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SCHOOL CULTURE AND STUDENTS' DISCIPLINE IN AKOKO SOUTH WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE

BY

Bolanle Beatrice Akomolafe, Ph.D: Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria; E-mail: bolaakomolafe14@gmail.com

Abstract

The prevalence of students' indiscipline and its attendant consequences may be attributed to callisthenic school culture. This study examined the relationship between school culture and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area of Ondo State. Descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for the study. The target population was 460 out of which 90 teachers representing (20%) were randomly selected while 9 principals, 18 vice principals and 9 school counsellors were purposively selected from the sampled schools. Four research questions guided the study were raised and answered. Two instruments titled Descriptive Questionnaire on School Culture (DQSC) and Questionnaire on Students' Discipline (QSD) were used for data collection. Frequency count, percentages and mean were used to answer the research questions while Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that compliance to school culture was high at ($\bar{x}$= 3.49) *in the study area while factors enhancing students' discipline was at* ($\bar{x}$= 2.59) *moderate level. The paper recommended that the State Ministry of Education should enforce principals and vice principals to mandate full compliance to school culture to meliorate the level of discipline in public secondary schools.*

Keywords: School culture, Rules, Leadership practice, Communication, Students' discipline

Introduction

Secondary education plays crucial role in shaping the future of young people, offering a pathway to higher education and preparing them for the workforce. Hence, the effectiveness of secondary schools in achieving these goals depends not only on the curriculum but also on the school environment. One of the key factors influencing the success of secondary education is school discipline. School discipline is significant in maintaining an environment conducive for learning and most influential factor in shaping student behaviours. Thus, students' discipline is a reflection of the values and norms upheld within the frame of school culture. Schools that provide nurturing and supportive environment help students develop a sense of ownership over learning and behaviours which contributes to positive reinforcement of approved behaviours, fewer disciplinary issues and better academic outcome. Researchers have observed that students' discipline is an important component in academic performances particularly during the formative years in schools (Odebode, 2019; Enefu *et al.,* 2019). It is the pathway to good academic performance and success throughout life. Little wonder that good academic qualifications without sound foundation of self-discipline may result to irresponsible and maladjusted individual in the family and society.

Indiscipline can be referred to as any act that deviate from the acceptable societal norms and values. Students' indiscipline is non-adherence to school rules and regulations which is capable of obstructing the efficient functioning of the school system. Indiscipline has been an unremitting administrative problem among secondary schools around the world. For instance, the level of school violence in Japan has grown to the point where students are taking their own lives as a response to the increasingly unsafe atmosphere. In Vietnam, there have been several hundred incidents of violence in schools, and the overall number of cases involving school violence is over 2,000. Of these 2,000 cases, 53% take place in schools (Nguyen et al, 2023).

In addition, the British Ministry of Education examined the nature and norms of student behaviour in British schools and the impact of negative behaviour on students and teachers. It was discovered that there is positive connection between the atmosphere of the classroom (which includes beliefs, values, and attitudes) and the behaviour of students (Department for Education, 2012). In Ghana, secondary schools' students are noted for disrespecting authorities, going to school late, fighting among themselves, refusing to do homework and dressing indecently (Ofori et al, 2018). The prevalence of indiscipline in Nigerian schools has been a great apprehension to stakeholders and its consequences has caused mental, emotional and physical damages in the society at large.

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Students' manifest indiscipline behaviour in various forms; such as late arrival to school, truancy, insulting/assaulting, drug abuse, gambling, stealing among others.

However, there are numerous factors that contribute to students' indiscipline which include poor teacher-student relationship, lack of student motivation and low parental control. For example, students who break ethical standards are disrespectful to their teachers, do not respect their parents, live an irresponsible lifestyle, and succumb to society problems (Linh, 2019). Hence, the focus of this study is on the practices of school culture and its impact on students' discipline in public secondary schools. The culture of the school is one of the most significant factors to consider when creating an efficient learning and working environment for the staff, teachers, and students at the school.

