

# Causes of Indiscipline among Pupils in Four Selected Junior Secondary Schools in Bo City

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**Abstract**— This study was initiated to investigate the causes of indiscipline among pupils in four selected Junior Secondary Schools in Bo City, Southern Province, and Republic of Sierra Leone.

Bo is located in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone. The city of Bo is divided into wards and within these wards are communities. Bo is bounded in the Southern by the Moa River estuary. Much of Bo is made up of hills to mountainous granite. In between the hills are valleys in which stream water flows in all directions from the hills top to the outer border.

Other land used as commerce, industry transportation and housing has gradually shifted farming into restricted locations with Kenema that required the use of high nutrient input to enhance sustainable crop production.

The main types of farming include traditional variety of leafy vegetable production. Livestock activities are restricted to poultry and piggery production on small scale for consumption of large scale of cash, particularly in the peripherals off the township.

The results of the study revealed that there has been a rising incidence in the level of violence and other forms of indiscipline in school especially after the rebel war in Sierra Leone. The instances of violence and disciplinary problems are severely interfering within the learning environment of students. A lot of studies have been done on disciplinary problems of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools. The purpose of this study therefore is to explore the problems of indiscipline among pupils in four selected Senior Secondary Schools in Bo.

In addressing this problem the following research questions were addressed in this study.

Making recommendations that will embrace effective discipline of pupils in the targeted schools in Bo. The study was designed to obtain information that will describe the problems of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo. Semi-structured recording schedules were administered to fifty-four (54) respondents, secondary data coupled with information discussion with key information were used

The rules and regulations or expected code of conduct for pupils were similar in all four targeted Schools in Bo and the major among others were; leaving the classroom without permission and failure to follow specific instructions given by school authorities.

The study revealed that, verbal or physical abuse of authority, vandalism of school property and theft were the most commonly reported disciplinary problems in schools.

The study suggested that teachers should communicate behavioural expectations (rules and regulations) to pupils and clearly explain to pupils the consequences of indiscipline.

## I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The problems of violence and indiscipline in schools have continued to increase even with the presence of police and other law enforcement officials. In the Classroom and schools, wide discipline problems have continued to plague the quantity of education especially in Bo, Southern Province,

Sierra Leone. Students continue to defy teachers and break school rules with impunity. Despite all these acts, Government and school authorities in particular have not done much in addressing the problems, as they are only expressed through obscure statements such as “students do not obey their teachers”. With these anecdotal reports, it is believed that violence does not only have its effect on the safety of schools but also on the social, psychological and emotional development of individuals in these disciplinary problems.

Notwithstanding the considerable studies done on the problems of indiscipline among pupils, clear evidence of precise or definitive date on the problems of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo is still lacking.

Indiscipline is a behavioural disorder that is classified as an act of delinquency, just like lying, stealing and playing truant or running away from home. It is the cause of a lot of mental emotional and physical damage to property in homes as well as in schools. An undisciplined child is an uncontrollable child and can do just about any damage when he/she does not get whatever he/she wants.

A school is a social institution that has certain basic regulations governing, controlling and directing the behaviour of its members, the majority of whom are students. In such a setting, discipline is important since without it, the purpose of the school cannot be achieved effectively.

Butt (2001) noted that public schools especially in developed countries like America are like combat zones as incidents of gang violation, students use of drugs, truancy and intentional shooting have created wide spread negative impression among communities in the world.

The Policy on education is inadequately formulated or monitored in Sierra Leone. For example the policy of free education was instituted but some schools in the majority gradually introduced numerous other levies under the guise of building funds, development funds, activity funds or school bills, and parents eventually had to pay more than the fees waved through the legislated policy.

