



The Influence of the School towards Students' Indiscipline

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to find out the how School management factors influence indiscipline in some selected secondary schools in Rivers State. Applying survey method through questionnaires, it used samples from secondary schools' students in Rivers State. This study, as much as possible has revealed that such factors as parent', lapse in their responsibilities towards their children, inadequate amenities in school, lack of teachers' sincerity and devotion to duty and students' indifference to study, all contribute to indiscipline and poor performance in schools. The theory of classroom discipline and reinforcement by Skinner was adopted in this work. The instrument used was questionnaire constructed by the investigator. Items on the questionnaire were designed to elicit information on the likely determinants of cases of students' indiscipline. The results were calculated in percentages. The findings indicated that certain Government factors influence students' indiscipline. It was discovered that these have adverse social and psychological effect on academic growth. Based on the findings, suggestions are made to the appropriate agencies dealing with students' discipline and academic growth. It is hoped that these suggestions will check the existence of indiscipline in schools which may be on step to enhancing good academic performance by students.

Keywords: Reinforcement, Indiscipline, Government. Discipline. Skinner, Academic Performance, Respondents, Truancy, Students etc.

1. Introduction

Indiscipline has however continued to be a problem in our schools for the past ten (10) to fifteen (15) years according to Gbuhe, I. (1984). But the Federal Government has not lost sight of this fact. This is evident in the present policy in which indiscipline has

been viewed from a totally new dimension. This time, not schools but the whole system has been their focus. This led to the launching of "War Against Indiscipline" (WAI), on 20th March, 1984. This has given the schools an added responsibility of not only seeing that children imbibe the principles of the ethics of society but "to be an agent of socialization to the society at large", Asuka, T.T. (1999 – P 74).

In recent times, indiscipline among Post-Primary School students has provoked comments and concern in educational institutions in the wider society. The issue of indiscipline is becoming an increasingly frequent topic of discussion in an educational system, as well as social circles. There seems to be a growing body of opinion in favour of devoting more time and effort in the nation schools to help students to achieve greater understanding and awareness of the moral values of our society. Hence, when people talk of lack of discipline in our schools, they immediately attribute it to the declining standard of social norms among school students

Right from the inception of formal education, many people have expressed their concern over the alarming rate of students in-discipline in our secondary school system and its consequences to their academic performance. Teachers and parents have expressed their concern over the growing rate of indiscipline in secondary school students, at home and in social functions.

The various act of indiscipline perpetrated by students are *'going to school at will and home when they desire, damaging school properties, talk to their teachers without due respect or regards, take to drugs abuse, cheat in test and examinations, drinking alcohol and smoking at school.*

Based on this apparent nature of students' attitudes in schools, it would be pertinent to find out the types and causes of indiscipline among students in ONELGA,

Rivers State. Hence, this study will examine the types and causes of indiscipline in ONELGA, Rivers State. Thus, the following research questions will guide this study.

This study finds out the basic cause of students' indiscipline and its influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State and how it could be minimized. It is hoped that this study will expose ways of remedy to indiscipline and it will also assist in contributing to the educational advancement of the students in the state. It shall also serve as a base for further research work in a related problem.

More significantly, it is hoped that this study will be of good use to parents, teachers, school authorities, as well as students who naturally have a stake in educational enterprise.

This study is limited to types and causes of indiscipline among secondary schools students in ONELGA, Rivers State.

Three hundred and seventy copies of questionnaire will be distributed, sixty-two to each school. The number of teachers that will be used in each school are fourteen (14) while students will be twenty five (25). The researcher will use six schools from the L.G.A. Also, teachers in the schools used for the research are randomly selected to respond to the questions.

2. The INFLUENCE of the School towards Student Indiscipline

The school is another major socialization agent for the child. It represents to the child new social problems, taboos and new models of social identification. Through the school, the child learns more about customs, values, belief, skill, reactions and other characteristics of the social environment.

Therefore, the school has a lot of influence on the behaviour of students in Nigeria today. The population of children seeking secondary education and the limited resources available to the government has made it almost impossible to build good schools but rather every available building space has been turned into school without due regards for a conducive environment.

