

# Principals' Management Techniques for Resolving Disciplinary Problems in Nigerian Public Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

This study examined the management techniques of principals for resolving disciplinary problems. Two research questions and two hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Two hundred randomly selected principals from Delta State constitute the sample. The questionnaire was the instrument used. The face and content validity of the instrument was established, and the r-value of 0.70 was obtained using the split half method which measured the internal consistency. Simple regression and means were the statistical tools used to analyze the data collected. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between male and female principals' management techniques for handling disciplinary problems. It also showed that there is a significant positive relationship between male and female principals' management techniques and their assessment of students' behavioural outcomes. It was recommended that there should be re-orientation by way of counselling to fight against manifested disciplinary problems. Also, there should be adequate funding. Teachers should be motivated in order to pay proper attention to the psychological and emotional needs of the students.

**Keywords:** Principals, Disciplinary problems, Management techniques, Public secondary school, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

As principals plan, organize, direct, control, co-ordinate, report and budget at the school administration level, teachers are responsible for the management of classrooms. They are the hub of academic wheel. Their knowledge and abilities are applied to the management of the students. Principals play an important role by collaborating with teachers and providing opportunities for successful teaching and learning. Principals of secondary schools should understand the complexity of human beings and be prepared with measures for tackling anticipatory disciplinary problems in their schools. Problems are bound to arise in the school system and this awareness will help to make for effective management. They should bear in mind of the fact that "prevention is always better than cure" (Ikoya, 2006). School disciplinary problems can be defined as attitudes or behaviours that run contrary to laid down rules and regulations of the school. All behaviour problems are indiscipline.

Mezieobi (2006) says that behaviour problems include physical fighting, stealing, disobedience, smoking, dishonest act, purposeful destruction of school property, cheating in examinations, immoral acts, noise making, impersonations, lateness, absence from school, lying, wearing incorrect school uniform, and extortion of money and property from junior students by senior students. Hamza (2006) grouped these signs of indiscipline into anti-social acts, acts of defiance, and acts of negligence. Most times, disciplinary problems make the objectives of setting secondary education, a mirage. These problems task beginning principals and teachers, and challenge experienced ones (Doyle, 1986). As the society gets more corrupt, it seeps into the school and aggravates the situation. This is why all efforts by government to introduce reforms have failed. There is need for teachers to devise techniques that will be effective in tackling problems of discipline in class if lessons and overall school objectives are to be achieved. Le Reche (1998) stresses that teachers' behaviour and style go a long way in influencing classroom situation thereby making students to be on constructive tasks all the time. Enose (2010) in his study revealed that a wide range of methods are used in managing students behaviour problems in schools (such as expulsion, suspension, physical punishment, detention, reprimanding, kneeling, guidance and counselling, rewards, etc). That the methods of establishing and maintaining student discipline in schools could not be applied wholesale, but they were contingent upon the environment. Thus the effectiveness of each method depended on the tradition ethos of schools and their environment. Principals of secondary schools should help teachers and students to overcome disciplinary problems by employing management techniques that will help achieve the objectives of secondary education. Bear (2010) suggested the following as management techniques for resolving disciplinary problems: develop social problem-solving and decision-making skills among students; establish and maintain close communication with each student's parents/guardians; provide academic instruction and activities that motivate learning; create a physical environment that is conducive to teaching and learning; frequently monitor student behaviour and respond immediately to signs of misbehavior;

and use praise and rewards strategically to maximize effectiveness in improving behaviour while minimizing the risk of diminishing intrinsic motivation.

