting are two-dimensional, that is responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind, 1967, 1991), guided by assertiveness which determines which of the two will be preferred consciously or unconsciously. Authoritative and authoritarian styles are practiced by the more assertive parents (Freeze, Burke & Vorster, 2014; King, 2010) while permissiveness is practiced by the less assertive parents (Freeze, Burke & Vorster, 2014; King, 2010). More directly, it is vital to link parental influence with factors such as control demandingness, power and authority on one hand and supportiveness and warmth on another (Samina & Almas, 2015).

The parenting strategies largely involve how to make demands on the children and how to respond to their demands (Spera, 2005) which facilitate adolescent behavior in adolescents and later, their temperament and personality (Kazdin, 2008). Hence, parenting dispositions are a major factor in children's conduct (Hoskins, 2014; Baumrind, 1967, 1991). The original parenting styles such as authoritative and authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting

styles have been identified in such studies. Whereas there is a common belief that authoritative style of parenting could be the best for child behavior, this may vary in different homes and settings based on culture and societal dynamics (Myers-Walls et al., 2006) and may trigger conduct disorders (Hemmati & Alamdarloo, 2014; Rinaldi & Howe, 2012; Lee, 2010) as adolescents born to such parents may portray low levels of autonomy, social skills and self-confidence, traits that obviously lead to depression, anxiety, antisocial behaviors, delinquency and conduct disorder (Diaz et al., 2005). This is an affirmation that parental factors, especially parenting styles, are closely linked to conduct disorders (Shahla et al., 2011) due to their association with depression (Darling, McCartney & Taylor, 2006; Shahla et al., 2011; Darling et al., 2006), ineffective monitoring, support and punishment which weaken parent-child relationship (Carlson, 2012) without which the adolescent will lack parental supervision, attachment and warmth and a preference for peer attachment (Karaman, 2013).

Possibly, school-related factors contribute to the existence of conduct disorders among school-going adolescents. These factors include teaching, administration, peers, that are critical in the conduct of learners and ultimately their academic achievement. Like the home, the school shapes the conduct of students (Goddard & Dennis, 2003; Odgers, Caspi, Russell, Sampson, & Moffitt 2012 and Ogundele, 2016). School and teacher practices may promote or inhibit adolescent conduct disorders. How a teacher reacts to adolescents' emotions is very detrimental to their conduct. Teachers' anger may be linked to adolescent students' emotions (Fabes, Poulin, Eisenberg, & Madden-Derdich, 2002). A chaotic school environment characterized by noise, overcrowding and lack of routine can cause stress among learners (Evans, Maxwell, & Hart, 1999; Wachs, 2000) and low cognitive competence which may contribute to the development of risky behaviors and conduct disorders (Wachs, 2000). The absence of academic support for adolescents can culminate into conduct problems (Pascal 2015; Gutuza & Mapolisa, 2015; Edinyang, 2017). Ugandan schools have faced violent and destructive strikes due to factors such as poor feeding and high financial charges by schools (Marais & Meier, 2010). The presence of inefficient new pedagogical innovations, inadequate student interest in students' academic growth, lack of academic feedback and effective communication, use of punitive and reactive measures, irrelevant curricular, can all contribute to unrest among adolescent learners (Negreiros & Albano, 2017; Daly, Der-Martirosian, Gambo & Muktar 2017; Ong-Dean & Wishard-Guerra, 2011; Wolhuter & Russo, 2013; Rampa, 2014; Gitome, Katola & Nyabwari, 2013). The lack of moral and religious training and mentoring has also seen students deviate from what homes and culture have taught them as acceptable conduct (Silva, Negreiros & Albano, 2017).

