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Effects of Social Interaction Intervention on Honesty and Punctuality among Public Secondary School Students in Gombe State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of Social Interaction Intervention (SII) on honesty and punctuality among public secondary school students in Gombe State, Nigeria. The quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study which involved all the Senior Secondary School (SSS2) students in all the senior secondary schools in Akko LGA of the State for the 2019/2020 academic session. The sample comprised 100 Senior Secondary School (SSS2) students, with 47 in the experimental group and 53 in the control group who were assigned to two respective intact classes using simple random sampling technique. The experimental group received SII, while the control group received a placebo Civic Education Values. A rating scale on students' moral character development which was developed by the researcher was used to collect data for the study. The development of the instrument followed the five principles of development of an instrument and was validated by three experts as well as tested for its reliability using Cronbach's alpha method. Descriptive mean and inferential statistics of ANOVA was used to analyze the data collected for the study. Results showed significant improvements in punctuality and honesty among students exposed to SII compared to those who were not.

Key Words: Social Interaction, Honesty, Punctuality, Students

Introduction

Sociologically, it is expected that individuals and groups, particularly students, ought to imbibe virtues and values cherished in their immediate society and those social vices that are abhorred. The virtues and values otherwise imbibed, often by observing others, constitute the moral disposition of such individuals/groups. Perhaps, recognizing the influence which certain significant others in society could have on the younger once, especially adolescents of secondary school age, in a bid to curb insufficient punctuality and lack of honesty, the governors of Gombe and Bauchi States in Nigeria have introduced digital and biometric registers for their civil servants, and particularly for teachers in the case of Gombe State (Abdullahi, 2024; Kolawole, 2020). While the initiatives of the two states governors suggest an indictment of dishonest practices among the workforce, it nevertheless reveals the moral relevance of punctuality and honesty particularly in schools.

Given the impact of declining social values among individuals and groups in society, particularly students who constitute the needed future workforce in society, there is a need to curb the malaise by whatever means feasible. Values in this context are all encompassing, punctuality, honesty, tolerance, empathy, citizenship, patriotism and accountability among others. However, the concern of this paper is the first two components mentioned. Punctuality refers to the regularity of the time a student arrives early to specific schools' activities. It also entails promptness in carrying out school tasks as antithesis of procrastination (Ugwuanyi, et al, 2019). As a common saying goes, "punctuality is the soul of business" hence; it is valued in any sphere of society, social engagement, business engagement and academic activities engagement, among others. In the school situation for instance, punctuality is part of the preparation for readiness for classroom learning and for other daily school activities. A dearth of punctuality among individuals/groups has led to the loss of so many opportunities in society including the opportunity to be morally good students. Punctuality palpably encompasses all spheres of life hence, the need to instil this value in students.

Honesty however refers to a student's resolve to disengage from or to avoid getting involved in activities considered to be immoral. Such immoral activities could include cultism, examination malpractice, drug abuse, pilfering, and unwanted pregnancy among others. Honesty is considered to be very important not only to the students, but also to society at large. Honesty is demonstrated both in achieving set academic goals and in reporting lost but found items belonging to others. The academic goal set by students could be attainment of academic excellence. Most students, caught up in the web of academic difficulties, tend to takes certain consequential measure, including plagiarism, impersonation and monetary inducement, to resolve their academic problems. The failure of the school to help students overcome the challenges that may arise in situations that involve making honest and right decisions could lead to further decline of acceptable

