

## **The Administrative Mechanism of the School Principals in Handling Sexual Indiscipline in Secondary Schools in Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** This paper on administrative mechanism of the school principals in handling sexual indiscipline in secondary schools in Nigeria actually discussed the nature, magnitude and types of sexual indiscipline in our secondary schools. Sexual indiscipline among our secondary school students and even teachers is premarital sex, that is having sexual intercourse before marriage. Sexual indiscipline in our schools leads to teenage pregnancies, teenage marriages, abortion and at times premature death. Sexual indiscipline in our secondary schools could be caused by total ignorance, poverty, influence of the mass media, quest to pass examination, inordinate desire of corrupt teachers etc. The school principal could use the recommended administrative mechanisms to handle sexual indiscipline in schools which include, adoption of aggressive sex education, being a source of discipline and being disciplined, giving award to the best morally behaved student at the end of the term etc. The adoption of all the recommended mechanisms will go along way to handle sexual indiscipline in our secondary schools.

**Key words:** Administrative mechanism • School principals • Sexual indiscipline • Secondary schools etc.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1960s and even in 1970s, Nigeria had not been engulfed by various acts of indiscipline as it is now. It appears that every institution from the family, the economic, the political, the educational and even the religious are all plagued with one form of indiscipline or another. It seems that the well cherished value system of the society has disintegrated to the extent that acts of indiscipline which were in the past relatively, rare and far in between, have now become common place. Obe [1] and Onabamiro [2] included the following as symptoms of indiscipline among students: drug abuse, peddling, vandalism, examination malpractices, cruelty, fagging, bullying, cheating, absenteeism, truancy, smoking, violation of school regulations.

In the larger society, the news papers are replete with instances of nepotism, favouritism, bribery, fraud with its latest variant called “419”, drug abuse, alcoholism, stealing, armed robbery, lack of obedience to constituted authority, forgery and sexual indiscipline which includes unfaithfulness, flirting, office romance, rape, marital irresponsibility and so on. Apart from bribery and corruption it appears that sex related indiscipline is the

most dreadful of all forms of indiscipline as a result of its devastating effect on the psyche of the nation and that of the individual especially if those involved are in their formative years. Thus, there is a great concern about the moral and sexual indiscipline among our youth who are the hope and leaders of tomorrow. As educators, we are naturally worried about the adolescents in our secondary schools where almost all the sex-related acts of indiscipline such as homosexuality, lesbianism, teenage pregnancy and parenthood, abortion, promiscuity and sexually transmitted disease are quite prevented [3].

Although we are all aware of the problem of sexual indiscipline among our youths, it appears that it has not actually received enough attention it deserves from the appropriate quarters. To the best of the knowledge of the writer, very little attention has been given or focused on sex –related indiscipline in our secondary school system as a whole. To the best of the writer’s knowledge, out of ignorance, sex education and marital life is only taught at the tertiary level of education after most of the harm must have been done to our youths. Therefore, it is the intention of the writer to draw attention of the concerned authority to the issue of sexual indiscipline in our secondary schools. In doing so, the magnitude of the

problem will be established, the causes discussed and the administrative mechanism for dealing with the situation put forward.

**The Nature of Sexual Indiscipline in Nigerian Secondary Schools:** People are sexual beings from birth until death and sexual development and behaviour are integral human processes. In the total lifespan, adolescence is probably the most critical period, since a major development task is learn the deal with sexual emotions and drives in ways which are socially acceptable and self enhancing, learning to handle the newly awakened sex impulse offers adolescent one of their major problems and dilemmas that have resulted in sexual indiscipline.

Sexual indiscipline among secondary school students includes increasing rate of premarital sex, promiscuity [1,4] prostitution, teenage pregnancy, teenage marriage and motherhood, illegal abortion, child abuse, child abandonment and premature death for teenage mothers as a result of abortion.

