PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TOWARDS DISCIPLINE IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OTA

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Abstract

Discipline is essential to engender stability. It deals with a student's behaviour in school and relations to rules and regulation governing the school so as to make it a favourable environment for effective teaching and learning. Discipline is a system of guiding the learners to make reasonable decisions and good management of discipline saves substantial resources and time for administrators, teachers and students. The purpose of the study was to investigate the perception and attitude of students towards discipline. The study adopted a cross sectional survey design where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Four hundred and seventy-eight (478) students comprising of 277 males and 201 females were randomly selected from two secondary schools to participate in the study, with age ranging from 14 to 19 years. Data was collected by means of a structured questionnaire consisting of both open and close ended statements. Result show that secondary schools are plagued with disciplinary problems but that experienced principals and teachers could endanger discipline in schools. The study found that peer group pressure could be positively channelled to facilitate discipline. Qualitative data dealing with ranking of disciplinary issues and means to ensure discipline were discussed. This study shows that engaging students, principal's years of work experience and using students as peer counsellors can promote discipline for effective teaching and learning environment.

Keywords: Discipline, Perception, Attitude, Secondary, Schools.

1 INTRODUCTION

Discipline is a form of "inner control", a set of internalized code of conduct, a state of mind which ensures that a person does what is right because he is convinced it is right, nor because he is afraid of reprimands if he behaved otherwise (Jimoh, 1996). Discipline is an essential part of effective education. There are standards set of protocols to follow to ensuring discipline in school. Some of these standards emanate from the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004), which sought to inculcate the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and Nigerian society, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and then, management of individual schools sets standards for the students which are expected to be in tandem with extant rules and best practices. The set standards regulate activities inside the classroom and outdoors such as respect for teachers, staff and school management, school and class attendance, bullying, school uniform (dress code), and work ethics. Anything a student does that is contrary to the set rules and regulation is referred to as an act of indiscipline. Thus, indiscipline in schools is the violation of school rules and it could be explained as the complete opposite of discipline. According to Dare, Hashim, Sweinan and Ofie (2004) as cited by Zubaidia (2009), discipline in schools is the respect for school laws and regulations and the maintenance of an established standard of behaviour and implies self-control, restraint, and respect for oneself and others. Indiscipline is an issue of concern for educators. Rossouw (2003) posits that education would not be successful when learners' lack discipline. Discipline enhances orderliness and effectiveness in the school.

In Nigeria, Nwana (1971) categorized indiscipline among senior school students into the following types of offences ranging from disobedience, truancy, assault and insult, drug addiction, wickedness, strike and mass demonstrations. Van Wyk (2009) noted that students will do anything to gain attention such as disruption the teaching and learning process, using and abusing drugs, assaulting, insulting, and engaging in other antisocial activities. As noted by Ireri (1992), problem of indiscipline in secondary schools include being disrespectful, engaging in unruly behaviours such as shouting and noisemaking among others. Others as enumerated by Zubaida (2009) include truancy, lateness to school, cultism, drug abuse, insulting/assaulting, stealing, rioting, and many other vices. Students' discipline enables them to distinguish between right, correct, acceptable and wrong, unacceptable disposition. To ensure discipline in schools, the students are expected to cultivate a positive attitude to adherence to rules and regulation. Doing these will engender a smooth running of school activities

including teaching, extra-curricular activities and other acts that will promote peace in our schools. Indiscipline students will weaken the bond between teachers and students and cause disruptions of the teaching and learning process. Gnagey (1975) noted that discipline within the classroom is to maintain an environment that will optimize appropriate learning. Kochhar (2001) sees indiscipline as behaviour exhibited by students and or teachers that runs contrary to the established rules and regulations in a school. A student's lack of discipline may be the consequence of boredom (Curwin and Mendler, 1999) or an attempt to project power when events in school go awry or protecting themselves (Curwin and Mendler, 1992; Mohapi, 2007).

