

EXTENT OF IDENTIFYING CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR IN PLATO'S TIME IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH-EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study was carried out to investigate Plato's concept of crime and punishment and its implications for secondary education in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design approach in which two research questions were posed and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 significant level. The population of the study consisted of 31,322 teachers currently teaching in 1,960 Secondary Schools in the five states of the South-East geo-political zone. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting three states used in the study while disproportionate stratified random sampling was used in selecting ten Secondary Schools as well as 563 teachers used for the study. A questionnaire of four-point scale was used as instrument for data collection. Mean was used in answering research questions while the t-test statistic was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. The result of the analysis revealed among other issues that truancy, fighting, bullying, examination malpractice, among others were criminal behaviours observed amongst Nigerian Secondary School Students. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that Plato's concept of crime and punishment should be integrated into Secondary School system by teachers, school administrators and curriculum planners.

Introduction

Human histories are always associated with complex state of criminality that is fraught with punishment. This is observable in Nigerian society and her Secondary School Students in particular. Crime is an act of commission or omission which is considered in itself or in its outcome to be harmful and which the state wishes to prevent (Curson, 1993). Or an intentional act of omission in violation of criminal law committed without defense or justification and sanctioned by the state as a felony or misdemeanour (Tappan, 1960). These definitions of crime suggest that crime is an act that contravenes the law. And more crucially, it renders the person who is responsible for it, to be liable to some kind of punishment following from the proceedings which are usually initiated on behalf of the state in court and which are designed to ascertain the nature, extent and legal consequences of the person's responsibility (Nwobodo 2008). Punishment is a kind of pain inflicted on evildoers for certain purposes. Punishment is the authoritative deprivations of food, operating on some wrong doers against his will in order to wipe out a fault committed (Higgins, 1949). This definition suggests that punishment will cause an offender to suffer for his or her offense by inflicting a penalty or by making him or her suffer either mental or physical pain.

Plato's conceptual view about crime and punishment is centred on the education of a

child. Plato regarded reformation as the primary essence of punishment for a crime committed and prevention as secondary and consequential. More so, Bruce and White (1981) emphasized that punishment relating to teaching and learning when applied should have significant effect on the enhancement of the child's learning. In Nigeria, news reports (Uwajere, 2007; & Dike, 2007) and commentaries on crime and criminal activities such as drug abuse, violent demonstration, assault on teachers, examination malpractices, rape, stealing, sexual abuse, sport-holiganism, bullying and general disobedience to school rules and regulations have become a recurrent headline in our print and electronic media as factors that bedeviled the Nigerian educational system. Although a great deal of research has been directed at exploring the problem of decline in the standard of Nigerian educational system on one hand and investigating the causes and consequences of deviant behaviours among students in schools on the other hand (Okechukwu, 1989; Emeka, 1990; Denga, 1991, & Aroh, 1997), it seems as if no one has made any significant effort to discover and articulate for the benefit of contemporary society how the grand masters of educational and philosophical thoughts handled the problem of crime and punishment. One of the greatest of these grand masters of education and philosophical thought is the philosopher called Plato. For Plato, punishment is another remedy for crime committed. Thus, he maintains that punishment should be inflicted on the offender but that punishment should neither be severe nor minimal otherwise it turns counterproductive. Plato believed that a well intentioned punishment is necessary so as to enable the child to select an alternative that is rewarding. The child or student should understand clearly what he or she is being punished for (Plato in Rusk, 1969). Recently, the ban on the use of punishment to correct criminal acts of students by the Nigerian government and the Federal Ministry of Education (2004) edict, which allowed the use of punishment by only the school headmasters and principals or any other teacher authorized to apply punishment in the course of teaching has watered down the effectiveness of punishment in schools. This edict made teachers not to have courage any longer to punish any student for misdeed for fear of being abused or queried. Consequent upon that, there is increase in students' indiscipline such as truancy, lateness to school, laxity, irresponsibility to duties, lack of motivation, loitering, bullying, fighting, dishonesty, among other forms of scandalous behaviour and non-observance of school rules and regulations. Moreover, the increase in students' indiscipline in schools could be linked to inappropriateness in the application of punishment in school system.

