

The Effects of Indiscipline on Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in the Fanteakwa District of Ghana

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of indiscipline on the academic performance of Junior High School Students (JHS) in the Fanteakwa District of Ghana. During the study, three hundred and sixty (360) participants made up students, headteachers and teachers were sampled. The students were sampled using random simple sampling technique while the headteachers and teachers were sampled purposively. The instruments used to gather all the necessary information about the problem was questionnaire. The study revealed that Indiscipline starts with the home because they are the children's first teachers. It was also found that the effects of indiscipline on academic performance included; students' inability to concentrate in class, loss of materials taught due to absenteeism and increase in rate of school drop-out. In order to minimize indiscipline behaviours, the study recommends that; discipline in the society should begin at the home. The home and the school must therefore interact and co-operate in instilling discipline. Also, providing a hearing process for students to present their side of the story and establishing an appeal processes to increase students and parents' perception of fairness.

Key words: Indiscipline, Student, Performance, Junior High School, Behaviour, Moral decay

1. Introduction

In the development of every nation, children are seen as future assets, since they serve as potential human resources to replace the old ones in the near generation. For this to come into realization, it is important to ensure that these young ones are not only preserved but disciplined so they can remain focused in life, sharpen their skills and enhance their talent. In contrast to these expectations from the young ones, Prout & James (2003), in their study, observed growing acts of indiscipline among school children which has become a universal challenge facing many countries. Indeed, the acts of indiscipline could be traced to the early period when individuals became conscious of organizing themselves into groups. This act of moral decadence is evident from several studies, pointing to the fact that the level of indiscipline, especially in schools has escalated (Idu & Ojedapo, 2011; Maphosa & Shumba, 2010).

Indiscipline is a destructive behaviour which does not promote peace and co-existence in society. This behaviour is a canker to many nations in the world as it is a threat to the lives of these young ones. Many efforts have been made by several world leaders to curtail this growing notoriety especially among school children but it is regrettable to say that there is no single day the media will not report of incidence of indiscipline in newspapers, on the radio and television (Clinard & Meier, 2015).

The growing incidents of apparent decay of our moral fiber are therefore a concern to all and sundry across the world and for that matter, the citizens of Ghana. Aliu Mahama, a former Vice President of Ghana, during his 2002 Independence address to school children and the nation as a whole said indiscipline was a growing canker, which threatens the cohesiveness of peaceful co-existence of Ghanaians. As he referred to it, "Today, intolerance, impatience and violence which are fruits of indiscipline has eaten deep into all facets of life of Ghanaians including Junior High School students" (Daily Graphic, 7th March, 2002, pg3).

According to Maphosa & Mammen (2011), basic schools of today are noted for disrespecting authorities, going to school late, fighting among themselves, refusing to do homework and dressing indecently. Some of the pupils go to the extent of vandalizing school property and assaulting teachers for taking disciplinary actions against them or a colleague. Pre-marital sex, armed robbery, drug abuse, drunkenness and smoking of marijuana popularly known as "wee" in Ghana have been reported to be prevalent among basic schools in the country (Director-General, Asare, & Twene, 2003).

The causes of these acts of indiscipline among pupils as stated by teachers and parents were attributed to the home and school environment, teacher related factors in addition to the other emerging phenomenon outside our Ghanaian culture. Intolerance and indiscipline behaviour brings about disorder, destruction and anxiety among the pupils. Indiscipline behaviours therefore do not create conducive environment for learning but leads to poor

academic work.

There is a general notion that standard of education in Ghana is falling and this has been attributed to internal, external, political constraints and human factors (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Indiscipline behaviours could be one of the human factors that might have contributed to the falling standards of education. Despite the threat and negative impact of indiscipline on students' learning, few researches have been done to assess the effects of indiscipline on students' academic performance in schools within the Fanteakwa District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The main purpose of this study was therefore to delve into causes and effects of indiscipline behaviours on the academic performance among students in the Fanteakwa District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. Specifically, the study was to address the following research questions:

- a. What are some common indiscipline acts exhibited by students in schools in the Fanteakwa District of Ghana?
- b. What are the causes of the indiscipline acts shown by students?
- c. How do indiscipline behaviours affect students' academic performance in school?

