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MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL MISCONDUCT OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC CO-EDUCATION SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NNEWI EDUCATION ZONE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the management of student social misbehavior in public co-educational secondary schools within Nnewi education zone, Anambra State, Nigeria. Data were collected from 261 teachers using a validated survey instrument (reliability coefficient = 0.88, Pearson's correlation). Analysis using means and standard deviations revealed that prevalent misbehaviors were primarily minor infractions such as truancy, incomplete assignments, inattention, and

disruptive classroom behavior. However, serious incidents including bullying, verbal abuse, disrespect towards authority, and inappropriate relationships were also identified. Contributing factors to misbehavior were multifaceted, encompassing negative home environments, inadequate school resources, peer influence, social media impact, and ineffective teaching methodologies. The co-educational school environment itself was also considered a potential influence. While existing school rules and disciplinary measures were in place, communication with parents regarding student misconduct was lacking, and student participation in disciplinary processes was limited. The study concludes that addressing student misbehavior requires a collaborative approach involving parents, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and the wider community to foster a more supportive and effective learning environment. Recommendations include improved communication strategies and greater student involvement in disciplinary procedures.

Keywords: Misbehaviour, Co-educational Schools, Disciplinary framework, Secondary school, Students

Introduction

The adolescent period, coinciding with secondary schooling, marks a critical phase of emerging adulthood characterized by significant transitions in education, employment, and relationships. This developmental stage is particularly vulnerable to mental health and behavioral challenges that can disrupt these pivotal life transitions (Arnett, 2011). Research has established a strong correlation between adolescent behavioral problems and both subsequent mental health disorders and a range of risky adult behaviors, including substance abuse (Fergusson et al., 2009; Bor et al., 2010). Schools play a crucial role in shaping these emerging adults into responsible citizens. However, a growing prevalence of misconduct in secondary schools is causing considerable concern among parents, educators, and the broader society.

Adolescent misconduct is a global issue with far-reaching consequences for both students and teachers, contributing to increased teacher stress (Paquette et al., 2016). Student misconduct, defined as behavior inappropriate for a given setting or that disrupts the flow of instruction (Charles, 2008; Kyriacou & Ortega, 2010), impedes academic progress (Turnuklu & Galton 2001) and creates an uncomfortable, insecure, and even fearful learning environment (Mahasneh et al., 2012). An inverse relationship exists between student misbehavior and academic achievement, with misbehaving students demonstrating increased rates of school dropout (Hwung, 2016; Whisman & Hammer 2014). Moreover, student misbehavior contributes significantly to teacher stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction (Tsouloupas et al., 2014; Aloe et al., 2014; Jacobson, 2016) as effective classroom management becomes a major challenge for teachers of all experience levels (Koutrouba, 2013).

As key stakeholders in education, it is imperative to guide students towards

exhibiting acceptable behavior both within and outside of the school context (Fekadu, 2019). School regulations are designed to promote an orderly and peaceful environment (Anna, 2013; Odoyo, 2016); however, various levels of misconduct persist in co-educational secondary schools. Despite the implementation of various disciplinary strategies by school administrators, some schools demonstrate greater success than others in managing student indiscipline. A decline in disciplinary standards has been noted, even with efforts to enforce regulations (Riak, 2007), a situation exacerbated by the erosion of societal moral values. Effective management of student misconduct requires a thorough understanding of the specific characteristics of co-educational secondary schools, the underlying causes of misbehavior, and the development of individualized management plans tailored to each type of infraction.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study is to find out how social misconduct can be managed in co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone of Anambra State.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1) Identify the nature (type) of social misconduct exhibited by students in the co-education secondary schools.
2) Identify the causes of the misconduct in the co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.
3) Identify the challenges posed by the misconduct in the co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.
4) Examine how co-education arrangement contributes to social misconducts in co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.
5) Identify the management strategies used by the teachers to curb the social misconduct of students in the co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.

Scope of the study

The scope of this study is limited to the management in co-education secondary school in Nnewi education zone comprising four (4) local government areas: Nnewi North L.G.A, Nnewi South L.G.A, Ekwusigo L.G.A and Ihiala L.G.A.The content coverage include types, causes, challenges posed by the social misconducts in co-education schools and the strategies teachers/schools employ to manage the social misconducts in co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research:

1) What are the social misconducts in the co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone?
2) What are the causes of social misconduct of students in co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone?
3) What are the challenges posed by these misconducts in co-education secondary school in Nnewi education zone of Anambra state?
4) How does co-education arrangement contribute to social misconduct of

students in co-education secondary school in Nnewi education zone?

