

# **POPULATION TRENDS, YOUTH DEVIANT BEHAVIOURS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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## **Abstract**

*In recent times, population trends show that many developing countries like Nigeria have large young population because of recent decades of high fertility and negative attitude towards family planning. The effect of the uncontrolled birth per woman is reinforced by the recent improvements in child survival. The 2013 World population data include Nigeria among the world's 10 largest countries in population with a population of 173.6 million people. The data also estimated that the population Nigeria to rise to 440.4 million by 2050. The data revealed that 44 percent of the total populations are under 15years. The high population and its accompanying Urbanization coupled with the on-going economic crisis (economic, cultural and religious) in Nigeria have greatly led to increased youth deviant behaviours in Nigerian schools. The analysis of the 2013 world population data which put 44 percent of Nigeria's total population under 15years implies that many of them fall under primary and Secondary School age. This explains the choice of the Secondary School level for this study. This study identify and discuss the enrolment trends in Secondary Schools located in Urban and rural areas of Imo State Nigeria, the forms of youth deviant behaviours prevalent among the students and the management demands on the school managers.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The population trend in Nigeria as in the case with most developing countries shows a steady increase in the population of the youth. This has been attributed to recent decades of high fertility and improvement in child survival, coupled with the fact that most Nigerian women due to religious and cultural belief have negative attitude towards family planning and the use of contraceptives. Also,

the high rate of early marriage (before age 18) among Nigerian girls, especially in the Northern part of the country denies them the benefit of being properly educated and expose them to the dangers of having children early in life. This results in their having more children than their peers who stay in school longer and married later. The consequence of the uncontrolled birth among most Nigerian women is the reason for the inclusion of Nigeria among the world's ten largest countries. The 2013 world population data put the population of Nigeria at 173.6 million people and also estimated a rise to 440.4 million in 2050. The data revealed that 44 percent of the population are under 15 years. The analysis of the population data in relation to school age and level show that 44 percent of Nigeria are within primary and secondary school age. Secondary education in Nigeria is splinted into junior secondary school (J.S.S) and senior secondary school (S.S.S) levels of 3 years duration each.

In most cases, both the J.S.S and S.S.S schools exist in the same premises with separate principals. This levels of education is an acknowledged bridge between primary and tertiary levels. it broad aims according to NPE (2004) is useful leaving within the society secondary schools principal-ship in Nigeria has become a herculean

tasks as a result of the increasing incidence of deviant behavior among students, especially at SSS levels (15-18 years) which follow within the period of transition from childhood to adulthood.

This level marks the inception of youthful age in line with World Health Organization (1988) conceptualization of youth as persons aged between 15 & 24 years. In the same vein, the United Nation defined a youth as one between the ages of 15 and 25. Generally, youths whether seen as good or bad have one common trait that runs in them; this trait is described by Mbakwem (2009) as 'energy'. This energy that characterizes youthful age cuts across socio-cultural, religious and economic backgrounds. It is the harnessing and application of this energy of the youths that make them products of, leaders and builder or fraudster and destructive agents (Mdubuike, 2002). It is noteworthy that schools at all levels are saddled with the enormous task of channeling the youthful energy positively for the benefit of the individuals and the immediate society and the global community. In recent times, an increase in youth deviancy have been witnessed in different forms and depth across the globe, Nigeria inclusive. The increase in manifestation of deviant behaviour in

Nigeria secondary schools calls for a well-articulated and coordinated study on its nature and possible relationship with population trends vis-à-vis student's enrolment in Nigeria secondary schools. This will invariably have some impact on the administrative capacity of the school administrators (principals). This forms the focus of the study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Schools are expected to equip the youth with necessary skills to enable them contribute meaningfully to their community and national development. In addition to this, secondary schools prepared the youth for higher education. Contrary to expectations of having secondary school providing its students as youth the opportunities of imbibing and leaving disciplined life, deviant behavior, from petty offenses to capital offenses seems to be on the increase.

This no doubt poses a lot of challenge to the school administrators as educational leaders in the duty of developing each student's total personality to the fullest in the face of sustained increase in population. How best secondary school administrators should meet up with this challenges forms the problem of this study.

## Research Questions

1. What is the enrollment trend in Imo State Secondary Schools in relation to geographical zones and locations?
2. What is the form of deviant behaviour among secondary school students in relations to gender and location?
3. How does a school principal manage deviant behaviour?