Higgins et al., (2014) argue that the school environment has a major impact on the adolescent learners' behaviours, specifically the school's physical environment as far as location, size of classroom, structures, availability and quality of both academic and non-academic facilities are concerned. These views are also echoed by Raihan et al., (2018), Hoffman, Hutchinson and Reiss (2009), Aldridge, Mcchesney and Afari (2017) and Ahmad (2016) who concur that problematic conduct among adolescent learners is a result of school environment. Ironically, school factors push learners to resort to extreme delinquent and aggressive conduct (Raihan et al., 2018) yet this same school environment is expected to be a powerful venue for shaping young peoples' behaviour as Aldridge et al., (2017) assert. Therefore, conduct disorders,

although they have been investigated mainly on primary school children and in more developed countries, can largely be attributed to factors related to parents and schools.

The study was guided by several perspectives of conduct disorders or juvenile delinquency. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th edition (DSMMR-5) is assigned to people who have not yet turned 18 years and whose typicality is that of violation of others' rights and non-conformity to rules that are age-appropriate especially among young people such as adolescents. Susman (1993) argues that conduct disorders are caused by and persist due to the interaction between human developmental factors that include biological, contextual and psychological aspects. To Susman, conduct disorders have their roots in biological experiences that come naturally as a result of the developmental milestones, but which have an impact on their psychological and social manifestations. However, Krol, Morton and DeBruyn (2004) present conduct disorder theories in terms of causes categorised not only as biological but also as cognitive and behavioural such as genetical, environmental and mental. To crown it all, Kwaadsteniet and Hagmayer (2018) give a holistic perspective that is an interaction of personal, biological, psychological, environmental and behavioral causes of conduct disorders as confirmed by Carr, (2006), Morton (2004) and Kendler (2005) too. It can be confirmed that conduct disorders may exist and persist due to personal, psychological/mental, social/environmental, behavioral and biological factors. An adolescent is a holistic individual whose behavior is influenced by all these perspectives, but which are primarily driven by factors that emanate from the human biological processes that later develop into behavioural tendencies and manifestations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was an explorative qualitative research by design aimed at unearthing and gaining in-depth insights into the causes of the destructive and rules violation conduct disorders. The study sought to achieve an in-depth discussion of the causes of selected conduct disorders among adolescents, an objective that could be achieved only through qualitative approaches. Explorative qualitative approach seeks to understand rather than predict human behavior (Babbie & Mouton, 2018). The study adopted a phenomenological design with two selected conduct disorders as the phenomena of interest. Data were collected using asynchronous online (WhatsApp) focus group discussions (FGD). The focus group discussions were two; one for parents and another for teachers. Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on physical gatherings, the researchers deemed it appropriate that non-physical methods of data collection be used, hence the use of WhatsApp chat groups where participants posted their voice notes presenting and discussing factors they deemed as causes of destructive and rules' violation conduct disorders among adolescents. The focus group discussions were conducted based on the questions on the focus group discussion guide that addressed causes of conduct disorders categorised as destruction and violation of rules. The instrument was an FGD guide for the parents and teachers. Participants were selected purposively (Silverman, 1998; Parahoo, 2014) and conveniently (Creswell & Creswell, 2021) irrespective of age and gender.

The research participants were 10 teachers (5 from Uganda and 5 from South Africa) and 10 parents (5 from Uganda and 5 from South Africa), a number sufficient for such a focus group discussion study (Milward, 2006). The participants were selected purposively because they live and work closely with adolescents at either school or home. Most behavior and conduct problems begin from and are witnessed mostly at home and at school by both parents and teachers respectively. The research setting was not an issue as long as the participants owned and used a smart phone with WhatsApp, hence, adoption of purposive and convenient sampling techniques in the study. The parents and teachers were considered as partners and stakeholders in the struggle to see a well-behaved adolescent population both at home and school. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. WhatsApp voice notes were recorded, transcribed and themes were generated from the transcriptions. The themes that emerged from the collected data from the focus group discussions were used to explain the causes of conduct disorders among the adolescents. The data analysis and discussion were done concurrently (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017).

As far as ethical considerations were concerned, informed WhatsApp voice consent from parents and teachers was sought first and their views were treated with utmost confidentiality. The purpose and objective of the study was clearly laid out and explained to the respondents before the data collection commenced. Participants were encouraged to hide their actual identity on the WhatsApp chat groups. There was no form of coercion from the researchers. Participants were assured of feedback from the study when the research was completed and this was done as part of member checking for correctness of the data collected.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of the research findings and discussion of the findings were concurrent. The research participants were 20 in number from both countries. The male participants were the minority, that is, 7 while the female participants were 13 from both countries. The presentation of findings from the focus group discussions was guided by five themes, that is, developmental, school, environmental, social and academic factors.