The term school culture has broad comprehension. It has been defined as the quality and character of life based on experiential models of the academic community (Tus, 2020). Some viewed school culture as the wide diversity of behaviours and activities that are demonstrated by each individual student while others described it as the manner in which teachers and staff cooperates to achieve the aim and vision of schools for their shared views, values, and assumptions (Verma, 2021). Rules and regulations are general standards of conduct formulated by the school authorities for the reasons of discipline in order to guard and protect the students while in school. They are documented statements presented in reasonable and simple manner for the purpose of molding and teaching desired behaviours and not just to punish bad behaviour. Rules and regulations are effective, when it is accompanied by consequences such as sanctions, penalties and restrictions. Previous studies have revealed that there is problem of non-compliance to rule and regulation in secondary schools (Nguyen *et al,* 2023: Ofori *et al*, 2018). However, the extent to which students knows the rules and how to follow the rules is contingent on the appropriateness of the rules in a learning environment (Enefu *et al.,* 2019). The Federal Ministry of Education provided rules and regulations in school matters which school authorities must act in accordance with the provisions of the law of the land or government policies. (TRCN, 2023). School rules are the anchor of any pre-emptive mechanism to curb students' indiscipline within and to some extent outside the school premises.

Leadership practice is another crucial aspect of school culture that cannot be overlooked. School leaders set tone for the school environment and are responsible for fostering a positive culture that promote discipline and academic success. Therefore, achievement of educational goals depends on the leadership of the school. It has been observed that leadership styles adopted in an educational institution will also determine the school culture, thus to be an effective leader, one must have the experience, knowledge, commitment, patience and ultimately the skill to collaborate a with others to achieve desired goals (Orupabo, 2021). School leaders faced some challenges which include fund shortage, inadequate professional teachers, shortage of infrastructure facilities, unstable policies, political influence, insecurity, shortage of instructional materials, corruption and indiscipline, overcrowding of classes and brain-drain that could hinders their effectiveness (Odo & Belloh, 2023). Thus, effective school leaders embrace good communication as tool for achieving the set objectives.

Communication among school leaders, teachers, students and parent plays an essential role in reinforcing the rule and values of the school. Effective communication ensures that students understand what is expected of them, and it helps to create an atmosphere of transparency and trust. Schools that operate on open communication tends to have a stronger culture of discipline as student understand expectations and feel supported by their teachers and school leaders. On the contrary, poor communication can lead to misunderstanding, lack of clarity regarding rules and disruptive behaviours among students (Peace & Kola, 2024). School culture has significant impact on the behaviour of students and the overall performance of school. Story (2010) found that leadership and involvement of stakeholders in the affairs of the school contributes to strong school culture. The author revealed that teachers, administrators, and other non-teaching staff perceived that school culture has become more tolerant of inappropriate and even aggressive acts by some students while, at the same time, the culture successfully endorsed the implementation of problem-solving techniques and positive behaviour support for most students. John-Klein (2019) examined school culture and its impact on student achievement. The author discovered that strong school culture positively impacts students' behavior and achievement. School culture that imbibed respect and understanding paved way for collegial interactions among students and between teachers and students. Bayar and

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Hürriyet (2021) discovered that schools that embraced strong and deep culture impacts the students' behavior and overall achievement both physical and socially.

Odama (2022) revealed that students' discipline was identified as one of the factors that enhance students' good performances. Schools that operate under disciplined environment raised responsible and well-adjusted students recorded. A survey study by Nguyen et al (2023) indicated that many students have not desisted from activities that violate cherished customs, traditions, the rules, state regulations, or laws which has negative impact on the educational environment such as smoking, consuming alcoholic beverages, and using illegal drugs. In terms of behaviours, it was found that many students are affected by teacher autonomy supportive environment that focused on the basic psychological requirements of students, taking into consideration the classroom setting.

