

## **Assessment of Effectiveness of “Incredible Years Program” Compared To the Traditional Program in Behaviour Modification among Juvenile Rehabilitees in Nairobi, Kenya**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the ‘Incredible Years Program’ (IYP) in reducing juvenile delinquency in Kenya. Juvenile delinquency in Kenya is on the increase. The number of children in conflict with law has risen significantly from 483 in 2006 to 927 in 2010. This necessitated the assessment of the effectiveness of this program. There was therefore need to conduct a research to determine whether the ‘Incredible Years’ Program training for house-parents and teachers is effective in the rehabilitation of juveniles in Kenya. It is for this reason that the current research embarked on trying out the ‘Incredible Years Program’ with a hope that it will improve juvenile rehabilitation services in Kenya and reduce the tendency of children falling back into crime. The design in this study was Quasi-Experimental research design. The target population in the study composed of all the children, house-masters/mistresses and teachers of Kenyan Rehabilitation Schools. Purposive sampling design was used in sampling procedure. A sample of hundred and fifty (150) children from two (2) Rehabilitation Schools took part in the study. Seventy five (75) from Dagoretti Girls’ Rehabilitation School and seventy five (75) from Kabete Boys’ Rehabilitation School. Both Rehabilitation Schools are in Nairobi. The two Rehabilitation Schools cater for medium-risk children. Medium-risk offences include being in bad company, being in possession of drugs and stealing. Low-risk offences are non-criminogenic in nature like dropping out of school. High-risk child offenders come in with murder, robbery with violence, arson and drug trafficking. Four House-parents and four teachers were also part of the sample, to make a total of 158. Two instruments were used to collect data. They included an adapted Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1999) which was filled by house-parents and teachers and an Observation Schedule filled by the researcher. A pilot study was also conducted in order to validate the research instruments. Data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations. The study findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between the ‘Incredible Years Program’ and behaviour change among the rehabilitees. There were significant differences between ‘Incredible Years Program’ and the Traditional Rehabilitation Methods and there was no significant relationship between effect of ‘Incredible Years Program’ and gender of the rehabilitees. Conclusively, results show that the ‘Incredible Years Program’ is effective in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents which was also indicated by other studies cited. This study has revealed salient features influencing rehabilitation outcomes that are amenable to change in terms of rehabilitation policy. If ‘Incredible Year’s Program’ is introduced in Kenya, the policy makers should ensure that it is implemented fully. The researcher recommends the following for further research: study on the behavior of children in the Juvenile Remand Homes, The role of the family in influencing conduct problems and the type of learning climate and its impact on offending.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Juvenile delinquency in Kenya is on the increase. The number of children in conflict with law has risen significantly since 2006 (Department of Children’s Services Database, 2010). The wave of unrest in Kenyan secondary schools in early 2000 is an indication of a serious problem of juvenile delinquency that is, children in conflict with law. Juvenile delinquents are children who commit crime (Children Act, 2001). The word ‘criminal’ is not used on children but on adults who commit crimes. Children commit astonishing crimes ranging from petty theft, drug abuse and trafficking, robbery with violence, arson and even murder. Urgent action needs to be taken to address this problem. The Government spends huge amounts of money in taking care of juveniles in our correctional facilities yet its effectiveness is minimal due to lack of adequate personnel with superior skills in handling juvenile delinquents. When juvenile delinquents are arrested by the police, they are charged in the Children’s Courts, whereas those who commit murder are charged in High Court. They are represented in court by the Director Children Services (DCS). They are also represented by Non-governmental organizations like The Child Rights Advisory Documentation and Legal Center (CRADLE) and The Child Legal Action Network (CLAN). According to the Children Act (2001), a child is anyone below the age of 18 years. Children cannot be sentenced to death even if

they have committed murder; this is stipulated in The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Treaty of 1989 of which Kenya is a signatory.

