

# PRINCIPAL'S MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES ON DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

The principal as the chief administrator is entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining discipline in the school environment. Students are known for their truancy, both teachers and students sometimes freely absent themselves from school just for no reasonable reason; students too are seen fighting in schools, stealing as well as use of substance has become a common thing in most public schools. Some of these schools rather than be a safe haven, has become breeding ground for touts thereby instilling fear in the minds of learners. If these negative conducts are not adequately controlled, the school might become unsafe. Discipline to a large extent guarantees the safety of the human resources in the school environment. The goals and objectives of the school system cannot be realized in a lawless environment. There is need therefore, that the principal as the chief administrator of the school be well grounded in disciplinary skills so as to ensure that both the students, teaching and non-teaching staff follow a cause that is in line with the laid down rules of the school. Thus, this paper is geared towards examining the function of the principal in managing disciplinary behavior while putting their planning, organizing, leading and monitoring roles into perspective. It also explains the common and severe disciplinary problems of students and the respective causes, as well as the consequences of student disciplinary problems. However, the paper identifies the basic techniques for managing student's disciplinary problems, it recommended that a proper code of conduct be developed for the purpose of creating order and discipline, and that principals should encourage self-discipline.

**Keywords:** Management, Technique, Discipline

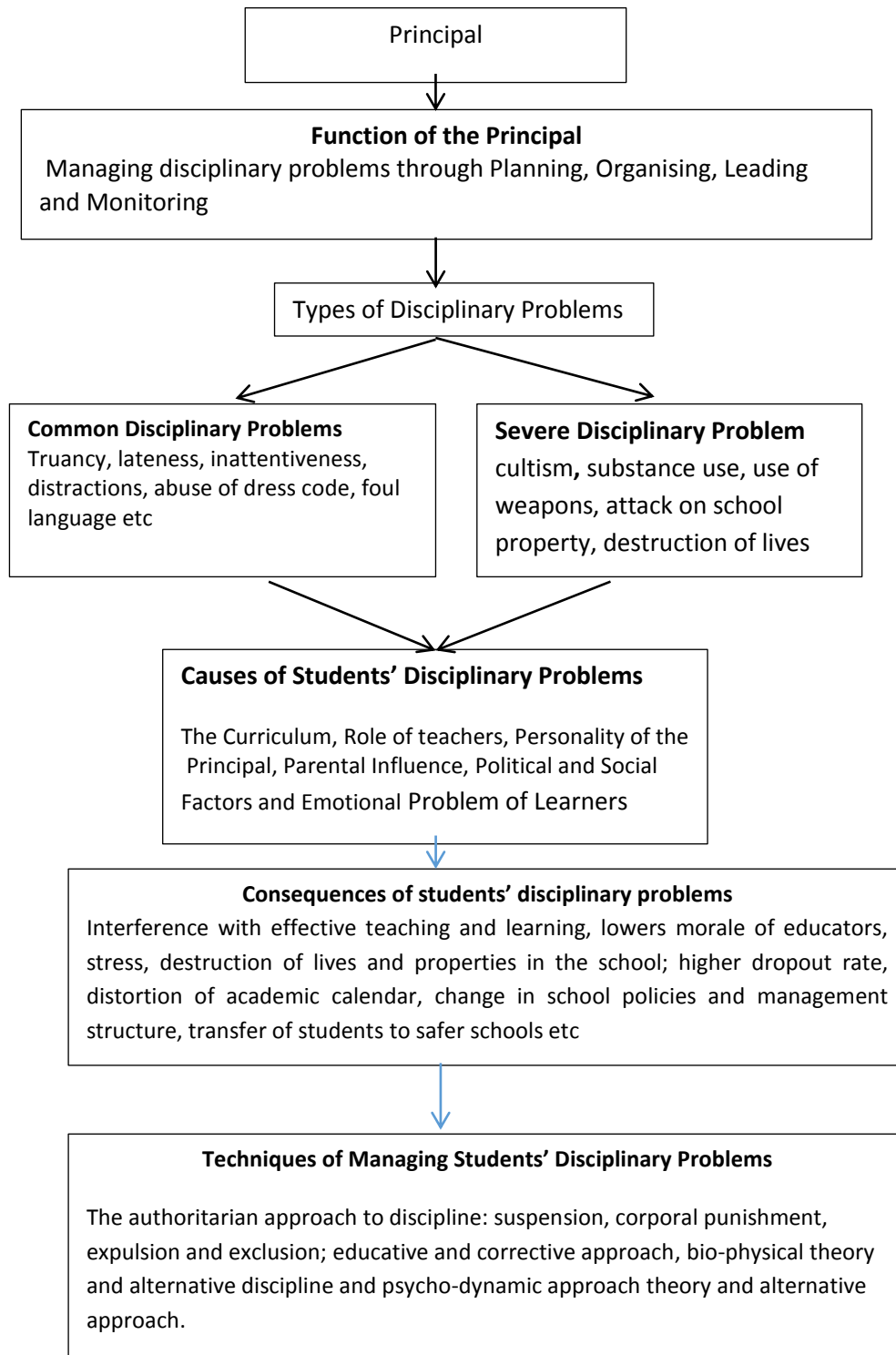
## **Introduction**

Disciplinary problems are forms of disruptive and antisocial behaviors, which contribute to the high stress levels on the students, school administrators and community at large. They often involve resistance to teacher direction by students, violation of school rules and regulation, frequent frustrating behavior, such as calling out and talking out of turn. Disciplinary problems in the secondary education system in Nigeria have become a major problem to stakeholders and the society at large. This is so because disciplinary problems are believed to have negative impact on effective teaching and learning. The author observes that teachers usually experience classroom disruption and noise as a result of student behavioral problems. This makes the classroom environment become less conducive for effective teaching. Earthman and Lemasters (2009) confirmed that classrooms where disruptive behavior occur frequently get less academic engaged time, and the students in disruptive classrooms stand in low category in achievement tests.

Disruptive behaviors are more prevalent in public secondary schools where classes are overcrowded. Many teachers in public secondary schools express frustration over the energy they spend in controlling learners in the classroom. That energy and time spent could have been used for the facilitation of learning. School administrators need to identify and handle disciplinary problems. Disciplinary problems need active supervision of the principal in collaboration with other school staff to have less effect on teaching and learning. The prevalence of disciplinary problems seems worse in secondary schools than in primary schools, because the learners as adolescents now become aware of their rights, namely right to privacy, to freedom of association, belief, opinion, and expression, among others. Learners these days talk as they wish, and are capable of causing teachers to feel that he or she is not necessary in the classroom. Relating to maintenance of law and order in secondary school system, the principal is authorized by law to take responsibility over issues relating to disciplinary problems. It is therefore imperative to further describe the principal in the light of his functions and role as secondary school administrator.

