

**ASSESSMENT OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS OF STUDENTS AND MEASURES
ADOPTED BY TEACHERS IN CURBING INDISCIPLINE IN
NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Ihendinihu, Uchechi Ezinwanyi
ihendinihu.ucheche@gmail.com

Department of Science Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture,
Umudike, Abia State

Abstract

The study assessed the perception of teachers on the disciplinary problems faced by secondary school students and the measures adopted by teachers in disciplining erring students. Research design adopted was descriptive survey. Participants of the study consists of 684 teachers (189 males and 495 females) from public secondary schools in Enugu state of Nigeria selected through disproportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The researcher used self-constructed questionnaire captioned disciplinary problems and measures of secondary school students (DPMSSS) to collect data for the study. Three experts validated the instrument. Reliability co-efficient of the instrument is .79, obtained using Cronbach alpha method. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Result indicated that disciplinary problems of students in secondary schools are examination malpractice, stealing, lateness to school, absenteeism, and bullying/fighting, wrong use of cell phones, vandalism, truancy, sexual harassments and insulting of teachers. The disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools include verbal warning, referral to principal, referral to disciplinary committee, written warning, and suspension, loss of privileges, manual labour, counseling/therapy, and flogging, discussion, kneeling down and reporting to parents. Gender of the teacher influences disciplinary measures adopted in secondary schools. Whereas the male teachers adopt verbal warning, manual labour and flogging to a very high extent, the female teachers adopt counselling to a very high extent. The research recommends that teachers should adopt a combination of the above measures, melt appropriate and commensurate punishment out to erring students to serve as deterrent to other students.

Key words: Assessment, discipline, disciplinary problems, disciplinary measures, gender, secondary school

Introduction

Youths are the future leaders of any nation. They form the major tool for driving the growth of any nation. Majority of these youths are in secondary schools. According to Nakpodia (2010), students are priceless assets and most essential elements in education. As noted by Flores-Tena, (2020), education is a planned effort to provide good guidance that will enhance the development of self-potential. Its major aim is to create an intellectual generation, who will be able to combine knowledge and skills needed as the main basis for social life. Putri, (2020) noted that education has an important role in promoting the progress of a country, and improving the quality of human life. Hence, for the individual to be able to live a useful life in his society and contribute maximally towards socio-economic and political development of the nation in which he/she belongs, relevant skills, values, attitudes, knowledge

and competencies that will make him to be disciplined must be impacted through education. Hence, to achieve success in education, the students or learners must exhibit acceptable level of discipline.

According to advanced learners' dictionary, discipline is the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience. Discipline is the systematic practice of self-control in order to adhere to principles, values, or established rules. It is the ability of a person to regulate his or her thoughts, emotions, and actions in order to maintain order, and foster personal growth. Discipline is an integral part of child socialization and education as an agent of socialization has a great role to play in ensuring that children are disciplined. Secondary school students can be taught to always carry out their duties well by getting used to a disciplined life (Fefer & Gordon, 2020; Hagenauer, 2018; Wang & Kuo, 2019). No doubt, the character of discipline is very important for secondary school students in shaping their personality. Students with discipline problems pose a great challenge for teachers in their fundamental bid to educate children effectively.

On the other hand, indiscipline refers to one's inability to adhere to laid down rules in any establishment or society. It is an act of lack of self-control, disrespect for dos and don'ts of any society (Odebode 2019). Indiscipline among students refers to these students not conforming to school regulations. This could manifest in the area of not putting on the appropriate uniform, lateness to school, disrespecting school authorities, stealing, verbal and physical aggression, lateness, truancy, sexual abuse, smoking, and drinking among others. Indiscipline can also occur as students talking while the teacher is teaching, involvement in examination practices, leaving school without seeking due permission (Odobedo. 2020).

In recent times, the most common act of indiscipline among our secondary school students is the wrong use of cell phones. Although most secondary schools prohibit the use of cell phones by students, students often time smuggle cell phones into the school environment. No doubt, this has both positive and negative implications. On one hand, cell phones can facilitate communication, access to information, and enhance learning opportunities. They provide a convenient tool for research, organization, and educational apps that support academic development. On the other hand, excessive cell phone usage can lead to distractions, reduced focus in classrooms, social isolation, and exposure to many societal ills that could have negative impacts on mental health.

