

***AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH IN UNDERSTANDING THE RISE OF STRIKES  
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI***

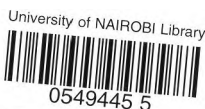
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**A Project Paper Presented to the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African  
Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of  
Arts in Gender and Development Studies of the University of Nairobi**



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**DECLARATION**

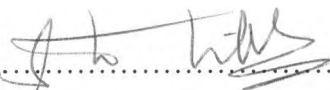
This project paper is my original work and has not been submitted to any other institution, college or university.

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## ABSTRACT

This study was designed to explore the extent to which socio-ecological factors in the school contribute to the strikes in secondary schools within Nairobi. Fieldwork for this study was conducted in Langata constituency, between June and October 2010. This study therefore set out to answer three research questions: first was to gauge to what extent does peer pressure contribute to student unrest in secondary schools. Second, whether the school set-up contribute to strikes in secondary schools and finally, gender differences in the disposition of students to school strikes.

The study was cross-sectional and exploratory in nature using both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions, key informant interviews and observation that included students, teachers and school administrators. On the other hand, quantitative data was gathered using the questionnaire instrument administered to 50 students. A total of 90 participants (68 male and 22 female) were engaged. The quantitative data was analyzed manually to gauge the age bracket and number of students who participated in the study and the findings from this approach presented in tables of percentages and frequencies. Qualitative data was analyzed according to emerging themes, and presented through quotes, anecdotes and descriptive methods.

The study revealed that students within the school context, students regardless of high or low academic achievement are prone to strike if their school climate is not conducive for their academic and social needs. Moreover, the study illustrated that peer pressure and mass media influences delinquent behaviour among school attending teenagers both negatively and positively. The final focus of the study indicated that male students are more disposed to delinquent and violent behaviour in comparison to female students.

This study set out with the objective of exploring the extent to which socio-ecological factors in the school contribute to school strikes in Nairobi. The study findings suggest that this objective has been achieved. These ecological factors come in various levels from within and without the school environment, although what is most significant here

is the school environment. Through this conclusion, the author also discusses strategies, implications and recommendations for further research on school unrest.

## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

Each year in schools around Kenya, tragic events stemming from student strikes in secondary schools are on the rise and these are issues of great concern to parents, administrators, government, NGOs and the public in general. These concerns have been gaining momentum since the 1980s due to the rising number of secondary schools involved and the intensity of the school strikes.

Growing concerns are evidenced by the chronology of violent acts with more and more cases of violent attacks in schools being documented. In June 2008, six students of Kithayoni Secondary School were seriously injured when irate boys from Machakos Boys High School attacked them (The Standard: 24th June, 2008) and a month later, 250 secondary schools were hit by an unprecedented wave of student strikes and riots closed about 250 high schools. There have been arson attacks at about half of them. Scores of teenagers have been arrested and thousands more sent home. One student died in a dormitory blaze (L.A. Times: July 30, 2008).

School violence, especially of such widespread nature as witnessed in Kenya, undermines a nation's ability to sufficiently educate its young. As noted in the Koech Report (2008), it is through education that the youth are provided with economic empowerment and opportunities to exploit their potential and ensure themselves a bright future. This problem of student unrest is not unique to Kenya but has also been experienced globally; a problem that warrants serious attention.

In trying to determine the reasons behind the school strikes, we should take into consideration the socio-cultural and physical environments that help shape the child's upbringing. The socio-cultural environment is the immediate setting such as the family background, culture, community and religion, while the physical environment comprises the school set-up. This study focused on the school environment and how this contributes to student strikes in our secondary schools.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

While lauding the efforts made by the Government taskforces, committees, individuals and organizations that have attempted to solve the challenge that is school violence, it is clear that these efforts have not worked as the strikes have continued (Nkinyangi, 1981). One possible explanation could be that while the taskforces and committees gather opinions from various stakeholders, they do not really investigate the root causes of school violence and its prevalence. To address any root causes of these acts, we ought to investigate the students' ecological environment in relation to these behavioural issues through a systematic empirical study.

The explanation for school strikes could be in some ways a mirror of the child's socialization through peer behaviour. The school ecological environment could also be the cause for such strikes. For example, if an adolescent has learnt from his/her peers that the only way to settle personal grievances is through aggressive or violent ways then he/she will display the same violent tendencies towards school authority.

So, are the strikes directly related to peer pressure? Or is it because of the lack of essential school facilities and operations? Are boys more likely to strike than girls, or vice versa? The study explored how student strikes are influenced specifically by socio-ecological and physical factors and tried to identify the relationship that exists between individuals and their environment.

This study therefore tried to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does peer pressure contribute to student unrest in secondary schools?
2. How does the school set-up contribute to strikes in secondary schools?
3. Are there gender differences in the disposition of students to school strikes?

## **1.3 Study Objectives**

### **1.3.1 General Objective**

To explore the extent to which socio-ecological factors in the school contribute to school strikes in Nairobi.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

- 1) To determine the extent to which peer pressure contributes to student unrest in secondary schools.
- 2) To determine how the school set-up contributes to strikes in secondary schools.
- 3) To examine the gender differences in the disposition of students to school strikes.

### **1.4 Assumptions**

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Peer pressure contributes to student unrest in secondary schools.
2. The school set-up contributes to strikes in secondary schools.
3. There are gender differences in the disposition of students to school strikes.

### **1.5 Justification of the study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether peer pressure and the school physical environment influence student involvement in school strikes. The findings should be useful to stakeholders within the education sector in addressing the disposition of students to strikes within Nairobi secondary schools. The study also contributes to knowledge by applying the ecological theory in studying school strikes. The findings will make additional value to studies already made and to relevant future studies on indiscipline in Kenyan secondary schools.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study took place within Langata Constituency in Nairobi Province. It examined the relationship between the school environment and strikes in secondary schools. However, due to the sensitive nature of the research problem, it was expected that the study subjects would not be truthful in their responses which would have interfered with the validity and reliability of the findings. Instead, this was not the case as the respondents were very open and cooperative. Another limitation is that the findings of the research might not be representative of all urban adolescents of high school age. This is because of the unique nature of the secondary schools studied. Of the two schools selected for the study, one was an affluent elite boys only boarding school and the other a constituency development funded mixed day school catering for economically disadvantaged students.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a review of the literature on various aspects of school strikes as well as the theoretical explanations of school strikes.

#### 2.2 Literature Review

##### 2.2.1 Prevalence of School Violence

Like in Kenya, empirical studies on the prevalence of school strikes have also been conducted in other parts of the world. According to Nation et al. (2007), violence is occurring at a high rate in developing countries and its impact on schooling, learning and living is certainly serious.

When the Children's Act was enacted in 2001, outlawing caning, the then Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) Secretary-general Francis Ng'ang'a argued that court rulings against disciplinary measures marked the beginning of lawlessness in schools (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2001). Despite the shortage of Kenyan studies on school strikes, it is clear that school violence is a significant problem for students, parents, administrators and communities across the globe. Optimistic bias could be blamed for the rise of strikes especially in 2008 where 250 secondary schools in Kenya were involved in strikes. Chapin and Coleman (2006) explain that regardless of the high profile of the strikes, school administrators remain in denial or adamant of the risk of students striking, thinking that strikes only happen in other schools and not theirs.

The recent University of Nairobi strike after a flawed student body election is a reflection of the ethnic polarization within our learning institutions and in turn a reflection of our society. Schools with students from various ethnic/racial backgrounds also experience some forms of ethnic taunting (Nation et al. 2007).

