

# **INDISCIPLINE AS A MENACE TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: THE ROLE OF COUNSELLORS**

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## **Abstract**

This paper discussed indiscipline as one of the impediments to academic performance that hampers successful learning. It went further to look at some common acts of indiscipline prevalent in our schools such as examination malpractice, absenteeism, truancy, bullying, stealing, fighting and among others. The paper also discussed extensively the causes of indiscipline in schools, the relationship between indiscipline and academic performance. The paper identified roles of Counsellors, teachers and administrators in curbing the ugly trend. The paper concluded that indiscipline affects academic performance of the students and by extension distort the moral upbringing of others. It is recommended that, counselors, teachers, parents and other community members should partner to reduce the menace of indiscipline in our schools.

**Key words:** Indiscipline, Academic, Menace.

## **Introduction**

Indiscipline has become incessant in Nigerian schools today. The antisocial behaviours among students is on the increase day by day. According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2001), indiscipline can be seen as “an act of habitual disobedience of the reasonable and lawful commands of parents or guardians or other custodians”. The Longman Dictionary of contemporary English defines indiscipline as a “lack of control in the behaviour of a person or group of people, with the result that they behave badly”. Going by the above definitions, indiscipline can be seen as a situation in which people do not control their behaviour or obey rules. As related to students in the school situation, it is the disobedience of students and lack of control on the behaviour that often lead to the breach of school rules. Indiscipline on many occasions results in failure of learning. Carew (2012) observed that, although, cases of indiscipline are rampant in schools, they do not share the magnitude for inclusion in the newspapers when compared to other news items. He went on to say that few secondary schools

have had incidents of indisciplinary problems and some of these schools have been temporarily closed. Many schools have experienced case of indiscipline that negatively affected the academic and social welfare of the school. However, since such issues have not appeared in the columns of the newspapers, they are considered to be minor by the society.

School administrators are known to have taken various measures to curb indiscipline in schools. The measure take the form of physical punishment like flogging, cutting grasses, hoeing the school farm, rustication of ring leaders, suspension and expulsion of offenders. The recent introduction of Civic Education in the school curriculum is one of the ways of addressing the problem of indiscipline in schools and instilling into the students the spirit of patriotism. All the measures mentioned above are good and in line to instill fear in the students and to serve as deterrence to others but they have to be strengthened by counselling service to achieve the desired goal. Through counselling, students will have to understand the meaning and essence of some school rules. When students misbehave and are punished, they will understand that the punishment is not out of hatred but a way of correction and to help them become disciplined in life.

## **FORMS OF INDISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS**

Acts of indiscipline are inappropriate behaviours and attitudes that violate the social expectations and are being manifested in different ways. The following are the most common indiscipline acts exhibited by students in schools as identified by Tor-Anyiin (2015):

### **Fighting**

Fighting is the exchange of blows, slaps or use of sticks, stones or any material to hit the other person. In school settings, fighting is one of the most common antisocial behaviour of students. The causes of fighting among students are numerous. Among them are: to demonstrate superiority, to revenge, to hurt others and to escape their real identity. In the words of Thompson and Rudolph (1992) as quoted by Tor-Anyiin (2015). Children have not learnt to settle their misunderstanding rather than by physical means. Fighting may be a way of gaining attention, a learned behaviour from parents, peers or other significant people or a way of striking back at a world perceived as cruel and hostile. (p. 35). Counsellors in schools should therefore seek to understand the cause of fight among students and staff. They should help students to embrace dialogue and advocate amicable ways of settling disagreement rather than by the use of physical combat.

### **Truancy**

Truancy is a deliberate staying away from school without a cogent reason. According to Odoemelam and Ajoku (2006), “truancy is a situation where students loiters, wanders and idles about, gallivants, rigmaroles, walks about and perambulates while lessons are progressing in the class”. People who play truancy are referred to as truants. The deliberate and willful absence from school without reason presupposes that a student causes the absenteeism. Owodunmi in Petters and Umo (2016) identified and grouped truancy into four categories,

which are; students being in school but absent in the class; students neither in school nor in the classroom but at home; students who keep away from the class as a result of the difficult in school subject or dislike of subjects and those neither at home nor in the classroom. Truants are no doubts going to miss whatever activity that goes on in the school. It starts from being absent from school without reason and adequate knowledge of the parents and the school authority. It results in poor attention to school and manifest in poor academic performance. As they (truants) grow up, the possibility of developing poor attitudes to work is very high. Other negative effects of truancy as identified by Tor-Anyiin (2015) are: being dropped out, engaging in social vices, substance abuse, robbery, vandalism, thug, mercenary and '419'.