The incidence of indiscipline has been a burden for parents, educators, administrators and the entire public. Therefore, for meaningful and long lasting development of any society, the youth would not only be nurtured but also be of good morals. Curbing indiscipline among students could take different dimensions. These include referring the unruly students to disciplinary committee, application of corporal punishment, verbal condemnation, reinforcement, organizing talks. According to Okafor (2022), other dimensions of curbing indiscipline include reinforcement, counselling, social isolation and constructive confrontation. being role models, giving moral instruction, punishment, high parental supervision, referral to appropriate helping personnel (Odebunde, 2020); referral to disciplinary committee, meeting with parents, proper subject preparation of educators, corporal punishment, referral to principal, rewards, deprivation of privileges, emphasizing values, encouraging traditions(Emekako, 2016); connecting teacher communication and school discipline (Amin, et al,2021).

Presently, Stakeholders in education have recommended and adopted several measures to correct students' misbehavior and hence instill discipline in secondary school students. Undoubtedly, the

measure adopted in disciplining a schoolchild depends on the age, educational level of the child, as well as the type of offence committed by the child. It is important to note that disciplinary measures should be appropriate to the severity of the offence committed. The measures adopted by a teacher may depend on the gender of the teacher. It is believed that male teachers prefer some disciplinary measures while female teachers prefer other ones. Studies on identifying the differences between classroom management and gender among the dimensions revealed that there is a significant difference between managing teaching and managing behaviours in favour of male teachers. Unal and Unal (2012) found that teachers' tendency to classroom management is suitable for interventionist approach rather than transactional approach. Newly graduated teachers' and male teachers' classroom management approaches had tendency to be more intrusive. Martin, Yin and Mayall (2014) revealed that there is a significant difference between classroom management approaches of female and male teachers. Female teachers' approaches seem to be more intrusive than male teachers' approaches. Various results are obtained from studies throughout literature comparing classroom management skills and competencies of teachers who are compared according to their genders. Some studies revealed that teachers' perceptions and opinions regarding their disciplinary measures and classroom management skills and competencies had been affected by their gender (İlgar, 2013; Korkut, 2015). It is on this premise that the researcher wishes to assess the disciplinary problems of secondary school students and measures adopted by teachers in dealing with the problems with gender as a moderating variable.

Purpose of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to;

1. Assess the perception of teachers on the disciplinary problems faced by secondary school students in Enugu State, Nigeria.
2. Assess the opinion of teachers on the disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools in Enugu state, Nigeria.
3. Determine the extent to which disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria differ by gender.

Research Questions

1. What are the disciplinary problems faced by secondary school students in Enugu state of Nigeria?
2. What are the disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools in Enugu state of Nigeria?
3. To what extent does gender influence disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools in Enugu state of Nigeria?

Theoretical Basis for the Study

This study is anchored on Kounin Theory. According to Odebode (2020), Kounin is a renowned contributor of behavioral method and approach, which is, based on the action-response of the behaviorist theories. Kounin (1971) explained that students imbibe acceptable behaviors and drop unacceptable ones with the aim of gaining reward in form of acceptance, praise, acknowledgement and avoiding punishment of any kind. When reward follows a behavior, such behavior is strengthened and

there is every tendency that such behaviour will be exhibited repeatedly. However, when unacceptable response is presented with pain and fear, such behavior is weakened and may never be exhibited (Allen, 1999). Skinner centered on controlling learner's behavior and achieving behavior change. Kounin focused on educator's behavior to achieve acceptable and eradicate maladaptive behavior of students. This means that according to Kounin's model that the teachers have the responsibility of making the learners/students behave in acceptable ways. The implication of this theory is that the school, school administrators and teachers can make a great impact in curbing indiscipline among students and youths at large using suitable measures