## Conceptual Framework

The diagram below is a conceptual framework of principal's management techniques of disciplinary problems in secondary school:



Source: Author

## **The Principal**

Typically, each secondary school has a single administrative officer, a principal, who is responsible for the operation of the school. In very small secondary schools, the principal may teach on part-time as well. In large schools however, there may be one or more assistant principals. Although his functions vary by location and size, the principal is primarily responsible for administering all aspects of a school's operations. But the question often asked is what then do principals actually do on a day-to-day basis to manage disciplinary problems? One way to analyze what principals do in this regard is to examine their job from a number of perspectives such as leadership functions and managerial skills requirement.

## **Functions Performed by the Principal in Managing Disciplinary Problems**

Effective management of instruction and behavior of students are the primary functions of secondary school principals. It is observed that in the course of interaction of students with other students, staff members, principals and members of the community, an acceptable standard of behavior is required of students. Students are required to be respectful to teachers, obey rules and regulations of the school, to conduct themselves in a well behaved manner especially in the use of school facilities, live harmoniously with other students and imbibe the culture of discipline in order to be responsible both to themselves and to the society at large. Many students are bound to deviate from these acceptable standards of behavior. This usually create disciplinary problem which may affect effective teaching and learning. Thus, principals are responsible, by law, to plan, organize, lead and monitor students' behavior in order to maintain discipline and effective learning environment.

**Planning:** Generally, planning defines where the school wants to be in the future and how to get there (Parker, 2011). Plans and the goals on which they are based give purpose and direction to the school, its subunits, and contributing staff. For example, in order to control disciplinary problems, the principal states rules and regulations of the school and the class teacher do same in his class. Also, suppose the principal in a large urban secondary school decides to increase the number of students operating computer at junior secondary I by 20 percent by the year 2017, the goal and the methods needed to attain computer literacy would then serve as the planning framework for the school (Gardiner, 2011). Planning is important because it provides students and staff with a sense of purpose and direction, outlines the kinds of tasks they will be performing, and explains how their behavior activities are related to the overall goal of the school (Oosterlynck, 2011).

**Organizing:** Once principals have developed workable plans and the methods for attaining them, they design an organization that will successfully implement the plans. Organizing involves three essential elements (Argyris, 2011): developing the structure of the organization, acquiring and developing the right staff, and establishing common patterns and networks. The principal establishes policies and procedures for authority relationships, reporting patterns, the chain of command, departmentalization, and various administrative and subordinate responsibilities. Apart from taking steps to appoint prefects and disciplinary masters, the principal trains them on the art of discipline. When necessary, the principal

establishes programs for training new personnel in the skills necessary to carry out their task assignments which include maintaining discipline in the school. Finally, the principal builds formal communication and information networks, including the types of information to be communicated, direction of communication flows, and reductions in barriers to effective communication.

