



ARSON ATTACKS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE SURVIVORS: A CASE OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Arson in high schools is a global phenomenon. In Kenya, the history goes back to 1908. To date, no solution has been found. In June and July 2016, more than 130 high schools were set on fire and this elicited a national outcry. Fires destroy property, death, and psychological trauma to those affected and cost the economy millions of shillings in repairs, relocation to other facilities, replacement of lost items, and reconstruction. The primary objective of the research was to determine the relationship between safety awareness, preparedness, psychological adjustment of the survivors of arson attacks in high schools in Nairobi County and to determine how this relationship is influenced by the manifestation of symptomatology and management of symptomatology and psychological adjustment. Specifically, the study was governed by the following objectives: to determine the relationship between safety awareness, preparedness, and psychological adjustment; assess the relationship between safety awareness, preparedness, and the manifestation of symptomatology, investigate the relationship between the manifestation of symptomatology and psychological adjustment; find out the moderating influence of management of symptomatology on the relationship between the manifestation of symptomatology adjustment. This research adopted a descriptive survey design to execute it. Snowball sampling technique was applied. The study population will comprise of high schools including students. The study will use self-administered questionnaires for students to collect data. Quantitative data will be analyzed by descriptive statistics and inferential statistics then statistical package for social sciences. The hypothesis will be analyzed by Pearson product-moment, Correlations (r), and stepwise regression technique. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were read, paying attention to ideas, documents, and concepts from respondents. Fieldnotes were edited and written based on content and theme and analyzed accordingly. The study adopted a social support theory. The theory states that the support an individual survivor receives from the social networks boosts the individual survivors' resilience and promotes health wellness and psychological adjustment. There is a relationship between social support and individual health. The outcome of the study will have implications for policy and theory. On policy, the study helped to identify gaps in the current understanding of arson survivors in schools and will assist education planners, administrators, and those responsible for education in the formulation of an adequate policy framework. In practice, the study will serve as the basis for future researchers, academics, managers, and individual survivors. Parents will benefit consistently in handling the youths, in turn, the youths will understand how to maintain peace and order, maintain an environment conducive for learning. Finally, the findings of the study will be able to support and extend studies on social support, health wellbeing, and functioning.

Keywords: Safety Awareness, Preparedness, Management Of Symptomatology, Arson Attacks

Introduction

Arson attacks in Kenya have occurred in high schools since 1908. To date, no solution has been found. It has been established that students' use of arson in schools reflects the crisis in society. In this regard, there may be no end in sight. The researcher recommended reviews of the students living conditions and school's infrastructure (Cooper,2014) The months of June and July 2016 alone saw unprecedented arson attacks in High Schools. The Country experienced over 130 High Schools set on fire (National Crime Research Centre, 2016). Arson is a traumatic event and may precipitate PTSD in survivors. The researchers at NCRC, (2016) noted that viewing images of arson repeatedly will overcome one's nervous system. This will leave one disabled and powerless, especially since the event is caused by human beings and lingers on for a long time, such as consequences of arson. Despite known consequences of the punishment such as imprisonment, fines, or both in addition to being denied a job by the state through a thorough vetting, the arsonists still commit the crime (National Crime Research Center, 2016). Similar studies further established that a relationship existed between substance abuse amongst the youths and their parents' level of education and socio-economic status (SES) (NACADA, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

High schools in Kenya have continued to experience arson attacks which began at Maseno School in 1908. More than 100 years ago to date, a solution to this scourge is yet to be found. Moreover, nothing is known about several survivors who tried to make their lives sufferable. Arson attacks are traumatic events that leave survivors, most of them youths, to experience the manifestation of symptomatology, which is debilitating to an individual survivor. However, this, may go away or linger for a long time and It impairs mental health wellness, and functioning. Those survivors needed psychological adjustment to regain their normal mental health wellbeing and functioning (Seaton,2009).