Ofori *et al* (2018) discovered that students that take alcohol are prone to flouting school rules and regulations, disregard for school authorities, harass colleagues, and destroy school properties also engage in disruption of school programmes and lessons. The exhibited acts create challenges in school and class management and do not foster conducive environment for learning. Odebode (2019) revealed in a descriptive study the factors responsible for students' indiscipline in Nigerian schools. The finding ranked the society, parents, schools and student factors among others as causes of indiscipline.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of students' indiscipline has always raised alarm among the tripartite stakeholders in education. Previous studies have reported disruptive behaviours such as truancy, vandalism, disrespect for authority, protest, and insult/assault among secondary school students. Scholars have identified various factors that could contribute to the decadent level of discipline but one crucial aspect that cannot be exempted is the school culture (Ofori *et al*, 2018; Odebode, 2019; Nguyen et al 2023). School culture is a prerequisite for effective administration of secondary education. Positive school culture created by school leaders ensures common vision, cooperation active participation in administration and attainment of goals. On the contrary, schools with weak culture may experience high levels of indiscipline, paving path for students to disregard rules and engage in defiant or disruptive behaviours. It appears that the rising incidence of indiscipline in schools is an indicator that the level of desired discipline in secondary school has not been fully achieved. In view of the prevailing condition, this study examines school culture and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. Examine the level of compliance to school rules and regulation in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area
2. Determine the level of leadership practices in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area
3. Ascertain how effective is the level of communication in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area
4. Find out the extent to which (teacher-student relationship, parental involvement and student motivation enhance students' discipline in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study

1. What is the level of compliance to school rules and regulation in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area?
2. What is the level of leadership practices in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area?
3. How effective is the level of communication in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area?
4. To what extent do teacher-student relationship, parental involvement and student motivation enhance students' discipline in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area

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Methodology

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for the study. Survey design enabled data collection for representation of the study population. The target population was 460 out of which 90 teachers representing (20%) were randomly selected while 9 principals, 18 vice principals and 9 school counsellors were purposively selected from the sampled schools. The sample consisted of 126 respondents comprising 90 teachers and 27 principals/vice principals and 9 school counsellors. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to draw the sample. Simple random sampling was used to select 9 public secondary schools out of the existing 18 secondary schools. 10 teachers from the sampled schools were randomly selected. The principals, vice principals and school counselors were purposively selected from the sampled schools. Two instruments titled Descriptive Questionnaire on School Culture (DQSC) and Questionnaire on Students' Discipline (QSD) were used for data collection. Descriptive Questionnaire on School Culture (DQSC) has three parts with 4 items in each part on 4 point Likert rating scale. Part A and B were used obtain response on school rules and regulation and leadership practice with options Always (A)=4, Sometimes (S)=3, Rarely (R)=2, Never (N)=1 while Part C contained 4 items with response options Very Effective (VE)= 4, Effective (E)= 3, Very Ineffective (VE)=2, Ineffective (I)=1. Questionnaire on Students' Discipline (QSD) contained 12 items on 4 point Likert rating scale. The reliability coefficient index of 0.67 and 0.60 respectively were obtained through test-retest method at the interval of two weeks using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Frequency count, percentages and mean were used to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Questions 1: What is the level of compliance to school rules and regulation in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area?

Data collected through items on school rules and regulation were analysed and presented in

Table 1: Level of compliance to school rules and regulation

S/N	Items		Responses				
			A	S	R	N	$\bar{x}$
1	Rules and regulation are obeyed by members of staff and students	Freq.	80	10	0	0	3.88
		%	88.9	11.1	0.0	0.0	
2	Inappropriate behaviours are penalised with no bias	F	43	45	2	0	3.46
		%	47.8	50.0	2.2	0.0	
3	Students comply to rule appropriate only to their age	F	39	43	7	1	3.31
		%	43.3	47.8	7.8	1.1	
4	Students adhere to rules and regulations that are quick for them to recall	F	42	41	7	0	3.38
		%	46.7	45.6	7.8	0.0	
5	Rules and regulation are enforce on members of staff and students	F	47	40	6	0	3.45
		%	52.2	44.4	6.6	0.0	
	Frequency/Grand Mean	**F**	**50**	**35**	**5**	**0**	**3.49**
	Percentage	**%**	**55.5**	**38.9**	**5.6**	**0.0**	

The data presented in table 1 indicated that the level of compliance to school rules and regulation by percentage points: always (55.5%), sometimes (38.9%), rarely (5.6%) and never (0.0%) by staff and students in the study area. The grand mean of 3.49 indicated high level of compliance in terms of school rules and regulations ($\bar{x}$ =3.88) followed by penalty for misbehaviours ($\bar{x}$ =3.46), enforced rules and regulation on staff and students while the least aspect of school rules and regulation were students adherence to rules easily recall ($\bar{x}$ =38) and students compliance to rules appropriate to their age ($\bar{x}$ =31). It can be inferred from the results that the level of compliance to school rules and regulation is high.