**Leading:** Once plans for ensuring students' discipline are formulated and patterns of behavior are organized, the next step is leading students and staff members to achieve the school's goals. Although planning tells principals what to do and organizing tells principals how to do it, leading tells principals why the student and staff member should want to do it. Recently, the leading function is also called facilitating, collaborating, or actuating. No matter what it is called, leading entails guiding and influencing students (people) to behave in an acceptable manner (Northouse, 2010).

The principal's role can be defined as getting things done by working with all school stakeholders (Hord & Sommers, 2008). The principal and other stakeholders must, therefore, influence the behavior of students in a positive direction. To influence students' behavior to be a disciplined person, the principal must act as role model. He needs to understand something about leadership, motivation, communication, and group dynamics. Leading means communicating goals to students and staff members. It also has to do with imparting students with the desire to perform at a high level (English, 2008). Schools are composed largely of groups. Leading the groups involves motivating entire departments or teams as well as individuals toward the attainment of goals.

**Monitoring:** When principals compare expected results with actual results, and take the necessary corrective action, they are performing the monitoring function. Monitoring completes the cycle of leadership functions. Monitoring is the responsibility of every principal. It may simply consist of walking around the building to see how things are going, talking to students, visiting classrooms, talking to heads of departments, or it may involve designing coordinated information systems to check on the quality of behavior and performance, but it must be done if the principal is to be successful (Blankstein, Houston & Cole, 2010). Monitoring also means an art of giving reward for good behavior and providing correction for disciplinary problems using various techniques.

For principals to perform their functions effectively and efficiently, they require specific skills. The necessary skills for planning, organizing, leading, and monitoring which principals require to perform their functions adequately have been placed in three categories: conceptual, human, and technical (Katz, 1974).

Effective school leaders have the ability to view the organization as a whole and solve problems to the benefit of everyone concerned. This is a conceptual skill. Conceptual skill draws on one's mental abilities to acquire, analyze, and interpret information received from various sources of information and to make complex decisions in order to achieve the

school's goals (Allie, 2001). In essence, conceptual skill concerns the ability to see how the different parts of the school fit together and depend on each other, and how a change in any given part can cause a change in another part. This skill support principals to monitor behavior of students and classify disciplinary behaviors. It also helps them to react appropriately and reflectively to situations as they arise. In applying this skill, principals must consider environmental forces such as culture, resource flows, staff and administrative concerns, ministry of education policies, reform mandates, expectations from parents and changes in school organization. These are significant inputs into the internal environment of the school.

In terms of human relation skills, principals spend considerable time interacting with people. Recall the researchers' descriptions of how principals spend their time: scheduled and unscheduled meetings, telephone calls, hallway/classroom tours, and other face-to-face contacts. All these activities involve other people. For obvious reasons, the principal needs human skills such as the ability to motivate, facilitate, coordinate, lead, communicate, manage conflict, and get along with others (Arnett, 2010).

More so, the ability to use knowledge, methods, and techniques of a specific discipline or field is referred to as a technical skill (Locke, 2010). The principal, heads of departments, bursars and other heads in secondary schools are examples of people with technical skills. They are recognized as experts in their disciplines and are presumed to have the ability to supervise others. To successfully run an academic department, the chairperson must know how to teach the subject, how to organize the group, how to acquire resources, how to evaluate performance, and the like. The principal superintends on all team leaders and heads of the secondary school.

In conclusion, effective principal must understand his or her work (leadership functions), understand the behavior needed to perform the job (administrative roles), and master the skills involved in performing their role (management skills). Thus, these three approaches to analyzing what a principal does are important components of addressing disciplinary problems in the school system.

### **Disciplinary Problem in Secondary School**

Discipline defines the limitations of an individual or a group of people. It is the practice of restraint. An individual possesses boundless urges and impulses, which are constantly seeking expression. These urges and impulses may include need for security, exploration and success. However, society specifies laws and conducts which does not permit free expression of these inner forces without following the appropriate procedure acceptable by balance between his inner tendencies and the external restrictions (Nakpodia, 2010).

School discipline therefore, refers to regulation of children and the maintenance of order ("rules") in schools. These rules may, for example, define the expected standards of clothing, timekeeping, social behavior and work ethics (Nakpodia, 2010). The term discipline

may be applied to punishment which is the consequence of transgression of the code of behavior. For this reason, the usage of school discipline sometimes means the administration of punishment, rather than behaving within the school rules.

School discipline is an essential element in school administration. This is because discipline is a mode of life in accordance with laid down rules of the society to which all members must conform, and the violation of which are questioned and also disciplined (Nakpodia, 2010). The aim of school discipline is therefore, to help the student to be well adjusted, happy, achieve in academics and character and become useful to society.