This study targets the survivors and the uniqueness of June and July 2016 when arson attacks were sporadic and unprecedented in the history of Kenya. In two months alone, more than 130 high schools were set on fire. The stakeholders were overwhelmed and shaken. The severity and the frequency of the fires attracted national debates, with local communities and other stakeholders searching for causes of the fires and solution to the menace that left thousands of survivors with psychological trauma. This problem has stained the image and integrity of the entire education sector, by and large, the whole country. Arson attacks cost the economy millions of shillings on repairs, relocation of survivors to other facilities, replacement of destroyed items, insurance costs, and reconstruction. During the disturbances, no learning in schools takes place and the schools suffer the loss of goodwill. However, the psychological consequences of survivors may not be apparent immediately. (Natural Crime Research Center, 2016).

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the relationship between safety awareness, preparedness, and psychological adjustment of the survivors of arson attacks in high schools in Nairobi County.
2. To assess the relationship between safety awareness, preparedness, and the manifestation of symptomatology of the Survivors of arson attacks in high schools in Nairobi County.
3. To investigate the relationship between the manifestation of symptomatology and psychological adjustment of the survivors of arson attacks in high schools in Nairobi County.
4. To find out the moderating influence of management of symptomatology on the relationship between the manifestation of symptomatology and psychological adjustment of the survivors of an arson attack in high schools in Nairobi County.

Literature Survey

A study on safety awareness and preparedness in secondary schools in Kenya established that most schools did not have the facilities and that students and teachers were ill-equipped to handle disasters (Kipng'eno and Kyalo,2009) However fear is the foundation of safety if people did not fear for the unknown, they would not take precautions (Tertullian 160-200). The philosopher supported the views of Kipngeno and Kyalo, (2009). Meanwhile, Jensen (2010) views studies of Kipngeno and Kyalo (2009) and Tertullian (160-200) on how well one needs to be prepared for possible arson attacks. The researcher termed safety awareness and preparedness as a strategy for resilience that promotes psychological adjustment.

Safety preparedness is also accepted as an emergency preparedness. The purpose is to limit the impact of the disaster through knowledge and involvement to save a life. Studies conducted on citizen national survey in the USA established that a large number of populations was unprepared for emergencies. The researchers further recommended studies in measuring relationships in personal emergency preparedness and to determine levels of predicting risks (Liu et al,2013). De Wolf (2004 identified 5 stages in planning to respond to during an emergency, namely, pre-event rescue, inventory, recovery, and post-event

Methodology

Research Design

This research is a case study and applied a descriptive survey design to execute it. The survey design helped the researcher to meet the study objectives by collecting, measuring, and analyzing data. The design used the description to organize data into patterns that emerge during analysis. This analysis is the form of the structure of the research and the availability of diverse information (Orodho, 2013).

The population of the study

The population of interest was the form four students who completed their studies towards the end of 2019 in the high schools that experienced arson attacks during June and July 2016 within

Nairobi County. They are a total of 853 students (Table 2.11.2). They were four schools, 2 public boys boarding, 1 private boy boarding, and 01 mixed boys and girls public with girls boarding while boys as day students. They were among over 130 secondary schools that experienced arson attacks in Kenya in June and July 2016.

Table 1: Total Population of Students

Name And Type Of School	Number of Students		Female
	Male		
Boys High School(Public Boarding)	225		
Boys Boarding (Private Secondary School)	275		
Boys High School(Public Boarding)	185		
Mixed Boys And Girls (Public Girls Boarding And Boys Day)	(168)	114	54
Total	853		

Key:

- Public boys' high schools' boarding
- 1 private boy's high school boarding
- 1 public mixed boys day and girls boarding school

Data Collection

Data both primary and secondary was used in the study. Primary data was collected on self-administered questionnaires. A questionnaire will help the respondents to answer questions on safety awareness and preparedness, the manifestation of symptomatology management of symptomatology, and psychological adjustment which are the variables of the study. To explore more unknown thoughts from respondents, the researcher will employ both structured and unstructured questionnaire. For the success of this operation, the researcher will adopt a field study procedure (Mugenda&Mugenda,2003). Questionnaires for data collection are preferred in this type of research due to time-saving are easily dispensed to respondents spread across a large area and are easy to handle. This helps the respondents to attempt to answer every question (Spasford,2006; Phellas,2011).

