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INDISCIPLINE IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:  
TYPES, CAUSES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates indiscipline in secondary schools in Nigeria with the purpose of finding out the common types, its causes and possible solutions. The study employed descriptive survey research design. Four research questions were raised and answered while two hypotheses were formulated and tested. A sample of 205 principals, 310 teachers and 420 students was drawn from 60 secondary schools in three states. The questionnaire with thirty-six items; was the instrument for data collection. Descriptive statistics involving percentage and mean were used to answer the research questions while one way ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed the common types of indiscipline as insubordination to school teachers and prefects, cases relating to the collective misbehaviour of students and cases relating to poor habits. The causes of indiscipline were Students based, the society based causes and school based causes. The identified possible solutions to indiscipline include moral leadership and education and societal orientation. The author recommended that the Nigerian government, Educationists, Educators, reformers, school administrators and parents should ensure that adequate facilities are provided in schools for effective learning, games and sports. Agencies of moral education must intensify efforts at ensuring that sound moral training is given to children.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a critical tool for the transformation of the individual and the society. Secondary education in Nigeria is aimed at preparing the individual for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education. For the individual to be able to live a useful life in his society and contribute towards the social, economic and political development of the nation, the relevant skills, values, attitudes, knowledge and competencies must be impacted. Recent times have witnessed tremendous growth in the incidents of indiscipline in Nigerian Secondary schools. Indiscipline has been a major and continuous administrative problem among secondary schools in developing countries. Denga (1999) in his study identified indiscipline problems such as stealing, truancy, sexual offence, vandalism and cheating as destructive practices.

In many urban and rural areas of Nigeria, the percentage of students who drop out of school is much higher. Such students develop and exhibit deviant behaviour and may never fulfill their potentials. They become burdens to the society. Nigerian educators, administrators and parents are concerned about the increasing rate of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools. This observation should disturb the mind of any patriotic Nigerian because the children

are the future leaders of the country. As a result, any attempt to control or eliminate the existence of indiscipline in schools will be acceptable to the government, educators, parents and school administrators. The main thrust of this study is to investigate indiscipline in secondary schools in Nigeria and identify the common types, causes and proffer possible solutions.

Several authors have defined the term discipline. According to Adesina (1980:108), discipline is to teach the students to respect the school authorities, to observe the school laws and regulations and to maintain an established standard of behaviour. From this definition the school has a role to play in inculcating discipline into the students. Hence school administrators and teachers should impose discipline on the students. Egwunyenga (1994) defined discipline as the training that enables an individual to develop an orderly conduct and self-control as well as direction. Peretomode (1995) maintained that discipline involves self-control, restraint, respect for self and respect for others. Discipline according to Abubakar (2000) is the ability and willingness to do what one ought to do without external control. Hence one can say discipline is internally motivated within the individual. It is voluntary and an individual deliberately makes efforts to conform to an established code of conduct. However, Aguba (2009) while emphasizing Douglas McGregor's theory x, maintained that discipline is externally induced in individuals who do not succumb to established rules and regulations out of personal volition but out of fear of punishment or sanction. Rosen (1997) sees discipline as a branch of knowledge, training that develops self-control, character, orderliness or efficiency, strict control to enforce obedience and treatment that controls or punishes and as a system of rules. According to Slee (1995), discipline involves teaching and self control. The United States department of Education 1993:1 in Rosen (1997) acknowledges that maintaining a disciplined environment conducive for learning requires an ethics of caring that shapes staff-students relations.

Public accountability presupposes that schools are places that turn out productive and useful school leavers. Agbenyega (2006) maintained that good discipline is one of the main attributes of effective schools and many failing schools have been blamed on lack of discipline. Indiscipline on the contrary, is any act that deviates from societal norms and values. It is a violation of school rules and regulations which is capable of obstructing the smooth and orderly functioning of the school system (Edem, 1982). An undisciplined child is an uncontrollable child and can do any damage in school when he did not get what he wants. Every school administrator requires a good measure of discipline in his school.