Basically, discipline problems in secondary school occur when a student refuses to obey rules of the classroom or school. When rules that deal with human actions are eventually broken, they require some sort of penalty. In order to match the penalty with the rule violation, rules are presented in written format and the punishment for violations is specified. The rules also relate to the stated function of education or the school process and, again, common sense is prevailed in establishing disciplinary action for breaking any rule. Parents and school administrators must share the responsibility of promoting values and standards which will help younger people to establish sound behavioral codes for their lives. Discipline problems can be dealt with much more effectively if both parties could share the similar and ideal vision which, leads to prolific missions.

### **Types of Disciplinary Problems**

Disciplinary problems can be categorized into common and severe disciplinary problems.

### **Common Disciplinary Problems**

Lewis (1991) distinguishes three overlapping types of misbehavior which are regarded as common disciplinary problems teachers in the classroom, namely misbehavior that inhibits the learner's own learning, misbehavior by one learner which is destructive to the learning of another, and misbehavior which is disrespectful, defiant or abusive to the teacher. According to Lewis (1991), the misbehavior can be committed intentionally or unintentionally.

**Table 1:** Types of student’s common misbehavior

<b>Intent</b>	<b>The behavior impedes only the student’s learning</b>	<b>The behavior disrupts the learning of other learners</b>	<b>The behaviour is to the detriment of the educator</b>
The learner did it intentionally	Ada is doing physics homework during an art lesson	Jean is yelling abuse at Eric	Kevin, when asked to move, says “I won’t. Try to make me”
The learner did it without intent	Agnes is daydreaming, looking out of the window	George accidentally drops his pencil case, and everything spills out.	Tracy, in a bid to get the pencil case back, ignores the teacher’s request to sit down

Lewis (1991) further outlines the situations where the learners’ behaviour can become real disciplinary problems for the teacher, and can impact negatively on his academic life and attitude. He classifies these problems as teacher-owned problems, and is listed (Lewis 1991) as follows:

a learner consistently comes to class late and disrupts the flow of the class; he/she talks while the teacher is addressing the class; he/she writes graffiti on school property; another one continuously calls out in class; one is not listening and asks questions that have already been answered; another one defies the teacher and refuses to follow instructions; and another one moves around in the class to the point of becoming a distraction (p.39).

It is a common observation that the types of disciplinary problems listed above are mostly caused by learners, and they do impact negatively on teacher’s self-esteem and self-confidence. Rosen (1997) identified some common types of disciplinary problems which may lead to a learner’s suspension. They include defiance of school authority; class disruption; truancy; fighting; the use of profanity; damaging school property; dress code violations; theft; and leaving school premises without permission. These disciplinary problems are indeed experienced by principals, teachers and students in many secondary schools in Nigeria.

In Rivers state for example, many students habitually engage in fights, insubordination, little or no support for teachers, a general climate of disrespect and distrust of the school administration. These types of disciplinary problems mentioned above are the ones being experienced in everyday teaching in River state secondary schools. Through



observation and informal interviews, the writer has learned that disciplinary problems are almost the same in the different schools, although the intensity may differ from school to school.

McManus (1995) listed several types of common misbehaviors which make the work of teacher difficult. These include:

repeatedly asking to go to the toilet; missing lessons, absconding; smoking in the toilets; pushing past the teacher; playing with matches in class; making rude remarks to the teacher; talking when the learner is supposed to be writing; being abusive to the teacher; fighting in class; chasing one another around the classroom; packing up early as if to leave; taking the teacher's property; wearing bizarre clothing and make-up; threatening the teacher; leaving class early; and commenting on the work (p.68).

These misbehaviors are clearly observed in public secondary schools in River State. Hayward (2003) indicates that it saddens him to hear how learners talk to young teachers these days, showing them no respect. Hayward (2003) refers this as the 'right syndrome' which is placing constraints on teacher, and may cause them not to last in the profession very long. Wilson (2008) confirmed that if educators do not have positive relationships with learners that will affect their job satisfaction and consequently, learner outcomes.

Some forms of disciplinary problems experienced in secondary schools are categorized and explained as follows:

**Truancy:** This is irregular attendance to school or classes. Many factors are responsible for truancy among secondary students. These factors include peer group influence, teacher methods of teaching and enforcement of discipline. Other reasons for truancy include poverty especially where the child might engage in labour to raise money in order to fend for him/herself. Poor parenting/guarding methods among others may be responsible for truancy.

**Absenteeism:** Students' absence from school or class has become a reoccurring disciplinary problem in most day secondary schools. Secondary School rules and regulations are clearly violated when students do not attend to curricular and non-curricular activities organized by the school for their personal development. Wilson (2008) asserts that absenteeism impacts negatively on teaching and learning. If a student has developed bad habit, he is also likely to consistently be absent from school work.

**Fighting:** The key impetus for fighting during curricular and extra-curricular activities is the child's basic sense of inadequacy and feelings of not being valued or worthy (Basag, 1991). In other words, fighting results when the four psychological needs of the child have not been met: the need for love, security, new experience and need for responsibility (Nakpodia, 2010). Fighting can cause minor or severe injuries, damage to human lives and properties

leading to closing down of schools and many parents transferring their children to safer schools (Bowman, 2004).