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Research Question 2: What is the level of leadership practices in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area?

To answers to research question 2, data collected through items on leadership practices were analysed and presented in Table 2

Table 2: Level of leadership practices

S/N	Items		Responses				
			A	**S**	**R**	**N**	**$\bar{x}$**
1	Promote the language, symbols, principles, and traditions guiding the school	Freq.	33	50	7	0	3.29
		%	35.6	55.6	7.8	0.0	
2	Share power and responsibility with subordinates	F	47	38	5	0	3.47
		%	52.2	42.2	5.6	0.0	
3	Develop a sense of awareness and understanding of the existing culture	F	44	39	7	0	3.42
		%	48.9	43.3	7.8	0.0	
4	Ensures that values and beliefs are carried on as veteran teachers retire and new teachers hired	F	35	40	5	0	3.36
		%	38.9	44.4	5.6	0.0	
5	Ensures that teachers, students and others have clear understanding of the mission and vision of the school	F	44	42	4	0	3.47
		%	48.9	46.7	4.4	0.0	
	Frequency/Grand Mean	**F**	**41**	**43**	**6**	**0**	**3.40**
	Percentage	**%**	**45.6**	**47.8**	**6.6**	**0.0**	

Source: Field Work, 2025

The data presented in Table 2 revealed the level of leadership practice with percentage points: always (45.6%), sometimes (47.8%), rarely (6.6%) and never (0.0%). The grand mean of 3.40 implied moderate level of leadership practice which reflected in the aspect of shared power and responsibility with subordinates ($\bar{x}$ =3.47), clarity of mission and vision of the school ($\bar{x}$ =3.47) and sense of awareness and understanding of the existing culture($\bar{x}$ 3.42) were the best practices adopted by the principals while the least aspects were sustained values and beliefs by teachers ($\bar{x}$ =3.36) and promotion of language, symbols, principles, and traditions of the school ($\bar{x}$ =3.29). It can be inferred from the results that the level of leadership practice is moderate.

Research Question 3: How effective is the level of communication in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area?

Data collected through item 2 on level of communication were analysed and presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Level of communication

S/N	Items		Responses				
			VE	**E**	**I**	**VI**	**$\bar{x}$**
1	Communication platforms, including e-mails, newsletters, social media, and meetings to reach all stakeholders	Freq.	45	38	6	1	3.40
		%	50.0	42.2	6.7	1.1	
2	Staff and students feel informed and included in the decision-making process	F	28	52	9	1	3.17
		%	31.1	57.8	58.3	1.1	
3	Open opportunities for teachers, students and parents to voice their opinions	F	36	45	9	0	3.28
		%	40.0	50.0	10.0	0.0	
4	Build strong relationships for collaboration and mutual respect	F	30	53	7	0	3.24
		%	33.3	58.9	7.8	0.0	
5	Share updates on school activities, explain decision and rationale behind policies	F	45	40	5	0	3.42
		%	50.0	44.4	5.6	0.0	
	Frequency /Grand Mean	**F**	**37**	**46**	**7**	**0**	**3.30**
	Percentage	**%**	**41.1**	**51.1**	**7.8**	**0.0**	

Source: Field Work, 2025

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Data presented in table 3 showed the effectiveness of communication between the principals and the members of school with percentage point: very effective (41.1%), effective (51.1%), ineffective (7.8%) and very ineffective (0.0%). The grand mean of 3.30 revealed moderate level of communication as reflected in explanations of decision and policies ($\bar{x}$ =3.42) and the communication media in public secondary school was regularly and adequately used ($\bar{x}$ =3.40) while the least aspect of communication in school were opportunities for teachers, students and parents to voice their opinions ($\bar{x}$ =3.28), building strong relationships for collaboration and mutual respect ($\bar{x}$ =3.24) and involvement of staff and students in the decision-making process ($\bar{x}$ =3.17). The results as shown on the table indicated that the level communications were moderate in public secondary school in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area.