Developmental Factors

From the findings that were a product of the focus group discussions held with parents and teachers from Uganda and South Africa, it became apparent that destructive and rules' violation conduct disorders are a result of multi-dimensional factors. It became apparent, as argued by most participants in the teacher category that these disorders among school going adolescents are a result of human developmental factors as one teacher from Uganda indicated,

“Adolescence itself is what these students are experiencing and this stage comes with many changes in behavior, which behaviors are negative in nature. In a bid to want to show their strength against their superiors, that is, teachers and school employees, they find themselves behaving in ways that are destructive and against the rules of the school establishment. Most

adolescents hate following rules and enjoy breaking them “as a parent from the same country A confirmed that indeed, with the onset of adolescence, some behaviors are inevitable, “for sure as much as this is not experiences in the same way, adolescence in this modern era has made our secondary school children very big headed and a destructive tendency. They, by virtue of the adolescence stage that they are experiencing, no longer listen to us or even acknowledge our authority as parents. I don’t think this is any different when they go to school. Sometimes I pray and wish that our children can freeze at 15 years and show up again at 20 years when they have come out of the active adolescence stage.”

In addition to what a teacher from Uganda mentioned above concerning the human development factor, a teacher from South Africa shared the same sentiments,

“It has to do with their background, this includes their respective homes and areas, some learners, are from abusive families which is like a disease in most South African families, so they bring that to the school environment. Another factor is peer pressure often I have seen learners being in trouble because of certain friends they follow to fit in. That transitional period is very difficult for them to handle and control themselves. From experience, they don’t want to be told what do by elders. Some learners are bullied such that they engage in dangerous behaviours. This can be due to many factors such as the environment that the learners grow up in and the socio-economic status they belong to at home. As teachers we have experienced a lot with and from these learners. That stage causes them not to think straight, so, basically, we blame that on physical changes they will be undergoing that causes them to behave awkwardly. Our children are growing faster than before we don’t know whether it is because of food or what”.

It is evident from what the teacher from Uganda and the teacher from South Africa shared that the adolescence stage brings with it behaviour change which in most cases becomes destructive if not properly handled and monitored. Both teachers indicated that during the adolescence stage, adolescents do not want to follow rules or to be told what to do. This can imply that they see themselves as mature enough to do whatever pleases them as they consider themselves as adults. The transitional period and the physical development are push factors that influence adolescent behaviour. This is in line with the views discussed on the theoretical framework guiding this study. For example, Susman (1993) argues that conduct disorders are caused by and persist due to the interaction between some human developmental factors that include biological influences. From the views shared by the same teacher above from South Africa, it can also be inferred that the rate at which children are growing physically is quite alarming. The teacher was not sure whether it was the food that children were consuming that was causing them to grow faster. It could be that because of mass production, most foods are genetically produced to meet the high demand. So, the chemicals that are used to grow the food affect them and they mature faster. When children see that they also think that they are adults, hence the tension between them and their parents/guardians and between them and the teachers. We also, interpreted it to mean that fast blooming can also trigger conduct disorders and rules’ violation since it could affect the adolescents emotionally.

