

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS IN MAINLAND PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA: NEED FOR COUNSELLING SERVICES

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Abstract: This study examined inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools across Mainland Area of Lagos State, Nigeria using a survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the pupils in both public and primary schools in Mainland Area of Lagos State. Through random sampling from randomly selected schools in Lagos Mainland, 53 male and 95 female respondents were respectively selected for the study. An Instrument called Childhood Misbehaviour Inventory was constructed and validated to obtain the data used for the study. Research questions were answered using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics. It was found that inappropriate behaviours in mainland schools among pupils are bullying, lateness, not paying attention in the class, hatred for teachers, noise making, truancy, walking out of the class during lesson without permission, and sleeping in class. The study also revealed that these inappropriate behaviours in primary schools are as a result of lateness to class by teachers, child abuse, and poor parenting styles, peer influence, sibling rivalry, poverty, unconducive environment and poor parental care among others. The study recommends that counselling should be introduced and made compulsory for all primary schools in Lagos Mainland as a panacea to incessant cases of inappropriate behaviours among the pupils in primary schools so as to catch them young to exhibit appropriate behaviours.

Keywords: *inappropriate behaviours; students; public schools; private schools; counselling services.*

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the public and private primary schools are the institutional bodies responsible for the training of young ones within the age bracket of 6 and 12 years. This age is a critical period of human development that runs into pre-adolescent stage when a lot of developmental changes take place (Oparaduru, 2021). Children of course acquire almost all their life long experiences at this stage with related developmental and attention seeking challenges which need to be handled carefully to avoid destroying them in the course of building them. Oparaduru (2021) opined that, school is the hallmark of progress for effecting change and growth. Therefore, anything that could hinder the expected goals of its establishment should not be encouraged. Pertinently, it is on the basis of this, that government is making education a top most

priority to ensuring that every person's goal is achieved.

Inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools, a major concern in Mainland Area of Lagos State, Nigeria, refer to behaviours that are not acceptable in society especially in institutions where learning takes place. This is because behaviours can easily be modified in schools if a very comfortable environment is provided. In a situation where inappropriate behaviours in schools at very tender age are at an alarming rate and little or nothing is done about them to ensure that they are curbed, raises a very big question and concern to the entire populace. Obi *et al.* (2022) opined that some of the problems encountered in Nigerian school system include inappropriate behaviours like truancy, deviancy, delinquency, aggression, and loitering in the streets within the hours that children

John O. Oparaduru & Augustine C. Ukwueze

Inappropriate behaviours in mainland public and private primary schools of Lagos state, Nigeria: Need for counselling services

ought to be in school studying. Others are truancy, vandalism, gang-fighting, stealing, and lying as common forms of inappropriate behaviours among teenagers. Ibuchin in Oparaduru (2021) identified a number of deviant behaviours that are prevalent in our schools irrespective of their level such as; examination malpractice, truancy, bullying, lateness to school, stealing, drug abuse, cultism, sex offences and absenteeism. Otubo and Okanume-Onah (2022) listed stealing, truancy, disobedience, insubordination, lying, fighting, cheating, lateness, rudeness, destructiveness, sex offences, cruelty, smoking and drinking of alcohol as common behaviour problems among boys and girls in schools.

Several experts believe that the above forms of inappropriate behaviours are consequences of varying factors. For example, Oparaduru (2021) listed some of the causes of deviant/inappropriate behaviours such as family background, mass media, peer group, and societal factors. Obikoya and Bright (2022) outlined such factors of inappropriate behaviours as culture, school and religion. For Lawan and Hassan (2022), moods of teachers, system of the rule employed by the school and quality of teaching skills are factors that impinge upon pupils' behaviour. Thus, inappropriate behaviours among primary school pupils is a manifestation of lateness of teachers to school or class, poor communication skills, poor teaching, child abuse at home, overindulgence, parenting style of being tough, parents not being interested in the education of their children, parents condoning whatever their children are doing, lack of discipline in the house, lack of behavioural control, and keeping bad friends. It is well known that inappropriate behaviours increase with age and gets to the peak during adolescence (Moffitt) in Omoegun *et al.* (2019). Biological changes (hormonal changes and neurological development) could account for this in addition to the influence of social environmental factors like the growing importance of peers, widening gap between pupils' personal lives and interests, school environment, social factors (poverty and neglect), and inappropriate parent-child interactions relate to behaviour problems in children (Omoegun *et al.*, 2019). In the opinion of Susan (2018), inappropriate behaviours in a child stem from a variety of environmental, emotional and biological issues in a child's life. Teens with learning and attention issues

