



INDISCIPLINE AMONG LEARNERS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE: A REFLECTIVE DISCOURSE

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Abstract

Indiscipline amongst learners in public secondary schools has become a source of concern and worry to stakeholders in the education sector, particularly as it appears to be defying measures designed to stem the tide. This research explored the factors responsible for indiscipline among learners in secondary schools in Edo State. The descriptive survey research design involving 300 learners and 300 teachers randomly selected from public schools within Oredo local government area of Edo State; while the social learning theory was adopted as the study's theoretical foundation in explaining the topic under investigation. The data gathered were analysed with the aid of both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study showed that the factors responsible for indiscipline among learners in public secondary schools were multifaceted and includes lack of commitment on the part of teachers, family negligence of its role, decadence in the society, influence of peer groups, social media influence and substance abuse respectively. The study suggests that public secondary school authorities should strictly enforce the laid down rules and regulations governing the conducts of learners within and outside the classroom, while parents should endeavor to instill sound moral values in their children right from the formative stage of their lives.

Keywords: Indiscipline, learners, social malaise, stakeholders.

Introduction

Universally, education as a concept refers to all the purposeful socially organised and regulated processes and activities aimed at achieving specific objectives such as the transmission of knowledge, fostering of skills and acceptable character traits. Interestingly, one of the core aim of education in Nigeria is well captured in the National Policy of Education (2004), and it is to inculcate the right values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society. Little wonder then, that graduands at convocation ceremonies are told that they have been found worthy in learning and in character. The essence of education therefore is transference of socially acceptable character traits in addition to knowledge and skills that will make the individual a better person in the society.

In Nigeria, discipline in public schools was quite high up till 1970 but it nosedived after the civil war as students started to exhibit different anti-social behaviour (Ojedapo, 2011). Ojedapo (2011) has attributed the high moral discipline in

schools prior to 1970 to the fact that most of the schools then were run by voluntary individuals (the missionaries) whose core mandate had to do with good morals. This implies that the compulsory hand over of mission schools to government produced the unintended consequence of acts of indiscipline among learners. The school as the second agent of socialization is saddled with the responsibility of inculcating acceptable behavioural pattern into their learners but unfortunately, carrying out this function is being greatly hampered by indiscipline among learners at all levels of the educational institutions in the world as a whole (Ofori, Tordzro, Asamoah & Achiaa, 2018).

The Nigerian educational system has come under heavy criticism for its inability to curtail the various acts of indiscipline and insurgences amongst its students. In fact, it would appear that the various efforts and strategies put in place by the school administrators have achieved nothing as indiscipline continues to persist (Elughe, 2014). Besides that; the root of indiscipline



amongst learners seem to reside in the learners, the home and the society (Okumbe, 2001) and if not well handled, it can derail the educational goals and objectives. This means that the home (family) which is the first agent of socialization needs to sit up to its responsibility of inculcating the right values and norms into its members. The school exists to strengthen such values which the family has developed in the children in addition to instilling discipline into the learners; and on its part, the society has a major role to play as well. The Nigeria society regrettably places too much value on materialism, not minding its roots. Little wonder then that, “yahoo plus” and ritual murders have continued to persist. The learners in schools see, imbibe and also end up as participating in them with all the attendant adverse implication on them, the school and society at large.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, acts of indiscipline amongst learners in schools have persisted and it would appear that there is no end in sight on the issue. What is worrisome to school administrators, teachers and stakeholders is that, the school is supposed to be a place where the character of learners is defined and behaviour modified but the reverse has become the case (Adegoke, 2011). In fact, the school is now a place where gangsterism, smoking, cultism, drug abuse, truancy, absenteeism and insurgencies against school management have become the order of the day (Kute, 2014). The society generally looks unto the educational institution to provide knowledge, character and discipline to the learners. The societal expectancy of the school has unfortunately remained an illusion as the social phenomenon is on the increase. It is a truism that indiscipline is not limited to the school environment as it pervades all spheres of human environment. It is like a cankerworm that has eaten very deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. As noted by Enefu, Obaka, Okaforcha & Haruna (2019), the various acts of indiscipline in schools in Nigeria are varied and with severe social implications on the learners, school and society in general.

The fact remains that education is one of the

greatest devices of man for the overall improvement of the society and that is why evidence emerging that there are differences in the behaviour between today's students and those of twenty years ago have become disturbing to stakeholders (Dhlamini, 2014). Today's students he notes, engage in various undesirable behaviour that were unheard of in the yester years. Scholars have tried to link the causative factors to peer and media influence, drug abuse, broken homes and teachers' indifference (Njagi, 2014; Muide, 2015 & Rubin, 2016). Knowing that the stability and continued existence of the society are in danger because an undisciplined learner can do grave damage to himself, the school and society; government and school administrators have tried to stem this rising trend with the introduction of policies and rules.

