

Social Development Approaches in Rehabilitating Child Law Breakers in Kenya: A Case of Kirigiti Girls' Rehabilitation School in Kiambu County

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of an investigation of how social development approaches have been utilised in rehabilitating child law breakers in Kenya in relation to their ability to develop life coping mechanism. Information for the study came from 3rd year beneficiary experiences at the Kirigiti Girls rehabilitation school in Kiambu county Kenya. The paper is anchored on social development theory by Erickson. Kirigiti girls' rehabilitation centre receives girls' child law breakers from all counties across the country for rehabilitation who are released after three years. The respondents for this study consisted of 55 beneficiaries in the 3rd year of rehabilitation, 5 Staff of Kirigiti girls, 3 Staff of NGOs implementing at Kirigiti girls, 4 Children's department field Officers, 2 Staff of National Council for Children's Services, 2 Probation Officers and 2 Police Officers. Data was collected through interviews and survey questionnaire. Research results showed that 76.4% of girls preferred being involved in co-curricular activities like participating in games and other sports. Correlation results showed that there existed a significant positive effect ($r=0.304$ and $=0.024$) between social development approaches used at Kirigiti for rehabilitated girls and their development of life coping mechanism. The study recommended that the rehabilitation centre should continuously motivate and encourage the girls to participate in an array of social activities like playing indoor and outdoor games, involved in social clubs to boost their life coping mechanisms and prevent chances of them being rejected by their families at the end of the rehabilitation period or dropping out of formal education.

Keywords: Social Development, Approaches, Rehabilitation

Introduction

The ability of the juvenile corrections system to provide appropriate facilities and programming for child delinquents is a major concern. Because the juvenile justice system is not geared to handle child delinquents, they are sometimes housed with older offenders in detention institutions and juvenile correctional facilities. Little is known about the detrimental effects of secure confinement on these children's emotional and cognitive development, and much less is known about the impact confinement has on children. For young children who have committed violent offenses, short-term facilities and comprehensive community-based programs may offer a good alternative to the many disadvantages of long-term confinement (Flores, 2003).

Over the past decade researchers have identified intervention strategies and program models that reduce delinquency and promote pro-social development. Preventing delinquency, says Greenwood (2008), not only saves young lives from being wasted, but also prevents the onset of adult criminal careers and thus reduces the burden of crime on its victims and on society. It costs states billions of dollars a year to arrest, prosecute, incarcerate and treat juvenile offenders. Investing in successful delinquency-prevention programs can save taxpayers seven to ten dollars for every dollar invested, primarily in the form of reduced spending on prisons (Greenwood, 2003).

Rehabilitation Schools are established under Section 47 of the Children's Act, 2001 of the Laws of Kenya to provide rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law and are meant to spearhead the process of equipping a child in conflict with the law with the capacity to achieve behavioural change while realizing intellectual, social, moral and economic obligations. Section 53 makes provision for duration of stay up to three years (Republic of Kenya, 2001). The origin of the Department of Children's Services now in the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services can be traced back to the Colonial era, when it existed as a Juvenile Correctional Institution. Its earliest correctional and rehabilitation institution, the then Kabete Approved School (now Kabete Rehabilitation School) was built between 1910 and 1912, in the lower Kabete area. The school was founded to cater for youth who had been imprisoned for failing to register themselves or their inability to carry the identity card (Kipande).

The ground on which Kirigiti girls' rehabilitation school stands was a concentration camp for the freedom fighters during the struggle for independence. After independence in 1963, it was used as a transit point for freedom fighters from central province after they were released from prisons. In 1964, there was a need to rehabilitate prisoners of war who were either children or young offenders. Kirigiti girls' rehabilitation school was therefore established under section 37(1) of (children and young person's Act cap 141 of the Laws of Kenya) in 1964. Now established under section 47 (1) of children's Act cap 586 as Kirigiti girls' rehabilitation school.

The Kenyan criminal justice process for children (both in current and future law) is mostly focusing on “rehabilitation” and “education” rather than on punishment. Even the current law does not use the terms “conviction” and “sentence”, imprisonment is rarely used, and children do not get criminal records. These features indicate a leaning towards welfarism, the danger being that in reality the system may be far less benign than it seems. Children are not sent to prisons but the alternatives to imprisonment may be equally damaging (Kinyua, 2004). This paper discusses influence of social development approaches in rehabilitating girls at Kirigiti School.