##### 2.2.2 School Set-up in Relation to Secondary School Strikes

The school setting is a powerful influence in the lives of many youth and it includes interactions between the youth, his or her peers, teachers and other adults who are present in

the setting. Astor et al. (2009) and Plank et al. (2009) explain that an atypical school climate is one that has minimal resources such as allocation of food provisions and physical facilities and when these are not efficiently catered for, basic educational goals and processes are jeopardized, leading to school unrest.

Lutomia and Sikolia (2006) cited the following factors as common causes of strikes and riots in learning institutions: communication breakdown, poor preparation and rationing of food, academic problems, teacher transfers, role of politicians, political events and strikes, influence of drugs, HIV/AIDS prevalence, school-community relations, adolescence, lack of sensitivity by teachers, idleness among students, provocation by teachers and poor teaching methods.

School environments where students are most likely to experience disruptive classrooms due to high-poverty have proved to be hostile environments for students. Chena and Weikarta (2008) state that smaller schools tend to have lower disorder and higher learning. The study also noted that a majority of striking schools were from rural and urban District schools (low achieving schools), which lack financial resources as compared to private and National schools (high achieving schools) that were hardly affected by the school strikes. Studies support the theory that under-achieving students are directly involved in school disorder. Student enrolment in relation to school size will reduce classroom congestion and may prove to be effective if applied and in turn reduce school strikes and help close the gap between the high and low achieving schools (Chapin and Coleman, 2006).

Student achievement is compromised when students lack personal relationships with their teachers. If the only interaction students have with their teachers is when receiving harsh corporal punishment instead of reasonable discipline leads to fear, rebellion and loss of learning motivation. These findings by Cavanagh (2009) are significant especially in regard to the nature of interactions students have with teachers in public schools and the potential influence this may have on school strikes. Emler and Reicher (2005) discuss why it is important for school administrators and teachers to provide support for stable, long-term relationships between students and parents, between students and mentors, and students and teachers. Schools and teachers should work to implement a school culture that would lead to creating a nurturing environment.

### **2.2.3 Peer Socialization and Student Unrest**

Culture influences the youth through learnt communication, beliefs and customs. The school culture contains a hidden curriculum that guides the day-to-day activities of the youth which is pertinent to their development. Peer aspects of the hidden curriculum include student cliques, rituals, roles and relationships and most students can either accept or reject the various messages conveyed. Cornbleth (1984) explains that cliques are spaces where youth are bound to engage in drugs and alcohol, early sexual experiences and non-violent misdemeanours especially after class hours. The study elaborates further by stating that school outings are other opportunities to engage in non-violent delinquent behaviour, traits learned through the hidden curriculum.

Any student with a violent background could be mainly controlled by direct physical/verbal, relational, and sexual harassment and victimization. A child from a society or community that does not hold its adults or youth accountable for misbehaviour will display this when placed within a school setting. Ochoa et al. (2007) state that adolescents who cannot comprehend the meaning and value of accountability tend to be unruly and mostly responsible for harms caused during school strikes. If a violent youth is part or head of a student clique, he or she can send messages of aggression to fellow peers and the receivers of the messages are coerced into keeping up appearances in order to be accepted and gain advantage (Cornbleth, 1948).

Technology has changed our society both negatively and positively; in our case technology has damaged our societal environment. Even in boarding schools, teenagers spend up to four hours a day watching television containing material on pop culture, while well-supported theory delineates why and when exposure to media violence increases aggression. Dimitri et al. (2007) indicate that short-term exposure to media increases the likelihood of physically and verbally aggressive behaviour, aggressive thoughts, and aggressive emotions. This study also shows evidence linking frequent exposure to violent media in childhood with aggression later in life, including physical assaults. Media content (e.g., attractiveness of the perpetrator) can influence the degree to which media violence affects aggression such as in the case of *Tahidi High*, a local Kenyan production aired on Citizen TV which was temporarily discontinued by the Government for airing shows that encouraged delinquency among high school students.



#### **2.2.4 Gender Differences in the Disposition of Students to School Strikes**

Major risk factors for school strikes include gender and deviant behaviour, such as using and selling drugs, committing non-violent felonies, and engaging in other forms of non-violent delinquency. Ochoa et al. (2007) states that low academic orientation, lack of parental affection and support indicate strong linkages to school strikes, although, boys are more susceptible to school strikes than girls. This could explain why boy schools as compared to girls only schools were most affected by school strikes in Nairobi.

Today's work ethic demands more input in time and energy, and with more mothers entering the work force they too are subjected to the same demands leaving the children unattended or under the care of house helps. Family life has taken a back seat to the needs of the workplace and as a direct result children have developed impaired relationships with their parents. Boys and girls show somewhat different paths to school violence, with girls being comparatively more susceptible to the effects of less parental supervision after school and family problems, lack of parental support and affection. Pernice-Duca et al. (2010) state that a society should foster societal attitudes that value work done on behalf of children at all levels: parents, teachers, extended family, mentors, work supervisors and legislators.

#### **2.2.5 Repercussions of School Strikes**

Arson and property damage are repercussions of school strikes that have occurred in Kenyan schools since the 1970s. In 1999, a prefects' cubicle was torched in Nyeri High School and four students were severely burned who later died in hospital (Daily Nation, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1999). In March 2001, sixty-seven students at Kyanguli High School in Machakos perished in a fire allegedly started by their schoolmates (Odaló, 2001). In the year 2008, there was a wave of student unrests in a few provinces across the country in which students torched many buildings. In July 2008, a form three student at Upper Hill Secondary School burnt to death while asleep when a fire broke out in the dormitory at around 2 a.m. (The Standard, 5 November 2008).

Sexual violence is another form of backlash from striking students. The most prominent of these was the 13th July 1991 incident at St. Kizito Mixed Secondary School where male students invaded a girls dormitory and violently raped a number of them resulting in the deaths of 19 girls (New York Times, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1991). In February 2008, eleven students

were seriously injured when Tala High School students raided Makenzie Academy in Kangundo District. During the attack, the students smashed windows and destroyed curtains.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the socio-ecological development theory. It explored an ecological understanding based on Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology for human development. Bronfenbrenner defined human development thus:

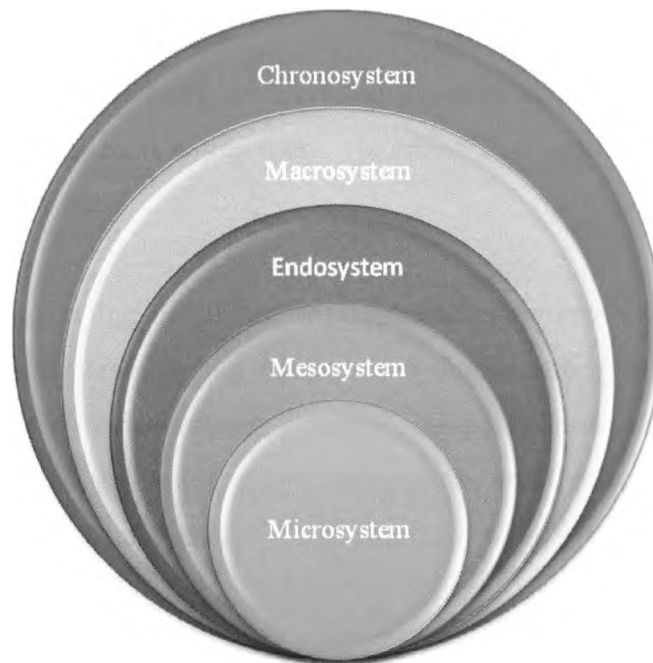
The process through which the growing person acquires a more extended differentiated and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content (1979:27).

