

Teachers' Perceptions of Pupils' Maladjustment Problems: A Psycho-social Perspective

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ABSTRACT The study explored teachers' perceptions of maladjustment problems manifested by pupils in South African primary schools using the psycho-social lens to view and interpret the phenomena. Thirty-two primary school educators participated in the study. The sample of educators was randomly selected from eight primary schools in the Central Johannesburg district. The survey design adopted combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study found that teachers who were not adequately trained to deal with maladjusted pupils did not endeavour to implement any interventions to alleviate them. It also revealed that not all maladjusted pupils cause disciplinary problems for teachers as some of the pupils who are unsocial, withdrawn, unhappy, depressed, fearful and nervous do attract very little attention to themselves. In examining the causes of pupil maladjustments the study found that these can be traced to some unfulfilled or thwarted psychosocial needs. Therefore the implementation of intervention strategies is likely to be more successful with adequate training and support for school personnel especially teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Not all maladjusted pupils create disciplinary problems for the teacher. Some of the pupils who are maladjusted do not necessarily attract much attention in the school and classroom although mental hygienists maintain that such pupils need as much if not more sympathetic help from teachers as do the maladjusted trouble makers. The causes of personal unhappiness, inferiority feelings, shyness and other antisocial behaviour can be traced to the same sources of conflict that create more aggressive types of maladjustments (Donald et al. 2007). Both the shy and the aggressive pupils have thwarted needs, but each adopts quite a different method of resolving the problem. There are conditions in the environment which create frustrations leading to personal inadequacies, feelings of inferiority, rejection by teachers, parents or peers. Some of these conditions are over protection or rejection by parents and are described by Blair et al. (2010) as unhygienic school

practices. This research seeks to explore some of the common teacher perceptions of maladjustment problems typical of pupils in their classrooms and schools.

Background

Information from the White House Conference on child Health and protection indicates that one out of every three school pupils is maladjusted in one way or another (Blair et al. 2010). It has also been estimated that 12 percent of the world's primary school going children are so emotionally upset as to require the services of educational psychologists, sociologists or guidance and counseling specialists. About eight decades ago, Wickman (1978) found a marked discrepancy between the ratings of teachers and mental hygienists on the relative seriousness of behavioral problems in school children. Wickman reported that teachers tend to stress the importance of problems related to sex, dishonesty, disobedience, disorderliness and failure to learn. For many educators the problems that indicated withdrawal symptoms and recessive characteristics in children were of a comparatively little significance. Mental hygienists on the other hand, considered these unsocial forms of behaviour most serious and discounted the stress which teachers lay on anti-social pupils'

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conduct (Blair et al. 2010). More recently, however, the Wickman study has been repeated by Stouffer, who found that today's educators and mental hygienists are in much closer agreement as to the seriousness of pupils' behavioural problems than they were in 1978. The extent of the present consensus is evident in the results of the Stouffer study, which reported a 61 percent degree of correlation between the teachers' rating and those of the psychological experts (Stouffer 2005).

Rationale

The rationale for this study is particularly apparent in cases where educators sometimes make judgments and take actions with insufficient knowledge about certain pupils. The pathos of some such mistakes is illustrated in the two cases described below:

Case 1: A grade 6 educator who was administering a timed test told her class that when she said "go" all pupils should begin writing immediately. All pupils started work on signal except Lesego (Pseudonym) who delayed with a few seconds and the teacher gave her an impudent stare. The teacher collected all papers, passed them out a second time, and again said "go" but Lesego was still late in starting. At this turn of events, the teacher slapped her in the face several times. Shortly afterward, a medical examination diagnosed Lesego's case as "post-encephalitic epileptiform behavior". In short, this implied that damage to her motor nerves made her reaction time slow. She would not be able to start at the word "go" no matter how hard she tried.

Case 2: The second case was that of a boy, Thabo, who was accused of stealing from his classmate's lunch box. Upon investigation, it was revealed that large quantities of sandwiches and fruit had been hidden in the school's basement and Thabo was found guilty. The teacher was aggravated by this apparent wilful waste of food and went on to suspend the boy from class for two weeks. A critical analysis of this case eventually revealed that Thabo was extremely malnourished. His lunches generally were nothing more than an ungarnished slice of bread or a few saltines. Other pupils had made fun of his lunch and he retaliated by taking tit bits and hiding them. When he was asked why he had not eaten any of the sandwiches, apples and other goodies his response was astonishing:

"Eat their lunches! That would be stealing!"

The two cited cases clearly illustrate the view that the most useful way to answer the question as to why a pupil behaves in a certain way is to study that particular pupil. It also brings to the fore, the view that a problem child is one who has a problem that has not been solved (Lawson 2008). These cases also illustrate that even though the pupils' deficiencies clearly reflected a need for action, further information was needed and seeking it eventually led as it often does, to individual attention so badly needed by many such pupils.

Theoretical Perspective Used as the Lens for the Study

Dealing with problems of pupils' maladjustment in the schools requires one deploys not only psychological perspectives (Donald et al. 2007) but to also employ what Wright Mills (1959/2008) calls the sociological imagination. It is in this light that this study adopts a psychosocial perspective to account for causes of maladjustment among primary school pupils. The psychosocial perspective is basically Erik Erikson's brain child (Cherry 2010). The theory of psychosocial development is one of the best-known theories of personality in psychology. It describes an approach that combines psychological and sociological views to account for personal and social problems (maladjustments) typical of human behavior (Donald et al. 2007). Much like Sigmund Freud, Erikson believed that human personality develops in a series of stages. Unlike Freud's theory of psychosexual stages, Erikson's theory describes the impact of social experience across the human whole lifespan (Cherry 2010).