Okpala (1981: 42) supported this claim when he stated that our schools are operating under difficult conditions. It is disheartening to notice that our school today where students should be playing with teaching aids, you find nothing but dilapidating materials.

So, the setting of the school system today has been identified to be a factor to students' undesirable behaviour, because students learn best in comfortable

and conducive atmosphere. Giving credence to this Koko (1991) state that "an atmosphere that will encourage the learner to willingly, happily, intelligently and rapidly participate in class should be created". Therefore, if the reverse is the case, the student whose efforts at learning effectively and displaying his hidden talents will be thwarted because of lack of necessary teaching aids and other equipment which will result to that student behaving abnormally in attempt to protest his resentment of learning situation and this affects his academic performance.

Nwokofo et al (1981: 32) cited in putlearningfirst.com also traced the school as a factor that causes students undesirable behaviour, when he included bad authoritarian methods of administration, ineffective teaching staff, harsh school rules, poor communication between the school administration, staff and students.

Nwokocho (1990: 59), supported the above when he claimed that the organizational climate of the school can promote or inhibit discipline. He further said "the ideal climate should reflect democratic way of Life". This he said, is a system where there is effective communication between the school administration and the subject such as the teachers, students and parent.

3. The school as an artificial setting or environment

One of the reasons that leads to disorder in the school is because it is a very artificial kind of place children from various backgrounds are brought together and encouraged to learn specific subject within a single room. In such an un-natural circumstance, a notice by Farrant (1994: 247), "everything can go wrong" he went further to suggest other possible school such as "noise, outside attraction, boring lessons due to bad methodology, lateness to school, absenteeism, sex harassment etc.

Peace and mutual co-existence in the school depends to a large extent on the keeping of rules and good relationship among students and between teacher-students. A breakdown of this type of relationship may lead to misbehavior by the students and will also affect their academic performance.

4. Types of Indiscipline as Manifested by Students

Be it primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions it is of importance for a society to be disciplined. In fact the effect of students' indiscipline on academic performance is the hindrance to the progress of any society. It is in this vain that many research has been

made on this topic as to highlight the problems of indiscipline among students in secondary schools. But the question is what indiscipline is?

Benjamin (1981: 45) stated, that “indiscipline can be viewed as none conformity to the school norms of group society”. He also stated that “indiscipline is the act of wrong doing from the social norms of the society in economic and code of conduct.

These undesirable behaviours which students exhibit in the cause of the learning process both in and outside the school system include: - rudeness, dishonesty, stealing, laziness, drug and alcohol intake, truancy, delinquency, lateness, making noise, fighting and lack of attention etc. it could also mean lack of control exercised over people especially children, violent and disruptive behaviour among students.

According to Mills (1976: 37), he identified five most frequent and seriously disruptive behaviour among students which constitute indiscipline as:

- Deliberate rejection of school standards of dress (i.e. wearing wrong uniform to school and improper dressing hair do etc)
- Persistent truancy
- Boy-cutting lessons
- Refusal to work and cooperate in lessons
- Individual misbehavior intended to destroy lessons

Tattum (1982: 97) on his part also provided a list of violent and disruptive behaviour among students as reported by teachers:

- Physical attack on other students, bullying of junior students and fighting.
- Disruptive or unruly behaviour, noise making
- Truancy, late coming, dogging lessons, loitering around and refusal to come to class
- Insult on teacher (verbal/abuse) by students
- Vandalism – willful destruction of school property
- Extortion
- Gang violence – mass misbehavior
- Assault on teachers (physical attacks) by students

Nwana (1971: 63), Wzewu (1982/83: 45), Rafe (1986: 30) and Okujagu (1987: 42) identified other dimension as:

- Disobedient – flouting specific instructions
- Dishonesty – telling lies, impersonation, examination malpractice, falsifying records sets.
- Stealing – of pens, text books and science equipment, misappropriation of school fees and other charges

- Demonstration and fighting
- Sexual harassment (special in school)

The above citations show that gross undisciplined behaviour is predominant in schools and it is obvious that the absence of discipline among children is one of the serious problems plunging our society. Our regional leaders have not helped the educational system as expected due to the country’s pluralistic or diverse nature and religious irrevocable controversies.