may be more likely to engage in risky behaviours like alcohol and drug abuse or sexual offences. Some suggestions that may make teens less likely to be involved in inappropriate behaviours include making rules and sticking to them, allowing the teen to make decisions, providing structure and routine for them, getting to know the child's friends, helping the child to find a mentor, and allowing the child to realize that you care about him/her (Oparaduru, 2017).

In a study, Oparaduru (2017) used cognitive restructuring and self-control techniques to foster adaptive behaviour, among students in Imo State, Nigeria. He, therefore, recommended both cognitive restructuring and self-control as viable therapies in handling students who manifest maladaptive behaviours but concludes that self-control therapy was more efficacious. On the other hand, the use of restorative discipline as an alternative to corporal punishments in Nigerian schools which involves providing appropriate consequences that encourage accountability for students' misbehaviours through collaborative exercises between pupils and teachers.

However, inappropriate behaviours are endemic problem in Nigeria which has become resistant to solutions proffered over the years as observed. Several efforts have been made by various governments in handling issues relating to maladaptive behaviours in Nigeria especially among school children. For example, the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of 1984 which went through several changes and brought the present National Orientation Agency (NOA) in Nigeria was the effort put in place by the federal government to fight indiscipline and other inappropriate behaviours in broader perspectives but to no avail. Unfortunately, instead of having positive results, the reverse seems to be the case (Oparaduru, 2017). A typical Nigerian child is swimming in the ocean of negative values and misbehaviours like indiscipline, secret cult, examination malpractices, bribery and corruption, greed and laziness/idleness among others. Due to modern technology, peculiar problems that are quite unexpected from adolescents rear their heads to the amazement of the school authority. For instance, when two secondary schools fight during sporting activities, sports hooliganism or other forms of unhealthy rivalry may occur. It is often amazing to see the type of armaments that such schools possess. Some carry sharp knives, daggers and pen-knives hidden under

their uniforms. These days, inter school fights usually found in secondary schools have also spread to primary schools.

This worrisome situation deserves attention from the cradle of our educational system, the primary school level to discover and checkmate all forms and causes of inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools across Mainland Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. It is quite imperative to state that the problems associated with the changes in children at primary school age cannot be over emphasized and left unattended. However, there seems to be a hand full of literature in this regard as most people (Oparaduru, 2017; Makinde and Oparaduru, 2018; Omoegun, Okoli and Oparaduru, 2019; Oparaduru, 2021) focused more on people in post-primary institutions. This gap, therefore, brings this study to fore with the view to investigate the inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools across Mainland Area of Lagos State, Nigeria and the need for counselling services to be employed to remedy some of these inappropriate behaviours in primary schools. This is premised on the fact that the rate at which Nigerian children are exposed, indoctrinated and manifest obvious activities at a very tender age is massively alarming. It is reasoned that these inappropriate behaviours at tender age are the sources of the escalating cases of terrorism and banditry in Nigeria today.

The following research questions were raised to guide the study. (1) What are the forms of inappropriate behaviours in Public and Private primary schools? (2) What are the causes of inappropriate behaviours in Public and Private primary schools? (3) What are the possible solutions to the challenges of inappropriate behaviours in Public and Private primary schools?

The following null research hypotheses were also raised to further guide the study. (1) There is no significant difference in the forms of inappropriate behaviours in public and primary schools. (2) There is no significant difference in the causes of inappropriate behaviours in public and private schools. (3) There is no significant difference between the solutions of the inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools.