The adolescence stage was further blamed for the existence of conduct disorders as stated by another parent from Uganda,

“because the students are experiencing adolescence, they desire to show superiority and this superiority complex makes them clash with adults who are placed in charge of them. Taking a look into this, we cannot deny that these students have a natural growth factor, that is, adolescence. These physical, emotional and even spiritual changes can easily explain this. Because of being adolescents, they tend to want to prove to their peers and superiors that they are now grown up in that manner.” A parent from South Africa expressed a similar view that, *“these children are full of confusion, they do not know where they stand and what they want. They want to be both parents and children at the same time. They are in a crisis, their emotions are not stable, sometimes they challenge us as parents. So, it could be because of growth however influenced by our environment that exerts a lot of pressure on them. They are overwhelmed and they cannot control their temperaments.*

These findings are linked to studies conducted by Lam et al., (2014) and Scherf et al., (2012) who view conduct disorders in light of the psychological and emotional effects of the adolescence stage that influence behaviours that the adolescents have no control of. From the findings, both teachers and parents who participated in the study agreed that the adolescence stage was a difficult period to manage as they experience physical, emotional, social and spiritual growth. This confirms Hall’s (1904) claims that the adolescence stage is a period of stress and storm. A parent from Uganda confirmed the argument raised by Hall (1904) by asserting that

“taking a look into this, we cannot deny that these students have a natural growth factor, that is, adolescence. These physical, emotional and even spiritual changes can easily explain this.”

The period is marked by confusion, tension, anger, sadness and other emotional issues. However, Casey et al., (2011) argue that some adolescents conquer the adolescence stage with minimal confusion. It emerged from the data analysed that some adolescents do things to prove a point to their peers and to adults. Consequently, clashes and conflicts with parents and teachers happen. Such an attitude impacts negatively on their academic performance and it would take an understanding teacher to handle such students in a non-confrontational manner.

Environmental and Home Factors

It emerged that the destructive and rules’ violation conduct disorders can be attributed to parent-related factors. As much as the teachers portrayed an external attribution of these behaviors by blaming the home and parents of the students, it emerged that the issues they used to back up their arguments are strong and significant. For example, a teacher from country Uganda argued that,

“Some parents have enclosed their children in their homes without exposing them to the outside environment. What happens is that now when the students join secondary schools and become adolescents at the same time, they get to experience the boarding school life, without the over strict and watchful eye of their parents. Since the students spend most of the time at school, their behaviours are seen most by teachers. This is also two in a way that whereas some parents are over strict, others have become over reluctant towards their adolescent children. These two extremes give birth to uncontrollable behavior among these students.”

Other parent- related factors emerged as another parent from Uganda stated,

“Some of us parents have failed in a very big way. We have refused to talk to our children and if we don’t talk to them and give them the right advice about behavior and its relationship to academic success, we have failed. The children, instead of talking to us, they talk to external people and borrow information about their psychological challenges from the internet. Yes, as Africans we are not told to have open and friendly talks with our children because we dread familiarity from them, but if we don’t work on us, we are burdening the teachers to who we send these children. More so, as parents, I have observed that some of us lack the power and moral authority to positively influence the behaviors of our adolescent children. We have failed to be good role models of the right conduct. We fight and engage in negative talk about our superiors at work in the presence of our children.”

The above point was re-affirmed by a teacher from country Uganda who said,

“Domestic violence back at home where some parents are harsh on their children. This makes them get used to violence and they hardly care who they harm because they have probably seen worse or have also been harmed before.”

Coupled with the economic factors, the adolescents’ homes become a breeding ground for behaviours that are destructive as one teacher from South Africa observed,

“Most of the most undisciplined students we see at school come from impoverished homes. They come from needy home backgrounds and lack basic needs to use at school. These high poverty levels make them develop inferiority complex and this comes out through violation of rules, for example these will be the thieves of their fellow students’ property, something that is against school rules and can lead to serious punishment.”

This was reechoed by another parent from the same country,

“some children are exposed to money at an early age like being given a lot of pocket money and when life turns to the opposite, some parents are not able to provide as before so their children go astray and start stealing or picking their fellow students’ and other peoples’ belongings without permission”

However, it was also noted that economically, it is not only “lack” but “abundance” too that causes conduct disorders, as one parent from Uganda admitted,

“many adolescents, including my own children have all their needs provided. One luxury that most have access to these days is smart phones. Because of these phones, they have daily access to mass media. Our children have learnt many things from social media and mass media in general. They have seen how their age mates from the developed countries behave and the rights they have as far as protection of what they call rights of children are concerned. They develop and practice conduct disorders well knowing they can’t be punished. So, whether parents are poor or rich, these children can’t be managed.”

