



# The Role of Teachers' Communication and Gender in Managing Students' Disruptive Behaviours in Secondary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of teachers' communication strategies and gender in managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria. A total of 367 teachers participated in the study. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using Pearson correlation and independent samples t-tests. The findings indicate no significant difference in managing disruptive behaviours based on teachers' gender, suggesting that male and female teachers are equally effective in handling classroom disruptions. However, a significant positive correlation was found between teachers' communication strategies and managing students' disruptive behaviours ( $r = .213$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result highlights the importance of effective communication in fostering a conducive learning environment. The study underscores the need for teacher training programmes to emphasise developing strong communication skills crucial for effective classroom management. By focusing on communication strategies, teachers can better address and mitigate disruptive behaviours, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience for students. These findings contribute to the existing literature on classroom management and provide practical implications for educational policy and teacher professional development programmes.

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## Introduction

Managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools is a persistent challenge that significantly impacts the educational environment and learning outcomes. Disruptive behaviours can range from minor infractions, such as talking out of turn, to more severe actions, such as aggression or defiance (Ødegård & Solberg, 2024; Zoromski et al., 2021). These behaviours not only hinder the academic progress of the individual students involved but also disrupt the learning process for their peers and contribute to teacher stress and burnout.

The education sector in Nigeria, like in many other parts of the world, faces significant challenges in managing student behaviour, particularly in secondary schools. Disruptive behaviours among students are a growing concern for educators, parents, and policymakers. These behaviours, which include acts of defiance, aggression, and absenteeism, negatively impact the learning environment and academic performance. The occurrence of disruptive behaviours in the classrooms is often linked to bad peers, socio-economic problems, and undertrained and under-resourced teachers (Azeem Ashraf et al., 2024). Disruptive behaviours affect teaching and learning activities and pose a significant challenge to the social development of learners (Ødegård & Solberg, 2024), often leading to dropping out from school (McDermott et al., 2019) if not well managed. Effective management of such behaviours is crucial for bringing up a conducive learning environment.

The secondary school system in Nigeria is particularly vulnerable to behavioural disruptions due to overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources, and socio-economic challenges (Adewale & Adebayo, 2020; Ihebom & Uko, 2020). Teachers often face significant pressure to maintain discipline and ensure a productive learning environment despite these constraints. Deal with these challenges require a nuanced

understanding of how teacher gender and communication styles intersect to influence student behaviour.

In Nigeria, the management of classroom behaviours is a critical issue, given the diverse and often challenging educational landscape. Effective classroom management strategies are essential to create a conducive learning environment, and teachers play a pivotal role. Two key factors influencing the management of disruptive behaviours are the teachers' communication strategies and gender.

Communication strategies are also central to managing classroom behaviour. Teachers who communicate clearly and consistently while actively listening to students are more likely to reduce disruptive behaviours and foster a positive learning environment (Adepoju, 2017). Non-verbal communication, such as body language and eye contact, also plays a critical role in maintaining classroom order. Research supports the importance of effective communication in reducing behavioural issues and improving teacher-student relationships, highlighting the need for teacher training programs that emphasize communication skills (Lee & McCabe, 2021).

Teacher-student interactions play a pivotal role in addressing these behavioural issues. Teachers' communication styles and strategies can either mitigate or escalate disruptive behaviours in the classroom (Adepoju, 2017). Effective communication has been linked to improved student engagement and reduced incidences of misbehaviour, highlighting the need for teachers to develop strong interpersonal communication skills. Communication is a fundamental tool in classroom management. Teachers who communicate effectively can set clear expectations, provide constructive feedback, and foster a positive classroom climate. Research has shown that teachers' communication strategies are crucial in mitigating disruptive behaviours and promoting student engagement and cooperation (Marzano et

al., 2003). Effective communication involves verbal interactions, non-verbal cues, active listening, and the ability to build rapport with students.

The gender of teachers is another important variable that can influence classroom management practices. Cultural and societal norms often shape students' perceptions and responses to male and female teachers differently. Some studies suggest that male teachers may be perceived as more authoritative, which could influence their ability to manage disruptive behaviours (Ahmed et al., 2018; Owoyemi & Adesina, 2021). Conversely, female teachers may employ more nurturing and empathetic approaches, which can also be effective in maintaining classroom order. Studies have shown that male and female teachers may adopt different approaches to managing disruptive behaviours due to varying perceptions and experiences (Enore et al., 2019). Understanding these gender-based differences can inform tailored interventions that leverage the strengths of both male and female educators.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the critical role of teachers in managing classroom behaviour, there is limited research on how gender and communication styles specifically impact the management of disruptive behaviours in Nigerian secondary schools. Existing studies often focus on general classroom management strategies without disaggregating the effects of teacher gender or exploring the specific communication techniques used. This gap in the literature leaves educators and policymakers without the crucial insights needed to develop targeted interventions. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence and preliminary studies suggest that male and female teachers in Nigeria may experience and address disruptive behaviours differently, yet these differences are not well-documented or understood (Enore et al., 2019; Havik & Westergård, 2020; Ramakulukusha et al., 2022). This lack of comprehensive data hampers

the development of effective training programmes and policies that could support teachers in their efforts to manage classrooms more effectively.

