

# **STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THE EXTENT AND PROSPECT OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN MAINTENANCE OF DISCIPLINE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

School discipline limits and restricts certain behaviours and attitudes that are seen as harmful or going against school policies, educational norms and traditions among others. Maintenance of school discipline is premised on the fact that it correlates positively on schools' tone, climate and more importantly, students' achievement. The increased school enrolment have accentuated students' disciplinary problems and burdens on school administrators so much that a systematic way of involving everybody including the students have become inevitable. This investigation therefore assesses the extent and prospect of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline in the public secondary schools in Osun state, Nigeria. Data were obtained from 500 stratified randomly sampled male and female students from ten public secondary schools in the state. The instrument was a 3-point Likert-type questionnaire designed and validated for the study by the researcher. Data were analyzed by using means and the t-test. The analysis revealed high rating by the sampled students for their participation in the supervision of morning duties; the maintenance of law and order; and stewards at schools' social function with 2.60, 2.55 and 2.60 respectively on a the 3-point rating scale. It was also gathered that such participation trains students in civic responsibilities and good citizenship; increased their happiness of school life; and the development of right conduct, self-control, cooperative efficiency and fairness in them with mean ratings of 2.58, 2.53, and 2.30 respectively. Opinions of male and female students were not significantly different on such participatory areas as: formulation of school rules and regulation; maintenance of law and order; and organization and control of morning/afternoon assemblies. They however differed significantly in such items as the organization and supervision of morning

duties, general supervision of junior students and stewards at school's social functions. Moreover, students' gender did not significantly influence their ratings on: students are educated in civil responsibilities and good citizenship; development of good friendliness between teachers and students; relieving teachers for more professional duties; and increased happiness of school life. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made for more effective participation of students in the maintenance of school discipline.

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**Keywords:** Students' participation, prefectural system, Nigerian secondary schools, School discipline, Students' Representative Council.

## **Introduction**

School discipline is the system of rules, punishments and behavioural strategies appropriate to the regulation of children or adolescents and the maintenance of order in schools. Its aim is to control the students' actions and behaviour. Rules are made in schools in order to define the expected standards of clothing, timekeeping, social behaviour and work ethic (wikipedia.org, 2013). The term discipline also connotes the punishment that is the consequence of breaking rules. According to Asaolu (2007), the aim of discipline is to set limits restricting certain behaviours and attitudes that are seen as harmful or going against school policies, educational norms, and school traditions among others.

The term, school discipline, also includes the willingness or the ability of students to respect constituted authority and observing established laws, rules and regulations of a school. It implies self control, tolerance, perseverance and recognition of human dignity. Lindgren (1976) defined discipline in three ways as: (1) punishment (2) control by enforcing obedience of orderly conduct and (3) training that corrects and strengthens behaviour. He concluded rightly that the teacher (or any user of the word) does not sharply differentiate the several meanings of the word but however has all the three meanings in mind. Indiscipline, the opposite of discipline, according to Yaroson (2004) was found everywhere. Nakpodia (2010) subscribed that students' indiscipline seems to be ubiquitous in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Nigerian secondary schools. The author saw child's discipline as a part of socialization. With increase in school enrolment however, students' discipline problems accentuated and caused more burdens on teachers and school administrators. Her conclusion, and in agreement with Anho (2011), was that students' indiscipline has developed into an epidemic in Nigeria and it has plagued schools to series of unrest. According to Nduka (1990) youths were often accused of being disrespectful, unreliable, oppressive, callous, and sexually licentious and this was why Luqard's recipe in the early days of

western Education in Nigeria, was to teach the scholars, "the public school code of honour" to produce 'gentlemen'. Gatsha (1998) and Moswela (2004) also subscribed that students' indiscipline is on the increase in Botswana Secondary Schools.