**Stealing:** This is the removal of another person's property without his permission. In many secondary schools, money and educational materials such as books, laboratory and workshop equipment and tools owned to students or the school have been lost through stealing. Where the victims do not have alternative sources, teaching and learning is adversely affected.

**Substance use:** This is one of the most dangerous and most common school disciplinary problems (Buchart, 1998). It means taking drug without prescription by the appropriate person. The drugs may include cigarettes and alcohol. Where hard drugs such as indian hemp, cocaine and heroine are involved, a more severe disciplinary problem arises. The negative impact of substance abuse on child development cannot be over-emphasized as it influences child's behavior.

### **Severe types of Disciplinary Problems**

Alidzulwi (2000) asserts that severe disciplinary problems have been experienced in many secondary schools. He indicates that some learners carry weapons such as daggers, machetes, axes, guns and other dangerous arms to schools. Incidences have been reported of learners stabbing their fellow students, teachers and principals. In River state of Nigeria, personal observation of the writer as a classroom teacher reveals serious cases of learner violence. These include the disturbance of the public peace in the host communities, setting classrooms ablaze, attacking teachers, principals and their vehicles, and other motorists. With the spate of cultism in secondary schools, indications show more disciplinary problems on and outside the schools. Smith (1999) on the other hand distinguished the kinds of perpetrators of school violence as those making themselves guilty of verbal violence, vandalism, theft, blackmail, extortions, or using weapons on the school premises.

### **Causes of Disciplinary Problems**

Research studies have identified many causes of disciplinary problems in secondary school. Some of the causes include parental/home influence, the role of the teachers, political, social and economic factors, learners with emotional problems, the kind of principal, the influence of gender, public schools versus private schools and the curriculum.

**Parental/home influence:** Alidzulwi (2000) like most authors, regards parents as of the greatest importance in creating a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere. It seems that the lack of parental involvement is the major cause of disciplinary problems in secondary schools. Bowman (2004) is of the opinion that parents' failure to teach their children discipline is identified as the major contributing factor to disciplinary problems in schools. Louw and Barnes (2003) also claimed that he has never seen a problem child, only problem parents. This means that those learners who behave badly at school do not receive proper discipline at home. In the researcher's opinion the statements made by several authors indicate the extent to which parents are being blamed for the disciplinary problems in

schools. Thus, bad behavior can be seen to have its roots in the quality of parenting as shown by erratic discipline, parental disharmony, and the approval of bad behavior.

Hayward (2003) further indicates that when parents show due civility and respect, their children reflect it in their interaction with their principals and teachers. On the other hand, if parents fail to exhibit reverence to others, the learners will imitate this behavior and show little or no respect for their educators. Some of the important factors related to the lack of parental involvement in schools that influence discipline were identified by Short et al. (1994), namely single parent homes, a lack of parental control at home, the negative influence of television, neighbourhood and community problems that influence the home and values differences between the home and the school. In reference to bullying, Besag (1991) indicates two styles of parental discipline in particular, namely; punitive and rewarding. He says that many bullies at school come from homes where a punitive style of discipline is used and where aggression is seen as a way of settling problems. Learners who are bullied are also more often absent from school (Gastic 2008). Besag (1991) further stresses that harsh and punitive discipline is ineffective, and may be interpreted as violence by the learners, and also offer a model for their own disruptive behavior. Conversely, the behavior of children is more respectful when they come from stable families where parents are rewarding and talk to their children in a loving and an encouraging manner.

**The role of teachers:** Teachers play a significant role in the management of school discipline. Bowman (2004) argued that teachers who do not actively involve learners in classroom activities may experience disciplinary problems. Research study also found that the involvement of learners in matters pertaining to their education reduces behavioral problems (Louw & Barnes, 2003). The writer's experience supports the above assertion that teachers who involve learners in class, treats them as people who are capable of thinking for themselves, and do not treat them as objects to be cajoled and shaped into manageable underlings experience more disciplinary problems with students. Short et al. (1994) emphasize that negative learner behavior seems to decrease in schools where the teachers have created climates of learner belongingness and involvement. Varnham (2005) study found that learners have a tendency of behaving badly at school because they feel that schooling is something that is done to them rather than a process in which they are valued as significant participants.

In a study done by Mabebe and Prinsloo (1999), it was indicated that learners prefer strict teachers who involve them in the management of discipline: teachers who are always ready to allow them to determine the consequences of their behavior, and who also make them responsible for the consequences of their behavior. The writer's experience show that some teachers are irresponsible and believe that their task is only to teach, and that the issue of discipline should be taken out of their hands by the system. That is why a general concern is brought to the fore by several authors, namely that teachers are no longer as committed to their profession as in the past. Many learners do not want to be forced to do something; instead, force encourages learners to act in a stubborn manner. Teachers, who do not prepare

their lessons thoroughly or meaningfully, promote a negative self-esteem in learners who show little or no participation in the classroom. This creates disciplinary problems.