Consequently, it is evident that the problem of indiscipline starts from home. This is because every student is traceable to a home and in most cases, even if the parents do not belong to any religious sect. i.e. neutralist, they still send their children to school.

5. The basic cause of indiscipline among secondary school students

The phenomenon of students’ indiscipline on the academic performance of secondary school can be caused by a lot of other factors to include the psychological aspect of the life of secondary school students and other external factors.

According to Amirinze (1995: 45) “Factors that cause students to exhibit undesirable behaviours lie around maladjustment i.e. mental, emotional, social and other forms of disorganization of child’s normal life and development which arise from the following factors:-

Peer Group/Neighbourhood Factor:

Apart from the home and school, much of what the child learns and becomes is as a result of the interaction he has with member of his age grade.

The attitude he puts up, the style of dressing he takes to and other aspect of his/her life especially as students, are shaped by peer influence

Sutherland and Gressway (1990: 108) found out that “individual learn bad behaviour from other within intimate peers based on sub-culture to which they are exposed to”. A child’s behaviour or motives is based not just on his own basic need and drives as Maslo (1954: 30) would want us to believe but also on the stimulation provided by his peer in the classroom. Thus, in First Corinthians (15:33) the Bible, *evil communications corrupt good manner*”. In other words, if a reserved and disciplined child follows a child that is unreserved and undisciplined, he will become unreserved and undisciplined before he knows it. According to Matza (1960: 79), “these children conform to group norms in order to retain their identity and status i.e. to feel among.

6. Teacher’s Behaviour as a factor

According to Ukeje (1960: 97) “The teacher occupies a very important position in the educational system. For this reason, his utterances, actions, leadership style, knowledge of the subject he teaches and share in teaching are considered as important factors having implication for student learning. Studies shown that teacher’s personality and expectations of a student can promote or inhibit his learning behaviours. According to Wrightsons (1987: 114), “a teacher’s personality influences the emotional and social climate in the classroom”, there are many teachers in some schools who are poorly trained or incompetent and psychological ill-suited to working with young people, or who are overtly concerned with personal and professional self-interest. Bassert (1979: 76) says that “effective classroom management depends on the teacher’s personality. “He believe that “positive personality trait will lead to effectiveness in controlling the class. Personality does not mean the physical look or build of the teacher but rather his projection of his social self. Sheffield (1984: 13) pointed out that most of the teachers liked by students were largely student oriented i.e. those who respect, care for and consider students as being important. Hanson (1994: 52) found that the teacher’s behaviour and attitude towards students and teaching are sometimes considered to be more important than methods and techniques. Blount and Klausmier (1988: 78) confirms that a teacher who is a dictator creates an interesting classroom climate which is characterized by absence of students’ initiative participation and consequent failure to be maximally productive. On the other hand, the democratic teacher induces a sense of involvement and psychological ownership in students and is the best tool in maintenance of good classroom discipline.

7. The Social – Economic and other factors

The socio-economic status of parent has been found to have profound influence on the behaviour and education of their children. A child from low socio-economic status homes tends to be adversely affected in their education pursuits. They may not go to school always due to financial limitations and in this way, they lose interest in their studies and more other things while others are in school.

According to Green (1986: 24) “The socio-economic factor includes increasing disorganization of social and family integration and cohesiveness arising from economic downturn, inflection, unemployment, child labour and the dehumanization of the dignity of human life”, lippitt and White (1993: 39) further reiterated

that these, i.e the above factors make the role of the parents as the standard. If setting a behaviour and controlling authority in the home diminish, the child goes his/her way to look for a way of survival either by stealing or prostituting. And those from rich and enlightened homes where there is enough space and objects of simulation which can be used to be the education advantage of children tend to become proud, arrogant, pompous and feel nobody even the teachers have the right to address them the way they want, thereby they thwart school orders and behave the way they want. The above-mentioned situation no doubt can hinder the child’s academic performance.