One of the main elements of Erikson's psychosocial stage theory is the development of an ego identity, the conscious sense of self that children develop through social interaction (Donald et al. 2007). According to Erikson, children's ego identity constantly changes due to new experiences and information they acquire in their daily interactions with others. In addition to ego identity, Erikson also believes that a sense of competence also motivates behaviours and actions. Erikson's psychosocial theory posits that human psychological and social development is stage wise and dichotomous in that at each of the eight stages of human psychosocial

development there exists bipolar personality traits, the positive and the negative (Uba et al. 2004). This implies that each stage in Erikson's theory is concerned with becoming competent in an area of life. If that stage in a child's life is handled well, the child will feel a sense of mastery, which Erikson sometimes referred to as ego strength or ego quality (Cherry 2010). But if the stage is managed poorly, the child will emerge with a sense of inadequacy often termed personal inadequacies. This basically means that according to Erikson, each stage of psychosocial development plays a major role in the development of child's personality and psychosocial skills. Erikson's theory also assumes that children or people in general do experience a conflict that serves as a turning point in their psychosocial development. In his view, these conflicts are centered on either developing a psychological quality (adjustment) or failing to develop that quality (maladjustment). During these times, the potential for normal personal growth is high, but so is also the potential for failure or maladjustments (Cherry 2010).

The first stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development occurs between birth and one year of age and is the most fundamental stage in life. Because an infant is utterly dependent, the development of trust is based on the dependability and quality of the child's caregivers. If a child successfully develops trust, he or she will feel safe and secure (adjusted) in the world (Uba et al. 2004). Caregivers who are inconsistent, emotionally unavailable, or rejecting contribute to children's maladjustments as their behaviour often fosters feelings of mistrust in the children they care for. Failure to develop trust will result in fear (maladjustment) and a belief that the world is inconsistent and unpredictable. It is such child rearing practices that hygiene theorists describe as unhygienic environmental factors (Blair et al. 2010; Herbert 1998). The second stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development takes place during early childhood and is focused on children developing a greater sense of personal control. Like Freud, Erikson believes that toilet training is a vital part of this process to prevent enuresis in children (Blair et al. 2010). However, Erikson's reasoning is quite different from that of Freud's in that he (Erikson) believes that learning to control one's body functions leads to a feeling of control and a sense of independence. Other im-

portant events at this stage include gaining more control over food choices, toy preferences, and clothing selection. Children who successfully complete this stage feel secure and confident (adjusted), while those who do not are left with a sense of inadequacy and self-doubt (maladjustment).

The above views are also consistent with assertions by such writers as Trudys (2011) who maintain that many symptoms of pupils who are maladjusted may be readily observable by watching them in action. According to this view an individual's facial expression may indicate unhappiness or anxiety. He may be restless, hyperactive, tense, give evidence of being neglected, seem self-conscious about physical defects, be easily upset, depressed or angered, frustrated, have nervous habits such as twitching or nail biting or be constantly engaged in day-dreaming or may be a truant. The child who feels rejected also very often tends to be withdrawn or if he is able to find a friend, he may be extremely jealous of him to the extent of desiring that no one else shares his affection (Trudys 2011). Children who have met with little or no emotional responses to their parents, more often than not, have the greatest difficulty in forming genuine attachments to anyone. It is hard for them to give affection when they are not certain that it will be reciprocated. Although educators are not in a position to do much to alter parent-child relationships, they can do much to make children feel accepted, loved, and significant when at school (Donald et al. 2007; Weldon 2000). Acceptance by any adult who is respected by the child (Significant other) or by the child's own peers may at least partially compensate for rejection experienced in the home. The source of need satisfaction may help many a child from becoming a severe behaviour case (Verville 2007).

Table 1 highlights the eight human psychosocial developmental stages propounded by Erikson as occurring throughout the human lifespan. In addition to an indication of the stages, the summary table also highlights the basic conflict (bipolar traits) likely to develop in children at each stage of their psychosocial development. Important events that need to be observed if the child is to be well adjusted to his environment are also highlighted. In the last column, the likely resultant personality or psychosocial behavioural traits are given.

Table 1: Summary of Erikson's psychosocial development perspective

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Basic conflict</i>	<i>Important events</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
<i>Infancy (birth to 18 months)</i>	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding	Children develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide reliability, care, and affection. A lack of this will lead to mistrust.
<i>Early Childhood (2 to 3 years)</i>	Autonomy vs. Shame and doubt	Toilet training	Children need to develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and a sense of independence. Success leads to feelings of autonomy, failure results in feelings of shame and doubt.
<i>Preschool (3 to 5 years)</i>	Initiative vs. Guilt	Exploration	Children need to begin asserting control and power over the environment. Success in this stage leads to a sense of purpose. Children who try to exert too much power experience disapproval, resulting in a sense of guilt.
<i>School Age (6 to 11 years)</i>	Industry vs. Inferiority	School	Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority.
<i>Adolescence (12 to 18 years)</i>	Identity vs. Role confusion	Social relationships	Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.
<i>Young Adulthood (19 to 40 years)</i>	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Relationships	Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.
<i>Middle Adulthood (40 to 65 years)</i>	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Work and parenthood	Adults need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often by having children or creating a positive change that benefits other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.
<i>Maturity (65 to death)</i>	Ego integrity vs. Despair	Reflection on life	Older adults need to look back on life and feel a sense of fulfilment. Success at this stage leads to feelings of wisdom, while failure results in regret, bitterness, and despair.

