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CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR CURBING LATENESS TO SCHOOL AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the causes, consequences and counselling strategies for curbing lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design, while the population of the study was 1262 school counsellors in all the secondary schools in Imo state. The sample size of the study comprised seven hundred and thirty-eight(738) counsellors drawn through accidental sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Causes, Consequences and Counselling Strategies for Curbing Lateness to School Questionnaire (CCCSCLSQ). Data collected for the study were analyzed using Arithmetic mean. Results from the study showed that the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students are problem of transportation, parental neglect, early morning

hawking, laziness on the part of the students, keeping late nights, inability of school principals and teachers to maintain discipline in schools, uninteresting method of teaching by the teacher and bad company are the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students. The result also showed that low self-esteem and anxiety and proliferation of secondary schools without boarding facilities are not the causes of lateness to school among the secondary school students. More so, results of the study also indicated that the consequences of lateness to school among secondary school students are truancy, and dropping out of school, poor academic performance, among others. Finally, the results revealed that the counselling strategies used by counsellors in curbing lateness to school among students in Imo state are sensitization programs, seminars, use of role modelling, reinforcement, self management technique, cognitive restructuring, rational emotive behavioural therapy, among others. It was recommended among others, that Counsellors should fashion out effective counselling strategies for handling the problem of lateness to school among secondary school students.

Keywords: Causes, Consequences, Counselling Strategies, Lateness, School, Students.

Introduction

Globally, schools are regarded ascentres for transformational learning and acquisition of life skills. Hence, students are enrolled in schools not only to acquire knowledge and understanding of the world phenomenon but also to become better citizens and contribute positively to the growth and development of the society (Ofoegbu & Igbokwe, 2021). According to Malik, Ladhani and Bhamani (2013), schools through their curriculum inculcate the significance of social skills in learners in order to properly equip them with the required skills to become responsible members of the society. Undoubtedly, for the school goals to be effectively achieved, it is very important that students take the activities of the school seriously and stick to the time scheduled at all times. However, it has been observed that some students usually come to their schools behind schedule, and this maladaptive behaviour is referred to as lateness to school.

Lateness is a term used to describe people not showing up on time (Lauby, 2009). According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2010), lateness is defined as a situation where an individual arrives after the proper, scheduled or usual time. Lateness is synonymous with tardiness, which implies being slow to act or slow to respond, thus not meeting up with proper or usual timing (Breezes, Woosh, Batt & Fine, 2010). Ojigbo and Obeta (2013) defined lateness to school as the failure to be present at appropriate times for school activities which could lead to deficiencies in the attainment of the goals and objectives of the school. For the purpose of study, lateness to school is a maladaptive behaviour that warrants students to come to school behind the officially stipulated time.

As people undergoing training to become better citizens, students are expected to be able to properly manage their time and attend to school activities within the specified duration. Supporting the above assertion, Chujor and Kennedy (2014) emphasized that the success of the school in carrying out its primary role of educating and socializing students is contingent on students attending school punctually and regularly. However, lateness to school has been identified as one of the most common maladaptive behaviours among our secondary school

students today (Chima & Nnodum, 2006). Ofoegbu and Igbokwe (2021) observed that many secondary school students are not conscious of time, which culminates in their lateness to school.

Studies have indicated many reasons for students' lateness to school (Anyamene, Nwokolo & Ngwakwe, 2017). For instance, Ofoegbu and Igbokwe (2021) enumerated the causes of lateness to school to include problem of transportation, early morning hawking, laziness on the part of the students, domestic duties, which have been attributed to students' lateness to school are mainly home-based and therefore may be directly tackled from the home through the students' determination and self-will to manage their own behaviour, bearing in mind that the primary goal of education is to assist individuals to become more independent in managing their own behaviour). Wale (2005) observed that with the proliferation of secondary schools which do not provide boarding facilities, students' lateness to school is on the increase. Moreso, Anagbogu (2002) outlined various contributing factors to the problem of lateness among students such as bad company, keeping late nights and uninteresting method of teaching by the teacher. According to Santillano (2010), personality traits such as low self-esteem and anxiety can lead to lateness. Santillano further noted that lateness to school is more prevalent among lower-socio-economic population.