Research Question 4: To what extent do (teacher-student relationship, parental control and student motivation) enhance students' discipline in public secondary schools in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area?

Data collected through item 1-12 on factors that enhance students' discipline were analysed and presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Weighted average of factors enhancing students' discipline

S/N			Responses				
							$\bar{x}$
1	Teacher-Student Relationship	Freq.	15	15	5	1	3.26
		%	44.0	40.0	13.0	2.7	
3	Student Motivation	F	16	16	4	0	3.29
		%	43.0	44.0	11.0	2.7	
4	Parental Control	F	16	12	5	3	3.13
		%	44.4	33.3	13.8	8.3	
	Frequency /Grand Mean	**F**	**16**	**14**	**5**	**1**	**3.27**
	Percentage	**%**	**44.0**	**39.0**	**14.0**	**2.7**	

Data presented on Table 4 showed the weighted average of factors enhancing students' discipline by percentage points which indicated that 44.0% of the students in the study area were properly disciplined while 39.0% of the students were inadequately disciplined, 14.0% of students were neither disciplined and 2.7% of the student lacked adequate discipline. Student motivation with ($\bar{x}$= 3.29), teacher-student relationship with ($\bar{x}$= 3.26) and the least parental control with (3.13).The grand mean of 3.27 indicated moderate of level of students' discipline. It could be inferred that the moderate level of parental control may be responsible for the level of students' discipline in the study area.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings from research question 1 revealed that the level of compliance to rules and regulation was high with mean of 3.49. In contrast, Story (2010) found that teachers, administrators, and other non-teaching staff perceived that school leaders have become more tolerant of inappropriate and even aggressive acts by some students through the implementation of problem-solving techniques and positive behaviour support for most students which were peculiar to the area of study. The outcome of the present may be attributed to the difference in locality and the methods adopted to ensure compliance.

The results from research question 2 indicated that the level of leadership practices was moderate with mean of 3.40. In consonance with the present study Lani & Pauzi, (2024) confirmed that principals faced numerous challenges which include schools' limited budget, lack of qualified teachers, students and parents' problems. These results may be responsible for the moderate level of leadership practice in the present study

Findings from research question 3 showed that the level of communication between principal, teachers and students was moderate with mean of 3.30. The results corroborated the findings of John-Klein (2019), Bayar and Hürriyet (2021) which agreed that strong school culture positively impacts students' behavior and overall achievement. The moderate level of leadership and communication as reflected the findings could be attributed to inability of school leaders to sustain the school culture.

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The results from research question 4 showed some crucial aspect of students' discipline such as teacher-student relationship, parental control and student. The grand mean of 3.27 indicated that the aforementioned factors moderately enhanced students' discipline. This confirmed the finding of Odebode (2019) that factor such as society, parents, school and student are responsible for students' indiscipline in Nigerian schools. In addition, Odama (2022) agreed that students' discipline enhanced students' performances and achievement. Those responsible and well-adjusted students are product of schools where discipline guided all activities. In contrast, Ofori *et al* (2018) and Nguyen et al (2023) affirmed that the level of desired discipline in secondary has been fully achievement. The moderate level of students' discipline in the present study may have accounted for the pervasive nature of indiscipline in secondary schools.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of data and interpretation of results, it was concluded that school culture moderately impacted students' discipline. However, the moderate level of students' discipline indicated that there is need for improvement in the areas of leadership practices and communication among the members of school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The State Ministry of Education should enforce principals and vice principals to mandate full compliance to school culture in order meliorate the level of discipline in public secondary schools.
2. Principals should review the activities of students' disciplinary committees to ensure total adherence to school culture
3. Teachers should increase the level of interaction with students to assist in areas of weaknesses and commend their good efforts
4. The school management should collaborate with parents through interactive forum to improve the level of students' discipline in secondary schools.

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