Erikson's stage theory of psychosocial development contributes enormously to an understanding of human personality development throughout the lifespan. According to his theory, the interaction of the psychological and the social dimensions of human development constantly bring out the interplay with a person's particular social context. It follows therefore that emerging psychological needs are continuously shaped by the kind of social interactions and experiences an individual person goes through (Donald et al. 2007; Holmes 1994). In educational terms this makes educators sensitive to the need to constantly recognize the influence of the social context in understanding their learners in the classrooms. Since Erikson regards people as constantly active in their own development and that there is no point where 'all is lost' or where the resolution of previous challenges cannot be modified, this helps educators to help learners with their learners' psycho-social needs in the school and classroom. Erikson's theory also helps educators to realize that although

children may be experiencing maladjustments challenges or barriers at particular stages in their life, they vary in what they bring to that stage and therefore how they will readjust and progress in school also vary. In educational terms the above statement underlines the importance of recognizing diversity and individual differences in learners in the school and classroom.

Finally, more than Piaget and Vygotsky, whose main focus was cognition, Erikson's human developmental theory brings out the interdependence of the different dimensions of human development. The implications of a child's emotional and social dimensions which have a bearing on personality development are plausibly explicated in this theory. In educational terms the idea of interdependence is extremely important for educators. Seeing students as whole persons (psychologically and sociologically), more than just their cognitive or scholastic parts alone should be an important aspect of consideration by every true educator.

Goals of the Study

This study sought to establish the nature and forms of pupils' maladjustment problems as perceived by teachers. An allied aim was to establish the possible causes of these maladjustments among primary school pupils. The research focused on not only the maladjustments that cause disciplinary problems in the classroom, but also those that do not create classroom disturbances though requiring the attention of the teacher since the primary obligation of the teacher is to guide pupils in pursuit of knowledge and skills in the classroom. In terms of contribution to educational practice, it is envisaged that the findings of this study will go a long way towards sensitizing educators on the need to have an understanding of their pupils and to be able to diagnose as far as possible, their behavioural tendencies in so far as they affect teaching and learning in their schools.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

What are the perceived maladjustment problems teachers encounter in the classrooms?

What are the possible causes of the pupils' maladjustment?

What intervention strategies do teachers need to adopt to alleviate pupils' maladjustment problems?

METHODOLOGY

Design

The study adopted a mixed method design for the reason that when used together qualitative and quantitative approaches represent a complementary component of the scientific and disciplinary inquiry approach (Ary et al. 1997). Hence the two approaches were employed to complement each other. While the qualitative approach captures the richness of the context and the personal perspectives of the subject(s) (Wiersma 2000), its quantitative counterpart is appropriate for describing the numerical relationships of the subjects (Gay and Airasian 2000).

Sample

A sample of 32 educators was recruited to participate in this study (50 % females and 50 %

males; age range 30 to 58 years). The demographic data of the sample is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' demographic details

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Qualification</i>		
PH	2	6.1
PTC	14	43.3
BEd (hons)	12	37.1
MEd	4	12.5
<i>Experience in Years</i>		
5-10	4	12.5
11-15	6	18.5
16-20	10	30.1
21+	12	37.1
<i>Gender</i>		
Males	16	50
Females	16	50
<i>Positions</i>		
Teacher	15	48.7
Senior teacher	11	34.3
Head of department	6	18.3

Instrumentation

A questionnaire and an interview guide were used for data collection. The educators' questionnaires consisted of three sections with the first section covering personal background information including gender, age, professional qualification, experience and position held. The second section contained a survey of teachers' views on the nature and forms of pupils' maladjustment problems. The third or final section presented a list of the possible causes of pupils' maladjustments, with provision for participants to respond by ticking the causes as well as to briefly motivate their responses in the spaces provided. This means that participants had the opportunity to clarify and elaborate on their responses (Shumba et al. 2011). On the sample of teachers these (educators) completed the questionnaire. The interview guide was used with the school principals. They responded to an unstructured interview, which was considered ideal because it allowed participants to generate useful data through the researchers probing for in-depth data (Gay and Arisian 2000), about their experiences with maladjusted pupils in their schools.

Prior to the interview sessions the researcher had to brief the respondents with the purpose of the study, issues of confidentiality and informed consent as well as their right to with-

draw from the research without any penalty. The instruments were, initially tested through a pilot study at one primary school which did not participate in the study, before being applied for the main study for purposes of ascertaining their reliability and validity for the study (Maree 2010). Only six teachers were used in the pilot survey stage. Following the pilot survey, corrections and alterations were effected in both the questionnaire and interview guides. The instruments were also checked for relevance to the purpose of the study and to establish if the distributors of items covered the research questions (Jansen 2010; Shumba et al. 2011).

Data Collection

The researcher sought and obtained permission to conduct the study from the Gauteng Department of Education (D 10) as well as from the principals of the eight schools where participants accepted by way of completing consent forms. The questionnaires and interviews were administered and conducted by the researcher during normal school hours. Prior to the interview sessions, participants were fully assured that the data gathered during the interview sessions would be treated with strict confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed descriptively. Descriptions and tables were adopted for analyzing and summarizing participants' responses on the nature and forms of pupils' maladjustment problems. Both the elements of quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed. The former was employed in the presentation of and analysis of statistical data, while the latter involved the use of direct quotes or (verbatim statements) as well as explanations and interpretations of the data gathered through interviews, all in an effort to complement the responses of teachers on the forms and causes of pupils maladjustment problems in school.

RESULTS

Table 3 presents a psycho-social analysis of participants' views and possible causes of maladjustment problems typical of pupils in schools. The table is a summary of questionnaire re-

sponses from the 32 teacher participants who completed the semi-structured questionnaire administered. The discussion that follows the summative table does not only focus on the questionnaire results but also entails an examination of the interview results emerging from the individual face-to-face discussions held with the participants.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the discussion of results is carried out according to the research questions and it synthesizes both questionnaire and interview results for purposes of complementarity. In addition to the summary contained in Table 3 which outlines the participants' perceived maladjustments typical of school pupils and their possible causes, the following discussion unravels the causes of the maladjustments cited by the respondents.