5) What are the management strategies utilized by the teachers to curb these misconducts in co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone?

Research Method

Research Design: This study utilized a descriptive research design to examine the management of social misconduct in co-educational secondary schoolsin Nnewi education zone. The study population consisted of all teachers in the randomly selected public co-educational secondary schools in all four Local Government Areas (LGAs) within Nnewi education zone in Anambra State, namely Nnewi North, Nnewi South, Ekwusigo, and Ihiala. As reported by the Post Primary School Service Commission (PPSSC, 2023), there are 38 such schools in this zone, with a total teacher population of 728 (refer to appendix). Nineteen schools were selected using simple random sampling. Subsequently, a convenience non-probability sampling approach was used to recruit 261 teachers from the selected schools based on their availability and willingness to participate.

Data was gathered using a self-structured questionnaire including six sections: demographic information; observed social misconducts in the schools; causes of social misconduct; challenges associated with social misconduct; perceived contribution of the co-educational arrangement to social misconducts, and the strategies used by teachers and schools to manage such misconducts. The teachers' responses were rated on a four-point Likert-type scale:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points
Agree (A) = 3points
Disagree (D) = 2 points
Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point

The instrument was validated by three experts in education management and a statistician, following which the reliability of the instrument was determined using Pearson correlation coefficient. This yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.88, indicating that the instrument was reliable. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A mean value of 2.50 was obtained by finding the average of the points (4, 3, 2, 1) on the 4-point Likert Scale. Items that score a minimum mean rating of 2.50 was accepted while items with mean rating below 2.50 were rejected. The teachers' responses were analyzed using simple descriptive terms and percentages. Ethical considerations are rigorously observed, including obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring theconfidentiality of their responses.

Presentation of Results

A total of 261 teachers, who were largely females (80.1%) in the fourth decade of life (39%) and have taught for at least 5years (72.4%) responded.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the observed students' social misconducts

S/N	Items	Mean (X)	SD	Remark
1.	Truancy, loitering and lateness to school	3.26	0.77	Accepted
2.	Bullying and verbal abuse	2.89	0.82	Accepted
3.	Failure to do homework/assigned tasks	3.20	0.74	Accepted
4.	Exam malpractice	2.97	0.82	Accepted
5.	Inattentiveness and noise-making while teaching is ongoing	2.89	0.89	Accepted
6.	Stealing	2.61	0.90	Accepted
7.	Cultism	2.15	0.94	Rejected
8.	Sexual abuse and promiscuity	2.11	0.94	Rejected
9.	Smoking and use of hard drugs	1.92	0.94	Rejected
10.	talking without permission during the lesson	2.96	0.85	Accepted
11.	complaining about their teacher to family	2.85	0.91	Accepted
12.	Lying	3.23	0.66	Accepted
13.	Being rude/Disrespecting teachers	3.04	0.79	Accepted
14.	Fighting	3.00	0.77	Accepted
15.	Hooliganism	2.41	0.94	Rejected
16.	Disrespecting school authority figures.	2.73	0.87	Accepted
17.	developing and supporting inappropriate and harmful relationships	2.64	0.90	Accepted
18.	bringing phones to the class	2.82	0.88	Accepted
19.	switching seats without permission	3.02	0.82	Accepted
20.	Aggression	2.70	0.81	Accepted

Table 1 above shows that apart from cultism, Sexual abuse and promiscuity, Smoking and use of hard drugs and Hooliganism havingbelow the mean score rating of 2.50, other items on the table are among the prevalent types of students' social misconduct observed in public co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the perceived causes of students' social misconducts in public co-ed secondary schools in Nnewi zone