Observations have shown that many of our secondary school children involve in prostitution and rape. Prostitution is a common indicator of sexual irresponsibility among school children. The main cause for prostitution is usually described, as a sign of moral delinquency [5] and lack of contentment. Promiscuity and prostitution have been traced to the economic recession which has led to mass retrenchment. With salary withdrawal from retrenched parents certain financial supports were also withdrawn from their children, thus resulting into prostitution in order to meet their needs [1]. Another indicator of sexual indiscipline among adolescent is the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, herpes and currently the much dreadful Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) with their implications not only for the carriers but for the whole society.

There is no doubt that the traditional values have been over thrown in favour of liberal sexual attitude. The findings of a study carried out by Kufiriji [5] aimed to investigate adolescents' attitude toward sex and marriage, indicated that 63% of the sample did not think virginity was important, but old-fashioned. Recreational sex seems to be the way of life among the youth.

Teenage pregnancy as stated above sometimes leads to teenage marriage. This option is faced with both medical, social and physiological dangers and problems. For one thing teenage girl's body is still growing and if nutrition is deficient such teenage girl is at poor obstetric risk. For another, there are psychological problems

associated with teenage marriage such as dropping out of school, humiliation and degradation suffered by the adolescents and their families. There are the financial implications and lack of psychological support system for the teenage mother. The attendant dropping out of school for the girl usually forces her into poverty cycle, while the high rapidly increasing rate of illegitimate pregnancy exacts a heavy financial toll on tax payers.

Furthermore, single parenthood seems to be on the increase among adolescents as a result of premarital sex with its implications for proper psychological well being of the child and mother and on the long run with social implications for the society.

It is a well known fact that more teenagers are engaging in sexual intercourse at earlier ages. Raufu [6] found that in a sample of 100 secondary school children, 48% boys and 36% girls stated that they had sexual intercourse by age 15. A large proportion of the girls indicated that their partners were old men, old enough to be their fathers, while only a small fraction of the male sample indicated that they had older girl friends. Thus, the problem of "sugar daddy and mummy" is a major one among adolescents. The adult society that preaches sexual morality and delayed gratification is thus creating more dilemmas for the youth by enticing them with money and other luxuries.

The adolescents appear surrounded by many temptations. The teachers who are supposed to be in '*locus parentis*' for the youth while in school are unfortunately part of the '*dramatis persone*' in the game. Teenage girls are lured by their teachers on the promise of merited academic reward. Thus, we have examination leakages and other malpractices, like favoritism.

It is therefore not surprising that promiscuity, teenage pregnancy, teenage marriage, abortion, premature death, child abandonment and abuse are prevalent among the adolescents, with attendant medical and psychological risks and consequences. It has been documented that there are associations between early motherhood, low educational attainment and a high probability of divorce and higher subsequent fertility and later poverty [7].

In Nigeria, it appears that little attention has been paid to the problem of sexual indiscipline among Nigerian adolescents. Evidence abounds in the mass media and school reports that the problem seems endemic. Adolescence is a universal phenomenon and therefore the findings of studies in advanced countries where a lot of studies have been undertaken are relevant to the Nigerian scene [3,8,9]. we can legitimately state that there are

increasing number of adolescents engaging in sexual intercourse, thus resulting in teenage pregnancies, teenage marriages, teenage mother, high incidence of abortion with attendant high rate of deaths etc. From the above, we have established that sexual indiscipline like many other aspects of indiscipline generally is prevalent among adolescents and is a threat to the healthy growth and self fulfillment of our youth. After all, sexual morality is grounded upon other moralities, especially upon self-control and a fine sense of consideration for others. What then are the causes of the lack of self-control, the lack of sense of proportion which can postpone immediate pleasures for the sake of a greater future fulfillment?

**Causes:** In the past, Nigerians approached issues related to sexual behaviour with great respect. There was a cultural prohibition of premarital sexual experimentation. The supposed sexual urge of the adolescents was not given opportunity for expression as a result of cultural sanctions and codes as well as adult supervision of the adolescent's life [10]. For instance, virginity was highly prized, particularly by the parents of the bride who usually prided themselves about their ability to guarantee the chastity of their daughters. But nowadays, virginity is perceived as old-fashioned. However, western influence with its permissive tendencies and failure of other socialization agencies to prepare adolescents for life is a major cause of sexual indiscipline.