Juvenile delinquents are committed to Rehabilitation Schools for a minimum of six months and a maximum of three years depending on the type of crime committed. Rehabilitation Schools are the former Approved Schools; the later name was changed in 1999 because of the stigma attached to it (Ndunda, 1978). The society resented these children causing them more psychological harm hence the change of name to a child-friendly one so as to increase the acceptability of these juveniles. The first juvenile correctional institution in Kenya was the Kabete Approved School now the Kabete Rehabilitation School opened in 1910 to cater for youth who had been imprisoned for failure to register themselves for identity cards and those who did not carry the cards, (Mugo, Musembi & Kange’the 2006). After Kabete, many other schools were established for example, Dagoretti Approved School (1945), Wamumu Approved School (1958), (The Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: Approved School Annual report 1958). Thereafter, the rehabilitation schools served the purpose of behavior modification of juvenile delinquents. There are only nine Juvenile Rehabilitation Schools in Kenya. The ‘Incredible parent, child and teacher training program’ also referred to as ‘Incredible Years Program’ has successfully been used in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in the USA, Europe and Asia with extraordinary results.

The ‘Incredible Years Program’, developed by a psychologist Dr. Carolyn Webster-Stratton in the USA in 1980 is an evidence-based program that has been shown in over nine randomized control group trials to prevent, reduce, and treat conduct problems of children (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003). ‘Incredible Years Program’ is a set of comprehensive, multifaceted, and developmentally based program targeting children between ages two and seventeen together with their parents or teachers. Specifically ‘Incredible Years Program’ involve, parents limiting their use of coercive child management strategies (like, yelling, hitting, and verbal aggression) and increasing their use of positive, supportive responses (for example. encouragement, praise, and physically positive behaviours).

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Studies in Kenya (Wakanyua, 1995; Maru, 1998; Lavera, 2002 & Kinyua, 2004) have shown that the rehabilitation methods used in Kenya provide temporary solution to juvenile delinquency leading to recidivism, which is a research gap. These studies also show that staffs in Kenyan rehabilitation schools lack the necessary skills and training to effectively rehabilitate juvenile delinquents.

The traditional methods of rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents have proved to have many gaps resulting to children committing crime again.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to find out the effectiveness of the ‘Incredible Years Program’ in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in Kenya.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study was based on the following objectives:

- (i) To identify the types of conduct behaviour problems presented by children admitted in rehabilitation schools.
- (ii) To find out the teachers’ and house-parents’ practices towards juvenile rehabilitees.
- (iii) To establish the behaviour change of children.
- (iv) To compare the behaviour of children in the ‘Incredible Years Program’ and those in Traditional Rehabilitation Method Program.
- (v) To find out if there is sex differences in response to Incredible Years Program.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- (i) What conduct behaviour problems do the children in the study have?
- (ii) Is ‘Incredible Years Program’ effective on teachers’ and house-parents’ practices towards juvenile rehabilitees.
- (ii) Is ‘The Incredible Years Program’ effective on behaviour change of children?
- (iii) Is there comparison in behaviour of children in the ‘Incredible Years Program’ and those in Traditional Rehabilitation Program?
- (iv) Are there sex differences in children’s behaviour response to the ‘Incredible Years Program’?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study may assist staff working in the Department of Children Services to rehabilitate child offenders effectively. For policy makers, the study will link policy decisions to key performance indicators at the implementation level. It is expected that the findings of this study will improve rehabilitation services in Kenyan Rehabilitation Schools and also enable follow-up studies to be carried out by other researchers. The findings may strengthen parents' involvement in children's school experiences to promote their academic and social skills and reduce delinquent behaviours. The findings may also strengthen children's social and emotional competencies, such as understanding and communicating feelings, using effective problem-solving strategies, managing anger, practicing friendship and conventional skills, and behaving appropriately in the classroom. The findings may strengthen teachers' classroom management strategies, promoting children's pro-social behavior and school readiness, and reducing children's classroom aggression and non-cooperation with peers and teachers.

### **1.6 Assumption of the Study**

- (i) That all medium- risk child offenders would easily be rehabilitated by the Incredible Years Program.
- (ii) That the information given in the questionnaire was true. This assumed maximum validity of the given information.
- (iii) That the house-parents would put into practice the new parenting skills of Incredible Years Program.

### **1.7 Delimitation and Limitation of the Study**

Limitation of the study included money and time required for the study. The IYP Training kit is very expensive. The program also required ample time in order to record the desired behaviour accurately and consistently, including specific time interval and duration of the behaviour. The inability to prevent children from the experimental and the control group from meeting in class and social places was another limitation of the study.

Delimitation of the study included: delinquency is a multifaceted concept that keeps changing. Though efforts were made to validate the instruments, there remained a degree to which one could not guarantee that only the targeted behaviour and exact aspect of delinquency was measured, and that all was captured. The study was done in Nairobi province only excluding other provinces.