Indiscipline is causing a menace in all parts of the world in relation to children's affairs. In some parts of the United Kingdom, the rates of absenteeism, vandalism and delinquency are above average. More worrisome is reported cases of high incidence of drug and drug related crimes that some parts of Britain are described as 'no-go areas' (Ken Reid, 2000). In Chicago, New York, Washington and Detroit pupil's violence in high truancy schools is rife; for example school-based robberies, vandalism, extortion and insolence to staff (Ken Reid, 2000). In Ghana, Danso (2010) decried the high rates of indiscipline and lawlessness in educational institutions. He observed that not a single day passes without a report of an act of indiscipline perpetrated by teenagers of primary and secondary schools. He lamented over the causes of drug abuse, rape, armed robbery, abortion and even murder in the educational institutions. Meaningful teaching and learning geared towards the attainment of school goals is unattainable if the teachers and students are not disciplined. Aguba (2009) noted that discipline is needed to produce a breed of well cultivated youths who will develop not only respect for themselves but also for others in the school and society.

### 1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Achievement of the goals of secondary school education largely depends on the positive disposition of students in their academic work and the instructional performance of teachers. A major task facing educational administrators is the continuous existence of the problem of

dropout, deviant behaviours, examination malpractice, lateness and poor academic performance among students. Records showed that most of the students involved in cultism in higher institutions started it in their secondary school days. The need has therefore arisen for school administrators, teachers, parents and the general public to eliminate indiscipline in schools. Nigerians cannot remain complacent when large human and material resources are wasted, indiscipline is rampant, an atmosphere of insecurity, frustration and instability are created in schools leading to ineffective learning.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The study has three objectives to achieve three goals namely:

- To identify the common types of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools
- To identify the causes of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools.
- To proffer possible solution to the problem of indiscipline in schools

## 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by five research questions as follows:

- What are the common types of indiscipline among secondary schools in Nigeria?
- What are the students based factors that cause indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools?
- What are the schools based factors that cause indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools?
- What are the societal based factors that cause indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools?
- What are the possible solutions to the identified causes of indiscipline in Nigerian Secondary Schools?

## 1.4 HYPOTHESES

The two hypotheses formulated and tested are:

- There is no significant difference among principals, students and teachers in their views on the identified causes of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools.
- There is no significant difference among principals, students and teachers in their views on the identified possible solutions to indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study comprised two thousand four hundred and twenty one (2421) secondary school principals, six thousand eight hundred and forty four (6844) teachers and all the students in Delta state of Nigeria during the 2007 / 2008 academic session. A sample of 935 respondents made of 205 principals, 310 teachers, and 420 students was drawn using a stratified sampling technique from 60 secondary schools from the three senatorial districts of the state. The schools were located in urban and rural areas. Only principals and teachers with 7 years and above teaching experience and senior secondary school students in senior secondary school 3 were used for this study.

The instrument for data collection was a 36 item questionnaire patterned after 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agree, SA = 4, Agree, A = 3 Strongly Disagree, SD = 2 and Disagree, D = 1. The face and content validity of the instrument was done by two experts in educational management who read through the items and made useful suggestions which was incorporated

into the final draft. The instrument was administered by the researcher to the principals, teachers and students. The result of the split half reliability coefficient computed through Cronbach Alpha formula was 0.72. This is an indication of the items being internally stable and supports the use. Nine hundred and thirty five copies of the questionnaire were administered but nine hundred copies were retrieved valid for analysis of data. The descriptive statistics of percentage and mean was used to answer the research questions while the parametric statistics of analysis of variance were used to test the hypotheses; the level of Significance was 0.05.

### 3. RESULTS

The results of the study were presented in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses. Question 1: What are the common types of indiscipline in Nigeria Secondary Schools?

Table 1: Identified Common types of Indiscipline in Nigerian Secondary Schools.