S/N	Responses	Mean (X)	SD	Remark
Causes originating from students				
1.	Feeling of frustration and being bored in class	2.78	0.85	Accepted
2.	Poor home background (such as broken homes, infightings etc.)	3.10	0.81	Accepted
3.	Poor students' peer and group relationships	3.08	0.73	Accepted
4.	Psychological factors such as personal problems, inability to handle frustration, seeking of attention, feeling of rejection,	3.15	0.74	Accepted

	lack of confidence, and feeling of discouragement may be the cause of students' misbehavior.			
5.	Students' attitudes/performance in the classroom will cause him to develop positive or negative feelings/attitudes towards their school.	3.09	0.74	Accepted
6.	Attention seeking behavior from teachers can lead to misconduct behavior.	2.79	0.81	Accepted
Causes originating from the teachers				
7.	Students usually misbehave towards teachers that use negative label and sarcasm on students.	3.09	0.70	Accepted
8.	Students misbehave towards teachers who are incompetent, unprepared and are habitual late-comers.	3.25	0.69	Accepted
Causes originating from school				
9.	An over-crowded classroom with insufficient space for students to sit or carry out practical activities may hinder the learning process and cause undesirable behavior.	3.44	0.73	Accepted
10.	Lack of clear and enforceable rules with good teacher-administration cooperation or with active administrations, breeds lawlessness in school.	3.27	0.76	Accepted
11.	When the curriculum appears irrelevant to the interests and needs of the students, social misconduct may be experienced	3.06	0.80	Accepted
Causes originating from the home, community, and the larger social order				
12.	Absence of family love	3.50	0.67	Accepted
13.	Negative parental attitude toward school and education,	3.39	0.66	Accepted
14.	Disharmony in the home environment/ bad/poor home environment,	3.48	0.64	Accepted
15.	Child abuse problems,	3.16	0.76	Accepted
16.	Poverty and negative neighborhood environment,	2.85	0.81	Accepted
17.	Negative influence of T.V and social media translate to misconducts in school.	3.75	0.50	Accepted

From table 2 above, all the items listed had mean score ≥2.50 mean score rating decision rule, and were thus accepted as the causes of students' social misconducts in the public co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of responses on challenges posed by students' social misconducts in public co-ed secondary schools in Nnewi zone

S/N	Response	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	Remark
1.	Social misconducts affect educational programs of students and school.	3.49	0.56	Accepted
2.	Social misconducts discourage parents from sending their wards to school.	2.93	0.84	Accepted
3.	Students have been suspended or expelled from school for Social misconduct.	3.41	0.63	Accepted
4.	There is decline in academic achievement of students.	3.27	0.71	Accepted

5.	Many students are afraid of social misconduct and left school because of the same problems.	2.66	0.90	Accepted
6.	Social misconducts affect the society at large.	3.56	0.62	Accepted
7.	Social misconducts lead to high school dropout.	3.39	0.72	Accepted

Table 3 shows that all listed items have mean above the mean score rating of 2.50 that guides decision. Hence, all seven listed items including increased frequency of high school dropout and decline in academic achievements of students among others, are valid challenges posed by the students' social misconducts on the public co-education secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the contributions of co-education arrangement to students' social misconducts in secondary schools in Nnewi zone

S/N	RESPONSE	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	Remark
1	The pressure from opposite sex makes students to indulge in social misconduct.	2.97	0.90	Accepted
2	Hormonal influence: Adolescents in co-educations may be more likely to be distracted by the opposite sex, which can lead to disruptions in the classroom and disciplinary issues	3.09	0.77	Accepted
3	Socioeconomic factors: co-education schools may have a higher concentration of students from disadvantaged background, which may contribute to disciplinary issues	2.94	0.85	Accepted
4	Different learning styles: Boys and girls may have different learning styles, which can make it more difficult for teachers to keep all students engaged and on task.	2.68	0.94	Accepted
5	Lack of role models: co-education schools may lack positive role models of the same gender as some students, which can make it more difficult for them to succeed academically and socially.	2.80	0.911	Accepted

From table 4 above, all items listed are viewed by the teachers as valid contributions of co-education arrangement on students' social misconducts in secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the strategies utilized to manage students' social misconducts in public co-ed secondary schools in Nnewi zone

S/N	RESPONSES	Mean	SD	Remark
At individual level				
1	I involve students in establishing rules and procedures	2.11	0.95	Rejected
2	I use non-verbal signals to stop misconducts (eye contact, approach and touch disruptive student, etc)	3.15	0.844	Accepted
3	I use short verbal cues (e.g. Shh, say student's name, etc)	3.26	0.69	Accepted
4	I use rewards to encourage good conduct	3.44	0.73	Accepted
5	I make students aware of the consequences of misconduct	3.56	0.57	Accepted
6	I deny the student some privileges (e.g. loss of break time)	2.87	0.92	Accepted
7	Flogging or other punishment like kneeling or standing during lesson cutting glass etc	3.21	0.80	Accepted
8	Shouting on the student	2.50	1.03	Accepted
9	I engage the student on a personal discussion/advise	3.48	0.65	Accepted
10	I report to the school authority/guidance and counselor	3.36	0.62	Accepted
11	Warning	3.34	0.61	Accepted
12	I redirect misbehavior on the spot (e.g. assign task)	2.09	1.01	Rejected
At school level				
1	There is existing school rules communicated to the students	3.32	0.76	Accepted
2	Exclusion from class (suspension and expulsion)	3.19	0.71	Accepted
3	Parents are communicated of their ward's misconduct and consequences in writing	1.20	0.06	Rejected
4	School organizes special training programme regarding management of classroom disruptive behavior for the teachers	3.24	0.75	Accepted
5	Students are involved in making rules and regulations	2.22	1.04	Rejected