Issues of indiscipline in Nigerian schools have a long history, with some researchers attributing the surge in school indiscipline to years after the Nigerian civil war ended. Prior to the Nigerian civil war, most of the schools were owned by missionaries or churches which preach obedience to God and constituted authorities. Students were obedient and straight, a precious virtue in the traditional community. No student wants to misbehave in the school because each family's name is highly prized, and parents in turn remind their children and wards not to tarnish the respected family name. Ojedapo (2011) noted that most of the schools in the past were voluntary agency schools. There was a high degree of discipline in schools then. There was also harmony as principals, teachers and pupils demonstrated awareness of their responsibilities in school. UNESCO (2002) adds that African adults have become more concerned with earning money and are less occupied with many traditional practices that formerly contributed to the upbringing of young people. However, the case today is different. For example, Zubaida (2009) noted that students direct their acts of indiscipline towards constituted authorities and against extant rules and regulations. A typical example is deliberately coming late to school, keeping long nails and the refusal to wear the correct shade of school uniform among others. In the well-entrenched traditional culture of Nigeria, the home front is the beginning of life where good virtues are taught and where children are socialized on the acceptable norms such as being respectful, morally upright, not taking other peoples materials/things. Thus, the family shapes a student's behaviour at school. On the corollary, any indecent behaviour is also traced to the family background (Oloyede and Adesina, 2013; Noun, 2015).

Apart from the students perpetrating acts of indiscipline, the school setting, management, teachers and parents all play a part in promoting or mitigating the incidence of indiscipline in schools. Finally, the politico-socio and economic situation of Nigeria may also be implicated in acts of indiscipline. Discipline in school is contingent upon the administrator. Head teachers must bring all ingenuity together to ensure, promote and sustain discipline in schools. The head teacher will often have assistants to help maintain discipline in school. This resonates with the submissions of Mohapi (2013) and Magwa and Ngara (2014). As posited by Mohapi (2013), parents are overly concerned about indiscipline in schools. Also implicated in the rising cases of indiscipline in schools is the over permissiveness of parents which contribute to the absence of discipline in schools. Some parents overprotect their children by being too permissive and as noted by Magwa and Ngara (2014), overprotected children develops unsocial behaviour. As elucidated earlier, discipline is the structure that facilitates the workings of some activities (Turner, 1973). These activities include the acquisition of knowledge by students, the skills of artisans, the training of students and the training of professional soldiers. Lack of discipline pervades the socio fabric in Nigeria. Peers exert pressure on others to conform and this may negatively influence behaviour. Not all is gloomy about peer influence; peers also learn positive values such as cooperation and responsibility.

There are two major factors that causes of misbehaviour in schools as postulated by Charlton & David (1993). These are biological and environmental. The cause is referred to as biological if it has to do with the malfunctioning of the central and peripheral nervous system and the endocrine glands, abnormal chromosomes and other genetic defects. Environmental factors revolve around the family such as death of parents or divorce, which may lead to child neglect; parenting issues and other family challenges (Charlton & David, 1993). Curwin and Mendler (1998) noted that familiarization between teachers and the students may breed contempt. They noted further that this is so due to the spaces shared together which may lead to competition and scheming against each other.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the perception and attitude of students towards discipline in selected secondary schools in Ota. The following objectives guided the study:

1 To investigate the nature of indiscipline among pupils in selected primary schools in Ota, Nigeria

    2   To evaluate the influence of principals' work experience on students' discipline in schools

    3   To establish the influence of teachers' in maintaining discipline in schools

    4   To establish whether peer influence impact on discipline in schools

    5   To determine if school and class size influences discipline in schools

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

    1   What is the nature of indiscipline among pupils in the selected secondary schools?

    2   To what extent do principals' work experience influence discipline in schools?

    3   To what extent do class teachers influence discipline in schools?

    4   Does peer-group pressure influence discipline in schools?

    5   Do school and class size influence discipline in schools?

2 METHODS

Design/Population/Sample and Sampling Techniques

The design used for this study is the cross-sectional survey design. This study involved participants from secondary schools in Ota, a sub-urban location in Southwest, Nigeria. Participants were selected from the three senior classes. This was done through stratified and simple random sampling, to cater for variables such as gender, age, class, and subject area.

