

Teachers' Characteristics and Disciplinary Problems in Public Primary Schools in South-West, Nigeria

Alabi, Festus Oluwole

*Department of Educational Management,
Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria*

Abstract

This paper investigated Teachers' characteristics and disciplinary problems in public primary schools in South-West Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive type. The population for the study comprised all the public primary school teachers and their heads in the South-Western geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, the sample for study consisted of 48 head teachers and 240 teachers selected through multi-stage, stratified and purposive sampling techniques. A research design questionnaire titled "Teachers Characteristics and School Discipline Questionnaire" (TCSDQ) was used to obtain necessary information from the respondents. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by colleagues and pilot tested specifically for the study. The reliability co-efficient was 0.80. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire and 218 responses representing 90.8 percent return was achieved for analysis. The findings of the study revealed that more males than females are into teaching profession. Also, the two major identifiable disciplinary problems in public primary schools are; (i) pupils are often absent from schools in the first two weeks of resumption for a new academic term or session and (ii) examination malpractices are common. Based on the findings, it is recommended among other things that: (i) teachers should create an ethical school climate that can reduce indiscipline such as examination malpractices and (ii) manpower planning approach should be employed in the recruitment of staff into the teaching force.

Keywords: *Teachers, Characteristics, Disciplinary Problems, Public Primary Schools, South-west, Nigeria*

Corresponding Author: Alabi, Festus Oluwole

Background to the Study

In Nigerian educational institutions, primary, secondary or tertiary, the incidence of indiscipline is common. It has, for the past decades generated serious concern among parents, educators, policy makers and government due to the extreme disciplinary problems evident in moral degradation and economic disasters that have characterized Nigerian societies. The thinking is that education is the gateway to achieving a nation's aims and aspirations, so whatever disciplinary problems observed in schools has carry over effects in the world of work and in governance. According to Timothy, in Ali, Dada, Isiaka and Salmon (2014), indiscipline is just the opposite of discipline that is lack of discipline. According to them, it refers to any act that contradicts the societal value and norms. In the school system, any act that runs contrary to school rules and regulations and could hinder effective and efficient realization of the school goals can be said to be indiscipline.

Considerable search attention have focused on causes of indiscipline particularly in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria with the student factor taking the Lion's share. This is aptly expressed in Ali et al (2014) definition of indiscipline as “an act, habit or behavior exhibited by the learners or students within the school premises and outside the school which attract condemnation (instead of praise) by the public/or the school staff”. There has been little or no consideration for research work on the school's disciplinary disposition in relation to the teacher's characteristics particularly at the primary school level. The thinking is perhaps as a result of what Onyali (2014) observed that primary schools encounter fewer forms of indiscipline than secondary and tertiary institutions. Whereas the primary school is the bedrock of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) (FRN, 2004) upon which the quantum of the entire body of knowledge, skills and competence at the senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions rests. A sound primary education, as Obidike (2014) notes, is a prerequisite not only to sound secondary education and tertiary education but to continuing education which is life-long. Moreover, children at the level of primary schools in Nigeria are usually within age 5 and 16, thus are in their formative age. This stage of their development, according to Akinade (2002) and Bolanle (2014) coincides with Jean Piaget operational stage of cognitive development. So whatever virtue learnt at this stage of human life is enduring.

While it is widely believed that the essence of any school organization with regard to maintenance of discipline is defined majorly by its teachers, as the mirror image of the student and the singular most critical change agent in the education industry, it is an incontrovertible fact too that a teacher can only teach what he knows and has the ability, experience and enablement for dissemination. These teachers everywhere are not the same. Obviously, they are human beings that vary in terms of age, gender, educational qualifications, marital status and cognate experience, hence varying work behavior (Ivancevick, Konopaske & Matteson, 2011). This perhaps, explains why some parents, guardians prefer certain teachers for their children/wards in the school especially for effective teaching and positive character development. This study is therefore out to examine teacher's characteristics and discipline in Nigerian primary schools. The teacher's characteristics in this study are those demographic variables such as age, sex, teaching qualifications, cognate experience and marital status which teachers bring into work place.

