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Analysis of Disciplinary Problems in Primary Schools: Causes, Types, and Addressing Strategies in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This study investigates disciplinary problems in primary schools within the Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Methodology: Employing a descriptive survey design, data was collected from 230 primary five pupils in five randomly selected schools using a structured questionnaire. The study aimed to address three research questions: identifying major factors causing disciplinary problems, determining types of disciplinary issues, and examining strategies employed by school administration and teachers to address these problems.

Findings: Analysis revealed that peer group influence, neglect of parental advice, poor educational planning, misunderstandings about peer groups, and poor enabling environments were significant factors contributing to disciplinary issues. Common disciplinary problems included tardiness, juvenile delinquency, fighting, insulting teachers, and environmental influences. While organizing seminars and engaging students in class workouts were ineffective, promoting a reading culture emerged as an accepted strategy for addressing disciplinary problems.

Conclusion: These findings highlight the complex nature of disciplinary issues in primary schools and provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to develop targeted interventions and improve the overall learning environment for students.

Keywords: Discipline, Primary, Schools, Disciplinary Problems, Strategies.

Introduction

Primary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria, typically serve as the foundational educational institutions for children aged approximately 6 to 12 years old. These schools form a crucial part of the state's educational system, providing basic education and laying the groundwork for further academic pursuits (Anagbogu et al, 2013). Primary education in Anambra State follows the Nigerian National Policy on Education, emphasizing subjects such as English, mathematics, science, social studies, and basic technology. Class sizes vary but generally aim for manageable student-teacher ratios. Facilities may range from basic to

moderately equipped, depending on the school's location and resources. The curriculum is designed to foster holistic development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth (Obidike, 2016). Additionally, primary schools often integrate extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, and cultural events, to enrich students' educational experiences and promote well-rounded development.

Disciplinary problems in primary schools pose significant challenges to educators, administrators, and policymakers worldwide. Disciplinary problems in primary schools refer to behaviors exhibited by students that disrupt the learning environment, compromise safety, and hinder academic progress (Temitayo et al, 2013). These problems encompass a range of behaviors, including but not limited to, tardiness, disobedience, bullying, aggression towards peers or teachers, vandalism, and truancy. Such behaviors can negatively impact the well-being of students, teachers, and the overall school community, leading to decreased academic achievement, social conflict, and compromised school climate (Alabi, 2017).

Several factors contribute to disciplinary problems in primary schools. Family dynamics play a significant role, with unstable family relationships and lack of parental involvement often leading to behavioral issues in students (Scott, 2020). Peer influence is another prominent factor, as students may engage in disruptive behavior to conform to social norms within their peer groups (Obidike, 2016). Additionally, socio-economic factors, such as poverty and community violence, can exacerbate disciplinary issues by creating stressors that impact students' behavior and emotional well-being (Cook et al, 2018).

Disciplinary problems in primary schools manifest in various forms, ranging from minor infractions to more serious offenses. Common types of disciplinary issues include tardiness, disruptive behavior, bullying, vandalism, and verbal or physical aggression towards peers and teachers (Bassette & Taber-Doughty, 2013). These behaviors not only disrupt the learning environment but also have long-term consequences for students' academic achievement and social development. Educators and school administrators employ a range of strategies to address disciplinary problems and promote positive behavior among students. One approach involves implementing proactive measures such as creating a positive school climate, establishing clear expectations for behavior, and providing social-emotional learning programs (Howell, 2014). These initiatives aim to prevent disciplinary issues by fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment where students feel valued and respected.

When disciplinary problems arise, schools may utilize various intervention strategies to address them effectively. These strategies may include restorative justice practices, such as peer mediation and conflict resolution programs, which focus on repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than punitive measures (Simeon & Nnaa, 2020). Additionally, targeted interventions, such as counseling and behavior management plans, can provide individualized support to students exhibiting challenging behaviors (Shukla et al, 2016).