In light of these issues, this study aims to investigate the role of teachers' gender and communication in managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria. By examining these factors, the research provides evidence-based recommendations for improving classroom management practices. This, in turn, could lead to better educational outcomes and a more positive school environment for both students and teachers.

In the educational landscape of Nigeria, secondary schools play a critical role in shaping the future of the nation's youth. As the primary agents of education, teachers are tasked with delivering academic content and managing classroom behaviours to create conducive learning environments. Disruptive behaviours among students, such as talking out of turn, aggression, and defiance, are common challenges that can significantly hinder the educational process (Adepoju, 2017; Skodova, 2018). The management of such behaviours is essential for maintaining classroom order and ensuring that all students can learn effectively. Gender, as a social and cultural construct, influences various aspects of human interaction, including behaviour management strategies employed by teachers by Skodova. This study explores the combined roles of teachers' communication strategies and gender in managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria. The research provides insights that can inform teacher training programmes and policy initiatives to enhance classroom management practices by examining these factors. Understanding the connection between communication and gender in classroom management is essential for developing comprehensive strategies to address disruptive behaviours. Focusing on the Nigerian context, this

study contributes to the broader discourse on educational practices in diverse and resource-constrained environments.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of this study were to:

- i. Examine the influence of teachers' gender on the effectiveness of managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria.
- ii. To examine the role of teachers' communication strategies in managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

- i. Is there a significant difference in the effectiveness of managing students' disruptive behaviours based on teachers' gender in secondary schools in Nigeria?
- ii. Is there a significant relationship between teachers' communication strategies and managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

H01: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of managing students' disruptive behaviours based on teachers' gender in secondary schools in Nigeria.

H02: There is no significant relationship between teachers' communication strategies and managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Learning Theory (SLT), developed by Albert Bandura, provides a robust framework for understanding the role of teachers' communication and gender in managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools. SLT emphasises that learning occurs through observation, imitation,

and modelling of others' behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions (Bandura, 1977). In the educational context, teachers' communication and behaviour serve as key models for students, influencing their conduct in the classroom. Effective communication strategies can set clear expectations and model positive behaviours, thereby reducing instances of disruption (Bandura, 1986; Marzano et al., 2003).

Teachers' genders also play a significant role in managing disruptive behaviours through differential socialisation and communication styles. Male and female teachers may exhibit different behavioural models that students observe and imitate based on societal norms and expectations (Salavera & Usan, 2021). Male teachers are often perceived as more authoritative, which can lead to compliance through intimidation, while female teachers may use more nurturing communication, fostering a supportive environment that mitigates disruptive behaviours (Lee & McCabe, 2021). These gender-specific approaches highlight the influence of social and cognitive processes on student behaviour.

Understanding the role of teachers' communication and gender through SLT offers practical insights for educational practices in Nigeria. Teacher training programs should prioritize developing effective communication skills and raising awareness of gender dynamics to enhance classroom management. By leveraging SLT principles, educators can create positive learning environments that minimise disruptive behaviours and promote academic success (Bandura, 1977; Marzano et al., 2003). This approach underscores the importance of social influence and cognitive processes in shaping student behaviour and improving educational outcomes.

### **Method**

This study adopts a quantitative research design of cross-sectional descriptive type to analyse the role

of teacher gender and communication strategies in managing students' disruptive behaviours in Lagos State, Nigeria, secondary schools. The quantitative approach is appropriate for this study as it allows for the collection and analysis of numerical data, facilitating the identification of patterns and relationships between variables. The target population for this study includes all secondary school teachers in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State was selected due to its large and diverse student population, which provides a comprehensive context for examining the impact of classroom management strategies. The study focuses on public secondary schools to ensure a standardised educational environment and consistent participant access.

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample of 367 teachers from the target population. This study adopted a self-designed questionnaire titled "Teachers' communication strategies and Students' disruptive behaviour" to elicit information from the participants. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: A, B, and C. Section A sought the participants' demographic information; section B contains six items that measure teachers' communication strategies; section D has six items on disruptive behaviour, the dependent variable. The questionnaire used a Likert scale format, ranging from "Never" to "Always". The instrument was also subjected to construct and content validity. Similarly, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to assess its reliability. It yielded a 0.69 coefficient.

The analysis of the data collected was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 29. While the demographic characteristics of the participants and research question one were analysed descriptively, an independent sample t-test and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) were conducted to

determine the role of teachers' communication and gender in managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time and the confidentiality of their responses. Participants' identities and responses will be kept confidential.

