

INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL CULTURE ON THE LEVEL OF DISCIPLINE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE

By

TESSY LUCKY UBA

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Port Harcourt, River State.

And

PROF. UGOCHUKWU K. AGI

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, 5047, Port Harcourt, River State.

Abstract

The study investigated the influence of school culture on the level of discipline among secondary school students in Rivers State. The study adopted a descriptive research design with a population of 7,234 (6,956 teachers and 278 principals). The sample size of 626 (487 teachers and 139 principals) was drawn through a disproportionate stratified random sampling technique from the population. Data was collated using School Culture on Students' Level of Discipline Scale (SCSLDS). Face and content validities were ensured by experts for SCSLDS. Internal consistency reliability method through Cronbach alpha gave the reliability coefficient for SCSLDS to be 0.713. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that school culture such as rules and regulations and physical environment can influence students' level of discipline to a high extent. It was recommended that rules and regulations should be enacted with the participation of teachers, students, and parents, the ministry of education and other relevant stakeholders should improve the teaching-learning environment to help discourage indiscipline among students.

Introduction

School culture plays a prominent role in the organization, administration, and management of the school system. School culture is important that it initiates, improves, and maintains the standard and norms that will guide human and material resources in the effective and efficient running of the school system. Culture has been variously defined by so many scholars regarding areas of emphasis and need. Culture is a derivation from the Latin term “Colere” which implies to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture (Zimmermann, 2017). Culture can be said to exist in areas where one or two human beings meet to interact or carry out business activities. Culture cut across customs, ideas, social and emotional behaviours of people living in a particular area or region. Culture from the angle of the society is the characteristics and knowledge in language, religion, social habits, cuisine, music, and arts of people within a given surrounding. Culture entails aggregation of religion, food, attire, language, marriage, music, believe (right or wrong), how we sit, how people greet, how people behave, among other things (Zimmermann, 2017). It is believed that a school that does not have a functional school culture may not achieve a lot in the areas of instructional delivery and human management. The African culture is a make-up of languages, music, religion, social values, social beliefs, social norms, and standards. Nigerian as a country in Africa has a pragmatic and unique culture. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) stipulated that the school should be an avenue to transmit cultural heritage from one generation to the other.

The school is a formal organization with laid down cultures guiding operations of human and material resources. School culture is the crux of the school organization and its operation. School culture reflects the ways school staff members, students and the schools' values, beliefs, and assumptions interplay (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2020). School culture is the outline of the school operation. In the same vein, school culture is the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007). To Fisher (2012), school culture is a composition of all the attitudes, expected behaviours and values that influences the school activities. They are the values, standards, perceptions, beliefs, behaviour, attitudes, written and unwritten rules and regulations that govern the school. School culture is very important in the regulation of school programmes and activities. School culture defines the behaviour and attitude of the students and teachers. The school principals make use of school culture to organize and set the standard in the school activities.

School culture could be positive or negative. Negative school culture does not promote healthy teaching and learning in the school. It displaces discipline and good conduct since there is no basis for operation. Negative school culture are values, norms, and beliefs antithetical to the welfare, growth and development of the teachers, students, and the school in general. Some of the signs of toxic school culture are; no clear sense of purpose, hostile relationship, and emphasis on rules more than people, lack of collaboration, poor communication and safety (Epitropoulos, 2019)

Positive school cultures provide a safe, supportive, encouraging, inviting, and challenging environment for students and staff, which in turn allow students' academic achievement to evolve (Malone University, 2018). Positive school culture promotes a positive relationship between students and teachers. This will create in the students and teachers that there is a need for co-operation to achieve the goals and objective of education instead of causing rankle and chaotic situations in the school. Positive school culture supports constructive criticism and mentoring in the school system. Where positive school culture prevails, everybody tries to work tirelessly with little or no motivation to sustain the reputation of the school and the welfare of the student population as well as that of the teachers.

Elements of school culture are communication, school rules and regulations, reward system and sanction, physical environment, teachers' and students' attitude, dress culture, ethos, and artefacts (Zion, 2018). For this study however, we will be looking at school cultures such as school rules and regulations and school physical environment.