## **II. Methodology of the Study**

The study adopted a Quasi Experimental design using a pre-test and post-test design and control/experimental group design. A quasi-experiment is a scientific research method primarily used in social sciences to explain relationships and/or clarify why certain events happen (MacDonald & O'Brien, 2008). Quasi-experimental means “as if or almost a true experiment”. The design however lacks absolute control of the experimental design including random assignment of subjects to the Control and Experimental groups (Dawson, 1997; Barry & Joan, 1997 & Trochim, 2006). The design also lacks absolute control of extraneous variables and the ability to manipulate the environment. This design was most appropriate for this study because it allowed the children to be observed in their natural settings.

Pre-test and post-test treatment provided a general overview of the behaviour of the children in the control and experimental groups. The ‘Incredible Years Training Program’ (IYP) guidelines also provided a more reliable picture of achievement and was likely to allow for follow-up to be made after this study by other researchers. In addition, the IYP has an inbuilt control system because it allowed for observation through experimentation. It was therefore possible to find out the impact of the ‘Incredible Years Training Program’ over time, by comparing the behaviour outcomes of children who underwent the Traditional Rehabilitation Program and those who underwent IYP.

The independent variable in this study was the type of rehabilitation program and it had two levels; Incredible Years Program and Traditional Rehabilitation Program. Components of the Incredible Years Program included; videotape viewing which helped the house-parents to specifically, limit their use of coercive child management strategies like (yelling, hitting, verbal aggression) and increase their use of positive, supportive responses like encouragement, praise, and physically positive behaviours like hugging or sitting next to the child. The emphasis is on one to one interaction with the child. The component of Traditional rehabilitation program in Kenya is group counseling.

The dependent variables were the behavioural outcomes of the children like obedience/disobedience, kindness/unkindness, considerate/unconsiderate helpfulness/ unhelpfulness, poor concentration/good concentration or easily scared/courageous.

Purposive sampling was used to sample two institutions in Nairobi Province. Only two Rehabilitation Schools out of four were sampled because the study was very rigorous and needed ample time and closer supervision by the researcher to collect accurate data. Both institutions sampled were in Nairobi in order to control for the environment.

Data for this research was collected by two instruments. An adopted “Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire” by Goodman, 1999 which is part of the IYP completed by house-parents and teachers to rate the children’s behaviour and an observation schedule constructed by the researcher for recording the children’s and house-parents’ behaviour at specific time intervals.

A pilot study was conducted to pretest the research instruments and procedures. This was done on fifteen (15) children from a medium-risk level rehabilitation school away from Nairobi specifically in Kakamega. It was necessary to do the pilot study this far to avoid contamination. The pilot study gave pointers on how to improve the validity and reliability of the instruments

### **III. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion**

- Results from the analysis of objectives show that the prevailing situation before the introduction of the ‘Incredible Years Program’ was that the differences among the Experimental and Control Group of rehabilitees were minimal.
- After the Incredible Years Training workshop given to teachers and house-parents and subsequent testing of hypotheses one and two, it was evident that there were significant differences between ‘Incredible Years Program’ and the Traditional Rehabilitation Methods. The rehabilitees in the Experimental Group improved by shading off negative behaviours and portraying more, stable and consistent pro-social, positive behaviours.
- The results concur with known authorities and proponents in ‘Incredible Years Program’ that; despite their diversity, parenting programs have proven effective for behaviour problems and are the treatment of choice for conduct disorders (Barlow, 2005; Mabe, Turner, & Josephson, 2005).
- The cumulative data was analyzed using quantitative analysis. The study on the ‘Effect of Incredible Years Program compared to the Traditional Rehabilitation Methods showed that the IYP is more effective in the rehabilitation of juvenile rehabilitees than the TRM.
- (i) Regarding rehabilitees behaviour , overall results show that after the ‘Incredible Years Training, the Experimental Group did much better in output of pro-social, positive behaviours than the Control Group.
- To ensure consistency of positive behaviours in juvenile rehabilitees, IYP training needs to be done on a regular basis, to avoid IYP having reduced effect over time.
- Results from the analysis of objectives show that the prevailing situation before the introduction of the ‘Incredible Years Program’ was that the differences among the Experimental and Control Group of rehabilitees were minimal.
- Positive and nurturing house-parenting analysis showed that the means of Positive and Nurturing House-Parenting in Experimental Group was higher compared to the Control Group.
- (iii) Behaviour change of rehabilitees showed that, there was a significant relationship between the ‘Incredible Years Program’ and behaviour change among the rehabilitees. After the IYP treatment, children showed less deviant behaviour.
- (iv) Comparison of Incredible Years Program’ and Traditional Rehabilitation Program showed that the IYP was more effective in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquency than the later.
- (v) Gender difference in response to IYP showed that: there were no significant gender differences in behaviour change among the boys and girls in response to the ‘Incredible Years Program.’