Methods

The research design used for this study is descriptive survey. The sample size consists of 684 teachers (189 males and 495 females) from public secondary schools in Enugu state selected through disproportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The researcher used self-constructed questionnaire captioned disciplinary problems and measures of secondary school students (DPMSSS) as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire has two sections (A & B). Section A deals with demographic data such as local government area, school and gender of the teacher while Section B was arranged in three clusters to answer research questions one to three. Cluster (1) contains the disciplinary problems faced by secondary school students. Cluster (2) contains the disciplinary measures teachers adopt in secondary schools. Cluster (3) deals with the extent of adoption of the disciplinary measures based on gender. The questionnaire contain 44 item statements structured as Strongly Agree (SA)-4, Agree (A)-3, Disagree (D)-2 and Strongly Disagree (SD)-1 for research questions 1 and 2 and Very High Extent (VHE)-4, High Extent (HE)-3, Low Extent (LE)-2 and Very Low Extent (VLE)-1 for research question 3. The mean benchmark of 2.50 was used to take decision for research questions 1 and 2. Items that scored 2.5 and above are accepted, whereas items that scored below 2.5 are not accepted. For research questions 3, real limit of numbers was used to take decision using the following defined range: 3.50 – 4.00, Very High Extent (VHE). 2.50 – 3.49 High Extent (HE), 1.50 – 2.49 Low Extent (LE) and 1.00 – 1.49, Very Low Extent (VLE).

Three experts validated the instrument: two from Psychology and Counselling and one from Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability coefficient of the instrument is .79 obtained using Cronbach alpha method. Data generated were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Results

Research question one: What are the disciplinary problems faced by secondary school students in Enugu state Nigeria.

Table 1: Mean response of teachers on the disciplinary problems faced by secondary school students.

S/N	PROBLEMS	MEAN	RANK	STANDARD DEVIATION	REMARKS
-----	----------	------	------	--------------------	---------

1	Examination malpractice	3.08	3rd	.806	Agreed
2	8 Lateness to school	3.44	1st	.745	Agreed
3	Stealing	3.11	2nd	1.111	Agreed
4	Absenteeism	2.74	10 th	.929	Agreed
5	Bullying/fighting	3.08	3rd	.806	Agreed
6	Wrong use of cell phones	2.83	8 th	1.015	Agreed
7	Vandalism	2.91	6 th	.780	Agreed
8	Alcohol consumption	2.33	11 th	.921	Disagreed
9	Substance abuse/smoking	2.33	11 th	.921	Disagreed
10	Truancy	2.80	9 th	.948	Agreed
11	Sexual harassments	2.88	7 th	.872	Agreed
12	Cultism	2.32	14 th	.840	Disagreed
13	Insulting of teachers	2.96	5 th	.863	Agreed
14	Rioting	2.35	13 th	.813	Disagreed

Result in table1 shows that ten (10) out of fourteen (14) items listed have mean score greater than 2.5 (which is the mean value of the four point scale). The items are 1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,10,11 and 12. The implication is that teachers agreed to the fact that the disciplinary problems faced by secondary school students are: lateness to school (3.44), stealing (3.11), examination malpractice (3.08), bullying/fighting (3.08), insulting teachers (2.96), vandalism (2.91), and sexual harassment (2.88), and wrong use of cell phones (2.83), truancy (2.80), and absenteeism (2.74). in that order. On the other hand, items 8, 9, 12 and 14 have means scores less than 2.5. Hence, teachers do not agree that substance abuse/smoking (2.33), alcohol consumption (2.33), cultism (2.32) and rioting (2.35) are prominent disciplinary problems among secondary school students in Abia state of Nigeria.

Research Question two:

What are the disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools in Enugu state of Nigeria.