Administering punishment in schools as preventive and reformatory measures will minimize the rate of crime among students and enable them learn effectively in schools. Onu (1985) while trying to define the actions of teachers towards punishment of students on the crime they committed said that it frightens him to hear that some parents go to court because his or her child is flogged or engaged in one punishment or the other for his or her involvement in some bad act. But regrettably, they (parents) in their own homes engage their children or wards to a more stressful punishment. Okeke (1985) believed that some teachers use or apply punishment for the purpose of class control and maintenance of attention span. However, many psychologists and educationists such as Skinnah (1953) and Travers (1977) have pointed out that the use of punishment as corrective measure of criminal acts of students has adverse effects. The use of punishment in reduction of crime rate among students in secondary school system appears to be controversial and therefore need further enquiries to clarify the controversy. Based on the

foregoing, the problem of this study therefore is the implications of Plato's concept of crime and punishment for Secondary education in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The major factor that has been associated with the steady decline in the quality of Nigerian educational system is that the system had in recent decades been fraught with the wide range of crime and criminal activities among Secondary School students. Those who commit crime and violate the school rules and regulations will be punished. A great deal of research has gone into exploring the problem of decline in the standard of the Nigerian educational system on one hand and investigating the causes and consequences of deviant behaviours among students in schools on the other hand. (Okechukwu, 1989; Emeka, 1990; Denga, 1991; Aso, 1991; & Aroh, 1997), it seems that no research effort was made to discover and articulate for the benefit of contemporary society how the grand masters of educational and philosophical thoughts handled the problem of crime and punishment. One of such grand masters of education and philosophical thoughts is the philosopher called Plato who believed that a well intentioned punishment is necessary as reformative measure that can enable the child to select an alternative that is rewarding. Ideally, Plato has different conceptual views about the applicability of punishment to crime committed in school system. To what extent would Plato's concepts of crime and punishment have implication for secondary education in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study is to examine Plato's concepts of crime and punishment with ultimate intention of highlighting their implications for secondary education in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the extent to which criminal behaviours in Plato's time could still be identified in Nigerian Secondary Schools of today.
2. Identify the perception of the respondents on the impact of punishment in Schools.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to Plato's thoughts with regard to crime and punishment in order to ascertain the extent to which the wisdom can be applied in solving related contemporary problems affecting the education of Nigerian citizen and to highlight the measures which Plato applied in addressing crime. More so, the study was focused on the perception of the respondents on the impact of punishment in our Schools. The study was limited to secondary school teachers in south-east geo-political zone.

Research Questions

The research attempted to provide answers to the following questions;

1. To what extent can criminal behaviour in Plato's time be identified in Nigerian Secondary Schools of today?
2. What are the perceptions of the respondents on the impact of punishment in our Schools?

Research Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following formulated null hypotheses, which were tested at 0.05 significant level.

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean rating score of male and female teachers with regard to disciplinary behaviours in Plato's time which could be observed in Nigerian Secondary Schools of today.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of male and female teachers on the impact of punishment in Nigerian Secondary Schools.

Methodology

Research Design

The survey research design was adopted for data collection based on modified instruments developed by Aroh (1997) and Ofordile (2002). Specifically, the design is descriptive survey. Descriptive survey research design are those studies which aim at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 1991). The design is suitable for this study because the study was aimed at identifying and describing the criminal behaviours among secondary school students.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

The target population for the study consisted of the entire 31,322 teachers currently teaching in 1,960 Secondary Schools in the five states of the south-east geo-political zone. A sample of 563 teachers were randomly drawn and used for the study. The sample was drawn through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Probability proportionate sample size method was adopted to select 2.5% of the population (Nwana, 1980). The sampling of teachers was done according to gender using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The 24% of the sample subjects were males while 76% were females. Hence, in Imo State, 48 males and 152 female teachers were randomly sampled; 43 males and 138 females were randomly sampled in Enugu State while 44 males and 134 female teachers were randomly sampled in Anambra State. This yielded 135 male teachers and 428 female teachers used for the study.