and desired values in society. Theoretically, George Herbert Mead's 1934 theory of social self (Hurst, 2021) and Albert Bandura's 1973 theory of social learning (Kurt, (2020) lend support to the fact that behaviours that individuals are disposed to are those characters that they have observed in others. Specifically, Mead's theory of social self, on the one hand, is based on the principles of meaning and the relationship between the individual and the group to which he/she belongs (Hurst, 2021). The theory of social self postulates that the self (character) emerges from observing and interacting with others, responding to others opinion about oneself and internalizing opinions and feelings about oneself in which the "Me" and "I" perform a functional role in a world of moral meanings. For instance, Mead believes that there will be corresponding predisposition to respond appropriately when there is an understanding of moral action being communicated. Hence, meanings are individuals' responses when they reflect upon themselves.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory, on the other hand, is based on four elements which include observational learning, reciprocal determinism, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Kurt, 2020). Observational learning assumes that the process of character development and behaviour learning is a function of the presence of models that people are exposed to and from whom they learn and later act out what has been learnt. These models include parents, peers, teachers, social media, cliques, gangs and so on. Specifically, the theory suggests that the character which is assumed is the imitation of other people's behaviour which has been observed. That is, much of what we do is much of what we see others do.

Also, the theory speculates on reciprocal determinism which suggests that moral character that is desired can be sustained through positive reinforcement while the undesired character can be discouraged and minimized through negative reinforcement. For instance, a school that emphasizes on punctuality is more likely to have students who come early to all school activities. Social Learning Theory subscribes to individuals' self-regulation as an expression of determination to apply what has been learned. Specifically, the theory asserts the notion that individuals have cognitive capacities to create actions as well as rationalize their actions. In other words, to know the right may not always correspond to doing the right. Hence, the need for self-efficacy which is assumed to set in when there is believe that new knowledge (character) can be acquired and put into action.

By implication, there is need to understand the pattern of influence that models have on students in order to moderate the resulting moral character being developed. The theories show that students' character disposition is influenced by factors other than those present in the school. They equally show that students need help in their attempt to reconcile the character they have already imbibed and the ideal character disposition required of them. Hence, there is a correlation between Mead's theory of social self and Bandura's theory of social learning. The application of the combined principles of Mead's theory of social self and Bandura's social learning theory, for instance, would enable students to reflect positively on themselves. Apart from helping students to enhance their capacity to give appropriate meaning to action and gesture, they can also be encouraged to set moral goals, and keep records of their

encounter at school, home and in the host community, using journal. This measure could help students achieve and sustain the values of honesty and punctuality It is assumed that applying the elements of the two theories, that is, theory of social self and social learning theory, students would be enabled to discover themselves in their relationship with others, set moral goals, and work towards achieving the moral goals which would culminate in the moral character that they eventually develop.

Notwithstanding that the characters disposed to by students (punctuality and honesty) are those they have observed among members of the community to which they belong, public schools have over the years adopted the infusion approach as a measure to instil social values in students (Web Solutions LLC, 2021). However, this approach appears to have little or no impact on ideal values desired by society. The approach has been based on the idea that integrating common beliefs and customs of the divergent society in the curriculum would resolve the dilemma about values and virtues which constitute moral character development of individuals. Teachers have also been required to directly instruct students on social values using various moral character development curricula (Kuehn, 2021). In spite of these measures, dishonesty and lack of punctuality still persist among students. Thus, it can be reasonably suggested that further measures and approaches are required to help students imbibe the right types of values cherished by society. It is probably in line with this view that many moral character programmes and approaches continue to emerge, yet without congruent consensus (DeTienne, Ellertson, & Dudley, 2021).

Accordingly, researchers of various disciplines continue to seek for a more effective approach to instilling the right types of values in students from distinct perspectives and sometimes from overlapping variables. Social interaction is one of the variables that have been variously employed by both sociologists and social psychologists to investigate the phenomenon of social values and virtues as they constitute moral character development. Social interaction intervention refers to the application of Jennifer L. Scully's social skills and moral character programme (Scully, 2000) to moderate social interaction elements which are inherent in students' daily social activities. The concept of social interaction was propounded by a renowned sociologist, Erving Goffman in 1959 in a new field of study called micro sociology also known as social interaction (Brouwer, Drummond, & Willis, 2012).