Such ineffective implementation of policy results in insufficient awareness among those who might benefit them, and causes that they have with the education system as a whole. It must be said that there are many good policies governing the education system in Sierra Leone. It is also fair to state that there are many individuals committed to improving the policy environment in Sierra Leone. However, it is generally known that policy makers and implementers in Sierra Leone have many problems confronting them:-

- (i) Planning and research units in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology lack capacities and resources and therefore do not adequately explore problems facing education.
- (ii) Policy formulated remains a top-down rather than bottom up process and does not allow for adequate involvement of researchers.
- (iii) Co-operation between university research bodies and policy department in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is generally weak.
- (iv) In any case policy makers are not always appreciative of research efforts often they do not border to read reports, particularly when the reports are long and frequently they cannot understand the language of the research. And too often researchers do not present their results in a way that is useful to policy makers and then complain when their recommendations are not accepted.
- (v) Policy makers often use research for rubber stamping questionnaire discussions (New Education Policy) in Sierra Leone (1995).

In African schools the problem of indiscipline is not a new one. Pupils defy teachers authorities, vandalize school properties and physically attack teachers creating state of tension and hostility. Some teachers come to school drunk and unprepared to teach.

According to five (1998), schools may be sources of lack of discipline and misbehavior among children for various reasons among which he noted are: that school rules and regulations being not only rigid and strict but also primitive and unnecessary.

Large overcrowded classes make it difficult for teachers to maintain control. Inadequate supervision of pupils during breaks may give older, stronger pupils the opportunity to bully the younger ones.

In some schools it is as a result of the authority vested in the teachers. Butt (2001), expressed the view that there are number of signals which serves as warning to the schools that a child may become a juvenile delinquent.

He noted that acts such as absenteeism, academic failure, behaviour problem and stealing, cheating, misuse of school properties, persistent truancy and flouting of authorities form major components of juvenile delinquency. From observed trend and anecdotal statements, there has been a rising incidence in the level of violence and other forms of indiscipline in schools especially, after the rebel war in Sierra Leone. The instances of violence and other disciplinary problems are severely interfering within the learning environment of students. A lot of studies have been done on disciplinary problems in schools but much has not yet been done on the problem of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools. The purpose of this study is to explore the problems of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo, Southern Province of Sierra Leone.

#### *Significance of the Study*

No school, small or large, rich or poor, rural or urban is immune to indiscipline and violence, no student with disability

or normal progress could be completely safe at school (Butt 2001).

Disciplinary problems including threats and acts of violence may cause disruption in the normal functions of a typical school day obstructing the learning process. This been the case the finding of this study can be beneficial to the following:

1. School personnel/administrations especially principles of secondary schools seeking to improve the quality of discipline in their schools and classrooms as the study identifies the causes of discipline among pupils and teachers and provide guidelines which if used may enhance proper discipline in these schools.
2. Governing bodies like the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Youths and Sports and other policy designs will be able to know as to “Why” discipline problems among teachers and pupils are highlighted. The findings of this study would guide policy designs when drawing up codes of conducts.
3. The study would be beneficial to NGOs and other social workers that are interested in why and how people behave in a certain way, to help correct the ills of society.
4. This study could be of immense benefit to guidance and counseling teachers in schools as they will be able to know the reasons why and when pupils behave in a certain way and could then sue such knowledge to assist especially students with chronic challenging behaviours to behave appropriately.
5. In particular, this study would be useful to teachers who would be in position to identify behavioural problems among students and provide them with alternative means of enhancing discipline especially teachers who know no other method of
6. maintaining discipline other than corporal punishment

#### *Objective of the Study*

Specifically the study will:

1. Identify the rules and regulations for pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo.
2. Identify the sources of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo.
3. Identify the problems of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo.
4. Make recommendations that will embrace effective discipline of pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design is a case study that uses descriptive survey research. This study describes the problem of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo. A small structured recording schedule was administered to fifty-four (54) respondents. Secondary data coupled with informal discussion with key respondents was used.

A list ten (10) Junior Secondary Schools in Bo from the Ministry of Education were used as sample frame. The list helped to provide the population of approved Junior Schools in Bo. The names on the list were categorized as boys, girls and mixed (boys and girls). Based on the list, there were eight

(8) mixed schools, one (1) pure girls and one (1) pure boy’s school. This sum up to a total of ten (10) junior secondary Schools in Bo at the time of study.