	<i>Cases relating to insubordination to school authority</i>	Score	%	Mean
1.	Assault and Insult on teachers and non-teachers	2440	68	2.71
2.	Assault on school prefects	2568	71	2.84
	<i>Cases relating to the collective misbehaviour of Students groups</i>			
3.	Vandalism	2860	79	3.17
4.	Mass Protest	2480	69	2.76
5.	Cultism	1680	47	1.86
	<i>Cases relating to poor habits</i>			
6.	Speaking pidgin English	2990	83	3.32
7.	Chewing gum in class	2520	70	2.80
8.	Examination malpractice	2660	74	2.95
9.	Wearing dirty and wrong uniform	2476	69	2.75
10.	Fighting	2444	68	2.72
11.	Drug abuse and alcoholism	2650	74	2.94
12.	Idleness	1540	43	1.68

Source: Computed from field survey, 2009.

From table 1, the identified common types of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary school are grouped into three. The cases of indiscipline relating to the insubordination of students to school authority are assault and insult on teachers and non teachers and school prefects. The cases of indiscipline relating to the collective misbehaviour of students are vandalism and mass protest. While cases of indiscipline relating to students poor habits are chewing gum in class, speaking of pidgin English, wearing dirty and wrong uniform, fighting, and examination malpractice.

Question 2: What are the students based factors that cause indiscipline in Nigerian schools?

Table 2: Identified student based causes of indiscipline in Nigerian school.

S/N	Items	Score	%	Mean
1.	Low self-concept due to constant negative labels	2322	64	2.58
2.	Abuse of Seniority by prefects	2654	74	2.95
3.	Poor study habits	2855	79	3.17
4.	Restlessness and Inattention	2433	68	2.70
	Total	10264	71	2.83

SOURCE: Computed from field survey 2009

From table 2, the identified students based causes of indiscipline in Nigerian schools are low self concept, abuse of seniority, poor study habits and restlessness and inattention by some students.

**Question 3:** What are the schools based factors that cause indiscipline in Nigerian schools?

Table 3: Identified school based causes of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools

S/N	Items	Score	%	Mean
1.	Harsh school rules and regulations	2998	83	3.33
2.	Unconducive school environment	3170	88	3.52
3.	Poor leadership of some school administrators	2470	69	2.74
4.	Lack of extra-curricular activities	2880	80	3.20
5.	Poor teaching by some teachers	2750	76	3.05
6	Teachers lateness and absenteeism	2934	82	3.26
7	Overcrowded classroom	2790	78	3.10
	Total	19992	79	3.17

Source: Computed from field survey, 2009.

Table 3, revealed the identified school based causes of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools are teachers' lateness and absenteeism, overcrowded classrooms, unconducive school environment, harsh school rules and regulations, poor teaching by some teachers and poor leadership of some school administrators.

**Question 4:** Where are the society based factors that cause indiscipline in Nigerian schools?

From table 4, the identified society based causes of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools are parental over the protection of children, poor value system, injustice in the society revealed by the practice of favouritism, nepotism and corruption, unwholesome mass media and unsatisfactory home condition in some homes.

Table 4: Identified society influenced causes of indiscipline in Nigerian schools

S/N	Items	Score	%	Mean
1.	Poor value system	3100	86	3.44
2.	Injustice in the society revealed by favoritism, nepotism and corruption	3015	84	3.35
3.	Unwholesome mass media	2918	81	3.24
4.	Unsatisfactory home condition in some homes	2900	81	3.22
5.	Parental over protection of children	3116	87	3.46
6	Parental rejection of children	1676	46	1.86
	Total	16725	78	3.09

Source: Computed from field survey, 2009

**Question 5:** What are the possible solutions to indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools?

Based on the information in table 5, the possible solutions to the problem of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools are the provision of moral leadership and moral education in the schools, value re-orientation in the society, provision of adequate facilities for teaching, games and sports, reduction of class size, establishment of functional parents teachers association in schools, emphasis on extracurricular activities, positive teacher-student relationship, provision of information communication technologies and internet facilities, high parental and school

supervision and counselling and through enforceable school rules and regulations and involvement of students in making school rules and regulations.

