

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INDISCIPLINE AT THREE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

IN ONE EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT

IN CENTRAL TRINIDAD

by

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Abstract

Students' perceptions of indiscipline at three primary schools in one educational district in central Trinidad

The study attempted to explore students' perception of indiscipline in three primary schools in one educational district in Trinidad. It was a qualitative study which involved purposeful sampling and the use of group interviews as the sole instrument of data collection. The findings reported on one of the research questions which revealed the following as major factors responsible for the level of indiscipline.

1. Teaching strategies and teacher attitude.
2. Media – including television, radio, internet and video games.
3. The home environment.
4. Anger issues
5. Peer pressure.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to all of my colleagues in education who often express concern over the growing level of indiscipline in schools, and who will never give up in their quest for finding effective solutions.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Background to the Problem

The issue of indiscipline has plagued the school system for many years. Sugai (2009) claims that over the past twenty-five years, the Phi Delta Kappa Gallup polls have consistently reported disruptive behavior and discipline problems as some of the top concerns of school staff and community members. This poll is usually done in 140 countries around the world. Stabbings, killings, weapons, assaults, fearful teachers and parents and a public in panic (in many areas) are features of life in many school communities (Thompson 2009).

Numerous researchers have described and defined this phenomenon of indiscipline in various ways as they have studied the causes and suggested possible methods to reduce indiscipline in schools. Indeed, a wide range of articles on the factors which contribute to indiscipline and the strategies which have attained a certain degree of success is readily available. Many of these go into detail as to how these measures are to be implemented. Freiberg, Huzinec & Templeton (2009) agree that the need for order in schools and its implication for student learning have consistently been documented in the research literature. They add that within the classroom and school context student behaviours that disrupt the learning environment have a rippling effect.

In the United States, as reported by Larson (2008), the National Center for Educational Statistics revealed that in 2006 thirty-six percent (36%) of the students in grades 9-12 reported that they had been in a physical fight within the last year. The report adds that 4 percent of inner-city teachers and 3 percent of suburban and rural school teachers were physically attacked by students. According to Kuntz (2000), day after day primary and secondary school teachers in both private and state sectors are being confronted with examples of bad behaviour—the destruction of school equipment or furniture, pupils' lack of respect for each other or for adults—which impede normal school routine.

In the Caribbean, the problem of school indiscipline seems to be no different. Dr Canute Thompson (2009) assistant vice-president at the International University of the Caribbean, states that administrators, policy-makers, teachers, parents and the public at large have been struggling to find solutions to the problem of indiscipline in schools. In spite of this it seems that the level of indiscipline continues to escalate in many schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2007 the then Minister of Education, Senator Hazel Manning, reported the results of a study done with two thousand, seven hundred and sixty (2760) students in twenty (20) schools in Trinidad and Tobago, on the issue of violence and indiscipline. The findings revealed that almost seventy-five percent (75%) of the students in the sample used obscene language or cursed, thirty percent (30%) of whom admitted to doing so more than ten (10) times in one term. She added that twenty percent (20%) of the sample of students willfully damaged school property, ten percent (10%) admitted to stealing and twenty-two percent (22%) got involved in fights.

Teachers often complain of behavioral problems of students and express hopelessness because strategies being used are not as effective as expected. Strategies which work in one context may not necessarily work in others. As a result, teachers are becoming increasingly concerned about the situation as in some cases their safety is at stake. Indiscipline interferes with the smooth and effective functioning of the school as administrators are expending a great deal of time dealing with issues of deviance. Classroom teaching and learning is also disrupted by negative behavior on a daily basis. Freiberg, Huzinec & Templeton (2009) believe that within the classroom and the school context, student behaviours that disturb the learning environment have a rippling effect, influencing the disruptive individual, his or her classmates, the school and subsequently, near and far communities. They add that classroom disruptions steal valuable teaching and learning time. It follows therefore, that if the level of indiscipline continues to rise, there can be serious damaging effects on the performance of students.

The problem of school indiscipline has caught the attention of various lecturers at the University of the West Indies over the years, especially those associated with the School of education. Dr. Susan Herbert, in a newspaper article entitled 'Of Bullies and Bullying' (2003), explains that this phenomenon exist in all types of schools in Trinidad and Tobago. She suggests that Health and Family Life education can contribute to alleviating the problems associated with bullying. Dr. Phaedra Pierre (2003) agrees that bullying is very common and adds that it is becoming more deadly. She also identifies student-teacher violence, student-student aggression and hostility among students as areas of concerns. Dr. Pierre suggests that a comprehensive

programme of peace studies, communication studies, values clarifications, anger management, conflict resolution and decision-making strategies must be made compulsory in every school. Dr. Rawatee Sharma (2006) feels that in many cases peer group pressure leads the child to commit acts of indiscipline and lists some ways in which this pressure can be resisted.

Dr. Arthur Joseph (2002) submits that over the last two decades the growing incidence of school violence has left educators shaken and nervous about the potential for violence in their own school. Reporting on a study done with principals and teachers Mr. Joseph lists tardiness, absenteeism, physical conflicts, drug use, gangs, and physical abuse among the major concern. He also reports that the zero-tolerance has not been very effective.

Another lecturer, Mr. Raymond Hackett (2002) recommended a combined effort by all stakeholders to deal with the indiscipline issue, stressing that there are no quick fixes. He (2006) later reported that many tend to believe that our schools are in crisis and that this is linked to the failure of school leaders to resolve conflict (Hackett 2006). He adds that learning occurs best in an orderly environment.

With the escalating level of indiscipline, teachers are finding it more and more challenging to create this orderly environment. Administrators are also complaining of having to spend too much time dealing with indiscipline issues. As such, while it may be the school's duty to mold the behavior of its charges, this task is becoming increasingly challenging as efforts to

do so are being undermined by the escalating levels of indiscipline. Educators have been constantly seeking innovative measures which they hope would help to alleviate this growing concern.

Teachers of the Presbyterian School under study report that the level of indiscipline has escalated at the school over the years. They attribute this to the media and a breakdown of family values. Most teachers express the view that nothing could be done to curb the problem. They list fighting, breaking of the school rules and littering as the main problems. They note however, that there are no instances of serious violence or such infractions which may require suspension.

The Government school under study reports a lower level of indiscipline. Students are described by both teachers as well as non-teaching staff to be generally well-behaved. The incidences of indiscipline are mainly late-coming and breaking of everyday classroom rules.

The Hindu school under study reports a high level of indiscipline. Teaching and non-teaching staff as well as parents express frustration at the number of serious offences reported each week. The offences include aggressive fights, use of obscenities against teachers, vandalism of school property, gangs and drug abuse. Several students are suspended during the term and the principal reports having to spend approximately 60% of his time dealing with discipline related issues.

In an attempt to investigate indiscipline from a different perspective, this study seeks to explore the views of the children themselves on what they consider to be indiscipline.

Rationale

Although there are strategies to deal with indiscipline in every school, related there still seems to be no improvement. Teachers continue to express hopelessness in their quest for improved discipline at their school. In light of this, this researcher has decided to address the issue from a different angle. While there may be numerous suggestions in the literature of strategies which may work, there is the need for a new perspective. I feel that the problem should be examined at the source. By allowing the students to voice their views, we may be able to begin to understand why the present strategies are not as effective as they should be and we may also be better able to approach the issue of indiscipline in a more meaningful manner.

Significance of the Problem

This study is grounded in the perspective that valuable insights about the issue of student indiscipline can be obtained from the students themselves. It is hoped that the students' voices would provide some information about the reasons for indiscipline and the methods which may be effective in maintaining discipline. The findings of this study may assist teachers in identifying some of the weaknesses in the existing strategies and also lead to the development of new strategies for addressing indiscipline in schools. If students themselves are given the

opportunity to explain their own behavior, to state why they adopt negative behavioral practices and to suggest what strategies may work for them, then teachers may be better able to understand and treat with this phenomenon. This is supported by Ravetis (2007) who states that pupil descriptions of, explanations for and evaluations of their behaviour can furnish teachers with significant insights into the underlying dynamics of disengagement from learning, and augment teachers' necessarily narrow and adult-centred perspectives.

It is also hoped that this study may open doors to further research on the issue of indiscipline and related issues.

The study is concerned with the possibility that students' perception of indiscipline may, in some cases, be different from those of the adults who are responsible for guiding them and molding their lives.

