



**INCIDENCE OF INDISCIPLINARY BEHAVIOUR
AMONG STUDENTS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS
IN BANTAMA SUB-METROPOLITAN SCHOOLS
IN THE KUMASI DISTRICT OF GHANA**

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Abstract:

The study sought to investigate the factors influencing indisciplinary behaviour among students in Senior High School (SHS) and to find means of eradicating such behaviours. The study had the intention of helping teachers, school administrators, students and parents to better understand the problem of indiscipline, its effects and to jointly find solution to them. The simple random sampling was used to select the Bantama Sub-Metropolis. All three SHS, teachers and students in the sub-Metropolis were used for the study. Simple frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the research questions to come out with the findings. The study indicated that all the respondents saw indiscipline as a major problem among SHS students. It was also clear that the common indisciplinary acts in schools included absenteeism, stealing, bullying, alcoholism, lateness and running away from school to town. Among the recommendations included the revision of outmoded school rules and regulations to suit current modern trends.

Keywords: indiscipline, students, senior high school, regulations

1. Introduction

Moral degeneration has been on the increase and the Sons and daughters of otherwise decent folk have now openly associated themselves with the deadly activities of indiscipline individuals whose lifestyles give cause for grave alarm. Finkelhor (2011) in citing Socrates stated;

“Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect for their elders and love to chatter in place of exercise. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parent chatter before company, gobble

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up their food, and tyrannize their teachers. The Order is heaven's first law, it is said, but discipline begets order. Hence, a disciplined life is an orderly life, a disciplined nation an orderly nation and it is in the midst of discipline that a nation or an individual can make genuine progress in any desirable direction."

The disciplinary problems that confront the growing child or the youth are numerous. The common ones which show themselves in the observable behaviour of the youth are profaned, defiance of authority, truancy, drunkenness, smoking, stealing, laziness, examination malpractices, carelessness, rioting, substance abuse and rudeness (Dobbert, 2004).

Vandalism in schools has of late become rampant with its attendant wanton destruction of public property. Some unrest has serious repercussions for students as it affects their progress and sometimes brings to an abrupt end their schooling and disrupts the school calendar.

In the Graphic of Monday, March 18, 2002, there was a report that the police at Koforidua had arrested fifty-one (51) students for engaging in a violent street fight. The fight, the report said brought traffic on the Koforidua-Effiduase road to a standstill until the police intervened.

The Daily Graphic of April 18, 2002 had a story "Boy 17, arrested over a taxi theft." The story alleged that the boy in question was believed to be a member of the taxi cab hijacking gang operating in the Accra metropolis. The police at Kwame Danso in the Sene District of the Brong Ahafo Region arrested three pupils of the Islamic Primary/J.S.S. for allegedly besmearing the room of their teacher with human excreta while the teacher was asleep. The pupils took the action after the teacher had punished one of them for not being punctual at school (The Daily Graphic, April 6, 2002).

The Daily Graphic of March 17, 2005, reports of a clash between students of Kumasi Polytechnic and the Katanga Hall of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology is leaving in its wake destruction of property belonging to both institutions.

Holme (2002) has blamed the level of indiscipline in schools on the inability of some parents to spend quality time with their children. According to her, indiscipline has roots in the home, the environment and society. To him "*home serves as a springboard for indiscipline.*" He was of the view that the future of the school was in jeopardy if the schools which were expected to train skilled manpower for the development of the country had become a common place for immorality, drug peddling and addiction of various forms. These problems, which threaten the very moral fabric of the society and the well-being of the child, need the concerted effort of parents, teachers, governments and all stakeholders of education towards their solution.