School rules and regulations are set of written or unwritten instructions that direct and guide the conduct and activities in the school system. School rules and regulations are needed as an important aspect of the school culture to make the cultural expectations realizable and functional. A school culture that is devoid of rules and regulations may suffer misconception and great abuse. School rules and regulations are policy statements that guide the educational and behavioural programmes and activities of the school. Past studies reported that rules and regulations are very indispensable in the actualization of desirable behaviours (Smart, 2017). More so, awareness of school rules and regulations are very supportive of school organization and management (Ramson, 2016). Without proper school rules and regulations, the system will turn to a great marketplace where noise and boisterousness are the order of the

day (Mohammed, 2017). Rules and regulations may not flourish in a porous physical environment.

The school physical environment is the immediate ambient where social, academic, emotional, spiritual, and physical activities are carried out. The school environment is very important in the achievement of administrative and behavioural purposes. The neatness of the school physical environment is very predictive in the determination of orderliness and discipline in the school. The school environment is comprised of the classroom, administrative blocks, hostels, field, refectory, library, laboratory, assembly hall, among others. The fascinating and fanciful outlooks of the school environment will inform the disciplinary level of the students. The culture of maintenance of sterling, good and hygienic school environment will to a reasonable extent determine students' behaviour as well as their level of discipline practiced. Substandard of the physical environment can jeopardize school activities. A school environment that has a culture where students must adhere to a given pathway will help in modelling students' behaviour as well as their attitude. That is why it is reported that a healthy school environment will certainly produce a healthy mind with good behavioural and attitudinal dispositions (Ohaka, 2015). A conducive physical environment can discourage unruly behavior thereby making students appear very decent and focused (Yerima, 2014). The physical environment can make or mar the students' reputation and ingenuity (Ohaka, 2015). The role of teachers and students' attitudinal culture in a given physical environment goes a long way to determine the type of disciplinary behaviours that will be displayed.

Secondary school is the school that pupils attend after completion of primary school. The secondary level of education is very relevant in the life of the students because this is the level where core subjects like Mathematics and English Language are made compulsory for all the students irrespective of Arts or Science Inclination. It enables the students to develop basics skills of reading, writing, and speaking before the tertiary level. Secondary school education is very important because it marks the beginning of career choice for most of the students before specialization at the tertiary level, it is the stepping-stone to university education and professionalization. Therefore, the FRN (2014) described secondary education as the education children received after primary education and before the tertiary stage.

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The goals and objectives of secondary education cannot be achieved without discipline and disciplinary measures put in place by the teachers and the schools. Disobedience to the school cultures, academic activities and programmes amount to indiscipline. Indiscipline is detrimental to effective school administration and organization. Some of the common forms of indiscipline frequent among students are late coming, tardiness, disrespect, truancy, stealing, examination malpractice, vandalization of school property, indecent dressing, bullying, scaling of fence and fighting. Indiscipline is the opposite of discipline.

Discipline is seen as the practice of helping people to conform to stipulated rules and regulations. It is the art of imbuing in individuals the right acumen of code of conduct. Contextually, discipline in the school is a measure used to remove insubordination, disobedience and nonconformity to rules and regulations. Discipline according to Ezeocha (2002) as cited in Agi and Adiele (2015) saw discipline as a systematic training through education or mode of life akin to societal requirements. And that it creates a conducive atmosphere for learning, teaching and achievement of other goals.

Discipline is classified into preventive, supportive and corrective discipline (Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2015). It is the techniques used by the teachers to handle students' behaviours as well as their attitudes during and after instructional delivery. Discipline is very crucial in the achievement of school and classroom management and control. More effective classroom management is achieved by a teacher who engages in consistent discipline strategies compared to other teachers who do not adopt the strategies (MOE, Guyana, 2015). These strategies are as follows:

Preventive Discipline

Teachers who adopt preventive discipline establish the classroom norms, standards and rules and regulation on the onset of the class. The guidelines and rules for classroom activities are very much spelt out to the understanding of the students for the first time in the class. The classroom dos and don'ts are properly agreed by the teachers and students. The essence of this measure is to provide proactive disciplinary measures that could guide the classroom behaviours (MOE, Guyana, 2015). The classroom activities are earmarked with expectations and guidelines for well-directed and targeted academic and social activities. Most of the time, the rules cut across methods of submission of school work, time for classes, talking, loitering, truancy,

thievery, prostitution and bullying. These conducts are initially outlined to be adhered by the students while pursuing their school goals and objectives.

