Delinquent and Anti Social Behaviour in Mauritian Secondary Schools

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Abstract
This study investigated the different forms of antisocial behaviour in the Mauritian secondary schools and explaining deviant behaviour among secondary school students both in the classroom and within and outside the school premises. A survey was carried out over a period of six (6) months to collect data from twelve (12) Mauritian secondary schools both private and state administered. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used and students as well as the teaching staff were given the opportunity to have their voices heard. The generated findings show that although the environment, the socialisation process, socioeconomic factors, genetic factors, cultural factors and peer influence among others have a strong impact on student’s behaviour, young people from well to do background with a stable environment, closely-monitored upbringing, very often indulge into indiscipline/delinquent behaviours. The results also show that indiscipline occurs practically in all schools but at differing degrees. Different forms of violence such as fighting and inflicting injury to their friends, although quite rare, were noticed in some cases. It is also wise to note that teachers feel disempowered and de-motivated because of both disproportionate student population and undisciplined students, which affects considerably the teaching and learning process and because of the lack of support and guidance from relevant authorities.

Key Words: Adolescents, Juvenile delinquency, anti social behaviour, secondary schools, educators.

Introduction
Common problems of indiscipline and violence, often aggressive and rampant in nature, have become a major cause of concern in many Mauritian secondary schools. One of the main social problems among young people today is school violence, which are “offences against property or persons, in an elementary or secondary school, including everything in and surrounding the school”. The last two decades have witnessed a degradation of student’s behaviour in and outside the Mauritian secondary school premises. The question of indiscipline and violence at school is taking an alarming dimension. Words like misbehaviour, rowdiness, carelessness, irresponsibility, vandalism are becoming very common in disciplinary committees and reports.

Undoubtedly, education is an important form of human capital and it plays an essential role in the development of a country. Mauritius, a small island situated in the Indian Ocean, relatively poor in natural resources, has as its major resource human capital (i.e. education and health) and without a healthy and educated population, a country is very unlikely to prosper. Fortunately, the government of Mauritius has succeeded in sustaining its welfare state despite severe warnings to stop catering for free education and health from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the 1970’s which was one of the conditions that the government of Mauritius had to accept to adopt the Structurally Adjustment Program (SAP). Education in Mauritius is free from primary to tertiary level although a minimal fee is payable upon registration at the tertiary level. Mauritius has signed the ratification Education for All (EOA) which should be achieved by 2015. The country’s future depends on the knowledge, skills, versatility and educability of its people and one of the roots to success is discipline which is now one of the most pressing concerns of all stakeholders in education. Teaching and learning should take place in a conducive environment and discipline also helps to establish a positive school ethos. During the last two decades a deterioration of discipline,
weakening of the social fabric and an erosion of moral values and traditions has been observed in our schools which need to be urgently attended. Schools should be made safe and secure locations. However, despite the recent rise in the number of incidents indiscipline and violence in the secondary schools, it should be noted that rectors and authorities hardly acknowledge the issue as they do not want to tarnish the reputation of their schools which would be earmarked as a ‘bad’ one.

The Mauritian youth are actually witnessing industrial and social changes which have been bought along with the challenges of a globalised economy. Although the Mauritian society has been transformed by technological progress, we are still tied to traditional patriarchal and institutional structures. However, indiscipline/discipline in Mauritian schools is such a sensitive issue that no rector or officer from the Ministry of Education wants to raise it publicly. The Mauritian secondary schools are invaded by all sorts of ills while students get access to alcohol, drug trafficking and marijuana also known as ‘Gandia’ (which has become very famous among school students) not only outside school premises but also in educational institutions.

Even the local press has pointed out some acts of vandalism in schools and students misbehaviour on different occasions such as the Le Carnaval, Jump Around concert and the annual Inter-College Sports Day which had to be cancelled during several years1 “On a décidé de ne pas relancer cette année………consideration la scène, l’arrière scène et la sécurité de la foule” [We have decided not to organize this year……. Considering the security of the crowd] Menon Mounien, events organizer.

