

Examining the School Climate Influence on Jamaican Secondary School Students: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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Abstract

The article synthesises the literature on the socioecological factors within the school climate - quality and character of school life (Cohen, 2009) influencing adolescents' resilience. The review focuses on social relationships and the mechanisms used for teaching and learning practices. Resilience is a positive development outcome resulting from a triadic interactive process between the adolescent, the internal capacity, and the socioecological factors within the environment (Ungar, 2008). Changes imposed by COVID-19 on teaching and learning practices assumedly altered the school climate and are known to impact adolescents' psychosocial well-being. Transforming the school climate at its minimum will require improving social relationships, communicating expectations, and creating a school environment where students will feel safe. Giving students autonomy through active and productive engagement in decisions that affect their developmental outcomes is critical for success. Expansion of this study requires applying a methodological approach that allows for students' perspectives of the school climate, careful measurement of their resilience levels and lived experiences of students and other school personnel.

Keywords: adolescent, school climate, resilience, COVID-19

Introduction

Investing in human capital is crucial for society to thrive. Nations must support their citizens by addressing vulnerabilities and risks. For this reason, the United Nations encourages countries to develop strategies that empower individuals through education and health systems and social support to overcome and cope with environmental challenges (United Nations, 2014).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a recent and widespread impact on the global population. It has affected all sectors, including social, economic, health, and education. Schools and businesses

worldwide had to close to prevent the spread of the virus, causing a halt in the teaching and learning process (Peng & Simpson-Bell, 2022). Education being a fundamental right for all children plays a crucial role in shaping their characters, attitudes, behaviours, and choices. Therefore, countries' education sectors launched digital learning platforms to continue the teaching and learning process (Parker et al., 2021). Jamaica was no exception; it resorted to remote teaching and learning practices through audiovisual and digital media (Jamaica Education Transformation, 2021).

Despite efforts to ensure continuous teaching and learning, the United Nations (2022) has observed an increase in the number of children not attending school. This is particularly true for those from disadvantaged households who lack the necessary learning tools to advance their education. Generally children, particularly adolescents in the midst of changes, face social challenges and require additional support and appropriate resources to achieve positive outcomes. Therefore, adapting to changes within the school sometimes requires more than individual effort. As Goldstein and Brooks (2005) suggested, a supportive, engaging, and nurturing school environment is necessary to foster children's development and resilience.

The concept of resilience is often defined as an individual's ability to bounce back, adapt, or adjust to adversity, trauma, and crisis (Baron, 2002; Masten & Garmezy, 1985). However, Ungar (2008) expands the definition of resilience to include

both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, p. 225).

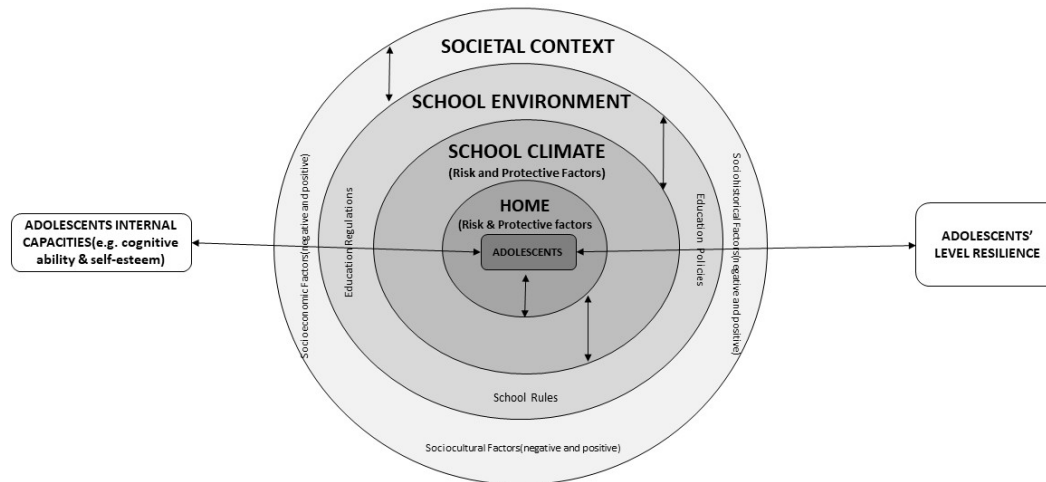
In order to promote school transformation, it is important to consider the school climate from the perspectives of both students and teachers (Thapa, Cohen, & D'Alessandro, 2012). Cohen (2013) defines school climate as the overall quality and nature of school life (p. 413), encompassing everything from interpersonal relationships and norms to teaching, learning, leadership practices, values, goals, and school structure (Cohen, 2013, p. 413). By analysing the school climate and its impact on students' resilience, we can transform the school environment to more sustainably contribute to Jamaica's national goal of empowering its citizens to reach their full potential through human capital development (PIOJ, 2009, p. xv).