Statement of the Problem

There has been growing quest for character and moral development education through schooling that will produce responsible individuals in Nigeria as evident in the stipulates of the

NPE and several curricular reforms at the various levels of the nation's education industry. Unfortunately, this quest has remained a forlorn hope as cases of truancy, absenteeism, sex offence, drug abuses, cultism, examination malpractices, stealing, disobedience and the likes have sadly, continued to be on the increase even at the primary school level, which represents the foundational level upon which all other levels of the country's educational development and even, the work and leadership behaviour at societal level rests. Worse still, in the series of research work on the incidence of indiscipline in Nigerian schools, teacher factor appears overlooked as they too are not left out among the stakeholders that express their worries and condemnation on the ugly disciplinary sceneries. Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate teachers' disciplinary disposition alongside variations in their age, marital status, educational qualifications and teaching experience in Nigerian primary schools.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to:

1. Examine the characteristics of teachers in South-west Nigerian public primary schools;
2. Investigate the level of indiscipline in South-west Nigerian public primary schools;
3. Identify the major disciplinary problems experienced in South-west Nigerian public primary schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of teachers in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria?
2. What is the level of teacher indiscipline in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria?
3. What are the major disciplinary problems experienced in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria?

Assumption

It is assumed that a teacher must be self-disciplined to be able to enforce discipline in his students. An undisciplined teacher presumed to be the parent of his/her pupils and therefore is responsible for the complete upbringing of the pupils will breed indiscipline pupils and invariably indiscipline future leaders.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The researcher collected information that describes teacher's characteristics as well as the incidence of indiscipline in public primary schools in Nigeria. The target population consists all public primary school teachers and their heads in the south-western geo-political zone of Nigeria, consisting of six states namely: Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Osun and Ekiti states. The sample for this study consisted of 48 head teachers and 192 teachers selected through multi-stage, stratified and purposive sampling techniques.

At the first stage, 4 states namely: Ondo, Oyo, Ogun and Osun were selected out of the 6 states in the study area through simple random sampling technique. In stage two, each of the 4 sampled states were stratified into 3 senatorial districts (North, Central and South) making a total of 12 senatorial districts. In stage three, 4 public primary schools were selected from each senatorial district through stratified and purposive sampling technique to reflect urban and

rural setting as well as variations in teachers' demographic variables, thus making a total of 48 schools. In stage four, 5 teachers handling primary one to five in each school were purposively selected to be evaluated by their head teachers, making a total of 240 subjects. The rationale for using the head teachers' perception of their teachers' disciplinary disposition was that they, as accounting officers in their schools were believed to provide realistic responses as regards the disciplinary dispositions of their teachers. A strong limitation to the study was the reluctance of some of the Head teachers to complete the appraisal instrument of some of their teachers.

A research instrument titled "Teacher's Characteristics and School Discipline Questionnaire(TCSDQ) was designed by the researcher to gather information. It consisted of three sections, A, B and C. Section A consisted of items seeking information on the respondents demographic variables (age, sex, marital status, educational qualification and teaching experience); section B contained items that probed the respondents perception of the level of indiscipline while section C probed the disciplinary problems that are prevalent in primary schools. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by colleagues and pilot tested specifically for the study. The reliability coefficient was 0.80.

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to all the respondents in their respective schools during the school hours. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher with the assistance of a research assistant. The selected teachers were instructed to complete the section A of the questionnaire administered on them and collected on the spot. The questionnaires were then taken to the headmaster/headmistress of each school to complete the B and C aspect of the questionnaire for objectivity sake because it bothers on character (value) appraisal. In all, 218 responses representing 90.8 percent return rate was achieved.

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the research questions. The statistical techniques employed for the collected data varied in accordance with the nature of research questions for the study. Tables, frequency counts and mean scores were used to answer the three research questions (1, 2 and 3) the decision rule was determined by a criterion mean of 2.50 which was derived from the values assigned to the response value. Therefore any item with mean of 2.50 and above is positive while any one with mean below 2.50 is negative.

Findings

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics of teachers in public primary schools in South-western Nigeria?