2. The Concept of School Discipline and Indiscipline

School discipline implies students with a code of behaviour often known as the school rules (Koomson, Brown, Dawson-Brew, Ahiatrogah, & Dramanu, 2005). Again, they state that some of the school rules may set out the expected standards of clothing, time keeping, relationship with peers (both teachers and pupils) and school work. They concluded by saying that there are several of such rules in every school. Koomson et al (2005), further asserted that sometimes, the term school discipline may not only apply to code of school rules. They claim the term may also be applied to punishment as a consequence of transgression of the school code of behaviour. For this reason, the usage of school discipline may sometimes mean punishment for breaking school rules. Discipline can be defined as training, especially of the mind and character, to produce self-control habits of obedience, the result of which sets rules for conduct and methods by which training may be given (Kuh, Power, Blane, & Bartley, 2004).

Indiscipline, in the view of Ayertey (2002), is a kind of behaviour that deviates from the generally accepted norms as seen in almost all facets of the society; at home, in schools, government and religious places. Keoreng (2004) also contended that indiscipline among school children has become a global problem. He mentioned that the rise of cultism, vandalism, examination malpractices, squandering of school fees by students, and truancy among many others are common among school children. He emphasized that indiscipline children are everywhere. Indiscipline is a behaviour that calls for application of sanctions. Indiscipline is a kind of human behaviour that is purely unethical and not in conformity with the norms and values of the society.

2.1 Importance of Discipline in Schools

According to Koomson *et al* (2005), the aim of school discipline is to ensure a safe and happy learning environment in the school and the classroom. A classroom where a teacher is unable to maintain law and order will be chaotic. This may lead to low academic achievement and unhappy students. They explained that school discipline has two main goals: to ensure the safety of staff and students and to create an environment conducive for learning.

Serious student misconduct involving violent or criminal behaviour defeats these goals and often gives the school a bad name or bad reputation. Though there may be problems that do not involve criminal behaviour or that do not threaten personal safety, nevertheless they still negatively affect the learning environment. Disruptions can interrupt lessons for all students, and disruptive students can lose even more learning time (Liu & Meyer, 2005; Adams, Lemaire & Prah, 2013). They assert that it is important for teachers to keep the ultimate goal of learning in mind when working to improve school discipline. Effective school discipline strategies seek to encourage responsible behaviour and to provide all students with a satisfying school experiences as well as to discourage misconduct.

Students' characteristics such as persistent lateness and truancy affect their learning. When students are not in class, they find it difficult to understand lessons and concepts that are taught. Students who exhibit indiscipline behaviours in class are known to be inattentive in class. Once students lose concentration on the lesson and do not take active part in the discussion, they are unable to grasp the concepts taught. The result is that there is a loss of content and knowledge that are taught (Etsey, 2005).

Ayertey (2005), states that deviant behaviour leads to breakdown of law and order, and creates insecurity. He explained that indiscipline behaviour on the part of pupils leads to disregard for law and order in the school environment. Laws are made to regulate the conduct of people and protect lives and property, and ensure the maintenance of peace. Indiscipline students, however, are disrespectful to law and authority; they destroy

property and disorganize orderly life in the school or classroom. In the opinions of Ayertey (2002) and Sekyere (2009), a school that has a high number of deviants or indiscipline pupils is likely to have its code of discipline broken and be plunged into disaster. A school plunged into a state of anarchy does not support learning. The end result is poor performance of students and poor examination results. In addition, indiscipline behaviour creates panic and a sense of insecurity in the school. Most deviants are responsible for theft, destruction of property, violence, assaults, rape and armed robbery in the society. These negative acts can create tension and fear in the minds of other students and authorities in the school. This will prevent the teachers from giving out their best since most of their time would be concentrated on their safety in the school environment (Carr & Chalmers, 2005). Indiscipline is blamed for improper teaching and learning in school due to what is stated above.

2.2 Causes of indiscipline Behaviours in School

Mahadeo (2008), reported that indiscipline in school is caused by many factors in the society. With regard specifically to indiscipline among children in school, parents / guardians, teachers and adult role models in society, all have to share responsibility for this problem.