Goffman used theatre as an analogy for social interaction in which it was observed that people's interaction showed patterns of cultural "scripts." In the theatre role performance, it was assumed that an individual may not know what part to play in a given situation and may therefore have to improvise the role as the situation unfolds. Hence, social interaction includes a large number of behaviours such that in *sociology,* interaction is usually divided into five categories - exchange, competition, cooperation, conflict and accommodation. Interestingly, both punctuality and honesty fall under the precinct of exchange as a component of social interaction. A number of studies have found increased disposition of various social values among students after the mediation of social interaction intervention. For instance, Ugwuanyi, et al (2019) found out that there was a reduction in

procrastination behaviour among students after the mediation of cognitive behaviour therapy-based programme.

Although there appears to be less literature that focus on punctuality, which might probably be because it has become a commonplace. There are however enormous studies that have examined the efficacy of social interaction intervention on honesty. These studies include but not limited to Hatta, et al (2022) who found out that Implicit Association Test (IAT) and a working memory (WM) task had marginal impact on implicit attitudes toward dishonesty. This was a study that seems to covey the idea that acquired social vices can be altered to achieve desired social values depending on the model to which an individual is exposed to. Equally, Spear, et al (2020) found out that cognitive control played significant role in mediating the conflict between reward and moral self-image in relation to cheating by developing a task which allowed for inconspicuously measuring spontaneous cheating on a trial-by-trial basis in the MRI scanner. It was found out that displacement in the configuration of the MRI scanner enabled the dishonest participants to be honest while it enabled the honest participants to be dishonest. The implication is that honesty is not dependent on an individual's moral default but as the function of cognitive control.

Also, Capraro, et al (2019) study aimed to determine time pressure and honesty in a deception game. Time pressure was manipulated against time delay in the deception game. The participants were selected using the online labour market Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT). The participants were asked two comprehension questions: one regarding the choice that maximizes their payoff, and the other regarding the choice that maximizes the matched participant's payoff with a timer to pressure the participants under five seconds. However, participants could take as long as they wanted to decide. It was found out that people were more honest under time pressure indicating the positive effect of the package on honesty. Thus, under time pressure, the participants were more honest than those acting under time delay. Thus, time pressure increases honesty in a deception game.

In addition, Hermann and Ostermaier (2018) have demonstrated that honesty can be promoted in social interaction. The study was based on the hypothesis that honesty depends on social distance. The participants were to share an amount of money with their partners who unknown to them was actually the researcher. The activities in the experiment involved the participants in one group casting a dice and reporting the outcome which was then recorded. The participants were given opportunity to lie about the outcome in order to earn more money. It was found out that dishonesty increased with social distance. It was also found out that the participants responded depending on their perception of inequity and honesty as moral values.

More so, Wiid, Cant and Neikerk (2013) study aimed to determine whether an individual's acute sense of moral behaviour will have effect on their concern towards ethical misconduct in their business environment. The findings of the study indicated that a strong relationship exist between sense of ethical concern and immoral behaviour in Nigerian business environment. The findings also revealed that entrepreneurs who had acute sense of moral behaviour were concerned about ethical misconducts and dilemmas in the business

environment. In a nutshell, organizations and groups are aware of the need to control certain manifest social malaise particularly at school and at the workplace in general. However, it is not just enough to put certain deterrent measures, the ideal could be feasible when individuals internalize the values and live practically by it by exposing them to intervention programme.

Statement of the Problem

Punctuality and honesty constitute parts of the challenges faced in most public schools in Gombe State and Nigeria in general, particularly amongst students. While punctuality defines the regularity of students to school, it constitutes a challenge as most students fail to come to school regularly; even when they do, most of them arrive behind the resumption time for academic activities. This is not only a setback for them academically; it erodes on the overall outcome of educational learning. To compound the issue, the students concerned tend to take to dishonest acts by getting involved in cheating, pilfering, conniving with other students to impersonate them during attendance roll call in class and during written quiz and examination. Given the established potency of social interaction intervention in enhancing moral virtues and values among students as obtained in literature, this study was specifically undertaken to ascertain the efficacy of the intervention in ameliorating lack of punctuality and honesty among public secondary school students in Gombe State. This study is phenomenal perhaps as it could contribute to the measures to tackle the incidents of students who probably claim to their parents that they are regular in school whereas in reality, they constitute parts of the alarming number of out-of-school children.