Conceptual Framework

The basis of this framework is the Ungar Ecological Model of Resilience (Ungar, 2011), the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and tenets from the Positive Youth Development Model (Lerner et al., 2000). As the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Model suggests, an individual's development is shaped by the complex interplay between their environment and various socio-ecological factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Therefore, the socioecological factors, such as, sociohistorical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic elements influence the adolescent well-being and development. These factors impact how adolescents interpret their interactions with others and how they view themselves. This interpretation is guided by their social cognition, self-competencies, beliefs, and the valence of environmental variables that create either protective or risk factors (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Bandura, 1997). The school climate also plays a critical role in shaping an adolescent's resilience, that is, their ability to navigate their present circumstantial conditions and negotiate the available resources (Ungar, 2008)—in short, thrive. This condition is likely when positive teacher and peer relationships, clear expectations, disciplinary practices, and protective mechanisms that create a sense of safety are provided. This, in turn, enables adolescents to function productively within their socioecological space (Ungar, 2012) (See Figure 1).

School Transformation: Jamaica

Sustainable Development Goal #4 implores a shift of conventional education delivery with a greater focus on inclusion and equitable quality education contingent on the teaching and learning process. The emphasis on improving intellectual capacity too often distracts from the holistic approach that affords quality education which expands and bolsters the personality, inherent talents, and abilities that enable adequate human functioning. Holistically, education contributes

Figure 1*Conceptual Framework (adapted, Bronfenbrenner (1979))*

to more significant developmental attainments (Aldridge, McChesney, & Afari, 2019).

Over the past few decades, the agenda to transform the education system to embrace a positive developmental approach has been seen in some countries. For example, Finland and Ireland reformed their educational systems using an inclusive stakeholder approach to focus on well-being as part of the school curriculum (Leppäkari & Oy, 2013). Finland addressed children's well-being using teacher leadership to build children's resilience (Hargreaves et al., 2007), while Ireland applied mental health strategies within the school system to transform their young people by enabling the development of personal life skills (Power et al., 2008). Overall, these countries recognised the need for improving socioemotional competencies as an "impetus for cultural, social and economic development" (Knight et al., 2007, p. 8).

Countries within the Caribbean have initiated this process—Jamaica is an example of one of these countries. Jamaica's recognition of the relevance and importance of education in nation-building and human capital development has led the government to employ

transformative efforts to revamp and align the education system to the National Vision: "Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families, and do business" (Education Task Force, 2004; PIOJ 2009, p. xv; Jamaica Education Transformation Commission, 2021).

Albeit the Jamaican education system has been influenced by colonial legacies, the government has taken measures to address inequality. At the secondary education level, upgrades were made to schools by rebranding them as high schools (Ministry of Education, 2021) and providing free access to education for all secondary school-age children (Tingling, 2015). However, despite these efforts, students' performance in upgraded schools remained relatively low (Knight et al., 2007). Traditional schools, which have a pre-existing supportive network, offer greater educational support and opportunities compared to upgraded or non-traditional schools (Jamaica Information Service, 2006).