2.2.1 Home and Parent factors

Ayertey (2002) also traces the main cause of indiscipline in schools to students' home background. He emphasized that, those negligent parents who are not concerned with their children's behavioural changes from early adolescent to late adolescent, have the tendency of causing indiscipline, especially when they are always found absent from home. Parents, who usually wake up early in the morning, go to work and get back home as late as 7.00 pm, will be neglecting their roles as caregivers and the children from such homes are likely to learn bad habits from their friends since their parents are not mostly around.

Sekyere (2009) also contends that, indiscipline arises among children mainly because parents these days have neglected their role of instilling good moral behaviours in their children. Parents have abandoned their roles to teachers and on the whole spend less time with their children. Sometimes they always fail to allocate quality time and resources for their children. Parents are always too busy, trying to fight with the economic hardship which faces them. Sekyere stresses that the basic reason of indiscipline is parents being disrespectful to their children's needs which may be physical, emotional and social.

In the view of Monroe (2005), indiscipline could be attributed to peer influence, broken homes, single parenting and bad extemporary lives led by parents, conspicuous consumption of alcohol and drug abuse, nepotism, racism, tribalism, favouritism, bribery and corruption, reckless spending by parents and many more. Parents who also insult teachers in the presence of their children contribute to indiscipline. Some parents even go to the extent of visiting schools to assault teachers who attempt to discipline their children. This sets bad precedence and encourages children to disrespect school authorities.

2.2.2 Teachers Factors Influencing Indiscipline Behaviour

Some of the teacher factors include; lack of sincerity and devotion to duty. When there is moral laxity on the part of teachers, it can lead to indiscipline. Porhola, Karhunen & Rainivaara (2006), opine that, laziness, incompetence, being autocratic in class, flirting with the female students can also cause indiscipline in schools. Some teachers lack professionalism when they backbite fellow teachers right in the presence of the students, this could also contribute to indiscipline among them. Teacher's poor attitude to work according to Sekyere (2009) breeds indiscipline since students are not fully engaged in the school environment. The free time the students have is used to learn and copy bad habits from their friends. Koomson et al (2005) says that, the situation where teachers tend to have punitive attitudes can also lead to indiscipline problems since most of the students may be trying to defend their rights. This can lead to flouting of school rules.

2.2.3 School Factors Causing Indiscipline

Koomson et al (2005) contended that indiscipline problems exist in schools where the rules are not clear or perceived as unfairly and inconsistently enforced. They assert in this situation that students do not believe in the rules. They also explained further that where teachers and administrators do not know what the rules are or disagree on the proper responses to student misconduct can lead to indiscipline in the school. Where teacher – administration co-operation is poor, or the administration is inactive, incidence of indiscipline can abound. Indiscipline, according to Cains and Cains (1994) can be prevalent in schools where misconduct is ignored or sometimes where schools have large population and lack adequate resources for teaching. Inability of the school management to communicate issues, rules, and new development in the school to the teachers and students can also lead to misunderstanding, which can become a potential source of indiscipline. Lack of integrity, firmness

and fairness on the part of the school head can also promote indiscipline in the school.

The removal of corporal punishment in schools has caused even more indiscipline to fester or aggravate among students. This is not because it was necessarily wrong to do that but it was not first thoroughly discussed among all the stakeholders, parents, students and teachers, with a view to replace it with measures of discipline that are just as or more effective (Fullan, 2011). As a result, teachers feel more vulnerable and are increasingly being attacked by students and parents, who feel that they now have the right to behave as they like with no effective consequences to their actions. This has created even a more violent school atmosphere.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design used for the study was non-experimental, descriptive survey. The design was non-experimental because the variables were not controlled. Descriptive research design refers to the process whereby respondents' information regarding their background characteristics, attitude and experiences are obtained through questioning (Kemetse, Nyarko-Sampson, Nkyi, & Nyarko, 2018 citing Leedy & ormoor, 2005)

3.2 Population of the study

The target population was all students, headteachers and teachers in Fanteakwa but this was impossible because of financial, time and logistics constraints. Hence, a total sample of 360 respondents, comprising; 300 students, 20 headteachers and 40 teachers were used for the study.