There is unquestionable unanimity about education as a potential tool for social mobility; however dysfunctional system can be a strong agent of social divide and exclusion. “It is with great concern that we notice the increase in violence in school’s” Some studies and certain events in the past few years have pointed at growing violence and indiscipline at school. The prevention of violence kit launched in September 2007 by Mrs. Ameeruddy C. (ombudsperson for children) is “a pedagogical tool for all stakeholders in education to favour a healthy and child friendly environment that discourages any form of violence at school” The latest study by Dr Ramharai from the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) paints a frightening picture of the situation. It was carried out over a period of nine months and covered the secondary schools around Mauritius3. The problem of indiscipline in some schools especially in marginalised and deprived regions is becoming a cause for alarm. Violence is imported from other parts of the society namely the family background and the school management should be geared towards constructive and positive discipline4’.

“A more educated society may translate into higher rates of innovation, higher overall productivity and faster introduction of new technology” (UNESCO, 2005:41). Long ago, the school was a place where students were submissive and respectful, easy for teachers to maintain discipline. Today, people are living in an age of high technology and our youth, vulnerable as they are, are the first to be affected by the outcome of such changes. They are tremendously influenced by the powerful media for instance the internet (Facebook, live chat, Webcam and viewing pornographic films) which is undeniably a useful tool for dissemination of information but which may transfer negative aspects on young people as well. On top of that, nowadays parents are taken up with their busy professional lives and the absence of communication between parents and their children is replaced from the support of the child’s peers which can jeopardise his upbringing and lead him astray.

In our endeavour to make Mauritius a knowledge hub, we tend to neglect the link between education and moral values. Swearing before teachers is becoming an inherent habit and much time is consumed in class to create an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. Authorities as well as various stakeholders in education have become increasingly aware of the serious problem of indiscipline in our

1: L’express Saturday 01/03/06

2 Ombudsperson pour les enfants: «C’est le devoir des parents de guider les enfants» A report: Ombudsperson for children

3 Dr. V. Ramharai etal (2006), Indiscipline et violence en milieu scolaire, MIE/MRC

4 Amar Bhatia, 2008, Discipline in Secondary schools, a study, UOM
schools and the insidious forms of violence that plagues our school system. Despite the fact that schools are viewed as a potential tool to forge one’s character and prevent anti social behaviour, reality seems to be different.

Many efforts have been made by the ministry of education in order to have a better educational system in Mauritius among which are the White Paper in 1997, Master Plan and the HSC schools by the minister Obeegadoo. In the Master plan in 1991, a law has been applied enforcing compulsory primary education due to a high rate of absenteeism associated with poor performance. The following is an extract from the White Paper (1997) “our children are unable to live their life fully due to scramble for the so-called star schools at the Certificate of Primary (CPE) level. A nine-year schooling basic compulsory education would be preceded by a year of pre-schooling”

Other reforms have been proposed such as the HSC schools where some secondary schools around the island were converted into forms I to V and others were HSc schools and the A+ system which was proposed by the Minister D.Gokhool. The president of the Government Secondary School Teachers Union, N. Gopee, has raised his voice against many issues and voiced out solutions to many, including education plans, indiscipline in schools, government policies amongst others. He added that all the plans in education, starting from the former minister Kadress Pillay’s plan to Gokhool and now Bunwaree (the present minister of education) have brought more disparity in the system instead of making it stronger.

The executive director of the Mauritius Research Council (MRC) noted at a conference in August 2007 that ‘there are more than a hundred cases of teenage pregnancy in unmarried school girls reported to the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Children and Family Welfare (WRCFW) every year. He added that due to stress and strains of modern day life, young people are also subject to mental problems as well and statistics show that in the year 2005, 28.1% cases of attempted suicide were recorded in young people aged between 10-19 years among which 76 males and 225 females. These problems certainly show an abnormality among youngsters in Mauritius and an indisclined, uncultured and bad- mannered youth will be unable to lead others in the future.

The concept of anti social behaviour

Delinquent and antisocial behaviour, among young people as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood, is an increasingly complex and confusing phenomenon. For many youngsters today, traditional patterns guiding relationships and transitions between family and school are being challenged, and social relations which ensure a smooth process of socialisation are collapsing (A. Lereau, 2003). Academic failure is often associated with the beginning of delinquency and the escalation of serious offending, and interventions that improve a child’s academic performance have been shown to reduce delinquency (Maguin & Loeber, 1996).