The literature on disciplinary problems in primary schools highlights the complex interplay of factors contributing to behavioral issues among students. Family dynamics, peer influence, and socio-economic factors all play significant roles in shaping students' behavior and contributing to disciplinary problems (Henderson & Guy, 2017). These findings underscore the importance of adopting a holistic approach to addressing disciplinary issues, which takes into account the various contextual factors influencing student behavior. Furthermore, the literature emphasizes the need for proactive and preventive measures to create a positive school climate and reduce the occurrence of disciplinary problems (Kafel, 2020). By promoting a culture of respect, inclusion, and support, schools can create environments where students feel safe and motivated to engage in positive behavior.

In cases where disciplinary issues do arise, schools must employ effective intervention strategies to address them promptly and effectively. Restorative justice practices offer an alternative to traditional disciplinary approaches by focusing on repairing harm and promoting accountability while maintaining students' dignity and well-being (Piquero et al, 2016). Additionally, targeted interventions, such as counseling and behavior management plans, can provide students with the support they need to address

underlying issues contributing to their behavior (Kafel, 2020). The motivation for the study therefore stems from the pressing need to understand and address challenges within the local educational context. Existing literature highlights the significance of such research, emphasizing the pervasive nature of disciplinary issues and their adverse effects on students' academic performance and overall well-being (Anderson et al, 2019). However, there remains a gap in the literature regarding specific causes, types, and effective strategies for addressing disciplinary problems within the local context of Onitsha North.

Furthermore, while studies conducted in broader Nigerian contexts offer valuable insights, they may not fully capture the unique socio-cultural and environmental factors influencing disciplinary issues in Onitsha North. Thus, a localized study is essential for identifying context-specific challenges and developing tailored interventions that resonate with the community's needs and realities. By addressing this gap, the study aims to provide policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in Onitsha North with evidence-based insights and practical recommendations for mitigating disciplinary problems in primary schools and fostering a conducive learning environment for all students.

Research Questions

1. What are the major factors that cause students disciplinary problems?
2. What are the major types of students' disciplinary in preparatory schools?
3. How do school administration and teachers address students' disciplinary problem?

Method

This study employed a descriptive survey design. Descriptive surveys involve collecting information from a sample that represents a larger population. The aim was to investigate the management of disciplinary problems in primary schools within the Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. The research was conducted in the Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. The accessible population comprised all primary five pupils from five selected primary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area. Out of sixteen primary schools, five were randomly selected: two male schools, two female schools, and one mixed school. The mixed school served as a trial test site for the pilot study. The sample included 115 male and 115 female students, totaling 230 students, selected through stratified random sampling.

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire aimed to elicit the necessary information to fulfill the study's purpose and answer the research questions. It used a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). To ensure the validity of the instrument, which measures the degree of accuracy, it was reviewed and guided by an expert in the field. The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study involving thirty students from Awka. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. The researchers administered the questionnaire directly to the respondents in the selected schools using the Direct Delivery Technique (DDT). This method ensured a high return rate and minimized the influence of others on the respondents' answers. Of the 230 questionnaires distributed, 226 were returned, with four rejected due to inappropriate responses. The collected data were analyzed using mean ($\overline{\text{X}}$), standard deviation (SD), Grand Mean, and T-test to address the research questions and test the hypotheses.

Results

Analysis in respect to the research questions are shown below.

Research Question 1: What are the major factors that causes students disciplinary problems?