METHOD

The study employed the survey research design to sample the opinions of the respondents on the forms, causes and possible solutions of inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools across Mainland Area of Lagos State, Nigeria with five public and five private primary schools randomly selected. Lagos Mainland here is limited to Lagos Island Local Government Area of Lagos State. Out of the total population of 2,081 primary school teachers and parents in Lagos Mainland, 77 parents were randomly selected from public primary schools whereas 71 parents were selected randomly from private primary schools through their children and wards from the ten pilot schools for the study. In all, a total of 148 subjects were used for the study.

The instrument used for the study is called Childhood Misbehaviour Inventory (CMI). The CMI was constructed, validated and administered to the respondents. Originally, the instrument had sixty items that were scaled down to forty-nine by an expert each in Measurement and Evaluation and Guidance and Counselling respectively after rigorous validation of each statement. The section A of the instrument sought for information on the biodata of the respondents whereas sections B and C sought for the respondents' perceptions on inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools respectively with four response categories as Most Often, Often, Rarely and Not at all, which were assigned 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Section C has in the same way, four response categories as Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree that were assigned 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively too. Final copies of the instrument were administered to twenty teachers of Cubic Royal Nursery and Primary School, Lagos State who were not part of the study on two different occasions after an interval of two weeks. The scores were subjected to Cronbach Alpha Analysis and a value of 0.87 was obtained to attest to the reliability of the instrument.

Copies of the instrument, Childhood Misbehaviour Inventory (CMI) were given to the sampled population in each school to fill and return through research assistants. Some randomly selected pupils were also given the instruments to give to their parents to fill and return to the research assistants that distributed the questionnaire in each school. Out of 110 given to public primary schools, 77 of them were properly filled and used whereas

John O. Oparaduru & Augustine C. Ukwueze

Inappropriate behaviours in mainland public and private primary schools of Lagos state, Nigeria: Need for counselling services

71 copies out of 98 copies sent to private primary schools were also properly filled, returned and used for the study. In all, 148 copies of the instrument provided the information on the data needed and used for the study.

The statistics used for the study is Descriptive Statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer the research questions where a value of less than 2.5 means rejection and a value of 2.5 and above means

acceptance of the item as a form or relative cause of inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools. Similarly, the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using inferential statistics (t-test).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study after detailed analysis are as presented in tables 1 to 5.

Table 1. Responses of public and private schools on forms of inappropriate behaviours

S/No.	Items	Respondents				Decision
		Public School		Private School		
		Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	
1	Violent disruption of classes.	1.86	0.87	1.72	1.14	Rejected
2	Bullying of younger and weaker ones.	2.45	0.78	2.17	0.92	Rejected
3	Stealing of other pupils` property.	2.91	1.24	2.50	0.99	Accepted
4	Destruction of school property.	2.30	0.86	2.09	0.90	Rejected
5	Stealing of school property.	1.57	0.58	2.18	0.94	Rejected
6	Refusal to follow instructions.	2.29	0.79	2.35	1.08	Rejected
7	Loitering in "prohibited" areas.	2.04	0.95	2.27	1.13	Rejected
8	violent disruption of classes.	2.48	0.65	2.00	1.13	Rejected
9	Withdrawal from interaction with others.	2.22	1.61	1.73	0.62	Rejected
10	Eating in the class.	2.91	0.90	2.56	0.85	Accepted
11	Chewing in the class.	2.52	0.97	2.50	0.99	Accepted
12	Talking out of turn.	2.78	0.95	2.64	0.98	Accepted
13	Making unnecessary noise.	3.00	1.13	2.87	1.03	Accepted
14	Immoral advances towards the opposite sex.	1.65	0.76	1.91	1.16	Rejected
15	Participation in examination malpractices.	1.96	0.95	2.45	1.23	Rejected
16	Cheating in classwork.	2.96	1.12	2.64	1.15	Accepted
17	Insulting teachers.	1.61	1.17	1.82	1.11	Rejected
18	Writing dirty things on walls.	2.73	1.29	2.59	1.47	Accepted
19	Fighting.	3.09	1.00	2.52	0.83	Accepted
20	Pitching mates during class.	2.73	1.29	2.59	1.47	Accepted
21	Truancy.	2.22	0.93	2.45	1.08	Rejected
22	Telling lies.	3.09	0.96	2.61	0.87	Accepted
23	Dodging classwork.	2.30	0.76	2.18	1.19	Rejected
24	Running in the corridor.	3.06	0.90	2.61	0.92	Accepted