Antisocial behaviour can start either in childhood, adolescence or adulthood and as seen in children is a growing concern among educators. Escalating violence in schools is an outward manifestation of antisocial behaviour. Adolescence, however, is a crucial time for the emergence of antisocial and criminal behaviour for some people and which may persist into adulthood, at a considerable cost to individuals, families and the wider community. Most research in the field has been devoted to the identification of risk factors associated with the occurrence of criminal and antisocial behaviour with the aim of preventing such problems. Antisocial behaviour can generally be characterised as an overall lack of adherence to the social mores and standards that allow members of a society to co-exist peacefully.

Antisocial behaviour, often defined by aggressive, delinquent and violent acts is being increasingly recognised as not only a social justice problem but also a public health problem (Merry & O’Carroll, 1988). Aggression, delinquency and violence are all strongly linked dimensions of a pattern of behaviour generically referred to as antisocial. Associated behaviours include those considered mildly disturbing such as non compliance, talking back, temper tantrums to those considered more serious and

5 Master Plan, Min. Of Education and Human Resources, 1997

6 News on Sunday: 22 November 2009
disruptive to the environment such as threatening and physically harming others, destroying property and even sexual assault. As children grow older, their social networks become wider and more complex, encompassing the individual, peers, family, school and the community. Behaviour difficulties can develop from, and be maintained by, negative interactions anywhere within this social network and lead to serious adolescent problems of substance abuse, violence and delinquency (A. Mannick, 2000, p.38).

School discipline practices are generally informed by theory from psychologists and educators. A number of theories can be considered while designing a comprehensive discipline strategy for a school or a particular class. Of the different theories include the reality theory, where teachers make clear connections between student behaviour and consequences in order to facilitate students making positive choices; positive approach which is grounded in teachers respect for students and instil in the latter a sense of responsibility and assertive discipline which focuses on the right of the teacher to set benchmarks concerning discipline matters with clear expectations and rules.

A disciplined student is someone who is in compliance with the school rules and codes of conduct. These rules may, for example, define the expected standards of clothing, time keeping, social behaviour and work ethic. In a recent study in Japan, classroom discipline and behaviour has been found to be highly problematic. Although schools have extremely rigid codes of conduct, in practice, many teachers find the students unmanageable and do not enforce discipline at all. Where classroom sizes are typically up to 40 to 50 students, maintaining order in the classroom can divert the teacher from instruction, leaving little opportunity for concentration and focus on what is being taught. In response, many teachers may concentrate their attention on motivated students, ignoring attention seeking and disruptive students. However, the aim of school and classroom discipline is ostensibly to create a safe and conducive learning environment as in a classroom where a teacher is unable to maintain order and discipline, the climate for learning is diminished.

Moreover, the concept of ‘juvenile delinquency’ is so complex that it is perceived differently by psychologists, sociologists, legal practitioners and religionists. In recent decades, antisocial behaviour has been the subject of intense study by researchers in various disciplines including biology, sociology, social work, psychiatry, education and psychology and great progress has been made in understanding and developing solutions for deviant, disruptive and aggressive behaviour (Burns, 2002).

Nevertheless, the consensus is that juvenile delinquency is an antisocial behaviour. Each society prescribes its own norms and values and anybody who violates them is seen as delinquent. More and more children from troubled, chaotic homes often carry well developed patterns of antisocial behaviour at school. Especially as these students get older, they wreak havoc on schools. Their aggressive, disruptive and deviant behaviour waste teaching time, disrupts the learning process, threatens safety and ruins their own chances of successful schooling and a successful life (N. Walker, etal 2004)

Shirrin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra, the Ombudsperson for Children, says: “It is the setting in which they grow that inspires bullies to act the way they do. This is why it is the adult’s responsibility to be an appropriate model to children. They should assure them that they should not hesitate to report acts of bullying to adults”. She also admitted that “bullying is perpetuated in unsupervised, isolated areas such as corridors or toilets during the recess. Teachers must identify the victims of bullying in schools and support them and report such acts to the authorities”.

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8 Mandlesaum & McComack, 2005, p.86
9 Emmer and Francisco, University of Aberdeen, 2006
10 News on Sunday 14 August 2009
Delinquent behaviour in the community include excessive noise at unreasonable times, drinking/drug use, leading people being rowdy and causing trouble, littering, vandalism or graffiti, being racist and other abuse. Policy makers have at least recognised the connection between the breakdown of families and various social problems. The unfolding debate over welfare reforms, for instance, has been shaped by the wide acceptance in recent years that children born into single parent families are much more likely than children from the parents families to fall into poverty and welfare dependence in later years (A. Elliott 2009). These children, in fact, face a daunting array of problems such as financial difficulties where the parent usually the mother, cannot afford to sent the child and as a result, may end up on the street.