Perceived Sources of Pupils' Maladjustment Problems

It emerged from the questionnaire and interview responses adopted for data collection in this study that the psycho-social perspective posited by Eric Erickson has a lot to offer in terms of accounting for pupil behaviour in schools. The major tenet of the perspective, which assumes that for every child to develop in a normal and wholesome manner he or she must achieve reasonable satisfaction for his physical, social and personality needs (Donald et al. 2007) has been proved plausible by this study. The results of this study (cf. Table 3) show that problem behaviours such as delinquent tendencies (theft, truancy, vandalism, smoking, sexual offences, bullying etc.) and personal unhappiness are fundamentally due to frustration due to unfulfilled needs in the home and or school. It emerged from both the interview and questionnaire responses given by participants that there are of course numerous conditions in and out of the school that can create frustrations leading to pupil maladjustments. Participants' responses revealed that included among these causes or sources are poverty, broken homes, personal inadequacies, parental rejection or over protection by parents and what the researcher has decided to code as numerous unhygienic school practices.

Table 3: A psycho-social review of participants' responses to the nature and causes of pupils' maladjustment problems

<i>Pupil maladjustments</i>	<i>Possible cause of the maladjustment problem</i>
Unsocial, withdrawn	Over protection, poverty, undue criticism, fear of reprisals
Unhappy, depressed, fearful	Broken homes, emotional abuse, undue reprisals, undue criticisms
Shyness	Constant ridicule or criticism, undue reprisals, parental rejection
Enuresis	Fear of reprisals, undue criticism rejection and timidity
Resentfulness	Physical and emotional abuse, broken homes, hunger
Sensitiveness	Undue criticism or reprisals, nasty previous experiences
Nervousness	Physical or emotional abuse or fear, nasty experiences
Over critical of others	Untamed ego, superiority complex, over-protection of ego
Easily discouraged	Constant criticism, low self-esteem, personal inadequacies
Temper tantrums	Physical or emotional abuse, feelings of not being appreciated
Domineering	Excessive energy, highly industrious or overly protective of ego
Delinquent tendencies: theft, truancy, vandalism, smoking, sexual offences, bullying etc	Inadequate enculturation, personal inadequacies, peer pressure, lack of values and adequate support, abusive social background or a desire for vengeance, broken homes or parental rejection
Physical cowardice	Constant physical abuse, nasty experiences, broken homes
Untruthfulness	Fear, constant accusations and undue reprisals, laziness
Sullenness	Feeling of inferiority, resigned attitude, poverty, hunger
Lack of interest in work	Lack of a supportive ethos, feeling unappreciated, poverty, hunger
Cheating	Fear, feelings of inferiority or personal inadequacies, laziness
Selfishness	Undue reprisals, unappreciated efforts, unhygienic school practices
Quarrelsomeness	Fear and the need for self-defence, personal inadequacies
Restlessness	Excessive energy, lack of industriousness, personal inadequacies
Inattention	Poverty, unappreciated efforts, unhygienic school practices
Impertinence, defiance, stubbornness, Disobedience	Undue criticism, lack of being appreciated, desire to fight back, personal inadequacies, unhygienic home or school practices
Tattling	Deprived social background, unhygienic home or school practices
Slovenly in personal appearance	Carelessness, parental rejection, symptomatic of deprivation, unhygienic home or school practices, poverty, hunger
Laziness	Bad eating habits, lack of an encouraging social environment
Attracting attention	Deprived background, personal inadequacies, parental rejection
Carelessness in work	Absent mindedness, lack of a health concentration span
Impudence, rudeness	Lack of supportive values for education, personal inadequacies
Inquisitiveness	Desire to learn more, quest for knowledge or over ambitious
Disorderliness in class	Lack of organizational skills, carefree attitude
Tardiness	Malfunctioning or tardy psycho-motor skills development, laziness
Interrupting	Lack of supportive educational values, personal inadequacies
Profanity	Lack of religious norms or values, broken homes, parental rejection
Smoking	Peer pressure, dysfunctional or broken homes, personal inadequacies

Poverty

Consistent with traditional sociological perspectives (the functionalist and conflict theories) that there is a close connection between poverty and personal maladjustments, the results of this study have shown that one of the causes of pupil maladjustments is poverty. Probed for clarity during interview session 18 out of the 32 participants (56.1 percent) concurred that not all pupils who come from poverty stricken homes are maladjusted though they were generally agreed that a low socio-economic status breeds conditions unfavorable to sound child adjustment since children from deprived home backgrounds are often inadequate

in many ways: diet, shelter, clothing and learning material or resources (Blair et al. 2010).

Broken Homes

The statistical responses of participants to the question of the sources of pupil maladjustment problems have unequivocally revealed that children who come from homes which have been broken by death, divorce, desertion, and separation are more often maladjusted than children who come from more stable homes. Twenty four out of the thirty two participants in this study (75 percent). These results are consistent with those reported by Glueck and Glueck (2001) on delinquent boys when they observed that no

fewer than six out of the homes of the delinquents, as compared with three of the homes of the non-delinquents, had been broken by separation, divorce, death, or prolonged absence of one of the parents. It is, of course the insecurity caused by the breaking of the home that has the deleterious effect upon children. Another point that emerged from the interviews held with the participants was that homes which are not broken but in which there is much parental conflict also provide more than their quota of nervous, unhappy and maladjusted children.