### **Stealing**

Stealing refers simply to the act of taking another's possession by deceit or without permission or approval. Sometimes stealing can be done by trick. This is the use of wise schemes to deceive another person. Stealing can be in various forms such as tapping and pilfering which is taking another's pencil, biro, textbook, exercise book, larceny, robbery, burglary, hijacking and kleptomania etc. Sometimes it could start with the intention to return if identified. Students who starts stealing learning materials should be helped to stop and desist from the habit. If not properly checked to be helped to overcome this, they may lure others into it. When they grow up with stealing, there is high tendency of them becoming armed robbers, hired assassins, terrorist and kidnappers.

### **Examination Malpractice**

Examination malpractice according to Anakwe (2008) is "all forms of cheating which directly or indirectly falsify the ability of students". To Oyetunde (2004), examination malpractice is "any form of dishonest effort on the part of candidates and other collaborating parties aimed at ensuring success in an examination". One of the dangers of examination malpractice is that it results into false ability of students' performance in an examination. Such results are deceptive because it does not show the true ability of the individual. Examination malpractice has so many effects on the individual, educational and the socio- political system of the country. As put forward by Ukpabi (2015), examination malpractice encourages laziness, students depend on quack arrangement to excel as against hard work and honest means of passing. Examination malpractice may lead students in some other areas of misconduct such as prostitution, cultism, and armed robbery. The quality of certificate is underrated hence one cannot defend it.

### **Cultism**

Cultism is secret society. The activities of cultism are highly secretive. Members of cults do not want to be known by non-members and their activities are majorly done in the night hours. Students who engage into occult activities constitute organised groups that often disrupt the school activities and the society in general. Mailafia (2015) observed that these are 'special' set of students that violate school rules and regulations and are responsible for disruption of peaceful atmosphere in the school. They find it difficult to concentrate on

academics and always live in persistent fear of being known and attack by other rival groups. Members of cults are always into hiding. Anytime they clash, there is loss of lives and properties. This normally rusticates academic programme of the school and innocent students are affected.

### **Drug Abuse**

Drug abuse can be known also as substance abuse. It is the wrong use of any chemical or medical substance to cause a physical, environment or psychological effect. Vishala (2006) lamented that many school students are deeply into drugs. In Nigeria, cases of drug abuse are glaring. Many youths do not know the dangers of taking drugs. But feel is a normal way of socialization. Some take drug because of peer pressure.

### **Vandalism/School Violence**

Vandalism is willful damage or destruction of public property. Students pay non-challant attitudes towards school utilities. Breaking of chairs, tables, tap, electrical installations and other school properties that are even beneficial to them. Many schools have witnessed violence in form of demonstrations which often result into closing down of schools for days.

### **Unhealthy Sexual Relationship**

Many students do engage in unhealthy sexual relationship. This act promotes premarital sex. Teenagers of school age do have unwanted pregnancies that force them out of school. Some opt for abortions which often result to loss of reproductive organs and even lives. Abstinence is the best option and the perception of teaching sex education in schools should completely be abolished because it has violated the provisions of our culture and religious provisions. Moreover, the curiosity among teenagers to practice what they learn at all times is another reason that is enough to remove any aspect in subject curriculum that deals with issues of sex, sexuality and sex education.

### **Bullying**

School bullying according to Omoteso (2012) is a situation where a person willfully and repeated exercises power over another with hostile or malicious intents. It is a situation where a student is repeatedly exposed to negative actions on the part of one or more students. These actions are in form of aggressive physical contact, verbal abuse, or making faces and rude gestures. The victims of bullying are called targets. When bullying occurs, the targets experience some trauma. This actions affect the interaction with fellow peers because it causes social withdrawal. The bully target feels unsecured, lacks self-confident in relating with others and is always in fear. This has caused psychological impact as it creates for the victim anxiety, shame and stigma, Baron (2006). Aluede and Adegoke (2010) also confirmed that being victimized by bullies produces anxiety, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem among students. It also develops mistrust of others, poor social adjustment, poor academic achievement and poor health as compared to others.