Statement of the Problem

Many schools in Trinidad and Tobago experience a growing level of indiscipline. Several strategies have been proposed by the Ministry of Education as well as by various other experts in the field. Additionally, each school has fashioned its own approach to dealing with this issue. In spite of this, however, teachers continue to express frustration about the growing level of indiscipline in their classrooms.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study, using a sample of thirty –six students in three primary schools in central Trinidad, is to identify, describe, and explain, students' perceptions of indiscipline in the schools under study.

Indiscipline Defined

Indiscipline has been defined in this study as simply the lack of discipline or a discipline problem. Longman (2010) elaborates by adding that it involves a lack of control in the behaviour of a group of people, with the result that they behave badly.

The definition is further clarified by Levin and Nolan (1996), who states that a discipline problem is behaviour that (1)interferes with the teaching act; (2) interferes with the rights of others to learn; (3) is psychologically or physically unsafe; or (4) destroys property.

Throughout the literature, though, the terms disruptive behaviour and misbehaviour are used interchangeably with indiscipline.

According to Afolabi (1998), discipline is 'the readiness or willingness of an individual to demonstrate decent and decorous conduct, respect for authority, high sense of responsibility, love for orderliness, eagerness to discharge duties with promptitude and efficiency'. When an individual fails to discharge these characteristics, indiscipline is said to have occurred.

Research Questions

Overarching Question:

How do students in the Primary schools under study perceive indiscipline?

Sub-Questions:

- 1) What behaviours perceived as indiscipline do students in the primary schools under study display?
- 2) To what extent do students in the primary school under study try to rationalize their perceived behaviours of indiscipline?
- 3) What are the students' perceptions of an effective discipline system for the school?

Delimitations and Limitations

The study is essentially concerned with understanding student perceptions of indiscipline and how these perceptions can be used to address indiscipline in schools.

It is confined to three schools in one educational district, two levels within the schools – Standard three and Standard five, and six students within each level. As a result, while the findings from this study may provide a general idea about the perceptions of students, the conclusions are specific to the particular participants. However, although the findings will not necessarily be generalizable to all schools they will hold implications for them.

Bracketing of the researcher's perceptions may be challenging and the researcher's preconceived notions about indiscipline may influence interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

The following were considered important and necessary.

Principals were informed of the aims and objectives of the study and written permission from the principal of each school was obtained. Consent was also obtained from parents of the participants.

Appropriate precautions were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity and participants were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time.

Cultural, religious, gender and other significant differences within the samples were taken into careful consideration throughout the entire study.

Institutional procedures and activities were taken into consideration when scheduling sessions.

Principals were ensured that the findings of the study would be made available to them upon request.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The literature Review relevant to this study embraced the following themes which emerged from the research questions of the study:

- The Nature and Dynamics of Indiscipline
- The Effect of Discipline Problems on Teaching and Learning

- Factors which Contribute to Indiscipline
- Strategies for Dealing with Indiscipline
- Clear Guidelines/Rules
- Behaviour Contracting
- Rewards and Punishment
- Non-Traditional Methods

The Nature and Dynamics of Indiscipline

An exploration of the literature has revealed a rich variety of descriptions and suggestions as to the nature and dynamics of indiscipline. However several researchers have expressed

concern that teachers and other educators lack in the ability to effectively articulate a meaning for the term. After consultations with principals and teachers McEwan & Damer (2000), found that the inability to define a student's behavior and its positive counterpart in precise behavioral terms is the major stumbling block to developing a cogent behavior pattern. They believe that it is important to explicitly define the behavioural problems which occur in and out of the classroom in order to be able to effectively treat with them.

Owing to the wide range of behaviours which are considered as indiscipline, several researchers have condensed the list to the most frequent or the top ten displayed by students, McEwan & Damer (2000), in their book entitled 'Managing Unmanageable Students' have listed the most frequent infractions in schools as follows:

1. Leaving the School Grounds
2. Physical aggression towards others using the hands, feet and/or objects such as hitting, choking, pushing, tripping, biting, throwing stones at someone and pinching.
3. Disturbing others with hands, feet and/or objects with no real malicious intent such as inappropriately touching other students or taking their materials.
4. Use of disrespectful and/or threatening language such as swearing, name-calling, demeaning comments and verbal insults.
5. Inappropriate use of school material such as kicking or throwing furniture, writing on the walls, breaking pencils, taking and using material from the teacher's desk without permission.
6. Talking out in class

7. Out-of-seat behavior such as moving around for non-purposeful activity.
8. Noncompliance with teacher's requests and directions
9. Inability to work independently without adult supervision
10. Non-disruptive disorganized behaviour such as non-completion of homework, slow rate of work completion, excessive dawdling.

Using the results of a study done with teachers Bowen, Jenson and Clark (2004) developed a list of the top ten behavioural problems which reflect similar infractions to the list presented above. However, absent were the inappropriate use of school material as well as the use of threatening language. These were replaced by disrespect for others, arguing and tattletale.

Amado and Freire (2009) attempted to classify indiscipline behaviour by categorizing them into 'levels'. The 'first level of indiscipline' involves those incidences of disruptive nature whose disturbance affect the good classroom functioning. Conflicts among peers are considered 'second level indiscipline, while conflicts within student-teacher relationships are considered to be third level indiscipline.

Professor of Education at the University of St. Denis in France, Bernard Charlot (Kuntz, 2010) has categorised misbehaviour into four types. He cites violence which involves serious injury punishable in a court of law as the first type. This he terms 'real violence'. Unruliness, disrespect for school rules and rudeness are grouped together in the second category and the third involves breaches of good manners such as slamming a door in someone's face. The fourth

grouping, which Charlot insists is just as violent as the third, deals with indifference of students which he states, is increasingly stressful to teachers. Absenteeism falls into category four where students are reported by Charlot to hold the view that they are not doing anyone any harm so they should be left alone.

Bowen, Jenson & Clark (2004) suggest that sometimes some of these behaviours are not really indiscipline. They believe that behaviours such as fighting, crying, arguing, noncompliance, or over-activity can be considered normal for the child's developmental level or for a particular situation. Laing and Chazen (1986) agree by adding that much aggressive behavior is entirely natural, especially in the early years. This is based on the theories of Erikson (1963) who points out that during the phase of childhood when a sense of autonomy is being acquired children often experience frustration because they cannot do certain things and this frustration tends to lead to aggression. Since it is desirable that children develop independence skills, a certain amount of aggressive behavior can be regarded not only as natural but also as desirable (Laing and Chazen, 1986). This view of the aggressive behaviour which occurs in childhood is supported by various other researchers. Manning, Heron and Marshall (1978), for instance, suggest that young children showing specific hostility, such as those which are designed to get their own way, tend to be socially well-adjusted. However, games hostility, which involve activities such as hurling to the ground or gripping round the throat, are maladaptive styles of behaviour. Laing and Chazen (1986) state that there is evidence that aggression in normal children tends to decline fairly rapidly after about five to six years. Maccoby (1980) adds that children who remain highly aggressive at the stage when other children's aggression is lessening are likely to be immature or disturbed.

From the arguments above it follows that the term disruptive behaviour does not mean the same thing for everyone. For example Amado (2001) believes that for some teachers, when a student comes into the classroom with a cap on his head or chewing gum, he is considered to be displaying disruptive behaviour. Other teachers will dismiss this as an unimportant issue. These differences in the perceptions of teachers can lead to inconsistencies in the approach to discipline in any given school. In support of this Seeman (1998) asks: 'Is it possible that there are some initial interruptions that are not per se 'discipline problems' but by calling them that, and then acting on them as though they were, we then incite a real 'discipline problem?'

As a result of this students may experience confusion as to the expectations of educators and to what is right and wrong.

The effect of discipline problems on teaching and learning.

Several researchers agree that when classrooms are characterized by disruptive behavior the teaching and learning environment is adversely affected. Firstly, the initial behavior can cause a ripple effect, leading to several students displaying disruptive behavior. Kounin (1970) adds that additionally both the methods the teacher uses to curb the misbehavior and the targeted student's resultant behavior cause a second ripple. This results in loss of valuable teaching and

learning time. Some teachers spend between thirty (30) to eighty (80) percent of their time addressing discipline problems (Walsh 1983). The time and energy needed to cope with some disruptive students can be physically draining and emotionally exhausting (Levin & Nolan, 1996). Stress related to classroom management is one of the most influential factors in failure among novice teachers.(Vittetoe, 1977). Not only do classroom discipline problems have negative effects on students, but they also have very negative effects on teacher effectiveness and longevity(Levin & Nolan, 1996).

