



# AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF INDISCIPLINE AMONGST SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN NYANGA DISTRICT

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of students' indiscipline amongst secondary schools students in Nyanga District in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe. The study draws on a quantitative inquiry on the causes of indiscipline amongst secondary pupils in Zimbabwe using a sample of 200 teachers drawn from a population of 585 teachers from Nyanga District. The research instrument used was the questionnaire. The study revealed that indiscipline in secondary schools was largely caused by poor group influence, bad company within and outside the school, lack of discipline at home and in school, irresponsible parents and guardians, use of drugs and alcohol, family problems, poor teacher-student relationships and failure of the school to effectively enforce school rules and regulations. The study recommends that all secondary schools should have a qualified guidance counselor to deal with pupil behavior problems. Schools should enforce school rules effectively to reduce cases of indiscipline. Parents and teachers should work together to promote good behavior from pupils.

**Key words:** Indiscipline, causes, pupils, secondary school, district.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Student indiscipline has been a source of worry for schools, parents and other stakeholders concerned with the education of children. As Ali (et. al, 2014) posit, indiscipline is a multifaceted phenomenon regarding its displays and causes as well as its meanings and functions in the social, psychosocial and pedagogical fields. School discipline has two main objectives; first to ensure the safety off staff and students and secondly to create an environment conducive to learning (Gaustard, 2005 in Ali et. al, 2004). As Madziyire (2012) argues, effective discipline is needed in school for good academic achievement because when there is effective discipline in a school and in the classroom, effective teaching and learning can take place. The cases of indiscipline in Zimbabwean secondary are very widespread, ranging from minor cases like late coming, bullying and stealing to major cases like rape, murder and drug abuse (Ncube, 2013). Most schools have well crafted school rules and yet in spite of these rules the phenomenon of indiscipline persists. It is



therefore, on account of this situation that this study attempted to analyse the major causes of indiscipline amongst secondary school pupils.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

School indiscipline has been over time an issue of concern for educators, policymakers and the public at large (Paul, 2009). Indiscipline is a behavioural disorder that is classified as an act of delinquency (kiprop, 2012). Just like lying, stealing and playing truant or running away from home, it is often the cause of a lot of mental emotional and also physical damage (MacDaniel, 2005). Zubaida (2009) identifies various forms of indiscipline among the secondary school students such as truancy, lateness to school, cultism, drug abuse, insulting / assaulting, stealing, rioting, sexual activities and many other social vices. According to Kounin (2008) indiscipline among students manifests mainly in various unruly behaviours exhibited by students in and outside the school like violence, street fighting and hooliganism, truancy at school, improper dressing even when they wear their uniforms moral laxity, gambling and other immoral acts.

Indiscipline in schools can be blamed on the parents who have neglected the discipline of their children at home (Madziyire, 2010). Nowadays, parents ignore their duties towards proper upbringing of their children; little time is spent with these children which results in moral laxity which is exhibited by students. Many who are undisciplined in our institutions of learning. Apart from this, as Kiprop (2012) observes, our society cannot be exonerated either as indiscipline is a societal problem which originates from our societal values which nowadays have been twisted and corrupted. A society demands the type of students it gets. There is a lot of indiscipline acts going on in our society and this rubs off on our students (Paul, 2009). For instance, a student who is fond of gambling in the school has come to realize that there is no honest way of making money and that hard work is not recognized in society (Mcmanus, 2009).

According to macDaniel (2005) indiscipline among teachers and non-teaching staff in schools also contribute to gross misconduct by students as student often think that what they are doing is right after all, if teachers can do it why can they not do it. For example, when teachers go on industrial action, absent themselves from work, insult each other in front of pupils, fall in love with pupils and steal school funds, this usually is copied by students resulting in indiscipline among the students (Madziyire, 2010).

One other factor that teachers generally agree has brought about an increase of indiscipline among pupils in Zimbabwean schools is the abolishment of corporal punishment (Chikowore, 2014). Children's behavior has grown considerably worse since the abolition of corporal punishment by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Since the abolition of corporal punishment there have not been effective ways of dealing with misbehavior (Chikowore, 2014) as teachers said detentions fail to deter pupils, while exclusions and suspensions are only handed out in the most serious cases because the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education takes a dim view of school that regularly exclude children (Madziyire, 2010).