Problem Statement

In Kenya, juvenile offenders are taken to Juvenile Rehabilitation Centers for rehabilitation. According to Youth Alive Kenya! An organization that implemented a child protection project at Kirigiti Girls Rehabilitation School, through financial support from research by GOAL Ireland Kenya, observed that there was a tendency of some children in their third year of rehabilitation to run away from the institution during rehabilitation, some children dropping out of formal education, families rejecting them during or after reintegration and some of them using abusive language when talking to one another (GOAL Ireland Kenya, 2012). These behavioural tendencies pose a question on the influence of the government’s approaches in rehabilitating child law breakers on life coping mechanisms. This study sought to explain the influence of socio-development approaches in rehabilitating child law breakers on life coping mechanism; a case of Kirigiti girls’ rehabilitation school in Kiambu County.

Literature Review

Rehabilitation Approaches

The government’s approaches are meant to equip children in conflict with the law with the capacity to achieve behavioural change while realizing intellectual, social, moral and economic obligations. The intellectual obligation caters for children who fit in the formal and non-formal system of education. The formal section consists of a fully-fledged school from class one to eight. The children who manage to score good marks join various secondary schools as per their performance and are sponsored by Friends of Kirigiti Approved Society (FOKAS), churches, NGOs, and individual well-wishers. Non formal classes are meant for girls who cannot read and write. While vocational skills are meant to provide short term skills training to the girls who may not find an academic class to be placed due to their level of education. It is also to empower girls with additional skills to be self-reliant upon release from the institution. The courses offered at the moment were hair dressing and beauty, Dressmaking and bakery. This enabled children to attain both the intellectual and economic obligation, types of crops like maize, beans, bananas, vegetables and others depending on weather. The farm activities help the girls to learn small scale farming and practice farming skills for their future.

Guidance and counselling falls under the welfare section. It is meant to guide and counsel children in the institution. Guidance and counselling is mostly done by volunteers, partner organizations and sometimes by University students on attachment since the institution does not have trained counsellors. Farm section exposes the girls to opportunity to acquire gardening skills and growing different. Finally the girls like any other children’s institution participate in a number of activities in order to enhance character moulding (Manager Kirigiti, 2012). The literature in consideration included; the influence of intellectual development approach, social development approach, moral development approach and economic development approach used by the government of Kenya in rehabilitating Child law breakers to enhance their life coping mechanisms.

Social Development in Rehabilitating Child Law Breakers

Under Article 45 of the Kenyan laws, the family is recognized as the fundamental unit of the society and as the necessary basis for social order. The family is recognized and protected by the state. The family is the place where every child belongs and child protection efforts must target the family (Republic of Kenya, 2001). The development of a social bond of attachment, commitment and belief between a youth and conventional society will also prevent delinquent behaviour, both directly and indirectly, by decreasing the likelihood of association with delinquent peers (Obondi, 2013). The bonding process begins within the family. When youths experience the opportunities for involvement in the family, when they develop the requisite social, cognitive and behavioural skills to perform as expected in the family activities and interactions, and when they are rewarded consequently for adequate performance within the family, they will develop a bond of attachment, commitment and belief in the family. When these three conditions are not present in the family; a bond to family is not likely to develop (Elliot et al, 1982).

The social development model assumes both direct and indirect influences of the family on delinquent behaviour. The indirect effects are through school experiences, belief in the moral order and peer group associations. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that strong attachments between youths and their parents inhibit delinquency (Hirsch, 1969). Social development in the context of this study involves; Social Clubs, Co-curricular activities and reintegration package. The establishment of Child Rights Clubs in schools/institutions is

being used by most child rights advocacy organizations as a strategy to promote the rights and welfare of children. The main objective of this initiative is to give children a platform to participate in issues affecting them and create awareness on their rights and welfare. They also share information among themselves (Njeri, n.d).

Through the clubs children participate in advocacy and awareness creation activities. They develop and make presentations on issues affecting children through poems, plays, drama and songs. Children make decisions on the themed activities to be undertaken and the teachers facilitate. The children are regularly enlightened on their responsibilities and rights; hence they freely share information concerning their welfare with teachers and parents (ANPPCAN Kenya, 2000). In the context of this study a co-curricular activity is defined as a program or out-of-class activity, supervised and/or financed by the rehabilitation school, which provides curriculum-related learning and character building experiences. Co-curricular activities are voluntary, are not part of the regular school curriculum, are not graded and do not earn credits (Kaniu, 2013).

“Co-curricular activities” mean activities conducted on or off school premises by clubs, associations, and organizations of pupils; “co-curricular activities” also include the pupil clubs, associations, and organizations that conduct those activities. “Co-curricular activities” do not include athletic competitions or practices or athletic teams or organizations. Co-curricular activities (CCAs), previously known as Extracurricular Activities (ECA) are activities that educational organizations in some parts of the world create for school students. They are activities which all school students must attend alongside. In Singapore, the policy was introduced by the Ministry of Education, which believes extra activities for school students are a means to enhance social interaction, leadership, healthy recreation, self-discipline and self-confidence (Ahmad, 2011). Although there is no specific legislation that deals with sports or sporting activities related to children, the children’s Act of the Kenyan laws (Republic of Kenya, 2001) under section 17 provides that a child shall be entitled to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities. The Education Act provides for the inclusion of extra-curricular activities in the education curriculum for example physical education (Child Labour Survey Report, 1998/1999).