Classroom management involves the application of behavioural principles and policies of discipline that are effective and would create an ideal academic system. The behavioural principles include: reinforcement of every kind, modeling, extinction, satiation, role shifts, utilization of logical consequences, successive approximation, etc. They assist principals and teachers to curb indiscipline (Mezieobi, 2006). Harry and Wong (2005), see management as procedures that govern how students go about their work in the classroom, while discipline is seen as the way of making students behave well. They pontificated that a teacher who has no time to structure and manage his classroom to prevent problems from occurring will always meet his professional Waterloo. They blamed the problem of indiscipline in our schools on administrators and teachers who lack good procedures and routines. According to them, most teachers do not understand the difference between classroom management and classroom discipline or behaviours, and this has often caused confusion in their application. Therefore, they (teachers) often apply classroom discipline techniques-instead of management techniques and end up stressing themselves fruitlessly everyday. Marshall (2007), corroborates the above view of classroom management and discipline. He further says that classroom management has to do with procedures and routines to the point of becoming rituals that are internalized by the individual, while discipline relates with impulse management and self-control. He explained that classroom management is the teacher's responsibility. This can be promoted when procedures are learned and routines are established; routines give structure to instruction and good classroom management that bring about stress-free but effective techniques of behaviour control.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Principals' good management techniques have been found to be effective against the cankerworm of problems of discipline in our educational system. In Nigeria, there are evidence of the application of a number of these techniques. These include establishing and communicating high expectations for students' behaviour, developing clear behavioural rules and procedures and making these known to all stakeholders, engaging school and community to the establishment and maintenance of appropriate students' behaviour in school and at school sponsored events, encouraging teachers to handle all classroom discipline problems that they can, increasing visibility and informal involvement in the everyday life of the school, increasing personal interactions with students by taking interest in their plans and activities, and arranging for appropriate staff development activities. In spite of the application of these techniques, disciplinary problems are still on the increase. Students still bully, steal, riot, collect items from junior ones, absent themselves from classes, insult and mock teachers, make noise, destroy school property, get involved in corrupt practices, drug abuse, cultism, examination malpractice, truancy, immoral acts, as well as other disruptive behaviours. What then is responsible for disciplinary problems in our schools? Does it mean that the techniques are obsolete. Hence this study wants to look at the following problem – what is the relationship between principals managerial techniques in handling disciplinary problems in schools?

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. Is there relationship between male and female principals management techniques for resolving discipline problems?
2. Is there relationship between rural and urban principals management techniques and their assessment of students' behavioural problems?

### **HYPOTHESES**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between male and female principals management techniques for resolving discipline problems?
2. There is no significant relationship between rural and urban principals management techniques and their assessment of students' behavioural problems?

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is set to find out the relationship of principals management techniques for resolving disciplinary problems in Nigerian public secondary schools. Specifically the study will investigate:

1. The relationship between male and female principals management techniques for resolving disciplinary problems in public secondary schools.
2. The relationship between rural and urban principals management techniques and their assessment of students behavioural problems.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The age-long problem of indiscipline in our schools has done great havoc to the educational system. This study will help to install sanity into the educational system as well as improve the moral standards of youths nationally and internationally. The result will be useful to parents, teachers, administrators, students and government towards resolving the problems of indiscipline in our schools, thereby making teaching and learning a scholarly venture.

## METHODS OF STUDY

The survey method was adopted for this study. The study is correlational in nature because it sought to establish the extent of relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The population of the study comprises all the 602 public secondary school principals in Delta State, Nigeria. A sample of 200 principals was drawn using systematic random sampling technique. Only principals with masters degree in education were used for this study. A questionnaire containing 30 items was used to collect data and it was divided into three parts. The first part sought information about the bio-data of respondents, the second part sought information on management techniques and the third part sought information on disciplinary problems. A four point likert scale of SA, A, D, SD, was used to measure the 30 items in the instrument. The face and content validity of the instrument was done by three experts in educational management and evaluation who read through the items and made useful suggestions which were incorporated into the final draft. The reliability of the instrument was established using split half method and the 'r' value obtained was 0.70. The data collected was analyzed using simple regression analysis for the hypotheses. The alpha level of significance was set at 0.05.

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** Is there significant relationship between male and female principals management techniques for resolving discipline problems? In addressing the problem, the question was transformed into hypothesis.

**Hypothesis I:** There is no significant relationship between male and female principals management techniques for resolving discipline problems.