3.3 Instrumentation

The instrument used was a questionnaire for the headteachers, teachers and students. The use of the questionnaire was appropriate because the study aimed at finding out their views about the, incidence, causes and effects of indiscipline on the academic performance of students. Questionnaire was more appropriate because it is the instrument that could be used to scan the views of the respondents who were scattered in the study area.

The questionnaire contained items that were both close and open-ended questions. The close-ended format offered the respondents fixed alternative responses from which they had to choose the most applicable one option; the use of close-ended questions also made it easy for the questionnaire to be administered and analyzed. Close-ended questionnaire also do not require extensive writing and therefore made its completion faster. However, the open-ended items were used to allow respondents to express their views freely.

3.4 Pilot Study

The instrument was pilot-tested on twenty-five (25) students, five (5) headteachers and ten (10) teachers at Old Tafo R/C JHS and Old Tafo Presby JHS in the East Akim Municipality. These schools were not included in the main study but were saddled with the same indiscipline problems. The pilot study was done to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Items on the questionnaires that showed double meaning and difficulty in understanding were reworded and properly structured to increase their comprehension before they were used in the main study.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

The choice of the schools was by simple randomized sampled technique. All the schools in the study area were given numbers and these numbers were written on pieces of papers. A piece of paper was drawn at a time from the lot placed in a bowl. The number on the piece of paper drawn was recorded, meaning, that school has been selected for the study. The piece of paper drawn was thrown back into the container before the next one was drawn to ensure that all the schools in the district had an equal chance of being selected. If an already chosen number is drawn for the second and third time, they were ignored. This procedure was followed until all the 20 Junior High schools were selected for the study. The students in their various schools were then selected using systematic random sampling.

The selection of headteachers and teachers was by purposive sampling technique. The choice of the purposive technique was appropriate because the headteachers and teachers were the people who have been teaching the pupils and have adequate knowledge of the indiscipline behaviours the students have been exhibiting in the classes.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The researchers administered the questionnaire personally to ensure high percentage return rate. It also afforded the researchers the opportunity to interact with the respondents to explore further their real life experiences and

the daily indiscipline situations faced by the schools. This ensured the respondents' comprehension which might have affected their responses, and the validity of the data collected was eliminated. The questionnaire was collected the same day they were administered to ensure high per cent return rate.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected with the instruments were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science Students (SPSS version 22.0). The computed results were presented for discussions using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

4. Results

4.1 Common acts of indiscipline behaviour students exhibit in Junior High school

The study looked at the common indiscipline behaviours shown by the students in the school and uses it to conduct the research. The data collected on the common indiscipline behaviours exhibited by the students are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Common Indiscipline Acts Exhibited by Students

Variables	Mean	SD
lateness to school	4.46	1.3
truancy	4.32	1.3
throwing liters around school compound and classroom	4.06	1.4
failure to do homework	3.99	1.6
stealing of friend's articles	3.85	1.6
examination malpractices	3.36	1.4
engaging in pre-marital sex	2.82	1.4
Alcoholism	2.78	1.3

Source; Field Survey, 2018

According to Table 1; three factors were identified by the students, headteachers and teachers as the main indiscipline acts exhibited by students. These included lateness to school (mean = 4.46, SD = 1.3), truancy (mean = 4.32, SD= 1.3) and throwing liters around school compound and classroom (mean=4.06, SD=1.4). Other factors such as failure to do homework, examination malpractice, engaging in pre-marital sex and alcoholism were identified as some of the common acts of indiscipline among the students.