A child's development does not occur in isolation; rather it takes place in a rich context of direct and indirect influences between people and their environments, their ecologies. This supports a focal point in this research, which is that you cannot understand people and their behaviour without taking into context their ecologies.

Gradually he/she becomes capable of adapting his/her imagination to the constraints of objective reality and even of refashioning the environment so that it is more compatible with his/her abilities, needs and desires. It is this growing capacity to remould reality in accordance with human requirements and aspirations from an ecological perspective that represents the highest expression of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 10).

According to Bronfenbrenner, the socio-ecological development approach focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment and the ecological contexts can be seen as a series of nested spheres with the children at the centre. The theory states that as a child develops, the interactions within his/her environment become more complex and this complexity can arise as the child's physical and cognitive structures grow and mature.

Bronfenbrenner (1979: 21) postulated that it was not only the interaction with one's immediate environment that affected behaviour but external settings as well. He broke down these interactions into five different interconnections: *the microsystem* (which subdivides into *the mesosystem* and *the exosystem*), *the macrosystem* and *the chronosystem*. This can be conceptualized as shown in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1: The steps of human development.**

The *microsystem* is the first set of relationships that a child experienced with his/her immediate settings such as the home, parents, teachers and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 21). Bronfenbrenner split the *microsystem* into two different relationships. The first was the *mesosystem*, comprising the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participated (p.25). The *mesosystem* evolved whenever the child moved into a new setting, for example, from home to school. The second was the *exosystem*, composed of indirect relationships affecting the child even if he/she was never personally involved in them (p.7 & p.25). For example, parents' work situation may influence the quality of life the child can have. The next interconnection is the *macrosystem*, the overarching patterns of ideology and organisation of a particular culture. A good example is a culture's religion. Finally, Bronfenbrenner described the *chronosystem* as, 'changes over

time within the person and within the environment' (Bronfenbrenner, 1986:724). This theory was useful because it detailed the various layers of the social context and the interactions that affect behaviour. It reminded me to be alert to not only the easily observed interconnections like the *microsystem* and *mesosystem* (internal ecologies) but also to be aware of how the *exosystem*, *macrosystem* and *chronosystem* (external ecologies) impinged on people's lifeworlds (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 8). Bronfenbrenner strongly disagreed with researchers who concentrated on the properties of the person and had only a rudimentary conception and characterisation of the environment in which the person is found (*microsystem* and *mesosystem*), overlooking the way in which relations between settings could affect what happened within them. He called findings from such research misleading in drawing conclusions:

The understanding of human development... requires examination of multi-person systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject. In the absence of such a broadened perspective, much of contemporary research can be characterised as the study of development-out-of-context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 21).

Another important consideration in the ecological approach is a phenomenological one. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 24) posited that it was impossible to understand behaviour solely from the objective properties of an environment without reference to its meaning for the people in the setting. This argument supported my intentions to work with students in dialogue and listen to them as they voiced their views, since they know their settings best. He also gave guidance as to how people could work together. He called two people working together a dyad or two-person system. This dyad could include third parties and become a triad, a tetrad if they were five and eventually a much larger interpersonal structure such as groups of parents, pupils and teachers that were involved in this particular study. He metaphorically used the example of a three-legged stool to show that study participants needed each other. If one of them became absent or disruptive he/she would cause a breakdown just like a three-legged stool with one broken or shorter leg (p.5). Through these thoughts, I was encouraged to appreciate the input of every participant and work together with them in the expectation that the outputs of the research would outlive my presence.

## **2.4 Relevance of the theory to the study**

The main theme in the socio-ecological development theory is the interaction of a child to his/her environment and this will guide the study objectives and explain the findings. Research linking children's developmental outcomes and the environments in which they live supports the importance of recognizing the contexts of children's experience. The youth mirror the behaviour of parents, other family members, society and peers; however, the study reduced the focus to the *microsystem*, specifically, the school environment. Within this structure, peer and social reinforcement of delinquent and violent behaviour may also lead to participation in school violence, specifically strikes.

The school environment is the layer closest to the child and contains structures within which the child has direct contact and encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with her immediate surroundings.

## **2.5 Definition of Key Terms**

**Hidden Curriculum** – Refers to messages communicated indirectly usually deal with attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour.

**Matatu** – A mode of public transportation in Kenya.

**Monolization** – The act of initiation by senior students to recently enrolled students in high school which is viewed as bullying to the school authority and junior students.

**Peer pressure** – The process whereby an individual learns the norms, values, behaviour and social skills of a group and in turn behaves in a manner approved by the group. Therefore, the individual acquires a personal identity.

**School physical environment** – This includes the physical, emotional, and social climate of the school that provides a safe physical plan, as well as a healthy and supportive environment that fosters learning.

**Sheng** – A slang-based language, originating in Nairobi, Kenya, influenced by the many languages spoken. The word is coined from the two words - (S)wahili and (Eng)lish and is

primarily a language of urban youths.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the procedures that were used in carrying out the study. It involves a description of the research site, study population, sample population and sampling methods, methods of data collection and data analysis, and presentation of the findings. The problems encountered in the field and solutions are presented.

#### 3.1 Research site

This study collected data from two secondary schools in Langata Constituency, Nairobi. Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya and an urban centre with an estimated 3.2 million occupants (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The city is the core for most industrial, commercial, educational and socio-economical activities in the country. Nairobi schools cater for youth from different social, academic and economic backgrounds with school enrollment being determined by the following categories, i.e., National schools, Provincial schools, District schools, private schools, boys, girls, mixed schools, boarding or day schools.

#### 3.2 Research Design

This study was cross-sectional and exploratory in nature and elicited both quantitative and qualitative data using the survey technique, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, direct observation and documentary sources. The findings are presented in graphs and tables of frequencies and percentages (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: The research design**

Research question	Method	Participants	Resources
1. To what extent does peer pressure contribute to student unrest in secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ FGD</li><li>▪ Questionnaire</li><li>▪ Observation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Students</li><li>▪ Teachers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Tape recorder</li><li>▪ Camera</li><li>▪ Pens and paper</li><li>▪ Transport</li></ul>
2. How does the school set-up contribute to strikes in secondary schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ FGD</li><li>▪ Key Informant Interview</li><li>▪ Photography</li></ul>		
3. Are there gender differences in the disposition of students to school strikes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Observation</li><li>▪ FGD</li><li>▪ Key Informant Interview</li></ul>		

### **3.3 Study population**

The study population was drawn from Langata Constituency (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2005). Initially, the proposed study was to focus within the Mugumoini Location. However, only two secondary schools within this area met the requirements for the research, since schools were set-up after the 2008 strikes. I also did not receive permission to conduct the study in one school whose administrators preferred to have their students' concentrate on the Third term examination preparations.

### **3.4 Sample Population**

A study sample of 50 students was taken from form three class for the reason that they were already enrolled in school in 2008 when the strikes took place.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedure**

Two schools, one boys secondary and one mixed secondary were purposively sampled for the study. This is because in Langata Constituency had already experienced school strikes. Class registers were used as sampling frames for the study subjects. Simple random sampling was used to select individual female and male students in form one, two and three classes.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.6.1 Focus Group Discussions**

Focus group discussions were used to collect information from the study subjects about their personal views on the reasons behind the school strikes. In each sampled school, two focus group discussions were held with each group consisting of eight participants. The students participating in the focus group discussion were selected randomly from each class. In the mixed school, gender equity within the discussion group was important. All participants were categorized into two groups i.e. those that were there during the strikes and those that enrolled after the strikes. The former group comprised form three students only. This being a final examination term, the researcher did not wish to interfere with form four studies. In the latter group, form ones and twos were selected for the study. The participants were asked to select their team leader and requested to select a suitable spot within the school to hold the discussion. The group was then requested to sit in a circle to avoid the situation where the researcher was seen as sitting in a position of power. In addition, this enabled the



researcher to grasp reactions of the individuals. Each discussion began with a round of introductions, stating the purpose of the study, ethics and code of conduct and concluded with a word of appreciation for the corporation rendered.