According to Goodland (1995) there could be no meaningful and sustainable development of any nation if its people are not disciplined. To him, in the educational set up, knowledge and skills acquisition are not the only pre-requisite for success but also mental and attitudinal discipline. He posited that the major challenge facing educational institutions today is how to turn out academically brilliant products who

are also disciplined. This challenge underscores the need to find more effective ways of integrating character and leadership training into the educational curriculum at all levels.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Causes of indiscipline in Senior Secondary Schools

According to Arnett (2000), students mostly in the adolescent age group are in the worst period in youth life due to their overall circumstances of living. This point is supported by Mcqueen (1992) as he stated that students are no longer willing to accept the complete, unquestioned authority of stereotypical teacher. They constantly seek new ways of dealing with their ever changing situation in the school environment. The student mostly engages in what the school and society consider as disciplinary behaviour. These include smoking, drug abuse, fighting, truancy, disobedience, rioting, leaving school without permission, lateness to school, boycott of classes, alcoholism, raping and lying.

The reasons why students behave this way are not far-fetched. One such reason is an arbitrary imposition of authoritarian methods and rules in school.

For instance the Gardner (1992) states that the school often argues that the best way to get the students pay attention to what goes on in the school and to carry out instruction is to use, the cane. To support this point, the Association asserts that disciplinary problems in our schools are generally connected with breaches of school rules and regulations. The regulations are often so much that both teachers and students do not remember all; often time they resist the imposition of these rules.

In a similar fashion, Eraut (2000) established that most disciplinary problems arise from situations such as not knowing what behaviour is required because the rules are unclear or contradictory or the rules may be so widely different from the student's normal needs that he is willing to risk the disapproval to satisfy his own needs. Cooley (2017) argues that unreasonable rules with no clear social disciplinary and actions purpose may also be rejected and hence themselves cause problems, while the teacher who is blatantly unjust in his attitude towards students may find difficulty in controlling students.

Students' attitude towards school is another strong indication that school factors contribute greatly to students' academic and behaviour problem. Norman & Harris (1981) as cited in Mcqueen (1992, p108) surveyed 160,000 teenagers in their book the "Private Life of the American Teenager" and discovered that only 42 percent of the students described the school as Necessary" Twenty-one percent found it ' interesting" and 27 percent said school was boring". Additionally, 60 percent of the students said they studied primarily to pass tests rather than to learn. Favouritism, unfairness on the part of school staff often are a source of indiscipline from students. This viewpoint is supported by Caulley (1978: p 57) as he said misconduct seriously undermines the teacher's prestige and therefore affects school discipline.

2.2 The Effects of Indiscipline on Students

The ideal goal of learning is to foster effective self-management behaviour in the child (Lorig & Holman, 2003). Therefore, no school authority will allow indisciplinary behaviour to take place while it sits by. The seriousness of indiscipline in secondary school is put in context when one considers the way our neighbouring country Nigeria waged war against indiscipline in secondary school by military intervention in secondary school discipline. The effect of indiscipline on the student's character can be grievous; it can range from inflicting pain by way of caning, grass cutting, digging of pits, deprivation of prefectship and expulsion from the boarding house. Amedahe & Owusu-Banahene (2007) points out that at any rate adolescents who fall prey to undisciplined behaviour ultimately abuse alcohol or other drugs. They claim that the students are more likely to be depressed and have trouble in school, including varying degrees of criminal activities. They may also be exposed to serious long term health risk, including brain damage as well as physical injury.

Bradley, Doolittle & Bartolotta (2008) have postulated that indiscipline students have poor adult progress with an estimated 40 percent of them having serious psychological difficulties in adult life, Bradley et al. (2008) further argues that as adults they contribute positively to major social problems such as crime, prostitution, drug addiction and aggressiveness and may become psychiatric patients. To them such people develop distorted conscience leading to lack of nationalism and prone to corruption, laziness and malingering at workplaces. They thus become rascals in society and the consequences on their community and nation is there for all to see.

Indisciplined behaviour in students is a warning that they may have emotional problems and that result in developing delinquent tendencies. At least, half the students who indulge in indisciplinary acts repeatedly are maladjusted (Dwyer, Osher & Hoffman 2000). Marecek, (1999) states that behaviour problem students cannot develop adequate techniques for self-management, self-decision and re-arrangement of their situations which are beyond their control and so becomes victims of in disciplinary acts.