Personal Inadequacies

The interview discussions held also revealed that a child who is physically or mentally inadequate for tasks which are expected of him is certain to experience frustration in the classroom. Equally frustrated is the over ambitious child who sets goals for himself which he cannot reach. It also emerged from both the questionnaire and interview results that a child who is crippled or disfigured has problems of adjustment to face which are more complicated than those of the physically normal child. Similar findings were reported by Barker et al. (1996) who noted through interviews, observations and reports of informants that physically disabled persons are more frequently maladjusted than their physically normal counterparts. Participants pointed out that the resultant child maladjustments may take such forms as being delinquent, unsocial or withdrawn, unhappy, depressed, fearful, shy, enures, resentful, sensitive to all forms of criticism, nervous, over critical of others, easily discouraged, throwing temper tantrums, domineering, dishonest, quarrelsome, cheating, tardy, inquisitive, slovenly in personal appearance, impertinent, defiant, stubborn, disobedient and tattling. Other maladjustments may entail a display of symptoms of paranoia, undue sensitivity, suspiciousness, craving for affection and attention, love of praise, aggression, anxiety, tension, nervousness and temper tantrums. Other forms of maladjustments in pupils may manifest themselves through quarrelsome, sullen, restless, selfish, rude, inattentive and careless behaviours. Being profane, disruptive, timid, resigning from working hard, displaying reticent behaviours, displaying an inferiority complex, emotional and psychological immaturity and being friendless or exhibiting isolationist ten-

dencies (cf. Table 3) are some of the manifestations of pupil maladjustment problems reported by participants in this study.

The Rejected Child

It was also reported by participants in this study that children who come from homes where they are neither loved nor valued by their parents feel rejected and that such a treatment threatens their needs for affection and security and may leave them feeling helpless and lonely. Asked during the interview to motivate their responses, twenty out of the thirty two participants (66.2 percent) were unanimous that parental rejection can take many forms including neglecting the child; separation from the child, withholding gifts from the child; threatening; nagging; punishing the child; humiliating him before other people and comparing him unfavorably with other children in the family or neighborhood. The participants further reported that more often than not neglected children exhibit a variety of maladjustment symptoms when in the classroom or in other situations. Among these symptoms may be excessive attention-seeking behaviour, temper tantrums, paranoia, selfishness, rudeness, tattling, enuresis and other delinquent tendencies. These findings are in tandem with those reported by Blair et al. (2010) that more often than not a child who is hyperactive, restless and who seeks attention through non-conformity or wise-cracking is merely striving in the classroom to attain the satisfaction of a need which he or she has been denied at home. This idea is also shared by Symonds (2004:47) in her psycho-social analytical contention that children who are neglected or harshly treated by their parents often develop psychopathic and unstable tendencies, which he describes as follows:

"The psychopathic child is one characterized by utter disregard for rules and conventions of society, by shallow feeling, by lack of reactions of guilt, and by emotional instability. He has not learnt self-control nor developed behavior which is socially acceptable. Rejected children have low frustration tolerance. Since their parents have not exercised restraint or control, the children acquire no conscience or restraints from within. Their super ego (Freud) is embryonic and consequently they are without feelings of guilt or remorse".

The Over-protected Child

In the interview discussions held with participants it emerged that just as children may be rejected by their parents, teachers and peers, they may also be over indulged by their parents. An example cited by one participant and which is worth mentioning here was that parents who are themselves insecure and anxious often lavish affection and attention upon their children. They spoil the child with excessive gratification, affection and attention most of the time leading the child being maladjusted. In the words of the respondent:

Respondent 3: Such parents crush the child's solicitude with excessive gratification such that every whim of that child is catered for. He or she may be made to eat whatever and whenever he or she wants, or may have any toy or other material object he or she desires. He however may be protected and restricted from playing with other children or from going out into the weather because his parents feel he or she may suffer thereby.

The above response clearly shows that children who are overindulged may end up developing some behavioural maladjustment problems which may affect their school experiences in numerous ways. They may exhibit behavioural traits characterized by selfishness, aggressiveness, lack of responsibility and general infantile tendencies. According to another interviewee, children who are over protected often exhibit such nervous habits as thumb sucking, enuresis and temper tantrums. The statement below was given by one interviewee:

Respondent 5: Such a child may be stereotyped as a child with bad manners, or the impolite child who will say the saucy thing and who will be rude and boorish. He or she may be regarded as undisciplined or ill-disciplined, and teachers may treat him or her as disobedient. When they make a request of him or her, it may or may not be obeyed according to his or her whim and if it is something disagreeable, he or she may become impudent when an attempt is made to coerce him. With other children he may be demanding, bossy, selfish, and cocky and may want to show-off.

It is clear from the above response that being overprotective of children can be a source of their maladjustment problems and therefore parents and educators need to strike a balance

between spoiling the child and protecting him or her from deprivations or neglect.

Unhygienic School Practices

The results of the questionnaire and interviews for this study indicated that there is clear and unequivocal that unfavourable home conditions play a large part in the maladjustment problems which some children exhibit at school. It is also apparent in the results that conditions existing in the school (in-school factors) also contribute much to a child's maladjustment problems. The implications of this is that teachers who are inadequately trained in educational psychology, sociology and mental hygiene unwittingly commit many serious errors and carry forward practices which are extremely detrimental to the good mental health of their pupils. Expecting all pupils in a given classroom to satisfy the same requirements regardless of their abilities is one such practice. Participants pointed out that a common example in their schools is the tendency by many teachers to expect some of their seriously maladjusted pupils to undertake tasks which are designed for normal or conventional pupils. As a result, some of the maladjusted pupils' responses to these demands may be expressed either by withdrawing (for example, day dreaming) or by attacking the situation (for example, disobedience). In such situations, some of the maladjusted pupils may be made to feel insecure, uncertain and afraid because the teacher expects and constantly threatens them with unexpected examinations or failure in the classroom.