Also affected are student psychological safety, readiness to learn and future behaviors (Levin & Nolan, 1996).

Factors which contribute to indiscipline

In order to deal with a problem effectively it is essential to have a clear understanding of the underlying reasons behind the problem. Teachers are more effective when they have some idea as to the factors which contribute to indiscipline. Fields & Fields (2006) argue that no amount of respect, teaching, or choice will make discipline effective unless the approach deals with the reasons why the behaviour occurred. Effective approaches to discipline work to get at the root of the problem.

It is no easy task to figure out why students engage in negative behaviour. Reasons may vary according to situations and students and different reasons require different solutions. Fields & Fields (2006) suggest that the causes of a problem are not always obvious and it may take serious study and even trial and error to get at the root of the matter.

Researchers agree that it is often difficult to figure out exactly why a student is misbehaving. As a result numerous factors are suggested. Mendler, Curwin and Mendler (2008) list four categories into which every student who misbehaves fits. These are lack of awareness, the belief that they are stupid or hopeless, the desire to look good in front of peers and the need for attention. Charles (2002) agrees that most students do not misbehave because they consider it the thing to do, listing egocentrism, threat, provocation, fear, boredom, hopelessness, frustration or feeling isolated, as the main factors. He goes on to assure that many if not all of these factors can be reduced.

Wachtel (2004), however, cites factors over which the school has no control. One of the main suggestions was loss of connectedness and community in modern society is largely responsible for the dramatic increase in negative behaviour among young people. The role of society in this issue is supported by Curwin and Mendler (2000) who cite societal violence as one of the leading out-of-school factors. Discipline problems in the schools reflect the problems that face society (Levin & Nolan, 1996). Thus, as problems of drug abuse, crime, violence and physical abuse increase in society, so will the discipline problems in schools. It follows therefore, that some factors that contribute to discipline problems are beyond the schools' control (Bayh, 1978).

Another leading cause cited is the effects of the media. Content analysis of television shows indicated at least thirty-two (32) acts of violence per hour in children's shows alone (Levin & Nolan, 1996). Levin & Nolan (1996) continue that the news programs also depict considerable amounts of real violence which is viewed by more than one-third of elementary aged children. Reporting on a review of decades of research concerning television and youth, Curwin and Mendler (2000) concluded that children will have viewed approximately 18,000 acts of television violence by the time they enter adolescence. Reporting on studies done Levin and Nolan (1996) confirm that heavy television viewing was significantly associated with elementary school children's belief in a mean and scary world and that poor school behavior was significantly correlated with the home T.V. environment. In 1993 the American Psychological Association stated: 'There is absolutely no doubt that higher levels of viewing violence on television are correlated with increased acceptance of aggressive attitudes and increased aggressive behavior' (pg 43).

The influence of television on children is not limited to violence. Television communicates to children pluralistic standards, changing customs, and shifting beliefs and values (Levin & Nolan 1996). This, they believe, has affected children's ability to differentiate between right and wrong. In agreement Sprafkin, Kelly and Gadow (1987) add that some children are less able to distinguish between fantasy and reality due to television programs and commercials.

Hyman (1997) discussed the role of the home and family in student behavior. He points out factors such as financial stress within the family and dysfunctional families as being

significant. Levin and Nolan (1996) also examine the role and function of family in meeting the child's basic needs. They state that the academic achievement and appropriate behavior are more likely to occur in school when a student's home environment has met his or her psychological, safety and belonging needs as stipulated by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Curwin and Mendler (2000) agree that the occurrence of negative behavior can sometimes be linked to an absence of emotional nourishment for many of our children. This, they continue, can be attributed to the fact that some adults seek refuge from unhappiness and depression in ways that do not involve their children. This causes those children to attend school with a greater concern for their basic security needs than for learning their time tables. The American Psychological association (1993) concluded that a breakdown in family processes and relationships contribute to children's antisocial behavior. This is supported by Mendler, Curwin and Mendler (2008) who add that many children with disruptive behavior come from troubled homes where there may be continuing erosion of the nurturing family structure, the absence of fathers in the home and drug use.

Curwin and Mendler (2000) believe that there are also some factors within the school that perpetuate indiscipline. At the top of their list is student boredom. They suggest that when students become bored they sometimes derive pleasure from making the teacher angry, and their teacher derives a measure of satisfaction from catching them being 'bad'. They list powerlessness as having some effect on behavior. Some students rebel as a way of voicing their dissatisfaction with their lack of power. Their participation in decision making is often excluded. Unclear limits, lack of acceptable outlets for their feelings and the need for recognition were also considered as significant factors.

The literature reveals that some researchers are of the view that teachers sometimes perpetuate indiscipline by their approach. According to DeVries & Zan, (1994) the teacher's attitude can create an environment that encourages either positive or negative behaviour. The messages of non-verbal communication are sometimes more heeded than those of verbal. Body language, tone of voice and intensity often speak louder than words (Fields & Fields 2006). Fields & Fields add that inappropriate adult expectations such as those which conflict with family culture and those which do not reflect gender differences, may encourage behavioural problems.

Agreeing with this Hyman (1997) adds that inadequate teaching, punitive school climates and inadequate principals also lead to problem behaviours. Other factors listed by Hyman are:

- Inefficient school policies
- Students biological and emotional disabilities
- Peer pressure.
- The size of the students' birth cohort
- Individual students' failures to accept responsibility for their own behaviours.

Strategies for dealing with Indiscipline

Discipline strategies vary along a continuum - from the extremely authoritarian in which the adults make all of the rules and punish any deviation, to the very permissive in which the child makes all of the decisions (Fields & Boesser, 2002).

The authoritarian methods can be aligned with the behaviourist philosophy which emphasises shaping behaviour through the use of rewards and punishment. According to Kohn (1993) these models are based on immediate and unquestionable obedience as the target behaviour. There are no allowances for the explanations or investigation of circumstances. As a result they are often associated with anger and sometimes result in depression and low self-esteem.

At the other end of the continuum Fields & Boesser (2002) associate the permissive model with the maturationist philosophy of education which is grounded on the notion that time is the best teacher. In this model there is the absence of any type of discipline. Children are left to learn on their own from their own mistakes. Baumerind (1967) believes that this model over-emphasises freedom. Fields & Boesser (2002) feel that this results in low self-esteem and difficulty in getting along with others. All other models fit along the continuum somewhere between these two extremes.

Researchers agree that traditional forms of discipline which involve the demand for obedience are closer to the authoritarian end of the spectrum and are no longer reliable. Charles (2002) states that many of the discipline techniques we have relied on are ineffective especially those that involve demanding, bossing, scolding, warning, belittling and punishing as these tactics can keep behaviour partially under control only for a while. He adds that they can produce detrimental side effects such as uneasiness, evasiveness, fearfulness, avoidance, dishonesty, undesirable attitudes towards learning, overall dislike for school and teachers, inclination to

retaliate, and for many the desire to leave school as soon as possible. These circumstances lead to inhibited learning.

These views are not adopted by all however, as some researchers insist that the traditional methods still hold a place in any discipline system. Following is a brief overview of some of these strategies.

Clear Guidelines/Rules

One of the most basic and common part of any traditional discipline system is the setting of rules. Evertson, Emmer & Worsham (2000) explain that a rule identifies general expectations or standards for behaviour and adds that giving the students a clear set of expectations for what is appropriate will be a major start towards establishing a positive classroom environment.

Clements & Sova (2000) add that rules are the foundation for school conduct or behaviour. It is essential that children understand exactly what behaviours are acceptable in school and which ones are not, and this is communicated through clear guidelines and rules. Moreover, several researchers agree that students should be a part of the process of developing appropriate rules for the classroom and the school. On the other hand Fields and Fields (2006) suggests that instead of setting rules, which are rigid, set guidelines which are flexible and take circumstances into consideration, adding that children will more likely follow guidelines they themselves have helped to determine.