Lateness to school has various negative consequences to the students, the school and the society in general. Ogbuvbu (2008) observed that lateness to school may lead to truancy and dropping out of school. Chima and Nnodum (2006) noted that lateness to school does not only hamper students' academic output, it is overtly a cog in the wheel of the quest for discipline in our secondary schools. According to Anagbogu (2002), lateness to school may lead to the students telling lies, cheating, keeping malice, quarrelling, missing class lessons and failing examinations. In addition, Anyamene, Nwokolo and Ngwakwe (2017) pointed out that students who come late to school are severely punished, they are beaten, flogged and kept under the sun kneeling down for long hours; all in a bid to see if they will either stop coming late to school, or at least reduce the rate at which they come late to school. When students come to class late, it can confuse the flowing of a lecture or discussion, distract other students, and disturb learning teaching process. Moreover, lateness can become frequent and infect other students. Students who are latecomers absent themselves from morning functions and morning assemblies where instructions are given to students. At times, they absent from some of their lessons and the consequences are always discernable in their learning outcome.

Most importantly, valuable learning time is lost when students are absent or late". Therefore, schools expect students to attend all learning and teaching sessions. Thus, students should come on time for classes. Late arrival students are disruptive and inequitable to other class members (Abubakare, Bashir & Vera, 2015). Therefore, students' lateness behaviour is considered as an educational problem and epidemic diseases which spread and infect other students.

Several methods may be used to tackle the problem of late coming in schools, ranging from punishment to luring pupils with new incentives. In Nigeria, school administrators resort to locking of school gate after 8:00a.m, flogging, picking or weeding around the school compound (Ofoegbu & Igbokwe, 2021). Ihiegbulem (2016) asserted that sensitizing students through moral instructions, seminars, workshops and media programmes can also help in

reducing lateness to school. Other strategies include self-management, positive reinforcement, and token economy (Olorunfemi-Olabisi & Akomolafe, 2013; Uams, 2017; Oguzie, Obi & Nnadi, 2019). In addition, Oguzie and Nwokolo (2019) observed that cognitive behavioural therapy can also be used as an effective counselling strategy in modifying maladaptive behaviours among students.

Lateness to school is at the top of the list in the nature and frequency of student's indiscipline in schools (Okwilagwe, 2017). Actually, time is like a sword; if people fail to cut it, it may cut them. Student's lateness to school may transcend into others life activities in adulthood, and negatively affect their functioning and contributions as integral members of the society. It is therefore necessary to check the habit of being late, especially at the early stage of secondary school in order to prevent its formation and consequent adverse effects in future life. In view of the problems posed by lateness to school in the Nigerian education system, this study was therefore necessitated to determine the causes, consequences and strategies for curbing lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State?
2. What are the consequences of lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State?
3. What are the counselling strategies of curbing lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State?

Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. According Nworgu(2015), descriptive survey study is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The population of the study was 1262 school counsellors in all the secondary schools in Imo state. The sample size of the study was seven hundred and thirty-eight (738) counsellors drawn through accidental sampling technique from the entire population.

The instrument used to collect data for the study was a structured questionnaire captioned Causes, Consequence and Counselling Strategies of Curbing Lateness to School Questionnaire (CCCSCLSQ). The instrument was validated by three experts in the Department of guidance and counselling, and the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest method using a sample of 20 counsellors in Abia State which is outside the study area. The instrument yielded a coefficient Cronbach Alpha value of 0.75. The researchers administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents through direct delivery method with the help of four research assistants. Data collected in the study were analysed using the arithmetic mean.