According to Ndakwa (2013) there are some students who influence others to cause chaos and this happens when students meet with other students with different behaviours that negatively influence them. Carter and McGoldrick (2005) state, as children grow older the importance of parents decreases as a reference group and as a model for conformity and they begin to relate more with their age mates. The power of the peer group becomes more important when the family relationships are not close or supportive (Vishala, 2008). As Ndakwa (2013) posits, if the parents are largely unavailable, the children may turn to their peer group for emotional support and will often turn to a group that accepts them, even if the group is involved in illegal or negative activities and for some young people the need for affiliation or closeness is often greater than the need to do the right thing.



Closing achievement and graduation rate gaps requires comprehensive school reform that includes a focus on a positive school climate that meets and develops the academic, social and emotional needs of every student (Paul, 2009). As Kiprop (2012) argues, student discipline policies often keep too many students out of school and away from the classroom causing them to lose critical learning time. Research repeatedly shows that harsh disciplinary policies disproportionately affect students from poor backgrounds. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included and accepted and actively promote positive behavior and interactions (Zindi, 2009). Gibson (2008) postulates that, principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and culture of mutual respect and a positive school climate is a crucial component of the prevention of inappropriate behavior.

The effects of indiscipline among pupils can be divided into two main areas: namely educational and work related as well as social behavior related effects (Bandura, 2010). Indiscipline manifests itself through disruptive behavior making it difficult for disciplined pupils to learn (Bandura, 2010). Teachers should decide on consistent that is, well defined but reasonable standards of expected behavior and stick to them. Too rigid (as opposed to consistent) standards are not desirable as they may promote deviant behavior (McDaniel, 2005).

## Statement of the Problem

Indiscipline in schools has been experienced for time immemorial, but the magnitude with which it is manifesting itself in today's schools is alarming. Indiscipline among secondary school students manifests mainly in various unruly behaviours exhibited by students in and outside the school. It is therefore imperative that strategies to curb this problem are devised in order to promote good behavior of students for effective learning.

## Purpose of the study

the purpose of the study was to establish the major causes of indiscipline among secondary school pupils in Zimbabwean schools in order to conscientise school authorities and other stake holders about the importance of promoting proper behaviour by students so that they may concentrate on their school work.

## Research Questions

In a bid to provide solutions to the main research question, the study explored for sub-problems.

1. Which are the most common cases of indiscipline in secondary schools in Nyanga District?
2. What are the general causes of indiscipline in Nyanga District Secondary schools?
3. What are consequences of indiscipline in secondary schools?
4. How can cases of indiscipline be reduced?

## Significance of the study

The importance of this study is premised on the fact that it hopes to highlight the major causes of indiscipline so that school administrators, teachers and other stakeholders may come up with strategies to minimize indiscipline cases in secondary schools.



## **Limitations of the study**

In view of the small sample used the findings of this study would have limited generalisability. The descriptive method that was used is also another limiting factor in that as Leedy (2009) argues, the research may discover and describe what is but is unable to predict what would be. Respondents may also give false responses thereby affecting the validity of the findings.

## **Delimitation of the study**

The researcher delimited the study to the analysis of causes of indiscipline amongst secondary school pupils in Nyanga District of Manicaland Province in Eastern Zimbabwe. Views from 200 teachers were used in the research. Perceptions from other stakeholders like heads, parents, education inspectors and pupils themselves were not used for this study.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**

The study employed the quantitative methodology and made use of a survey research design. According to Bell (2003), the descriptive survey method looks with intense accuracy at the phenomenon of the moment and then describes precisely what the researcher sees. The study employed the simple random sampling technique to select the respondents because it permitted every teacher an equal opportunity of participating in the study (Cohen and Manion, 2005). The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the target schools and collected them through the Zimbabwe Teacher's Association after two weeks. Prior to distribution of the instruments, permission had been sought through the District Education Officers office to carry out the study. Data collected from the questionnaires were computed and presented in tables and inferential implications from them derived and recorded.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The study set out to analyse the causes of indiscipline in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by sex (N=200)**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	90	45
Female	110	55
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

As Table 1 reveals, 55% of the respondents were female and 45% were male. This is generally a fair and nearly balanced distribution of respondents in the survey as views from both male and female teachers were accommodated.

**Table 2: Composition of sample by professional qualifications (N=200).**

Professional Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate in Education	4	2
Diploma in Education	100	50
Bachelor of Education	78	39
Masters Degree	6	3
Untrained	12	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>



Table 2 above shows that the majority of respondents (94%) are holders of professional qualifications which means that they are aware of the need for discipline in schools for effective teaching.

**Table 3: Which are the most prevalent cases of indiscipline? (N=200).**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Late coming	30	15
Bunking lessons	40	20
Drug abuse	50	25
Bullying / Fighting	50	25
Love affairs	30	15
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows that drug abuse and bullying / fighting are the most reported cases of indiscipline (25% respectively). Bunking lessons, late coming and love affairs also feature prominently as cases of indiscipline (20%; 15 and 15%).