The data in Table 1 indicate that pupils in primary schools engage in stealing of other pupils` property, eating in class, chewing in the class, talking out of turn, making unnecessary noise, cheating in class work, writing dirty things on walls, fighting, pitching mates during classes,

telling lies, and running in the corridor. It is also observed from the table that the forms of inappropriate behaviours in public primary schools are replicated in private primary schools with insignificant variations.

Table 2. Responses on causes of inappropriate behaviours from public and private primary schools

S/No.	Items	Respondents				Decision
		Public school		Private school		
		Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	
1	Lateness of teachers to class.	2.35	1.00	1.91	0.90	Rejected
2	Poor teaching.	2.30	0.98	2.27	1.14	Rejected
3	Child abuse at home.	3.17	0.87	2.91	1.24	Accepted
4	Autocratic style of parenting.	3.78	0.96	2.55	1.08	Accepted

5	Permissive style of parenting.	3.04	0.81	2.64	1.07	Accepted
6	Democratic style of parenting.	2.61	0.97	2.45	1.08	Accepted
7	Poor school administration.	2.70	1.20	2.56	1.07	Accepted
8	Overindulgence by parents.	2.96	0.69	2.45	1.08	Accepted
9	Disorganized or broken home.	3.52	0.58	3.09	0.90	Accepted
10	Use of corporal punishment.	2.30	0.91	2.45	0.89	Rejected
11	Disallowing caning.	2.83	0.87	2.50	0.78	Accepted
12	Influence of peers.	3.30	0.91	3.00	0.85	Accepted
13	Sibling rivalry at home.	3.00	0.78	2.82	0.83	Accepted
14	Poverty at home.	2.78	0.98	2.55	0.99	Accepted
15	Bad environment.	3.74	1.65	2.73	0.96	Accepted
16	Influence of films and movies.	3.65	0.48	3.00	0.85	Accepted
17	Lack of teachers` support.	2.70	0.86	2.91	0.79	Accepted
18	Presence of over aged pupils.	2.07	0.75	2.09	0.74	Rejected
19	Poor parental education.	2.83	0.87	2.56	0.88	Accepted
20	High living standard/affluence.	2.74	0.74	2.55	1.30	Accepted
21	No counselling in the school.	3.09	1.72	2.67	0.86	Accepted
22	Poor parental care.	3.17	0.76	2.82	0.72	Accepted
23	Corruption in the society.	3.26	0.90	2.77	0.86	Accepted
24	Inheritance from parents.	2.70	0.75	2.66	1.34	Accepted
25	Poor Classroom management.	2.35	1.00	2.27	1.05	Rejected

The data in Table 2 show that inappropriate behaviours in both public and private primary schools are caused by child abuse at home, autocratic style of parenting, permissive style of parenting, democratic style of parenting, poor school administration, overindulgence by parents, disorganized or broken home; disallowing caning; influence of peers; sibling rivalry at home; bad

environment, influence of films and movies, lack of teachers` support, lack of counselling in primary schools, corruption in the society, and inheritance from parents. Responses from the respondents are in support of the above claims as the main causes of inappropriate behaviours among pupils in public and private primary schools.