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Characteristics in Public Primary Schools in South-west Nigeria

Variables	Level	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	70	32.11%
	Female	148	67.89 %
	Total	218	100 %
Age	18 – 25	30	13.76
	26 – 35	53	24.31
	36 – 45	71	33.81
	46 and above	64	29.36
	Total	218	100
Marital status	Single	42	19.27
	Married	160	73.40
	Widow/Widower	10	4.59
	Divorced	6	2.10
	Total	218	100
Highest Educational Qualification	NCE	113	51.84
	HND	-	-
	Bachelor's Degree/HND+PGDE	99	45.41
	Master's Degree	6	2.10
	Doctoral Degree	-	-
	Total	218	100
Teaching Experience	Less than 10 years	14	6.42
	10-19 years	76	34.86
	20-29 years	104	47.71
	30 years and above	24	11.01
	Total	218	100

From Table 1, it is shown that 32 percent of the participants were male while 68 percent were females. 34 percent of the participants were aged 36-45 years, while another 29 percent were 46 years old and above. Fewer participants were between 18 and 25 years and between 26-35 years that is, 14 percent and 24 percent respectively. Thus, aged teachers 36-45 years and 45+ years constituted a total of 63 percent of the respondents.

In regard to marital status, 19 percent of the participants were single, 73 percent were married while just 5 percent were widow/widower and 2 percent were divorced. As to teaching experience, 6 percent of the respondents had between 1 and 10 years of experience, 35 percent had 10-19 years, 48 percent had between 20-29 years, while 11 percent had 30 years and above.

Concerning highest educational qualification of the respondents, large majority had National Certificate of Education (NCE) and bachelor's degree/Higher National Diploma (HND) + Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) 52 percent and 45 percent respectively while fewer respondents, 3 percent had Master's Degree, there were no respondents with HND or Doctoral Degree.

From the percentage ratings discussion of the characteristics of the respondents, it is obvious that there are more female teachers (58%) than male (42%). Also, older teachers represented by

those between 36-45 years and 46 years and above far outweigh the younger ones (25 years and below, and 26 -35 years). This portends dangerous succession signal in the school as the few new entrants may not match the vacuum that will be created by the exit of the more experienced retirees in the near future. Moreover, there is the possibility of high rate of graduate unemployment with regard to teaching profession whereas the rational quest for globalization with regard to science, information communication technology and entrepreneurship education requires more new professionals in the education industry. Also, the vast majority of the respondents (73%) are married while 19 percent are single, the remaining 5 percent and 2 percent are widows/widowers and divorced respectively.

Research Question 2: What is the level of teacher indiscipline in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Rating of the Level of Teacher Indiscipline in Public Primary Schools in South-west Nigeria

S/No.	Item	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean
1.	Level of flouting of school rules and regulations with impunity	20	32	66	100	408	1.87
2.	Level of involving bias and double standard in introducing and enforcing class rules	60	68	58	32	592	2.72
3.	Level of involvement in smoking or alcoholism	26	39	60	93	434	1.99
4.	Level of insubordination to the school administrator and other senior colleagues	18	36	65	99	409	1.88
5.	Level of display of lackadaisical attitude towards student welfare and safety needs	15	30	70	103	398	1.83
6.	Level of dereliction to duty (not punctual or accepting responsibility)	42	65	66	45	540	2.5
7.	Level of lack of concern to extracurricular activities	34	39	55	90	441	2.02
8.	Level of rough and indecent dressing	22	28	65	103	405	1.86

S/No.	Item	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean
9	Level of involvement in leakage of examination questions to students	12	22	75	109	373	1.71
10	Level of involvement in illicit relationship with his/her students	18	36	65	99	409	1.88
11	Level of carelessness about school plant maintenance	78	86	31	23	655	3.0
12	Level of making or receiving phone calls while teaching in the class.	46	66	59	47	547	2.51
	Grand Mean						2.15

Table 2 shows that the level of teacher indiscipline was high on 4 items while it was low on 8 items out of the 12 items listed on the level of teacher indiscipline in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria. However, the grand mean 2.15 suggests that generally, the level of teacher indiscipline in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria was low.

Research Question 3: What are the major disciplinary problems experienced in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria?

