

Managing Deviant Behaviours in Secondary Schools in a Period of Economic Recession in Bayelsa State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the management of deviant behaviours in secondary schools during a period of economic recession in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population consisted of 400 students drawn from eight public secondary schools in Bayelsa State using proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Management of Deviant Behaviours in Secondary Schools during Economic Recession Questionnaire (MDBSSPERQ). The instrument was validated by experts in educational administration and measurement and evaluation. Reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.78$). Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics including chi-square and one-way ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicated that clear school rules, peer influence, and disciplinary enforcement significantly affect students' compliance with school regulations. The study concludes that collaborative efforts among teachers, school administrators, parents, and policymakers are essential for effectively managing deviant behaviour, particularly during periods of economic hardship. Specific recommendations are provided for key stakeholders.

Keywords: deviant behaviour, discipline management, economic recession, secondary education, school discipline

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a critical role in national development. The National Policy on Education identifies education as an instrument for national development and social transformation. Schools therefore function as institutions where knowledge, skills, values, and socially acceptable behaviours are transmitted to learners.

Secondary schools bring together adolescents from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Although the primary objective of schooling is to promote intellectual and moral development, students sometimes display behaviours that violate school rules and social expectations. Such behaviours are commonly referred to as *deviant behaviours*.

Deviant behaviour refers to actions that violate established norms, rules, or expectations of a social group or institution. Within the school context, examples include truancy, bullying, fighting, drug abuse, vandalism, disrespect for authority, and examination malpractice. These behaviours disrupt teaching and learning processes and may negatively affect academic performance.

The management of deviant behaviours becomes even more challenging during periods of economic recession. Economic downturns are typically characterized by unemployment, reduced household income, and financial instability. These conditions often create psychological stress within families and reduce the capacity of schools to provide adequate resources for student supervision and discipline.

In Nigeria, economic recessions have affected the educational sector through inadequate funding, deteriorating infrastructure, and limited availability of learning resources. Such conditions may indirectly contribute to behavioural challenges among students and complicate disciplinary management within schools.

Understanding how schools manage deviant behaviours under these conditions is therefore essential for improving discipline and ensuring a conducive learning environment. This study investigates the management of deviant behaviours in secondary schools in Bayelsa State during a period of economic recession.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the management of deviant behaviours in secondary schools during a period of economic recession in Bayelsa State.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine students' perceptions of deviant behaviour management in secondary schools.
2. Identify strategies used by schools to manage deviant behaviours.
3. Determine whether school disciplinary rules influence students' compliance with school regulations.
4. Examine whether differences exist among schools in their management of deviant behaviours.

Research Questions

1. How do secondary school students perceive the management of deviant behaviours in their schools?
2. What strategies are used by secondary schools to manage deviant behaviours?

Research Hypotheses

There is no significant relationship between school disciplinary rules and students' compliance with school regulations.

There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of deviant behaviour management across the sampled secondary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Deviant Behaviour in Schools

Deviant behaviour refers to actions that violate established norms and expectations within a social system. In educational settings, deviant behaviour includes student actions that disrupt the teaching-learning process or undermine school discipline.

Haralambos and Holborn (2008) define deviance as behaviour that fails to conform to the norms and expectations of a particular social group. In the school context, these norms are usually expressed through codes of conduct, rules, and disciplinary regulations.

Durkheim (1895) argued that deviance is a normal and inevitable part of social life because every society establishes norms that some individuals will inevitably violate. In schools, common forms of deviance include truancy, bullying, lateness, drug abuse, fighting, examination malpractice, and disrespect for teachers.

When such behaviours are not properly managed, they can disrupt classroom activities, reduce instructional effectiveness, and negatively influence other students.

Causes of Deviant Behaviour among Secondary School Students

Scholars have identified multiple factors contributing to deviant behaviour among adolescents.

Family Influence

The family plays a fundamental role in shaping children's behaviour. Poor parental supervision, family conflict, and unstable home environments may contribute to behavioural problems among students (Ezewu, 1985).

Peer Group Influence

Peer groups exert strong influence during adolescence. Students often adopt behaviours that are accepted within their peer networks, including deviant activities such as truancy or substance abuse.

Media Influence

Exposure to violent media content and unregulated digital platforms may contribute to aggressive behaviour among adolescents.

School Environment

School conditions such as overcrowded classrooms, poor supervision, and weak disciplinary systems may encourage student misconduct.

Economic Recession and Student Behaviour

Economic recession refers to a prolonged decline in economic activity characterized by rising unemployment and reduced household income. Economic hardship can affect families' ability to support children's educational and emotional needs.

Financial stress within households may reduce parental supervision and increase students' vulnerability to deviant peer influences. At the same time, schools may face reduced funding, limited teaching resources, and inadequate infrastructure, which may weaken disciplinary systems.