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher developed a questionnaire instrument which was used. The instrument consisted of 41 items and took the form of a four-point rating scale. The instrument was divided into five sections. The instrument was validated using four teachers of philosophy and three experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability was established using Cronbach Coefficient alpha procedure, yielding a coefficient of 0.76.

The administration of the instrument to the sampled subjects was carried out by 15 trained research assistants who administered the questionnaires to the respondents directly by hand. The administration of the instrument provided data for analysis. The analysis of the data was done using mean and t-test statistic. The bench-mark for any item to have plausible relevance to the purpose of the study is that the item should attract a mean score of 2.5 or more.

Results

Research question one and hypotheses one were answered using tables 1 and 2 respectively below.

Table 1: Mean Responses of the Respondents on the Extent to which Criminal Behaviours in Plato's time could be identified in Nigerian Secondary Schools.

S/N	Item Description	Male X_1	Female X_2	Total X_3	Decision
1	Truancy from school	3.15	3.18	3.165	GE
2	Assault and battery	3.36	3.55	3.455	GE
3	Sale of school goods	3.50	3.71	3.605	VGE
4	Theft	3.85	3.33	3.59	VGE
5	Indecent dressing and speech	2.98	3.98	3.48	GE
6	Examination malpractice	3.62	2.45	3.035	GE
7	Bribery	3.02	1.87	2.445	LE
8	Performance of unauthorized comic works	3.15	3.12	3.135	GE
9	Money gambling	3.75	3.18	3.465	GE
10	Pursuit of unsuitable occupation	3.11	3.71	3.41	GE
11	Murder	3.55	3.45	3.50	VGE
12	Manslaughter	3.28	3.33	3.305	GE
13	Suicide	2.95	3.00	2.975	GE
14	Receiving stolen goods	3.52	3.55	3.535	VGE
15	Sexual immorality	3.35	3.75	3.50	VGE
16	Fighting	3.00	3.66	3.33	GE
17	Bullying	3.28	3.30	3.29	GE
18	Drug abuse	3.30	3.98	3.64	VGE
	TOTAL	3.33	3.15	3.24	GE

Table 1 revealed that the respondents have rated the items on the extent criminal behaviours in Plato's time could be identified in Nigeria Secondary Schools, above the stipulated mean criterion of 2.5 except item 7 which has mean of 2.445, which is below the agreed criterion of 2.5. The result shows that all the items are criminal behaviours to a very great extent or great extent except item 7 which represents bribery as observed in Nigerian Secondary Schools.

Table 2: Comparison in the mean rating scores of male and female teachers with regard to disciplinary behaviours in Plato's time which can be observed in Nigeria Secondary Schools.

RESP.	N	X_1	SD	df	t-Value Calc.	t- critical	Decision
Male X_1	120	3.33	2.31	498			Accept
Female X_2	380	3.15	2.46	498	0.85	1.96	

Table 2 revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers with regard to disciplinary behaviours in Plato's time

which can be observed in Nigeria Secondary Schools of today. Research question two and hypotheses two were answered using tables 3 and 4 respectively, below.

Table 3: The mean responses of the respondents on the impact of punishment in schools.

Item no.	Item Description	Male X_1	Female X_2	Total	Decision
19	Punishment develops the mind to all kinds of ideas paving way for a proper attitude making one to be scientific and creative.	3.18	3.25	3.215	A
20	Punishment that is moderate helps to control classroom activities	3.55	3.75	3.65	SA
21	Severe punishment disrupts classroom environment	3.71	3.51	3.61	SA
22	The use of force as a way of soliciting students compliance always meet violent protest from students	3.33	3.28	3.305	A
23	Punishment as applied today by teachers does not enhance academic achievement of the students	3.98	3.30	3.64	SA
24	School administrators administer punishment in a way that reforms the students criminal behaviour	2.45	3.55	3.00	A
25	The use of intensive lessons in schools by teachers and school administrators makes the students to behave well	1.87	3.00	2.435	D
26	Punishment applied with counselling service would reduce crime among students in the Nigerian schools	3.12	2.95	3.035	A
	TOTAL	3.15	2.88	3.015	A

Table 3 revealed that item 20 was rated highest among the items in the table. Item 20 was rated 3.65 and it indicated that punishment that is applied moderately helps to control classroom activities than otherwise. However, item 25 which recorded a total mean score of 2.435 falls below the bench mark of 2.5 and so does not possess plausible purpose of the study. Items 19 21 to 24 and item 26 each had a mean score far more than the bench mark of 2.5 and so indicated that the mean responses of the respondents on the impact of punishment in school are high. This shows that punishment has positive impact on the child's learning.

