

PRINCIPALS' STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO MODIFYING UNDESIRABLE CLASSROOMS BEHAVIOR: AN ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study examines the tactical methods used by secondary school principals in Nigeria to address disruptive classroom behaviour. Creating conducive learning environments requires effective classroom management, and school principals are crucial in putting behaviour modification tactics into practice and supervising their implementation. This study looks at a variety of interventions, such as social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, individual behaviour plans, restorative practices, and positive behavioural interventions and supports (PBIS). By means of an exhaustive examination of these tactics, the article pinpoints the essential elements that lead to their triumph and emphasises the obstacles and constraints faced during their execution. Furthermore, a comparative study of various methods sheds light on the relative merits of various tactics as well as the situational variables that affect their results. The results highlight how crucial it is to use resources wisely, pursue ongoing professional development, involve parents, and employ culturally sensitive methods in order to maximise the effectiveness of behaviour control programs. In order to improve student academic and social outcomes, the study ends with suggestions for school administrators on how to enhance current practices and create a welcoming and supportive school environment.

Keywords: classroom management, secondary schools, school principals, effective intervention, positive behavioral support

Introduction

A variety of behaviours that disturb the learning environment and obstruct academic advancement are included in undesirable classroom behaviour. These behaviours can range from more serious problems like bullying, aggressiveness and vandalism to more persistent disruptions like talking out of turn, disobedience to authority, and inattentiveness. In Nigerian secondary schools, a range of circumstances, including peer pressure,

family dynamics and socioeconomic challenges, may lead to unwanted behaviours (Fareo, 2015). To foster a courteous and effective learning environment, it is essential to effectively address these behaviours. Gage et al. (2017), stated that the way students behave in the classroom has a significant impact on their educational experience and results. Disruptive behaviour has the potential to impair learning, cut into instructional time, and ruin the classroom environment as a

whole. In order to create a supportive learning atmosphere where students can concentrate on their studies and actively participate in the curriculum, effective regulation of undesired behaviour is crucial. Principals play a crucial role in putting initiatives to confront and change these kinds of behaviours into action because they are important leaders in educational institutions. Their method has an impact on the general school climate and culture in addition to the individual student outcomes.

According to Danladi & Abdullahi (2023), Nigerian secondary schools deal with a number of issues pertaining to student behaviour and classroom management. These challenges include: Teachers may find it challenging to properly monitor student behaviour and give each student individualised attention in crowded classrooms, many schools have little funding, which makes it difficult for them to provide support services and comprehensive behaviour control programs, the variety of student experiences and backgrounds makes behaviour control more difficult, necessitating specialised and adaptable techniques and students from underprivileged homes may display behavioural problems associated with outside pressures like homelessness, unstable families, and acts of violence in the community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a critical analysis of the tactical methods secondary school administrators in Nigeria use to deal with and change

disruptive behaviour in the classroom. The paper's specific objectives are to:

1. Examine and assess the many tactics and approaches principals employ to deal with disruptive and unwelcome behaviour in the classroom.
2. Explore the role of principals in shaping and enforcing behavior management strategies.
3. Determine the typical difficulties and roadblocks principals have when putting behaviour management techniques into practice.
4. Provide principals and educational officials with evidence-based suggestions for improving behaviour management techniques.

Theoretical Framework

This paper draws from several key theories related to behavior management, leadership and educational administration in contextualizing the strategies used by principals and assess their effectiveness

A. Behavioral Management Theories

1. **Behaviorism (B.F. Skinner, John B. Watson):** This theory emphasises the significant influence of environmental cues and reinforcement on behaviour. The idea states that both positive and negative reinforcement which entail rewarding desired behaviour and punishing unwanted behavior can aid in the modification of negative behaviour. By implementing clear consequences for disruptive behaviour and systems of reinforcement for good behaviour, principals can apply behaviourist

principles to the control of student behaviour in schools.

2. **Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura):** According to this theory, people pick up new behaviours through modelling, imitation, and observation. It highlights how social connections and role models influence how people behave. By modelling acceptable behaviour, supporting peer role modelling, and creating an atmosphere where students can learn from one another, principals can effectively utilise social learning (Jones & Cater 2020).