2.1 Ethical consideration

The department of Psychology internal review board (IRB) certified the study fit as not constituting harm to the respondents. School principals of the selected students provided informed consent and conveyed their approval to the researchers in writing. Furthermore, parents of some of the selected participants assent by signing a consent form to indicate their approval. Participants were informed that they were free to participate or to decline participation in the study.

2.2 Instrument

A questionnaire titled discipline in school (DIS) was used for the conduct of this study. All the respondents were literate enough to read, comprehend and fill out the questionnaire forms with little or no guidance. The DIS had two sections A and B. Section A elicited data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B was elicit information on the disciplinary nature of secondary schools, influence of principals' years of working experience, teacher's attitude and conduct, and peer-group influence. The reliability of the instrument was established using a test-retest reliability method. It was administered to 30 secondary school students and after a three-week interval, the same instrument was re-administered. The Cronbach's Alpha gave a reliability coefficient of 0.84. The research trajectory was therefore considered adequate for testing purposes.

2.3 Procedure for data collection and analysis

The questionnaire forms were administered to the participants with the aid of research assistants. The questionnaires were administered and some were collected on the spot while others were retrieved later. Four hundred and seventy eight forms were fit for statistical analyses. The data were expressed as both descriptive and inferential statistics, such as frequency counts, percentages and chi-square analysis to answer the research questions. A p-value of ≤ 0.05 was considered significant. All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS statistical software.

2.4 Study participants and inclusion/ exclusion criteria

The respondents comprised 478 senior secondary school students who were selected to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria included that the school principal must provide informed consent in writing; the respondent (student) must be in senior secondary school class, agree to participate freely, inform their parents/guardians about the study, and provide a letter of assent from them. A participant

must also be at least 14 years of age and not more than 20 years. Those who did not meet these criteria were excluded from the current study.

3 RESULTS

Table 1 presents the demographic features of the respondents. There are more males (73.2%) than female respondents. The age distribution shows the youngest respondents were 14 years old and they made up 19% of the respondents. Majority of the respondents are 18 years (25.7%) while the 17 year olds made up about 20% of the respondents. Class distribution shows that 198 (41.4%) respondents were in senior secondary school (SSS) class three which is the final year of secondary school education in Nigeria. Those in SSS2 constituted 35.6% while the remaining 110 (23%) respondents were in their first year of senior secondary school.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	350	73.2
Female	128	26.8
Age (X = 16.55)		
14	91	19.0
15	69	14.4
16	42	8.8
17	95	19.9
18	123	25.7
19	57	11.9
20	1	.2
Current Class		
SSS1	110	23.0
SSS2	170	35.6
SSS3	198	41.4

Table 2: Indiscipline in Secondary Schools

Variables	Options	Frequency	Percent
Do you have cases of indiscipline in your school?	Yes	435	91.0
	No	43	9.0
Is there someone who deals with indiscipline cases in your school?	Yes	425	88.9
	No	53	11.1
Are the prefects involved in solving cases of indiscipline in your school	Yes	341	71.3
	No	137	28.7
Is there a Class Level in your school which is mostly affected by indiscipline	Yes	231	48.3
	No	247	51.7
Which of the Classes	SSS1	392	82.0
	SSS2	53	11.1
	SSS3	33	6.9
Are there any major problems of indiscipline in your school?	Yes	288	60.3
	No	190	39.7

In Table 2, the students were asked whether there were major disciplinary problems in school and responses show 91% indicating yes to this question while 89% reported that there is someone who deals with indiscipline in school. About a third of the responses reported that school prefects are

involved in maintaining discipline in the schools. The table show that students in senior class one (SSS1) are the most indiscipline (82%). More than half of the respondents (60%) reported that there were major problems of indiscipline in school. The students were requested to mention some of these problems are as listed in Table 7.