Table 5: Identified possible solutions to indiscipline in Nigerian Secondary Schools

S/N	Items	Score	%	Mean
1.	Moral leadership and education.	2734	76	3.04
2.	School authorities to be of good models.	2810	78	3.12
3.	Provision of adequate facilities for teaching, games and sports.	2350	65	2.61
4.	Involvement of students in making rules and regulations.	2920	81	3.24
5.	Reduction of class size.	2830	78	3.14
6.	Value re-orientation.	2630	73	2.92
7.	Functional Parents Teachers Association (PTA).	3230	89	3.59
8	Emphasis on extracurricular activities.	2888	80	3.20
9	Positive teacher/students relationship.	2568	71	2.85
10	Provision of ICTs and internet in schools.	2348	65	2.61
11	High parental and school supervision and counseling.	3100	86	3.44
12	Enforceable rules & regulation..	3000	83	3.33
	Total	33408	77	3.09

Source: Computed from field survey, 2009.

*Hypothesis 1:* There is no significant difference among principals, parents, teachers and students on the identified causes of indiscipline in Nigerian schools.

Result in table 6 revealed that the calculated F value of 0.00386 is less than the critical value of 2.68 at 0.05 level of significance. Hence hypothesis one is retained. This implies that there is no significant difference among the respondents in their opinion on the identified causes of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools.

Table 6: ANOVA Summary on identified causes of indiscipline in Nigerian Schools

Sources of variance	SS	MS	DF	F – cal	F –crit
Among group	437.1	82.3	3	0.00386	2.68
Within group	6,138,110.2	7,387.4	996		
Total	6138547.1	7469.7	999		

Source: Computed from field survey, 2009.

*Hypothesis 2:* There is no significant difference among principals, parents, teachers and students on the identified possible solutions to indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools.

The result in table 7 showed that the calculated F value of 0.00436 is less than the critical F value of 2.68 at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis two is therefore retained. Therefore, there is no significant difference among the respondents in their opinion on the identified possible solutions to indiscipline in Nigerian Schools.

Table 7: ANOVA Summary on identified solutions to indiscipline in Nigerian Schools

Sources of variance	SS	MS	DF	F – cal	F –crit
Among group	252.9	66.4	3	0.00436	2.68
Within group	8,315,235.6	111,377.2	996		
Total	8315488.5	11,443.6	999		

Source: Computed from field survey, 2009.

#### 4. DISCUSSIONS

The result of the study revealed that the common types of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools as cases of insubordination to school authority such as assault and insult on teachers and non teachers and assault on school prefects. The most common cases of indiscipline relating to the collective misbehaviour of students such as the vandalization of school properties and mass protest, while the common cases of indiscipline relating to poor habits of students are speaking of pidgin English, chewing gum in class, fighting, wearing dirty and wrong clothing contrary to the official school uniforms and examination malpractice. The findings of the study on insubordination to school authority like assault on teachers corroborates the reports of Ebontane (2006) who reported violence and insubordination to administrative staff, teachers and school prefects among secondary school students in Cameroun. In addition, this study has the support of Ken Reid (2000) who reported high rates of vandalism and insolence to staff in schools in Chicago, New York, Washington and Detroit.

As regards the students based causes of indiscipline, the result of the study showed that constant negative labels on students, abuse of seniority by school prefects, students poor study habits and students restlessness and inattention in class were the major factors. The excess energy accumulated by children kept passive and inactive for long tends to make them inattentive in class and restless. In addition, students may become restless and inattentive when lessons are boring due to acute shortage of instructional facilities and problems of curriculum. The use of constant negative labels on students by the teachers can make them to begin to build low self concept by developing a negative frame of mind. Such student may begin to see himself as one who cannot perform well whenever the teacher is in the class, become deliberately rude to the teacher and may be withdrawn from activities.