Behaviour Contracting

The development of the behavior contract was grounded on the theories of operant conditioning, which hold that behaviours which are reinforced are likely to be repeated and those which are not reinforced will soon disappear (Levin & Nolan, 1996). A behavior contract is a written agreement between the student and the teacher which commits the student to behave more appropriately and specifies a reward for meeting the commitment. The resulting consequence for not holding to the contract, rewards for meeting expectations and time frame are also specified. Usually a parent is involved in the development of the contract to ensure that the student obtains the necessary support in maintaining the terms stated. The contract attempts to control behavior that is not controlled effectively by normal classroom procedures, to encourage self-discipline on the part of the student, and to foster the student's sense of commitment to appropriate classroom behavior (Levin & Nolan, 1996). Contracts can be developed to suit the level of the student and to address any type of behavioural issue. As such behavior contracts can range from very simple to complex. Some samples of behavior contracts are included in the Appendices.

Non-Traditional Methods

Fields & Boesser (2002) proposed a model which provides the ideal balance between these two extremes called the constructivist model. Through this model students can learn from their own experiences and make informed logical choices. Kamii (1984) agrees that this model works towards self-determined responsible behaviour reflecting concern for the good of oneself and others. The constructivist approach to discipline strives to equip students with the necessary

skills to think for themselves and differentiate between desirable and undesirable behaviour. Students also develop caring and respectful relationships with each other and with the adults in their lives. As a result they are encouraged to think about the effects of their actions on others. The model involves guidance by adults and the exploration of consequences of negative actions. While children are able to become involved in decision-making, they are also guided and taught to make intelligent and informed decisions. Whenever they choose to display negative behaviour they understand that they are choosing the negative consequences that result from those behaviours. This shared-power model results in high self-esteem, good social skills, general competence and self-discipline (DeVries, 1999). Fields and Boesser (2002) stress that having mutual respect between adult and child is crucial to the success of the constructivist approach to discipline. They add that this type of relationship results from taking time to get to know the students and building positive relationships with them.

Curwin and Mendler (1990) agree that instead of trying to solve the discipline problem it may be wiser to positively affect the lives of children. They add that building and maintaining positive relationships with the students would decrease the frequency of certain negative interactions between teacher and students. Some of the ways of developing this positive rapport with students suggested by them are:

- Pay attention to the small details which make the classroom welcoming.
- Greet students
- Notice and build on students strengths
- Tell personal stories
- Call students by name

- Teach empathy
- Let them see who you are
- Have fun with them
- Listen to them
- Use non-verbal messages
- Say no respectfully

Fields & Fields (2006) also agree that teacher-child relationships are a critical part of teaching, and that teachers need to build positive relationships with children in order to influence their behaviour and thoughts. This, they claim, creates harmonious classrooms that are conducive to learning, as self-esteem, confidence and feelings of security are encouraged.

Along with positive relationships there is the suggestion by researchers that keeping students engaged during classtime would help to eliminate disruptions and reduce general indiscipline. For instance Mendler Curwin & Mendler (2008) state that the best way to prevent behavioural problems is to engage students with lessons that are interesting and entertaining. They suggest that teachers take into consideration the multiple intelligences and learning styles in the classroom, teach with energy and enthusiasm, make their objectives clear from the outset, use informed grouping tactics and incorporate games into the lessons. Clements and Sova (2000) add that one of the most important aspects of managing student behavior is to ensure that teaching practices and classroom organization are appropriate to the needs of the learner. These strategies are expected to reduce the chances of boredom as students become motivated to be involved in

learning activities. Self-concept and self-efficacy are also enhanced by these methods which empower students and ensure success.

If the feeling of hopelessness is one of the contributing factors to indiscipline, then the strategies must involve improving students' self-concept and self-confidence. Mendler Curwin & Mendler (2008) explains that because academic achievement is the primary yardstick that many students use to measure their self-worth in school, then educators must find ways of helping each child become an academic winner. Some behaviour problems that lead to aggression occur because students fail early on and then give up. Mendler Curwin & Mendler (2008) add the following methods for ensuring success:

- Offer genuine positive comments about performance
- Ensure success by giving choices e.g. give 20 Math problems and ask students to choose five.
- Highlight efforts and praise mistakes
- Focus on the positive, especially when it is hard to find

Another strategy which researchers consider to be highly effective is modelling behaviour. Davis-Johnson (2000) claims that teachers are not always modelling positive behaviours. She stresses that the role of the teacher is to model the behaviours of positive self-concepts, and respect for others and to establish the importance of academic achievement. This view is also held by Fields & Fields (2006) who claim that teacher and parental examples are productive methods of guidance and discipline, and Mendler, Curwin and Mendler (2008) who state that students learn morals and actions based on what they see more than what they hear. Fields &

Fields (2006) also add that sometimes the cause of inappropriate behaviour is that children have learned from inappropriate role models. Children today are bombarded with all forms of violence on television, movies, and cartoons and more importantly on the video games which they play. In order to counteract such pervasive influences adults must provide positive modelling. This strategy can be especially helpful for providing students with an example to imitate (Hyman, 1997). Fields & Fields (2006) agree that students use the examples of admired adults as they construct their own ideas of appropriate behaviour.

Over and over again, research findings demonstrate that children learn how to treat one another from the way they are treated by their teachers and parents (Landy 2002). Students learn behaviours such as dealing with anger or pain, responding to the anger of others, and dealing with personal problems from the way they see adults behave in such situations. The styles of interaction which students adopt are highly influenced by the interaction styles of the adults in their lives. As such, teachers and parents who exhibit very controlling behaviour are setting an example of demanding their own way without regard for others (Fields & Fields, 2006). It follows therefore that when adults create a culture of sensitivity, respect and kindness, these result in students who treat each other with respect and consideration.

The strategies outlined above seem to focus mainly on classroom discipline. However, Clements and Sova (2000) believe that schools need a team approach in dealing with indiscipline, adding that every school needs a nucleus of staff trained in non-violent physical crisis intervention that can respond by restraining and removing violent and non-compliant

students. They propose that schools take a holistic discipline approach to combat the increasing problem of violence and disruptive behavior. They have outlined a school-wide discipline model which is proactive and comprehensive but includes elements of traditional disciplinary methods. They advise that school staff should first be trained in effective communication and mediation skills as well as non-violent physical crisis intervention techniques. After the completion of training, there should be communication with parents in the form of seminars whereby the school's vision for a safe school is explained. Next, as with traditional methods, school rules are to be developed based on discussions and input of all members of staff. Each teacher is to then develop with his or her class the individual classroom rules. All of the school and class rules must be clearly communicated to parents along with a request for their cooperation.

Curwin and Mendler (1994) agree that an effective discipline approach involves a united effort by the entire school. They have outlined 12 processes that form the foundation of any effective discipline program as follows:

1. Let students know what you need
2. Provide instruction that match the students' level of ability.
3. Listen to what students are thinking and feeling
4. Use humor
5. Vary your style of presentation
6. Offer choices – 'You can do your assignment now or during recess'.
7. Refuse to accept excuses – accepting excuses teaches the students how to be irresponsible.

8. Legitimise behaviour that you cannot stop – e.g. If there are daily paper airplanes buzzing past your ear consider spending 5 minutes a day having paper airplane contests. When certain types of misbehaviours are legitimised the fun of acting out fizzles.
9. Use hugs and touching – pat on the back, high five, handshakes. One of the biggest educational fallacies is the prohibition against using touch because of sexual misunderstanding.
10. Be responsible for yourself and allow the kids to take responsibility for themselves you are responsible for being on time, being prepared and making your lessons meaningful. You are not responsible for judging students' excuses or doing their work for them.
11. Realise and accept that you will not reach every child.- Some students must be allowed to choose failure.
12. Start fresh everyday.

Summary

The literature review revealed that the perceptions of indiscipline vary among individuals. While there are certain behaviours which are considered by all to be negative, there are those actions which may depend on the teacher's, researcher's or student's point of view.

It was also discovered that determining the causes for indiscipline is not necessarily a simple or straight-forward task as in most cases multiple agents contribute to the behavior of a

single individual. Several possible factors emerged from the research findings the major ones being the media especially television programs and video games, the home, the community, peer influence and the teacher.

The literature also presented a variety of strategies which can be employed in attempting to treat with behavioural problems. It is obvious, though, that what is now occurring is a shift in the approach to dealing with indiscipline. While the traditional methods of addressing behaviours after they occur are explored in the literature, the research findings reveal a profound predilection towards proactive methods. However, researchers maintain that there is no universally ideal solution as each community, school and student is unique and strategies must be fashioned to suit the individual situation.

Chapter Three

The Methodology

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methods and procedures through which the data for the study was collected. The research design, sampling procedures and data collection procedures are described here.