Kohn (1998) maintains that students' cooperation can be enjoyed when they are involved in decision making on classroom matters, for instance, class rules. Discipline can be effective when teachers encourage students' input and sense of having some control. Besides, Page and Page (2000) hold that the essence of disciplining students is to inculcate self-control in them so as to develop positive self-esteem.

Participation is a sharing proposition. Students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline therefore implies the sharing of school discipline procedure between the students and other groups of persons in the school system. Huddleston (2007) observed that participation is an essential ingredient of any society. Though, the legal authorities for the management of school are imposed upon its male students, students only participate in line with the principles of human relations (FME 1990). While Huddleston (2007) and Magadla (2007) felt that students should be involved in all areas of school life, others like Sithole (1998) argued that secondary school students must remain passive and receive instructions from parents and teachers.

Several areas of participation reviewed by Huddleston (2007) were: (a) have charge of assembly programmes; (b) set up rules and regulations; (c) act in a liaison capacity between staff and student body; (d) supervise behaviour in corridors and lunchrooms, study halls, library and public performances and, (e) act as a jury in the case of serious violations of good citizenship behaviour in connection with (b) and (d) above. Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) in their own contribution, subscribed that students' participation should be confined to issues concerning student welfare such as in maintaining order, marshaling students to the places where they are supposed to be at particular times; preventing rowdiness; arranging duty rosters, games practices and; pastoral responsibilities. It was equally observed by Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) that it could be better, if the students themselves are allowed to participate in formulating some of the basic rules governing their actions, after all discipline does not imply rigid regimentation, and the ultimate aim is for the students to be disciplined all the time so that if the teacher is away for a very short time, chaos does not replace order. Roll call in class attendance assembles and at every lesson; inspection of other students for cleanliness of nails, teeth, and clothes; checking of unauthorized wares; spitting and; supervision of cleaning exercises in and out of classrooms are other areas of interest.

Some of the channels through which students participate in school discipline and its disciplinary procedure are the Prefectural and the students Council (Jeruto and Kiprof 2011). The Students' Council, also known as Students' Representative Council is the centralized representative body which unifies all the activities of students. It is the legislative body which sets up policies, submits proposals and makes appeals on matters affecting the students' welfare and discipline. The Prefectural or Executive Council allows students to participate in administering a given policy. Members are selected and approved by the male students from the most senior class. They are co-opted into the authority system of the school by being vested with the right to watch over the conduct of their fellow students and issue sanctions when deemed appropriate. The best known version of the prefectural system, according to Sugarman (1973) originated from the British Independent Boarding Schools. The officers in most cases included the Senior Prefect, Janitor, Health, Chapel and Labour prefects.

Students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline has been linked with the development of ideals of right conduct, self control, cooperative efficiency and leadership training, and of course greater student interest in school. It is also a channel through which teachers may educate students in civic responsibilities; develop feelings of goodwill and fellowship between staff and students; relieve teachers for more professional duties; increased happiness of school life; and opportunity for students to solve their own problems. (Page and Page 2000, Snell and Janney 2000). In fact discipline is a prerequisite to almost everything a school has to offer her students (Seifert and Vornberg, 2002)

As part of dangers of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline is the fact that some school officers might arrogate powers to themselves. Such officers may be dangerous eventually. Lack of teacher cooperation, and teacher domination were other problems identified by Douglas (1963) who further added that some students often resent discipline by their peers; parents have less confidence in its justice and efficacy; groups defeated in elections refusal to submit to their fellow students who are victorious; and moreover students settlement of cases on personal or clique basis obviously departing from the uniform treatment of all individuals. Using students for detecting and reporting offences are not altogether effective because students are likely to result in unpleasant feelings between individuals and groups of students divided on the question of whether it is ethical to do so.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Maintenance of school discipline has been a herculean task in the history of school administration. There were reported cases of indiscipline

here and there to the extent that most school administrators spend a large portion of their time dealing with maintenance of school discipline and behaviour. School-heads' effort on this variable is premised on the findings that discipline correlate positively on one part with schools' tone, conducive school climate and more importantly, students achievement (Meador, 2013). A systematic way of involving everybody including the students has therefore become inevitable. This investigation therefore attempts to assess the extent, prospects and problems of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline in the secondary schools in Osun state, Nigeria.