**Table 4: What are the major causes of indiscipline? (N=200)**

Causes of indiscipline	Frequency	Percentage
Home background	26	13
Abolition of corporal punishment	44	22
Teacher's behavior	28	14
Peer pressure	52	26
Abuse of drugs	30	15
Community leaders	8	4
Closed school climate	12	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows that peer pressure, abolition of corporal punishment as well as abuse of drugs (26%; 22% and 15% respectively) top the list of major causes of indiscipline in the schools. Home background, teachers' behavior closed school climate as well as community leaders (13%; 14%; 6% and 4% respectively) are also causes of indiscipline.

The questionnaire had one open-ended question which bolstered data from the close-ended questions. The question wanted to find out from the respondents what they thought could be done to curb indiscipline in secondary schools. The most common responses in order of popularity included the following:

- Democratize the prefect selection system
- Use of encouragement, affirmation and rewards
- Working with parents / guardians and community leaders
- Use of sanctions.



## Discussion

The information from the study revealed that the most prevalent cases of indiscipline were abuse of drugs, bullying / fighting, bunking lessons, late coming as well as love affairs. Although these cases of indiscipline did not occur at the same level of preponderance, they were all existing in alarming levels. This finding tallies with observations by Zimbaida (2009) who identified various forms of indiscipline among the secondary school students such as truancy, lateness to school, drug abuse, insulting/assaulting, stealing, rioting, sexual activities and many other social vices. Kounin (2008) on the other hand argues that indiscipline among students manifests mainly in various unruly behaviours exhibited by students in and outside the school like violence, street fighting and hooliganism, truancy at school and improper dressing.

The major causes of indiscipline in Nyanga Secondary Schools include peer pressure, abolition of corporal punishment, teachers' behaviours, abuse of drugs, home background, closed school climate as well as community leaders. Peer pressure and the abolition of corporal punishment were the most common causes mentioned by respondents. As Ndakwa (2013) argues, if the parents are largely unavailable, the children may turn to their peer group for emotional support and will often turn to a group that accepts them even if the group is involved in illegal or negative activities and for some young people the need for affiliation or closeness is often greater than the need to do the right thing. On corporal punishment abolition in Zimbabwe, Chikowore (2014) states that children's behaviour has grown considerably worse since the abolition of corporal punishment. On home background, Madziyire (2010) argues that nowadays parents ignore their duties towards proper upbringing of their children because little time is spent with these children which results in moral laxity which is exhibited by students.

On suggestions to reduce cases of indiscipline teachers stated that the processes of selecting prefects should be democratized. This implies that school authorities should promote the participation of pupils in the selection of their school leaders instead of imposing them as the common practice in many schools. As Kipron (2012) advises, where pupils are involved in the selection of their leaders (prefects), they are most likely to work harmoniously with them and not against them and this may reduce cases of indiscipline. Schools were also encouraged to use encouragement, affirmation and rewards to promote good behavior. As Freire and Amado (2009) postulate, school disciplinary processes that rely on sanctions will end up promoting submission and manipulation rather than the considered development of individual and group behavior.

Teachers also suggested that there is need to work with parents and community leaders to curb indiscipline in secondary school. This is corroborated by Ozeinar (2006) who states that parental monitoring has a protective effect on many adolescents risk behaviours in both middle-class and poor urban environments, whereas unsupervised time, exposure to sexual possibility situations, and out of home care increase sexual behavior, improved parent-child communication reduces sexual risk behaviours.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the main cases of indiscipline in secondary schools in Nyanga include abuse of drugs, bullying / fighting, bunking of lessons or truancy, late coming as well as sexual activities. The major causes of indiscipline are attributable to peer pressure, lack of corporal punishment, teachers' behaviour, home background as well as abuse of drugs.



## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of this study, the researchers would like to make the following recommendations: -

- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should recruit competent professional counselors for all secondary schools to guide pupils on proper behavior patterns.
- Schools should not impose prefects on pupils but should allow pupils to elect their own leaders with teachers professionally facilitating the process.
- Parents and community leaders should be involved in the discipline of pupils so that they also play their role to augment the schools' efforts in moulding pupils.
- Teachers should strive to deliver motivating and interesting lessons so that pupils feel compelled to attend these lessons in order to avoid bunking of lessons.
- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should close by monitor the implementation of the abolition of corporal punishment especially in remote areas as it also creates feelings of resistance by pupils thereby causing indiscipline.

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