4.2 Causes of indiscipline acts shown by the students in the study area

The causes of indiscipline acts were investigated from the home and school point of views. Respondents were asked to indicate home and school factors that contributed to indiscipline behaviours. The list of factors presented by the respondents is summarized in Table 2;

As shown in Table 2, the respondents agreed to all the statements listed as the causes of indiscipline with the greatest being broken homes (mean = 3.92, SD= 1.6), followed by peer influence (mean= 3.83, SD= 1.6), then, large class size (mean = 3.71, 1.6). Similarly, respondents also reported watching of violent movies, inability of parents to allocate quality time for their children and meet the child's psychological and social needs, teacher's absenteeism, schools' inability to enforce rules and regulations respectively. It could be observed from the results presented in Table 2 that, the inability of the home to support the child's physical, psychological, social needs in addition to exposure to mass media and broken homes are the main causes of indiscipline behaviours among students seen in schools. The data presented further shows that the students, headteachers and teachers shared the view that the movie exposes students to pornographic and violent films. Others reported that it takes students' considerable time instead of studying and also makes students to become imitators and actors of these violent films they watched when they come to school.

Table 2: Factors contributing to Students' Indiscipline Behaviour

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Home Factors			
Broken homes	360	3.92	1.6
Watching of violent/pornographic movies	360	3.53	1.6
Inability of parents to allocate quality time for wards	360	3.38	1.5
Inability of parents to meet financial needs of wards	360	2.98	1.6
School Factors			
Peer influence	360	3.83	1.47
Large class size	360	3.71	1.5
Schools' inability to enforce rules and regulations	360	2.92	1.6
Teachers' absenteeism	360	2.85	1.5
Teacher's immoral relationship with school girls	360	2.75	1.4
Poor attitude of teachers to work	360	2.6	1.5

Source; Field Survey, 2018

4.3 How indiscipline behaviours affect students' academic performance in school

The effects of indiscipline behaviour as enumerated by the respondents are shown in Table 3;

Table 3: Effects of Students' Indiscipline in Schools

Effect	N	Mean	SD
Inability to concentrate in class	360	4.34	1.2
Loss of materials taught due to absenteeism or lateness	360	4.18	1.2
Becoming a school dropout	360	4.02	1.3
Disruption of lessons	360	3.58	1.5
Using part of contact hours to settle dispute	360	3.15	1.4
Teachers feeling unsecured in class	360	2.88	1.5

Source; Field Survey, 2018

As reported in Table 3, majority of respondents said inability to concentrate in class (mean=4.34, SD=1.2), whilst a good number of the respondents (mean= 4.18, SD=1.2) said persistent absenteeism led to loss of materials taught in class. Also, some respondents said indiscipline behaviours can lead to school drop-out (mean=4.02, SD=1.3) whilst others stated that it led to disruption of lessons and part of contact hours are used to settle disputes respectively. Again, it could be seen from the results that indiscipline behaviours can led teachers feeling unsecured in class.

5. Discussion

The different acts of indiscipline behaviours as shown from the results of the study such as lateness to school, truancy, littering of school compound and classrooms are likely to affect students' learning. Clearing of the litters coupled with the late arrival of students to school implies that lessons may not start early as scheduled on

the school's time table. Social vices such as sexual misconduct, stealing of friends articles and drinking of alcohol are likely to affect human relation and create hostile environment in the school. Students who take alcohol are likely to be flouting school rules and regulations and show disregard for school authorities. Students' acts such as assault on colleagues, destruction of school properties and flouting of school rules are also known to disrupt school programmes and lessons. These acts make school and class management difficult and do not foster conducive environment for learning. These outcomes of the study agree with those of Ayertey (2002) and Keoreng (2004). They asserted that indiscipline problems such as cheating at examination, truancy, vandalism among school children have become a global canker.

The major causes of indiscipline acts in the study area were attributed to the home, teachers and the school factors such as broken homes, mass media, poor financial support from parents, bad examples set by parents and parents' inability to meet their children's psychological, emotional and social needs were blamed for the upsurge of indiscipline behaviours among school children. In addition, teachers were found to contribute to indiscipline acts as a result of their poor attitude to work, persistent absenteeism, and immoral relation among school girls. The above behaviours of teachers such as discrimination promote agitation and leads to indiscipline acts. Teachers' immoral relations with students especially with girls do not promote enforcement of school rules and regulations. School factors were also found to be part of the current spate of indiscipline in schools. The results of the study show that influence from peers, large class size, relaxed school rules and regulations, teachers' immoral relationship with school girls and poor attitude of teachers to work are sources of breeding indiscipline acts. The different sources and causes of indiscipline found in this study are consistent with those mentioned by Sekyere (2009), Mahadeo (2008), Ayertey (2002) and Koomson *et al* (2005). Different studies conducted by the above researchers showed that parents, teachers, school and adult role models in society have contributed to the current spate and upsurge of indiscipline among school pupils.