According to the National Education Inspectorate (2015), there are concerns about the quality and effectiveness of education in the system due to persistent inequality at the primary and secondary levels. The COVID-19 pandemic has

worsened these inadequacies, inequity, and inequality, emphasising the need to address these issues urgently (Jamaica Education Transformation Commission, 2021).

In 2020, the Government recognised the challenges schools and students face due to the pandemic. Prompt action was taken using audiovisual (radio and television) and online platforms for teaching and learning (Jamaica Education Transformation, 2021).

However, due to socioeconomic disparities, some students did not have access to the necessary learning tools, impacting their educational progress (Blackman, 2021). This condition coupled with the lack of social interaction, has influenced their learning and the rate of their development. UNESCO (2020) highlighted the setback in achieving equality and access to education due to the issues associated with COVID-19. The social environment of schools plays a vital role in learning and development (Goldstein & Brooks, 2005). Essentially, developing the whole child is crucial because children spend a significant amount of time at school learning and interacting with peers and teachers, which greatly influences their behaviour (Eccles et al., 2011). In essence, the quality of a student's experience at school affects their social, emotional, and physical well-being.

Schools as Supportive Institutions

School and School Climate

Education is a basic human right emphasised in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It promotes creating a tolerant, respectful, and appreciative atmosphere for human differences in schools (United Nations, 1990). Schools are critical in preparing children for society and adulthood by fostering their intellectual and social abilities through educational regulations, structured curricula, and socialisation (Education Reform, 2013; Eccles et al., 2011). According to Eccles et al. (2011), schooling links various ecological

system levels, which affect human behaviour. Notably, educational policies and regulations are shaped by societal norms, practices, and culture, which further influence how schools operate, including social interactions, teaching and learning practices, and leadership.

Ungar (2012) argues that the education system allows students to adapt positively to challenges and become well-rounded citizens. Cohen (2009) stresses the significance of implementing measures to eliminate bullying and punitive disciplinary actions, ensuring healthy educational experiences. Therefore, it is crucial to develop age-appropriate programmes that recognise individual capacities and competencies, offering appropriate care, resources, and opportunities to promote positive adolescent development (Landgren, 2005; Lerner et al., 2011; Ungar, 2012; UNICEF, 2012, 2022).

Ensuring a high-quality experience for secondary school students is crucial for their social and emotional development. According to Durlak et al. (2011), fostering social and emotional competencies can lead to improved behaviour, such as increased prosocial actions and decreased conduct and internalising issues. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted school operations and impacted students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with pre-existing conditions. Parker et al. (2021) found that despite efforts to address educational needs during the pandemic, children in poor living conditions and those with disabilities in several Caribbean countries faced significant challenges. Additionally, students with limited internal resources struggled to adapt to the changes brought on by the pandemic.

A positive school environment with caring and supportive relationships can boost students' sense of belonging and promote self-esteem, confidence, and self-efficacy through interactions with peers and teachers (Evans, 2006; Meškauskienė, 2017; Pottinger & Stair, 2009). Meškauskienė (2017) discovered that teacher quality demonstrated through traits like respect, sincerity, trust, tolerance, and support

can positively impact students' self-esteem. Such a positive environment can motivate students to work harder and more diligently towards their academic goals, as they develop trust in their teachers and feel empowered to succeed (Benard, 2004; Martin & Dowson, 2009, as cited in Furrer et al., 2014).

A study by Gardner and Webb (2017) with 334 Jamaican adolescents found that high self-esteem, as well as support from peers and family, were protective factors against depression and anxiety among Jamaican adolescents. Conversely, low self-esteem was identified as a risk factor that increased the likelihood of poor decision-making and negative behaviours, which had an adverse impact on their well-being. Keddie (1992) elaborated on this symbiotic relationship, reporting that Jamaican adolescents with low self-esteem were more likely to experience teenage pregnancy. Additional studies have shown that adolescents experience greater self-doubt and anxiety when protective factors are limited and difficult situations are encountered (Schwarzer & Warner, 2013).