### **IV. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The quantitative findings pointed out to the importance of juveniles being shown acceptance by the society, this speeded up their rehabilitation. This supports research, demonstrating the link between positive parental involvement and positive child outcomes. Specifically ‘Incredible Years Program’ involve, parents limiting their use of coercive child management strategies (like, yelling, hitting, and verbal aggression) and increasing their use of positive, supportive responses (for example. encouragement, praise, and physically positive behaviors).

Kazdin (1995) has shown that, ‘Incredible Years Program’ can significantly reduce the development and persistence of conduct problems and improve the quality of parent-child relationships. Kazdin (1997) also notes that, people exposed to harsh parenting beginning in childhood are more likely than others to be aggressive, commit murder, rape, robbery and arson.

## **Recommendations**

The present findings offer a number of directions for juvenile rehabilitators and other stakeholders in juvenile rehabilitation. This study has revealed salient features influencing rehabilitation outcomes that are amenable to change in terms of rehabilitation policy.

### **Recommendation to Policy Makers**

- Policy makers need to ensure that after policies are formulated they are followed to the letter. If ‘Incredible Year’s Program’ is introduced in Kenya, the policy makers should ensure that it is implemented fully.
- The government should provide opportunities for short term and long term training on ‘Incredible Year’s Program’ for all personnel working with juvenile delinquents.

### **5.4.2 Recommendation to Rehabilitation Schools Managers**

- Rehabilitation Schools Managers and administrators should be aware of the need for regular training on this program for their rehabilitation staff. This will facilitate faster rehabilitation of the juveniles under their care.
- In order to motivate house-parents and teachers in rehabilitation schools, they should not only be sponsored to attend ‘Incredible Year’s Program’ training but that those whose children under their care that experience less behavioural recidivism per a given duration of time, should be rewarded as an incentive.
- Managers of rehabilitation schools should access Juvenile Rehabilitation policy documents that specify the treatment of juvenile and ensure they comply with the standards of best practices.

### **5.4.3 Recommendation to Parents and other Juvenile Rehabilitation Stakeholders**

- Parents and other stakeholders should be taught the principle of the ‘Incredible Year’s Program’ and encouraged to apply it. This included positive gestures like hugging the children or sitting next to the child should be used. In case of misbehavior, prompt punishment should come in handy, but the child should be made to understand that what he/she has done is what is wrong but the child is still loved.
- All teachers and house-parents in rehabilitation schools should be trained in IYP.
- Parents should supervise their children effectively to avoid them getting into bad company. Rehabilitated juveniles who are placed back into the society should have constant supervision by parents to avoid them falling back into criminal activities.
- It is recommended that parents should be encouraged to work hand in hand with the teachers in order to develop a positive approach to children who are vulnerable to falling into crime by engaging crime-preventive strategies. Parents should not base love and acceptance of their children on children’s behavior for they come to associate love and acceptance with self-worth. Parents should also encourage cooperative behaviour among their children as this can be useful in promoting pro-social behaviour.

Other recommendations for further research include;

- The study on ‘assessment of Incredible Program’ compared to the Traditional Rehabilitation Methods in the rehabilitation of juvenile rehabilitees in Kenya only covered selected divisions in Nairobi. It has provided the basis for further studies in other divisions not covered, districts, or provinces in Kenya to see if the trend is comparable.
- The various conduct problems should be observed on the children under different categories for example conduct disorder can be further categorized as physical and psychological.

The following studies can be undertaken for further research:

- Types of conduct problems presented by girls admitted in Rehabilitation Schools.
- Types of conduct problems presented by boys admitted in Rehabilitation Schools.
- The effects of Incredible Year’s Program on frequency of girl’s misbehaviour.
- The effects of incredible Year’s Program on frequency of boy’s misbehaviour.