While attempts are being made to solve today's problems, a more solid, sound and practicable arrangement must be made in order to better cope for the anticipated pressures for tomorrow so that discipline is upheld in our school systems.

### **Questions**

The following questions were stated to guide the study:

- (1) What is the students' assessment of their participation in the maintenance of school discipline in the secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria? And
- (2) What is the students' assessment of the prospects of their participation in the maintenance of school discipline?

### **Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference in the sampled mean rating of male and female students as to the (1) areas, and (2) prospects of students' participation in the maintenance school discipline were tested at 0.05 significant level.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in Osun State, Nigeria. The sample comprised of 500 stratified randomly sampled male and female students from ten co-educational public secondary schools in the state. The stratification ensured even representation of male and female students. These 500 students were the respondents to the instrument designed for the study. The instrument, "Students Participation in the Maintenance of Discipline Rating Questionnaire", (SPMDRQ) was a 4-point Likert type questionnaire designed for the students. It comprised items that require respondents' rating from 0 to 3. The items were grouped into: (a) areas, and (b) prospects of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was administered on forty students. After an interval of two weeks the instrument was again

administered on the same subjects. The two scores of each item were correlated. A reliability co-efficient of 0.86. The instrument was thus adjudged to be good enough for the research work.

The instrument was personally administered by the researcher. All sampled 500 students completed the questionnaire items.

### Data Analysis and Results.

Mean ratings were computed for the male and female students' responses to determine the degree of acceptance of the items one by one. The t-test was done to test the hypothesis earlier stated. The research questions are treated along with the corresponding hypotheses.

**Question 1:** What is the students' assessment of their participation in the maintenance of school discipline in the secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria?

The six relevant items of the questionnaire on the areas of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline were employed in order to answer this question. Each item of the instrument were assessed by 250 male and 250 female students. The total sum of the rating of each item were calculated. The mean ratings were consequently calculated. The result is as shown in the table 1 below:

**Table 1: Areas of Students' Participation in the Maintenance of school discipline.**

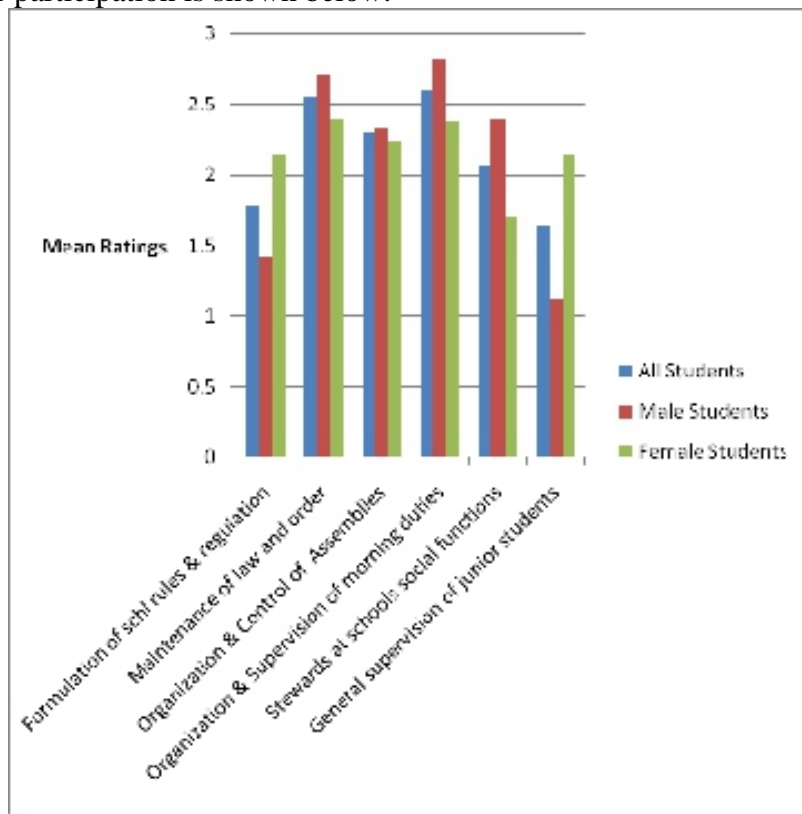
Areas of Participation		All Students N=500	Male Students N=250	Female Students N=250	t- cal
		Mean	Mean	mean	
i.	Formulation of school rules & regulation.	1.78	1.42	2.14	1.85
ii	Maintenance of law and order.	2.55	2.71	2.39	1.75
iii	Organization and control of morning/afternoon assemblies.	2.29	2.34	2.23	0.23
iv	Organization and supervision of morning duties	2.60	2.82	2.38	6.78*
v	Stewards at schools social functions.	2.06	2.40	1.71	6.33*
vi	General supervision of junior students.	1.64	1.13	2.15	2.29*