Research Design

A qualitative design was adopted for this study because it allows for the exploration of students' views and how they make sense of the issues involved with indiscipline. According to Borg and Gall (1989), the most obvious aspects of everyday life in educational settings tend to become invisible because they are so habitual. They add that qualitative methods are probably the best means we have of rediscovering such aspects. Qualitative research attempts to understand a phenomenon in terms of the meanings which people ascribe to it. It is subjective in that it explores what is real for each knowing individual. The nature of this study is such that the meanings that students place on indiscipline at the schools under study were sought. As such students were studied in the natural setting of the school. Although there are numerous definitions for indiscipline articulated by various specialists in the field, there is the need to find out what the students themselves in this case, believe. A qualitative approach enabled the study to explore what the student's perspectives were and what they interpreted indiscipline to be. It

also provided an avenue for the students' voices to be presented in a manner which was free from the influence of the researcher's point of view. Preconceptions of the researcher, therefore, were bracketed beforehand so as not to inject personal experiences and opinions into the study.

The study more specifically took the form of instrumental, multiple case studies. The case study design facilitated the exploration of the experiences of the subjects in their own setting in a quest for the disclosure of all possible meanings to them. Each case focused on how the students in the school under study perceived the problem. Multiple case studies were used because they can provide greater insights into the issue than one case. Johnson and Christensen (2004) add that one is more likely to be able to generalize the results from multiple cases than from a single one. Kjellin, Stier, Einarson, Davies, and Asunta, (2010) used multiple case studies to investigate pupils' voices about citizenship education. Chang (2010) and Morita also used multiple case studies in exploring elementary beginning Mathematics teachers' efficacy development and the relationship between language, culture and gender and academic socialization, respectively. The study is instrumental in that this researcher intended to use the findings to add to the existing literature on indiscipline. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004) researchers doing instrumental case studies are less interested in making conclusions that are specific to the case and its particular settings than they are in making conclusions that apply beyond a particular case. They add that in an instrumental case study design, the researcher is usually interested in how and why a phenomenon operates as it does. As such the instrumental case studies of this research focused on developing a better understanding of how and why indiscipline occurs, with the vision of extending the findings to the universal setting.

In qualitative inquiry, the investigator starts with a very tentative design and develops the design as the inquiry progresses (Borg & Gall, 1989). In keeping with this view, the design of this study was reexamined and restructured as the study progressed.

Sampling Procedure

According to Borg & Gall (1989) the method of selecting a sample is critical to the whole research process. If research findings are not generalizable to some degree beyond the sample used in the study, then the research cannot provide us with new knowledge, cannot advance education as a science, and is largely a waste of time (Borg & Gall, 1989). As such all efforts were made to ensure that the sample chosen for this study was representative of the target population. With this objective in mind purposive sampling was done. This is a non-random sampling technique in which the researcher solicits persons with specific characteristics to participate in a research study' (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). By purposefully selecting a wide range of subjects.....the qualitative researcher will be more likely to uncover the full array of multiple realities relevant to the inquiry (Borg & Gall, 1989). This method, also termed purposeful sampling, and criterion-based selection by various researchers, was used by Wardhaugh (1996) and Flannery (1991). The goal of this strategy is to locate information-rich individuals.

The Sample

Three co-educational primary schools in the Caroni Educational District in Central Trinidad were chosen for this study: a Presbyterian School (School P), a Hindu School (School H) and a Government school (School G).

The School Context

School H is located in a village on the outskirts of Chaguanas. A large number of families in this village experience problems associated with unemployment and poverty while the employed citizens generally hold low-income jobs. There are regular reports of drug abuse and drug related crimes in the area. Issues of sexual abuse, incest, violence and child neglect are also addressed on a regular basis by law-enforcement personnel. School H houses a total of three hundred and fifteen students (315) with twenty (20) staff members. A large percentage of students score below thirty (30) percent at the S.E.A. and National Tests every year. This has captured the attention of the Ministry of Education which has adopted the school under the Performance Enhancement Program. Of all the issues across the curriculum the areas of Reading and Mathematics seem to be of greatest concern. The principal, however, often stresses that absenteeism and indiscipline are the major causes of underperformance at School H. Incidences such as violent fights, violent acts against teachers, gang activity and vandalism of school property are identified as being commonplace. There are Student Support Services personnel who are permanently attached to the school and are present on the compound on a daily basis. A discipline matrix has been developed by the staff in an effort to address the issue. In spite of this,

indiscipline continues to be the main focus of staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences and teacher-teacher conferences, both formal and informal at this school.

School G is located in a small rural village in central Trinidad. The area is very quiet with a low level of reported crime. The student population of one hundred and sixteen (116) students is managed by the appointed female principal and a staff of eleven (11) trained teachers, two (2) of whom have completed the Bachelor of Education Degree program. The school participates in zonal and regional sporting and aesthetic competitions and hosts its own internal biennial school sports. There is a school steel band orchestra along with various other musical instruments. Staff members describe the academic performance as average, adding that an average of two (2) students score under thirty (30) percent at the S.E.A. Over the past few academic years there has been an average of three (3) discipline related referrals for Student Support Services. However, the principal has pointed out that these referrals involve the same students each year. Teachers state that generally the students are well-behaved and a minimal amount of time is spent dealing with indiscipline issues.

School P is located in a village along the Southern Main Road. The school's database of parents reveals a wide range of occupations which include business entrepreneurs, doctors, teachers, farmers, clerks and labourers. There are several striving businesses in the area as well as a police station which has established links with the school over the years. Reported incidences of crime in this village include mainly breaking and entering and car thefts. School P has a population of four hundred and fifty (450) students and nineteen (19) teachers. The

majority of classes range from 25 to 33 students. The students perform quite well at the Secondary Entrance Examinations as well as the National Test. Some students also excel in sporting competitions reaching the national finals in certain competitions. In spite of these achievements the principal and teachers agree that the level of indiscipline in the school is quite high. Teachers regularly complain about the behavior of students and express frustration with the ineffectiveness of their efforts to deal with it. The principal can be heard on a regular basis speaking with students about incidences and issues pertaining to negative behavior on the school public address system. There are no Student Support Service (SSS) Personnel permanently attached to the school but services would be provided for special cases upon request. However, the offences committed by students are those which appear to be minor and do not need the intervention of SSS personnel. These usually include littering, defacing and damaging school property, fighting and disobedience of those school rules which relate to orderly conduct. As a result the Student Support Services are seldom requested.

School H was chosen based on the high level of indiscipline and the large number of referrals for Student Support Services due to discipline issues, over the past three school terms. School G was reported by the teachers and the principal as having very few discipline problems. The selection of a school with a low level of indiscipline for this study was encouraged by the views of Borg & Gall (1989) who articulated that many qualitative researchers overlook the fact that a great deal can often be learned by a careful study of the non-typical subject. School P was chosen based on the teachers' complaints that although there are few infractions which require Student Support services for the year, many students generally display non-compliance and

disruptive behaviour on a daily basis. Factors of convenience and willingness to participate in the study, although minimal, also influenced the choice of schools.

The Participants

The study involved a total of thirty-six (36) participants. These participants were selected from the Standard Three and Standard Five classes of each school. Six students were chosen from each level (3 boys and 3 girls). This number was chosen based on the suggestion of Krueger & Casey (2000) that an ideal number is between six and eight participants as smaller groups show greater potential and is more orderly. The selection of the students illustrated representative cases of well-behaved students, representative cases of badly behaved students and representative cases of average students from each of the three schools. Thus of the 6 students selected at each school 2 were considered by the class teacher to be very disruptive due to their constant involvement in various acts of indiscipline. 2 of the students of each school were considered to be average based on their occasional involvement in indiscipline behaviour. Finally, two students from each school were chosen based on their compliance with school rules and general good behaviour, both in and out of the classroom. The selection of well-behaved students for this study was again influenced by the suggestion of Borg & Gall (1989) that a great deal can be learned from the non-typical subject. As such, this researcher felt that the well-behaved students may serve to enrich the data with valuable perspectives.

Data collection

Semi structured group interviews were used to collect data. The research interview has been defined by Cannell and Kahn (1968) as a conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation. Such Qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to enter into the inner world of another person and to gain an understanding of that person's perspective (Patton 1987). The interviews, therefore, were planned with the aim of entering into the world of the students to gain information and develop an understanding of their perspectives of indiscipline. The interview allows for greater depth as there is opportunity for probing and response-keying. Lupton (1996) believes that this approach yields rich, detailed answers. The semi-structured interview has been used by Silva and Neves (2009) in their quest to understand students' disruptive behaviour and by Woods (1979) and Mac Pherson (1983) in their various studies. An interview protocol was prepared by the researcher to ensure that the same general topics were covered for all of the interviews conducted. Cross and Stewart (1995) used the interview protocol in their study of what it is like to be a gifted student attending a rural high school. Interviews were designed with the scope for flexibility of phrasing and questioning to suit the various participants.