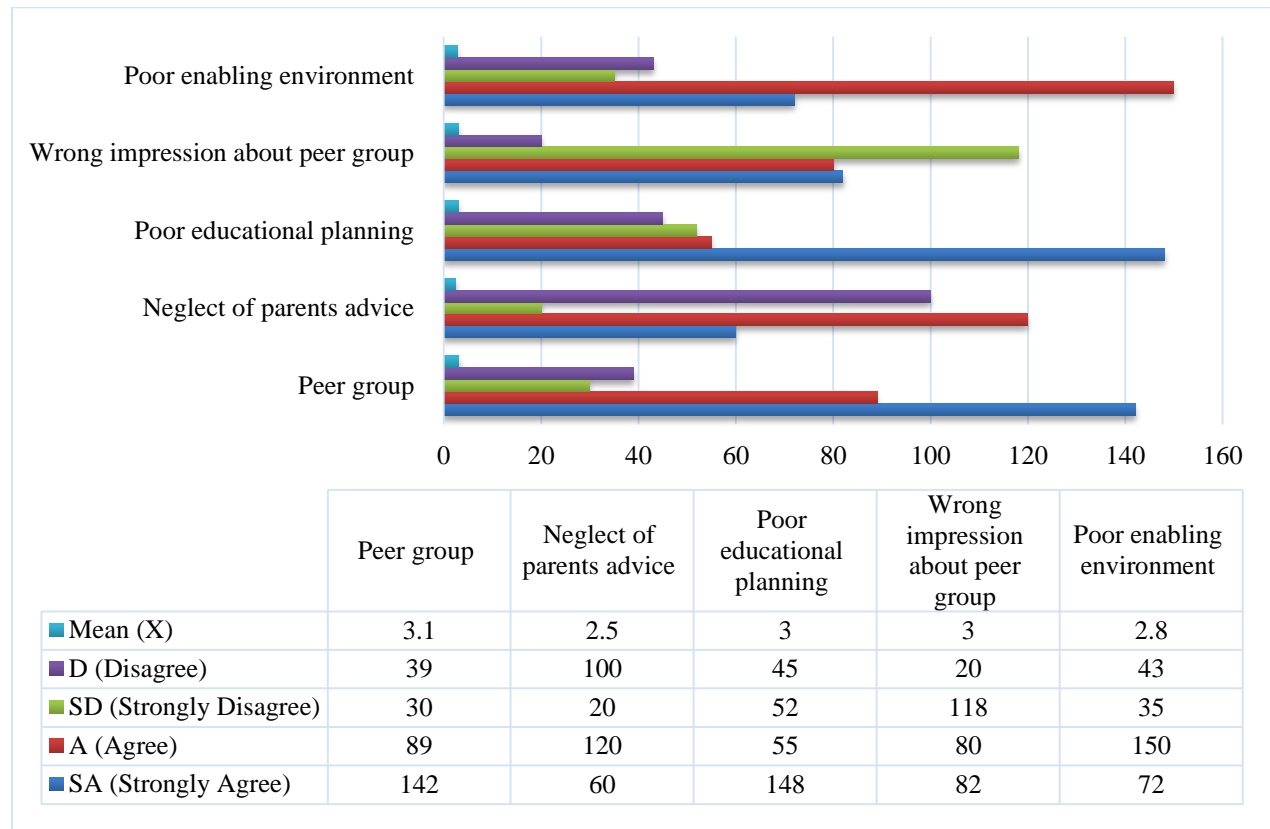|	Peer group	Neglect of parents advice	Poor educational planning	Wrong impression about peer group	Poor enabling environment
■ Mean (X)	3.1	2.5	3	3	2.8
■ D (Disagree)	39	100	45	20	43
■ SD (Strongly Disagree)	30	20	52	118	35
■ A (Agree)	89	120	55	80	150
■ SA (Strongly Agree)	142	60	148	82	72

Figure 1: *Major factors that causes students disciplinary problems*

Figure 1 highlights the major factors contributing to students' disciplinary problems. Peer group influence, with a mean score of 3.1, was strongly agreed upon by 142 respondents and agreed upon by 89. Neglect of parents' advice, scoring 2.5, had 60 strongly agreeing and 120 agreeing. Poor educational planning received a mean of 3.0, with 148 strongly agreeing and 55 agreeing. Misunderstandings about peer groups also scored 3.0, with 82 strongly agreeing and 80 agreeing. Lastly, a poor enabling environment, with a mean of 2.8, saw 72 strongly agreeing and 150 agreeing. All factors were accepted as significant contributors to disciplinary issues.