The school climate reflects the interpersonal relationships between peers and teachers, as well as the collective and individual feelings of safety (Bear et al., 2016). Devine and Cohen (2007) emphasise that school climate is the nexus between personal and group experience. Collectively, school climate—"the quality and character of school life" (Cohen et al., 2009)—emanates from the school culture, in which artefacts, such as school regulations, policies and physical infrastructure, are enshrined into values, practices and behavioural norms (Schein, 2009).

For many students, the school is a primary source of socialisation and support (UNICEF, 2020; OECD, 2020). As Stewart (2013) notes, social interaction is an integral part of human existence, and the quality and quantity of interaction directly impact the strength of social and relational capabilities developed during these interactions.

The role of schools in promoting overall well-being through fostering positive relationships

between students, and teachers, was impeded by the COVID-19 restrictions. Students were unable to interact with others as closely as before, leading to a negative impact on their mental health (Bourne et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2020; Parker et al., 2021). Studies have shown that students without access to digital devices, particularly the more disadvantaged, faced even greater challenges in terms of socialisation and learning, leaving them more vulnerable (Parker & Alfaro, 2021; UNICEF, 2020; OECD, 2020).

Adolescence: Impressional Period

Adolescence is a crucial period in human development, as it marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. During this time, individuals undergo physiological, psychological, and cognitive changes in preparation for the responsibilities of adulthood (UNICEF, 2012). The World Health Organization (2016) highlights that adolescence is a time for growth, self-discovery, identity formation, skill development, and exposure to various social influences and risks. This stage of life is significant, as it enables individuals to establish their sense of self, adopt behavioural norms, and embrace values necessary for adulthood (Smetana et al., 2014; World Health Organization, 2016).

Typically, adolescents are characterised as high risk-takers, attributed to their fragile emotionality and heightened vulnerability (Hashmi, 2013). They are often seen as delinquent or provokers of law and order—presenting themselves as victims and or perpetrators of crime and violence (e.g., CCYD, 2010; Ministry of National Security, 2013; Smith & Green, 2007). With the varied risk factors within their environment, some experience poor school attendance or dropout, while some exhibit poor social conduct, resulting in an increased rate of adolescent pregnancy, suicide ideation, depression, and school violence (UNICEF, 2016, 2018).

Albeit these deviant behaviours are often attributed to adolescents or youth, Braithwaite (2009) argues that within high-risk environments where there is limited protective

factors, engaging in risky behaviours sometimes compensates for psychological conciliation to avoid emotional pains evoked by feelings of depression, confusion, fear, frustration, and low self-esteem (p. 5). The human compulsion for pleasure over pain lends to Braithwaite's explanation suggesting that some youth demonstrate these behaviours in exchange for a euphoric experience and, some, rebellion. Hofer et al. (2010) underscore this claim by inferring that the regulatory process occurring during adolescence contributes to the adolescents' behavioural response and adaption to stressors, inadvertently affecting the quality of their psychosocial functioning (p. 572).

The reasons behind risky behaviours during adolescence have piqued the interest of many researchers due to the increased vulnerability of this stage. According to Steinberg (2020), brain development during adolescence can contribute to such behaviours, but as the brain matures, cognitive control improves, and dependency on peers decreases. The ultimate result is establishing identity and purpose through life-changing experiences, which can increase vulnerability to external demands and expectations from family, schools, and intimate partners (Mezulis et al., 2010). To mitigate such risks, supportive environments are necessary to strengthen internal capacities and buffer developmental challenges (UNDP, 2014; Ungar et al., 2011; WHO, 2016).

In a longitudinal study, Lerner and Lerner (2011) emphasise the critical role of support in ensuring positive outcomes for adolescents. Family, school, and community resources were found to have a positive impact on youth development and civic engagement. Adolescents demonstrated more developmental assets when parents, teachers, and other supporting adults were involved.