Tried as government and school administrators have in terms of curbing indiscipline in schools, it would appear that the phenomenon is still on the increase. The questions that agitate the minds of concerned citizens of Nigeria remain: Is it that there are no rules and regulations to prevent indiscipline among learners in schools? Are the causes of indiscipline in schools insurmountable? It is against this background that this study therefore sought to bridge this gap by engaging in a reflexive discourse on indiscipline amongst learners in public secondary schools in Edo State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Are there rules and regulations against indiscipline in public secondary schools in Edo State?
2. Are the rules and regulations against indiscipline effective in curbing indiscipline in public secondary schools in Edo State?
3. What are the causes of indiscipline in public secondary schools in Edo State?

Objectives of the Study

The study was embarked upon principally to examine indiscipline among learners in public secondary schools in Edo State. However, the



study specifically seeks to:

1. Find out if there is indiscipline in public secondary schools in Edo State.
2. Examine the effectiveness of the rules and regulations against indiscipline in curbing indiscipline in public secondary schools in Edo State.
3. Examine the causes of indiscipline in public secondary schools in Edo State.

Brief Review of Related Literature

Indiscipline in Nigerian colleges has become a social malaise not only creating concern to the stakeholders but seem to be defying the various efforts that has been put in place to eradicate it. Scholars have looked at the issue of indiscipline from different perspectives. Orhungur (2003) sees the concept as not conforming to established societal norms. Ekpo (2003) on his part believes that, indiscipline is the state of disregard for laid down rules and regulation which result in disorderly behaviour in learners. Similarly, Okeke (2014) opines that it is the essence of proper training which produces unruly behaviour, obedience and disorder amongst learners. Akpan (2003) insists that the term refers to all forms of disobedience within the school setting.

Rules and Regulation vis-à-vis Indiscipline in Schools

The rate at which learners in public secondary schools engage in different vices is breath taking. In fact, acts of indiscipline in public schools are quite alarming and if not controlled, will cause severe damages to the nation's educational system. This better explains the concern stakeholders are having over the issue. Scholars like Johnson (2010) have noted that indiscipline not only exists but manifests in form of improper dressing, lateness to school, misbehavior, bullying, hooliganism, unrest and drug abuse. These acts of indiscipline take different forms within the classroom, school premises and outside the school environs. However, three kinds of misbehaviour easily fit into what constitute indiscipline in schools and these are: misbehaviour that inhibit the student's own learning, misbehavior that one student which affects another student's learning and

misbehaviour which affects the management and staff of the schools (Morongwo, 2010).

For members of society to live and co-exist, there must be rules of engagement. Such rules as Asaolu (2007) observed are designed to make all the people in society show character that will conform to the laws of the land. Similarly, the school have rules and regulations that are put in place to ensure that there is peaceful co-existence in schools; these rules are also meant to guide and control the behaviour of learners with the goal of setting high standards of discipline that will aid the education process. This, to Akinpelu (1981), equally means that any breach by any learner of such established school rules and regulations are met with sanctions as the infringement constitute an offence. However, he notes that many of the schools do not have the will power to enforce these rules and regulations and so, the rules and regulations are not adhered to.

Underlying Factors responsible for Indiscipline in Schools

Lack of Commitment on the part of Teachers

This is one of the major causes of indiscipline amongst learners in public schools in Edo State as teachers who ought to be role models have instead by their conduct, taught learner's truancy, and lateness to school. The aftermath of this is that the school syllabuses are not covered at the end of the term. Some principals are fond of leaving the school for their personal matters under the guise of going to the ministry of education or post primary education board. The attitude of some teachers to put it mildly, is distasteful, unbecoming and non-chailliant. This unfortunately has made learners develop negative attitude towards learning, as well as engaging in dysfunctional behaviour because no teacher cares or is bothered (Oghuvbu, 1995; Idu & Olugbade, 2011 & Ekpo & Bassey, 2011).

Family's Negligence of Its Role

Some scholars have argued that the family has a major share in the causative factor of indiscipline in schools. Egbochukwu & Ekanem (2008) have advised parents to engage their children in useful sex education in addition to passing the right



values to them so that they can become useful members of the society. On his part, Madzivyire (2010) placed the blame of indiscipline of students at the door step of parents who have neglected the discipline of their children. Many families have abandoned the proper training of their children to the teachers. Regrettably, some of the teachers are not interested as they are part of the problem of indiscipline in schools.