“Bullying among children is a deliberate act whereby a child who feels that he is stronger and more powerful coerces other children by fear, persecutes or oppresses them by force or threats. It involves repeated acts of physical, emotional or social behaviour that are intentional, controlling and hurtful. Bullying is a learned behaviour, Children learn to bully others by observing adults or older children behaving in such violent ways”

Extract from report “State Secondary Schools in the doldrums”

Research Approach
This main aim of the study was to identify and explain the different forms of deviant and antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Mauritius. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been considered appropriate for this study. Students as well as the teaching staff were given the opportunity to have their voices heard through Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Moreover, three hundred and fifty (350) questionnaires which consisted mainly of close ended questions in simple English were administered to students of Forms III to V out of which three hundred and thirty (320) filled questionnaires were collected. Secondary data also was collected from rectors and administrative staff through guided interviews which were conducted during their free time. Also, secondary data was obtained from newspapers, articles, books, international journals and reports from different ministries such as Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Health. Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of data collected were given a prime concern and attention. Moreover, the informed consent of the Ministry of Education and Culture, parents and rectors of schools were considered a priority.

Due to time constraints, a small scale study was conducted while ensuring that the sample was representative. The Mauritian educational system is divided into four zones or regions and three schools were chosen in each zone. Each region has a Regional Education Office and a Director of Education heads each office. The Ministry of Education, through the Regional Directorates, administers the government schools, having responsibility for the school buildings as well the supply of teachers, equipment and materials to the schools. Each directorate has a corps of inspectors responsible for the coordination of educational activities in schools.

The schools were selected according to their nature namely non-state also called ‘private schools’ 11, mixed schools mainly Mahatma Gandhi Secondary schools and state schools which is shown in the table below. The three hundred and fifty (360) questionnaires were administered to students of Form III to Form IV who were selected randomly and were in the age group of 12 to 16. Population, gender, zoning and category of schools were taken into consideration. Three schools were chosen from each zone namely one state school, one private and MGI secondary school with thirty (30) students from each school and fifteen (15) girls and fifteen (15) boys from the mixed schools. Administration of questionnaires was done as far as possible during lunch time to ensure that classes are not disrupted. The total number of students who responded is three hundred and twenty (320) as shown in table 2 below.

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11 ibid (3)
Table 1 showing the schools per zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school Zone</th>
<th>State Secondary School</th>
<th>Private Schools (Under PSSA)</th>
<th>Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Port Louis and the North)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (B.Bassin, Rose Hill and the East)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Curepipe/South – Rose Belle)</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Quatre Borne, Vacoas/Phoenix ant the West)</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 showing rate of response per school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School gender</th>
<th>Rural Schools</th>
<th>Urban Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of Boys</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Girls</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussions and Interpretations
As shown below in Figure 1, the majority of the respondents live with both parents with ninety students representing 70%. 36% students live in single parent families among which 16% live with their mother only. 2% students live with their grandparents.

Figure 1 showing family background of respondents
38% of students live either in single parent families or with their grandparents. Very often, these students do not live under stable conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Address</th>
<th>How would you rate discipline in your school</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strict</td>
<td>fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 showing the student’s rate of discipline per residential area of respondents
The findings show that most respondents come from working, lower and middle class background where their parent’s occupation were either in the public sector namely office attendants, clericals, and educators or in the private sector such as bricklayers, carpenters, office clerks and some had their own business with their income varying in the range of Rs11000 to Rs25000. 54% of students admit that they receive regular visits of the rector at school. It is rational to note that the rector is someone responsible at all levels, be it management and academic, for the smooth running of the school. Therefore the latter has the prerogative to look around for any anomalies or incidences which may occur among students or teachers during school hours and may do so, for instance by walking around the school premises during lunch time. 79% of respondents answered positively to the fact that action was taken whenever there is indiscipline in schools and this shows that there is definitely a degree of concern between the school management and the rate of indiscipline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table showing the link between parent’s Income distribution and main reasons the students give for indiscipline in schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main reasons of the lack of discipline in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of respect towards the elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6000-10000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11000-20000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21000-30000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31000--40000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41000-50000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;51000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents whose parents income varied between five to twenty thousand rupees believe the rate of indiscipline among school students is high because of parent irresponsibility.