8. I.Q and Genetic Factor

Research findings and social statistics show that incidents of indiscipline occur more in dull sub-normal and slow learning children, as stated by Mecandes (1983: 13), “intellectual dullness and backwardness in the school subjects could lead to students’ indiscipline thereby affecting academic achievement of secondary school students”, This is further heightened when Caspari (1976: 15), said “that severe learning disabilities”. This is because the conflicts that they cause prevent them from concentrating on their work.

The origin of such conflicts are sometimes genetically inherited. Anthony et al (2000: 29) pointed out that “genetic origin and connections cause indiscipline and anti-social behaviour in the lives of individuals” the genetic origin they said “is referred to as psychopaths: such persons do not have a properly developed conscience and they are usually ruthless and inconsiderate with a diminish sense of responsibility. They are sadistic even as children”.

According to Richardson (1982: 60) genetic factors could also include physiological aspects of the student’s life when he said that “between the ages of about seven and twelve, the child will be relating himself to the society by learning to do the things his parents, teacher and peer groups do. It is during the secondary school years that he is striving to discover his own separateness and uniqueness as a person by doing what he wants to do.

Finally, Weigert (1997: 41) in his study of the adolescent noted that “the adolescents is a problematic stage in one’s life circles and the reason for this societal/school expectation of passing examination etc, result in frustration and discontent which leads to acts of indiscipline and further resulted in poor academic performance.

Research Question: How does the school contribute to student’s indiscipline in post-primary school?

Statement 1-5 were used to test this question; the results are show below:

Table 3

S/N	Statement	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Over centralization of power on the principal	35	23	115	77	150	100
2	Not involving students in decision making and rules that affect them	70	47	80	53	150	100
3	Lack of supervision	100	67	50	33	150	100
4	No disciplinary measure	115	77	35	23	150	100
5	Lack of proper Administration	115	77	35	23	150	100

Statement 1 of the above indicates that 23 percent of the students responded positively while 77 percent of the students responded negatively.

Statement 2 of the above table indicates that 47 percent of the students responded positively while 53 percent of the students responded negatively.

Statement 3 in the above table indicates that 67 percent of the students responded positively 33 percent of the students responded negatively.

Statement 4 in the above table indicates that 77 percent of the students responded positively while 5 percent of the students responded negatively.

Statement 5 in the above table indicates that 77 percent of the students responded positively while 23 percent of the students responded negatively.

From the analysis of data of table 3, we can term the following as ways school contributes to student indiscipline in secondary schools:

- Lack of supervision
- No disciplinary measure
- Lack of proper administration

The finding is in line with Nwokafor et al (1981:32) cited (pulearning-first.com). He traced the school as a factor that cause students undesirable behaviour, when he included bad authoritarian methods of administration, ineffective teaching staff, harsh school rules, poor communication between the school administration staff and students. Also in support, is the statement made by Nwokocha (1990: 59) that the organizational climate of the school can promote or inhibit discipline. He further said that “the ideal climate should reflect democratic way of life”

9. Summary of the Analysis

The responses of the survey as observed in the tables indicate that most students who filled the questionnaire were involved in one act of indiscipline

or another. The teachers’ response testify to this also. Students were each either guilty of one offence or the other. There was none of the acts of indiscipline listed out in the questionnaires that at least, a student was not involved in, these ranged from breaking bounds, drinking alcohol, fighting, quarreling, truancy and cheating in examination hall, which are all against school rules and regulations.

10. Discussion of Findings

From the findings within the limitation of this study, the following areas have been identified as the causes and types of indiscipline and bad behaviour among secondary school students in, Rivers State:

- Poor administration
- Lack of basic teaching facilities
- Bad Association
- Parental laxity
- Unqualified teaching staff
- Fighting on regular basis
- Disobedient to their seniors at school
- Being rude to their teachers
- Cheating in examination hall
- Smoking Indian hemp and practicing prostitution
- Lack of supervision
- No disciplinary measure
- Parent being divorced and
- Parent influence on the student’s choice of subject

Therefore, these areas mentioned above are summarized under these factors:

- Parental factor
- School management/teachers’ factor
- Students’ attitudes to discipline and learning factor

10.1 Parent Factors Contributing to Indiscipline among students in Secondary Schools

One of the major problems facing the school however is parent non-attendance regarding the progress of their children in school academically or character wise. Some children are delinquent because of “maternal deprivation”.