Objectives

This study was aimed to:

1. compare the difference that exists between the punctuality mean scores of students exposed to SII and those who were not;
2. find out the difference that exists between the honesty mean scores of students exposed to SII and those who were not;

Research Questions

1. What difference exists between the punctuality mean scores of students exposed to SII and those who were not?
2. What difference exists between the honesty mean scores of students exposed to SII and those who were not?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the punctuality mean scores of students exposed to SII and those not exposed.
2. There is no significant difference between the honesty mean scores of students exposed to SII and those not exposed.

Methodology

The study adopted the quasi experimental design, specifically, the pre-test and post-test design. The design was considered to be suitable for the study because intact groups were used in which one experimental group was exposed to the Social Interaction Intervention and then compared to the one control group which received a placebo – Civic Education Values. Also, the design was considered because the school authorities were most willing to consent to an experimental study being carried out if intact groups are used. The design equally enabled the researcher to compare the post-test mean scores of the two groups, and also to use the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) technique to compare the mean scores of the two groups.

The population of the study consisted of all the 1,786 Senior Secondary School (SSS2) students in 14 public Senior Secondary Schools for the 2019/2020 academic session in Akko Local Government Area (LGA) of Gombe State, Nigeria. The population comprised of male and female students with different moral character dispositions and who came from different socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. This population of students had been exposed to all forms of social vices and immoral acts found in schools that were in the remote areas of the LGA as well as those that were proximate to the State capital. The choice of SSS2 students was because they were expected to be operating at the post-conventional level of moral reasoning proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg, a renowned social psychologist. At this stage, the population of the students were expected to understand the moral principles that underlie the norms and values of the school and the society at large, as well as the inherent consequences. Thus, the population had common characteristics that were considered to be adequate for the study. The sample of the study was made up of 100 SS2 students in two selected schools out of the 14 public Senior Secondary Schools in Akko LGA. The sample comprised of two groups: experimental and control groups.

The experimental group comprised of 47 participants consisting of 21 male and 26 female students while the control group comprised of 53 participants consisting of 27 male and 26 female students to make a total sample of 100 participants. Simple random sampling technique was in assigning the two groups to either experimental group or control group and in selecting the two schools for the study as well as the intact classes for the study from the arms of SSS2 classes in the two schools for the study. The data for the study was collected using a rating scale titled: "Moral Character Development Rating Scale (MCDRS) developed by the principal researcher. The MCDRS was developed by applying the 5 basic steps in development of an instrument which are: the consideration of the objectives of the study, literature review, consultation of experts writing of the items, corrections of draft instrument and validation. Hence, the items on the MCDRS were developed based on existing literature that addresses specific research objectives/questions and the hypotheses for the study.

The items are structured on a 4-point scale to guide the respondents in choosing the options that may be applicable to them. The MCDRS has two sections: Section A and B. Section A elicits the demographic information of the respondents such as participant code number and gender while section B contains 28 items on moral character subsections of Students' Moral

Character disposition which were tolerance, empathy, honesty and punctuality. The instrument developed was subjected to the scrutiny of experts in Educational Psychology Unit and Research, Test and Measurement Unit as well as the researcher's supervisor. The experts were requested to scrutinize the MCDRS for appropriate wordings and structure of items suitable for the level of study participants. For example, factors like tolerance, punctuality, empathy, and honesty were structured appropriately for the level of the students. The instrument that addresses the specific moral character development variables was revised and used as one instrument on moral character development. The Moral Character Development Rating Scale was further subjected to validity and reliability after the pilot study using Cronbach's alpha statistical method for quality control and to assess the internal consistency of reliability of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient index of 0.840 was found for the MCDRS which can be considered effective reliability for judging a scale.