The school based causes of indiscipline revealed by this study are teachers' lateness and absenteeism in class, overcrowded classrooms, unconducive school environment, unenforceable school rules and regulations, poor teaching and poor leadership by school administrators. This finding has the supports of Asiyai (2005). She reported that unconducive school environment characterized by an acute shortage of facilities for teaching, games and sports, engendered unrest and crippled academic activities. In addition, Yaroson (2006) reported that unrealistic school rules were the causes of indiscipline. Rules and regulations are meant to guide and control activities in school but when they become too much and unenforceable, they tend to breed indiscipline.

The results further revealed the society based causes of indiscipline as parental over-protection of children, poor value system, and injustice in the society indicated by the practice of favouritism, nepotism and corruption, unwholesome mass media and unsatisfactory home condition. The poor value system in Nigerian society which no longer honour the hard work and meritorious services are responsible for the breakdown of law and order in schools. Hard work is jettisoned while favouritism and nepotism become the order of the day. Unsatisfactory home condition breeds in children, a feeling of insecurity and frustration and thus contributing to the

formation of deviant behaviour which they manifest at school. Some parents are too busy to keep their eyes on their children. Their children go out at will and return home any time they like. They do not even bother about the type of friends their children keep. Their children become morally loose. In school, such children have no respect for school rules and regulations and even they exhibit absolute disrespect for school authority.

In agreement with this findings Yaduma and Abdulhamid (2007) stated that the dynamic explosion of the mass media system through television, magazines and computer have contributed to the inculcation of deviant practices among most students in Niger state. The finding also is in line with Danso (2010) who noted that some programmes which pupils watch on television promotes violence and pornography.

The findings on the possible solutions to indiscipline revealed provision of moral leadership and moral training, value re-orientation, provision of adequate facilities for teaching games and sports, establishment of functional PTA, reduction in class size, schools emphasizing extra-curricular activities, involving students in making rules policies that affect them, positive teacher-students relationships, provision of ICTs and internet connectivity, high parental and school supervision and counselling and enforceable school rules and regulations. School administrators should devise means of involving students in formulating rules and policies that affect them. Involvement of students in evaluation and improvement of instruction programme, involvement in the planning and implementation of co-curricula programmes, involvement in the control of students' behaviour and in deciding the consequences of flaunting the school rules will help to curb indiscipline among students. Positive teacher-students relationship is attainable when teachers take cognizance of the child socially, psychologically and physically. Teachers must appreciate, understand and accept today's students. As a result, the social distance between the students and teachers should be decreased. In addition, with the provision of ICTs and internet connectivity in schools, students will spend most of their extra time searching for information and expanding knowledge rather than loitering about during such free periods.

The results for the hypotheses revealed that there was no significant difference among the respondents in their views on the identified causes of indiscipline and possible solutions to indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative to ensure that the good behaviour and conditions are inculcated, established and maintained for effective learning in schools. Consequently this study proffers the following recommendations:

- The government of Nigeria, policy makers, education reformers and school administrators should ensure that schools are provided with adequate facilities for teaching and learning, sports and games as well as information communication technologies and internet connectivity.
- Concerted efforts of stakeholders such as parents, teachers' non-governmental organizations, educational authorities, corporate bodies past students and government should be made to find a lasting solution to the social menace.
- School administrators, parents and teachers must show good examples to students since they imitate and copy their behaviour.
- School administrators, teachers and parents should reduce indiscipline through increased supervision. Support staff can be used to assist teachers in classroom supervision especially in large classrooms.
- In cases of serious misconducts, parents of children should be invited to the school by the administrators.



- Teachers should correct students' mistakes with love rather than label them negatively.
- School curriculum should emphasize moral education for good character training
- School administrators and teachers should provide moral leadership in schools.
- There should be re-orientation of the wider Nigerian society. If the society is disciplined, the micro society will be disciplined.
- Parents, the school and the church that is charged with moral training of children should ensure that sound moral education is given to children.

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