The South African teachers who participated in the study vehemently blamed violent and abusive parents. The teachers indicated that they are stressed because of such unruly behaviour. Consequently, teachers apply for sick leave, resign or retire early. The participants also complained that the parents, community and the government were blaming the teachers for the negative behaviour demonstrated by learners, as one South African teacher, after a deep sigh, sad face and tone said,

“Some secondary school pupils are destructive due to different reasons, for instance, some learners have parents who are violent, some parents are divorced, and some parents cannot control their children while others are extremely strict and deal with their children harshly. Ma’am, these children are always surrounded by bad friends who abuse alcohol and some substances, coupled with the negative things done by parents”.

Similarly, another South African teacher asserted,

“They can be destructive when they feel stressed during a class thinking about how brutal some of their parents are. Some children lack love, they feel neglected and unloved and they carry that to school with them. They transfer their anger issues to other students for they think that everyone does not love them. They disturb other learners and behave wildly, they become unruly. The learners we face today, have many emotional issues and when they feel that they are not given attention they tend to look for alternatives so that they can be noticed. We lost a colleague here who was stabbed by a learner and we lost so many learners due to the same reasons. We fear for our lives we are always stressed”.

The above extracts show that data collected in Uganda corroborated the data collected in South Africa. Teacher participants voiced the significant role parents should play in the upbringing of children. This goes back to the nature of the environment the child is brought up in, how health/conducive the home environment is. It emanated from the findings above that some parents are too strict, too relaxed to discipline their children, are absent parents, divorced or fight in the presence of children. All these issues go back to the parenting styles that parents use at home and how they associate or relate to the children as significant others. Therefore, it can be concluded that the parenting style can affect the conduct of children and modern parents are failing to raise a generation that is calm and dignified as argued by the teachers in Uganda and South Africa. The view that the parenting style can affect the emotions of a child positively or negatively is in line with literature discussed above. For instance, Samina & Almas (2015) argue that the role of parents and their styles of parenting is a possible social and home environment trigger and cause for the genesis and persistence of some conduct disorders among adolescents. The emotional scars the children are left with manifest at school to the extent of killing teachers or other learners as raised by one teacher from South Africa. Parents/guardians are advised to go back to the drawing board and start all over again introspecting how best they can raise disciplined children in the midst of all the environmental influences.

On the other hand, several parent participants from South Africa squarely blamed themselves and the school system that has lost control and dignity. They also blamed the government for giving children too much freedom and rights; they were blaming the issue of

democracy that children talk about without understanding what it exactly meant. The parents indicated that they had lost control as a country because parents and teachers were disempowered as they could not discipline learners. They pointed out that their own children could report them to the police claiming that their rights had been violated if a parent questioned, reprimanded or tried to correct the child's bad behaviour. The socio-economic status of the families also stood out as one of the contributing factors to the conduct disorders of children. One parent from South Africa asserted

"I can't control my child; teachers cannot control them either. The dawn of democracy has brought a bittersweet experience. I can go to jail for punishing my own children when trying to bring them back on track. It is very difficult to raise a child under the circumstances we are experiencing in South Africa hence so many children are misbehaving even at school."

This same idea of the financial status raised by the above parent was raised also by a South African teacher who participated in the study,

"the socio-economic status at home is a big challenge because in my class I see learners fighting or not relating well because of the differences in affordability. Some learners feel intimidated by those learners who can afford what these ones are longing for back home to a point that they behave harshly towards other learners".

From these assertions by parents and teachers about the parent/home-related explanations for the existence of conduct disorders among school-going adolescents, it can be argued that the level of communication between parents and their adolescent children is poor, yet this stage comes with a lot of confusion that requires clarification from an adult figure. It was noted too that parents have lagged behind in their role of providing a perfect example of good behavior to their children and adolescence has, as a result become the opportune moment for the latter to practice what they have seen their parents do and say. These parent-related factors in totality seem to augur well with those put forward by Pratt (2003), Powers (2013), Bai and Fosencenca (2019), Park, (2008), Zu and Hampden-Thomson (2012), Freeze et al., 2014), King (2010) and Mugenyi, (2021) who agree that indeed, parental conduct, parenting styles and the home environment in the homes where these adolescents come from have a role to play and if these behaviors have to change for better, the home must turn into that conducive sanctuary where good behaviors are formed, modelled and enhanced, for the greater academic and social good.