B. Leadership Theories

1. **Transformational Leadership (James MacGregor Burns, Bernard Bass):** The goal of transformational leadership is to inspire and motivate subordinates to reach greater heights of engagement and performance. Buttressing this Adeoye & Ainnubi (2023), opined that qualities that define transformational leaders are their capacity to inspire passion, establish a vision, and maximise the potential of those they manage. By inspiring teachers and students, developing a climate of mutual respect and cooperation, and casting a good vision for the school, principals who use transformational leadership can have an impact on classroom behaviour.
2. **Situational Leadership (Paul Hersey, Ken Blanchard):** Effective leadership, according to situational leadership theory, is built on adapting

one's approach to the needs of the circumstances and the developmental stage of the followers. Leaders adjust their tactics based on the circumstances and the preparedness of their team. By adjusting their behaviour management techniques to the unique needs of their pupils and the surroundings of their school, principals can employ situational leadership.

C. Organizational Behavior Theories

1. **Systems Theory:** According to this theory, organisations are complex systems made up of interdependent parts that affect one another. It emphasises how important it is to understand the relationships and dynamics inside the system. The connections between instructors and students, policies, and external variables are only a few of the facets of the school system that principals must consider when managing conduct in the classroom.
2. **Ecological Systems Theory (Urie Bronfenbrenner):** The study of ecological systems theory looks at the interactions between people and the various environmental systems (micro, meso, exo, and macro). It draws attention to how different circumstances might have an impact on behaviour. When applying behaviour management measures, principals must be aware of the larger ecological contexts that impact children, including family, community, and society concerns.

D. Educational Administration Theories

1. **Instructional Leadership (William B. Hoy, Kevin E. Walker):** The focus of instructional leadership is on how school administrators may enhance instruction and student learning. It entails establishing learning objectives, assisting with teaching methods, and assessing the results of instruction. According to Naz & Rashedi (2021), as instructional leaders, principals can affect classroom behaviour by encouraging good teaching techniques, offering professional growth opportunities, and establishing high standards for student conduct and performance.
2. **Change Management Theory (John Kotter):** Organisational change management and leadership procedures are outlined in the theory of change management. It involves phases including establishing a coalition that will serve as a guide, generating a sense of urgency, and consolidating wins. To ensure that behaviour management techniques are implemented and maintained and that changes are successfully communicated and embraced within the school, principals might use the concepts of change management.

Role of Principals in Behavior Management

In order to develop and put into practice ways for dealing with disruptive behaviour in the classroom, principals are essential (Gage et al. 2017). Setting behavioural objectives, assisting teachers,

and promoting a positive school climate are all examples of their leadership that goes beyond administrative responsibilities. Effective principals tackle behavioural issues with a range of strategies. These include collaborating with parents, neighbours and other stakeholders to build a network of support for behaviour management, setting clear guidelines and sanctions to deal with and deter inappropriate behavior, giving teachers assistance and training to enhance their classroom management techniques and assessing the success of strategies put into practice and modifying them as needed to improve results. Understanding and assessing the strategies principals employ to address disruptive conduct in the classroom is essential for identifying best practices and areas in need of improvement (Ispas & Ispas 2023). This study aids in identifying effective solutions and customising them to meet particular problems encountered by educational institutions.

Principals' Strategies for Modifying Undesirable Behavior

These strategies are critical to improving student achievement and creating a happy learning environment. They fall into two categories: proactive and reactive, and they offer a comprehensive approach to behaviour regulation.

A. Proactive Strategies

1. **Establishing Clear Expectations and Rules:** According to Suleiman, Olanrewaju & Suleiman (2022), principals and instructors must work together to establish equitable,

consistent, and clear norms and guidelines for student behaviour before they can effectively regulate behaviour. This is accomplished by working with teachers, parents, and students to create an extensive code of conduct. Make sure that the regulations are consistently stated and prominently displayed in the common spaces and classrooms. Having clear expectations helps pupils understand what is expected of them, eliminates uncertainty, and establishes a disciplined environment that encourages good behaviour.

2. **Promoting a Positive School Climate:** Positive school climates increase the likelihood that students will feel safe, valued, and respected. This could reduce the likelihood of behavioural issues. Put in place initiatives that encourage inclusivity, celebrate diversity, and foster good relationships between staff and students. Plan recurring school-wide activities that uphold community and school values in a similar manner. A respectful and inclusive school environment increases student involvement and decreases behavioural issues (Edahiro, 2021).
3. **Building Strong Teacher-Student Relationships:** It is recommended that principals motivate educators to cultivate significant and nurturing connections with pupils in order to enhance conduct and involvement. Professional development on relationship-building techniques like empathy and active listening should also be offered. Martínez & Wighting

(2023), asserted that strong ties between teachers and students provide a helpful and trustworthy learning environment that boosts motivation and decreases behavioural problems.