Results

Table 1: Mean rating of respondents on the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State

S/N	ITEM(S)	Mean (x)	Remark
	Causes of lateness to school		
1.	Problem of transportation	3.02	Agreed
2.	Parental neglect	3.12	Agreed
3.	Early morning hawking	2.73	Agreed
4.	Laziness on the part of the students	3.02	Agreed
5.	Low self-esteem and anxiety	1.07	Disagreed
6.	Keeping late nights	2.83	Agreed
7.	Inability of school Principals and Teachers to maintain discipline in schools	3.15	Agreed
8.	Uninteresting method of teaching by the teacher	3.26	Agreed
9.	Bad company	2.58	Agreed
10.	Proliferation of secondary schools without boarding facilities	1.22	Disagreed

Data in Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed that problem of transportation, parental neglect, early morning hawking, laziness on the part of the students, keeping late nights, inability of principals and teachers to maintain discipline in schools, uninteresting method of teaching by the teacher and bad company are the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students with mean scores of between 2.58 and 3.15. However, the respondents disagreed that low self-esteem and anxiety and proliferation of secondary schools without boarding facilities are among the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students with mean scores of 1.07 and 1.22 respectively.

Table 2: Mean rating of respondents on the consequences of lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State

S/N	ITEM(S)	Mean (x)	Remark
	Consequences of lateness to school		
1.	It leads to truancy and dropping out of school	3.08	Agreed
2.	Poor academic performance	3.22	Agreed
3.	Lateness to school hampers students' academic output	3.01	Agreed
4.	It makes students to miss class lessons and failing examinations	2.81	Agreed
5.	Lateness to school leads to punishment	2.68	Agreed
6.	It causes confusion and distractions during lessons	2.53	Agreed
7.	Lateness to school causes loss of valuable learning time	2.67	Agreed
8.	Lateness to school leads to examination malpractice	2.58	Agreed
9.	Students who come late to school can fall into crime	2.94	Agreed
10.	It can infect other students	2.52	Agreed

Data contained in table 2 revealed that the respondents agreed thatthe consequences of lateness to school among secondary school students are truancy and dropping out of school,

poor academic performance, it hampers students' academic output, making students to miss class lessons and failing examinations, punishment, confusion and distraction during lessons, loss of valuable learning time, examination malpractice and infecting other students with mean scores ranging from 2.52 to 3.22.

Table 3: Mean rating of respondents on the counselling strategies for curbing lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State

S/N	ITEM(S)	Mean (x)	Remark
	Counselling strategies for curbing lateness to school		
1.	By organizing sensitization programs	2.83	Agreed
2.	By organizing seminars	2.96	Agreed
3.	By the use of role modelling	3.00	Agreed
4.	By using reinforcement such as token economy	2.52	Agreed
5.	Counselling students using self-management technique	3.41	Agreed
6.	Counselling students using cognitive behavioural therapy	2.80	Agreed
7.	By the use of rational emotive behavioural therapy	2.57	Agreed
8.	Punishment such as cutting flogging, grass, pick pins among others	1.04	Disagreed
9.	Clients presenting themselves to the counsellor during morning assembly	3.20	Agreed
10.	By suspension	2.01	Disagreed

Data presented in table 3 indicated that the respondents agreed that sensitization programs, seminars, use of role modelling, reinforcement, self management technique, cognitive restructuring, rational emotive behavioural therapy and clients presenting themselves to the counsellor during morning assembly are counselling strategies for curbing lateness to school among secondary school students, with mean scores ranging from 2.52 to 3.20. However, the respondents disagreed that punishment and suspension are the counselling strategies used by in curbing lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State with mean scores of 1.04 and 2.01, respectively.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study showed that the respondents agreed that problem of transportation, parental neglect, early morning hawking, laziness on the part of the students, keeping late nights, inability of principals and teachers to maintain discipline in schools, uninteresting method of teaching by the teacher and bad company are the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students are the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students in Imo State. This finding is in line with previous report by (Anagbogu, 2002; Anyamene, Nwokolo & Ngwakwe, 2017; Ofoegbu & Igbokwe, 2021) who observed that many students come to school late because of problem of transportation, early morning hawking, laziness on the part of the students, domestic duties, among others. However, this finding contradicts the finding by (Wale, 2005; Santillano, 2010) who found that proliferation of secondary schools without boarding facilities and personality traits such as low self-esteem and anxiety are among the causes of lateness to school among the secondary school students.