Other acts of indiscipline in schools as posited by Tor-Anyiin (2015) are: name calling of teachers and other students, forcefully collecting other students' provisions, clothes,

mockery, gossiping, assaulting, teasing, abusing, mobbing and many other acts. The above acts of indiscipline are inexhaustible as can be found in school. Still, in some schools more acts may be found than others. It does not matter the system of operation by the school. Whether a school is operating as a day or boarding, wherever acts of indiscipline are prevalent, learning is surely going to be negatively affected. Efforts should be directed towards curbing the antisocial acts.

## **CAUSES OF INDISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS**

Attempt to disclose what causes indiscipline among students in secondary school is a herculean task. Although, there are many causes of students' misbehavior, it is safer to group it under the following subheadings as other literature also put it: Theoretical causes, school causes, family causes and societal causes.

### **Theoretical Causes**

The emphasis here is placed on the psychological theories of human behaviour. The psychological theories that explain how behaviour is formed and can be modified are useful here. According to Lar, Okpede and Bulus (1992) and Lannap (2004), the theories are as follow.

#### **The Natural Evil Theory.**

This theory is likened to the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Though the theory was not initially meant to explain behaviour maladjustment and modification, it has been found useful in explaining the behaviour maladjustment. The psychoanalytic theory attribute put human behaviour into three major propositions which are referred to as personality traits. These traits are the id, ego and superego. The id according to Freud as found in Tor-Anyiin (2015) is inborn and is the seat of the biological and psychological forces, drives, urges, instincts and impulses. It seeks pleasure for the individual. It is the force to satisfy primitive and selfish needs without caring about others. This explains why the individual may not be aware of the negative aspects of his behaviour as he is merely pushed to satisfy his pleasure. The theory explains that indiscipline in people is caused by people who are dominated by the id forces. The ego is the conscious and rational part of the personality. While it is conscious of self, it also recognizes the place of others in the social environment. It does not only seek pleasure for itself. The superego which is the third personality stage according to psychoanalytic theory is developed after the ego. This personality trait identifies that society equally needs his cooperation and so works towards the dos and don'ts of the society. It understands the societal values and norms that is always trying to meet. The idea behind the theory is that people operating at the id personality are more indiscipline than people operating at the ego and superego personalities.

### **Natural Goodness Theory**

This theory views man in quite an opposite direction with the former one earlier discussed. The chief proponent of the theory is a French man by name Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Rousseau believed that if man was God's creation, then man is to be born as perfect as the creator himself (Lar, Okpede & Bulus 1992). The theory believed that man is essentially born good but the society or environment influences man to do evil. The theory agrees with the view that personality is determined by the environment and biological factors. The tendency to evil is caused by the environment in which man finds himself. This therefore calls for need to make the environment conducive, those things and behaviours that can influence the students negatively should not be allowed in the schools. The school administrators and counsellors must live up to expectation by watching the lives of students and manipulating the environment for good. Good models should be set for students.

### **The Evolving Man Theory**

This theory holds that the child like any other biological being is subject to environmental adaptations. To this theory, man is neither born good nor bad. It is the environment or the society that sets what he becomes. It is the environment that set up the platform of behaviour where both wanted and unwanted behaviour traits are found. The social learning theory of Albert Bandura and counselling therapy by Peters and Lindsley are other theories supporting the view (Mallum and Haggai, 2004). The theory explains that indiscipline acts are learned and imitated and observed. People simply reproduce the responses of the model. As people watch other people's behaviour they tend to copy it. This implies that a student who found himself among undisciplined people will end up behaving like them.

#### **School Causes**

The school sometimes can be the cause of indiscipline in the lives of students. Poor teaching methods, unruly behaviour on the part of teachers that lead to truancy and other violent behaviour on the part of students, dysfunctional school administration, failure to enforce rules and regulations, lack of motivation, lack of innovation in syllabi, and favouritism can make students to become unruly.