Recent research on the behaviour of adolescents has unveiled some interesting insights into their level of dependence. While teenagers have traditionally been known to gradually distance themselves from their parents,

longitudinal studies have confirmed a normative decrease in this relationship over time (Tsai et al., 2013). Adolescents find greater security and respect from their peers (Hashmi, 2013). This separation is often attributed to parents' need for control and autonomy and their perception of their child as rebellious (Branje, 2018). Moreover, studies have shown that authoritarian parenting practices can lead to poor behavioural conduct in boys and heightened depression, anger, and suicide rates among girls (Smith & Moore, 2013). However, when adolescents have an enabling environment and opportunities to express themselves without fear of victimisation, they can better regulate their self-esteem and resilience (UNICEF, 2012). Many teenagers now take a more active role in their development by creating a two-way communication process (Smetana et al., 2014).

Socioecological Variables

While there are certain universal traits and behaviours that can be attributed to adolescents, the group is quite diverse due to varying cultural norms and values (Chen, 2001). Jamaican adolescents, in particular, are affected by colonial artefacts, norms, values, and practices. The socio-historical, economic, and cultural factors in their lives can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. Unfortunately, high levels of crime, violence, poverty, social inequality, and inequity (Harriot & Jones, 2016) can result in negative behavioural responses. Notably, urban children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are two to three times more likely to witness violent events (Samms-Vaughan et al., 2005). Those from higher socioeconomic groups tend to live in safer communities and have fewer experiences witnessing violence. Comparatively, children exposed to crime and violence are more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression (Small-Bartley, 2010).

The social reality among some Jamaicans reveals the ongoing thought of attractiveness being associated with lighter skin colour, causing some Jamaicans to bleach their skin to acquire beauty and attract partners (Charles et al., 2017).

Cultural practices and beliefs within society have influenced the sexual behaviours of adolescents, increasing sexual transmitted infections, sexual violence, and pregnancies (UNICEF, 2018). According to McFarlane et al. (2019), adolescent pregnancy is rooted in several cultural factors, such as, “intergenerational transmission of teenage pregnancy, the prevalence of absentee fathers and romantic partners, experiences of sexual abuse and the influence of media and popular culture” (p. 13). Wilson-Mitchell et al. (2014) conducted a study with adolescent girls 13-15 years and noted that many girls faced the existential reality of child abuse and sexual violence, with approximately 23% of the sample admitting to attempting suicide one or more times in the last 12 months due to sexual innuendos.

Despite ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, corporal punishment remains prevalent in the Caribbean and is used to discipline children (Bailey et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2021). A recent report by UNICEF indicates a need for a ban on corporal punishment due to its widespread use across the island (UNICEF, 2021). Unfortunately, children from poorer families are at a higher risk of experiencing severe physical punishment compared to their wealthier peers (UNICEF, 2011). Living in high-risk communities and homes also exposes adolescents to substance use, which can hinder their participation in age-appropriate activities and negatively impact their social relationships within the family and with positive friends (Connell et al., 2010; Segal & Stewart, 1996).

The interplay of various factors during adolescence plays a significant role in shaping one’s ability to regulate oneself, make sound decisions, and tackle problems critically. However, some adolescents may be exposed to unfavourable circumstances, such as poverty, abuse, family and community violence, and other risk factors, which can hinder their development. Research posits that those exposed to such risks are more prone to emotional and psychological distress (Parker et al., 2021). As highlighted by WHO (2012), social class and socioeconomic factors are key determinants of adolescents’ well-being and

can either level the playing field for all youth or exacerbate the systemic advantages of privileged ones while minimising those of the less privileged.