School as a Push Factor

As much as parents have been blamed for the occurrence of destructive and rules violation conduct disorders among school-going adolescents, it became apparent through the discussions with both teachers and parents that school-related factors too have a major role to play in this social dilemma. A teacher from Uganda admitted that,

"Schools have overlooked the importance of extra-curricular activities such as games. Students have been denied an opportunity to play and yet too much of concentration on academics only is

also harmful and bad. They get tired of studying and need time to engage in activities that help them to shed off the extra energy they possess as adolescents. They need outings and study tours to break the monotony of classroom-based learning too. A bored adolescent can become a menace if this is not addressed.”

Another teacher from country Uganda added that

“some schools have unconsciously led to the occurrence of conduct disorders through the systems they have put in place to achieve discipline, “rules are good but these rules, if very strict and limiting can be disastrous on students’ behaviours. Rules that limit students in every aspect can lead to a desire to violate them, just to prove a point to the school authorities. This is what leads to school strikes in schools. The strictest schools have the most defiant students, and the same applies to the strictest parents. Let schools set rules that consider the biological and psychological experiences that the adolescent students are going through. Some teachers have used these rules to torture students and this has back fired in the form of destruction and continuous violation of rules.”

However, data collected from South Africa indicates that though learners from both countries had destructive and violation conduct disorder tendencies among school-going adolescents, the degree of conduct disorders was more in South Africa than in Uganda. A teacher from South Africa, showing signs of agony explained,

“Our learners were given too much freedom and the laws protect them too much at the expense of the bigger picture. In South Africa rules are too relaxed for the learners and our learners abuse that and teachers fear for their lives and cannot rebuke or correct some learners, you can die because of that”. Another teacher from South Africa also echoed that “Some children are forced by us teachers to be wild because of improper relationships. Some teachers force themselves on students. Other teachers also take drugs and drink alcohol with learners and what is that Ma’am? Teachers seem to forget that they are in a position of a loco parentis and learners need to be protected by them”.

Unfortunately, the student-teacher relationships in some schools could be the reason for rules’ violation as another South African teacher argued,

“the association between teachers and students has gone beyond professional boundaries. Some teachers, for reasons not clearly known, have very close relationships with students. It is not surprising that when the time for guiding these students on the right path comes, the students will not respectfully adhere to the advice. This I blame on the teachers who have allowed familiarity which in the long run breeds contempt. Respect from students has to be earned through how we relate with them. It does not come automatically. It is earned through self-respect which can also be achieved by setting up social boundaries between these students that we teach and ourselves.”

However, parents from Uganda noted that the teacher student relationship has also caused conduct disorders as one parent asserted,

“Lack of proper teacher-student communication: Sometimes, these students need the teachers to confide in and some teachers are too unfriendly and unapproachable and what is seen from the students’ behaviours is an outburst of unshared emotions about school and life situations.”

Therefore, school-related factors in general, emerged as major causes of selected conduct disorders and these findings seem to match with those from studies conducted by Goddard and Dennis (2003), Odgers et al., (2012), Okaba (2019), Nhambura (2020), Lam et al., 2014) and Ogundele (2016) who emphasise that schools shape the behaviour of students and can, therefore, do this in an inverse manner if caution is not taken.

Social Factors

The destructive and rules’ violation conduct disorders were attributed to social factors too. It was reported by both parents and teachers from both countries that one of these social forces behind the conduct disorders was peer pressure, as one teacher from country Uganda retorted,

“There is a lot of peer pressure and peer influence among these young people. Without a peer group, there is peace. But when negative peer groups form, disaster follows. I wish they would have groups that build them rather than those that encourage bad behavior. This is why we see bullying happening. It is an activity of peer groups. That is why we see school strikes. It is also the work of groups. These groups are bad news.”