Supportive Discipline

Supportive discipline is a reinforcement to preventive discipline. It is the strategy used periodically by the teacher to draw the attention of the students to the status quo in cases of erring. It enables students who are currently disobeying lay down norms, standard or rules and regulations to be properly guided out of it. The supportive discipline strategy provides the students' options to avert punishment or be punished (MOE, Guyana, 2015). It serves the purposes of reminder, redirection through verbal and non-verbal communications to achieve the required behavioural expectations.

Corrective Discipline

The corrective discipline is invoked when there is a failure to utilize the window opportunity provided by supportive disciplinary strategy for the supportive of behaviours. Corrective discipline comes in when there is outright disobedience from the students on the classroom or school ethics. This involves drastic measures to get the wrongs right. It involves confrontations and punishment to those who obviously and conspicuously neglected the supportive approach.

Based on the backdrop, it appears that school culture plays a notable role in the school system. Therefore, the researcher is concerned and hence, investigated to find out whether school culture can influence the level of discipline among public secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Every school expects to have and produce students who are worthy in character as well as in learning. But the reverse has been the case from a close study carried out by Jude (2019) where he reported that a crop of the Nigerian students' in public secondary schools have one behavioural issue to the other. This may not be uncommon with students in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Regrettably, the level of indiscipline among students manifests itself in bullying, nagging, examination malpractices, truancy, fighting, prostitution, thievery, and cultism to a reasonable extent (Amadi, 2019). These unfortunate incidences may have contributed to the disruption of favourable and positive school climate. Most of the students and teachers move about without guidelines and at times come to school without proper monitoring,

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supervision, and regulation. It is still uncertain whether school culture can influence the level of discipline in secondary schools in Rivers State. Therefore, the researcher is burdened and hence wants to ascertain the extent to which school culture such as rules and regulations and physical environment can influence the level of discipline among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives

The study explored the extent to which school culture can influence students' level of discipline in secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent school rules and regulations can influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the extent physical environment can influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does school rules and regulations influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does the physical environment influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and principals on the extent school rules and regulations can influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and principals on the extent physical environment can influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design with a population of 7,234 (6,956 teachers and 278 principals) in 278 public secondary schools in Rivers State (Source: Planning, Research & Statistics Department, Rivers State Senior Secondary School Board (RSSSSB), Port Harcourt, 6/2/2020). The sample size of 626 (487 teachers and 139 principals) was drawn through a disproportionate stratified random sampling technique representing 7% of the teachers and 50% of the principals respectively. A self-designed instrument titled School Culture on Students’ Level of Discipline Scale (SCSLDS) was used for the study. The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section A elicited demographic information from the respondents while section B comprised questionnaire items developed from the variables of the study. It was designed in a manner that responses to them were coded using a modified 4 Point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values of 4,3,2 and 1 respectively. Face and content validities were ensured by experts for SCSLDS. Internal consistency reliability method through Cronbach alpha gave the reliability coefficients for SCSLDS to be 0.713. The reliability coefficients for the subscales of School rules and regulations and School physical environment are .812 and .840 respectively. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research question 1: To what extent does school rules and regulations influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation score of the extent rules and regulations can influence the level of discipline

	School rules and regulations	Teachers			Principals		
		\bar{x}	SD	Decision	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
6	Enactment of school rules are based on the goals and objectives of the school which guides students ‘behavior	3.09	.29	High extent	3.21	.47	High extent

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7	The school rules do not violate students' fundamental human right that can lead to violent attacks	3.02	.15	High extent	3.26	.45	High extent
8	Members of staff and students' representative's involvement in the enactment of school rules reduce undesirable behaviours	3.07	.68	High extent	3.02	.64	High extent
9	Pasting of school rules and regulations in strategic places direct one's actions	2.90	.66	High extent	3.05	.49	High extent
10	Regular briefing on school rules and regulations promotes discipline in the school	3.09	.43	High extent	3.04	.69	High extent
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.03	0.44		3.12	0.55	High extent