Richter et al.’s (2009) study utilised multilevel logistic regression models to analyse “socioeconomic differences in self-rated health among adolescents and the contribution of health-related behaviours” (p. 396). The study revealed that adolescents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were more inclined to make healthier choices than those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, the research found a link between self-rated health and family affluence across different countries, indicating that adolescents from higher SES backgrounds have an advantage in accessing necessary resources and opportunities, which translates into more social, health, and academic options.

A study conducted by Fox and Strachan (2007) on Jamaican adolescents highlights the importance of having protective factors at home and school. The study found that the absence of these factors can lead to alcohol and substance abuse, as well as other negative behaviours. The study revealed that one-third of the adolescents in the sample had experienced physical attacks, while 13% were perpetrators. To further emphasise the significance of a supportive environment, Ungar et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study with disadvantaged youth from five different countries. The study showcased the positive impact of youth contributing to their families and coping with chronic adversities. According to the researchers, youth who were given the opportunity to contribute to the adulthood process in a culturally and developmentally appropriate manner were more likely to access relevant resources that promote well-being. The study also highlighted the dual contribution of both youth and their caregivers to the development of psychosocial well-being in the context of multiple risks.

Negative societal influences or risk factors can lead to various behavioural responses in youth, including increased crime and violence, victimisation, adolescent pregnancies, suicide and suicide ideation, and substance abuse (Bailey,

2011; Braithwaite, 2009; UNICEF, 2012, 2018). However, Telzer et al. (2018) argue that positive social impact can influence social adjustment and lead to positive outcomes in youth. They suggest that taking advantage of the social context of adolescents and their sensitivity to societal norms can be critical for positive adjustment.

Resilience: A Dynamic Concept

Understanding resilience is not exclusive to studying the individual's innate traits to cope with trauma or crisis or, as commonly stated — being able to bounce back (Ungar, 2011). Studies over a few decades have revealed that an individual's innate capacity can be stymied or bolstered depending on the interacting variables and multiple systems within their socioecological space (Rutter, 1987; Ungar, 2008; Ungar et al., 2021). For this reason, studies have purported resilience as a dynamic socio-ecological process and a positive development outcome precipitated by cultural elements, environmental opportunities and resources made available along the developmental pathways, despite exposure to adverse conditions (Ungar, 2008; Ungar, 2012).

Resilience Models

Over the years, the multiple approaches and varying resilience perspectives have led to three general resilience models (Crawford, 2006). The Challenge Model of Resilience highlights a curvilinear relationship between the risk and the outcome. The model suggests that exposure to severe adverse conditions (e.g., poverty, poor parenting style, violence) will, over time, reduce the individual coping capacity. However, mild exposure will likely build the ability to deal with future occurrences (O'Leary, 1998; Rutter, 1987).

The Compensatory Model of Resilience explicates the opposing nature of the risk factors and protective or compensatory factors. It suggests that if the protective factors are compelling (e.g., social support or high self-efficacy), they compensate for risk factors, increasing the likelihood of a positive outcome. Conversely, the model proposes that when risk

factors are more powerful (e.g., no or limited social support, low socioeconomic status) and the compensatory factors weaken, the individual is most likely to elicit a negative response (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Ledesma, 2014).

The Protective Model of Resilience explains the important connection between protective or promotive factors and an individual's capacity. According to this model, providing developmentally appropriate services and opportunities to someone can strengthen their ability to adapt and succeed (O'Leary, 1998). To further develop on this model, Ungar (2015), proposes the Ungar's Ecological Model of Resilience, which considers the developmental path and sociocultural context of adolescents, recognising that resources and opportunities are crucial for navigating adversity and thriving.

Building Resilience

The outcomes of students as functional, productive citizens have rested on the arms of academic achievements or performance, with little focus on the social and emotional competencies necessary to advance along their life trajectories. Some students fail to succeed during their developmental pathway, as sometimes their internal capacities are compromised or not supported by their environments. In essence, the home, school, community, and/or society may fail to provide the necessary resources and opportunities to facilitate success and reduce the barriers or risks they may experience (Ungar, 2008). Fundamentally, resilience is influenced by an individual's capacity, supportive relationships, and systems to cope with stressors and adversities.