According to Reid et al, (2002), antisocial behaviour results widely from a mix of constitutional that is genetic, neurological and environmental (namely family and community factors) and in the vast majority of cases, environmental factors are the primary causes. Patterson and his colleagues have described in detail the main causes of anti social behavior among young people. They noted that social and personal factors put great stress on family life, for instance poverty, divorce, drug and alcohol problems and physical abuse.

These problems disrupt normal parenting practices making family life chaotic, unpredictable and hostile. It should be noted that disrupted parenting practices may in turn, lead family members to interact with each other in negative and aggressive ways and attempt to control each other’s behaviour through coercive means such as excessive yelling, threats, intimidation and physical force. In such homes where coercive behaviour is common, children are soon acquainted with these hostile behaviours and by the time they are off to school, they have already developed an anti social profile (due to environmental factors).
Each school has its own culture and reputation such as five star schools also called the ‘national colleges’, the other state schools are simply called the ‘SSS’ that is State Secondary Schools and finally the schools run by the PSSA which are known as ‘private schools’ in the Mauritian jargon. Disciplinary problems tend to vary from school to school with many common elements. As shown in figure 2 above, while most students in rural areas believe that the rate of discipline is fair in their schools, the majority of those from urban areas think that strict discipline prevails in their schools but which they do usually do not abide by. Many teachers have reported that it is less problematic to work in rural areas than urban schools as the students are more cultivated, well mannered, motivated and comprehensive. The rectors as well agree that they are more comfortable at working in a rural school than an urban one. For instance in a ‘national college’ in Quatre Bornes, the rector stated that “ici pa facil ar sa ban tifi la, zot fer desordre plis ki garçon. Mo prefere travail dans la campagne” [It is not easy to work with these girls. They are worse than boys. I prefer to work in a rural school]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Lack of respect towards the elders</th>
<th>Parent irresponsibility</th>
<th>Laisser faire attitude of the management</th>
<th>Influence of media on the students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3 showing the student’s response of main reasons of lack of discipline in schools**

Most students both females and males believe that the main reasons of the lack of discipline in schools is due to a lack of respect towards elders. While forty one (41) girls think that it is the laissez faire attitude of the management that indiscipline prevails in their schools, sixty four (64) boys believe that the main cause is parent irresponsibility. During the focus group discussions, the teachers revealed that in girl’s schools, there are fewer problems of indiscipline as compared to boy’s schools. Types of indiscipline in girl’s school are usually in the form of swearing, talking, eating, not doing homework, inappropriate uniforms, and ‘make up’, truanting and fighting.

In one of the Focus Group Discussions (FDG), a group of educators complained that these students take private tuition where they recuperate the lost lessons and therefore are not interested in the lessons at school. Some educators also complained about the fact that students use mobile phones in class and disrupt the teaching and learning process. “Zot sms entre ek rié zot mem dan klas ek nu pa cpv fer nanrié. ban zenfan aster ena tro bucou droits samem zot p monte lor latet” [They send SMS among themselves during the class and we cannot do anything. They have got too many rights nowadays that’s why they do whatever they want] Furthermore, educators have also focused on the powerful influence of media on the students which has a direct connection with indiscipline. Students learn so many things such as latest fashion, new music and videos, try to imitate pop singers, and even get access to pornographic materials from the media through the television, magazines and the indispensable tool ‘internet’ where they can share the latest news, make new friends and fix up dates using the social tools such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and try to reproduce these at school along with their friends.

However, in boy’s schools, educators face more problems which are quite different when compared to girl’s schools. Some illustrations of these anti social acts are throwing rubber on blackboard, using foul/abusive language among their classmates and even with their teachers, smoking and drinking alcohol in the school compound and destroying school properties such as desks, chairs and cupboards. In one boy’s school in Belle Rose, students have reported that their friends come to school armed with knife and cutters which they would use if ever they have conflicts with their friends or even with the school staff. On top of that, the rector stated that he has to lock all classrooms during lunch time to prevent damage to the school property by the students.
Most rectors that were interviewed complained about the immaturity of some educators especially the young recruits. The latter tend to be very friendly with the students and as a result, cannot exercise authority upon them “Professeser cuma dir camarad ek zelev, nek rié coçé ene zourné, samem pena respet entre professeser ek zelev” [they are like friends, always laughing and talking throughout the day]; hence there is no mutual respect and the pupils end up in disobeying him/her.