Group interviews were done with each class group of six students. Cohen and Manion (1994) states that group interviews create the potential for discussions to develop, thus yielding a wide range of responses. For example Lewis (1992) found that 10-year-olds' understandings of severe learning disabilities was enhanced in group interview situations, the children challenging

and extending each others' ideas. Rabiee (2004) supports group interviews by stating that groups can generate large amounts of data in a relatively short time span.

Two group interviews were done in each school, yielding a total of six (6) interviews ranging from forty-five (45) to sixty (60) minutes. Each interview was audio recorded.

Data Collection Instrument

An interview protocol was designed by the researcher and used for all of the interviews to glean the relevant information from the students.

The interview Protocol

The interview guide consisted of twenty-two (22) questions which were designed to encourage further discussions. The questions were aligned to the research questions as shown in Table 1 below.

Research Question	Ques. No.	Interview Guide Questions	Literature Review Theme
<i>Overarching Question:</i> How do students in the Primary schools under			

study perceive indiscipline?			
<i>Sub-Question 1:</i> What behaviours perceived as indiscipline do students in the primary schools under study display?	1	1. What do you understand by the term indiscipline?	The Nature of Indiscipline
	2	2. Could you give me some examples of indiscipline behaviour?	
	3	3. How do you know that these things are bad?	
	11	4. I'm going to call a list of behaviours which students display. I want you tell me which are indiscipline and which are not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not doing homework • Chewing gum in class • Eating in class • Speaking quietly during classtime • Playing catch with your friends during the break • Fighting • Asking for permission to use the bathroom • Drawing quietly after you have finished doing your work • Drawing quietly even though you have not completed your work • Making paper jets during classtime • Making paper jets outside of classtime • Writing on the desks • Drawing on the toilet walls • Late coming 	
	12	5. Is there any behaviour which you are not sure whether it is right or wrong?	
	13	6. Do you think students enjoy engaging in certain behaviours which they know is wrong?	

	14	7. Is there any behaviour which you consider to be indiscipline but you enjoy doing?	
<p><i>Sub-Question 2:</i></p> <p>To what extent do students in the primary school under study try to rationalize their perceived behaviours of indiscipline?</p>	4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think causes children to engage in these behaviours? 2. Do you display any behaviour which you think is indiscipline during classtime? 3. What causes you to do this? 4. Do you display any behaviour which you think is indiscipline outside of classtime? 5. What causes you to do this? 6. What behaviours do you see others displaying which you consider indiscipline? 7. What do you think causes students to display this type of behaviour? 	Factors which contribute to Indiscipline.
<p><i>Sub-Question 3:</i></p> <p>What are the students' perceptions of an effective discipline system for the school?</p>	15 16 17 18 19 20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you ever been punished for doing something which you don't think was wrong? 2. Have you ever seen this happen to anyone else? 3. Do you think students sometimes get away with being indiscipline? 4. How does your school deal with those behaviours which are considered indiscipline? 5. Do you think these methods work well? 	Strategies for dealing with indiscipline

		6. What do you think can be changed to make it more effective?	
	21	7. What else do you think the school can do to help you keep away from indiscipline behaviours?	
	22	8. What else do you think can be done to stop others from being indiscipline?	

Table 1: How the Interview questions were aligned with the research questions.

Administration of Interviews

Interviews were scheduled after consultations with the principals and teachers of the students involved. The researcher was on time for all scheduled sessions and the selected students were readily available. At each school the principal kindly consented to the use of the computer room or library for this purpose. During all six interviews distractions were at a minimum and the conditions were conducive to open discussions and audio taping. At the onset of each interview all efforts were made to ensure that an adequate level of trust between interviewer and interviewees was established and participants were made to feel comfortable. Guiding questions were prepared and used for the interviews. However, discussions developed during each interview based on the responses given by students.

All interviews were conducted in the afternoon and students were quite open and responsive in all but one school, School P. At this school students were initially hesitant and

indecisive about sharing their thoughts. This may be due to the fact that the researcher was familiar to them being a teacher at the said school. After some coaxing, however, students eventually became a bit more comfortable with the discussion and were able to respond openly. In the other two sites discussions were generally smooth and productive.

Each interview had a duration of between forty-five (45) to sixty (60) minutes, all of which were audio recorded by the use of a voice recorder. After every interview each participant was given a refreshment plate as a token of appreciation. This gesture was also extended to the principal and class teachers, along with expressions of gratitude for their cooperation.

Interview tapes were stored under coded labels in an effort to protect the anonymity of the schools and participants.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was an on-going process which began at the onset of data collection. The researcher embarked upon a continuous process of reflection and readjustment. As a result, after each interview some of the ideas and issues raised, which were not originally included in the interview protocol were used to refine the protocol for the ensuing interviews.

Before the data could be effectively analyzed it was necessary to first convert it into a format that can be easily analyzed. As such, audio-taped interviews were transcribed. Transcription is a pivotal aspect of qualitative inquiry (Tilley 1998). Bull & Whelan (2006) used semi-structured

interviews which they later transcribed in their exploration of the management schemata practiced by parents of students with ADHD.

As is typical of qualitative research, the data was studied inductively ‘in order to reveal unanticipated outcomes’ (Borg & Gall, 1989). First of all, upon the recommendation of Creswell (1998), a general review of all the transcripts was done in order to obtain a sense of the overall data. Thematic analysis was done whereby themes were gleaned from the data and not imposed upon it by the researcher. This was achieved by reading through the data and colour coding various parts to indicate that they are aligned to some thematic idea. At its simplest, such a coding process enables researchers to quickly retrieve and collect together all the text and other data that they have associated with some thematic idea so that they can be examined together (Lewins, Taylor & Gibbs, 2005). Inductive codes were developed based on the particular emic terms which emerged in the transcripts. This open coding was followed by axial coding. According to Creswell (1998), axial coding puts data back together in new ways by making new connections between its categories and subcategories. Smith & St. Pierre (2009) used open and axial coding in their study on determinants of enjoyment in Physical education. The emergent ideas and categories were then further categorized into broader themes. Finally these themes were categorized according to their relation to the research questions.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Research Findings

Introduction

In this study, three different aspects of students' perceptions were explored. Only one aspect is presented in this chapter through the findings of Sub-research question two.

Sub-research Question Two

To what extent do students in the primary school under study try to rationalize their perceived behaviours of indiscipline?

Data Analysis

When asked what they think causes students to engage in negative behaviour students from all three schools in the study identified the influence of their peers. One student from the Standard Three group at School P stated: 'Well who they hang out with in school.....sometimes they does see their friends doing it and they follow them and do it too'. A student from the same class level at School G added that 'they does act that way from being in bad company.....when they badjohn friends want to fight and curse and thing...and then they does end up doing the same thing.' In school H two students of the Standard five group indicated agreement by stating that 'they does want to do what them other children doin.....they does

see them doin it and follow them’. One student from the Standard three group from the same school simply responded, ‘from their friends’, while two of his classmates expressed agreement by nodding their heads.

At least one students of each of the six groups, when asked why they themselves misbehaved, directed the blame towards their peers. A student of the Standard Five class of School H explained:

Watch, when I doing my work it have some children in the class, them does cuff me and get me real vex.....they does want me to tell them the answer and when I don’t tell them they does want to hit me and thing.

Another student from the same group added that ‘they want to see what I doin in my book so they does pull my book and thing and then I does have to push them away and hit them for they to stop’. This tendency to cast the blame on other students was also seen in the response of a student from the Standard Three class of School P who added: ‘and when they call you name and thing you must get vex’.

A student from the Standard Three group of School G went a bit further by rationalizing that ‘if someone quarrel with you then you does have to quarrel back.....and then you does get in trouble because the teacher does say that you misbehaving’. This view that when they react in a negative manner to a particular situation they are not to blame was shared by a student of the

Standard Three group of School P who related that ‘once a boy steal another boy money and I went to take it away from him and the teacher make me stay onside for a week but I was only trying to get back my friend money’. This response was substantiate by a Standard five student of School H who said that ‘a girl did hit me and I hit she back and I did not get to go outside for lunchtime’.