**Table 1:** Male and female principals management techniques for resolving discipline problems

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	r-cal.	r-crit.	Level of Sign.	Decision
Male	100	59.78	13.31	98	0.57	0.21	0.05	Significant (Rejected)
Female	100	40.50	5.36					

**Key:** N - No. of respondents

$\bar{X}$  - Mean

SD - Standard deviation

DF - Degree of freedom

r-cal. - r-calculated

r-crit. - r-critical

Table I above shows the computed value of the relationship between male and female principals management techniques for resolving disciplinary problems. The mean value of male principals is 59.78 with

standard deviation of 13.31 for a sample of 100. This is greater than that of female principals which is 40.50 with standard deviation of 5.36 for a sample of 100. The calculated t-value of 0.57 is greater than the r-critical value of 0.21. The null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected. This indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between the dependent and independent variable.

**Research Question 2:** Is there any significant relationship between rural and urban principals management techniques and their assessment of students behavioural problems? In addressing the problem, the question was transformed into hypothesis.

**Hypothesis II:** There is no significant relationship between rural and urban principals management techniques and their assessment of students behavioural problems.

**Table II:** Correlation between rural and urban principals management techniques and their assessment of students behavioural outcomes

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	r-cal.	r-crit.	Level of Sign.	Decision
Rural	100	33.79	4.07	198	0.76	0.21	0.05	Significant
Urban	100	30.87	7.20					(Rejected)

The result in table II shows that the mean value of rural principals which is 33.79 with standard deviation of 4.07 for a sample of 100 is greater than that of urban principals which is 30.87 with standard deviation 7.20 for a sample of 100. In this table, the second hypothesis was tested and the answer provided that there is statistically a significant positive relationship between rural and urban principals management techniques and their assessment of students behavioural problems. This is because the r-calculated value of 0.76 is greater than the r-critical value of 0.21. The null hypothesis is, therefore rejected.

## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Results of this study have shown that there is a significant relationship between male and female principals management techniques for resolving disciplinary problems. The possible reason for this findings is that principals experience over the years has given them a good understanding of disciplinary problems and may have been applying them on trial and error basis, hence been acquainted with the most appropriate techniques for the students in contemporary times. This finding confirms the work of Mezieobi (2006) who said that classroom management involves the application of behavioural principles and disciplinary policies that are effective and that will bring about an ideal academic system and achievement of targeted objectives. These principles assist principals to overcome disciplinary problems. Results also revealed that there is a significant relationship between rural and urban principals management techniques and their assessment of students behavioural outcomes. The understanding of individual's behaviours over the years and management techniques utilized by the principals confirm this finding. However, this finding is at variance with Marshall (2007) who opined that classroom management can be promoted when procedures are learned and routines are established, and that

these routines give structure to instruction and a good classroom management that brings about a stress-free and effective techniques of behaviour control.

## CONCLUSION

There is high level of disciplinary problems in secondary schools, but effective management techniques of principals can curb these problems. Results of this study indicate that management techniques of principals go a long way in resolving disciplinary problems and their assessment of students behavioural outcomes. Thus, principals should be consistent in the application of management techniques that suit a particular situation and continue to test and apply other approved techniques of resolving disciplinary problems. This will bring about sanity in our secondary educational system.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made for effective management of disciplinary problems in the secondary school system;

1. Principals should understand the complexity of human beings and prepare measures of resolving anticipatory disciplinary problems in their schools.
2. There should be re-orientation by way of counselling in secondary schools to fight against manifested disciplinary problems. Parents are the primary custodians of morality and value system. Therefore, they should collaborate with principals in the quest of training children/students to behave adequately well and obey school rules and regulations.
3. Principals should help teachers and students to overcome disciplinary problems by employing various management techniques to achieve the objectives of secondary education.
4. The government should, without further delay, improve on the funding of secondary schools by providing adequate instructional and infrastructural facilities necessary for effective teaching and learning. They should also workout ways of improving the social and psychological status of teachers so that they (teachers) will be motivated to pay appropriate attention to the psychological and emotional needs of students.

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