More so, the findings of the study revealed that truancy and dropping out of school, poor academic performance, it hampers students' academic output, making students to miss class lessons and failing examinations, punishment, confusion and distraction during lessons, loss of valuable learning time, examination malpractice and infecting other students are the consequences of lateness to school among secondary school students. This finding is in consonance with the report of Anagbogu (2002) and Ogbuvbu (2008) who found that that lateness to school may lead to truancy and dropping out of school, students telling lies, cheating, keeping malice, quarrelling, missing class lessons and failing examinations. In addition, Anyamene, Nwokolo and Ngwakwe (2017) observed that students who come late to school are severely punished, they are beaten, flogged and kept under the sun kneeling down for long hours; all in a bid to see if they will either stop coming late to school, or at least reduce the rate at which they come late to school.

Finally, the findings of the study showed that the respondents agreed that the counselling strategies used by counsellors in Imo State for curbing lateness to school among students are sensitization programs, seminars, use of role modelling, reinforcement, self management technique, cognitive behavioural therapy, rational emotive behavioural therapy and clients presenting themselves to the counsellor during morning assembly. The above finding is in consonance with the findings of Ihiegbulem (2016) who posited that sensitizing students through moral instructions, seminars, workshops and media programmes can also help in reducing lateness to school. This finding also agrees with the reports of previous researchers (Olorunfemi-Olabisi & Akomolafe, 2013; Uams, 2017; Oguzie, Obi & Nnadi, 2019) who observed that self-management, positive reinforcement, and token economy can be used to handle the problem of lateness to school among students. The finding further supports assertion of Oguzie and Nwokolo (2019), who posited that cognitive behavioural therapy can also be used as an effective counselling strategy in modifying maladaptive behaviours among students.

However, the respondents disagreed with the useof punishment and suspension as counselling strategies for curbing lateness to school among secondary school students. This finding contradicts the report of Ofoegbu and Igbokwe (2021) who sustained the useof punishment and suspension in curbing lateness to school among students. One possible reason for this finding may be as a result of the fight against the use of corporal punishment in the contemporary education system.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students are problem of transportation, parental neglect, early morning hawking, laziness on the part of the students, keeping late nights, inability of principals and teachers to maintain discipline in schools, uninteresting method of teaching by the teacher and bad company are the causes of lateness to school among secondary school students. It was however concluded that low self-esteem and anxiety and proliferation of secondary schools without boarding facilities are not among the causes of lateness to school among the secondary school students. More so, it was concluded that the consequences of lateness to school among secondary school students are truancy and dropping out of school, poor academic performance, it hampers students' academic output, making students to miss class lessons and failing examinations, punishment, confusion and distraction during lessons,

loss of valuable learning time, examination malpractice and infecting other students. Finally, the study concluded that the counselling strategies used in curbing lateness to school are sensitization programs, seminars, use of role modelling, reinforcement, self management technique, cognitive behavioural therapy, rational emotive behavioural therapy and clients presenting themselves to the counsellor during morning assembly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should fashion out effective counselling strategies for handling the problem of lateness to school among secondary school students.
2. Parents and care-givers should stop sending their children and wards to early morning hawking so as to avoid them coming late to school.
3. Counsellors should be posted to every secondary school in Nigeria and allowed to focus more in counselling students. This will enable them to provide adequate professional counselling services to students.
4. Teachers, Principals, Counsellors, and other school staff should serve as role models by taking their jobs serious and always be punctual to school.
5. School administrators should maintain adequate inspection, supervision and monitoring of students regarding attendance and punctuality.

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