Table 3. *Possible solutions to inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools*

S/N	Items	Mean	Std	Decision
1	Plan ahead	3.31	.772	Accepted
2	Mentoring	3.07	.710	Accepted
3	Get to know them	3.09	.713	Accepted
4	Show appropriate level of dominance	3.18	.783	Accepted
5	Exhibit a good level of cooperation	3.22	.727	Accepted
6	Give clear instructions	3.28	.727	Accepted
7	Show love and care	3.24	.794	Accepted
8	Consistency	3.28	.756	Accepted
9	Keep the pupils busy	3.14	.744	Accepted
10	Reward good behaviour	3.08	.733	Accepted
11	Counselling	3.18	.747	Accepted
12	Physical punishment	2.57	1.04	Accepted

The data in Table 3 show the possible solutions to the inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools. From the above table, it could be observed that possible solutions to inappropriate behaviours include planning ahead, mentoring, getting to know them, showing appropriate level of

dominance, exhibiting a good level of cooperation, giving clear instructions, showing love and care, consistency, keeping the pupils busy, rewarding good behaviour, counselling, and giving appropriate and commensurate physical punishment where need be.

Table 4. *The t-test result on the forms of inappropriate behaviours in primary schools*

Respondents	Number	Mean	Std	df	Sig.	Decision
Public	77	31.13	4.66	146	0.71	Significant
Private	71	30.86	4.22			

John O. Oparaduru & Augustine C. Ukwueze

Inappropriate behaviours in mainland public and private primary schools of Lagos state, Nigeria: Need for counselling services

The information in Table 4 shows the degree of freedom (146) with significance level (0.71). By this result, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the forms of inappropriate behaviours in public and private schools is hereby rejected. It is

an indication that a significant level of differences exists in the forms of inappropriate behaviours that are exhibited in public and private primary schools in Nigeria.

Table 5. *The t-test result on the causes of inappropriate behaviours in public and private schools*

Respondents	Number	Mean	Std	df	Sig.	Decision
Public	77	37.44	4.26	146	-.571	Not significant
Private	71	37.89	5.21			

The data in Table 5 indicate that the Degree of freedom (146) of (-.571) significance level is less than 0.05 per cent level of significance. From this result, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the causes of inappropriate behaviours among public school pupils and Private school pupils is hereby accepted. This implies that the causes of inappropriate behaviours could be seen from the same perspective both public and private primary schools in Nigeria.

peer influence, sibling rivalry at home, poverty, bad environment, influence of films and movies, high living standards/affluence, and poor parental care (Table 2). Without mincing words, it was autocratic parental styles, poor school administration, overindulgence by parents, disallowing caning, lack of teacher`s support, poor parental education, lack of counselling in primary schools, and inheritance from parents that are responsible for inappropriate behaviours in primary schools (both public and private). This revelation is in agreement with the findings of Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020) which stressed the above variables as serious precursors of children`s inappropriate behaviours in primary schools.

Discussion

It is quite imperative to state here that inappropriate behaviours are fundamental issues in human society. The prevalence of maladaptive behaviours among young children these days get stronger as they grow into adulthood. This study discovered that at the primary school level, children do not get involved in violent disruption of classes, stealing of school property, loitering in ‘prohibited’ areas, immoral advances to the opposite sex pupils. This assertion is in supported of the work of Oparaduru (2017) which opined that maladaptive behaviours exist among secondary school students. This could be attributed to the unchecked inappropriate behaviours in primary schools which will also manifest in secondary schools.

In addition to the above, it was found that despite some marginal variations, there is a significant difference in the forms of inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools (Table 3) and no significant difference in the causes of inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools (Table 4). There are possible solutions to the challenges of inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools. This could be achieved through concerted efforts to ensure that there is avoidance of child abuse, parents should discourage both autocratic and permissive styles of parenting, encouragement of good and favourable school administration, introduction of caning in schools, stable homes in families; healthy peer-grouping, good environment free from all forms of corruption, good parental care, and provision of counselling services in primary schools. It is quite clear that this consensus position about the forms, causes and possible solutions to inappropriate behaviours in public and private primary schools in line with the position of Oparaduru (2017) which revealed that which maladaptive behaviours exist among young people.