This data collection method was important to gauge whether the data in the questionnaire supported the discussion outcomes. A list of themes (Appendix A) were used to guide the discussions.

### **3.6.2 Survey Technique**

The questionnaire enabled the researcher to collect a variety of responses as to why students resorted to striking through the use of open-ended and close-ended questions (Appendix B). The questions were related to non-violent and violent delinquent behaviour, peer influence and perceptions of the school environment. In each sampled school, the Deputy Principal facilitated the selection of students. Later, all participants were put into one class, which gave the researcher an opportunity to explain the purpose of the study, have control over the distribution and filling of the questionnaires and ensure no canvassing was made during the process.

### **3.6.3 Key Informant Interviews**

Key informants selected for the study were selected from the schools themselves. The researcher selected two teachers from each school for interview and this included a senior teacher and a guidance and counselling teacher. Each interview was held in an office and stated the purpose of the study and the researcher's code of ethics. The key informants provided opinions on the school environment in which they worked, disciplinary action given to students and what they perceived to have been the source of the problem and conditions that led to the strikes. A key informant guide (Appendix C) was used to collect the data.

### **3.6.4 Direct Observation**

The researcher observed the behaviour of four randomly selected students in order to gauge to which degree that he or she depicted particular behaviour skills that are deemed important for students to be successful academically and socially. The assessor situated herself in both schools strategically over thirty - minute periods for three days and observed interactions, behaviours or repeated activities mainly in peer relations and acts linked to aggression

among the study subjects. After data collection, the findings gathered from comments and the checklist were analyzed and reported using diagrams to illustrate relationships and different social behaviour among individuals and groups. The study used an observation checklist in Appendix D to collect the data.

### **3.6.5 Documentary Sources**

Existing literature on strikes and violence related behaviour in secondary schools were reviewed to facilitate the formulation of the various aspects of this particular study. Information was mainly been gathered from libraries and documentaries which has been very useful in coming up with the literature review and has continued to be used throughout the study. The researcher was able to identify the existing gaps that existed in understanding the reasons behind secondary school strikes as well.

### **3.7 Data Processing and Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed manually to obtain the age and number of students who participated in the study to obtain frequencies and percentages and the findings from this approach are presented in tables of percentages and frequencies. Qualitative data was analyzed according to emerging themes, and presented through quotes, anecdotes and descriptive methods.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher was responsible for all procedures and ethical issues related to the project. The research was carried out in full compliance with and awareness of standards and laws and regulations and to avoid undue intrusion into the lives of the participants. The welfare of the informants was given highest priority to protect their privacy and interests at all times. The participants were clearly informed of the context, purpose and nature, methods and procedures of the research in a manner and language that they understood. Participants were also informed of their right to refuse and withdraw at any time during the research.

### **3.9. Problems Encountered in the Field**

The researcher encountered a few problems in the field that disrupted the schedule of data collection. Initially, the researcher had selected to study Mugumoini Division in Langata constituency. However, one Deputy Headteacher denied me the opportunity to study the school stating that third term was not an appropriate period to conduct research as this had

proven to interrupt the students' concentration. In the mixed school in my study site, one senior teacher was reluctant to provide the necessary contacts and also be interviewed despite a direct request by the Principal to do so.

Two questionnaires (one from each school) were not completely filled and since probing was not possible through this tool, the researcher attempted to solve the problem by asking similar questions during the focus group discussion.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CAUSES OF SCHOOL STRIKES IN NAIROBI

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, findings from the data gathered through the survey method, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and observation are discussed and presented.

#### 4.2 Age of Respondents

The sample for the survey was drawn from the two schools and consisted of 50 participants sampled equally from Form 1 to Form 4 and equally between the two schools. In total, 68 males and 22 females (comprised of teachers and students) participated in the study. Table 4.1 presents the distribution of the respondents according to age.

**Table 4.1: Age of Respondents**

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
14	6	12
15	8	16
16	9	18
17	11	22
18	7	14
19	6	12
20	3	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.3. Academic Performance

Findings in Table 4.2 indicate that 92% of students in school A achieved a mean grade of over 50% while 56% of students in school B achieved a grade mean of over 50%. It is worth pointing out that one participant in School B did not indicate his performance in the last exam. Thirty-two percent of female students in school B had a better average performance than their male counterparts, with 24% of them attaining a mean grade of 50%.

**Table 4.2: Frequency Distribution of Performance in Class**

	MALES: School A		MALES: School B		FEMALES: School B	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>80%-100%</b>	2	8	0	0	0	0
<b>50%-70%</b>	21	84	6	24	8	32
<b>20%-40%</b>	2	8	6	24	4	16
<b>Below 20%</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	25	100	12	48	12	48

#### 4.4. Attitude to University Education

Table 4.3 shows the level of importance in attending university among the students. All students in school A had plans to attend university after their completion of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) while 44% of students in School B intended to pursue further education. However, School B had 16% of students that were not sure whether they intended to further their studies after high school and of those undecided 12% were boys and 4% were girls.

**Table 4.3: Future Plans of Respondents**

	MALES - School A		MALES - School B		FEMALES - School B	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>YES</b>	25	100	10	40	11	44
<b>NO</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>UNDECIDED</b>	0	0	3	12	1	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	25	50	13	52	12	48

Qualitative data from students' perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge were transcribed and translated and categorized to support quantitative data according to these major themes:

- (a) Perceptions of the school and its environment,
- (b) Disciplinary measures,
- (c) Navigating peer relationships, and
- (d) Reasons and consequences of the June 2008 strikes.

#### 4.5 Perception of the School and its Environment

The following are quotes picked from two focus group discussions in School A and School B.

*School A is a place where you can build your dreams or destroy them, your attitude to education will determine your future.*

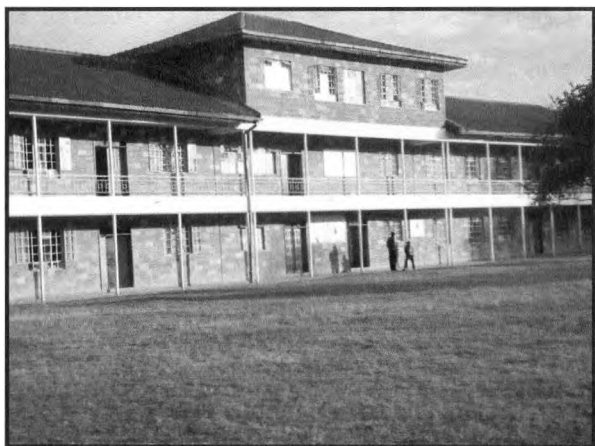
*School B is wonderful in terms of teaching.*

Focus group discussants in School A and School B were in agreement that the schools were good places to study in. Students in school B felt the teaching methodology was appropriate for them as their teachers taught them in a manner they could understand, i.e., mixing English and *Sheng*. Out of a teaching staff of about ten, my observation showed a youthful staff that was approachable to the students and goes to support the students outlook of their teachers. A teacher in School B was in agreement that the teachers were very dedicated to teaching their students. The academic standards set in School A were high and achieving this, according to student T, was possible as the teachers taught from the heart and treated the students with respect. In addition, laboratory equipment and the teaching methodology was of very high standards. I noticed that this learning institution had several complete laboratory facilities; with a computer laboratory equipped with 60 computers for computer lessons as a plus.