Table5 shows the different strategies utilized by teachers for the management of the students' social misconducts at individual and school levels. Items 1 and 12 were not utilized by the individual teachers and items 3 and 5 of the school level strategies are not among the strategies utilized by teachers to manage students' social misconducts in public co-ed secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.

Discussion

This researchrevealed that students' social misconducts prevalent in public co-education secondary school in Nnewi education zone were largely in the minor misconducts category which are usually impulsive, including truancy, loitering and lateness to school; failure to do homework/assigned tasks; exam malpractice; inattentiveness and noise-making while teaching is ongoing; talking without permission during the lesson; complaining about their teacher to family; Lying and switching seats without permission. The serious misconducts observed were bullying and verbal abuse; Stealing; being rude/disrespectful to teachers; fighting; disrespect to school authority figures; bringing phones to the class; and developing and supporting

inappropriate and harmful relationships. The only severe misconduct observed was physical aggression. This finding is in agreement with the works of Kaur & Niwas (2017), who in their classification of the different types of students' social misconduct into three categories, asserted that most disruptive behaviors of students are impulsive and minor. A meta-analysis on the students' misbehaviours that affect classroom management by Dalgic & Bayhan (2014) showed that severe misconducts only accounted for 5% of students' social misconducts

The causes of students' social misconducts in co-education secondary schools could be related to student, teacher, school, home and societal factors. The causes identified included student's feeling of frustration and boredom; Poor home background, Poor peer relationships; psychological factors; Students' attitudes/performance in the classroom; attention seeking behavior from teachers; teacher's use of negative words on students; overcrowded classroom; lack of clear and enforceable rules; absence of family love, disharmonious home environment; Negative parental attitude toward school and education and Negative influence of entertainment and Social media among others. These protean and diverse causes of students' social misconduct was also highlighted by other researchers, stating that the causes range from innate students factor and the influence of his environment (home, school and the society, including the media) (Turanovic J.J, Sonja E. & Siennick, 2022; Youssef & Youssef, 2022).

Few of the causes highlighted by Youssef & Youssef (2022) include absence of family love; negative parental attitude toward school and education; disharmony in the home environment; bad/poor home environment; child abuse problems; negative neighborhood environment; violence or inappropriate behavior portrayed on the media, including television, movies, internet and in popular music; availability of weapons; racial tension; lack of parental monitoring; broken connections in the family and problems associated with poverty (Youssef & Youssef, 2022). The environmental influence was also stressed by Kaya et al., who stated that continuous exposure to violence, drugs, alcohol, vulgar language, and destructive behavior in the media and the internet are considered direct sources of misbehavior (Kaya, et al., 2010). Also, in agreement with our findings, Harmer (1991) stated that some students' misconducts are reactions to their teachers' behavior, as students usually disrespect teachers who use informal language, display aggressive behavior or negative attitudes towards them, as well as teachers who are incompetent, unprepared and are habitual late-comers. Gillean (2014), also in agreement pointed out that an overcrowded classroom with insufficient space for students to sit or carry out practical activities, may hinder the learning process and cause undesirable behavior.

Students' social misconducts pose threat not only to the students, but also the school and the society at large. The challenges of students' social misconducts included disruption of student's and school's academic programs; parents' discouragement from sending their wards to school;

suspension/expulsion of students from school; declining student's academic achievement; student's change of schools as well as high school dropout. These findings are in agreement with the statements of Turanovic, Sonja & Siennick (2022) and Hwung (2016) that students' social misconduct is associated with declining academic achievement with increased dropping out of school of the misbehaving students. Also, Mahasneh et al., (2012) in agreement showed that it can make the school environment uncomfortable, insecure and fearsome for both students and teachers.