Strategies for Managing Deviant Behaviour

Several strategies have been identified for managing deviant behaviour in schools.

1. Enforcement of school rules and regulations.
2. Guidance and counselling services.
3. Parental involvement in school activities.
4. Positive reinforcement and reward systems.

Studies have shown that schools with clear disciplinary policies and active counselling services experience lower levels of student deviance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on **Social Learning Theory** developed by Bandura (1977). The theory explains that individuals learn behaviour through observation, imitation, and interaction with others in their environment.

According to Bandura, behaviour is influenced by the interaction of personal factors, environmental influences, and behavioural patterns. Students may therefore develop deviant behaviour by observing peers, family members, or media figures.

The theory suggests that behavioural change can be achieved by modifying the social environment and reinforcing positive behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a **descriptive survey research design**. The population consisted of 400 students selected from eight public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 50 respondents from each school.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled **Management of Deviant Behaviours in Secondary Schools in a Period of Economic Recession Questionnaire (MDBSSPERQ)**.

The instrument was validated by experts in educational administration and measurement and evaluation. Reliability was established using the **Cronbach Alpha method**, which produced a coefficient of **0.78**, indicating acceptable reliability.

The questionnaire was administered using a **direct delivery method** with the assistance of trained research assistants.

Data analysis involved:

- **Mean and standard deviation** to answer research questions.
- **Chi-square tests** to determine significant relationships between variables.
- **ANOVA** to test differences among schools where applicable.

A decision rule of **2.50 mean benchmark** was adopted.

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation On How Secondary School Students Perceive Management of Deviant Behaviours.

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	SD
1	disobey school rules sometimes due to peer influence	3.44	0.66
2	I disobey school rules so that I can be punished	1.42	0.51
3	I feel good when am punished for disobeying school rules	1.37	0.61
4	School rules make students goal achievement easy	3.23	0.94
5	I obey school rules to avoid punishment	3.32	0.70
6	I obey rules to conform to school norms	3.54	0.57
	Mean	2.72	0.66

Table 1 shows that students generally comply with school rules primarily due to social expectations and fear of punishment. Peer influence was identified as a key factor influencing rule violation among students.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on how secondary school students perceive management of deviant behaviours

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	SD
7	Secondary schools need rules and regulation	3.53	0.50

8	Rules aid school administration	3.29	0.76
9	Teachers work is easier when rules are obeyed	3.53	0.51
10	Rules regulate students activities	3.47	0.50
11	Rules help in correcting deviant behaviours	3.30	0.72
12	Teachers welcome deviant behaviour in school	1.49	0.50
13	Parents are happy when students obey school rules	3.48	0.54
Mean		3.16	0.58

Table 2 indicates that respondents strongly agreed that school rules and regulations are necessary for effective administration and discipline. The findings also suggest that when rules are enforced consistently, teachers find it easier to manage classrooms and maintain order.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that students generally comply with school rules due to social expectations and the presence of disciplinary sanctions. This finding supports earlier studies in educational sociology which argue that institutional rules play a major role in shaping student behaviour.

The study also found that peer influence contributes significantly to deviant behaviour among students. This aligns with the social learning perspective which suggests that individuals learn behaviours through interaction with peers and social groups.

Furthermore, the results indicate that clear rules and consistent enforcement contribute to effective school administration. Schools with well-defined disciplinary structures tend to maintain better behavioural standards among students.

During periods of economic recession, schools may face additional challenges such as inadequate funding, overcrowded classrooms, and reduced parental supervision. These factors may indirectly contribute to student misconduct.

Therefore, effective management of deviant behaviour requires coordinated efforts among school administrators, teachers, parents, and policymakers.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that effective management of deviant behaviour is essential for maintaining discipline and improving the quality of education in secondary schools. Clear school rules, consistent enforcement, and collaboration among stakeholders play important roles in controlling deviant behaviour among students. In periods of economic recession, schools must adopt more proactive behavioural management strategies in order to sustain educational standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Teachers

- Teachers should receive training in **classroom management and behavioural intervention strategies**.
- Guidance and counselling services should be integrated into classroom activities.

For School Principals

- Principals should establish **clear disciplinary policies and consistent enforcement mechanisms**.
- Schools should create **student behaviour monitoring systems**.

For Parents

- Parents should maintain regular communication with teachers and school authorities.
- Parents should monitor peer associations and media exposure of their children.

For Policymakers

- Government should invest in **school counselling services**.
- Education authorities should develop **state-wide behavioural management policies**.
- Funding should be provided for **student mentorship and character development programs**.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the study relied on self-reported data from students, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. Second, the study was limited to eight public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the sample size and include private schools to provide broader insights.

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