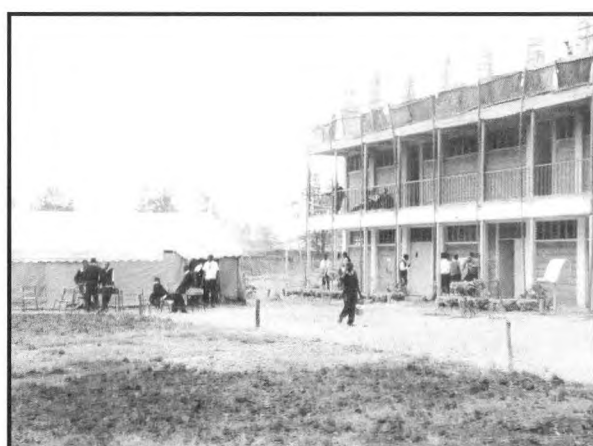
*It is really cold in the tent during the morning hours and when it gets hot, the sun is distracting and the tent gets too uncomfortable to be in. Because we share a tent with another class, one needs to concentrate on their side of the class and not listen to what is happening in the other tent.*

The above quote was from a focus group discussion with junior participants in School B. There were, however, strong negative perceptions towards the physical amenities in both schools. According to senior students in a focus group discussion in School B, the development of physical amenities was not proceeding expeditiously. They argued that it had taken too long to have the school buildings completed. Learners here experienced many challenges, for example, incomplete classrooms (Fig 4.2:), form 1 and 2 students study in a shared tent and one laboratory facility to serve all students studying biology, chemistry and

physics. This outlook was supported by Mrs. LM who was unhappy with the incomplete buildings and unsure as to why there was a funding gap between the Community Development Fund (CDF), the construction company and the school Board of Governors. She continued to state that one major problem in the school is the lack of sufficient teachers and it was not common to find teachers forced to teach subjects they had no experience in. Because of this, teachers were overwhelmed with the work and students were forced to share a text book among three to five students'. This in turn has affected the students' academic performance.



**Figure 4.1: School A - Classrooms**



**Figure 4.2: School B – Classrooms**

The toilet facilities in School B were not also sufficient, with a total of 260 students sharing eight toilets facilities with an adjacent primary school with 350 pupils. The girls in particular were not happy with the state of the toilets.

In both schools, participants were dismayed at the lack of sufficient sports facilities. One participant named H stated that School A sports players had to share one sports field for rugby, basketball and football. On the other hand, Mrs. LM in an interview emphasized that co-curriculum activities were less important to academics. “ Yes, the students have complained several times to have more sports but that is not the agenda of the school, I can say we allocate at least 70% of the time to academics.” Mr. K in school B stated that the secondary school was constructed on “borrowed” land from the primary school with close to no infrastructure, meaning that the students have to share a field with the pupils. According to discussants JY and GT, the only sport that was promoted was football and only to a certain level because the school was unable to continue funding the participation of students

in football tournaments. Due to the congestion of learners, it was possible to have conflicting schedules in the physical education class. Most of the time, the secondary class would forfeit their physical education class and remain in their classroom. Girls in this school did not engage in much sport except for Physical Education which is mandatory.

*To add on, there are no proper drainage systems; when it rains this place floods so badly it's just muddy.*

The above quote was taken from a focus group discussion in School A. Both schools have drainage problems and when it rains, one student in School B claimed they have to walk along the fence and hop over stones to get to the school. In addition, the toilets become flooded and unusable. In the area of security, the students felt safe within the school premises despite being in close proximity to an animal park and the infamous Kibera slums because an electrical fence protects them. In 2009, a hippo strolled into School A compound but harmed no one; however, this did not make students feel unsafe. School A is in close proximity to the Langata Road and TM stated, "I just sometimes feel homesick when I hear the cars zooming past and sometimes it can get noisy". On the other hand, School B students felt safe within the school compound and appreciated being in a quiet suburb away from the road because it was not distracting to them. However, they faced serious safety challenges attempting to cross the busy highway to and from school or catching a *matatu* home. It was reported that speeding vehicles have knocked down two students this year alone.

There was a general consensus among focus group discussants in School A that improvement was needed on the variety of food served. However, Mr. DN, a key informant disagreed assuring me, "You have looked around and you can see the boys are fed well and if they want 5-star food, who will foot the bill?" The discussants in the senior lot claimed to have requested over the years to have a school hall and a chapel to no avail. Currently, the school dining hall (Fig 4.3.) facilitates these three functions and causes disruptions to meals especially when there is a meeting in the dining hall. School B has a corrugated iron sheet kitchen (Fig 4.4) but no dining hall and respondent Mrs. LM stated that the students have to eat in the open and compete with the birds. However the students here did not have much complaint about their lack of a dining hall or chapel.



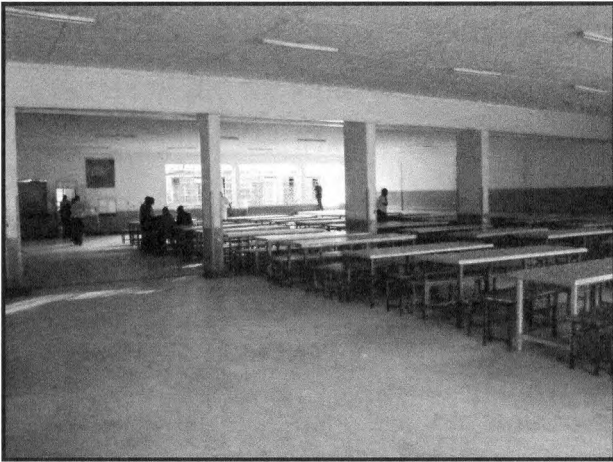


Figure 4.3: School A - Dining/Chapel/School Hall

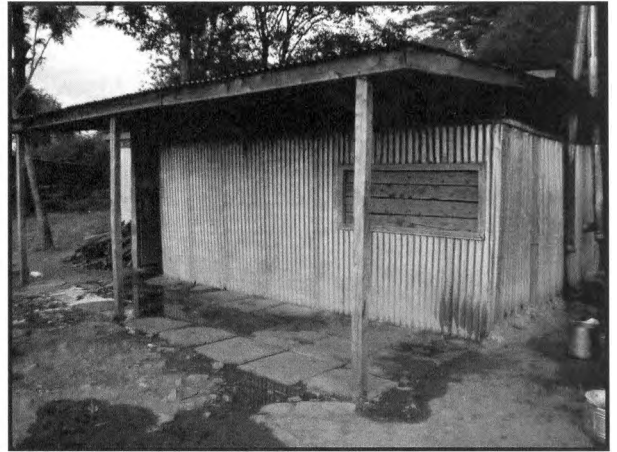


Figure 4.4: School B - Kitchen

#### 4.6. Disciplinary Measures

The study was also interested in finding out about the types of disciplinary measures given by the school administration in the case of both poor academic performance and indiscipline. In the focus group discussion in School B, the below quote indicated their perception of discipline.

*The kind of punishment one receives is dependent on the mood of the teacher, but at times the punishment is fair for the crime.*

Favouritism played a big role in delivery of punishment whereby some students took advantage of good teachers to escape discipline or teachers were lenient to students they liked. The participants described the disciplinary measures as being not commensurate with the crime committed while the teaching staff in the two schools did not feel the punishment was adequate for minor offences.