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Research Question 2: *What are the major types of students' disciplinary in preparatory schools?*

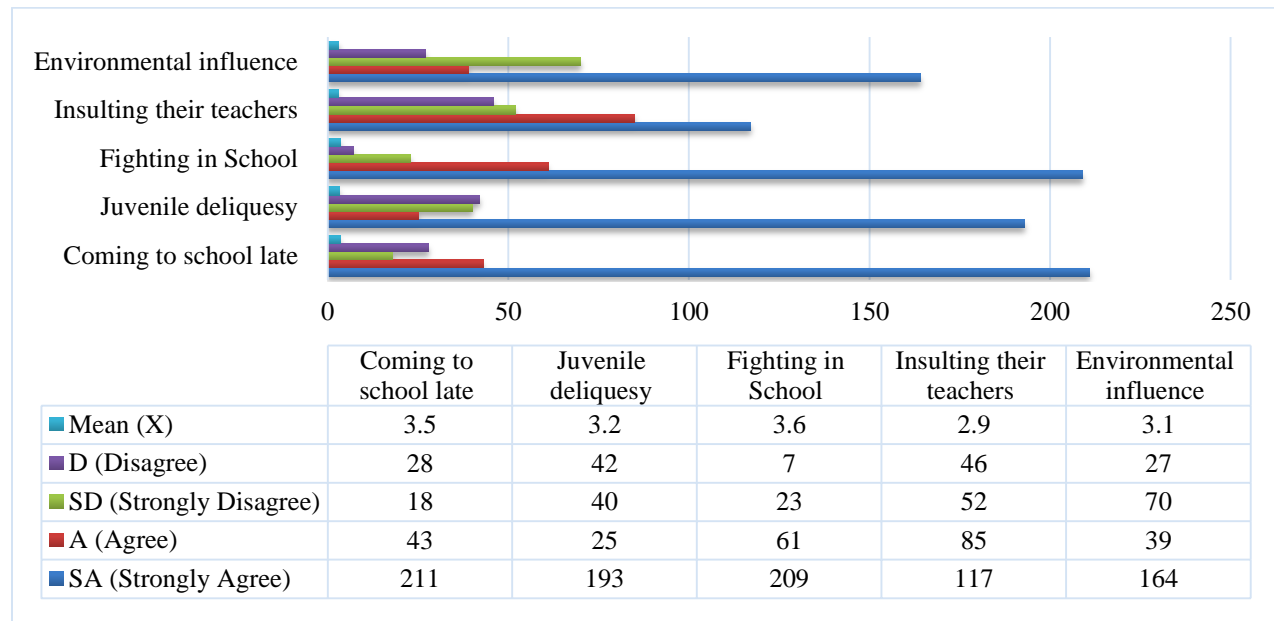|	Coming to school late	Juvenile deliquesy	Fighting in School	Insulting their teachers	Environmental influence
■ Mean (X)	3.5	3.2	3.6	2.9	3.1
■ D (Disagree)	28	42	7	46	27
■ SD (Strongly Disagree)	18	40	23	52	70
■ A (Agree)	43	25	61	85	39
■ SA (Strongly Agree)	211	193	209	117	164

Figure 2: *Major type of students' disciplinary in preparatory schools*

Figure 2 identifies the major types of disciplinary problems in preparatory schools. Coming to school late, with a mean score of 3.5, was strongly agreed upon by 211 respondents and agreed upon by 43. Juvenile delinquency, scoring 3.2, had 193 strongly agreeing and 25 agreeing. Fighting in school, the highest with a mean of 3.6, saw 209 strongly agreeing and 61 agreeing. Insulting teachers received a mean of 2.9, with 117 strongly agreeing and 85 agreeing. Environmental influence, scoring 3.1, had 164 strongly agreeing and 39 agreeing. All items were accepted as significant disciplinary problems, with a grand mean of 2.9.