Data analysis was done through the following procedures. Well-structured questioner, personal interview and discussion with key respondents. Data was summarized and presented in statistical tables. The findings and results were summarized, followed by conclusion and recommendations.

**III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Rules and regulations in four selected Schools. This section presents information on the rules and regulations for pupils in the targeted schools in Bo. The result is presented in the table below.

TABLE I. Distribution of responses on the rules and regulations for pupils:

Rules And Regulations For Pupils	Responses in Percentate (%)		
Leaving the classroom without permission	100	0	100
Failure to follow specific instructions by school authorities	100	0	100
Dishonest to authorities and friends	44	56	100
Vandalism of school properties	89	11	100
Use of drugs or school	93	7	100
Unnecessary disturbances in class whilst classes were on	65	35	100
Lack of complete sets off exercise books and school materials	74	26	100
Non-Payment of school fees and other charges	100	0	100

Source: Author’s Survey June, 2017

The data in table I revealed that the rules and regulations or expected codes of conduct for pupils were similar in all targeted Schools. The rules and regulations that were stated are:

The schools were against all forms of defiance such as, failure to follow specific instructions given by authorities, leaving the classroom without permission, being dishonest to authorities and friends, vandalism of school properties, lack of payment of school fees and other charges, lack of complete sets of exercise books and school materials. Based on the result of table I non-payment of fees and other charges, leaving the classroom without permission and failure to follow specific instructions given by school authorities scored the highest (with 100% each) among respondents indicating that They were well communicated to the pupils. Dishonesty to authorities and friends (with 44%) scored the least among respondents. This also shows that it was not well communicated to pupils in the schools.

The result is in agreement with the expected result of this study which proposed that the rules and regulations for pupils in Junior Secondary Schools are: The schools are against all forms of defiance such as failure to follow specific instructions by a person in authority, leaving the classroom without permission being dishonest to authorities and friends, vandalism of school properties, drug or alcohol use, unnecessary disturbances in class whilst classes are on, lack of payment of school fees and other charges or other forms of general duties or the lack of complete sets of exercise books and school materials.

The result also supports the finding of Prince (2005) who found out that the code of conducts for pupils in this study area were similar in all other schools.

What is noted here however is that the high number of respondents (56%) claiming that children are free from his honesty practices remains to be questioned.

Looking at our society today at least from anecdotal records, one would see that children’s dishonest behaviour is on the increase. It has been observed that students cheating and even teachers property keep occurring on a daily basis. The rate of lying after a crime has been committed in schools is giving school authorities and the investigating departments a lot of headache.

I being a teacher can personally testify to it that dishonest behaviour is the order of the day in most school children.

A. Sources of indiscipline among pupils in schools. Respondents were asked to identify the sources of indiscipline among pupils in their respective schools in Bo. The result is presented in Table II below:

TABLE II. Distribution of responses on the sources of indiscipline among pupils in three primary school

Sources of Indiscipline Among Pupils in Junior Secondary Schools	Responses in Percentate (%)				
	Yes		No		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq. %
Society	22	40.7	32	59.3	100
Home	73	79.9	11	20.1	100
School	54	100	0	0	100

Source: Author’s Survey Data June, 2017

The data in Table II revealed that the major sources of indiscipline in schools are the schools, home and society, but the school has the highest number of responses (100%) showing that it is highly responsible whilst the society is the least with 40.7% responses.

From the data collected, classes in schools were over crowded marking supervision and control a major problem for teachers. The pupil- teacher ratio in schools shows that the schools were under-staffed. It was also revealed that the school authorities were not likely providing correct information to the governing bodies and the Ministry of Education, for policy. This has been printed out as a source of indiscipline since it would be very difficult for school authorities who should instill discipline in the pupils are themselves not honest.

Moreover, teachers were very much convinced that one of the major causes of indiscipline in schools is the restriction by Ministry of Education on teachers for the use of corporal punishment.

In terms of the home as source of indiscipline, though some parents were interested in their children’s school work, a good number of them paid little or no attention to the behaviour of their children outside of the home. This has been shown to be a source of school discipline problem.