2.3 Effects of Indiscipline on Teaching

The school can serve as an impediment in the wheel of progress towards self – actualization. The curriculum, the teachers and facilities provided at school can separately or collectively influence the path towards self-actualization. However, Lorig & Holman, (2003) think that the ideal goal of learning is to foster effective self-management behaviour in the child. Ofori, Tordro, Asamoah & Achiaa (2018) hold that one of the aims of education is to discipline all the faculties of the individual so as to bring out the best human qualities in him.

Enhanced tone of the school and a conducive atmosphere for serious academic work and learning is effective where there is school discipline. Indiscipline affects effective teaching by way of motivation. As students attend classes late, make noise during classes, are rude towards the teachers and even refuse to do assignments,

effective teaching is curtailed. Caulley (1978) highlighted this when he said *“it is hard to playfully apart when there is an ache in the heart.”*

According to Petrie (1992 p. 79) the type of the disciplinary problem troubling experienced teachers, are the eyes which stray to the window, the expression of boredom on the pupils’ faces, the counting of hair, the concealed comic books. There is also the copying of work, cheating in examination and laziness. Indiscipline is resulting from disruption in the social calendar by way of riots and closure of school, as they have recently become part of our school system affects effective teaching just as destruction of teaching aids, classroom and other buildings in the Secondary schools, against the background of insufficient budgetary allocations of funds impact negatively on effective teaching.

According to Petrie (1992) the school, her first thought was an area where the low income worker lived. She claimed the standard of school work seemed to be unbelievably low and the total lack of interest in the formal subject among the students was a revelation. Students were interested in gossips, illness, boy, Girl friendship, domestic events, all which were outside the curriculum. If there were no disturbances during the classes they become bored and it affects their attention.

In a 1987 study conducted for the centre for Education statistics, 44 percent of public school teachers report more disruptive classroom behaviour in their schools, one third of teachers (29 percent) stated that, they had seriously about side red leaving teaching because of students’ misbehaviour and teachers estimate that about 7 percent of their students were habitual behaviour problems. The same study ‘showed that 19 percent of teachers reported being verbally abused by students in the previous weeks. Blasé (1968) as cited in Mcqueen (1992) concluded that teachers perceive as most stressful students’ behaviour that is aggressive and that interrupts classroom events.

3. Methodology

The design adopted for this study was the descriptive sample survey. According to Ofori et al. (2018) descriptive sample survey involves a clear definition of the problem and requires a planned collection of data and skilful reporting of the findings. The target population was all Senior High School teachers and students in Bantama Sub-Metropolis. The sample used included 40 SHS teachers and 80 students. To ensure fair representation of teachers and students of each school, the proportional stratifies sampling method was used. Hence, the 40 teachers were made up of 10 from S.D.A. SHS, 15 from Asanteman SHS and 15 from Anglican SHS. The 80 students comprised 20 from SDA SHS, 30 from Asanteman SHS and 30 from Anglican SHS.

The main instrument was self-designed questionnaire, which had both open-ended and close-ended questions. The reliability of the instruments was estimated using the test re-test method. The estimated co-efficient of the reliability was 0.87 which meant that the instrument was reliable for the study. A pilot study was also conducted with teachers and students of the Tarkwa Ware SHS from which a variety of response alternatives were developed to build the questionnaire for the main study. The data

collected from the study were scored and analysed using frequency and percentages based on the sample.

4. Results

4.1 Problem of Indiscipline in Schools

Table 1: Problem of Indiscipline in Schools

| Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|----------|--------------------|------------|
| Yes | 120 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

As indicated from Table 1; all (100%) of the respondents indicated that indiscipline is a problem among students in schools.