Research Question 3: *How do school administration and teachers address students' disciplinary problem?*

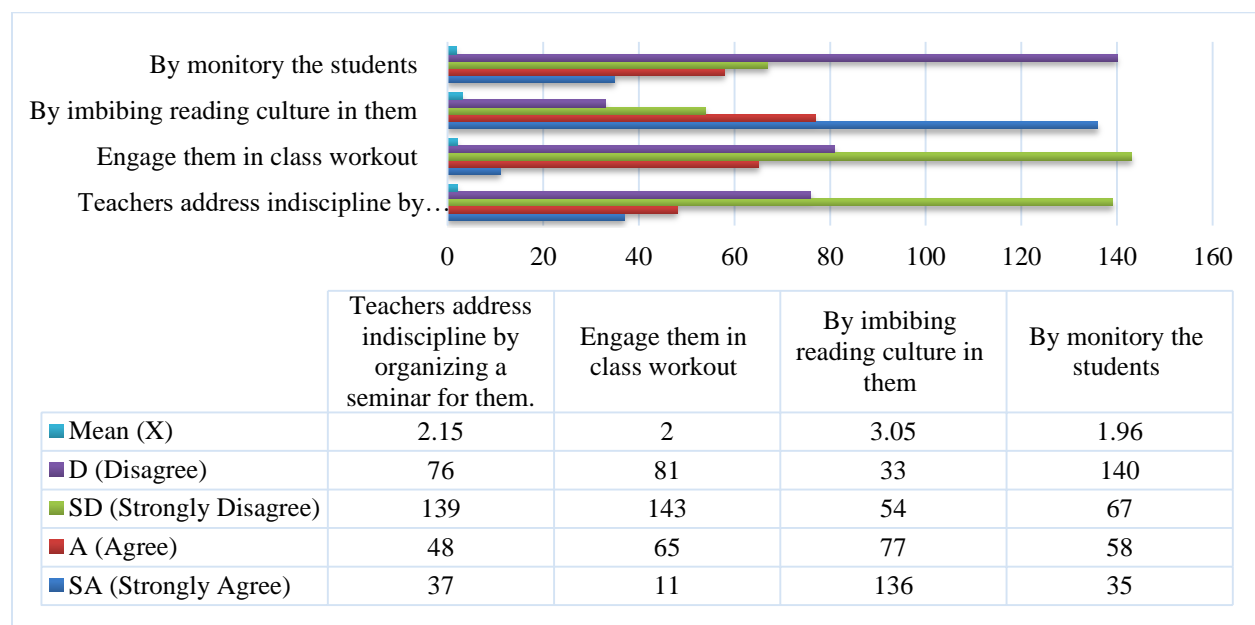|	Teachers address indiscipline by organizing a seminar for them.	Engage them in class workout	By imbibing reading culture in them	By monitory the students
■ Mean (X)	2.15	2	3.05	1.96
■ D (Disagree)	76	81	33	140
■ SD (Strongly Disagree)	139	143	54	67
■ A (Agree)	48	65	77	58
■ SA (Strongly Agree)	37	11	136	35

Figure 3: *How school administration and teachers can address students' disciplinary problem*

Figure 3 illustrates how school administration and teachers address students' disciplinary problems. Organizing seminars was rejected with a mean score of 2.15, having 37 strongly agreeing and 48 agreeing. Engaging students in class workouts was also rejected, scoring 2.0, with 11 strongly agreeing and 65 agreeing. Imbibing a reading culture was accepted with a mean of 3.05, having 136 strongly agreeing and 77 agreeing. Monitoring students was rejected, scoring 1.96, with 35 strongly agreeing and 58 agreeing. Thus, promoting a reading culture was the only accepted method for addressing disciplinary problems.

Discussion Findings

The major factors contributing to students' disciplinary problems include peer group influence, neglect of parental advice, poor educational planning, misconceptions about peer groups, and poor enabling environments. Peer group influence is significant, as students often mimic the behaviors of their peers, which can lead to disciplinary issues. This finding agreed with a study by Enyi et al, (2019), which noted that peer influence is a strong determinant of students' behavior in schools. Neglect of parental advice also plays a critical role. In contrast, a study by Atilola et al, (2022) found that active parental engagement significantly reduces behavioral problems in children. Poor educational planning contributes to disciplinary issues as well; inadequate curricular activities and lack of resources can lead to student disengagement and misbehavior. This aligns with research by Enyiazu (2022), who found that well-structured educational programs mitigate disciplinary problems. Misconceptions about peer groups, such as believing that disruptive behavior is acceptable, further exacerbate these issues. In a related study, Manya (2017) highlighted that students often develop such misconceptions from media portrayals, which influence their real-life interactions. Lastly, a poor enabling environment, including inadequate facilities and lack of support, fosters disciplinary problems. This finding is supported by Uche (2019), who emphasized that schools with better infrastructure and support systems report fewer disciplinary incidents.