Table 1 revealed that items with serial numbers 6 to 10 have their mean values above the criterion mean value of 2.50 and were agreed to a high extent as the ways rules and regulations can influence the level of discipline. The aggregate mean values of 3.03 and 3.12 revealed that rules and regulations can influence the level of discipline to a high extent

Research question 2: To what extent does the physical environment influence students' level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation score of the extent physical environment can influence the level of discipline

s/n	Physical environment	Teachers			Principals		
		\bar{x}	SD	Decision	\bar{x}	SD	Decision

21	The neatness of the school environment can determine students' discipline	3.19	.78	High extent	3.13	.89	High extent
22	Enablingschool environment can discourage anti-social activities	2.89	.97	High extent	2.65	.91	High extent
23	A Staff room that is very close to students' classes can reduce indiscipline	3.14	.59	High extent	2.57	.84	High extent
24	Classrooms that are furnished with academic driven materials can provoke hard work with a reduction in consequence on disobedience	3.00	.75	High extent	3.15	.74	High extent
25	The cordial relationship between the school and the immediate environment can determine the level of discipline in the school	3.16	.89	High extent	2.89	.88	High extent
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.08	0.79	High extent	2.88	0.85	High extent

Table 2 revealed that items with serial numbers 21 to 25 have their mean values above the criterion mean value of 2.50 and were agreed to a high extent as the ways the physical environment can influence the level of discipline. The aggregate mean values of 3.08 and 2.88 revealed that the physical environment can influence the level of discipline to a high extent.

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Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and principals on the extent school rules and regulations can influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the extent school rules and regulations can influence the level of discipline

Categories	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit.	Decision
Teachers	487	13.93	1.09	624	6.52	1.96	Hypothesis is rejected
Principals	139	15.56	1.48				

P>0.05= significant

Table 3 showed that the mean and standard deviation scores for teachers are 13.93 and 1.09 while that of principals are 15.56 and 1.48 respectively. With a degree of freedom of 624, the calculated t-value of 6.52 is greater than the critical table value of 1.96. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This implied that there is a significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and principals on the extent school rules and regulations can influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and principals on the extent physical environment can influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the extent physical environment can influence the level of discipline

Categories	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit.	Decision
Teachers	487	15.38	2.30	624	1.91	1.96	Hypothesis is accepted
Principals	139	14.39	2.51				

P<0.05= Not significant

Table 4 showed that the mean and standard deviation scores for teachers are 15.38 and 2.30 while that of principals are 14.39 and 2.51 respectively. With a degree of freedom of 624, the calculated t-value of 1.91 is less than the critical table value of 1.96. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This implied that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of teachers and principals on the extent physical environment can influence the level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Discussion of findings

School Rules and Level of Discipline

The finding of the study revealed that school rules and regulations can influence students' level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State. There is no gainsaying on the fact that school rules and regulations can effectively enforce the right behaviour in a large population of the students. Without proper school rules and regulations, the system will turn to a great marketplace where noise and boisterousness are the order of the day (Mohammed, 2017). The school rules and regulations have a strong correlation with the sustenance of ill-conceived behaviours in the school.

School Physical Environment and Level of Discipline

The finding of the study revealed that school physical environment can influence students' level of discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State because the physical environment is the immediate ambient that supports social, academic, emotional, spiritual, and physical activities. There is a need for serenity and tranquility, that is why it is reported that a healthy school environment will certainly produce a healthy mind (Ohaka, 2015). More so, a conducive physical environment can discourage unruly behaviour while making students appear very decent and focused (Yerima, 2014).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that positive school culture can validly and reliably influence students' level of discipline in the schools as they are strong determinants of students' disciplinary behaviours in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School rules and regulations should be enacted with the participation of the teachers, students, and parents.
2. The ministry of education and other relevant stakeholders should improve the teaching-learning environment to help discourage indiscipline among students.

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