8

Table 2: disciplinary measures adopted by secondary school teachers

S/N	MEASURES	MEAN	RANK	STANDARD DEVIATION	REMARKS
1	Verbal warning	3.49	3rd	.660	Agreed

2	Referral to principal	2.95	8 th	.848	Agreed
3	Referral to disciplinary committee	2.91	10 th	.754	Agreed
4	Written warning	2.53	13 th	.667	Agreed
5	Referral to law enforcement agents	1.52	15 th	.582	Disagreed
6	Suspension	3.20	6 th	.910	Agreed
7	Expulsion	2.42	14 th	.854	Disagreed
8	Loss of privileges	2.91	10 th	.754	Agreed
9	Restitution	2.57	12 th	.854	Agreed
10	Manual labour	3.57	2 nd	.796	Agreed
11	Counseling/therapy	3.48	4 th	.736	Agreed
12	Flogging	3.38	5 th	.844	Agreed
13	Discussion	2.95	8 th	.848	Agreed
14	Kneeling down	3.67	1 st	.782	Agreed
15	Reporting to the parents	3.04	7 th	.899	Agreed

The result shown in table 2 indicated that thirteen(13) out of fifteen (15) items listed as disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools have mean scores greater than 2.5, whereas two (2) of the items have mean scores less than 2.5. The indication is that teachers agreed to the fact that the disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools include kneeling down (3.67), manual labour (3.57), verbal warning (3.49), and counseling/therapy (3.48). Others are flogging (3.38), suspension (3.20), reporting to the parents (3.04), discussion (2.95), referral to principal (2.95), referral to disciplinary committee (2.91), loss of privileges(2.91), restitution (2.57) and written warning (2.53) in that descending order. However, the teachers disagree on two of the items as disciplinary measures currently adopted in secondary schools. They are expulsion (2.42) and referral to law enforcement agents (1.52). Hence, these two measures are hardly used.

Research question three: To what extent does gender influence disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools in Enugu state of Nigeria?

Table 3: Influence of teacher gender on disciplinary measures adopted in secondary schools

S/N MEASURES	MEAN FOR REMARKS				
	MALE TEACHERS	FEMALE TEACHERS			
1	Verbal warning	3.52	VHE	3.03	HE

2	Referral to principal	2.70	HE	3.10	HE
3	Referral to disciplinary committee	2.60	HE	3.00	HE
4	Written warning	2.42	LE	2.35	LE
5	Referral to law enforcement agents	1.65	VLE	1.20	VLE
6	Suspension	3.44	HE	3.04	HE
7	Expulsion	2.45	LE	1.22	VLE
8	Loss of privileges	2.82	HE	3.04	HE
9	Restitution	2.30	LE	2.67	HE
10	Manual labour	3.70	VHE	3.10	HE
11	Counseling/therapy	2.91	HE	3.65	VHE
12	Flogging	3.57	VHE	2.80	HE
13	Discussion	2.57	HE	3.21	HE
14	Kneeling down	3.72	VHE	3.60	VHE
15	Reporting to the parents	2.86	HE	3.20	HE
	GRAND MEAN	2.88		2.81	

Where VHE = Very High Extent, HE = High Extent, LE = Low Extent and VLE = Very Low Extent. From the result shown in table 3, the disciplinary measures adopted by male teachers, to a very high extent, include verbal warning, manual labour kneeling down and flogging. The measures adopted to a high extent include referral to principal, referral to disciplinary committee, suspension, loss of privileges, counselling discussion, and reporting to parents; low extent include written warning, expulsion and restitution; very low extent is referral to law enforcement agents.

For the female teachers the disciplinary measures adopted to a very high extent include counselling and kneeling down; high extent include verbal warning, referral to principal, referral to disciplinary committee, suspension, loss of privileges, restitution, manual labour, flogging, discussion and reporting to parents; low extent is written warning; very low extent is referral to law enforcement and suspension. It can be observed that whereas the male teachers utilize verbal warning, manual labour and flogging to a very high extent, the female teachers utilize counselling to a very high extent.

Hence, gender of the teacher influence disciplinary measures adopted in secondary schools.

The grand means indicating extent of adoption of disciplinary measures for male and female teachers show that male teachers have mean of 2.88 whereas female teachers have mean of 2.81. The implication is that male teachers are more involved in disciplinary measures than female teachers are.