“Spare the rod and spoil the child.” This was Mrs. Z’s opinion and she continued, “3/10 students will feel the punishment was deserved and I feel psychological punishment is not effective, its more persuasive than discipline.” Those interviewed agreed that major offences which were punishable by a two-week or indefinite suspension, expulsion or a teacher - parent discussions, were acceptable. The most recent disciplinary action in both schools for poor academic performance was the threat to repeat the school year. However, Mrs. Z believes it is merely a threat as making a child repeat a class is not effective but counter-

productive. Mrs. LM felt the school administration was not supportive of the teachers in emphasizing the importance of discipline. Students that blatantly came to school in wrong uniform or did not work on a class assignment would be allowed back to class despite the teacher's objection. This in turn has brought about a communication breakdown and conflict between students and teachers whereby the students do not respect the teachers and teachers lack the authority and morale to deal with indiscipline cases.

The teachers felt that girls were less undisciplined than boys as girls were more likely to respect authority and engage less in misdemeanour than boys. Mr. X was disappointed that caning has been outlawed for, when caning was in effect, he saw it work very well. He continued, "Girls work better with "word of mouth" punishment but for boys caning works best, the psychological torture does not work on them". The main forms of psychological punishments include washing classrooms, toilets, slashing grass, kneeling, slapping, verbal warnings, suspension or being sent back home. In School A, the boys are made to kneel, wash classrooms or corridors, chop wood, slash grass, or banned from participating in symposiums. However, for serious cases, a disciplinary committee handles these cases.

Electronic gadgets are considered illegal within school compounds and teachers in School B discarded these items into the pit latrine. TM painfully shared his story alleging his teachers disposed his MP3 player into the latrine, yet his grandfather had given it to him as a Christmas gift. The discussion on whether to bring electronic gadgets went on with Mr. K in School B stating such gadgets make other students who cannot afford them feel inferior, while the students felt that having a mobile phone was important especially during emergencies.

Girls in School B felt some punishment was harsh, stereotyped and culturally insensitive, e.g., being slapped by a male teacher. Students expressed great fear for their teachers. Even where an anonymous suggestion box existed, students opted not to contribute for fear of victimization. "We have few teachers, it is easy for them to trace your handwriting" TM said. Mrs. LM supported this by stating that students feared coming to the Guidance and Counselling office for thinking that they would be punished; little do the students know that the teacher just wants to have a word with them.

#### 4.7 Gender dispositions in delinquent behavior

To gauge the gender dimensions in participation in school unrest, the survey asked participants to indicate the following: (1) Whether they had ever behaved in a delinquent manner within and without the school property; and (2) If so, what reasons were did they have for the behaviour. Their responses are summarized in Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

**Table 4.4: Male Responses on Participation in Delinquent Behaviour**

Delinquent Behaviour	YES		NO	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Lied to teachers	29	58	8	16
Lied to peers	29	58	6	12
Been in a fist fight	19	38	19	38
Skipped class	13	26	22	44
Drank alcohol	8	16	28	56
Used illegal drugs	3	6	32	64
Participated in school strikes	7	14	28	56
Vandalized school property	9	18	25	50
Suspended from school	5	10	30	60
Charged with criminal offence	1	2	33	66

**Table 4.5: Female Responses on Participation in Delinquent Behaviour**

Delinquent Behaviour	YES		NO	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Lied to teachers	6	12	6	12
Lied to peers	8	16	4	8
Been in a fist fight	1	2	11	22
Skipped class	8	16	4	8
Drank alcohol	1	2	11	22
Used illegal drugs	0	0	12	24
Participated in school strikes	0	0	10	20
Vandalized school property	0	0	11	22
Suspended from school	3	6	7	14
Charged with criminal offence	0	0	11	22

According to the findings seen in Tables 4.4 and 4.5, 58% of male respondents and 12% females had lied to teachers, while 58% males to 16% females had lied to their peers. The main reasons given were to fit in with the group or to get out of bad peer behaviour, e.g., skip class or generally break school rules. The difference between boys and girls becomes more visible in physical aggression, whereby 38% males and 2% female respondents reported that they had been in a fist-fight.

All in all, while female students engaged in more non-violent delinquent behaviour such as lying to teachers and their peers and skipping class as seen in Table 4.5, boys seem to be high aggressors in both non-violent delinquent and criminal behaviour. However, the girl respondents were fewer in comparison to the boys.

In gauging the gender dimension of participation in school unrest, attempts were made to investigate what boys and girls believed to be reasons behind their delinquent behaviour. The findings are summarized in Table 4.6 below.

**Table 4.6. Main Reasons For Delinquent Behaviour**

<b>Delinquent Behaviour</b>	<b>Main Reason</b>
<b>Lied to teachers</b>	To escape disciplinary measures
<b>Lied to peers</b>	To fit in or avoid bad behaviour
<b>Been in a fist fight</b>	Self defence
<b>Skipped class</b>	Tiredness and lack of school fees
<b>Consumed alcohol</b>	Peer pressure
<b>Used illegal drugs</b>	Peer pressure and curiosity
<b>Participated in school strikes</b>	Frustration by school administration
<b>Vandalized school property</b>	Frustration and displeasure in school
<b>Suspended from school</b>	School absenteeism
<b>Charged with criminal offence</b>	Peer pressure

#### 4.8 Navigating Peer Influence

Cliques do exist in both schools and their influence is high but the general consensus within the focus group discussions was that peer groups practised mutual respect for one another especially among the junior students. PP said, "The seniors can never see eye to eye with us juniors. However the main issues discussed among peers is entertainment, girls."

*"Yes, we cannot always agree and conflict does arise".*

The above quote was taken from a focus group discussion while discussing peer groups. Despite the peer groups, there are only a few groups among the junior students that engage in bad behaviour. Most groups are out to guide their peers positively especially those involved in sports and female empowerment groups. One participant stated that seniors were the ones with harmful behaviour and destroyed school property, e.g., breaking chairs and this inconveniences other learners. These sentiments were supported by the focus group discussion in School B where the respondents stated the forth formers usually influenced the junior students and often used threats to get their way. Students were pleased that senior peer groups that *monolized* juniors stopped the practice. New students normally underwent this form of bullying, but with time school administrators and prefects have curbed the vice.

In School B, girls asserted the need to have individual style in school but this right was infringed by teachers who emphasized on uniformity in hairstyle, no jewellery and make up. The power of the pop sub-culture was strong enough to get students risk breaking school rules as the girls did not always adhere to the school uniform. It was evident that media is a major influence on students, mainly girls who were influenced by magazines, local TV shows, Facebook, the Internet and movies. Peer groups mainly engaged in discussing TV shows and movies especially those watched over the weekend, causing a major disruption to concentration during class hours. According to one participant known as ST, watching adult movies led him to lose concentration in class all week. My observation of subjects engaged in normal playful behaviour among their peers with only one boy in School A was consistent in not adhering to the proper school uniform. I also witnessed one student in School B being threatened with a slap by a Mr. K for wearing a wrong school sweater.

The extremely delinquent team leaders of peer groups were expelled from both schools to stop the negative influence. Mrs. Z reported of efforts to develop Christian counsellors

within peer groups who would assist in behavioural change. She continued to state that students in the privacy of their dormitories formed kangaroo courts to discipline the extremely negative peer groups especially their leaders.

#### **4.9 Reasons for and Consequences of the June 2008 Strikes**

In both schools, the teachers had sensed abnormal behaviour among the students prior to the strikes and tried to speak to the trusted students to reveal what was going on. In school B Mrs. LM stated that the rebellion was not made easier when the Head boy was demoted for various reasons and as a result he continued to perpetuate the unrest. Slowly the students refused to eat lunch but fortunately, some students exposed the plan to the administration claiming that paraffin had been bought with the intention of being used to burn the school. The paraffin was later found hidden within the school premises. Discussants from School A narrated the happenings of that unfortunate Sunday night, they were among the very few junior students that had any idea of what the commotion was about and the damages to the school were dire. All students were sent home indefinitely that evening.