Decadence in Society

The issue of indiscipline in schools cannot be adequately discussed without the society as it cannot be absolved of the irresponsible behaviour of the students. For one thing, a good society breeds good members and a disciplined society breeds disciplined individuals (Kiprop, 2012). The society not only values materialism but worships those who display affluence. Unfortunately, the source of their wealth is not questioned. A lot of young boys have taken to “yahoo plus” and openly display their wealth which some of the teachers even envy instead of reproaching them. The unfortunate thing is that some members of the society belong to various secret cults and as such, do not see anything wrong in their children taking to yahoo plus. In fact, they lack the moral justification to do so.

Influence of Peer Groups

The minds of the young ones are quite impressionable and more often than not, tend to seek the approval of their mates. They also like to do or emulate what their mates do, whether negative or positive. In fact, as Ndakwa (2013) observed, the influence of peer groups could lead to acts of indiscipline among learners. This implies that peers who exhibit good behaviour promote the same among their mates and vice-versa. For one thing, learners tend to trust their mates more than their parents due to the fact that they are able to relate and bond easily with them. Some learners take to drinking and abuse of substance simply because their mates do so. Others absent themselves from attending classes because their friends asked them not to. Peer influence often convinces the teenage learners to act in a manner dictated to by their mates positively or negatively. The negative peer

influence to Drewry (2007), is responsible for learners' drop out from school.

Social Media Influence

New media often referred to as social media are basically technologies that enhance social interaction amongst people who use such medium. Good as this medium is in terms of quick dissemination of messages across different and vast geographical locations, it however has adverse social implications on learners, family and society. For one thing, social media negatively affects learners by distracting them, exposing them to bullying, spreading rumour and irresponsible behaviour such as nudity and violent actions (Brannam, 2016). There is a truism that the increased usage of social media by learners has undoubtedly created issues for schools to deal with. Gangsterism, sagging, tattooing which are common amongst learners in public schools today are often learnt over social media. Most learners are engrossed in making social media friends and learning bad behaviour from them through chatting and exchange of immoral and nude content.

Substance Abuse

The use and abuse of substance by learners has become a serious concern among stakeholders, especially as it has led to incessant acts of indiscipline among learners in public schools across Edo State. There is no gainsaying the fact that, substance abuse has become endemic in the Nigerian society to the extent that public school learners have also indulged themselves in it. Okorodudu & Okorodudu (2004) have observed that quite a number of secondary school learners get involved in substance abuse which leads them to perpetuate acts of indiscipline such as rape, examination malpractice, absenteeism and the likes. When learners abuse substance, their behaviour tend to affect the effective and smooth functioning of the classroom; their behaviour towards teachers, the school authority and even fellow learners in the school (Zubaida, 2009).

Theoretical Orientation

This study adopted the social learning theory of Albert Bandura as its theoretical foundation for



the purpose of explaining the topic under focus. The central thesis of this theory as expounded by Bandura (1985) is that individuals generally observe, model and imitate the attitudes, behavioural pattern and emotional reaction of significant others. The theory holds that both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behaviour. In other words, it believes that all human behaviours, be it adaptive or maladaptive, social or anti-social are learnt and can also be unlearned. This implies as noted by Joseph (2021) that no matter the nature of indiscipline manifested in the school or amongst the learners, it is the outcome of poor learning experiences. In relation to the topic under focus, this theory implies that all acts of indiscipline perpetuated by learners in public secondary schools are learnt from members of the family, peer group, social media and teachers. If the learner sees that there is a reward or no sanction for such acts of indiscipline he or she is most likely to engage in it.

Methods and Materials

The study employed the cross-sectional descriptive survey research method. The population of this study consists of all teachers and students in twenty public secondary schools in Oredo local government area of Edo State and with the aid of the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) usually used for known population, 600 respondents were selected from the area of study. The study adopted the stratified random sampling technique which has to do with dividing the population into strata designed based on members of the population distribution. The instrument adopted for data collection was a self-designed semi-structured questionnaire which had two sections; Section A which elicited information on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents while Section B sought information with respect to the topic under focus. The data collected was analysed using the frequency distribution and simple percentage. The instrument was administered on twenty respondents and after two weeks, they were again administered, using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula (PPMC). The result of the coefficient was 0.94 which shows

that, the instrument was reliable enough to be used in the study. The instrument was scrutinized by two lecturers in the Department of Education to ensure that it possessed content and face validity as required universal standard for validity of instrument.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section is devoted to data presentation and discussion of findings which are done in line with the specific objectives of the study.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
10-19	300	50
20-29	50	8
30-39	100	17
40-49	100	17
50 and above	50	8
Total	600	100
Religion		
Christianity	580	97
Islam	-	-
A.T.R.	20	3
Total	600	100
Educational status		
Students	300	50
N.C.E	50	8
B.Sc/B.ED	200	33
M.Sc & Ph.D	50	8
Total	600	100
Marital status		
Married	250	42
Single	350	58
Divorced	-	-
Separated	-	-
Total	600	100
Occupation		
Student	300	50
Teacher	300	50
Total	600	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 1 indicates that respondents within the ages of 10-19 years were 300 (50%), those between 20-29 years were 50 (8%), while those within the ages of 30-39 and 40-49 years were 100 (17%) respectively and those who were 50 years and above were 50 (8%). This indicates that majority