Sexual indiscipline can also be explained from other perspectives, such as that of changing cultural patterns. The rapid secularization of schools and the removal of religious instruction and moral instruction from among school subjects, greater emphasis on co-educational system as opposed to single sex-schools and the gradual phasing out of the boarding system have all been blamed for increasing sexual immorality among adolescents [10]. As a result of the above factors, there are more opportunities for boy-girl interactions, most of which are unregulated and unsupervised either by real or vicarious adult models in religious stories.

The cult of silence by adults, particularly by the home in matters of sex, is another factor responsible for indiscriminate sexual activities of the youth. The home appears to have failed in its responsibility of preparing the youth for family life. In most homes, it is a taboo to discuss sex, children's curiosity is usually handled with anger, rebuff or punishment, to the extent that children may grow up with a sense of guilt and fear about sex-related matters. Thus, children are not adequately informed about sex matters other than where babies come

from. Parents who should be an important source of information about sex are more often than not a hindrance. Some times, parents are as uninformed as their children and are embarrassed when confronted with sex talk. Beyond mother's sketchy information regarding menstruation, the implications of such an important development to girls' sexuality are rarely mentioned. Thus, most parents miss out on the opportunity to gradually but permanently mould their children's feelings and attitudes to sex instead of giving adequate information that will lead to self control, widening sublimatory or socially acceptable expressions for sexual thought and feelings which invariably leads to increasing understanding of what sex is and how it functions [11].

Due to the failure of the parents to educate their children about how to handle their naturally occurring physiological, biological and emotional changes, the children resort to their peers who are the worst source of information on such matters because they are as ignorant as their friends.

Another source of the problem at hand is the mass media. There is no doubt that the mass media; the radio, television, cinema, films, the news papers, magazines have become a veritable source of influence on almost all things and issues under the sun. The print media and the electronic ones have become quite powerful because of the speed and mode of presentation. The video machine, satellite viewing and the computer machine make any idea and event available to any corner of the globe at the shortest time. The advancement of science and technology, modern transportation and housing, with abundance of sensational literature, including pornography has influenced adolescent's sexual life negatively. The cinema, television, glossy magazines and advertising of all kinds seem to conspire to enhance eroticism, promulgate confused and discordant morality and set up conflicting models for a happy sex life.

The mass media, particularly, the ubiquitous television presents sexuality as a distorted, recreation oriented, exploitative, casual activity without dealing with the consequences. Apart from telecasting women as sex objects, TV presents sex mainly via innuendoes and contextual references to intercourse soap operas are increasingly attracting youth where the sexual content is heavy and explicit. The import of the contribution of the mass media becomes quite grave when we remember that apart from sleeping, one major preoccupation that takes a lot of children's time at home is televiewing. The situation becomes quite alarming when we realize that children's televiewing are little supervised or monitored by parents.

We therefore can conclude that the mass media has brought about negative influence on the sexual morality, of school children.

Last but not the least, the school in which the children spend the greater part of their working hours has also shied away from assuming responsibility of adequately informing the children about sex matters and family life. It has limited its job to little moral and biology teaching and reproduction as if the latter has no relevance in the lives of its students, even though they exhibit all signs of preparedness for adult life.

Most schools systems in Nigeria have only limited its concern to policy statements of preparing the child for affective and self fulfilled family life [12]. Even in most advanced countries which have included sex education in its curriculum; it is not made compulsory because parents must give their consent. Teachers and counselors only talk sex whenever there is an incidence of teenage pregnancy or premarital sex among the students. Thus, the adolescent is left unaided to cope with his/her new awakened sexual impulse. The student's sexual feeling and drives seek expression and satisfaction, but the student finds himself in a dilemma, yet the society expects him to know what to do. Their situation is worsened by the conflict arising from the double standard of the adults in their environment. The adult (teachers) who sermonizes about sexual immorality and promiscuity has often been the subject of such irresponsible acts.