Mrs. Z stated, “The mob psychology is what happened. There was incitement. There is always a source (for the incitement) and that source was individuals and the fire got to the rest”. Mrs. LM confirmed this scenario whereby individual students who were mainly delinquents had lagged behind in classes and were uncertain about their ability to sit for the Mock exams and fed the idea to the others. The second reason was that the students were dissatisfied with the incomplete school infrastructure and harsh punishment. What baffled Mrs. LM was that the students had been there for four years and it made no sense to rebel just before they were about to complete their secondary school education. The below quote was also from Mrs. LM.

*“This idea was developed among the senior peer groups and they threatened the junior students to join in the rebellion. We curbed the problem before it began”.*

One discussant GT, in form three claimed that at the time, if felt fashionable to strike while Mr. DN and Mrs. Z felt the wave of strikes around the country was mainly influenced by the media. Mr. DM added that there was a clear rift that developed based on negative ethnicity and unwarranted promotions among some teachers and some individual students noticed this and took advantage of the division. The Marxist theory comes out clearly here when the

student community gained consciousness from within and without to end the conditions of subjugation from an oppressive school administration (Turner, 2002). In the case of School A, two respondents stated that the issues that led to the strike were petty, i.e., wearing trousers instead of shorts, better and variety in food, purchase of physical facilities, e.g., diesel generators and the ban of cleaning duties and caning. In other words, the students were rebelling against duties they did not get to do at home but were made to do in school. They were also rebelling against too much pressure from teachers to perform academically, lack of regard for co-curricular activities, heavy punishment from both prefects and teachers (especially on the suspensions), general frustration, collective peer pressure from Formers and pressure from outside. Not only did they strike but wanted to vandalize school property to show their extreme frustration. However, GT in School B exclaimed, “We didn’t burn or break furniture in our school because we don’t have enough facilities anyway.”

An immediate repercussion of the strikes was that several students transferred to other schools, damage to classrooms, loss of books, failure in examinations especially the KCSE due to loss of class hours, and teachers stopped attending class. Psychological effects experienced were long lasting according to one respondent, for anytime someone shouted or screamed students panicked thinking it was another strike. This sentiment was expressed by the junior students. Long-term effects of the strikes include the lack of confidence among the parents in the teachers’ ability to handle student woes, negative perception from learners in other schools.

A lot of blame game happened, with teachers blaming students and parents blaming teachers. Administrators in school A were unable to find the perpetrators as the students maintained a code of secrecy. However, key suspected leaders were expelled from both schools. All in all some students, especially those who enrolled before the 2008 strikes felt that they had won as some of their demands were met. Issues that students perceived as a win for them was the ban of caning, better quality of food and better teacher-student communication.

According to Mr. DM, all prefects in School A undergo a rigorous leadership programme in a retreat organized by the school so they can understand what leadership entails. Mrs. Z believes the strict selection process of all students coming into the school has enabled the

school to maintain students of high integrity. In school B, Mrs. LM said it was unfortunate that the school enrolls any student willing to study there without a rigorous interview process. It is therefore, difficult to determine the calibre of individuals selected to enrol. Teachers in School B have been very vigilant since then. Mrs. LM concluded by saying, "Once the students feel you are their friend, they will tell you everything".

## **5.0 Conclusion**

The students and school administrators' views were polarized regarding the need for further development of co-curricular activities. The students felt a strong need for sports while teachers emphasized academics. In relating School B to Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological theory, what comes into play here is the indirect influence of the *exosystem* on the students. The CDF fund and Board of Governors need to synergize efforts in order to complete the construction of School B, This way, students would be studying in a conducive learning environment.

Disciplinary measures brought out various views; key informants were of the opinion that psychological punishment was not sufficient while students found physical punishment cumbersome, not effective and gender insensitive, though not as harsh as in the pre-2008 years. Therefore, despite the disciplinary measures, students still engage in delinquent behaviour with or without peer influence.

All in all, the main reasons behind the strikes and vandalism of school property in 2008 were seen across the board in both schools as frustration, harsh discipline and lack of sufficient physical amenities. What I found disconcerting was that none of the school administrators seriously discussed or counselled the students after the strikes, the problem was shoved under a rag and life went back to business as usual. The role of educators and school administrators should be to take into consideration the students' needs and wants to avert future unrest.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study, and then presents conclusions. The summary is divided into three parts in order to answer the specific research objectives. Recommendations and further areas of research are also provided.

#### **5.2 Extent to which peer pressure contributes to student unrest**

One objective of the study was to investigate whether peer socialization contributed to student unrest within the school context. All study subjects were aware of what peer pressure meant and the results indicate that 58% boys and 16% of girls were influenced by their peers but for various reasons.

Peer leaders were, and still are considered extremely influential with other students. To teach other students a lesson, school administrators normally expel those peer members with negative behaviour. The discussions revealed that students were aware of individuals that engaged in smoking, drinking, drug use and early sexual activities and that their influence was derived from social networks, curiosity and pop-culture through the media. Students, under strong peer pressure in order to maintain their status within the group, will dare to test school rules in order to maintain a pop-culture attitude or way of life by bringing electronic items to school, e.g., mobile phones and MP3 players. Other students who wish to be in the group will feel pressured to purchase these items yet they do not have the means to do so. Some students desire to bring electronic equipment because it is a “forbidden fruit” despite the fact that these items reduce concentration in class.

The extent to which peer pressure contributed to school unrest varied, one reason being that senior students seemed to coerce junior students into actions that they would not do themselves, e.g., steal or purchase items that could stir unrest like petrol. Secondly, those that belonged to a peer group, in a bid to maintain their status within the group or avoid being punished by their peers, maintained a code of secrecy on the intention to strike. This made it difficult for teachers to figure out what was brewing.

On the other hand, positive peers encourage individual members to perform well academically and socially. In the case of School A, teachers created a Christian peer group that would positively influence others, while in School B teachers set up a “Girl Power” group to empower their female students in all dimensions and this, according to one participant, developed a sense of self respect among the girls.

### **5.3 Extent to which school set up contributes to school strikes**

One other objective studied was whether the school environment contributed to school strikes. The issues tackled within the school environment were the physical amenities, academic capacity and disciplinary measures. The study indicated that regardless of the school setup, category or national level of academic achievement, as soon as students feel frustrated by the school staff and administration, they would resort to striking. Where food provisions and physical facilities were not sufficient, the students feel their basic needs were not being met. In the case of School B, the classrooms caused a disruptive setting for learning, the students and staff can only survive in this “hostile” environment for so long without complaining. The administration, guidance and counselling teachers and class teachers need to extend discussions to their students and parents and discuss reasons behind the lack of certain facilities to keep the students involved in the school development or lack of it.

Discipline was an issue that elicited strong opinions. Disciplinary measures ought to be fair, gender and culturally sensitive according to the students. On the other hand, the teachers felt that since caning which was at the time the most immediate disciplinary measure became illegal, immediate follow-up should be made for students that seemed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Steps should be taken to contact parents of regular offenders and for those that do not catch up with their schoolwork should be sent home since they have no reason to be in class if they do not want to do assignments. Students fear their teachers and fear victimization so much so that they would not contribute to the suggestion box. This suggestion box is a tool that can provide very helpful information to the school and its students, administrators should take advantage of it. It was noted that one on one counselling did work in some indiscipline cases although students feared going to the guidance and counselling teacher with the assumption that they had done something wrong.

The school ought to change how students view the role of the guidance and counselling teachers.