4. **Implementing Preventive Programs and Interventions:** Preventive programs concentrate on early intervention and support to address possible behavioural issues before they worsen (Aasheim et al. 2018). Programs like mentorship, workshops on conflict resolution, and social-emotional learning (SEL) can be implemented to achieve this. Determine whether pupils are at risk and offer extra assistance in the form of counselling or specialised programs. By addressing behavioural difficulties early on and helping students build coping mechanisms, these preventative programs help lower the frequency and intensity of harmful behaviours.

B. Reactive Strategies

1. **Utilizing Effective Discipline Techniques:** Principals and educators employ equitable and consistent discipline strategies that focus on behaviour correction rather than punishment when dealing with misbehaviour in students. Applying a tiered discipline approach beginning with small interventions and rising as needed can accomplish this. To address the underlying reasons of behaviour and encourage accountability, adopt restorative methods. Good discipline strategies

correct bad behaviour while promoting personal development and preserving a good student-teacher rapport.

2. **Providing Support and Counseling Services:** Additional support and counselling may be necessary to help pupils overcome underlying obstacles while dealing with behavioural disorders. One way to address this issue is by hiring school counsellors who can give resources and individual and group counselling sessions to students who are struggling with personal, family or academic issues. In line with this, Suleiman et al. (2019), stated that support and counselling services help students create coping mechanisms and change their behaviour by addressing the underlying causes of unwanted behaviour.

3. **Engaging Parents and Guardians:** A consistent strategy to support and discipline at home and at school can be established by involving parents and guardians in behaviour management. This can be accomplished through giving parents regular updates on their child's behaviour, including them in plans for behaviour modification, and teaching them techniques for at-home reinforcement. According to Garbacz et al. (2015), parental participation helps pupils make positive behavioural changes and reinforces expectations for behaviour at school.

4. **Monitoring and Adjusting Interventions:** In order to maintain

their effectiveness and relevance in light of evolving student requirements, behaviour management systems must be continuously monitored and adjusted. Principals should conduct regular observations, feedback sessions, and data analysis to assess the efficacy of behaviour control measures. In addition, they must modify their tactics in response to new problems and student development. Better results for children are achieved when behaviour management initiatives are responsive and well-managed through monitoring and modification of interventions (Hång, 2021).

Analysis of Effective Interventions

The objectives of this analysis are to evaluate the effectiveness of these treatments, comprehend the aspects that contributed to their success, and pinpoint best practices that may be used in a range of educational settings.

A. Evaluation Criteria for Interventions

1. **Impact on Student Behavior:** The effectiveness of the intervention in reducing disruptive behaviours in the classroom should be assessed by the principal. It is crucial to track metrics like the frequency of occurrences, modifications in behaviour reports, and teacher and student feedback. In order to evaluate the success of the intervention, they should also make use of behavioural event reports,

- student questionnaires, and teacher evaluations.
2. **Teacher and Staff Feedback:** Ask instructors and staff members for their opinions on the interventions' overall efficacy, practicality, and convenience of use. Their perspectives are essential for comprehending the difficulties and real-world application. Principals should gather both qualitative and quantitative input from teachers and staff by holding focus groups, interviews, and surveys.
 3. **Student Engagement and Academic Performance:** Look for connections between the treatments and improvements in the academic performance and involvement of the students. Academic results and classroom engagement should ideally increase with effective behaviour management. Examine attendance records, grades, and surveys on student involvement.
 4. **Sustainability and Scalability:** The long-term sustainability of the intervention and its potential to be scaled across many classrooms or schools should be ascertained by principals. Take into account elements including the need for resources, training, and flexibility. It is recommended that they examine reports on implementation, training plans, and resource allocation in order to evaluate scalability and sustainability.
- B. Case Studies of Successful Interventions**
1. **Clear Expectations and Rules:** As reported by De Nobile et al. (2016), a school established a thorough code of conduct that included precise expectations for behaviour and regular reinforcement. They saw a marked decline in disruptive episodes and an improvement in rule compliance among the students. The success was attributed to regular reinforcement, consistent communication, and student participation in rule-making.
 2. **Positive School Climate Programs:** A different school implemented a positive behaviour support program for the entire school, with an emphasis on rewarding and recognising positive behaviour (Lim & Hayoung 2019). Students were more motivated as a result of the curriculum, and disciplinary referrals decreased. It was essential to put an emphasis on inclusiveness, positive reinforcement, and frequent celebrations of student accomplishments.
 3. **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs:** According to Ulla & Poom-Valickis (2023), a school included SEL curricula, emphasising emotional control and conflict resolution techniques. Student behaviour and social relations both improved as a result of the intervention. The involvement of parents, incorporation of SEL into daily activities, and effective training

for teachers were all crucial components.