The students of all six groups emphasized that other students got them angry and caused them to display unacceptable behaviors. Of all the participants, only one student who was with the Standard Three group of School H, gave the indication that he was aware of his own responsibility for the manner in which he acted when he said that ‘sometimes when somebody do something to get me vex I does try to move away and go by myself so I don’t do nothing to get myself in trouble’.

One Standard Five student of School P expressed a different aspect of peer pressure by stating that ‘some of them does fight and curse and thing to get attention and show off.....they maybe don’t get attention from they parent so they does like it when other children ‘fraid them and thing. Another student of the same group added: ‘Yeah...dey does want other people to watch they and say they bad and then they does feel good.’ Four students of the Standard Five group of School G agreed that some students misbehave to get attention while a student at School H added that ‘sometimes the boys does take the girls’ thing and throw it in the bin and thing.....they does do that because they like them and they want to talk to them.

Another student of the same group continued: ‘Yeah and they does tease them and make them cry and thing.....because they like them.

Moreover, none of the Students of the Standard Three groups in all three schools seemed to think that misbehavior had anything to do with getting attention as no student from these groups aluded to it in their responses.

The students of all groups in all three schools found ways to explain how their negative behaviours were to be blamed on their peers. They felt that the attitudes and encouragement of their peers played a crucial part in student behavior. As such even though they may not want to engage in negative behavior, the expectations and encouragement of their friends and other students place them in a position where they feel that they have no choice. Apart from one student the participants did not seem to think that they had any control over their own reactions and emotions.

The responses of several students, especially at School H identified the home environment as an important influence on the behavior of the children. One student of the Standard Five group at school H explained that ‘some ah them parents does curse and fight and thing and they does learn to do the same thing’. A Standard three student of the same school agreed with this by adding: ‘How dey grow up at home.....they parent doesn’t teach then the right way to behave’. A student from the same group took it a bit further by adding:

When de children and them see they parents smoking and drinking and thing they does want to try it too.....a boy in Standard Five, James (Not the real name), he father does be in the rum shop across the roadI does see him dey smoking and drinking and thing.....and one day Sir ketch him (James) with a cigarette.....he was giving a boy from Miss Pamela (Not the real name) class to smoke it.

This impression was shared by a Standard Three student of School P who explained that ‘some ah them does hear dey parents cursing and thing and they does feel that it ok for them to do it too....and then dey does come in school and want to curse we. Another student from the same group elaborated even further by explaining that ‘maybe some children does see they father and mother and uncle and thing quarrelling and thing and maybe they does learn it from them’.

Students generally were able to identify the power of negative role models in the home as being influential on student behavior.

When students were probed further to identify other reasons for misbehavior one Sandard Five student at School H began by saying: ‘Well.....the area they living’. When asked to elaborate another student continued:

Well.....you see it have a lot of crime and drugs and thing.....and the people does make trouble with the police and thing....and well the children does learn from the people in the area.....some ah dem doh fraid no police so dey does do what they want.

A third student from the same group added that ‘I does see Justin and them cursing and thing on the road when they going home and it does have the police van park up right they and he does say.....me ent fraid no police’.

The students of schools P and G made no mention of criminal activities in the community. However, a student of the Standard Five class of school P alluded to the element of community influence by explaining that ‘some children does hear people cursing and thing and see them smoking and thing when they going home and that is how they does learn to do it’.

Students in all three schools mentioned various forms of media as being influential in the level of indiscipline behavior displayed by students. The most frequent form of media mentioned was television. Students, mainly of School H and School P, explained that many of the television shows which they enjoy watching involve some sort of violence. As one Standard Five student from School H stated:

Some children does see people on T.V. doing thing and they does want to go and try it out on other children.....but they don’t realize that is cartoon and

people can't really do them thing.....all them dropkick and thing.....but I do
ah dropkick already eh.....but not everybody could do it.

One Standard Three student on School P agreed that 'some children does watch how people on T.V. does behave and they does learn from there'. Another Standard Three student who belongs to School P expressed agreement by adding that 'some ah them action shows does have real fighting and shooting and thing and children does watch that and maybe that is how they does behave so'. Only one student from School G indicated that she though that the television influenced student behavior when she simply said 'maybe from T.V.' in response to the same question.

In addition to television video games were also identified by a Standard Three student at School H who explained with enthusiasm that 'some ah dem games where it have fighting and thing it does be real real.....you does see blood and thing and sometimes they brains does mash up and thing.....my brother have that but he don't let me play with it.....is ah X-box.....he now get it'. In the Standard five group of School P video games were also mentioned as one students said 'maybe from them games like Nintendo and PSP and thing', while another student supported him by adding that 'some children does play DSI fighting games all the time and them games does have real killing and thing, No student from School G mentioned video games. One student of School P recognized the influence of the internet by stating that'some children does be on the internet all the time and maybe they does see it (negative behaviours) there'. Three students from the same group agreed with this.

Students of School H felt that the teacher plays a part in facilitating indiscipline behavior in the classroom. One student of the Standard five class of School H stated that ‘sometimes the teacher does be so boring and some ah dem children does get bored and want to interfere with other children’. Another student from the same group referred to the teaching styles of their teacher by stating that ‘Sir does only be talkin and talkin and talkin and we does be bored.....but like the teacher we had in Standard Two.....she used to be jokey and make we laugh and thing’. In School P the role of the teacher was also mentioned by a standard three student who stated that ‘some teachers does punish students for nothing.... and then the children don’t like the teacher so they don’t want to listen to them in class’. In agreement another student from the same group added that ‘they does want to spite the teacher’.

The Standard Three group of School H indicated that there was a problem with teachers’ language and tone of voice, especially when they were dealing with issues of indiscipline. One of them stated that ‘it have some teachers who like to quarrel with the children and tell them thing to make them feel shame’. When asked if this helps the students to behave in a more acceptable the response was: ‘No.....they does try to irritate the teacher because they know that she don’t like them....so they does do all kinda thing to get she vex.’ One Standard Five student from the same school went a bit further with the issue by trying to explain teachers’ behavior as follows:

Some teachers does bring dey stress from home and take it out on the children.....like Miss Stacy (Not the actual name)....she always quarrelling and

buffing up children.....and how she does talk....the children does want to behave bad to get back at she.

Student at School P supported this view as a Standard Three student explained that ‘sometimes when you do something Miss does bawl up at you in front everybody....and she does tell everybody and then because ah that you don’t like she’.

The students of School G however, did not seem to agree with the above views as no mention of teacher behavior was made. When asked if they thought teachers did anything to cause students to misbehave one Standard Five student responded by saying: ‘No, Miss does have to talk to the children all the time about how dey behaving and thing and they don’t listen....they does go back and do the same thing so she must get vex.’ All of the other students from both groups at this school simply responded: ‘No.’

Conclusion

The findings revealed that:

- some students from all three schools try to justify their negative behaviors by placing a large percentage of the blame on the actions and influence of their peers.
- students from all three schools recognize the influence of their home environment and the role models presented there, upon their own attitudes and behaviours.

- most students of school H and some from School P felt that the community played a part in influencing student behavior.
- Students of Schools H and P indicated that the media in the form of television shows, video games and internet plays a part in shaping their behavior.
- Students of schools H and P suggest that teachers play a part in perpetuating misbehavior in students.
- Students of School G did not consider the media or the teachers as being perpetrators of student indiscipline.

Chapter Five

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The findings of the study which relate to Sub-Research Question Two are discussed in this chapter.

Summary of Research Findings

The findings to sub-research question two revealed that students rationalize their perceived behaviours of indiscipline in the following ways:

- By placing a large percentage of the blame on the actions and influence of their peers.
- By recognizing the influence of their home environment and the role models presented there, upon their own attitudes and behaviours.
- By admitting that the community played a part in influencing student behavior.
- By indicating that the media in the form of television shows, video games and internet plays a part in shaping their behavior.
- By suggesting that teachers play a part in perpetuating misbehavior in students.

Discussion

Emerging from the findings of sub-research question two Students rationalize their own indiscipline behavior in various ways. These can be categorized into the following themes;

- Peer influence
- Home environment
- The community
- Media
- Teachers

By using insights from the literature review as well as the researcher's rich and lengthy experience in the field, the findings are discussed in the context of these emergent themes.