Summary of Findings

Based on the result of data analyses, the following findings were made:

- The disciplinary problems of students in secondary schools are examination malpractice, stealing, lateness to school, absenteeism, bullying/fighting, wrong use of cell phones, vandalism, truancy, sexual harassments and insulting of teachers.
- The disciplinary measures adopted in secondary schools include verbal warning, written warning, and suspension, loss of privileges, manual labour, counseling/therapy, flogging, and discussion, kneeling down and reporting to parents.
- Gender of teachers influences the extent of adoption of the disciplinary measures. Whereas the male teachers adopt manual labour, flogging and verbal warning to a very high extent, the female teachers adopt counselling to a very high extent. Male teachers are more involved in discipline than female teachers are.

Discussion

The report that lateness to school, stealing and examination malpractice are in the top of the list of the disciplinary problems of students in public secondary schools in Enugu state is in line with a priori expectation. Most of the public secondary schools do not have functional boarding system. Hence, the students attend school from home. The distances of the homes from school, the transport constraints and distractions from home will likely delay the students and cause them to attend school late. Furthermore, most of the students who attend public secondary schools nowadays come from poor homes where the parents or guardians may not be able to provide their basic needs. This could lead some of the students into stealing.

On the issue of examination malpractice, most students in public schools do not have adequate learning materials that will enable them prepare well for examinations. They often resort to examination malpractice to pass their examinations. However, the fact that insulting of teachers emerged as one of the disciplinary problems of secondary school students is contrary to a priori expectation. The students are expected to have high regard and respect for their teachers. The poor treatment given to teachers in public schools by government, like delay in payment of salary, could make students regard them as poor and hence look down on them.

Furthermore, the finding that kneeling down, manual labour and verbal warning are in the top of the list of disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools aligns with a priori expectation. The fact that corporal punishment is discouraged in schools may have made these other measures more popular. The finding that male teachers utilize verbal warning and manual labour mostly while the female teachers utilize counselling is also in line with a priori expectation. The female teachers have better quiet and calm disposition, are tolerable and hence are amenable to utilizing counselling. Conversely, the fact that male teachers mostly utilize manual labour and verbal warning could be because these measures require more energy that is physical. Hence, the conclusion that gender influence disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in secondary schools is in line with a priori expectation.

The finding of the present study agrees with Okafor (2022) who reported that both male and female teachers use of reinforcement, counselling, corporal punishment, social isolation and constructive confrontation in the management of classroom undesirable behaviours among junior public secondary

school students. The finding corroborates with Odebode (2020) who noted that being good role models, giving moral education in schools, punishment, high parental supervision and referral to appropriate helping personnel are strategies for curbing indiscipline in secondary schools. The finding also supports Emekako (2016) who reported that referral to disciplinary committee, meeting with parents, proper subject preparation of educators, corporal punishment, referral to principal and rewards are measures for curbing indiscipline in schools. Other measures are deprivation of privileges, emphasizing values, encouraging tradition, encouraging learners praise amongst other learners, learners' participation in the code of conduct, system of classroom rules and isolation outside the classroom. The result also agrees with other researchers who reported differences in disciplinary measures and classroom management skills in favour of male teachers (Unal & Unal, 2012; Martin, Yin & Mayall, 2014; İlgar, 2013; Koçoğlu, 2011; Korkut, 2015).

Recommendation

1. Teachers and parents should adopt behavioral modification strategies such as counseling therapy and discussion with the students among others in secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. Moral education should be continually given in schools and at home. This will serve as revelation for students to the danger of indiscipline as well as the benefit of being of good conduct.
3. Appropriate and commensurate punishment such as kneeling down, manual labour, verbal warning, flogging and so on should be melted out to stubborn students. This should however, be used sparingly and only when all other behavioral modification strategies have failed.
4. Counseling services should be provided in schools continuously. This could be done in form of orientation at all-time which will stand as preventive and curative counselling.
5. Schools should constitute disciplinary committees that will superintend over disciplinary issues of the students.