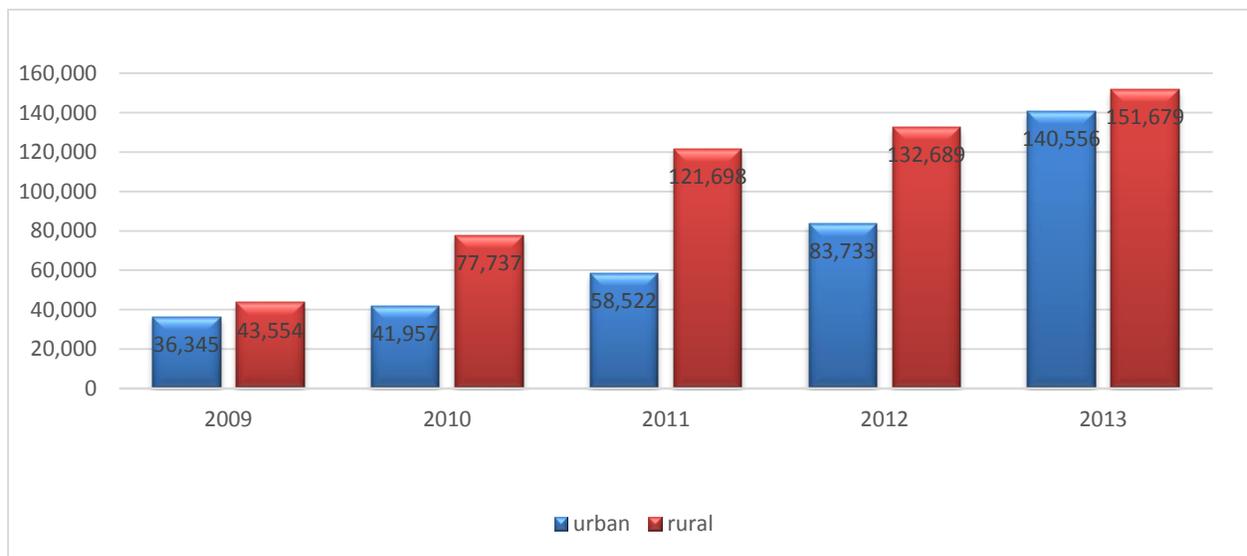


Figure 1: Enrollment trend in Imo State Nigeria

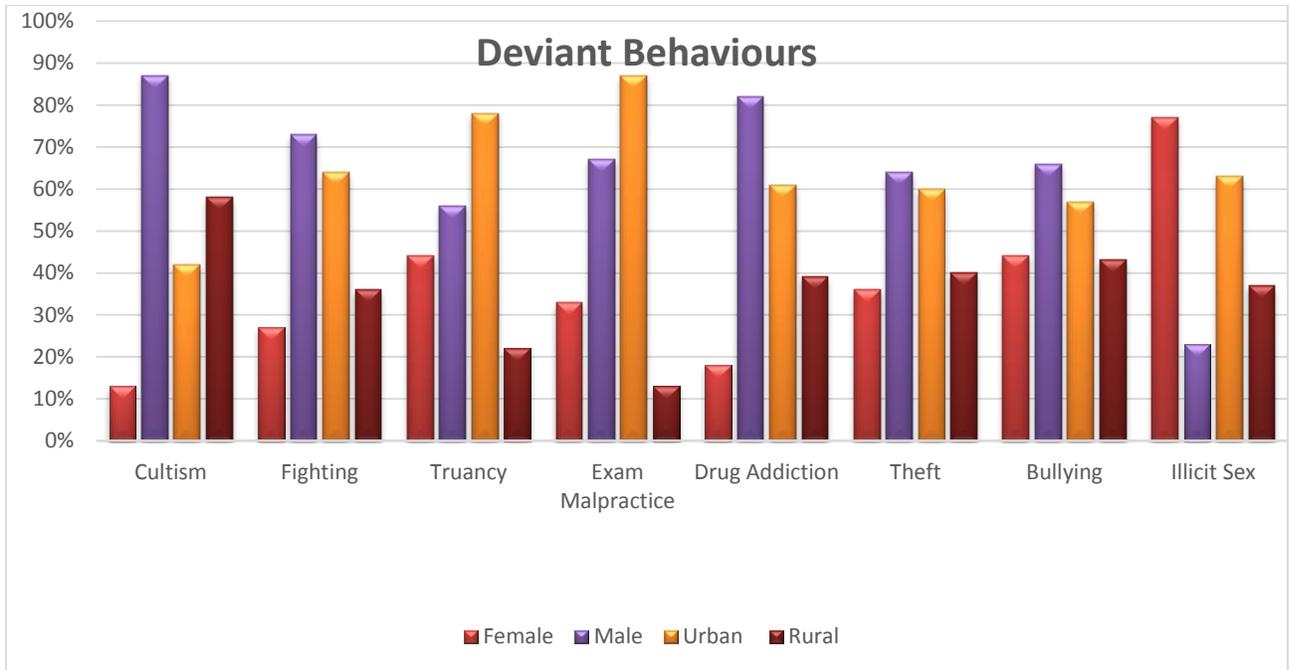


Figure 2: Forms of Deviant Behaviour among Secondary School Students in Relations to Gender and Location

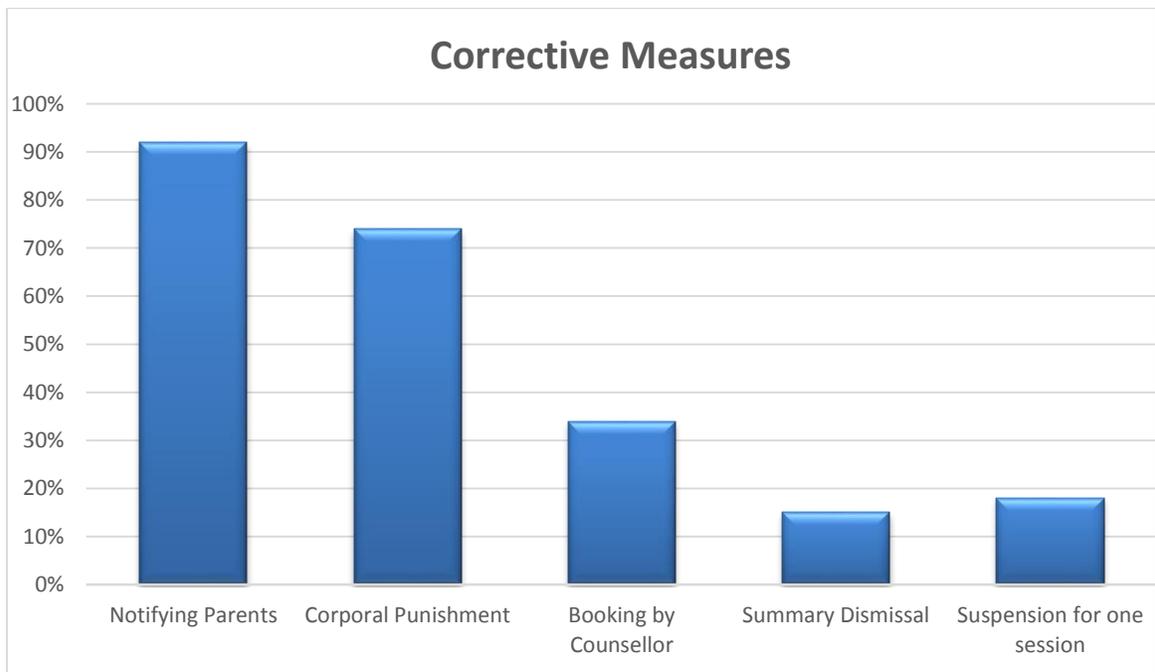


Figure 3: Measures Adopted by School Administrators in Managing Deviant Behaviour

A review of the graphs show that the schools are confronted with different types of deviant behaviours ranging from the minor (Fighting, bullying, truancy and exam malpractice) to the major (Cultism, drug addiction, theft and illicit sex). These deviant behaviours are similar irrespective of schools, location and gender of the students. However, involvement in cultism, fighting and bully are exhibited more by the male students, especially those in urban schools. This may be attributed to high population growth with its accompanying consequence. The process of modernization in the urban areas according to Adepaju (2002) has brought in its wake myriad of problems of congested living conditions, unemployment, alcoholism, prostitution abandoned children, drug addiction and so on.

