

Students' Perception Towards Management of Discipline and Their Academic Performance in Cross River State.

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Abstract

This study investigated the students' perception of discipline management and their academic performance in Cross River State. Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a correlational research design while a simple random sampling technique was used in selecting a sample of 180 students. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire tagged: "Students' Perception of Discipline Management and Academic Performance Questionnaire (SPDMAPQ)." Pearson product moment correlation statistical technique was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance and 178 degrees of freedom. The findings revealed that students' perception of suspension and expulsion management is significantly related to their academic performance respectively. Based on these findings, it was recommended among other things that; parents should encourage their children/ward to maintain good attitudes that will not lead to their suspension or withdrawal from school; and that principals should listen properly to offenses of students and mete out the right discipline so that students will not be suspended or expelled in an unjustifiable manner.

Keywords: Students'; Perception, Students' perception, Management, Discipline, Academic performance.

Introduction

To provide a good system of education, the quality of students produced from the Nigerian formal school system has to be improved. The quality of graduates produced is determined in part by their academic performance, and also by their ability to perform and carry out duties effectively after graduation, in their areas or related areas of studies.

Academic performance refers to the extent to which those in the academic sphere have achieved their short- or long-term educational goals. This study focuses on students' academic performance. Student academic performance can be defined as the degree to which students are achieving the reasons or objectives for which they were sent to school. Simply put, students' academic performance refers to the learning outcomes of learners, it can be good or poor. Yusuf (2018), sees the academic

performance of a student can be regarded as the observable and measurable behavior of a student in a particular situation. For example, the academic performance of a student in social studies includes observable and measurable behavior of a student at any point in time during a course. In social studies, students' academic performance consists of his scores at any particular time obtained from a teacher-made test. Therefore, we can equate academic performance with the observed behavior or expectation of achieving a specific statement of or statement of educational intention in research. Academic performance of students consists of scores obtained from teacher-made test, first term examination, mid-semester test.

In recent times, students' academic performance in Cross River State, as well as other sister states in Nigeria, has become a national problem. The poor academic performance of secondary school students in both classroom and standardized examinations such as JAMB, WAEC, NECO, and NABTEB examinations have called for scrutiny of the efficacy of the Nigerian educational system. For instance, the official JAMB Result Statistics, Analysis, and Breakdown in 2018 reports that out of a total Number of 1,502,978 Released Results, 465,025 candidates scored 200 and above representing 27% of the candidates who wrote the exam; 615,880 candidates scored 190 and above representing 35.76% of the candidates who wrote the exam; 802,108 candidates scored 180 and above representing 46.57% of the candidates who wrote the exam; 1,024,527 candidates scored 170 and above representing 59.49% of the candidates who wrote the exam; 1,226,199 candidates scored 160 and above representing 73.52% of the candidates who wrote the exam; 1,548,399 candidates scored 150 and above representing 82.40% of the candidates who wrote the exam; 1,548,399 candidates scored 140 and above representing 89.91% of the candidates who wrote the exam; 1,596,276 candidates scored 130 and above representing 92.69% of the candidates who wrote the exam and 1,606,374 candidates scored 120 and above representing 93.27% of the candidates who wrote the exam (Jamb results statistics, 2018). You can see from the above, the poor performance of students. This is not only seen with jamb but with other standardized and internal examinations.

Past research studies have identified several factors that affect the academic performance of students in various centers of learning. Some of these factors include class attendance age, learning styles or preferences (Aripin, Mahmood, Rohaizad, Yeop, & Anuar, 2008), gender (Haist, Wilson, Elam, Blue, & Fosson, 2000), class size (Heinesen, 2010), entry qualifications (Mlambo, 2011), family income (Ali, Haider, Munir, Khan, & Ahmed, 2013), poor discipline of students (Ehiane, 2014), and many other factors. The findings of Nwosu, Amanze, Oladosu, and Adewunmi (2017) reported that students who had negative attitudes towards suspension were not performing at the same level as those with positive attitudes. Similarly, Mlambo, (2011) noted that students who did not follow school rules and regulations, had bad attitudes and are not afraid of expulsion, and they never did well in placement examinations.