Participants also pointed out that other unhygienic school practices that cause pupil maladjustments include the teachers' use of stringent autocratic controls in the classrooms. In motivating their responses during the interviews participants argued that this has the effect of reducing the children's resourcefulness and initiative. Their contention was that such an approach makes children who are impertinent or who show-off to be publicly humiliated and sometimes be forced to make apologies while those who are tardy or who play truant are required to stay after school. Children who lie or steal are accused and threatened with expulsion from school. These results resonate with those of Healy and Bronner (2005) who found that the school may in some instances directly con-

tribute to the delinquency of certain children. According to some interview respondents of this study the stereotypes, remarks and treatment given to some pupils accentuate their maladjustment problems in schools. A case in point cited was that of a teacher amplified his pupils' delinquent tendencies by constantly making stereotypical and prejudicial remarks. The participants pointed out that slurs, taunts, cutting remarks, evidences of social and racial prejudice may arouse or accentuate feelings of inferiority which in turn, are reflected in reckless antisocial behaviour. If for example, a teacher, without thinking, asks in the classroom, "*why doesn't your mother send you to school cleaner?*" or "*Are you a placed-out child?*" or "*What does your father do for a living?*"-Questions that possibly imply social inferiority-he little realizes how the child may be touched. Such remarks may set off whole trains of explosive behaviour. A case in point was also cited as evidence to back up the above assertion: A strong, determined boy of twelve years, already sensitive about his home life, met a teacher's slurs about his mother's lack of care for his appearance with immediate truancy. He stubbornly evaded school for weeks, steadily refusing to return to his teacher's room. When the principal rejected the idea of transferring him to another school, he ran away, made his way elsewhere, and was gone for a whole year. Returning while still of school going age, but continued to be truant, committed other delinquent acts and was always embittered about the earlier school experiences.

Another interview respondent had this to say about unhygienic school practices that engender pupil maladjustment problems:

Respondent 12: In some schools pupils are singled out as defective, and even though no official announcements are made, the pupils themselves, their schoolmates, their families and neighbours become vaguely aware of what they feel to be an unsavory and disturbing label. Then nothing constructive is done. They simply wait and worry. The simple fact is that labelling or branding a child as defective and then ignoring or neglecting him intensifies the maladjustment problem both for him and his family.

The above interview response clearly shows that the practice of labelling pupils as dumb, bad, stubborn, disobedient, or a stutterer may actually contribute toward making a pupil dis-

play the characteristics of that label. Many additional examples could be given of school procedures which promote poor mental health or maladjustments on the part of pupils.

The Pupil Who Steals

Participants in this study were unanimous that behind every act of stealing by a pupil there is a cause or motive. The teacher should try to find out what need or needs of the child is or are being met by this type of behaviour. Among the reasons given by participants for theft by pupils are situations where a child steals because he is hungry, needs clothes, or because he needs money to impress his friends. Sometimes he may want to buy the social approval of other pupils if he has money to procure gifts for them. At other times pupils steal in order to get revenge upon another child or the teacher (cf. case 2), or to vent hostile feelings toward their teachers or parents. Just what should be done in the case of the child who steals would depend upon which of the foregoing motives were operative.

The Pupil Who Cheats

The interviewed participants were agreed that cheating on the part of pupils is a problem which confronts a great many teachers. They pointed out that pupils cheat in the rooms of some teachers, but did not do so in other teachers' classes. Participants also noted that pupils cheat for a variety of reasons such as when the set task is too difficult or when parent, teacher or child standards are too high. They also cheat when a parent or teacher has placed a premium on marks or grades rather than on understanding. Sometimes when the pupil feels inadequate or insecure in the situation he or she finds himself or herself in.

From the above stated reasons of theft, it follows that the child who cheats is usually under severe pressure to make good or has a fear that he or she will fail in his or her studies. It also follows that a teacher who gears learning tasks to the abilities and interest of his or her pupils may find that cheating drops off drastically in his or her classroom. Many times pupils do not see how the subject they are studying will help them personally. They thus take the shortest possible route to secure a passing grade. Units of work and problems directly related to real life

activities often so intrigue pupils that the possibility of cheating never occurs to them. Much cheating can, however, be expected in dull and tense classes where a premium is placed upon the acquisition of subject matter which has doubtful value in the minds of the pupils. Even in such situations, the honour system as employed by some schools has had a marked effect in reducing cheating. When pupils are given full responsibility for their own conduct and when peer pressure is brought to bear, it is a rare pupil who will break the rules of the game. Under the honour system there may be thirty or forty pairs of watchful eyes supervising an examination instead of just one pair of eyes—those of the teacher and this may thwart the temptation to cheat.

The Lazy Pupil

The interviewed participants contended that it is not uncommon to hear them characterize certain of their pupils as being lazy. Examples of lazy pupils given included those that never do their assignments, and who during class periods drape over the desk in a most lackadaisical manner. One respondent asserted that some pupils that are deemed lazy by their teachers are in fact not all that lazy but unmotivated when it come to studying certain subjects. He further argued that many so-called lazy children come to life and exhibit real enthusiasm and competence when school activities are slanted towards goals which the pupils themselves consider to be important. Too often, however, the goals of the school and the goals of such pupils are at cross-purposes. In such situations there will inevitably be many unmotivated or lazy pupils in the classrooms.

The Truant

Most of the interviewed teachers, 30 out of the 32 participants (92.3 percent) considered truancy to be a more serious maladjustment problem than fearfulness, shyness, enuresis, nervousness and temper tantrums. Asked about their conceptualizations of a truant, the participants concurred that a truant is a pupil who just does not want to go to school and makes plans to do something else. He may go fishing, attend a movie, visit the circus, take a trip or work on some interesting project in a friend's basement.