**Political and social factors:** Politically, Rossouw (2003) indicates the over-emphasis placed on children rights is one of the factors confusing principals, teachers and learners in matters relating to the discipline of learners at school. Some principals are under pressure to recognize learners' rights, and do not know to which point they should make allowance for their own voices. For instance, many newly appointed principals do report that they are uncertain, confused and afraid of infringing upon learners' rights, and of being accused of misconduct. This mandate to protect learners' rights causes learners to behave beyond boundary. They try to influence behavior of their classmates negatively by exhibiting lack of discipline.

Socially, children who experience social alienation from others often misbehave. According to Lewis (1991), this situation arises within most families where children feel rejected. This finding is supported by Butchart (1998) where he indicates that emotional disconnection from family, friends, and peers results in feelings of isolation and alienation for the child. These feelings experienced by the child may ultimately develop into what is referred to as 'psychological pains', which may cause problems such as physical assault, gang violence, substance abuse, and many other discipline problems. In his analysis of the social aspects of truancy and absenteeism, Varma (1993) identifies the following social and economic elements as being present in the homes of children who are often absent from school:

Families at the lower end of the social scale; Families in which parental unemployment is a norm; Families on low incomes; Families living in overcrowded conditions; Families living in poor standard housing; Poor material conditions within the home; Families where the children are being abused; Families where the children are being supplied with free school meals; Families where the parents are passive victims of an appalling environment and unsure of their constitutional rights (p.78).

The political situation in south-south, south-east and north-east Nigeria can also be blamed for children's misbehavior because of involvement of youth in struggles. Many youths form gangs because of the lack of transformation. Some learners carry guns during elections.

**Emotional problem of learners:** When learners have emotional problems, this may cause them to misbehave. They may behave badly in class because they need special attention, want to be leaders, want to be left alone, or want to hurt others as they have been hurt. Rossouw (2003) mentioned that some learners play with cell phones in class, and when the teacher confronts them they start acting aggressively to impress their classmates.

Learners with emotional problems are particularly disruptive when certain teaching methods are used. For example, Rossouw (2003) comments on active learning approaches which allow learners to speak out aloud. As the lesson progresses some learners take advantage of the situation and start making a lot of noise.

**Personality of the Principal:** The kind of principal has attracted the attention of several researchers in respect of students' discipline at school. Short et al. (1994) advocate learner and educator participation in matters relating to the running of the school. Principals who are autocratic and self-centered end up with many disciplinary problems at their schools. Allie (2001) discovered that the principal's attitude influences discipline at school. In his findings, Allie came up with five types of principals, named A, B, C, D and E. They have different attitudes towards discipline, but they all believe that the attitude of the principal influences discipline at school. Allie (2001) explains:

- Principal A believes that, when things go wrong and discipline is poor, he is the cause and that he is not a strong enough principal.
- Principal B does not accept the idea that teachers should take responsibility for any disciplinary problems. He believes that he himself has to deal with every situation at school concerning discipline in accordance with code of conduct.
- Principal C believes that he is influenced by the attitude of teachers although they sometimes put pressure on him, and that he may need the intervention of others.
- Principal D regards matters concerning discipline as a team effort. He also believes that his attitude plays a role, but it has to be influenced by a collegial relationship with the staff. He sees himself as one of many; he sees himself as teacher first, thereafter as a principal.
- Principal E believes that discipline at school depends on the strictness of the principal. Allie (2001) believes that this kind of principal thinks the fundamental responsibility of the principal is to set the tone and discipline of the school. The type E principal also believes in leading by example, for example if he preaches punctuality, then he must always be punctual.

**The curriculum:** The relevancy of the curriculum to learners' needs also influences discipline at school. Research found that learners engage in several forms of deviant behavior if the curriculum is not able to offer them opportunities for self-development and a sense of personal worth, and do not address the aims that are promoted by society (Basag, 1991). Basag further maintains that learners resort to taking matters into their own hands if they believe that the curriculum is irrelevant and boring. Accordingly, Doveton (1991) indicates that deviant behavior is always experienced if the curriculum that is offered to learners is irrelevant to their interests and the needs of their communities. Therefore, there is need for school administrators to emphasize the importance of linking the curriculum to the philosophy and customs of a particular society.