For the purpose of this study, more emphasis will be placed on discipline as a factor of students' academic performance. Discipline, according to Akpan (2011), "is an orderly behavior exhibited by an individual or group of individuals in an organization." "A person is said to be disciplined if his/her behavior reflects the training imposed by that relevant situation or is in line with the standards

expected of him/her in the relevant circumstance" (p.45). It can be inferred from the above meaning that discipline is simply sticking and abiding by established standards. The process of ensuring that members of an organization follow the established rules can as well be seen as discipline. There are different types of discipline – preventive discipline, corrective discipline, and counseling approach (Akpan, 2011). Preventive discipline is used to eliminate or avoid non-adherence to established standards before they even occur; Corrective discipline is a type of action that is taken against a personnel as a result of rule infraction (Akpan, 2011); while counseling approach is used when a person has been observed to have misbehaved due to psychological reasons, with the aim of protecting the person self-image and dignity, while also maintaining a healthy cooperation with the person.

Several disciplinary measures have been identified which can be used in managing the behavior of erring students. These include enforcement of rules and regulations, suspension, corporal punishment, expulsion/withdrawals, fines, etc. Enforcement of rules and regulations refers to the deliberate action taken against students by either the head teacher or teachers to make sure that they obey the school rules and regulations. Suspension refers to the deliberate and temporary putting to hold, students' academic activities for a period of time due to their perceived misbehavior or indiscipline behavior. The duration for suspension is usually determined by the person administering it and also based on the offense committed. Corporal punishment refers to the act of using the cane or other means to inflict physical/bodily pains on students for their wrongdoings. Expulsion, on the other hand, refers to an action taken against students for their not keeping up to expected standards by outright removal or permanent dismissal from the school system.

The use of discipline is a popular phenomenon in the school system, many students perceive or react to the management of discipline differently. To some students, discipline is seen as a punishment, while others perceive discipline to be a way in which teachers express their wickedness, some students also see discipline as a way of displaying authority with only a few perceiving discipline as a means of maintaining set standards and managing the behavior of students (Owan, 2012). From the above, it can be added that students have both negative and positive perception of the management of discipline in schools.

It is against this background that this study has been undertaken to examine students' perception towards the management of discipline and its relationship to their academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State.

Statement of the problem

To achieve the goals of education in Nigeria, there is a need for increased academic performance in our secondary school system. In an ideal situation, students were supposed to maintain good conducts and behavior in schools so as to create room for effective teaching and learning. Effectiveness in teaching and learning will promote the attainment of stated objectives. However, the poor academic performance of students in internal and external examinations, coupled with the poor quality of graduates produced yearly from our secondary schools especially those in Cross River State, has

implications for urgent attention. Many factors including discipline have been identified to be responsible for such poor academic performance.

The poor, disrespectful, and deviant attitudes exhibited by secondary school students towards their teachers especially from those in senior classes have led to many teachers using various approaches as means of combating such behavior. However, in using these strategies, many teachers complain of teachers who flog mercilessly and others who use very harmful and inhumane techniques of punishment. Some teachers while attempting to discipline children have used abusive words, detention, suspension etc. The use of such techniques has most often led to conflict arising between the school and the community (the teacher and parents). Different students have been observed to hold different views about discipline differently which in turn, have an effect in their academic performance. In time past, many principals have made deliberate efforts to advise those staff who used brutal techniques of discipline. The PTA has also been used by many principals to cushion this problem, and in other cases, committees are formed. Despite all of these efforts, many teachers are adamant and unwilling to change from using brutal means of managing discipline.

Given the need for good academic performance, the poor attitude of students and that of some teachers, coupled with the observed poor academic performance, is an indication that there is a problem. The problem of concern here is that: could students' perception towards the management of suspension, and expulsion be related to their poor academic performance? This study seeks to investigate for an answer to this question.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between students' perception towards the management of discipline and their academic performance in Cross River State.

Specifically, this study sought to find out whether:

- i. Students' perception towards management of suspension relates to their academic performance.
- ii. Students' perception towards management of expulsion management relates to their academic performance.