From the interview discussion, it emerged that he may not have a serious problem of personal adjustment. It is clear, however, that he has a real problem of school adjustment. If the activities at school challenged him as much as those outside school, it is certain that he would be no truant. Some respondent cited the fact that basketball coaches have no problems of truancy among their players. In fact, they often have great difficulty keeping the boys out of the gymnasium even when practices are not scheduled. The child who is successful in school or whose needs are being met is unhappy if events prevent him from attending classes. The implication for this is that teachers should consider truancy on the part of pupils as a sign that something is wrong with the school as well as with the pupil. Participants argued that when changes have been made in school programs, truancy has been known to drop off. One teacher commented upon one of her boys as follows:

Respondent 23: Khabo (pseudonym) is one of our truants. We have previously had great difficulty in keeping him in school. He is now in one of the remedial reading clubs where he is responsible for telling others about how the club works. Of late, he has been attending every day. This boy cannot afford to be absent from school because he would then miss the opportunity of being a valued member of his reading club.

The above response clearly shows that when pupils enjoy school or certain subjects then playing truancy is alleviated. Teachers therefore need to create motivating learning environments for their pupils to enjoy as opposed to enduring if they are to curb the maladjustment problem of truancy in their pupils.

The Unsocial or Withdrawn Pupil

Of all the maladjustment problem types of classroom behaviour, the interviewed participants rated this one among the most serious ones. They reported that they are also becoming conscious of the unsocial, withdrawing child in their midst as evidenced by the fact that they now rate this maladjustment problem among most serious ones. It also emerged from the interview discussions held that although the shy pupil often causes the teacher no inconvenience, he or she may be most unhappy and suffering from feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. He

may daydream excessively, refuse to mix with others. Some of the interview respondents tended to concur with the contention of mental hygienists that the unsocial or withdrawn pupil is in a most dangerous position to develop schizophrenia if nothing is done to check his or her unsocial trend. Of course, such pupils do not often become psychotic but the mere fact that some of them often develop into social misfits and isolates who lead an ineffective and unhappy life is sufficient cause for concern.

The unsocial or withdrawn pupil needs to feel that he or is essential to the happiness of others, that he is a valued member of some group. If satisfaction can be achieved in real life activities, there is no need for the child to withdraw into the realm of dreams to satisfy his basic wants. The implications of this are that the teacher may need to observe that a withdrawing pupil has some special competence or ability that can be used in a group activity. By indirection the child may be induced to participate and if his contribution is appreciated by the other pupils, then he or she should be encouraged to repeat the successful performance in group situations. One teacher respondent cited an example of one Home Economics teacher who induced one of her very shy and poorly adjusted girls to have a cooking party in her home. Other children in the class were invited. The success of the enterprise greatly increased the girl's confidence in herself and resulted in a changed attitude of the other children toward her. This example helped set the stage for a discussion of the possible intervention strategies needed for alleviating pupil maladjustment problems in schools.

Interventions to Mitigate Pupils' Maladjustment Problems

The Use of Remedial Classes

Suggestion from participants in terms of interventions revealed that because more often than not, some of the pupils who are extremely maladjusted in several ways often find themselves bewildered, frustrated, and discouraged in regular classes which are designed for levels too high for them, the use of remedial classes might be a worthwhile option to mitigate the effects of pupil maladjustment problems. This implies that a master teacher with unlimited skills and resources or materials and small classes,

could minister to the needs of these pupils at a pace they are capable of coping with. This helps in that it protects the very slow, maladjusted pupils from being humiliated to such an extent that they may develop aggressive, withdrawn and other anti-social behavioural traits. A great number of schools have set up remedial classes to fit the needs of such pupils. By giving the slow learners success experiences rather than failure experiences a big step is taken toward rebuilding their morale and integrating their personality. Reports from some of the interviewed teachers revealed that as a result of remedial classes many maladjusted pupils have become cooperative, readjusted and self-confident in their studies. In some remedial classes some previously discouraged pupils have become hopeful, and socially readjusted pupils.

Creating an Enabling Learning Environment for Maladjusted Pupils

In teaching such classes it is imperative, however, that teachers create an atmosphere which makes their pupils feel important and significant and not inferior to other pupils. The pupils should be made to feel that they are normal and that each of them is good in some subjects and not in others. If it is a special class in reading, the teacher should convey the idea that anyone can learn to read just like anyone can learn to tap dance or play piccolo. The teacher might cite cases of famous men such as President Andrew Johnson who did not learn to read until after he was married. If a pupil is really made to believe that there is nothing peculiar about him. He will generally be enthusiastic about improving his reading skills even if the lessons are conducted in a class especially designated for that purpose. On the other hand, if teachers and school administrators tend to regard special classes for poor readers as essentially dumbbell classes, the pupils quickly sense this and very unsatisfactory results are bound to emerge from it. Under such circumstances, slow learning pupils would probably be better off in regular classes.

Play Therapy, Non-directive Counselling and Psych-drama

The major part of this discussion has been devoted to consideration of ways and means of

helping the maladjusted child. Other useful techniques and materials necessary to promote pupil readjustments include the provision of a school atmosphere and curriculum which will make possible their satisfaction. This, of course, is fundamental and all devices utilized should have as their aim a similar purpose. Among the techniques suggested for use by classroom teachers to aid maladjusted children are therapy, play therapy, non-directive counseling, and psychodrama. Advocates of the use of psychodrama in schools feel that through the process of acting out a situation (role playing) there will be a release of tension on the part of the pupil and a more complete understanding of his or her problem. Psychodrama is recommended for all grade levels of the school. Teachers who desire to improve their skills in dealing with maladjusted pupils should make a careful study of these methods by reading the available literature and pursuing specialized courses in these areas.