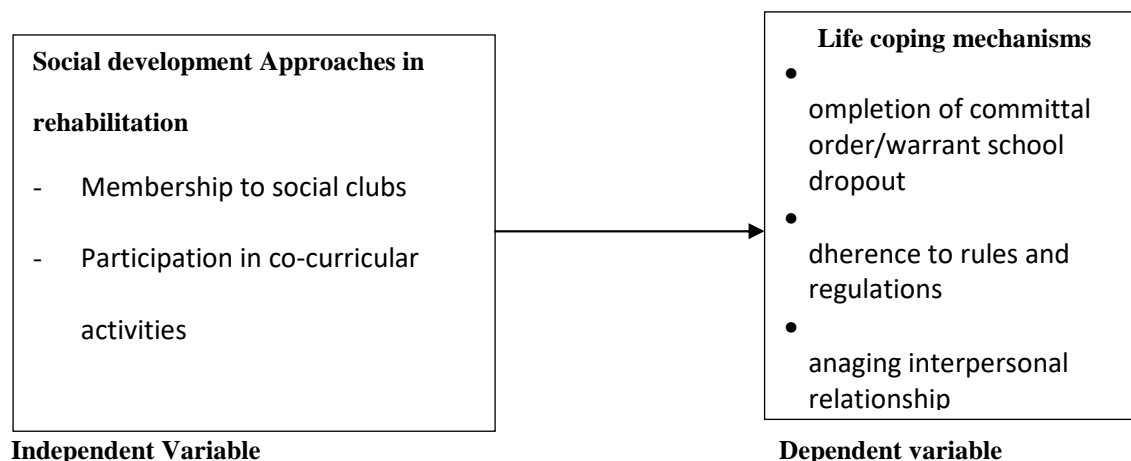
Theoretical Framework

The study is framed within the social development theory of Erik Erikson (1956). According to Erik Erikson’s theory, in order to develop socially; children need to interact with their peers and adults in a socially acceptable way. Therefore developing good social skills is necessary for them to be able to eventually form healthy relationships and fit into various social scenarios comfortably. Social development, according to Erik Erikson, 1956, consists of eight basic phases—the “eight stages of man.” His eight stages of man were based primarily on experience in psychotherapy, including extensive experience with treating children and adolescents from various socio-economic backgrounds. Each stage is described by Erikson’s social development theory as a “dilemma that requires a resolution before the person can move onto the next stage of development. These stages can be compared to the building of a house: satisfactory resolution of each stage is a prerequisite for the next, just as the foundation of a house must be completed properly in order to advance to the first floor, which in turn has to be structurally sound in order to properly support the second floor, and so on. Social development refers to the development of social skills and emotional maturity that are needed to forge relationships and relate to others. Often developing empathy and understanding the needs of others is also included in the area of social development. In order to develop socially, children need to interact with their peers and adults in a socially acceptable way. Developing good social skills is necessary for them to be able to eventually form healthy relationships and fit into various social scenarios comfortably. As a child grows and matures, his language skills improve, making social emotional development and social interactions with peers an important part of his life, as he becomes more involved with other children and adults around him.

Social and emotional development is reflected in the ability of the child to pay attention, make smooth transitions from one activity to another, empathize and cooperate with others and other skills. Research shows that social development in children skills are very important in school readiness for children and play a big role in the child’s social integration in school and society. This paper therefore attempts to find out to what extent the social theory is applicable in indicating factors that contribute to enhanced life coping mechanism of child law breakers. It is hoped that the research questions will be answered. This, according to Erickson (1956) is simply appreciating the fact that during the children’s formative years, both positive and negative experiences help shape the children’s cognitive, social, behavioural and emotional development.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between independent and dependent variable.



Materials and Methods

The design of the study was descriptive survey. The study focused on one government rehabilitation school; Kirigiti girls' situated in Kiambu County which is currently under the Ministry of labour, Social Security and Services and the department of the Children's Services. The population of the study was 55 children who were in their third year of rehabilitation at Kirigiti rehabilitation school and 18 key informant interviews. This study was a census since the population of study was small. This study used questionnaire and interview as instruments of data collection. The study tested the research instruments for validity and reliability. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the analysis together with discussion on the influence of socio-development approaches on the life coping mechanism by girls being rehabilitated at Kirigiti Centre.