The major types of disciplinary problems in preparatory schools include lateness, juvenile delinquency, fighting, insulting teachers, and environmental influences. Coming to school late is a prevalent issue, often linked to parental negligence or lack of student motivation. This finding agreed with a study by Kearney (2021), which highlighted that punctuality problems are indicative of broader issues such as disengagement and family dynamics. Juvenile delinquency, encompassing behaviors like theft and vandalism, is another major concern. In contrast, a study by Piquero et al, (2016) found that schools with robust counseling programs saw a significant decrease in delinquent behaviors, suggesting that intervention programs can mitigate these issues. Fighting in school is a severe problem that disrupts the learning environment and poses safety risks. This finding aligns with research by Kafel (2020), who noted that conflict resolution programs in schools effectively reduce instances of physical altercations. Insulting teachers undermines authority and disrupts classroom management. In a related study, Henderson and Guy (2017) found that positive student-teacher relationships are crucial in reducing disrespectful behavior, emphasizing the importance of mutual respect and understanding in the educational environment. Environmental influences, including community and home environments, significantly impact student behavior. This finding agreed with Shukla et al, (2016), who highlighted that students from unstable or hostile environments are more likely to exhibit disciplinary problems at school.

School administrations and teachers employ various strategies to address students' disciplinary problems, including organizing seminars, engaging students in class workouts, fostering a reading culture, and monitoring students. Organizing seminars is a common approach, where teachers provide information and strategies for good behavior. This finding agreed with Simeon and Nnaa (2020), who noted that seminars can effectively raise awareness about the consequences of indiscipline and promote positive behavior. However, in contrast, Howell (2014) found that seminars alone might not lead to long-term behavior changes without continuous reinforcement and follow-up activities. Engaging students in class workouts is another method used to manage discipline. Physical activities help channel students' energy positively and reduce disruptive behavior. In a related study, Janssen and LeBlanc (2010) highlighted that regular physical exercise in schools significantly lowers instances of behavioral problems, supporting the

effectiveness of this strategy. Fostering a reading culture among students is also an effective approach. Encouraging reading helps develop students' concentration and critical thinking skills, reducing disruptive behavior. This finding agreed with Bassette & Taber-Doughty (2013), who found that students engaged in regular reading activities showed improved behavior and academic performance. Monitoring students closely is crucial for maintaining discipline. By keeping a vigilant eye on students' activities, teachers can prevent problems before they escalate. Cook et al, (2018) supported this, noting that active supervision and prompt intervention are key components of effective disciplinary strategies. In contrast, Scott (2020) argued that monitoring must be coupled with positive reinforcement and supportive teacher-student relationships to be truly effective.

Conclusion

This study comprehensively analyzed the causes, types, and addressing strategies of disciplinary problems in primary schools within the Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that peer group influence, neglect of parental advice, poor educational planning, misconceptions about peer groups, and poor enabling environments are significant contributors to students' disciplinary issues. These factors highlight the need for a holistic approach to mitigate disciplinary problems by addressing both home and school environments. The types of disciplinary problems identified include lateness, juvenile delinquency, fighting, insulting teachers, and the influence of the surrounding environment. These behaviors disrupt the educational process and undermine the overall learning environment, necessitating targeted interventions.

To address these issues, schools have implemented various strategies such as organizing seminars, engaging students in physical activities, promoting a reading culture, and closely monitoring students. While these approaches have shown varying degrees of effectiveness, the study underscores the importance of continuous engagement, comprehensive intervention programs, and a supportive school environment. In conclusion, tackling disciplinary problems in primary schools requires a multifaceted strategy involving parents, teachers, and the community. By fostering a collaborative approach and implementing effective disciplinary measures, schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area can create a more conducive environment for learning and development. Further research and continuous evaluation of these strategies are recommended to ensure their effectiveness and adaptability to evolving educational challenges.

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