The worst could be the introduction of and easy availability on contraception through explicit advertisement in adolescent sexual immorality because there is a guarantee even though flimsy of not getting pregnant. The elimination of the fear of pregnancy and STD gives an impetus to sexual activities particular, premarital sex, promiscuity and prostitution among adolescents. The administrative mechanism of the school principals in handling sexual indiscipline in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Adolescence, that is ages between twelve and eighteen is universally acknowledged as a turbulent and critical period in the lives of children. It is a period when the adolescent child becomes aware of the tremendous physiological, endocrinal and psycho-social changes that are taking place in his/her organs and seeks various ways to get answers to his/her sexual urges. They now view them selves as independent adults who should be trusted with taking care of themselves, including the use and even misuse of their newly found independence. But there is no doubt that an intervention is required at this time just as such are given in the areas of intellectual,

educational and career development of the adolescent. The need for accurate and adequate information to guide the development of values attitudes and concepts in sex and family life can not be over-emphasized. The only effective way to ensure positive development and the use of adolescent's sexuality is to assist them to acquire requisite knowledge that will lead to responsible decision making in such issues.

The major cause of sexual indiscipline is invariably ignorance. There is therefore the need to equip adolescents with the necessary information in order to enable them develop positive attitude toward sex and sexuality.

Since the home, the church and even the school have all failed to educate the adolescents sexually, the writer has the following administrative mechanisms for the school administrators in handling sexual indiscipline in their schools. The school administrator should find enough time and organize sex education programme in his/her school for the students using resources persons. This should be done monthly. Attendance to this meeting or special gathering must be made compulsory for both students and teachers. Here everything about sex shall be unveiled especially the negative consequences of premarital sex, so as to discourage students from indulging in it.

The school principal shall not stop at that, he/she should go ahead to organize the same meeting with the parents and tell them their own duties as far as premarital sex is concerned. This meeting should be once in a term. The school principal should further organize special orientation for his/her teachers on the dangers of having premarital sex with the students. Here, teachers should be adequately informed of the consequences of such act.

The principal should go further and constitute special disciplinary committee on premarital sex to checkmate with students and staff and still punishment meted out for offenders. The principal should see that adequate utilization of the school counselors is made to the advantage of students on the sex – related issues. Thus, students should be encouraged to visit the school counselors for advice and information regularly.

The principal him/herself must be a role model, a father, a disciplinarian, a teacher not a preacher and an exemplary person for him to be able to carry out this fight against sexual indiscipline in his school. The best identified morally behaved girl on termly basis should be openly in the Assembly Hall rewarded, praised and encouraged and vice-versa by the school authority.

The school authority should create recreation halls where students should be encouraged to go and watch films that are morally educative and immorally discouraged and stocked with moral books or literatures. The school authority should also adopt strict monitoring team of overt students behaviours and discouraging boy-girl friendships in school and report cases of immorality to the school authority immediately for adequate punishment. These monitoring team activities shall extent up to community level to checkmate the moral behaviour of the students.

The school authority should encourage the communities to create recreation centres where students could go to and relax and watch highly moral films and listen to educative stories from the elderly ones. The school authority should ensure that adequate religious and moral instruction is given to students to enable them be morally equipped in life.

### CONCLUSION

It is a known fact that one of the manifestations of the general wave of indiscipline currently sweeping through the nation is sexual indiscipline. The writer has deliberately limited this topic to an examination of this problem among secondary school students because as a subculture of the larger society, what goes on outside matters more for the school system than what goes on in the schools. Thus, the school as a reflection of the society is plagued with sexual indiscipline inform of premarital sex, teenage pregnancy, abortion, premature death, child abuse and abandonment, promiscuity, rape, elopement, flirting and prostitution with attendant sexually transmitted diseases, particularly the deadly ones like syphilis, herpes and AIDS. The causes of the problem were identified to include ignorance, economic recession, the influence of the mass media etc.

Lastly, some suggestions for handling the problem by the school authority are proffered, among which are, the introduction of sex education, checkmating immoral behaviours among students and teachers etc.

The adoption of the recommended mechanisms by the school principals will actually go a long way to curb this, cankerworm among our secondary school students.

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