\*Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\* $t_{table}$  @ N=500 is 1.96

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of male and female students on areas and extent of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline.

A chart showing the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent of their participation is shown below:



**Fig.1: Areas of Students' Participation in the Maintenance of school discipline.**  
(Source: Derived from table 1.)

The highest mean rating by all students was in the organization and supervision of morning duties (item iv) with a mean of 2.60. This item also has the highest male students' mean rating of 2.82. Others with higher mean ratings by all students are: maintenance of law and order; stewards at schools social functions; and organization and control of morning/afternoon assemblies with mean scores of 2.55, 2.06, and 2.29 respectively. The students' least mean rating was in the general supervision of junior students with 1.64.

The male students highest mean rating was in the "organization and supervision of morning duties" (item iv) with 2.80, while the female students' highest mean rating was in the "maintenance of law and order" with 2.39. Male and female students' least rated areas of participation were "general supervision of junior students"; and "organization and supervision of morning duties", (items ii and iv) respectively "stewards at schools social functions" (items vi and v) with mean ratings of 1.31 and 1.71 respectively.

Participation in most of the listed items was rated high. On areas such as formulation of school rules and regulations, students' opinion mean was higher than the male students' mean rating, while in the maintenance of law and order, both sides' opinion means were high. In the organization of morning/ and afternoon assemblies, mean ratings of male and female students were not different on the average between the groups. The test of hypothesis showed that there is no significant difference, ( $t_{\text{calculated}} < t_{\text{table}}$ ) in the mean ratings of male and female students in three items. These are: formulation of school rules and regulation; maintenance of law and order; and organization and control of morning/afternoon assemblies. There is however a significant difference, ( $t_{\text{calculated}} > t_{\text{table}}$ ) in the mean ratings of male and female students in such items as the organization and supervision of morning duties, general supervision of junior students and stewards at schools social functions. The significant difference in the mean ratings of two items, (organization and supervision of morning duties, and general supervision of junior students) are in favour of the male students, perhaps the male students participated in these items more than their female counterparts.

**Question 2:** What are the prospects of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline?

In order to answer this question, the participants' responses to the seven relevant items of the questionnaire were analyzed in means. The t-test of male and female ratings of each items were also done in order to determine the level of significant difference of their ratings. This analysis is shown in table 2 below:

**Table 2: Prospects of Students' Participation in the Maintenance of School Discipline.**

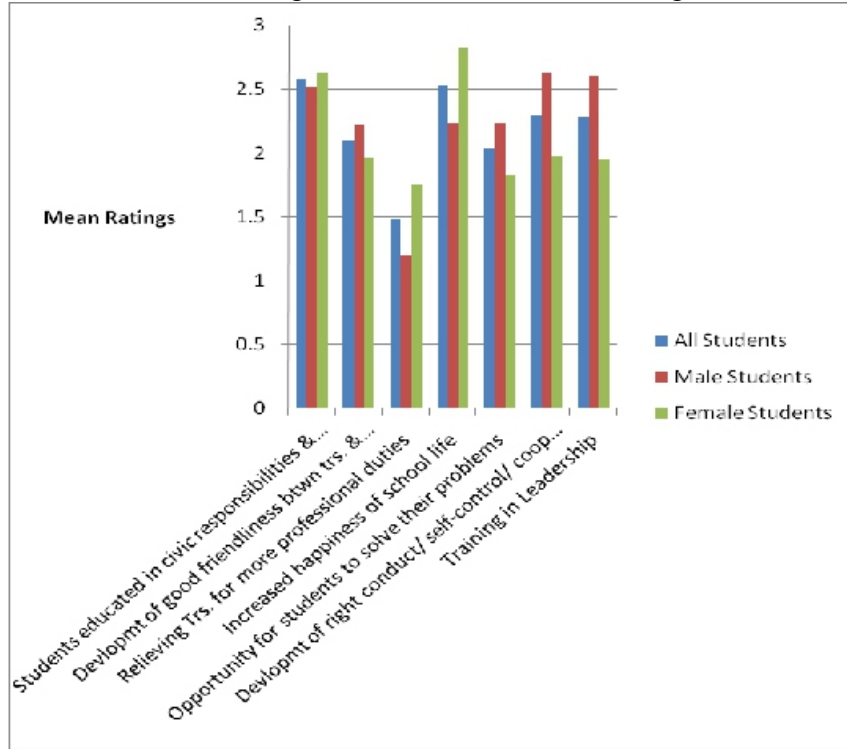
Prospects		All Students N=500	Male Students N=250	Female Students N=250	t- cal
		Mean	Mean	Mean	
I	Students are educated in civic responsibilities and good citizenship	2.58	2.52	2.63	0.43
ii	Development of good friendliness between teachers and students	2.09	2.22	1.96	0.83
iii	Relieving teachers for more professional duties	1.48	1.20	1.75	1.45
iv.	Increased happiness of school life	2.53	2.23	2.82	0.28
v.	Opportunity for students to solve their own problems.	2.03	2.24	1.82	2.32*
Vi	Development of right conducts, self-control, cooperative efficiency and fairness	2.30	2.62	1.98	3.28*
Vii	Training in Leadership	2.28	2.61	1.95	2.77*

\*Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\* $t_{\text{table}}$  @ N=500 is 1.96



The male students' and female students' mean rating on the prospects of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline are shown in table 2. These mean ratings are also shown below in Figure 2 below:



**Fig.2: Prospects of Students' Participation in the Maintenance of School Discipline**  
(Source: Derived from table 2)

The highest mean rating by all students on the prospect of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline was in "students are educated in civic responsibilities and good citizenship", (item i) with a mean rating of 2.58. This was followed by "increased happiness of school life"; and "development of right conducts, self-control, cooperative efficiency and fairness" (items iv and vi) with means of 2.53, and 2.30 respectively. The least mean rating was "relieving teachers for more professional duties" with a mean of 1.48.

In the opinion of the male students, the prospect of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline in descending order included: the development in students the ideas of right conduct, self control, cooperative efficiency and fairness; and training in leadership which are items (vi) and (vii) with mean ratings of 2.62 and 2.61 respectively. Others were: students are educated in civil responsibilities and good citizenship (item i), with a mean of 2.52. Development of good friendliness between

teachers and students; increased happiness of school life; and opportunity for students to solve their own problems which are items (ii), (iv) and (v) have the mean ratings of 2.22, 2.23, and 2.24 respectively.