The study also revealed that primary school pupils engage in talking out of turns; making unnecessary noise in the class, cheating in class work; fighting, telling lies, and running along the corridors. This revelation is in consonant with the position of Oparaduru (2017) which in addition to the above maladaptive behaviours, include others like disobedience, lateness, rudeness and cruelty as children grow older.

Furthermore, this study revealed that inappropriate behaviours in both public and private primary schools are caused by child abuse at home, permissive style of parenting, broken homes, poor

Need for counselling services

Counselling is a “helping” relationship. It is the process of assisting individuals to cope with life situations (Sakiz & Saricali, 2019). It is a relationship of trust whereby the counsellor who is regarded as a specialist assists an individual to evaluate himself and his opportunities, make a feasible choice in the light of unique characteristics and opportunities, accept responsibility for his choice and initiate a course of action that is in line with his choice (Obikoya & Bright, 2022). At the primary school level, counselling focuses on identifying developmental needs of pupils; and identifying and modifying maladaptive behaviours among them. Counselling provides opportunities for socialization skills, counselling of parents and teachers, prevention of inappropriate behaviours, and appropriate ways of managing adjustment challenges through individual and group counselling techniques; role playing and modelling.

Hence, the findings of this study identified several counselling needs of primary school children. Most children in Nigerian primary schools are prone to several forms of maladaptive behaviours that are caused by several factors. Counsellors, therefore, should see this as a pressing responsibility and a call to professional task to save these tender children from being destroyed. This could be through referral services, interaction with parents and teachers during school “Open Day” school programme, orientation, and helping pupils to imbibe the acceptable attitudes, norms, values and acceptable behaviours necessary for adjustable growth and developments in society. This is necessary because primary school children are easily deceived through learning of any behaviours that they may come across since many of them are in their formative stage at this level. Hence, counselling becomes paramount and very proactive in order to prevent them from being engrossed with behaviours that are maladaptive in nature. With the cooperation of the school heads, teachers and parents, the possibility of getting this achieved will be quite feasible.

CONCLUSION

Inappropriate behaviours are as old as man and have eaten deep into the fabrics of the larger society. This study revealed various forms of inappropriate behaviours in primary schools. Some of the well pronounced ones include talking out of

turns, making unnecessary noise in the class, cheating in class work, fighting, telling lies, and running in corridors. These inappropriate behaviours are mainly caused by child abuse at home, permissive style of parenting, broken homes, poor peer influence, sibling rivalry at home, poverty, bad environment, influence of films and movies, high living standards/affluence, and poor parental care. Without mincing words, others include autocratic parental styles, poor school administration, overindulgence by parents, disallowing caning, lack of teacher’s support, poor parental education, lack of counselling in primary schools, and inheritance from parents.

Having identified some of these forms of inappropriate behaviours and their causes in public and private schools, it becomes imperative to state that one of the possible solutions is the provision of counselling services in primary schools with professionally trained counsellors. Their services will proactively mitigate the already existing negative situations in their behavioural life styles. In furtherance to this, the following are the recommendations of this study: (1) Guidance and counselling services should be provided in both public and private primary schools as proactive and reactionary measures towards inappropriate behaviours in primary schools. (2) There should be regular orientation and enlightenment programmes in primary schools for parents, teachers and care givers to sensitize them on the benefits of guidance and counselling services. (3) Practicing teachers in primary schools should be encouraged to take up programmes in counselling, which will make them to serve as teachers and mentors to the pupils due to the scarcity of professional counsellors in Nigeria. (4) Government should provide cost waiver or scholarship awards for those going into guidance and counselling programme in various institutions of higher learning in order to get many people trained and readily available to handle issues associated with inappropriate behaviours in primary schools.

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John O. Oparaduru & Augustine C. Ukwueze

Inappropriate behaviours in mainland public and private primary schools of Lagos state, Nigeria: Need for counselling services

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