Table 3: Major Disciplinary Problems experienced in Public Primary Schools in South-west Nigeria

S/No.	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
1.	There is frequent cases of bullying and fighting among pupils	16	34	69	99	403	1.85
2.	Stealing is rampant among pupils in the schools	18	56	55	89	439	2.01
3.	Truancy is common among students	34	39	55	90	441	2.02
4.	Pupils here flout school rules and regulations with impunity	18	36	65	99	409	1.88
5.	There is frequent cases of impudence or assault of teachers by pupils or parents	21	30	67	100	408	1.87
6.	Sex offences like having sex within the school or possessing of pornographic literature or films are common in the school	11	18	101	88	388	1.78
7.	Suicide cases are rampant in the school	04	16	33	165	295	1.35
8.	Pupils are often absent from school in the first two weeks of resumption for a new term	101	67	25	25	680	3.12

S/No.	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
9	There is frequent cases of willful destruction of school properties of other colleagues in the school	30	35	56	89	426	2.03
10	Drug offences like cigarettes or Indian hemp are rampant in the school	36	40	78	64	484	2.22
11	Cultism is common among pupils	31	34	58	87	429	2.04
12	Examination malpractices are common in the school	50	69	64	35	570	2.61
	Grand Mean						2.07

Table 3 reveals that out of 12 items on the disciplinary problems experienced in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria, the respondents agreed to 2 items and disagreed to 10 items. Therefore, it is shown that pupils are always absent from school in the first two weeks of resumption for a new term and examination malpractices are common in the schools. However, the grand mean of 2.07 is an evidence that the problems experienced in these primary schools as highlighted in table 3 are minimal.

Discussion of Findings

Indiscipline has continued to be the concern of all right-thinking individuals with regard to the operation of educational principles and practices in Nigeria; education presumed to be the determinant of the future destiny of the individual and invariably the society at large. While energies are being dissipated in the direction of other stakeholders – government, students, parents and the society in general apart from the teacher- in finding out the causes and solution to the problems of indiscipline in Nigerian schools, the aspect of the teacher factor seems overlooked perhaps on the belief that teachers are always right. The present study x-rays scholarly, teachers' characteristics and indiscipline in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria.

The findings from research question one revealed that 32 percent of the participants were male while 68 percent were females. This is in consonance with Ivancevich et al.'s view that jobs can be gender stereotyped. While some jobs like nurses and teachers are “female”, some others like electricians are “male”. Also, a total of 63.17% of the respondents are 36 years and above while 36.83% falls below 35 years of age. The implication is that the disproportion of younger workers to older workers will herald succession incongruence in the near future and there will be occurrence of young graduate unemployment in the labour market.

The findings that overwhelming majority are married should be expected because of the presence of more teachers in the marriageable age category in the teaching force.

Findings from research question three shows that of the 12 identifiable problems examined in public primary schools in South-west Nigeria, 2 are significant that is (pupils are often absent from schools in the first two weeks of resumption for a new term and examination malpractices are common in the school. The reason for the first stated identifiable disciplinary problem could be the practice of using the first week of resumption for the new academic term to subject pupils to clean up the school surroundings that would have been untidy after some weeks of vacation which they (pupils) are trying to avoid.

Conclusion

Flowing from the assumption in Nigerian parlance that “like teacher like pupils” and therefore, a disciplined teacher would more likely produce disciplined pupils and vice versa. This paper, through the review of related literature and descriptive analysis of the survey type has been able to establish low level of acts of indiscipline among teachers in Nigeria primary schools. However, certain acts of indiscipline such as making phone calls during classes and carelessness in school plant maintenance are notable.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should behave in a fair, ethical and courteous manner in order to reduce the incidence of indiscipline in schools.
2. Teachers should create an ethical school climate that can reduce indiscipline such as examination malpractices.
3. Concerted effort and attendance strategies such as opening test for students in the first week of resumption should be instituted in our public primary schools to guide against students staying away from school in the first week of resumption.
4. The school principal should be proactive and aggressive in enlightening the parents on the needs to join hands with the school to release and monitor the resumption of their children/wards whenever the school resumes for a new session/term.
5. Manpower planning approach should be employed in the recruitment of staff into the teaching force.

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