### **Consequences of Disciplinary Problems**

Geiger (2000), regarded a lack of discipline as a chronic problem in the classroom, and the manner in which it is being handled as determining the amount of learning that is taking place in schools. Mole (1990) indicated that student misbehavior interferes with effective teaching and learning, and lowers the morale of educators. It can lead to helplessness and anger (Split & Koomen 2009). Joseph (2000) echoed the same sentiments where he indicated that student behavior is one of the major factors which contributes to stress, demoralization, and the drop-out of teachers and students from school. Wilson, Malcolm, Edward and Davidson (2007) found, by means of a study conducted in England, that learners' truancy lowers morale of teachers. This is because the passion for teaching is significantly influenced by learner behavior.

Experience in classroom teaching indicates that some educators do not know how to control poor learner behavior. Such educators handle disciplinary problems in an unpleasant manner. For example, they become sarcastic or lose their self-control, and scream at the learners. Thus, some educators' frustration with their learners' unacceptable behavior leads to stronger-than- desired responses. This may lead to greater disciplinary problems and even lower educator morale.

### **Techniques of Managing School Discipline**

It has been observed by education stakeholders such as teachers and principals in Nigeria that education system at all levels is riddled with series of discipline problems. Unfortunately, when these problems go on unabated in secondary schools, the principals are blamed for non-performance of their duties and their failure to exhibit appropriate leadership behaviors to solve these perennial problems besieging education system. A significant challenge for principals today is to identify the situations of the school, such as discipline problems, its effect on teaching and learning and strategies the principal should employ to mitigate them. Therefore, most principals set up some sorts of rules and measures at the commencement of the academic year. They also try to implement those rules and measures. It will be expected that positive results would be achieved whenever the rules are implemented, and whereas if the rules are breached may create harmful repercussion. Keeping under consideration the present scenario, the following considerations may be useful to principals.

**The authoritarian approach to discipline:** In a research study conducted by Mtsweni (2008), the authoritarian style of leadership has been linked to autocratic communication, excessive control of learners, domination as well as compulsive exercise of power that may undermine the learners' feelings of freedom and security. The authoritarian approach to discipline suggests that administration of punishment cannot be ruled out in the control and discipline of students. The right and authority of a principal to inflict punishment on students for offences, who breach school rules and regulations, is enhanced by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) which specifies peoples' right to personal liberty; and instances in which a person who has not attained the age of eighteen

may be deprived of his right to personal liberty specifically, for educative and welfare purposes.

Sequel to the above constitutional provision, a principal has authority to corporally punish a pupil even when his parent objects to that type of punishment, unless the parent proffers convincing reason. A principal's authority stems from any of the following: Parental delegation, necessity, preservation of discipline, government's duty, and public duty. In a State where corporal punishment is statutorily prohibited, a principal's authority to inflict corporal punishment is at an end (Zindi, 1995).

In secondary schools, the range of permissible punishment is at present very broad, ranging from expulsion, suspension and exclusion, to corporal punishment. Corporal punishment refers to any kind of bodily chastisement on a person by another. It is here taken to include bodily chastisement, and all forms of punishment which subjects the child to fatigue and perhaps to the derision of his schoolmates. Schools have regulations which prescribe rules on who may inflict corporal punishment, the number of licks that may be administered, the need to keep a record of it in a register, and perhaps a requirement that the pupil's parent should be informed promptly. A corporal punishment book in which shall be entered by the principal or teacher authorized by the principal, the date of all such punishment awarded, the nature of the offence and punishment, the name of the teacher administering the punishment and the name of the pupil. Such corporal punishment shall be kept to the minimum and shall be administered only by the principal, or teacher authorized by the principal, such authorization is to be entered in the log book: provided that no female pupil shall receive corporal punishment from a male teacher.

**Suspension and expulsion of students:** A student may be suspended or expelled where he infracts a grievous school rule. The student is probably to be given fair hearing prior to suspension or expulsion. It is recommended that parents are invited to the disciplinary committee hearing if the sanction of expulsion is contemplated. Parents have right to appeal to a higher person or body. A principal is at liberty to inform the entire students the reason for the suspension or expulsion if it will have a deterrent effect on them.

Without attempting an exhaustive list, the following may result to suspension or expulsion: truancy, tardiness, insubordination, and disobedience to teacher, insulting a teacher, hitting a teacher, fighting with another student, leaving the school premises without permission, substance use, and refusal to stay for detention, lack of civility and destruction of school property. Punishment record must be kept by the school. Punishment record is a punishment book in which relevant information about student's punishment is entered by the head of the institution or any other teacher authorized by him. It contains information on date of the punishment, name of the pupil punished, nature of the offence and the name of the designated person who administered the punishment.

Suspension and expulsion are too weighty to be left at the discretion and caprice of a school head or proprietor. Where the regulations are not adhered to or where they are contrary to the provisions of the child's right, statute law or judicial pronouncements, the decisions and principles would want to challenge the punishment.

**Exclusion:** By exclusion, a pupil who infracts school rules may be asked to have limited contact with other pupils in the school. He may be permitted to enter the school premises solely to write an internal or external examination while he remains barred from receiving lessons or participating in other school activities.