4.2 Common Indisplinary Acts in Schools

Table 2: Respondents' Views on Common Indisciplinary Acts (N=240)

| Response | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Bullying | 3.06 | 1.36 |
| Stealing | 4.21 | 1.02 |
| Smoking | 2 | 1.05 |
| Excessive drinking | 2.67 | 1.2 |
| Absenteeism | 4.23 | 0.98 |
| Lateness | 2.88 | 1.32 |
| Running away from school | 3.15 | 1.44 |
| Bullying | 2.88 | 1.2 |

Table 2 shows that absenteeism and stealing were the most commonly identified indisciplinary act while smoking was found to be the least 6(5%) indisciplinary act in the schools.

4.3 Major Effects of Insciplinary Acts

Table 3: Major Effects of Indiscipline

| Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Dismissals/Suspension | 12 | 10 |
| poor academic performance | 45 | 37.5 |
| Temporary Closure of school | 18 | 15 |
| Destruction of properties | 36 | 30 |
| Injuries | 9 | 7.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

From table 3 it can be seen that 45(37.5%) of the respondents did state dismissals or suspensions was the major effect of indisciplinary behaviour in schools. This was

followed by destruction of properties 36(30%) and temporary closure of school 18(15%), while only 9(7.5%) stated injuries as the major effects of students indisciplinary behaviour.

4.4 Methods of Handling Indisciplinary Behaviour by Teachers

Table 4: Methods of Handling Indisciplinary behaviour by Teachers

| Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------|--------------------|------------|
| Punishment | 33 | 82.5 |
| Counselling | 07 | 17.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100 |

From table 4: majority of the teachers 33(82.5%) indicated that disciplinary behaviour of students is handled through the use of punishment. As few as 7 (17.5%) of the teachers indicated that indiscipline students are made to go through some form of counselling.

5. Discussions

From the data all the respondents indicated that indiscipline is a problem among students. This view is supported by Ogbu, (2003) when he stated that critics of American schools are not alone in their concern about the behaviour of the young. He went further to say that public polls show that indiscipline is a major concern. Ogbu of the opinion that most disciplinary problems arise from situations such as not knowing what behaviour is required because the rules are unclear or contradictory. This finding is not surprising since the youth requires freedom and independence; hence they resist any arbitrary importation of authoritarian methods and rules in the schools.

Mcqueen (1992) in supporting this point stated that; *“students are no longer willing to accept the complete unquestioned authority of stereotypical teachers”*. Wayson & Suprinell (1982) cited in Mcqueen (1992) posited that; *“when discipline problems occur in school they can most often be traced to dysfunctions in the interpersonal climate and organizational patterns of the school that malfunctions in the individuals.”*

From the data stealing, absenteeism, excessive drinking and running away from school in town were stated as common disciplinary acts among the students. One common result of the effects of indiscipline showed suspension, temporal closure and dismissals as the most common response. Other effects stated by the respondents were destruction of school properties and injuries to students and staff.

On the handling of indiscipline behaviours, the data indicated that 82.5% of the respondents used punishment with only 17.5% using counselling. It is clear from the data that indiscipline in schools within the Bantama sub-metropolis of Ghana are most of the time met with punishment. Rules and regulations are imposed on the students, who are simply to obey them. For this reason most often punishments meant to correct students tend to create more serious problems because students do not see it as a corrective order. Shertzer & Stone (1976) cited in Taylor & Buku (2006) advocate of this

concept of curbing indiscipline believes that students who misbehave need help in perceiving and accepting authority as it impinges upon their inner life and overt behaviour. The disciplinary process stressed the fact that misbehaving individuals need to learn to understand and accept emotionally the necessity and wisdom of authority as it affects responsible self-direction in society. The view here is that more counselling need to be used in curbing students in discipline since the use of punishment is not helping in reducing it.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusions drawn from the study show that absenteeism, stealing, bullying, alcoholism, lateness and running away from school to town are the common indisplinary acts among students. Based on the findings it can be concluded that factors such as inadequate school facilities and climate of the school contribute to school indiscipline. It is therefore recommended that parent-teacher associations, school management committees and headteachers must work together in stamping out acts of indiscipline. Prizes should be awarded to well behave students to serve as example to other students. Lastly, ineffective and outmoded rules and regulations in the schools need to be reviewed and made to suit peculiarities of modern times.

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