Studies show the debilitating effects of the low internal capacity of adolescents to make effective decisions. Schwarzer and Warner (2013) acclaim that adolescents with low self-efficacy are likely to evade intimidating or difficult situations and may experience more significant self-doubt or anxiety that diminishes functionality. Supporting this claim, Vaughan-Johnston et al. (2020), in a study with adolescents, found that self-esteem may "provide a protective factor against engaging in physical violence to prevent bullying" (p.14). The

study also highlights that self-esteem importance is seen to be strongly associated with “directly and indirectly defending peers” (Vaughan-Johnston et al., 2020, p. 14). Similarly, Gardner and Webb (2017) asserted that social support (family and peer) and self-esteem are protective factors in preventing depression and anxiety. Further, Weiland et al. (2012), using a sample of youth between the ages of 18 and 22 years from large communities, found that resilience in early adolescence is a protective factor against alcohol problems and drug use, showing the negative correlation between resilience and alcohol problems and illicit drug use.

In a learning institution, the teacher’s appraisal and expectations, and the student’s perception of their safety, along with other elements within the school climate, play an operative role in strengthening the resilience of adolescents. Schools are important institutions to provide protective factors to promote resilience. Meškauskienė (2017) underlines that when teachers demonstrated an acceptance of students as they are, they were more likely to feel respected and embrace a positive disposition.

On the contrary, Pottinger (2012) argues that children exposed to punitive disciplinary measures become disconnected and alienated. Accordingly, Pottinger and Stair (2009) conducted a study with 225 Jamaica students, in which they found an association between teachers’ and peers’ limited trust and unkind treatment towards students and school performance and resilience. Similarly, Evan (2006), from a case study conducted in urban Jamaica, highlighted the harmful effects of demoralisation of students. The study found that coercive and punitive measures to maintain classroom control resulted in an unfavourable reciprocal exchange between students and teachers, with students reporting feelings of resentment and shame. Smith and Moore (2013) purport that school punitive disciplinary practices were predictive of poor behavioural conduct and depressive symptoms, suicide ideation and anger.

Rutter (1987, 2000) elaborated on the imperative nature of opportunities and support for youth in adverse conditions to further emphasise the role of support and an enabling environment in strengthening resilience. The study highlights

that risk factors account for less than 50% of a high-risk population and 50-80% of positive outcomes among high-risk youth was due to the provision of opportunities and support during adverse conditions. Typically, social support plays an integral role in the psychological well-being of adolescents, lending to resilience, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Dolan et al., 2006, as cited in Smyth et al., 2015; Berk, 2001; Cobb, 2001).

As adolescents evolve, they see themselves as receivers and contributors to their development. Given that the vast majority of their time is spent in school, schools should be one of the primary sites to provide the requisite support, resources, and opportunities to strengthen students’ ability to adapt, become more self-aware, solve life problems, make constructive decisions, and effectively contribute to their development.

Discussion

Fundamentally, the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Model underscores and provides clarity on individual’s development and how it is shaped by the complex interplay between their environment and various socio-ecological factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Further complimented by the Ungar Ecological Model of Resilience, Ungar (2011) emphasises the role of the socioecological variables and cultural elements as critical to adolescent development. According to evidence provided from the review, schools play a crucial role in shaping the resilience of students by creating a positive school climate. Seemingly, students—adolescents—are more vulnerable and require intentional efforts by schools to promote positive outcomes and resilience. The evidence suggests that the social and physical environment within which adolescents operate, including their homes, schools, and society, has a significant impact on their outcomes. The negative school environments have resulted in adverse effects influencing students’ well-being, self-esteem, social skills, problem-solving abilities, and sense of purpose and identity (Benard, 2004; Fleischmann, 2018).