Demographic Data of 3rdYear Girls

A total of fifty five (55) third year rehabilitation beneficiaries participated in the study. At first they were asked to indicate their age category and the results are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Age of 3rd year rehabilitated beneficiaries (n=55)

Age bracket	Frequency	Percent
10-12 years	2	3.6
13 - 15 years	27	49.1
16-17 years	26	47.3
Total	55	100.0

The results show that 2 (3.6%) of those who participated were aged between 10-12 years, 27 (49.1%) were aged 13-15 years and 26 (47.3%) were aged between 16-17 years. The results indicate that most 3rd year beneficiaries of Kirigiti rehabilitation school were aged between 13-17 years.

Influence of Social Development Approach in Rehabilitating Child Law Breakers in Order to Enhance their LCM

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of social development approach; membership to various clubs and societies and involvement in co-curricular activities on enhancing life coping mechanisms among child law breakers at Kirigiti. The respondents were asked to state the extent to which they were involved in various social activities; their responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Influence of social development approach applied by the government of Kenya in rehabilitating child law breakers in order to enhance their LCM

Involvement in social development activities	Yes		Sometimes		No		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Access to membership in various social clubs	26	47.3	1	1.8	28	50.9	55	100.0
Involvement in co-curricular activities	42	76.4	3	5.5	10	18.2	55	100.0

Access to membership in various social clubs in Kirigiti rehabilitation school, half 28 (50.9%) said that they were not involved in any of them and only 26 (47.3%) were found to be engaged in clubs and societies. The results show that girls being rehabilitated at Kirigiti are given options of joining social clubs as part of enhancing

their development in life coping mechanisms. Moreover, results of the study revealed that more than three quarter 42 (76.4%) of respondents were involved in co-curricular activities, 3 (5.5%) were found to be moderately involved while only 10 (18.2%) were found not to participate in co-curricular activities. The finding implies that girls at Kirigiti prefer participating in co-curricular activities like games as opposed to being involved in various social clubs. To check, the relationship that exists between rehabilitated girls involvement in various social activities in relation to their development of life coping mechanisms, a correlation statistic was computed and results presented in Table 3

Table 3 Influence of girls' involvement in social development and enhancement of life coping mechanisms

		Social development	Life coping mechanisms
social development	Pearson Correlation	1	.304*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.024
	N	55	55
Life coping mechanisms	Pearson Correlation	.304*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	
	N	55	55

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

It is evident that there exist a positive influence ($r=0.304$) between social development approaches used at Kirigiti girls rehabilitation school and the beneficiaries development of life coping mechanism. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed). This interprets to mean that the institution should encourage the girls in the institution to participate and be actively involved in clubs and co-curricular activities as it will improve their life coping mechanism in future.

Key Informants Responses

When asked to indicate whether the child law breakers who go through the government rehabilitation programme reform by the end of the third year, most 12 (63.2%) supported the statement, 3 (15.8%) were undecided while 4 (21.1%) disagreed with the statement. The result implies that more than 60% of key informants believed that the government's programme is essential in reforming girl-child law breakers at Kirigiti. Also, whether government programme had some negative effects on girls who go through it, close to half 9 (47.4%) said yes, 5 (26.3%) had mixed responses while 5 (26.3%) indicated that the programme did not have negative influence. This shows that despite the programme enjoying support, a lot still needs to be done to minimise the negative influence it may have as in some cases the girls after being released from the institution end up committing and breaking the law further as indicated by one probation officer interviewed. Lastly, the study sought respondents perception regarding whether there were other alternative programmes that could be used by the government to reform the girl-child law breakers, according to their responses, most 13 (68.4%) agreed, 4 (21.1%) were uncertain while only 2 (10.5%) disagreed with the statement. Elsewhere Obondi (2013) found out that attitude and capacity of staff is important in determining the success and effective rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. During the focus group discussions 4% of the officers pointed out that there was resistance to change and accommodating the new approaches may be slowed. The study deduces that the government with the inclusion of other stakeholders needs to review the approaches used to reform the girls admitted at rehabilitation institutions around the country so as to ensure that the girls reform at the end of their term in those institutions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The increased cases of 3rd year girls running away from the institution were found to be as a result of the way programmes are being conducted at the institution. The main programs in the school were guidance and counseling, educational, vocational and spiritual training. Membership of girl-child law breakers in social clubs assists them in developing inter-personal relationship, understanding, communication and support amongst themselves. Inadequate access and limited opportunities for the same impacted negatively on the social development of those girls. Furthermore, the study found out that social development approaches had significant positive relationship ($r=0.304$ and 0.024) on life coping mechanism enhancement among 3rd year beneficiaries of Kirigiti girls' rehabilitation school. The reason for low ranking of social approach was due to the fact that girls preferred participating in co-curricular activities more than even participating in social clubs and other associations. The study recommends that Kirigiti rehabilitation school should increase access and opportunities for beneficiaries to join social clubs so as to enhance development of inter-personal relationship, understanding, communication and support amongst themselves.

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