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

- i. There is no significant relationship between students' perception of suspension management and their academic performance.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between students' perception of expulsion management and their academic performance.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study may be significant to the students, teachers/principals, parents, NGOs and researchers. The findings of this study may suggest areas of discipline where students can improve on, that will lead to an improvement in their academic performance. The study may be relevant to teachers because it may provide suggestions on the appropriate strategies to use in correcting or preventing disciplinary problems.

To the principals, this study may serve as a guide in making decisions or formulating disciplinary policies in their respective schools. Parents who have been found conflicting against teachers or schools, may also be better informed through the findings of this study that, certain disciplinary

actions are taken when students misbehave. This further creates a healthy relationship between the school and the community.

The study may also be of immense importance to other Non-Governmental Organizations who may seek ways to solve discipline-related problems in their organizations. Finally, this study may also serve as a resource material to other researchers for further studies in this area, or related areas.

Methods

This study adopted a correlational research design. This is because the study seeks to establish the relationship as it exists between the phenomenon being studied which is students' perception towards discipline and their academic performance. The population of this study includes all the public secondary school students in Cross River State. A sample of 180 students was selected using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: "Students' Perception of Discipline Management and Academic Performance Questionnaire (SPDMAPQ)". The instrument was constructed in two sections the first section gathered biographical data of the respondents while the second section consists of 15 items. Each sub-variables of the independent variable were measured with 6 items while the dependent variable was also measured with 6 items. The questionnaire items were designed to measure respondents' degree of agreement to items ranging from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD) on the revised 4-point Likert scale. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test all the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between students' perception of suspension and their academic performance. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of results of the relationship between students' perception of suspension management and their academic performance (n=180).

Variables	Σx	Σx^2	Σxy	r-cal.
	Σy	Σy^2		
Students' perception towards management of suspension	50187	545		
			47751	0.972
Academic performance	533	47995		
Critical r = 0.146, df = 178				

From table 1 above, the calculated r-value of 0.972 is greater than the critical values of 0.146 at 0.05 level of significance with 178 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between students' perception of suspension management and their academic performance.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between students' perception of expulsion management and their academic performance. The result from the analysis of data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of results of the relationship between students' perception of expulsion management and their academic performance (n=180).

Variables	Σx	Σx^2	Σxy	r-cal.
	Σy	Σy^2		
Students' perception of management of expulsion	547	52587		
Academic performance	533	50067	45873	0.890

*Critical r = 0.146, df = 178

From table 2, the result of the analysis showed the calculated r of 0.890 is greater than the critical values 0.146 at 0.05 level of significance. We, therefore, reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant relationship between students' perception of expulsion management and their academic performance.

Discussion of results

The findings of this study established that there is a significant relationship between students' perception towards the management of suspension and their academic performance. This means that students who had a negative perception towards the management of suspension did not do well while those whose perception towards the management of suspension is positive, performed academically better. This finding is supported by the findings of Nwosu, Amanze, Oladosu, and Adewunmi (2017), who reported that students who had negative attitudes to suspension, were not performing at the same level as those with positive attitudes.

The findings of this study also revealed a significant relationship between students' perception of the management of expulsion and their academic performance. Different students had a different perception of the management of expulsion. Those with positive perception achieved better academic standing than those with negative perception towards the management of expulsion. This finding supports the position held by Mlambo, (2011) who noted that students who did not follow school rules and regulations, had bad attitudes and are not afraid of expulsion, and they never did well in placement examinations.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that students with negative perception towards the management of suspension and expulsion, did not perform well academically. Those who had a positive perception of the management of suspension and expulsion did better academically.

Recommendations

It was recommended that:

- i. Parents should encourage their children/ward to maintain good attitudes that will not lead to their suspension or withdrawal from school.
- ii. Principals should listen properly to the offenses of students and mete out the right discipline so that students will not be suspended or expelled in an unjustifiable manner.
- iii. Students should be encouraged to maintain good attitudes and obey established rules and regulations.

- iv. Disciplinary committee should be set up that will monitor, regulate and handle all disciplinary cases in schools.
- v. Students should be made to understand that discipline is not punishment but rather, a way of shaping one's behavior to conform to the norms and values of the schools. It is when students perceive discipline from this angle that their attitudes towards discipline will change.

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