It is also revealing that the co-education arrangement has negative effect on the students, as it encouraged students' social misconduct through increased psychological pressure from opposite sex; hormonal influence such as distractions by the opposite sex; having higher concentration of students from poor socioeconomic/disadvantaged background; difficulty having a learning style that can accommodate/encourage full engagement of both sexes on a task; and lack of positive role models of the same gender to help the students succeed academically and socially. Kachero (2014) stated that co-education context does affect students' academic performance negatively compared to single-sex schools, as students in single-sex schools appeared to perform better academically. The findings of this research agree with the outcome of the works done in Kenya by Affulo (2005), who reported that co-education schools have more complex issues of misconduct than the single-sex schools, including absenteeism, sneaking, and defiance of authority, stealing, bullying, and boy–girl relationship with resultant high dropout rates resulting from boy-girl relationships, early pregnancies and early marriages. Quora (2022), also stated that there are several potential reasons why there may be a discipline problem in co-ed schools, including distractions by the opposite sex, pressure to conform to gender-specific stereotypes and behaviors, different learning styles making it more difficult for teachers to keep all students engaged and on task, higher concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and lack of positive role models of the same gender (Quora, 2022)

Among the strategies utilized to manage students' social misconducts were the use of non-verbal signals; use of short verbal cues; use of rewards to encourage good conduct; making students aware of the consequences of misconduct; denial of privileges; Flogging/punishment; Shouting; engaging the student on a personal discussion/advise; reporting to the school authority/guidance and counselor; Warning; exclusion from class/school. It also showed that although there are existing school rules which are communicated to the students and organization of special training programme regarding management of classroom disruptive behavior for the teachers; the students were neither involved in the establishment of rules and procedures by the teachers/schools nor were parents communicated in writing of their wards' misconducts. Similar to our findings, the study carried out by Düzey and Çağanağa (2017) among secondary school teachers at Güzelyurt Region also revealed that strategies teachers use for handling the undesired behaviors in the class included warning, making agreements with the

students, dealing rewards or punishment, establishing eye contact, appointing tasks, sending them to the guidance services or the principal. In the study done by Suleman et al. (2013), it was shown that school rules were not communicated to the students, and students were not involved in the making of these guiding rules; also, teachers and school authorities did not inform parents through letters about the disruptive behavior of their children. They therefore, recommended that at the beginning of new session, classroom management norms, rules and regulations should be formulated (with the students involved) and announced so that students may understand the conduct of a teacher. They also recommended that special training programme regarding management of classroom disruptive behaviour be launched to equip teachers with modern techniques to manage classroom disruptive behavior properly. Kachero (2014) also recommended that co-education schools should use guiding and counseling departments or motivational talks to foster teachers' and students' positive attitude towards co-education.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that while minor forms of social misconduct are prevalent within co-educational secondary schools in the Nnewi education zone, these behaviors are driven by a complex interplay of factors including socio-environmental deficits, peer influences, and the dynamics inherent in the co-educational setting itself, leading to increased student dropouts and academic underachievement. Furthermore, the current disciplinary framework, characterized by a lack of parental and student engagement in the creation and implementation of school policies, limits the effectiveness of intervention strategies. Therefore, a multi-faceted approach that address both the root causes of misconduct and fosters active participation from parents and students is needed to create a more supportive and effective learning environment in this context.

Recommendations

We recommend adoption of a "Participatory Policy Design Model" for developing and implementing school policies related to discipline, as well as models that encourage societal norms development. This will include:

1. Establish a Student-Parent-Teacher Policy Committee, responsible for collaboratively developing and reviewing school policies.
2. Conducting regular student and parent surveys aimed at gathering feedbacks from students and parents on their experiences with school policies and disciplinary procedures.
3. Hosting 'Open Forums and Dialogue Sessions' to facilitate communication and collaboration among all stakeholders.
4. Implementing a school-wide "Positive Peer Culture" Campaign to promote positive peer relationships, respect, and inclusivity. This campaign will utilize student-led initiatives, social media, and creative arts to foster a culture of support and accountability.
5. Implementing accessible and culturally relevant "Family Strengthening" Program through free

parenting workshops and resources focused on positive parenting techniques, effective communication, and understanding adolescent development.

These recommendations are a roadmap to transforming education, as decisive action to implement these strategies will empower our students, elevate our community, and secure a brighter future for generations to come.

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