#### **5.4 Gender differences in the disposition of students to school strikes**

The study was also designed to investigate the final objective, which was whether there is a gender dimension in the disposition of students to school strikes. The findings illustrated in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 prove that male students are more disposed to delinquent and violent behaviour in comparison to female students. The key informants revealed that in indiscipline cases, it was easier to deal with female students than with male students. This is supported by the fact that 58% boys as compared to 12% girls had lied to teachers to get out of punishment. Fourteen percent of boys had participated in strikes compared to no girls in the studied schools and, of those suspended, 10% were boys and 6% girls.

The teaching staff indicated that teenage boys had high energy which was more physiological and this needed to be exerted in a positive manner, e.g., through sports. However, due to the lack of proper sport facilities, the boys were idle and resorted to delinquent behaviour to keep themselves pre-occupied and at times they went out of control. At the conclusion of the discussion, all participants were in agreement that measures that would have handled the strike better would have been mediation.

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

This study set out with the objective of exploring the extent to which socio-ecological factors in the school contribute to school strikes in Nairobi. The study findings suggest that this objective has been achieved. These ecological factors come in various levels from within and without the school environment, although what is most significant here is the school environment. Where a school has inadequate academic and physical resources, low food rations, harsh disciplinary measures and poor communication, students become frustrated and lack the motivation to learn. When student grievances are taken lightly by teachers and the school administrators, they will in time be provoked and pull together to resist school rules. Schools that experienced strikes should ask themselves why their students protested against the school administration while other schools were fortunate enough to continue with their day-to-day activities.

The gender dimension and peer pressure do exist in school unrests. Girls were seen to be less prone to delinquent and violent behaviour in comparison to boys even among their peer groups. The study found that it was necessary for school administrators to promote a conducive atmosphere needed for students to approach them for discussion. Maintaining open communication lines will see students seek to engage with their teachers regularly. The study came to the conclusion that indeed ecological factors whether, internal or external, do influence student unrest.

### **5.6 Recommendations**

Based on the outcome of the study and available literature, the researcher would like to propose the following recommendations:

1. Educators and counsellors have the opportunity to positively influence behavioural change among the student community. The study found that there is need to have open communication among school administrators, teaching staff and students. Listening to student grievances and responding to them promptly would curb security risks and students that do state their issues openly should not be victimized.
2. The top school administrators, Boards of Governors and teaching staff should always speak in one voice when it comes to school matters and any differences should be kept within the staff room. Students should not get a whiff of strained relations between their teachers' as they are likely to take advantage of the situation or be strained academically.
3. Double standards should not exist while delivering disciplinary measures; all students should be treated in a uniform manner without favouritism or discrimination. Forms of punishment need to be evaluated regularly by the Ministry of Education to gauge their efficacy.
4. Schools must take into consideration safety precautionary measures by erecting fences, ensuring students classrooms are not a hazard, hiring a road safety personnel to help students cross busy roads to and from school.
5. In the study, it emerged that the media has the power to influence students negatively into drugs, alcohol, early sexual behaviour and violence. Guidance and counselling teachers, school prefects, parents and other stakeholders should be keen in empowering their students consistently on positive behaviour.

### **5.7 Further areas of Research**

Despite the conclusion, the study is not conclusive since the research only covered urban secondary schools in Langata constituency within Nairobi. To gain a bigger perspective, a larger study to include comparison groups would help better understand the relationship between secondary strikes and ecological factors. A larger study would gather a nationwide perspective; and in turn provide an in-depth analysis as to the phenomenon of the school strikes and prevent future unrest within our Kenyan secondary schools.

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION  
NAIROBI

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## **APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**

## **GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Below is a summary of the questions addressed in the focus group discussions.

1. In one word, express your opinion of your school.
2. Describe your school physical environment.
3. How does the school meet your academic and social needs?
4. Opinions on disciplinary measures taken by teachers.
5. Gender differences in the relation to good and bad behavior.
6. Behavior and influence of peer groups or cliques within the school.
7. About the 2008 June strikes.
8. Consequences and effects of the school strikes.

## **APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear All,

I am an M.A. Gender and Development Student at the University of Nairobi. My course requires me to submit my research paper on a topic of my choice. I have chosen to research on strikes in secondary schools in Nairobi. I am glad to inform you that you have been selected to participate in the study. Please tick in the spaces provided and note that there are spaces provided where writing is expected. The information provided will be used for research purposes only

Please do not put your name on the questionnaire since all responses are confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

### **SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Sex: Male-----() Female-----()
2. Year of birth 19 \_\_\_\_
3. Name of your School \_\_\_\_\_
4. What was your average mark in your last exams?  
80%- 100% \_\_\_\_\_ 50% - 70% \_\_\_\_\_ 20% to 40% \_\_\_\_\_ Below 20% \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have plans for university after your KCSE?  
Yes-----1() No-----2() Undecided-----3()

.....

**CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER**

1. I am a loving and caring person.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

2. My bad qualities outnumber my good qualities.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

3. My success is very important to my family.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

4. I consider my classmates personal friends

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

5. My peers strongly influence my behaviour in school.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

6. My school provides all I need for my education.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

7. My teachers always consider my feelings.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

8. My teachers recognize my academic achievements.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

9. My teachers give reasonable discipline.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

10. Exposure to multi- media (TV, radio, internet and magazines) influences my behavior.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly Agree

**SECTION 3: If YES, answer with tick (X) and answer why**

Have you ever done any of the following:-

Yes                      No

a) Lied to teachers? -----

Why? -----

b) Lied to peers? -----

Why? -----

c) Been in a fistfight? -----

Why? -----

d) Skipped classes? -----

Why? -----

e) Drank alcohol beverages? -----

Why? -----

f) Used illegal drugs? -----

Why? -----

g) Participated in a school strike? -----

Why? -----

h) Vandalized school property? -----

Why? -----

i) Been suspended from school? -----

Why? -----

j) Been charged with a criminal offence?

Why? -----

## **APPENDIX C: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am a M.A. Gender and Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. My course requires me to submit a research paper on a topic of my choice. I have chosen to research on the reasons behind strikes in secondary schools in Nairobi. We are interviewing people inside and outside the school as part of an information-gathering process. The interviews themselves will be strictly confidential. Your knowledge would be very valuable and we hope you could make yourself available for the interview, which will only take 30 to 45 minutes.

1. Define your role in school and your employer's mission and vision.
2. Explain whether secondary schools are catering for students' academic and physical needs. Please describe how these needs are/are not met.
3. What kind of disciplinary action do teachers give when students have failed to adhere to the rules? How would you describe the style of discipline that is used?
4. Do you believe that school strikes were instigated by certain individuals or by a collective group? If individuals instigated the strikes, how would you describe their personalities/characters?
5. In your own opinion, what was the main reason(s) behind the recent strikes?
6. What do you suppose would have been more appropriate assertive response the school administration and students should have used to curb the situation?

*Thank you very much for your time. Your knowledge and insights have been very helpful.*



## **APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST**

## **OBSERVATION CHECKLIST**

CANDIDATES NAME \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY OBSERVED \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Tasks to be Observed</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attentive			
Competing			
Cooperating			
Demanding			
Dependent			
Disruptive			
Demonstrates positive character traits (i.e. kindness, trustworthy, honesty)			
Arrives to class on time			
Imitating			
Inappropriate Reactions			
Interaction (Teacher-Student)			
Leading/Demonstrating			
On-looker			
Responds Appropriately to Peers			
Uninvolved/Wandering			
Unsafe Activity			
Using School Facilities Appropriately			
Having Appropriate Manners			