It was found in the study that indiscipline behaviours have contributed to the poor performance of students in schools. The different unacceptable behaviours among the students prevented them from concentrating in class, loss of content and knowledge taught, created tension and insecurity in class, disrupted lessons and caused most of the contact hours to be used to settle disputes. This does not allow the syllabus to be completed before students write their final examinations. For fear of their lives, teachers were unable to give out their best and use strategies that could enhance their teaching. The outcome of the above indiscipline behaviours are poor school results and in certain cases school drop-out. These findings of the study are not different from those discussed by Etsey (2005), Koomson *et al* (2005), Ayertey (2002), Carr & Chalmers (2005). They blamed poor teaching and learning in schools on indiscipline behaviours of different forms. Teachers and headteachers used for the study suggested that both the home and school should cooperate to reduce the incidence of indiscipline among the students. Both parents and teachers were to serve as role models as well as instilling discipline among the students. This they can do by punishing and rebuking various forms of behaviours that are not accepted in society.

They also suggested that parents should be responsible and work hard to meet the socio-economic and emotional needs of their children. Teachers were also expected to change their attitudes towards work, eschew laziness and be in position to counsel the students when the need arises. The different suggestions proposed by the teachers and headteachers fall in line with those of Koomson *et al* (2005), Mbiti (1988) and Johnson and Johnson (1991). They proposed that teacher assertiveness is very important in obtaining good discipline in the classroom and in the school in general. They also contended that Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) meetings can be a good forum to share ideas on how to deal with indiscipline problems in the school. Head-teacher relationship is also important to foster good discipline in school. Good communication and shared values are important elements in the head – teacher relationship. Earls, Cains & Mercy (1993) reiterated that a head that was able to create consensus among staff on rules helped in their enforcement.

6. Conclusion

The study examined the effects of indiscipline on the academic performance of JHS students in the Fanteakwa District of Ghana. Specifically, the study looked at the causes of the indiscipline behaviours and effects of indiscipline on students' learning and the roles of parents and teachers in minimizing the incidence of indiscipline. The common indiscipline acts committed by the students in the study area were lateness to school, truancy, littering of school compound and classrooms, and failure to do homework. Acts of sexual misconduct, stealing, drinking of alcohol and examination malpractices were also prevalent in the study area. In addition, violent acts such as assault on colleagues, flouting of school rules and regulations, disrespect for authority and destruction of school property have also occurred in the schools used for the study.

It was evident that indiscipline behaviours were prevalent in the schools in the study area. No stone should therefore be left unturned in nipping in the bud, the emerging and growing monster called indiscipline in our schools and the society in general. Indiscipline does not lead to proper and successful educational development and learning of students. Indiscipline affects the emotional development of the children; expose them to social

vices and deviant behaviour which are negative core values that militate against students' performance and lead to subsequent school drop-out. Parents, teachers and the society as a whole are expected to cooperate and help to reduce incidence of indiscipline behaviours among students so as to give them stable mind to learn in order to perform well academically.

7. Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that;

- a. Rules of classroom and forms of punishment must be discussed with the whole class and consensual agreement must be reached before enforcement.
- b. Each school should develop a mentorship scheme, which provides for every disruptive child to be accompanied by his form teacher or a surrogate.
- c. Counseling activities in schools should be intensified and done by qualified persons.
- d. There should be regular Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings for the discussions of students' indiscipline behaviours.
- e. Parents should be educated to be responsible and work hard to meet the educational needs of their wards.
- f. School rules should be restated, reviewed periodically and reinforced without fear or favour.

Recommendations for further research

It is recommended that this study should be replicated in other districts in the country. Again, other factors that affect learning in schools such as availability of teaching and learning materials and proper supervision of teaching and learning in schools should also be investigated.

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