The MCDRS was administered as pre-test in order to establish the moral character development level of the study groups before exposure to the treatment and placebo respectively. It was also administered on the study groups as post-test after eight weeks of intervention involving two sections per week. The sessions were loaded with activities such as group projects, personal value journal on a day-to-day social encounter at school, home and in the participants' immediate environment as well as those that involved the participants and the principal researcher together with the research assistants. After the eight weeks of intervention and the placebo, the MCDRS was administered on the participants in their respective classes for duration of 20 minutes. The participants were requested to complete the MCDRS immediately it was administered on them and after which the completed instrument were retrieved with the help of the research assistants. The results obtained after exposure to the treatment were compared with the pre-test scores. Any observed differences in the pre-test scores obtained were attributed to the effects of the treatment package. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics of mean while the hypotheses were tested, using the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Research Question One

What difference exists between the punctuality mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not?

Table 1: Differences in Punctuality Mean Score of Students Exposed to SII and those who were not

		Pre test		**Post test**		
Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Mean Difference
Control	53	17.00	1.81	18.26	3.84	1.26
Experimental	47	16.94	1.74	29.83	3.32	12.89

Table 1 shows the mean score obtained on punctuality between students exposed to SII and those that were not. The result reveals the mean punctuality score of students exposed to SII

increased by 12.89, while that of students who were not exposed increased by 1.26. This result indicates that students exposed to SII gained more score on punctuality than their counterparts that were not exposed. This implies that the punctuality among the exposed students improved more than students who were not exposed to SII. Therefore, there is a difference between the punctuality mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not in favour of students exposed to SII.

Research Question Two

What difference exists between the honesty mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not?

Table 2

Differences in Honesty Mean Score of Students Exposed to SII and those who were not

	Pre test			Post test				
Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Mean Difference		
Control	53	15.92	0.81	16.47	2.69	0.55	2.69	0.55
Experimental	47	16.09	0.97	23.96	3.40	7.87		

Table 2 reveals the mean honesty scores obtained by students exposed to SII and those that were not exposed to SII. The result reveals students exposed to SII gained mean honesty score of 7.87, while their counterparts who were not exposed gained mean honesty score of 0.55. Result show that the mean gain in honesty score obtained by students exposed to SII was higher than that obtained by students not exposed to SII (7.87 versus 0.55). This result indicates that there is more improvement in the honesty of students exposed to SII than those not exposed which was only a slight increase in honesty. Therefore, there is a difference between the honesty mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not in favour of students exposed to SII.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the punctuality mean score of students exposed to SII and those not exposed.

Table 3: Tests of Between Subjects Effects on Punctuality Post-test

Source	**Type 111 Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F-calc.**	**Sig.**
Corrected Model	3339.680	2	1669.840	127.809	.000
Intercept	757.185	1	757.185	57.955	.000
Punctuality Pretest	7.621	1	7.621	0.583	.447
Group	3325.192	1	3325.192	254.508	.000
Error	1267.320	97	13.065		
Total	60776.00	100			
Corrected Total	**4607.00**	**99**			

a. R Squared = .725 (Adjusted R Squared = .719), F-critical= 3.94.

Table 3 shows the summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of students' post-test punctuality score between students exposed to SII and those who were not exposed to the intervention. The F-calculated of 254.508 was obtained, which is greater than the F-critical of 3.94. The P-value is .000 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the P-value = **.000<0.05**. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in punctuality mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not. This means that after adjusting the covariance (pre-test punctuality score), there is significant difference in punctuality mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not. Based on the mean gain in punctuality score, students exposed to SII were more punctual to school than their counterparts who were not exposed to SII (12.89 versus 1.26).

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the honesty mean score of students exposed to SII and those not exposed.