Society also has its share of the responsibilities for the misbehavior of pupils in schools, because what happens in school is a reflection of what is going on in society. Through

the media, children are exposed to violence and their peers and other children defying authorities. They model such behaviour and apply them to their relationship with other children at school. The result is in agreement with the expected result of this study which proposed school as highly responsible for indiscipline of pupils in schools. The result also support the findings of Munawanda (1992) and Kamara (2003) revealing that the school, home and society are the major sources of indiscipline in schools but the school (100%) was highly responsible.

However, Konteh (1998) in his study discovered similar result as Kamara (2003) and Munawanda (1992) but concluded that the home was highly responsible.

TABLE III. Distribution of response on the problems of indiscipline among pupils in schools

Problems of Indiscipline Among Pupils in Three Primary Schools	Frequencies And Percentage Of Respondents					
	Yes		No		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Sexual abuse or rape	0	0	54	100	54	100
Physical attack with weapon	30	56	24	44	54	100
Verbal or physical abuse of authority	54	100	0	0	54	100
Vandalism of school properties	54	100	0	0	54	100
Murder	0	0	54	100	54	100
Use of drugs	0	0	54	100	54	100
Frequent Truancy	50	93	10	7	54	100
Cheating	48	89	6	11	54	100
Theft	54	100	0	0	54	100

Source: Survey: Data - June, 2017

The data in Table III revealed that, verbal or physical abuse of authority, vandalism of school property and theft were the most commonly reported disciplinary problems in schools as all the respondent (100%) each responded positively to them. There was 90%, 80% cheating and 56% incident of physical attack without weapon. There was no (0%) report of sexual abuse or rape, murder and use of drugs.

The high number of vandalism in schools was likely a consequence of pupils fighting for furniture – chairs and desks or might have been because when classroom are re-arranged in most schools, very limited area is left for the pupils to even move freely in classes. Pupils were sequenced up in classes and as a result, they destroyed furniture’s when for example they wanted to leave seats to move out. The problem of high incidents of theft might either mean that parents or guardians did not instill proper moral training in their children at home or that they were not well catered for and as a result stole friend’s books, pens or lunch for examples to satisfy their needs.

The result is in agreement with the expected result of this study which proposed that the problems of indiscipline in schools are expected to be physical abuse of authority, vandalism of school properties, and use of drugs, frequent truancy, cheating and theft.

The result also supports the findings of Kamara (2003) and Bangura (1998) who found out in their studies that vandalism of school properties, theft and verbal or physical abuse of authority were the most commonly reported disciplinary

problems in school as all respondents (100%) responded positively to that.

TABLE IV. Solutions/Suggestions from Participants for the Problem of Indiscipline among Pupils.

Solutions to Problems of Indiscipline Among Pupils	Frequencies And Percentage Of Respondents					
	Yes		No		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
The use of corporal punishment in school	0	0	54	100	54	100
School authorities should take an interest in their plan activities	30	56	24	44	54	100
Principals should encourage all teachers to hold classroom disciplinary problems that they can support	54	100	0	0	54	100
Make clear to pupils the consequences of indiscipline to pupils	54	100	0	0	54	100
Classroom teachers should hold and communicate behavioural expectations to pupils	0	0	54	100	54	100

Source: Authors Survey Data June, 2017

Based on the analysis of the result on Table IV, all respondents (100%) cited that, teachers should hold and communicate behaviour expectations to pupils and making clear to pupils the consequences of indiscipline. Minority of the respondents (37%) suggested the use of corporal punishment in schools as solution to the problems of indiscipline among pupils in schools.

The result is in agreement with the expected result of this study which proposed that, school authorities should make clear to pupils the consequences of indiscipline and the class teachers should hold and communicate behavioural expectations of pupils.