#### **Family Causes**

Family sometimes can be a causative agent to indiscipline among students. According to Akinsemoju, Yayi, Nuhu and Fakorede (2017), children born from monogamous families tend to be more discipline than children born in the polygamous families. A monogamist has more time to watch over children than the polygamist. In the same vein, children from single families and those from broken and divorced can contribute more to deviant behaviour. Over-pampering and petting of children makes other parents neglect their duty of training the children. Children from overprotect homes tend to be deviant.

#### **Societal Causes.**

The societal causes of indiscipline are the surrounding where the individual found himself. They are the environmental factors. The societal causes are larger than what happens

at the school and family scales. The societal factors that can promote indiscipline are: disorganization and indiscipline behaviour of members of the society in which one lives, social disturbances, unrests, communal crises, religious unrests, political upheavals, and political thuggery/violence during elections. Children who are born and brought up in this environment tend to be more violent oriented than children born in a peaceful environment. They will be aggressive in nature and will only think that the only way of resolving issues is through crises. Peer pressure can also be an environmental or societal factor that can promote indiscipline among students. The peer group one belongs to can determine to a large extent how one behaves.

### **Mass Media**

Television and mass media have bombarded youths with foreign culture and led many to imitate and implement some of the things they watch, read or hear about. Many of the films young people watch are of immoral and poor taste. Foreign and local films that are of bad taste attract young people. Blue films and pornographic materials accelerate the sexual urge of adolescents. Students who are too used to watching these are likely to be early sexually initiated, hence they need to experiment what they watch and read.

### **EFFECTS OF INDISCIPLINE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Students' indiscipline seems to be on the rise in recent times in Nigerian schools. With the increase in school enrolment, students' discipline problems are bound to accentuate and cause more burden on teachers, school administrators and students. Students' indiscipline has plagued schools leading to series of unrests. Nakpodia (2010) and Yusuf (2015) pointed out that there are at least two effects of lack of discipline on learning. The first one is that of insecurity. Teachers feel and claim that schools are no longer places of safety and order. They said when it is time to go to class, teachers will be thinking of their safety rather than what to teach. Teachers are not free to teach students. In this situation, teachers will be asking questions like; what if the students use vulgar language? How will I react? What about the situation where students have knives, or other weapons? These and more questions teachers ask whenever they are to face students, especially on indiscipline issues. The fear of insecurity has made many teachers to absent themselves from attending classes.

Another effect of indiscipline on teaching and learning as pointed out is poor performance among students. This is supported by Matsimoto (2010). This is because much time is spent on discipline cases, less time on teaching and what this implies is that the syllabus is not covered, when the syllabus is not covered, the result is that the students are not adequately prepared for examinations. At the end, there is low performance. Ikpeazu (2016) affirms that school indiscipline has a great effect on school academic performance. The school infrastructure or other resources/materials that are useful during teaching and learning are damaged when students become violent. The undisciplined students end up messing the culture of the school. Teaching becomes problematic and the overall performance goes well below the least expected. Indiscipline poses a problem since it leads to poor results.

Usually, indiscipline students perform badly academically. Tor-Anyiin (2015) emphasized that indiscipline acts derail the achievement of educational goals as stipulated in the National Policy on Education and ultimately educational development. The prevalence of antisocial behaviours that do not conform to the existing order indicates that the learners have not gained anything from the teaching and learning. This is because the national education philosophy of Nigeria states unequivocally that ‘for the Nigerian education to be in harmony with the national goals, education must be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency and effective citizenship’ (FGN, 2014). In line to this, Ibezim (2001) supported this when he said one who has acquired these qualities has acquired effective citizenship. To him, citizenship is the ability to imbibe public spiritedness, voluntary service, and sense of fair play, honesty and respect for opposing views and opinions and self-sacrifice for societal benefits. Where, rather than inculcate these values, the learners adopt indiscipline acts like fighting, bullying, aggression, stealing, truancy, drug/substance abuse among others, it means the education is not meeting the quality and quantity required. The implication of the above acts for educational development is that the society is full of irresponsible citizens. The school is no longer the place for reformation rather it becomes a place to perfect acts of indiscipline. Most indiscipline students end up becoming dropped outs.