Experimental Data Analysis

Analysis of gathered information began with editing the questionnaire for accuracy, cleaning, and coding. The information will then be entered on the spreadsheet and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Quantitative data were analyzed by applying descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency as a technique for closed-ended questions. Meanwhile, qualitative data was cleaned and organized into specific codes according to research questions and directives and grouped into various themes from which conclusions were drawn (Yadutta and Ngao,2006). The researcher applied inference rules to draw out a conclusion. For example, the objective was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation(r)

Results

This paper established that there is a positive relationship between safety awareness, preparedness, and psychological adjustment of the survivors of arson attacks in high schools in Nairobi County. The paper also established that the relationship between safety awareness Preparedness and the manifestation of symptomatology of the survivors of arson attacks in high schools in Nairobi County was a positive but weak correlation.

The results demonstrated that there was a positive relationship between the manifestation of symptomatology and psychological adjustment of the survivor of arson attacks in high schools in Nairobi County. The findings also showed that the management of symptomatology (physiological, psychological behavioral symptoms, and signs) positively affect the relationship between the manifestation of symptomatology and psychological adjustment of the survivors of arson attacks in Nairobi County.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Managers of education in the country must ensure that all high schools are equipped with safety awareness and preparedness apparatus. Unfortunately, many schools do not have important items like firefighting measures. Teachers and students are ill-prepared to handle fire in their schools. Where this equipment is available, it is either not serviceable, or few people know how it can be employed. In strangeness, however, some members of the school are not aware of its existence.

Secondly, principals, teachers, school counselors, and peer counselors must be on the lookout for students who exhibit symptoms and signs as a result of trauma with the view to addressing them and managing them at this point. Schools might consider what facilities are available, such as, recreation halls, sports and fields, and other extracurricular activities to promote healing. Strict discipline should be observed.

The government is responsible for enacting relevant legislation through the ministry of education that can protect the safety of individuals in the schools as it is responsible for the safety of its citizens. The individual in the school is responsible too for his/her safety and must be made accountable by signing the relevant regulations on entering the institutions to comply with them. In some countries, the USA, for example, has set the month of September every year for its citizens to rehearse security drills to stay alert for a disaster. Moreover, mental health directly impacts the development of the nation and must be given due recognition just like cancer day and others, with appropriate budgetary allocation to train enough psychiatrists and other health workers. Mental health should be destigmatized from the cultural belief of witchcraft. Some cultural practices such as torching houses to ethnic cleanse or exorcise evil spirit in displacing population or mob justice by necklacing victims, with impunity should be banned. Others such as initiation ceremonies of boys into manhood by serving them with alcoholic beverages initiate into becoming arsonists (Wanjala, 2013).

There is a need to employ chaplaincy services to enhance religious values, which emphasize non-criminality among communities in which schools are located, may play an important role in cases of arson attacks, and should be involved in the school's security arrangement. People who observe religious ordinances have a strong will to reject evil schemes. Indeed, social

support (community, church and government, and other social networks) enhances healing in trauma-exposed individuals. Support may come, for example, in monetary form or in kind. Units like the Nyumba Kumi Initiative and Harambees should be encouraged and strengthened.

Conclusions

This paper has investigated the relationship between safety awareness, preparedness, and psychological adjustment of the survivors of arson attacks in high schools in Kenya and determine how this relationship is influenced by the manifestation of symptomatology, management of symptomatology, and psychological adjustment. Researchers have established that arson attacks are traumatic events that leave survivors to experience the manifestation of symptomatology which is debilitating to an individual survivor. It impairs mental health wellness and functioning. These survivors will need psychological adjustment to regain their normal and function effectively in a world of people.

The recommendations offered are based on the findings and are by no means the only ones. They took into consideration the fact that indeed arson attacks in high schools are traumatic events and cause mental health illness. This helps to influence the manner the survivors think about the traumatic event and how this resource helps them to cope by protecting them from harmful consequences of stress.

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