Other educators are also blamed to be too childish in both their approach and their way of dressing. Furthermore, it has become even difficult for lady teachers to work in boy’s schools where the students will make embarrassing comments about them like “hmm guete so linze miss ta..! actrice net!! cuma dir Preity Zinta zordi!!” [hmm look at her..! she looks like Preity Zinta (a bollywood actress) today!!]. Some students also reported that they have seen girls kissing in toilets and even enticing others to come and join them.

It should be noted that not in all schools, teachers encounter such serious acts of indiscipline and antisocial behaviour.

Date from the Focus Group Discussions at the Mahatma Gandhi Schools revealed less disciplinary problems when compared to either state secondary schools or private schools. Apart from taking severe sanctions against those who misbehave, the schools have the main aim to inculcate the Gandhian principle and philosophy among Mauritian young people that will definitely make a significant contribution to the enhancement of social harmony and cultural diversity. The Mahatma Gandhi secondary schools are among the first co-educational institutions which have proved to be very successful in the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family background</th>
<th>To annoy the teacher</th>
<th>To challenge the teacher’s authority</th>
<th>To have fun</th>
<th>To divert attention of the class</th>
<th>To cut the boredomness of the class</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live with mother only</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with father only</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with both parents</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with grandparents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4 showing why do students involve in indiscipline**

The findings show that most students involve in indiscipline to challenge the teacher’s authority. Among those students who live with both parents, sixty (60) believe that students want to enjoy themselves for instance some respondents from mixed school F in Flacq admitted that they are in a quest for “Nissaa” (merry-making) or to “be cool man!!”. Some students pretend to know everything about the subject and sometimes even challenge the teacher. One student from school G in Curepipe stated that “nu fini fer ban topic la dans lecons, nu pa nécessaire suivre dan klas” [we have already covered these topics in tuition; there is no need to follow the class]. Another group of students from the boy’s school J in Belle Rose confessed that “nu pa capav concentré si nu pa tap ene siro!!” [We cannot concentrate if we do not get our dose (wine/drugs)!!]

When the students of school H, located in an Urban area were asked why they misbehave in class they replied

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12 Ibid (3)
“zot capave empeche nu mangé dan klas mais li pa korek ki nu bizin res assizé ek pa koz ek nu ban camarades. Klas la vine tro boring lerla” [they can prohibit us from eating in the class but it is unreasonable to prohibit us from leaving our seats and talking with our classmates. It is too boring not to talk during the lesson].

Educators and the administrative staff from the mixed schools have reported the boys of form V usually try to entice/influence young girls of forms II to III into trivial love matters and a security officer from school F noted that “souvent nu trap ban tifi garçon derrière buissons p fer bannes scenes indescent lerla nu pren zot nu amene kot recter” [we often find boys and girls flirting behind bushes and bring them to the attention of the rector]

Some students believe that the demise of one or both parents can eventually disrupt the stability of the child. One girl from a rural area in the North from the private school B, who lives in a single parent family, told me secretly that “Après la mort mo papa, mo mama ine bizin ale travail dan l’usine. Tous les jours après lekol, mo ale travaye dan ene salon coiffeur. mo ena encore trois ti ser, mo bizin aide zot” [After the death of my father, my mother has to work in a factory, every day after school hours I go to work in a hairdressing salon, I have three more little sisters, I need to help them].

There is a general feeling of insecurity among teachers where students defy their authority and challenge them in class especially in the so-called star schools where the students have a feeling of superiority. The rectors also admitted that due to regular transfer of educators to schools which are usually very distant from their residence leaves the latter distressed and not motivated at work. Also, it has been reported by most educators and rectors of the different schools that the first term is usually the most difficult one concerning indiscipline rather that the next two terms. The reason advanced is that students take time to get acquainted to both each other and the teacher’s mode of teaching.

Student behaviour is usually the outcome of the upbringing and parenting styles. Many parents are swaying from their responsibilities and are the least concerned about their children’s whereabouts after school hours as they are busy working or involved in other business.

The existing measures to combat the problem of indiscipline advanced by rectors are disciplinary committees where both staff, members of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA)\(^\text{13}\) and concerned parents would discuss over the problem; rustication or arrest, call the parents at school or remarks in the student’s copybooks to be signed by the parents. The rectors explained that very often when students are punished in the form of ‘arrest’ that is they have to stay after school hours; the parents report to school complaining that their child has missed tuition! So, instead of supporting the school’s measure to combat indiscipline they do not cooperate but instead, support their children.