The present unbecoming attitude of some students in areas of indiscipline is regarded by parents as a manifestation of the inability of the school to control the behaviour of students.

But, unknowingly parents share in the blame of their children who are students. This is because, parents appear to have abdicated their responsibility towards their children and tend to look on school as glorified baby-sitting agencies.

10.2 School Management/Teachers’ Factors that contribute to the breakdown of discipline in schools

It is apparent that various causes of indiscipline among students link to their schools in as much as it links to their home.

The respondents in this study adduced various reasons for doing certain things that are against the school rules. A summary of some reasons is given below:

- Some students do not go to school at the beginning of a new term because studies will not commence until after two weeks. Others said they went late because the principal and his staff were fond of coming late to school. Thereby keeping them long in Assembly Hall for morning devotions and announcements.
- Roughly 130 students went late to school because of lack of water in the environment they live as day students or the distance they walk every day to school. This has to do with government policy of phasing out boarding system and not providing enough enmities for the proper take up of these schools.

In an interview conducted by the researcher with secondary students in the selected schools on “why they go on rampage”, the reply was “*we resort to vandalism when the school authorities refuse to understand and appreciate our points of view*”.

In addition, a teacher’s personality influences the classroom”. The researcher identified that some students roam about when their teachers are not around. Other sit in the classroom to make noise, while another went to the dormitory to sleep when they were supposed to be in class learning. Quite a number of students are reported to have cheated in examinations

because teachers showed them questions before the examination, or undue favour to a number of students in the examination rooms. This was the opinion of 88 students. Some students stayed out of classes because some lessons were not uninteresting to them.

10.3 Student’s Attitudes to Discipline and Learning Factor

This investigation indicates clearly the opinions and attitudes of students about discipline and learning. This now borders on the individuality of the students. Teachers’ opinion indicate that students are generally not mindful of the rules and regulations of the school. This emanates when students indulge in extortion and stealing, sex abuse, consumption of hard drugs/smoking, cultism, fighting, vandalism and hooliganism, possession and use of dangerous weapons and charms, examination malpractices, truancy, loitering and lateness etc as a social deviance which entails the violation of the rules and regulations patterning the behaviour of individual in school.

Some students go late to school for the fun of it, others deliberately stayed out of school because they do not want to learn. While other wear mufti to schools even when they have school uniforms. Some even did not seem to know why they are in school; thus, they imitate others to earn popularity among their colleagues. Others are so mischievous that they absent themselves from important school functions.

All these are real constraints to good behaviour and good academic performance

10.4 Educational Implication

The findings of this study have its education implication in the following areas:

Lack of adequate financial up keep can demoralize students, as it’s the popular sample opinion indicated in student’s responses. Invariably, apart from stealing, or keeping friends of the opposite sex, student academic performance could be negatively affected.

The tendency of parents to send their children on errands while lessons are in sessions is detrimental to their good academic performance. This happens mostly to students who come to school from their homes. This also places students in a fix because they cannot refuse to go on errands for their parents. At this time, they are forgoing their studies. This behaviour on the part of some parents indicates that, they do not understand the school system and that missing lessons could have a negative effect on their children academic performance.

The fact that students absent themselves from school at the beginning of a term amounts to improper preparations on the part of the school authority for the immediate start of studies, they tend to keep students busy by making them cut grasses. This in turn keep those who do not want to cut grass away from school. In as much as it is necessary to keep the school premises clean, it should be incorporated into the regular school programme and should go hand in hand with commencement of studies right from the start of a new term. If this is done, students will definitely return to school in a larger number at the beginning of a term.