This was a striking resemblance with what a teacher in South Africa said,

“We have a problem of gangs in our schools. Some learners are forced to join these gangs; others make a choice under drug and alcohol influence. They become initiated and get wild to please and conform to group members. These learners sometimes beat up other learners, confront teachers, steal, destroy property and behave awkwardly. They feel ‘high’ and we struggle as teachers to control them or bring to an end such an influence.”

As part of the social factors, it was also implied that some students are engaged in destructive and rules’ violation behaviours due to drug abuse as one parent from Uganda angrily asserted,

“Surely, I don’t know what we as parents can do help our children. I am told they have and abuse these drugs. It must be their friends teaching them how to use these drugs. The moment a child starts drug abuse, behaviour can’t be normal again. Marijuana sellers know how to sell these to the students. Sometimes this is what they spend their pocket money on. And I have to say this, most students who practice bullying and fighting at school are most probably under the influence of drugs.”

Data collected from teachers corresponded to data gathered from parents, and this implies that the issue in question is a common problem that is being noticed by both stakeholders. The puzzle that needs solving is what parents and teachers can do to help such learners. These findings are in

agreement with those carried out by Ogundele (2016), Muzaki (2018), Nhambura (2020), Mawusi (2013) and Arafin et al., (2018) who among other arguments, emphasises that deprivation can cause social misbehavior and social problems.

Academic Factors

Lastly, the respondents presented academic factors as causes of destructive and rules' violation conduct disorders among school-going adolescents. One teacher from country Uganda stated,

“Students can pressure other students into acts of academic dishonesty in many ways. Academically weak students who find themselves in that category naturally or due to preoccupation with more exciting things end up in acts of cheating in exams yet the school rules on examination malpractice are very clear. They claim that other students cheat in exams hence they will cheat too because that is the norm. This is worsened by the fact that parents force their children to take on subjects that are popular but not in their children’s interest and ability levels.”

Similarly, one teacher from South Africa talked about the pressure exerted on learners to pass ‘killer subjects.’ The teacher explained how the importance attached to these subjects and the labeling push students even to the extent of getting depressed or committing suicide. Subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Economics and Accounting are among the so called ‘killer subjects. Learners can do whatever it takes for them to pass these subjects hence the 2020 leaking of the Matric Examinations that was in the public domain and being investigated (SABC 404). The teacher from South Africa remarked,

“The learners fear certain killer subjects which stress them too much. The mentality that every learner must pass these subjects leads to cheating. Exam question papers are sold to learners as the case that was being investigated by UMALUSI in 2020 of the learners who allegedly got access to the paper before the exam”.

Furthermore, another teacher in South Africa expressed that,

“Some learners can be destructive when they feel stressed during a class lesson or when they're going to write an exam. They feel anxious during a class test such that they make noise to disturb others for them to fail together”.

Hence, it must be noted that academic reasons too can cause conduct disorders. Waschs (2000) and Pascal (2015) suggest in their research that academic incompetence and lack of academic guidance are responsible for the existence of conduct disorders among adolescents in school.

CONCLUSION

Basing on the findings, it was concluded that conduct disorders exist among adolescents, as admitted by both parents and teachers who are the main caregivers of this vulnerable population

in the two settings. Specifically, they include destructive and rules' violation conduct disorders which are on the rise. They are attributed to developmental, parent-related, school-related, socio-economic and academic factors. If not well-handled using correct strategies, they can have adverse effects on parent-child relationships, academic achievement and social interaction. A great concern that emanated from the study drives towards a need for schools to work hand in glove with parents, community and the government to bring sanity to schools and curb this fast-growing pandemic of destructive and rules' violation conduct disorders. Schools should also enforce the good practices that parents are fostering and stop the blame game between parents and teachers, who should view each other as complementary partners, each playing their roles effectively to curb conduct disorders among school-going adolescents for a greater good, that is, well-behaved and functional adolescents that will become great leaders of Africa's tomorrow.

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