## **ROLES OF COUNSELLORS IN CURBING INDISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) in the National Policy on Education (NPE) while stressing the importance of counselling to post primary education says “.....in view of personality maladjustment among school children, counsellors and career officers shall be appointed in post primary institutions” (FRN 2014:41). The policy’s statement underscores the importance of counselling and the role it plays in curbing acts of indiscipline and maladjusted behaviour in schools. Counselling can be used both as a curative measure in school and to avert and/or correct indiscipline among students. Guidance and counselling may be provided holistically in secondary schools. The following are some of the measures to be taken by counsellors/career masters in restoring discipline in schools.

- 1. Orientation:** Orientation service is one of the fundamental counselling services in schools. The initial purpose of orientation is to help freshers adapt to the new place they have found themselves and become acquainted with it. However, Akinade (2012) opined that, orientation service is expected to be offered to students on a continuous basis and at every phase of school life. Orientation service is one of the fundamental function of a counselling programme. Through orientation service, the dos and the don’ts of the school are explained to the students. Counsellors/career masters and mistresses should endeavour to conduct orientation from time to time to help student to properly adjust in schools. When students are told in advance of what is expected of them in school, the consequences of the maladjusted behaviours and its effects on academic performance, many will behave well. The situation where students are left on their own, they will be grooming in darkness.



2. **Moderate use of Corporal Punishment:** This role is expected not to be performed by the counsellor but by other members of the school disciplinary committee. After the punishment, the child can be referred to the counsellor. The use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure has generated a heated debate among professionals. However, most of the researches on the use of corporal punishment has been conducted in a Western context (Gershoff, 2002). There is a popular African adage which says “spare the cane, spoil the Child”. This implies that the use of cane can also serve a purpose in the discipline of students. Commenting in support of corporal punishment, Korb and Danga (2013) admitted that, one of the major advantages of corporal punishment is that it stops misbehaviour in a short term. It is effective in bringing about immediate compliance by the children. The application of corporal punishment should be with caution so as to serve its purpose. Overuse of it in such a way as to cause injury on the students should be avoided.
3. **Positive Affirming Actions/Rewards:** Giving of rewards to students who have distinguished themselves in school by exhibiting good behaviour is another way of encouraging good behaviour among students. Verbal commendations, writing of letters commendations to parents whose wards have behaved well can serve a good purpose.
4. **Teaching of Moral Subjects:** teaching of moral subjects and empathy also discourages indiscipline among people. These subjects give people insight into what is right and what is wrong. It also teaches people how to react in certain situations. We are told that the American Nation was transformed through the teaching of Social Studies. The teaching of Civic Education and Social Studies in Nigerian schools is a step towards bringing discipline to schools. It should be done by all vigour. Topics like drug abuse and its effects, cultism and its dangers, premarital sex and the implications are all methods to be adopted by teachers and counsellors to instill discipline in students. In addition to these subjects, religious subjects should be taught to instill the fear of God in students and love for one another.
5. **Presentation of Right Models:** Albert Bandura in the Social learning theory says that children copy and learn the behaviour of the adults, (Mallum & Haggai, 2004). Teachers and Counsellors should endeavour to present worth-while behavioural models to their pupils to copy. The practice whereby teachers indulge into immoral acts with students is uncalled for. Quarrelling and fighting among staff should be avoided.
6. **Suspension/Expulsion:** Students who exhibit acts of indiscipline and have been counselled twice or more and repeats the same acts can be given suspension for a period of time. Upon resumption, such students should be asked to come with their parents and a letter of undertaking be written by them promising to behave in an orderly manner. If such students show unrepentant behaviour and demonstrate same acts of indiscipline or worse maladjusted behaviours, they should be expelled from the school. This will serve as deterrent to other students.

## Conclusion

The paper concludes that indiscipline acts are dangerous not only to the person who exhibits them but also affect others as well, especially in schools where morality is given priority. The task of correcting acts of indiscipline in schools is a herculean task. Indiscipline affect academic performance and social well-being of students. The tasks of nipping in the bud of these acts should be the concern of all. Counsellors, career masters/mistresses, teachers and school administrators should join hands in addressing the issue.

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