Table 4

Tests of Between Subjects Effects on Honesty Post-test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-calc.	Sig.
Corrected Model	1400.562	2	700.281	75.272	.000
Intercept	79.718	1	79.718	8.569	.004
Honesty Pretest	4.695	1	4.695	.505	.479
Group	1369.780	1	1369.780	147.235	.000
Error	902.428	97	9.303		
Total	42263.00	100			
Corrected Total	**2302.990**	**99**			

a. R Squared = .608 (Adjusted R Squared = .600), F-critical= 3.94

Table 4 shows the summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of students' post-test honesty score between students exposed to SII and those who were not exposed to the intervention. The F-calculated of 147.235 was obtained, which is greater than the F-critical of 3.94. The P-value is .000 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the P-value = **.000<0.05**. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in honesty mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not. This means that after adjusting for the covariance (pre-test honesty score), there is significant difference in honesty mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not. Based on the mean gain in honesty score, students exposed to SII gained significant higher honesty character than students who were not exposed to SII (7.87 versus 0.55).

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant difference in punctuality mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not hence, **F**-calculated **= 254.508** > **F**-critical = **3.94** and P-value = **.000<0.05 (**see table 9). This means that after adjusting for the covariance (pre-test punctuality score), there is significant difference in punctuality mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not. This implies that students exposed to SII were more punctual to school than their counterparts who were not exposed to SII (**12.89** versus **1.26**). The result obtained aligns with Alam (2013); Kataria (2018), and Khan, Ahmad, Ali, Muntaz, and Ullah (2019), who have found out that there is a positive correlation between time management, punctuality, self-discipline, social adjustment and home environment, respectively.

Therefore, those exposed to SII were able to improve on their punctuality to school probably because the intervention emphasized on discipline and personal commitment to achieving set tasks. Hence, the participants may have found out that schooling could only be interesting as they would perceive it to be. Also, the result alluded to Ugwuanyi, Elejere, Uguanyi, Eya, Okeke, Gana, et al (2019) and Battistich (2003) who reported that generally, most students try to avoid academic underachievement, school failure and procrastination by being regularly punctual to every school activity. Thus, the improvement in punctuality among those exposed to SII may have been triggered by the emphasis on the importance of punctuality as well as the dangers of procrastination in the achievement of academic success and in the discharge of social responsibilities that may be assigned to them in the future.

The findings equally indicated that there is a significant difference in honesty mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not (**F**-calculated = 147.235 > **F**-critical = **3.94**) and P-value = **.000<0.05** (see table 10). This means that after adjusting for the covariance (pre-test honesty score), there is significant difference in honesty mean score of students exposed to SII and those who were not (**7.87** versus **0.55**) in favour of students exposed to SII. The result obtained aligns with Hermann and Ostermaier (2018) and Capraso, Schulz, David and Rand (2019), who have expressed the view that effective moral character intervention, could ensure high integrity among students. Integrity encompasses academic honesty and all other tasks within and outside of the school activities such as games and peer influence when under pressure.

Perhaps the students exposed to SII were able to come to terms with the fact that the virtue of honesty is cherished in society and in the school particularly. More so, the fact that students were practically exposed to the relevance of honesty in society may have further propelled their avowed commitment to honesty. Specifically, it could be said that the emphasis on the virtue of honesty which was more or less "localized" in agreement with Nwankwo and Kanu (2013), helped to inculcate the virtue in the participants. Honesty was vigorously emphasized on as value cherished in society. The participants may have also realized that the virtue of honesty is not alien or a thing that is not achievable. More so, the emphasis on dependability

and positive assertion which is in agreement with Olatunji (2012) could have also helped to ameliorate immoral act of dishonesty among those exposed to SII.

Conclusion

The study found that Social Interaction Intervention significantly enhanced punctuality and honesty among public secondary school students in Gombe State, Nigeria. The findings suggest that Social interaction intervention can be an efficacious measure of improving punctuality and honesty particularly among students.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that secondary schools should implement Social Interaction Intervention programmes to enhance punctuality and honesty among students.
2. Teachers should also receive training on Social Interaction Intervention not only to effectively implement the programme, but to also exemplify moral models..
3. There should equally be parental involvement in reinforcing Social Interaction Intervention principles at home to in order to ensure consistency.

Ethical Consideration

The study participants gave their written consent to participate in the study and they were guaranteed their confidentiality as the response they gave was used strictly for the purpose of the study and was not to be attributed to them in any way.

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