Peer Influence

It is interesting to note that students from each group in all of the three schools in the study placed a great percentage of the blame for their own misbehaviors on their peers. Most of the students explained that whenever they misbehaved it was in reaction to the actions of others and that they were not to be held responsible for the consequences. The Standard Five students in the study also admitted to the need for acquiring attention from their peers. They seemed to think that a display of negative behavior sometimes brought fame and admiration from their classmates. The desire to look good in front of their peers and the need for attention have been included by Mendler, Curwin and Mendler (2008) in their list of possible factors contributing to indiscipline. However, the need for attention was not recognised by the Standard Three students.

This may be due to the fact that these students are younger and are at a different developmental stage from the Standard five students. Also the Standard five students are at the age where they are anticipating the onset of puberty which involves hormonal changes. At this age students tend to become more sensitive about physical appearance and popularity in the peer group (Goodlad, 1984).

The Home Environment

Students expressed the view that the home environment contributed to the development of habits of negative behaviour. They felt that students learnt how to curse, quarrel, smoke and drink alcohol from their parents and other adults in the family. The role of the home and family on student behavior has been substantiated in the literature by Hyman(1997), Levin and Nolan (1996) and Curwin and Mendler (2000) who spoke of dysfunctional families, negative role models and the absence of emotional nourishment in the home respectively. The American Psychological association (1993) also agreed that a breakdown in family processes and relationships contribute to children's antisocial behavior. The study revealed that students were able to observe the actions of the parents of their peers and identify links between actions and habits of the parents' and their children.

The Community

The influence of the community was recognized by students of two of the schools as being important to the development of positive or negative habits. However the elements of

crime and drugs were only mentioned by students of both groups of one school. This is because the community to which the school in question belongs is noted for criminal activities, many of which are drug related. The students of the school are exposed to these issues on a regular basis and so they are able to identify with them. As indicated by one respondent the appearance of the police is commonplace in the area. The role of the community was corroborated by Curwin and Mendler (2000) who cited societal violence as one of the leading out-of-school factors of indiscipline. Students of school P also alluded to the role model presented by the adults in the community.

The role of the community was absent from the responses give by students from School G. This may be attributed to the experiences of the students in their own community. Being a small quiet village, the community where this school is located is almost free of criminal and drug related activities. Students do not have the first hand experience of these elements as do the students of School H. As such they are not able to readily recognize the link between the negatives of the community and misbehavior of students.

The Media

Several students stipulated that various forms of media can have a negative effect on student behavior. Television was identified as the most influential culprit by students of all three schools. Students admitted to their exposure to negative values and actions through television shows. This aligns with Nolan's (1996) view that poor school behavior was significantly correlated with the home T.V. environment. The American Psychological Association (1993) also confirmed that higher levels of viewing violence on television are correlated with increased

acceptance of aggressive attitudes and increased aggressive behavior. Students were able to identify this the link from their own experiences.

There was the recognition among some of the students in the study that some of the video games which they play portray similar violence to what is seen on television. In fact, students admitted that the video games contained very graphic representations which they felt encouraged the desire to copy the behaviours seen there.

Teachers

The attitudes, behaviours, tone of voice and language of the teacher were identified by students as being a factor contributing to their indiscipline. They felt that teachers sometimes use language and tones which embarrass them and stimulate rebelliousness. This is supported in the literature by Fields and Fields (2006) who stated that the body language, tone of voice and intensity [of the teacher] often speak louder than words (Fields & Fields 2006).

Students of Schools P and H felt that the teachers sometimes bore them in the classroom causing them to get fed up and become involved in inappropriate behavior. Curwin and Mendler (2000) supports this by stating that when students become bored they sometimes derive pleasure from making the teacher angry, and their teacher derives a measure of satisfaction from catching them being 'bad'. According to DeVries & Zan, 1994) the teacher's attitude can create an environment that encourages either positive or negative behaviour

Conclusion

The study has clearly revealed that the ways in which students rationalize their own negative behavior aligns closely with the factors outlined in the literature. It is apparent that students were able to identify these factors through their own observations, experiences and behaviours. As such, one can conclude that the main factors which contribute to student indiscipline include peer influence, the home environment, the community, the media and the teachers.

Recommendations

From the revelations of the study, the following recommendations have been developed to assist educators in developing systems of dealing with the issue of indiscipline. These recommendations are also suggested to inform improvements of existing strategies and approaches to dealing with school indiscipline.

Teacher Professional Development

Teachers should be equipped with a variety of strategies to motivate and actively engage students in every lesson. Multiple strategies must be employed so as to cater to the individual needs of each student. This would ensure that the element of boredom is eliminated from the classroom and thus decrease the occurrence of misconduct by students.

It should be made mandatory that every teacher undergo anger management training which can assist them in dealing with their own emotions as well as enable them to be able to convey those strategies to the students. Along with anger management skills, conflict management, critical thinking skills and decision making skills should also be included in such professional development. After undergoing such training teachers can then develop programs of work, based on the Health and Family Life Education curriculum, through which they can in turn equip students with the skills necessary to conduct their own behavior by making the right decisions. In this manner, teachers can develop a proactive approach to discipline which is based on positivity as opposed to the traditional negative methods of punishment. By being proactive schools can reduce the occurrence of misbehaviours and shift the focus from ensuring effective punitive methods to instilling a desire in students to refrain from engaging in negative behavior in the first instance.

Positive Role Models

Along with the above suggestions it would also be necessary to train teachers to be more positive role models for students. Students of the study have admitted to learning behaviours from looking at others. Sometimes the adults in the home and society do not sufficiently portray desirable examples for students' positive development. It therefore follows that there is the need to provide them with more positive role models from whom they can learn more appropriate and acceptable behaviors.

Parental Engagement

There is a need for more in-school as well as after school programs which are designed to encourage parents to become more engaged in their children's learning. Through these programs also parents can be guided to present themselves as positive role models while providing the necessary support and encouragement necessary for positive development of their children. Such programs can also be used as avenues of educating parents about the importance of exposing their children to more positive and educational aspects of the media, while ensuring that they are not bombarded by the negative aspects.

Any program designed to address the issue of indiscipline must be fashioned to suit the needs of the particular school. Since there is no quick fix and no one strategy is adequate, there must be a combination of approaches which are to be implemented, tried and tested over time. The problems of indiscipline did not develop overnight and thus cannot be eliminated in a short period of time. A comprehensive and systematic program is required which is based on a proactive and positive framework, the success of which will be grounded in dedication, commitment and confidence from all stakeholders.

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Appendix 1

Samples of Behaviour Contracts

Contract

I will: finish my lunch on
time and not dawdle.

My teacher will: give me
a fish sticker.

Then, I will get: to pick
out a goldfish for the class
when I have 10 stickers.

Signed: Raould
me
My Sambetno.
my teacher
May 8
today

Appendix 2

Interview Protocol

1. What do you understand by the term indiscipline?
2. Could you give me some examples of indiscipline behaviour?
3. How do you know that these things are bad?
4. What do you think causes children to engage in these behaviours?
5. Do you display any behaviour which you think is indiscipline during classtime?
6. What causes you to do this?
7. Do you display any behaviour which you think is indiscipline outside of classtime?
8. What causes you to do this?
9. What behaviours do you see others displaying which you consider indiscipline?
10. What do you think causes students to display this type of behaviour?
11. I'm going to call a list of behaviours which students display. I want you tell me which are indiscipline and which are not?
 - Not doing homework
 - Chewing gum in class
 - Eating in class
 - Speaking quietly during classtime
 - Playing catch with your friends during the break
 - Fighting
 - Asking for permission to use the bathroom
 - Drawing quietly after you have finished doing your work

- Drawing quietly even though you have not completed your work
- Making paper jets during classtime
- Making paper jets outside of classtime
- Writing on the desks
- Drawing on the toilet walls
-

12. Is there any behaviour which you are not sure whether it is right or wrong?

13. Do you think students enjoy engaging in certain behaviours which they know is wrong?

14. Is there any behaviour which you consider to be indiscipline but you enjoy doing?

15. Have you ever been punished for doing something which you don't think was wrong?

16. Have you ever seen this happen to anyone else?

17. Do you think students sometimes get away with being indiscipline?

18. How does your school deal with those behaviours which are considered indiscipline?

19. Do you think these methods work well?

20. What do you think can be changed to make it more effective?

21. What else do you think the school can do to help you keep away from indiscipline behaviours?

22. What else do you think can be done to stop others from being indiscipline?