References

- Amin A., Alimni, Dwi A.K., Sabila E.S., & Miftahul A.Z., (2021) *The Study of Differences and Influences of Teacher Communication and Discipline Characters of Students*. Jurnal Ilmiah Sekolah Dasar, 622-630 P-ISSN: 2579-3276 E-ISSN: 2549-6174.
- Allen, T. H. (1999). *Developing a discipline plan for you*. Retrieved from <http://www.humboldt.edu/tha/discip-options.html>.
- Emekako, R. U. (2016). Disciplinary measures for learners in secondary schools: An Evaluation of a district in the North West province. *Pakistan journal of social sciences* 13(5-6): 64 – 72. ISSN: 1683-8831.
- Fefer, S. A., & Gordon, K. (2020). Exploring perceptions of school climate among secondary students with varying discipline infractions. *International Journal of School and Educational Psychology*, 8(3), 174–183.
- Flores-Tena, M. J. (2020). The Educational Inclusion in the Deficit of Attention of Elementary Students. *International Journal of Educational Research Review*, 265–273.

- Hagenauer, G., Gläser-Zikuda, M., & Moschner, B. (2018). University students' emotions, life satisfaction and study commitment: a self-determination theoretical perspective. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 42(6), 808–826.
- Hezekiah, O. A. & Nkechi, O. (2015). Strategies for managing indiscipline among secondary school students in Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Foundations & Management*. 9(1): 23 – 33.
- Ilgar, L. (2013). *A research study on classroom management skills of primary school teachers* (A Master thesis, Istanbul University).
- KoCoGlu, Z. (2011). Emotional intelligence and teacher efficacy: A study of Turkish EFL, preservice teachers. *Teacher Development*, 15, 471 – 484.
- Korkut, K. (2015). The correlation between level of classroom teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and classroom management ability perceptions. *Masters thesis, Mehmet Akif Ersay University*.
- Kounin, J. (1977). *Discipline and group management in classroom*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Winston.
- Martin, N. K. & Yin, Z. (2011). Attitudes and beliefs regarding classroom management style: differences between male and female teachers. *A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, Austin, TX, ERIC404738*
- Martin, N. K., Yin, Z., & Mayall, H. (2014). Classroom management training, teaching experience and gender: do these variables impact teachers' attitude and beliefs toward classroom management style? *A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, Austin, TX, ERIC494050*.
- Nakpodia, E. D. (2010). Teachers' disciplinary approaches to students discipline problems in Nigeria. *International NGO Journal* 5(6): 144 – 151. <http://www.academicjournals.org/INGOJ>. ISSN 1993-8225 © 2010 Academic Journals.
- Odebode, A. A. (2020). Views of Nigerian Teachers on Strategies for Curbing Indiscipline: Implications for Counselling Practices. *Mimbar Sekolah Dasar*, 7(1), 30-42. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17509/mimbar-sd.v7i1.23477>
- Odebode, A. A. (2019). Causes of indiscipline among students as viewed by primary school teachers in Nigeria. *Mimbar Sekolah Dasar*, 6(1), 126 – 140
- Okafor, G. O. (2022). Strategies adopted by teachers in the management of classroom undesirable behaviours among junior secondary school students in Anambra state. *Journal of Educational Research and Development*: 5(1) 25 – 42. ISSN (print): 2682-5201;
- Putri, N. P. J. E., Artini, L. P., & Wahyuni, L. G. E. (2020). EFL Teachers' Perception and Strategies for Integrating Character Education into the Lesson. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*.
- Strauss, M. A. (2001). *Beating the devil out of them: Corporal punishment in American families*. New Brunswick, NJ. Transaction publishing.
- Unal, Z., & Unal, A. (2012). Comparing beginning and experienced teachers' perceptions of classroom management beliefs and practices in elementary schools in Turkey. *Education Journal*, 4(8), 243-352.
- Wang, W. L., & Kuo, C. Y. (2019). Relationships among Teachers' Positive Discipline, Students'

Well-being and Teachers' Effective Teaching: A Study of Special Education Teachers and Adolescent Students with Learning Disabilities in Taiwan. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 66(1), 82–98.