Table 3: Principal's Work Experience on Students' Discipline

Questions	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Principal's work experience influence discipline of the students	Yes	310	64.9
	No	168	35.1
Does the period of stay by the Principal in school influence discipline?	Yes	256	53.6
	No	222	46.4
Does the Principal involve other teachers in solving indiscipline	Yes	431	90.2
	No	47	9.8
Does your Principal speak frequently about indiscipline during morning assembly in your school?	Yes	237	49.6
	No	241	50.4

The data presented in Table 3 shows the perception of the respondents on the influence of years of experience of the principal in maintaining discipline. More than half of the respondents (64%) reported that what the principal do or years of work experience does affect their level of discipline and that the presence of the principal {256 (53.6%)} influences discipline. It was reported by 90% of the respondents that the principal involves other teachers in resolving disciplinary case. However, about half of the respondents (50.4%) reported the principal does not speak frequently about indiscipline cases.

Table 4: Peer Group Influence on Students' Discipline

Questions	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Are there any students peer groups in your school?	Yes	439	91.8
	No	39	8.2
Peer groups affects discipline of students in your school?	Yes	400	83.7
	No	78	16.3
Peer group causes peer pressure leading to indiscipline problems?	Yes	452	94.6
	No	26	5.4
Can peer counsellors assist other students by teaching good conduct?	Yes	453	94.8
	No	25	5.2

The data presented in Table 4 explored whether peer pressure influences students' discipline. As expected, there were students peer groups in schools (91.8%). About 84% of the respondents reported that peer groupings affects discipline. This item did not specify direction but the next question made up for this by asking whether peers cause peer-pressure leading to problems and 452 (94.6%) agreed with this while 94.8% reported that peer counsellors could assist other students by teaching good conduct thus complementing what goes on at the school counselling centres.

Table 5: Influence of School and Class Size on Students' Discipline

Questions	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Does size of your school affect students' discipline?	Yes	178	37.2
	No	300	62.8
Does size of your class affect the students' discipline?	Yes	161	33.7
	No	317	66.3
Does school control students' discipline?	Yes	421	88.1
	No	57	11.9

Table 5 explored the influence of school and class size on student's discipline. The findings show that majority of the respondents indicated that school size (62.8%) and size of the class (66.3%) had no influence on students' discipline. The third question indicates that the school exert control on students' discipline (88.1%) and the follow up question explores the means and methods put in place to ensure discipline. This is as indicated in Table 8.

Table 6: Attitude of Students towards Teacher's Supervisory Role on Students' Discipline

Questions	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Do your teachers play any role in ensuring discipline in school?	Yes	434	90.8
	No	44	9.2
Do teachers assist students in dealing with indiscipline?	Yes	464	97.1
	No	14	2.9
Do teachers play any role in shaping students' discipline?	Yes	458	95.8
	No	20	4.2
Does staff at the counselling centre assist students' affected by indiscipline?	Yes	370	77.4
	No	108	22.6
Should teachers be involved in improving and maintaining discipline of students?	Yes	431	90.2
	No	47	9.8

Table 6 explored attitude of students towards teacher's supervisory role on students' discipline. Data show that majority of the students reported that teachers play a very vital role in ensuring discipline (90.8%), assist students in dealing with indiscipline (97.1%), serve as mentors to shape students' disposition (95.8%), and the trend continued as 90.2% reported that teachers should be involved in improving and maintaining discipline of students in schools.

Table 7 contains data on offences often committed by students and other disciplinary problems in secondary schools. The offencewere ranked and noise making was ranked nimber 1 (83.5%), this was followed by verbally abusing other students (80%) ranking as number 2. Risky sexual behaviour (65.3%) was ranked number 3 while pilfering (60.3%) was ranked as number 4. From the table, students who engage in physical fights (18.6%) were ranked number 9 while smoking (16.3%) took the 10th rank. Vandalism (5.6%) was reported to be the least committed offence in the sampled schools.