Moreover, when parents are called at school concerning their child’s misbehavior, they never turn up claiming they are very busy at work and this attitude encourages their children who are the least concerned about the rules and regulations of the school. In some schools situated in the suburbs of urban areas, cases of deviant behaviour is often more serious, for instance students fight among themselves breaking their arms or legs, or serious conflicts with the management such as bringing addictive drugs (heroine, marijuana or even alcohol) to school or a girl student has accused the educator of rape or sexual advances where the police has to intervene.

Several laws exist about how to deal with anti social behaviour which has now become a major concern for communities but working it out is not always as easy as it might seem. For instance, the Child Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare and Consumer Protection (MWCFPC) has specialised staff to protect children under the article 3, section 14 of the Child Protection Act (CPA). The ‘Brigade pour la protection des Mineurs’ has also been reinforced to ensure a close monitoring of all suspicious places and they often undergo ‘crack down’ operations. In 2006 and 2007, the brigade organised a number of lectures, conducted in schools, in order to sensitize children in primary and secondary school and individuals in various

\(^{13}\) PTA forms part of most schools, comprised of both parents and teachers, aims to look at the school’s activities and day to day running.
community youth centres, to the issue of child abuse, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

However, several complaints have emerged from the Ombudsperson for children (OC) and other stakeholders that the actual legislations are not being implemented, for the problem lies in a lack of coordination between the police, the different Non Governmental Organisations (NGO’s) concerned, the health services, Ministry of Women’s Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare and Consumer Protection (MWCFCP). Following a reduced sense of commitment either from their family, community or society, the students suffer from a lack of moral values, traditions and culture which may further lead them to criminality. The severity of antisocial behaviour patterns also is also associated with an increased risk for police contacts and arrests. The best that can be done for children and youth with behavioural problems is to keep them engaged in school, where educators can develop their skills, maintain a positive influence, and prevent involvement with disruptive groups during school hours (Walker et al., 1995).

Indiscipline is less prevalent in private schools and Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools when compared to the state secondary schools; and the main reason advanced by educators and students in these schools is a good management and severe sanctions taken against those who misbehave. Different forms of violence such as fighting and inflicting injury to their friends, although quite rare, were noticed in some cases. It is also wise to note that teachers feel disempowered and de-motivated because of both disproportionate student population and undisciplined students, which affects considerably the teaching and learning process and because of the lack of support and guidance from relevant authorities.

The disciplinary problems encountered by the staff of the state administered schools are mainly due to the lack of authority and power of both the management and the educators. The rectors complained about not being able to take severe sanctions against students who misbehave as each and every case has to be referred to the ministry for follow-up. The latter also often ignores the recommendations of the different schools with respect to expulsions, arguing that they should first exhaust the guidance and counselling process. The different cases are referred to educational psychologists’ who would have an in-depth study of the situation.

Conclusion

Anti social youngsters are at serious risk for a number of negative outcomes namely school dropouts, vocational maladjustment, drug and alcohol abuse, relationship problems, and higher hospitalization and mortality rates. As illustrated in this study, juvenile delinquency or antisocial behaviour covers a multitude of different violations of legal, social norms, ranging from minor offences to serious crimes committed by young people (Loeber and Farrington, 2001). Poverty, social exclusion and unemployment often cause marginalisation, and young people who are marginalised are more susceptible to maintaining delinquent behaviour. If delinquency policies are to be truly effective, higher priority must be given to the marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.

Our society’s social, cultural and economic problems are spilling into our schools. They are greatly complicating school’s central task of educating students safely and effectively. However, even though many young people come from chaotic, coercive lives, many youth from well to do families as well are found to be misbehaving and indulging in antisocial acts at school. Our country’s educational system which is also a means of social control is not fulfilling its role and is undergoing many changes. The study shows that indiscipline and anti social behavior intrudes greatly on the schooling system which has the main objective of socializing and preparing the child to be better citizens in the future. A holistic approach should be adopted to tackle the issue of indiscipline and antisocial behavior in our secondary schools.

14 The private schools are non state schools which are run under the aegis of the PSSA (Private Secondary Schools Authority) which is a Para Statal body
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