School climate, being the “quality and character of school life” experienced by students,

is influenced by the school culture (Schein, 2009), regulations, policies, and physical infrastructure (Eccles et al., 2011). Given the importance of developing students' resilience through the education system, it is critical to carefully consider the design and implementation of the elements that contribute to a positive school climate.

Evidently, in Jamaica, the use of corporal punishment and other punitive measures in schools have, in some cases, acted as risk factors which may have led to an increase in delinquent behaviour and drug use among students (Evan, 2006; Fox et al., 2007 ; Pottinger, 2012; Pottinger et al., 2009; UNICEF, 2021). Students exposed to high risk factors associated with COVID-19 coupled with other negative issues such as violence exposure are likely to experience higher vulnerability that may lead to poor school attendance, and poor social conduct (Parker et al., 2021; Rutter, 2000; UNICEF, 2016, 2018; Weiland et al., 2012;). Adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable and at-risk require added support for strengthening resilience (Rutter, 2000; Weiland et al., 2012).

On the contrary, students provided with positive educational experiences are more likely to foster healthy and productive behaviours (Cohen, 2009; Schwarzer et al., 2013; Vaughan-Johnston et al., 2020). While resilience is often thought of as an individual's ability to overcome their circumstances, it is also greatly influenced by the social and ecological agents present in their environment (Ungar, 2008; Ungar, 2011).

As Jamaica seeks to fulfil its national development goal to "empower Jamaicans to achieve their fullest potential" (PIOJ, 2009, p. xv), transforming the school climate within secondary schools should be paramount on its agenda. Secondary school students are transitioning to higher education and joining the workforce, further assisting the country's social and economic development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The use of harsh disciplinary measures like corporal punishment in Jamaican schools have resulted in negative school climates, leading to a rise in delinquent behaviour and drug use among students (Evan, 2006; Pottinger, 2012;

Pottinger et al., 2009; UNICEF, 2021). To mitigate these risks, it is important to build resilience in adolescents, especially those who face higher risk factors such as exposure to violence and gangs (Weiland et al., 2012; Rutter, 2000). Schools that provide positive educational experiences are more likely to foster healthy and productive behaviours in students (Cohen, 2009; Schwarzer et al., 2013; Vaughan-Johnston et al., 2020).

Examining school climate and its influence on students' resilience requires a comprehensive view of the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environment. Inevitably considering the social psychological theories and principles is crucial in broadening the understanding of the school climate and students' resilience. While resilience is often thought of as an individual's ability to overcome their circumstances, it is also crucial to recognize that the development of adolescents is not solely determined by internal factors, but is deeply intertwined with the social and ecological agents present in their environment. (Ungar 2008; Ungar, 2011). This dynamic interaction shapes their experiences, choices, and ultimately, their path towards healthy development. Failure to address the challenges they face, often amplified by their environment, can have far-reaching consequences, not only for individuals but also for entire societies.

Concerning the likely disparity in school types at the secondary level, understanding the critical contextual variables to build resilience is relevance to students' outcomes. To establish positive school climates and promote students' resilience, it is proposed that more attention be given to the cultural and historical elements as well as the current new trends and norms occurring among adolescents. Further studies should examine the cultural nuance within the society and school norms and practices, considering students' perspectives, the environment, and available resources for students' development. Analyses of the school climate as a determinant of students' resilience should also take into account the distinctive types of secondary schools in Jamaica, both traditional and upgraded, and how they operate within the social structure of the country. The literature should be synthesized to further inform this discussion.

Implications for Further Study

While the evidence suggests a connection between school climate and student outcomes, a deeper investigation is necessary. School climate is a multifaceted concept that can be viewed from different perspectives. To truly understand the school climate of secondary schools in Jamaica, it is essential to identify the key variables that accurately measure this construct in the Jamaican context. Additionally, a comprehensive methodology that captures students' perspectives and lived experiences should be utilized. The literature indicates that some schools may have a positive school climate while others have a negative one, resulting in positive or negative student outcomes. This highlights the importance of further investigation into the variations in school climate across different types of schools in Jamaica.

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