Table 4: Comparison between the mean perception of Male and Female Teachers_on impact of Punishment in our Schools.

RESP.	N	X_1	SD	df	T-Value Calculated	T-critical	Decision
Male (X_1)	120	3.15	2.46	498			
Female (X_2)	380	2.88	22.34	498	1.2574	1.96	H_0 not rejected.

From table 4, the calculated t-value is less than t-critical value. The hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the responses of male and female teachers on the perception of impact of punishment in Secondary Schools of south-east geo-political zone.

Major Findings

- i. The extent to which criminal behaviours in Plato's time could be identified in Nigerian secondary schools was found to be of great extent and very great extent.
- ii. The subjects strongly agreed that moderately applied punishment in secondary school system has positive impact on the students.
- iii. The study showed no significant difference between the responses of male and female teachers on the perception of impact of punishment in secondary schools.

Discussion of Result

From the findings, it is clear that truancy, assault and battery, sale of school goods, theft, indecent dressing and speech (as in provocative speech), meddling in education (as in examination malpractice by students, sale and exposition of examination papers by staff etc.), bribery and corruption, performance of unauthorized comic work, destruction of school property, assault on teachers, sexual immorality, fighting, bullying and drug abuse, money gambling, murder, manslaughter, suicide, receiving stolen goods are all conventional crime observed amongst Nigerian students in the educational institutions. This finding is consistent with the earlier postulates of Omoregbe (1993) who noted that students of developing countries are susceptible to some social vices like truancy, assault on superiors, exam malpractice, violent attacks, drug abuse and the likes. In support of the above finding, Garforth (1971) remarked that at the time of Plato, he was unhappy and disappointed so much about the violence and the killings that characterized the Athenian political life, which led to the execution of Socrates and other problems.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that a well applied punishment geared towards Plato's ideology has positive impact in Nigeria Secondary School learning. The findings indicated also that punishment as applied today by many teachers does not enhance academic achievement of the students but rather hinder learning, leads to insubordination and indiscipline among students. The findings suggest that severe punishment tends to fix the behaviour rather than eliminate it. For instance, Gibson (1976) in support of the finding reported that harsh punishment is

undesirable as it can provoke physical attack on the person of the teacher. Again, this finding supports Nwachukwu and Anyanwu (1999) who investigated students behaviour and punishment reported that kneeling the students down, canning and grass cutting for offences committed were not only used as punishment but were also perceived as serving the interest of the individual, the school and the society.

The issue of criminal behaviour among Secondary School Students and the punishment to accompany it should follow the postulates of Plato about crime and punishment. The issue appears to be inconclusive and need further enquiry to clarify the notion.

Conclusion

The following conclusions are made on the findings of the study. The findings provided empirical evidence that truancy, assault and battery, bullying, fighting among other social vices are all conventional crimes observed among Nigerian Students in the educational system. More so, the findings provided empirical evidence that punishment applied moderately helps to control classroom activities, assault on teachers, fighting, bullying, drug abuse, murder, among other social vices amongst Nigerian Students in the Secondary School education industry.

Recommendations

Recommendations are made based on the findings as follows:

1. Plato's concept of crime and punishment should be integrated into Secondary School system by teachers, educational administrators and curriculum designers so that with well applied punishment, it helps in the moulding of a child's character as well as giving of the right type of education.
2. Workshops, seminars and conferences should be organized often for Secondary School teachers by professional bodies like Nigerian Union of Teachers and Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria and government so as to create awareness to teachers to take cognizance of the moderate application of punishment to crime committed by students.

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