Table 7: Offence/Disciplinary problem in Schools*

Offence/Disciplinary problem	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Pilfering/Stealing	288	60.3	4th
Being rude to teachers	109	22.8	8th
Verbally abusing others	382	80.0	2nd
Physical Fight	89	18.6	9th
Vandalism	27	5.6	11th
Being absent in school	261	54.6	5th
Risky sexual behaviour	312	65.3	3rd
Lateness for class	167	35	6th
Smoking	78	16.3	10th
Drinking alcohol	167	35	6th
Noise making	399	83.5	1st

*Multiple responses allowed

Table 8: Means and Methods to ensure Discipline*

Means and Methods	Frequency	Percentage
Meeting with school prefects	289	60.4
Provision of good infrastructure	397	83.0
Effective and efficient parents teachers forum (PTA)	210	44.0
Use of corporal punishment	192	40.1
Suspension and expulsion	267	56.0
Praise and rewards	426	89.1

*Multiple responses allowed

The respondents indicated that the use of praise and reward (89.1%) can maintain and sustain discipline in the school and this was closely followed by the provision of good infrastructure including clean campus environment (83%). Some respondents identified periodic meeting with the prefect body (60.4%) to inquire about students complaints and needs as a means to ensuring discipline in schools. More than half of the respondents (56%) listed suspending or outright expulsion of students as a method of ensuring discipline while 210 (44%) respondents posited that effective platform for teachers, school administration and parents meetings will reduce cases of indiscipline. One hundred and ninety-two respondents (40.1%) advocated for the use of corporal punishment as a means of ensuring discipline in schools.

4 DISCUSSION

The respondents were unequivocal in their responses that there were no major disciplinary issues in school. Some of the problems included pilfering/stealing, being rude to teachers, verbally abusing others, physical fight, vandalism, being absent in school, risky sexual behaviour, lateness for class, smoking, drinking alcohol and making excessive noise. In addition, 392 (82%) respondents identified senior secondary one (SSS 1) as the class that displays indiscipline the most.

The study revealed that principal's work experience positively impacts on the level of school discipline. More than 90% of the respondents indicated that principals often consult with the teachers on cases of indiscipline thus making the teachers stakeholders in ensuring discipline on campus. However, about half (49.6%) of the respondents reported that principals do not talk about indiscipline frequently during morning assembly. As noted by Kimani (2013), experienced head of school often set high standards for discipline in their schools to engender positive students conduct.

According to Perry (1987), peer group can influence behaviour because they demand blind obedience to group norms. Peer pressure was identified as influencing school discipline both positively and negatively. Result show that 94.8% of the respondents indicated that appointing peer counsellors to assist fellow students in teaching good conducts will reduce cases of indiscipline in schools. The result on effect of school size was surprising as research indicated that it is difficult to manage large secondary schools (Kimani, 2013). In this study, 62.8% and 66.3% respectively reported that neither school size nor class size affected level of indiscipline in schools. This study shows the role of the teacher in ensuring discipline. Result indicated teachers play a role in ensuring discipline (90.8%) and they assist students in dealing with indiscipline (97.1%). This show the important roles teachers play in shaping the life of students. According to Kimani (2013), teachers enforce school rules in curbing indiscipline problems long before they occur and constant monitoring of students enables the teachers to have authority and control over them.

5 CONCLUSION

This study brought to the fore the pervading issues on indiscipline in secondary schools. Principals are expected to be in control by being more available and discussing the menace of indiscipline on the assembly ground. Almost all the respondents agreed that well experienced principals and teachers are able to instil discipline among students. Peer influence was identified as one that could promote both discipline and indiscipline among students. Hence, the respondents agreed that having peer counsellors will go a long way in promoting positive disposition among students. Notwithstanding the size of the school or class, all hands must be on deck to promote discipline and to deal decisively with students who display acts of indiscipline.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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