The Use of Materials in Mental Hygiene Programmes

Participants also suggested the use of a variety of learning material designed for mental hygiene programmes on the assumption that an increasing number of good books and films are being produced which can be used in mental hygiene programs for maladjusted pupils in schools. Among the examples of suggested books which have been prepared for maladjusted pupils in mental hygiene programmes are: *Getting Along with Others*, *How Personalities Grow*, *Personality and Youth*, and *Ways to Improve Your Personality*.

Participants also cited the following titles as some of the films that may be used for mental hygiene programmes with maladjusted pupils: *Developing Self-Reliance*, *Shy Guy*, *Developing Your Character*, *Developing Friendships*, *The Other Fellows' Feelings*, *Understanding Yourself*, and *You and Your Family*.

Using the School Psychologist and Guidance Counsellor

Many participants suggested making use of school psychologists and guidance and counsellors on the grounds that many schools have a psychologist or guidance counselor on the regular staff. This person helps to supplement

the mental hygiene programmes of the school. He or she works with teachers, assists with the testing programmes, and may consult with individual pupils who may be seriously maladjusted. Participants noted that although he or she may render extremely valuable services of a specialized nature, he or she is just one cog in the total programme. Teachers in the classroom will always have to do much counselling and guidance work regardless of whether a specialist is or is not available. When mental hygiene principles are extensively applied in classroom practice the number of children needing the attention of a psychologist will become progressively fewer. The well-trained teacher should be able to recognize children whose problems are of such a nature that outside help is needed. In some communities there are child guidance clinics which may be used by schools with limited specialized personnel. These clinics are often directed by a psychiatrist who has psychologists on his staff. Severe problem cases which require deep psychotherapy should thus be referred to such agencies.

CONCLUSION

The present study, though limited in scope has shown that there are a plethora of pupil maladjustment problems in schools. It is clear from the results of the study that teachers who are not well trained to deal with pupil maladjustments face a lot of challenges in the course duty and in dealing with some of these challenges some of them may end up being maladjusted themselves. The study also concluded that while many maladjustment problems faced by educators in schools lead to disciplinary problems, not all of them have this effect as some the unsocial, withdrawn, unhappy, depressed, suspicious, fearful and nervous pupils hardly attract any attention to themselves. Nevertheless these pupils also need as much help from educators as do their trouble maker counterparts. In examining the causes of pupil maladjustments, the study concluded that these are attributed to some unfulfilled or thwarted pupil needs within their homes or school environments. It was also established that where educators and school principals are not adequately trained to effectively deal with maladjusted pupils, not much is done in terms of intervention strategies towards the readjustment of pupils. The conclusion made in

this regard is therefore that problems such as the ones presented in this study certainly require the highest levels of psycho-social training and insight. How to deal with pupils who present personality difficulties is a skill which must be mastered by all who would succeed in the task of teaching. Suggestions given by participants included, *inter alia*, that truancy, however, can be made to disappear when the child finds that he is really needed at school and that what he has to offer is appreciated by others. Likewise the shy and socially ineffective child can be made to show more confident behavior and to take part in more group activities when arrangements are made for him to experience success rather than failure in connection with social activities. It is also clear from the study that schools are beginning to give attention to problems of mental hygiene. In some instances, special classes or programs are being developed to deal directly with pupil adjustment problems. As a result, teachers are also beginning to receive in-service training in using therapeutic devices which formerly were employed only by a few experts. Such programmes include group therapy, play therapy, non-directive counselling and psychodrama.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To understand why some maladjusted pupils behave as they do, it is essential for teachers to engage in home visitation. Such experiences will be rewarding to the teacher as it will furnish him or her with a perspective for dealing with the child which cannot be obtained in any other way. Some schools have worked out a plan whereby time is set aside each week for the careful analysis of a given pupil maladjustment problem. At this time all the pupil's teachers gather along with such other interested individuals as the principal, counsellor, school nurse, and school social worker. All the pertinent information available regarding the pupil and his problem is presented, and a recommendation is made which is designed to facilitate the pupil's readjustment. Such occasions are important as they serve to alleviate problems of maladjusted pupils by providing valuable in-service training for teachers. In order to help the personally and socially maladjusted pupils, educators need to play a role in identifying the likely causes of the maladjustments. The truant may for example, be described as being a child who finds few satisfactions at school. For him or her, school might

be such an unpleasant place to go that non-attendance is preferred. In such situations the teacher needs to find a way of encouraging or motivating such a pupil to desire to achieve through school attendance. This helps the teacher to meet his or her important function of helping each pupil to set aspiration levels which are commensurate with his or her abilities.

The over-protected child is greatly in need of socialization. The school can do much to help him take responsibility and overcome his or her self-centred infantile behaviour. He may receive many hard knocks from both the teacher and other pupils but it will be greatly to his or her advantage if he can learn to develop tolerance for frustrations. This is something that every child needs to develop at home and something which will be greatly needed in life if he or she is to be successful. Care should be taken however, that his or her rough edges are not removed more quickly than he can stand. He or she will need sympathetic but firm and realistic treatment. Over a period of years, the overindulged child through association with individuals outside the family may develop socially acceptable behaviour.

The child who steals because he is hungry should certainly first of all be supplied with the necessities of life. The one who steals in order to buy gifts which will win him acceptance into a social group needs help in gaining social recognition through more legitimate channels. The child who steals in order to express feelings of hostility towards his or her teacher probably needs more affection and response from his or her teacher and an opportunity to release his or her emotions in such activities as school plays, music, art, or athletics. From the mental hygiene point of view it would be very unwise to demand a confession from a child who steals or to publicly accuse him of such an act. Such procedures do not get at the basic cause of his trouble and may only aggravate the case by causing him to lie or gain a bad reputation for an act he may not commit again.

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