**Educative and corrective approach:** In its guide for educators on how to deal with discipline, the Department of Education (2000) advises educators to adopt alternatives to corporal punishment for effective discipline, such as:

present possible alternatives that focus on positive behavior; focus on rewarding learners for their effort, as well as for good behavior; discuss rules with learners and reach an agreement on these rules --learners will attempt to keep these rules because they have been consulted in their design; make use of measures that are respectful and dignified, as well as physically and verbally non-violent; use disciplinary measures in such a way that the consequences of breaking the rules are directly related to the learners' behavior; use time-out that is open-ended and managed by the learner, who determines his/her readiness to gain self-control (p.87).

Rogers (1995) came up with a school discipline policy which provides a framework that corresponds with what a school will seek to practice. The framework aims at achieving the following, namely to:

establish a stable social learning environment; encourage students to be responsible for their own behavior, to develop self-discipline, and enhance their self-worth, and to respect the rights and feelings of others, such as their fellow students and teachers; set out the school's expectations and rights, and to enhance positive behavior; and establish a set of preferred practices and due processes, whereby the staff may address unacceptable student behavior (p.12).

**The bio-physical theory and alternative discipline:** According to Henly (2010), the bio-physical theory explains human behaviour by means of an analysis of metabolic, genetic, and neurological factors. This theory indicates that lead poisoning, allergies, and neurological impairments are the three widely accepted bio-physical causes of poor student behaviour. Henly (2010) further indicates that infections, a lack of sleep, a poor diet, and vision problems are other bio-physical explanations for attention problems in children.



It is therefore imperative for teachers to understand that medication is an accepted treatment for a wide range of challenging behaviors and behavioral conditions, including hyperactivity, inattention, aggression, self-injurious behavior, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder and Tourette's syndrome (Scheuermann & Hall, 2008). Not only is medication to be used to control certain types of unwanted behavior, Forness and Kavale (2009) are of the opinion that medication for behavioral control should always be combined with the various types of behavioral interventions and positive behavioral support. The more principals understand the possible biological predisposition for challenging behaviour, the more likely it is that they will be motivated to provide environments designed to help the learners to overcome these biological influences. Research shows that even when behavioral disorders are attributable to biological influences, the most effective treatment programmes are those that include both medical treatment and psychological interventions.

**The psycho-dynamic theory and alternative discipline:** For psychological health, children and young people must successfully complete a series of developmental stages, each which presents accompanying psychological conflicts (Scheuermann & Hall 2008). This means if any of the developmental stages are not satisfactorily completed, or the conflicts are not adequately resolved, psychological difficulties, and accompanying behavioral problems, may result. Scheuermann and Hall (2008) demonstrate in the above model interventions which are more relevant to school settings. These include, among others, providing a warm, supportive climate, where the principal and all the staff members are trained to interact in various appropriate therapeutic ways with the learners. Such environments are designed to reduce unnecessary problems. Art, music, drama, and the work of play therapists may be used to help children identify negative feelings. Group processes and dynamics are also emphasized. It is important to provide an environment that is positive, predictable and consistent, and appropriate for each learner's emotional needs. Counseling is advised for students who exhibit high levels of challenging behavior.

### **Conclusion**

Secondary education is the education of children received after primary education and before the tertiary stage (FGN, 2014). The broad goals of secondary education include to prepare individual for useful living within the society; and higher education. To achieve the objectives, there is need for effective management of disciplinary problems among secondary school students by principals. It was discovered that students' misbehavior is a prevailing problem affecting schools across Nigeria. Students' misconduct in the classroom interferes with teaching and learning and is thought to be precursor to later school dropout and similar negative social outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the reviewed literature, the following recommendations are made:

1. Principals can make a significant contribution to enhance discipline and to increase the achievement of students. They can develop code of conduct for the purpose of creating order and discipline in the school.

2. Principals need to facilitate model behavior in students and teachers.
3. Principals should approach the problem of discipline with empathy.
4. Principals should create a positive learning environment by developing an incentive-based system that rewards good conduct and encourages self-discipline, which goes a long way towards lessening the need for disciplinary measures.
5. Principals should develop a sense of humour in order to assist learners to get rid of negative emotions.

### **Summary**

The aim of this paper is to identify the types of disciplinary problems existing in schools, their causes, consequences and management. The writer reviewed existing literatures on disciplinary problems in secondary schools. The review indicated that there indeed existed disciplined problems in the schools. These were caused by factors related to the learners, their parents, the educators, and the school principals. The impact of a lack of discipline among secondary students on principal, teachers and students included anger, irritability, tiredness, a loss of control, ineffective teaching and learning, and the wish to leave the teaching profession. The review highlighted most of the management strategies available for principals to control disciplinary problems. Many principals are unaware of these options leaving disciplinary problems unabated. The paper made recommendations for principals on how to improve the situation.

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