The result is also in agreement with the findings of Kamara (1997) but disagreed with the findings of Bangura (1998) who discovered that majority (100%) of respondents in his study are suggested the use of corporal punishment in schools as solution to the problems of indiscipline among pupils in schools.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There has been a rising incidence in the level of violence and other forms of indiscipline in school especially after the rebel war in Sierra Leone. The instances of violence and disciplinary problems are severely interfering within the learning environment of students. A lot of studies have been done on disciplinary problems of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools. The purposes of this study therefore is to explore the problems of indiscipline among pupils in three primary schools in Bo, Southern Province of Sierra Leone.

In addressing this problem the following research questions were addressed in this study.

1. Are there rules and regulations for pupils in Junior Secondary School?

2. With these rules and regulations, what are the discipline problems among pupils in three Primary Schools?
3. What are the sources of indiscipline among pupils in three Primary Schools?
4. Are there solutions to handle these problems in schools? If no, what should be done to address these problems?

The general objectives of the study were to explore the problems of indiscipline among pupils in three Primary Schools in Bo, Southern Sierra Leone. The specific objectives of the study include:

1. Identify the rules and regulations for pupils in three Primary Schools in Bo.
2. Identify the sources of indiscipline among pupils in three Primary School in Bo.
3. Identify the problems of indiscipline among pupils three Primary School
4. Identify solutions/suggestions from participants to the problems of indiscipline among pupils in school.

Making recommendations that will embrace effective discipline of pupils in three Primary Schools in Bo. The case study of selected Primary School in Bo that are approved and assisted by the Government of Sierra Leone. The study was designed to obtain information that will describe the problems of indiscipline among pupils in three Primary Schools in Bo. Semi-structured recording schedules were administered to fifty-four (54) respondents, secondary data coupled with information discussion with key information was used.

Results of the study were as follows:

1. The rules and regulations or expected code of conduct for pupils were similar in all targeted three Primary School in Bo and the major among others are, non – payment of fees and other charges, leaving the classroom without permission and failure to follow specific instructions given by school authorities.
2. The sources of indiscipline among pupils in three Primary Schools are society, school and the home but the school was identified as the major source of indiscipline.
3. The study revealed that, verbal or physical abuse of authority, vandalism of school property and theft were the most commonly reported disciplinary problems in schools.
4. The suggested solutions to the problems of indiscipline among pupils in Junior Secondary Schools are: teachers should hold and communicate behavioural expectations to pupils and making clear to pupils the consequences of indiscipline

#### *Conclusion*

Based upon the research findings, the following conclusions were made:

1. The rules and regulations or expected codes of conduct for pupils were similar in all targeted Junior Secondary Schools in Bo and the most well communicated ones are: non-payment of fees and other charges, leaving classrooms without permission, and failure to follow specific instructions given by school authorities.
2. The sources of indiscipline among pupils in schools are: the school, society and home but the school was identified

as the major source of indiscipline among pupils in schools.

3. The most common disciplinary problems among pupils in school are: verbal or physical abuse of authorities, vandalism of school properties and theft.
4. The solutions to the problems of indiscipline among pupils in schools are:

Teachers should communicate behavioural expectation to pupils

Make clear to pupils the consequences of indiscipline.

#### *Recommendations*

Based upon the research findings, the following recommendations were made for action and for future researchers.

School personnel (Principals and School Staff) seeking to improve the quality of discipline in their school and classroom can follow the following tips.

##### *A. At School Level*

1. School authorities and community members should be committed to establish and maintained appropriate public behaviour in school and at school – sponsored events.
2. School authorities should establish and communicate high expectations for pupil’s behaviour.
3. Head Teachers should encourage all teachers to handle all classroom disciplinary problems that they reasonable can support their decisions.

##### *B. At The Classroom Level*

1. Teachers should make clear to pupils the consequences of misbehavior.
2. Classroom teachers should communicate behaviour expectations
3. Establish clear rules and procedures and instruct pupils how to follow them.

##### *C. When Disciplinary Problem Arises*

The following are recommended when indiscipline problem arises:

1. School authorities should intervene quickly and do not allow behaviour that violates school or classroom rules to go unchecked.
2. As appropriate, develop reinforcement schedules and use these with misbehaving pupils.
3. Instruct pupils with behaviour problems in self – control skills, teach them how to observe their own behaviour.

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