Lack of punctuality by some principals and staff to morning devotion is a serious thing that will enhance unseriousness on the part of students. This is because a principal has the duty of spelling out the norms of behaviour in his school. This in effect means that the moral tone of the school depends on his/she being a model for other subordinates to emulate. He is supposed to be “a good commander that leads a good army”. If on the other hands, the principal is incompetent and cannot even keep to his own rules. This means he cannot also establish his authority among his students and staff. He is bound to meet with many difficulties in maintaining discipline in school. This can lead to a total breakdown of rules and regulation of the school and thereby results to poor academic record.

The scarcity of water in these areas has adverse effect on the behaviour of students. This is solely not of their own making or the principal’s per se. this amounts to lack of proper planning by the government to provide at least certain basic minimum facilities before the takeoff of school. Though, it has been a kind of gesture on the part of government in bringing education nearer to the people. But it all amounts to nothing when inadequate provision is made for the takeoff or continuance of such institutions. This has adverse effect on students’ studies since they definitely need these basic amenities e.g. water and dormitories to keep the teaching/learning situation in progress.

The idea of students absenting themselves from class because of uninteresting teaching methods is a real serious problem to tackle. These are related to lack of qualified teachers on one hand and lack of devotion to teaching on the other. This has many implications. One of such is that the teaching and learning process will be adversely impaired.

The idea of keeping students in the class for hours with boring poorly designed lessons or materials that

cannot make use of their real interest, nor their actual capabilities, behaviour problems will emanate, students will either keep away from such lessons or they engage in disturbing the learning of other students in the class.

Bad teaching promotes cheating. If a child is given materials which is too difficult for him or if he has specific deficits that prevent his progress and cannot earn reinforcement in a legitimate manner obviously, cheating is likely to occur.

Finally, children who are frequently absent from school show poor academic attainment and adjustment to school.

11. Conclusion

From the findings of this research study, the following conclusion were drawn:

- Teachers in secondary schools are aware of the academic performance problems bothering their students
- From the responses to the questionnaire, the research would conclude that the six (6) selected secondary schools in Rivers State which were used for this study believe that, poor administration, bad association from among youths influence academic performance.
- Lack of basic teaching facilities, unqualified teaching staff.
- Bad behaviour such as; destroying school property, smoking Indian hemp, practicing prostitution, fighting on regular basis, disobedient to their seniors at school and being rude to their teachers. All these are areas where indiscipline behaviour are manifested by students and they influence their academic performance negatively.

12. Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the researcher the following recommendations are made:

- Parents should be alive to their obligations for up-bringing of their children
- Parents should improve in their efforts to spend more time with their children so as to be able to correct them when they go wrong.
- The school should be able to maintain a code of conduct which spells out clearly the moral tone of the school. This code of conduct should be effectively popularized amongst students and also implemented so that

- offenders could be squarely dealt with to serve as deterrents to others.
- Furthermore, with the current handover of schools to private owners in Rivers and Bayelsa States, the Government and these agencies should jointly, in the interest of improving the quality of education provide adequate and qualified staff to all schools.
 - Through the school administrators, the government should make provision to improve the quality of teachers, through seminars, workshops and in-service schemes.
 - It is also necessary that both the government and private owners of schools enhance the status of the teachers as a deliberate policy to make teaching more attractive than any other job.
 - The government and proprietors should also endeavour to reduce the present rate of school fees to enable parents meet up their financial obligations to their children to enable them have a steady and regular studies throughout the term.
 - It is also suggested here that the government in conjunction with school proprietors, should provide hostel accommodations for all students in the area of this study. This should be accompanied with the provision of water to the school community. The government's current policy of phasing out boarding facilities does not augur well for a coherent and effective learning due to the distance of some students who have to walk to school.
 - Invariably also, I would suggest that accommodation be provided for teachers within the vicinity of the schools to enable them relate closely with students outside the classroom environment. This is likely to expose students' behaviour in a wider perspective to teachers. And this will help the teachers to know the students better. Thus, the teacher should be the major force and source of guidance to the children.
 - Finally, as part of disciplinary measures rewards or awards could be given to best well-behaved students at the end of every term.

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