of the respondents were between the ages of 10-19 years. On religion, 580 (97%) of the participants were Christians, none were Muslims while 20 (3%) practiced African traditional religion. On educational status, 300 (50%) of the participants were secondary students, 50 (8%) were NCE holders, while 200 (33%) had B.Sc/B.ED degrees and 50 (8%) of the participants had M.Sc/Ph.D degrees. On marital status, 250 (42%) of the respondents were married, 350 (58%) were single and none were neither divorced nor separated.

Table 2: Percentage Score of the existence of indiscipline in public schools

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Is there indiscipline in public schools?	Yes	450	75
	No	150	25
	Undecided	-	-
	Total	600	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 2 shows that 75% of the participants affirmed that there is indiscipline in public schools, while 25% was in the negative. This research finding is in concordance with the research findings of Johnson (2010) and Elughe (2014) where they observed that indiscipline is a global phenomenon that pervades secondary schools. They further insist that beyond its existence in schools, its prevalence is alarming and quite worrisome to all stakeholders in schools as it continues to persist.

Table 3: Percentage Score of the effectiveness of rules and regulations against indiscipline in public schools

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How effective are the rules and regulations against indiscipline in public schools?	Yes	100	17
	No	500	83
	Undecided	-	-
	Total	600	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 3 reflects that 17% of the participants affirmed that the rules and regulations against indiscipline in public schools are effective, 83% was in the negative while none were undecided. This research finding further gives credence to the works of Akinpelu (1981) Asaolu (2007) where

they found that schools basically have rules and regulations which guide the conduct and activities of learners and even teachers but regrettably these rules and regulations are not strictly enforced by the teachers and management of secondary schools thus rendering them ineffective and of no consequence as far as discipline is concerned.

Table 4: Percentage Score of Reasons for indiscipline in public schools

What are the reasons for Infidelity among Men?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of commitment on the part of the teachers	50	8
Family	40	7
Society	50	8
Peer influence	50	8
Social media influence	60	10
Drug abuse	50	8
All of the above	300	50
None of the above	-	-
Total	600	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 4 indicates that 8% of the surveyed participants affirmed that lack of commitment on the part of the teachers is a reason for indiscipline, 7% mentioned family as a reason, society and peer influence accounted for 8% respectively, while social media was 10%, drug abuse was 8%, and 50% highlighted all the above reasons. This finding is further given credence to by the works of Ekpo & Bassey (2011), Madzviyire (2010), Kiprop (2012), Ndwaka (2013) and Brannam (2016) and Okorududu & Okorodudu (2004) where they argued that lack of commitment on the part of teachers, family negligence of its role, decadence in the society, influence of peer groups, social media influence and substance abuse respectively were some of the reasons for the continued existence of indiscipline in public secondary schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Most, if not all public secondary schools in Nigeria are confronted with various acts of indiscipline carried out by learners. It would appear that the incidence is on the increase with serious adverse social circumstances. What is more worrisome is that, all the stakeholders in the



education industry have contributed in one way or the other to the present messy situation. Some parents have neglected the moral upbringing of their children and society have misplaced societal values where corrupt politicians and “Yahoo Yahoo boys” are now worshipped. A society demands the type of learners it gets. The various acts of indiscipline manifest and condoned by the society also rub off on the learners who are good imitators. Regrettably, learners are now trained in a school environment devoid of rules, loving and disciplined environment. Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions were put forth:

1. Schools should institute award for the best-behaved learner, every academic session. This will in some way spur others to imitate the awardee.
2. Rules and regulations should not be ambiguous rather clearly stated. The management of schools should apply the necessary and prescribed sanction on any learner who contravenes any of the rules and regulations of the schools, irrespective of the social status of the learners' parents.
3. The teachers should endeavour to at all times be role models to the learners by avoiding negative acts. In addition, they should correct the learners' mistakes in a gentle and loving manner, instead of being harsh and labelling them as idiots or mumu
4. Qualified guidance counsellors should be employed and posted to all public secondary schools in Edo State. The counsellors should at intervals organize lectures, workshops and seminars where the ills of substance abuse and other social vices are exposed to learners.
5. Parents should monitor the use of cell phones and the time learners spend on the internet, particularly the sites the learners visit because of the things, habits and the likes that they could pick up from there.
6. Schools and even government should try and make provision for correctional facilities within the school premises, as well as in strategic locations in the communities. This will divert learners' attention from the pressure they receive from their peer groups.

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