4. **Restorative Practices:** Gómez et al. (2020), reported that the use of restorative practices to resolve disputes and behavioural problems led to a more understanding and cooperative learning environment in the classroom. This strategy enhanced student relationships while lowering the recidivism rate for bad behaviour. Robust student participation in the process, staff training, and efficient facilitation of restorative circles.

C. Best Practices and Recommendations

1. **Integration of Proactive and Reactive Strategies:** A balanced approach to behaviour management combines proactive tactics with reactive ones. To effectively address a wide range of behavioural difficulties, schools should create a comprehensive behaviour management strategy that includes both proactive and reactive parts.
2. **Ongoing Professional Development:** The effective application of behaviour management techniques requires ongoing professional development and assistance for educators and personnel (Aasheim et al. 2020). Invest in frequent chances for professional development that emphasise behaviour management strategies, such as peer learning sessions and workshops.
3. **Engagement of All Stakeholders:** Engage the community at large,

parents, and students in the creation and implementation of behaviour control techniques. Similarly, Scaletta & Hughes (2020), stated that it is necessary to create avenues for communication and cooperative projects to involve all parties in promoting behavioural norms and corrective actions.

4. **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** Evaluate behaviour management initiatives on a regular basis by gathering data and providing feedback. Adopt a methodical monitoring and assessment strategy that includes recurring assessments and modifications depending on data gathered.

Challenges and Limitations

Although several tactics for changing unfavourable classroom behaviour have the potential to be beneficial, school principals in secondary schools in Nigeria may face a number of obstacles and constraints. These may make it more difficult for behaviour management treatments to be implemented successfully and sustainably.

Resource Constraints: Budgetary constraints prevent many schools from implementing extensive behaviour management programs. The availability of materials, teacher training, and the ability to continue ongoing treatments can all be impacted by a lack of funding. It's possible that staff members and teachers don't get enough instruction on positive behaviour control strategies. Staff that lack the necessary training may find it difficult to

apply techniques consistently and successfully, which would lessen the overall effectiveness of interventions.

Resistance to Change: The principles of some behaviour management systems may occasionally clash with cultural norms and values, resulting in opposition from both staff and students (Clark et al., 2023). It can be challenging to overcome deeply rooted cultural beliefs and customs, this calls for careful consideration and tenacity. Teachers and staff may be reluctant to implement new behaviour management techniques because they are accustomed to using the current strategies or because they are sceptical of fresh ideas. Resistance might cause tactics to be applied inconsistently, which reduces their efficacy.

Environmental and Contextual Factors: High student-teacher ratios might make it difficult to efficiently control behaviour and give each pupil their own attention (Asiegbu et al. (2022). Pupils in overcrowded classes may behave worse and may find it more difficult to apply some remedies. Various external circumstances, including poverty, family dynamics, and community violence, might have an impact on students' behaviour. In order to effectively address behaviour problems resulting from socioeconomic challenges, extensive help that extends beyond the school's resources is frequently needed.

Consistency and Sustainability: It might be challenging to guarantee that behaviour control techniques are applied consistently

throughout all staff members and classrooms. Students may become confused by inconsistent implementation, which also lessens the impact of the interventions. Programmes for behaviour management must continue to get funding and support in order to be sustained over time. If programmes are not sufficiently supported, they may gradually lose steam and cause undesired behaviours to resurface.

Measurement and Evaluation: It can be difficult to gather and evaluate data on behaviour incidents and the results of interventions. It is challenging to precisely assess the efficacy of interventions and make wise modifications in the absence of solid data. Because behaviour has many facets and is influenced by outside variables, assessing the effectiveness of behaviour management techniques can be difficult. Incomplete or inaccurate assessments might result in inefficient changes and a lack of knowledge about what functions.

Ethical and Equity Considerations: It is crucial to make sure that all students get fair and equitable application of behaviour control techniques. To this end Gion, McIntosh & Falcon (2020), stated that inconsistencies in the implementation of interventions may give rise to beliefs of partiality and unfairness, hence compromising confidence and efficacy. Excessive disciplinary actions can harm the rapport between students and teachers as well as have long-term detrimental consequences on the wellbeing of students.

Comparative Analysis

When assessing the diverse tactics utilised by principals to address unfavourable classroom conduct in secondary schools in Nigeria, it is imperative to take into account both their distinct characteristics and overall efficacy. This comparative analysis identifies important tactics and assesses how well they work to encourage positive behaviour and enhance the educational environment.

A. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): According to Childs et al. (2015), PBIS is a proactive approach that establishes clear behavioral expectations and reinforces positive behaviors through a system of rewards and recognition. The success of PBIS depends on staff buy-in and consistent application. When it comes to encouraging long-term behaviour change, positive reinforcement may be more successful than punitive approaches. Research indicates that PBIS can lower the number of disciplinary occurrences, improve student behaviour, and improve the school climate in general. Ongoing support and substantial initial training are necessary to guarantee staff uniformity and long-term viability.

B. Restorative Practices: These concentrate on mending damage and rebuilding relationships by communication, negotiation, and cooperative problem-solving (Green et al. 2018). For restorative practices to be successful, a strong feeling of community and trust must be established. This gives students the chance to develop their

empathy and conflict resolution skills. The implementation of Restorative Practices in schools promotes connections, accountability, and a helpful learning environment. It can take a lot of time, and competent facilitators are needed to keep things running smoothly.

C. Behavioral Contracts and Individualized Behavior Plans: According to Gage et al. (2015), these entail establishing clear expectations for pupils' behaviour as well as describing the penalties and benefits connected to their actions. When faithfully carried out, individualised strategies can be quite beneficial for pupils who have ongoing behavioural problems. The cooperation and active participation of parents, instructors, and students are essential to success. Provides a clear framework for behaviour modification while customising interventions to meet the needs of each individual student. Regular monitoring and follow-up are necessary to guarantee progress and compliance. It can be difficult to provide each student the attention they need when there is a shortage of staff and a high student-to-teacher ratio. It can be challenging to get everyone to engage consistently, especially in places where parents might not be as involved.

D. Teacher Professional Development: These programs aim to equip educators with the skills and strategies necessary to manage classroom conduct in an efficient manner. It takes ongoing professional growth to keep up good behaviour management techniques. Peer support and collaborative learning can increase the

effectiveness of professional development initiatives. In line with this Mitchell, Hirn & Lewis (2017), stated that a more pleasant learning environment results from teacher professional development, which increases teachers' competence and confidence in managing behavioural challenges. Nevertheless, in order to keep teachers informed about best practices, they need constant training and assistance. Long-term professional development programs might be challenging to maintain because of financial limitations and conflicting objectives. The influence of professional development may be limited since there is frequently a disconnect between classroom instruction and real-world implementation.

E. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs: These emphasise helping pupils acquire social and emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills (Albrecht & Brunner, 2018). When properly implemented, SEL programs can result in notable gains in academic performance and student behaviour. Encouraging SEL as a whole-school initiative guarantees that every student gains from it. Additionally, it promotes academic performance, lessens emotional suffering, and improves student behaviour. However, SEL curriculum integration can be difficult and demands support from the whole school community. With a busy academic schedule, teachers might find it difficult to find time for SEL, which would decrease its effectiveness. Getting all of the personnel on board and making sure that the school adopts the same strategy might be challenging.

Conclusion

In summary, a comprehensive and integrated strategy is required to manage classroom behaviour and promote a positive school culture. To guarantee the success of behaviour management programs, school administrators must place a high priority on continuous training, teamwork, and data-driven decision-making. Through the implementation of the recommendations delineated in this paper, secondary schools in Nigeria can augment their ability to confront maladaptive behaviours, thus fostering a nurturing and favourable learning milieu for every pupil. Effective behaviour management is an ongoing process that calls for perseverance, creativity, and a dedication to the welfare of the whole school community. It is critical that principals continue to be watchful, flexible, and committed to establishing learning environments where each and every student can succeed.

Recommendations

Drawing from an examination of the constraints associated with current approaches to addressing disruptive classroom conduct in secondary schools in Nigeria, the ensuing suggestions are put up to augment the efficacy of those interventions:

More funding for behaviour management initiatives should come from the government and educational institutions. This covers the cost of providing training, recruiting more employees, and purchasing the required supplies and equipment.

Provide instructors with ongoing, hands-on professional development that focusses on behaviour control tactics and strategies.

Create and put into action plans to get parents more involved in efforts to control their children's behaviour.

To guarantee that behaviour management techniques are sincerely and consistently applied by all employees, establish explicit policies and procedures.

To handle unwanted behaviours in a thorough and all-encompassing manner, use a variety of behaviour management techniques.

Develop behaviour control plans that are relevant to the unique circumstances of secondary schools in Nigeria and sensitive to cultural differences.

Establish a welcoming school environment that encourages kids to behave well and to treat others with respect.

Make use of data to guide and inform actions and plans for behaviour management.

Maintain a close eye on the efficacy of behaviour management techniques to make sure the intended results are being achieved.

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