For the female students, increased happiness of school life (item iv) ranked first among the prospects of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline with a mean opinion score of 2.82. Others with high mean scores in descending order as shown in the table were: students are educated in civil responsibilities and good citizenship; development of ideas of right conducts, self-control, cooperatives efficiency and fairness; development of good friendliness between teachers and students and; training in leadership. These are items (i), (vi), (ii) and (vii) with mean opinion scores of 2.63, 1.98, 1.96, and 1.95 respectively.

The t-test analysis further showed that the mean ratings of male students and female students are not significantly different, ( $t_{\text{calculated}} < t_{\text{table}}$ ) in items (i), (ii), (iii) and iv) but differ significantly, ( $t_{\text{calculated}} > t_{\text{table}}$ ), on items (v), (vi) and (vii). In essence there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students that: students are educated in civic responsibilities and good citizenship; development of good friendliness between teachers and students; relieving teachers for more professional duties; and increased happiness of school life. These differences are in favour of the male student's higher mean ratings of the items as against their female counterparts' lower ratings respectively. It should be noted that there were higher mean ratings for items (i) and (ii), and lower means for item (iii) by both groups. This implied that relieving teachers for more professional duties was less acceptable by the groups as one of the reasons for students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline.

## Discussion

This study showed that students' participation in most of the areas investigated were high. This agreed with Huddleston's (2007) observation that participation is an essential ingredient of any society. This is also in tandem with Magadla (2007) that students should be involved in all areas of school life. The study however negates Sithole (1998) argument that secondary school students must remain passive and receive instructions from parents and teachers. There is no gainsaying that students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline is in line with democratic principles and should be encouraged.

As shown in this study, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students that: students are educated in civil responsibilities and good citizenship; development of good friendliness between teachers and students; relieving teachers for more professional

duties; and increased happiness of school life. These agrees with Alcorn, Kinder and Schunert (1970)

On the whole, students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline is a democratization process of school administration which, if transferred to our socio-political system, cases of indiscipline in the society will be reduced. As the school is established by the society for the education of her children to uphold her values, students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline is a step in the right direction to the sustenance of discipline in schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## **Conclusion**

This paper concludes that:

- a. Student's discipline is a prerequisite to almost everything a school has to offer students. Students' discipline is linked with organizational climate and school achievement (Meador 2013)
- b. Students should be more involved in the organization and supervision of junior students, supervision of morning duties and stewards as school social functions. They could also participate in the formulation of school rules and regulations. Students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline could be through the prefectural council where officers are co-opted into the authority system of the school, or through the Representative Council as legislative and advisory body to their school administration.
- c. Students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline gives them, the opportunity to solve their own problem; develops in them the idea of right conduct, self control, cooperative efficiency and fairness and trains them for leadership. This agreed with Page and Page (2000) and Snell and Janney (2000) but however disagreed that the method relieves the teacher for more professional duties.
- d. There were few occasional differences within and between the opinions of the male studentss and students on such issues as the areas, problems and prospects of students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline. The heterogeneity of the respondents and the administrative or leadership styles of the schools male studentss and the school's tradition may be examined further to determine the extent each of the variable influence students' participation in the maintenance of school discipline.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

First, students' leaders' should be accorded the necessary recognition and properly co-opted into the authority system of the school

Secondly, teacher advisors should be appointed to serve as links between the students' officers and school authority. The school's expectation should be made known and in clean terms to the student leaders.

Thirdly, school rules and regulations should be reviewed with students' officers from time to time.

In addition courses and seminars in leadership training should be organized occasionally for student leaders on the effective maintenance of school discipline.

The school Guidance Counsellors should be of help to the teachers, officers and students in general so that the school is made a joyful place for proper learning to take place.

Moreover, symbols like badges could be worn by student officers for recognition. Prizes should also be given to them at the expiration of their term of offices.

Probation officers should be allowed to serve under the outgoing officers for continuity.

Finally, this type of study should be carried out in other states of the federation

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