This situation is different from students in schools located in the rural areas who seem to have less-deviancy prone; though they scored more in fighting than truancy than their urban counterparts. They tends to be more involved in local organization that give them some degree of responsibility unlike their urban counterparts. The high incidence of truancy among the rural students has been attributed to the fact that most of them absent themselves from

schools on popular market days and farming seasons to help their parents in the farm since most of them are farmers. It is pertinent to note that notifying parents is the most used corrective measure adopted by teachers and school heads in managing deviant behaviors. This is not surprising since the home or the family constitute one of the triangular prop that supports our educational system alongside the school and the society. These three must of a necessity relate closely and interact with the child since our education system is child-centred and community oriented. The active interaction results in making disciplined behavior an automatic and natural attribute of the child since discipline according to Akubue (1991) must begin at home, goes to school to be reinforced and returns to the society to shed its light.

However, the rapid change in African societies as a result of gradual disappearance of the extended family system that hitherto provided the youth with networks of kith and kin that were very willing to contribute to the up keep and discipline of the family members, coupled with the widespread of poverty have eroded the abilities of most homes to meet the basic needs of their members. This situation becomes more worrisome in developing countries like

Nigeria with high youthful population resulting in high dependency burden on the few working adults. The decline in working age population and subsequent involvement of young people in paid labor has its implications on the school discipline. A UNESCO statistics as stated in Nworgu (2010) indicated that as at 2007, about 13% of Nigerian children aged 5-14 were involved in child labour. There is no doubt that the incidence of child labour is on the increase in Nigerian considering the rate of the country's population growth vis-à-vis her deteriorating infrastructure, investment climate, inability to harness new innovations and build institutional capacity. A situation where a child engages in one form of labor or the other will invariably expose him/her to some kind of deviant behaviour that will impact negatively on the school. Also, parental control diminishes significantly in situation that exposes a child to work as a way of providing his or her basic needs and probably contribute in the family upkeep.

The weakening of the parents' economic power and control over their children is a strong signal to school managers that more efforts should be made towards managing deviant behaviours among students. The emphasis on the use of punishment as a major

correction measure in Nigerian schools should be minimized since it may become counter-productive by stimulating counter aggressions if not well administered. School managers and classroom teachers should adhere to professional guidelines and laid down policies in administering punishment, and as much as possible reduce its frequency by blending their coercive remunerative and normative powers in managing deviancy in school. Teachers and school managers should adopt more proactive ways of managing deviant behaviors in schools by:

- establishing comprehensive rules and procedures for all aspects of expected behavior and implementing them with the active involvement of the students and their parents or guardians through a functional Parent Teachers Association (PTA) interactions.
- establishing an effective system of recording behaviors exhibited by students so as to compliment or caution them appropriately
- establishing optimal teachers student relationship characterized by 'withitness' and "emotional objectivity" by the teachers. 'Withitness' according to Kounin (1983) is the disposition of the teacher to quickly and accurately identify

potential problem behavior and act on it immediately. It is the primary difference between effective and ineffective school managers. It is the attitudes of letting students know that they (teachers) are 'withit' having positioned themselves to know the students and keep track of their activities in the school while carrying out other functions. Maintaining emotional objectivity while interacting with students is very important in creating an enabling school climate where everyone feels loved and cared for, without any form of prejudice. This creates an atmosphere of fair play, justice and equal opportunity needed to make a deviant feel that he or she merited to be disciplined and therefore accepts the corrective measures given to him or her and subsequently terminate the inappropriate behavior.

### **Needed policy Actions**

The major policy actions needed in developing countries like Nigeria is to take advantage of its growing population by improving the quantity and quality of schooling at all levels and by providing the schools with the required number of teachers, school infrastructure and materials in relation to the accepted teacher-students ratio for effective classroom interaction.

Also, the government should enact and enforce laws to prevent early marriage thereby reducing the incidence of large families and overwhelming increase in schools enrolment. The expansion and reinvigoration of family planning programmes to delay births and reduce unintended pregnancy should be emphasized. Finally, policies that promote sound economic management should be evolved and fully implemented to absorb the large young adult population into the workforce as a way of empowering families to take adequate care of their youths in schools and through it minimize the incidence of deviancy among them.

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