## Results

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

| Variable               | N   | %     |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Gender                 |     |       |
| Male                   | 125 | 34.1% |
| Female                 | 242 | 65.9% |
| Years of experience    |     |       |
| 1-5                    | 50  | 13.6% |
| 6-10                   | 39  | 10.6% |
| 11-15                  | 90  | 24.5% |
| 16-20                  | 42  | 11.4% |
| 21-25                  | 109 | 29.7% |
| 26-30                  | 7   | 1.9%  |
| 31-35                  | 30  | 8.2%  |
| Academic Qualification |     |       |
| NCE                    | 29  | 7.9%  |
| BSc/ED                 | 206 | 56.1% |
| MSc/ED                 | 119 | 32.4% |
| PhD                    | 13  | 3.5%  |

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants. In terms of gender, the majority of participants were female, accounting for 242 (65.9%) of the participants, while 125 (34.1%) were male. Regarding years of experience, the distribution shows that the largest group of participants had between 21-25 years of experience, representing 109 (29.7%) of the participants. This was followed by 90 (24.5%) participants who had 11-15 years of experience. Fewer participants were at the lower or higher end of the experience range, with only 50 (13.6%) having 1-5 years of experience and 7 (1.9%) having 26-30 years of experience.



Furthermore, regarding academic qualifications, most participants held a bachelor's degree in education (BSc/ED), making up 206 (56.1%) of the participants. A significant portion also had a master's degree (MSc/ED), accounting for 119 (32.4%) participants. Only a small number,

13(3.5%) and 29 (7.9%), had a PhD and an NCE, respectively.  
H01: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of managing students' disruptive behaviours based on teachers' gender in secondary schools in Nigeria.

**Table 2:** Independent T-test of the effectiveness of managing students' disruptive behaviours based on the gender of teachers in secondary schools

| Variable                | Gender | N   | Mean | Std.   | df  | t     | Sig. | F    | Cohen |
|-------------------------|--------|-----|------|--------|-----|-------|------|------|-------|
| Disruptive<br>behaviour | Male   | 125 | 3.22 | .61878 | 365 | -.926 | .435 | .610 | 0.6   |
|                         | Female | 242 | 3.28 | .61776 |     |       |      |      |       |

The independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the effectiveness of managing students' disruptive behaviours between male and female teachers in secondary schools. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the effectiveness of managing disruptive behaviours between male teachers (M = 3.22, SD = .61878) and female teachers (M = 3.28, SD = .61776),  $t(365) = -.926, p = .435$ . Levene's Test for Equality of Variances showed no violation of the

assumption of equal variances ( $F = .610, p > .05$ ). The effect size, measured by Cohen's d, was 0.6, which indicates a medium effect size.  
H02: There is no significant relationship between teachers' communication strategies and managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria.

**Table 3:** Correlation between Teachers' Communication Strategies and Managing Students' Disruptive Behaviours In Secondary Schools in Nigeria

| Communication        |                     | Disruptive Behaviour |   |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|
| Communication        | Pearson Correlation | 1                    |   |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | <.001                |   |
|                      | N                   | 367                  |   |
| Disruptive Behaviour | Pearson Correlation | .213**               | 1 |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | <.001                |   |
|                      | N                   | 367                  |   |

**Note.**  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

As revealed in Table 3, a Pearson correlation examined the relationship between teachers' communication strategies and managing students' disruptive behaviours. The results indicated a significant weak positive correlation between communication strategies and managing disruptive

behaviours,  $r(365) = .213, p < .001$ . This suggests that as teachers use effective communication strategies, their ability to manage disruptive behaviours also improves.

## Discussion

The findings from the independent samples t-test suggest that the gender of teachers does not significantly impact the effectiveness of managing students' disruptive behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria. This finding disagrees with the outcome of the study conducted by Nacar and Tumkaya (2011) which established a significant difference between males and females in interpersonal problem-solving in their classrooms. It was found that male teachers are more confident and consistent in handling students' disruptive behaviours.

The positive correlation between teachers' communication strategies and the management of disruptive behaviours suggests that effective communication is a critical factor in classroom management. This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Akudo (2020) who found a significant relationship between teachers' communication skills and students' learning motivation. This implies that the teachers' relationship approach in the classroom plays a greater role in how the students conduct themselves for learning. When the communication strategies are poorly used, there will be a high tendency for students to misbehave, causing school disruptions.

Adepoju (2017) emphasised that teachers who employ clear and consistent communication are better able to establish a positive classroom environment, reducing disruptive behaviours. This is supported by the study's significant correlation, indicating that as teachers' communication strategies improve, the incidence of disruptive behaviours decreases. Moreover, the significance of the correlation at the 0.01 level implies a strong association that is unlikely due to chance. This reinforces the notion that communication strategies are supplementary and essential in managing student behaviour effectively. A study by Adepoju (2017) also found that teachers who communicated expectations clearly and actively listened more

successfully managed classroom behaviours. The current study's findings are consistent with these results, further validating the role of communication in educational practice.

In practical terms, these findings suggest that teacher training programmes should prioritise communication skills, equipping educators with the tools to manage classroom behaviours proactively. By fostering an environment of open communication, teachers can mitigate disruptive behaviours and create a more conducive learning atmosphere.

## Conclusion

The study's findings underscore the importance of effective communication in managing disruptive behaviours in secondary school classrooms, challenging the notion that teacher gender significantly impacts classroom management effectiveness. Educators can create a more conducive learning environment by emphasising communication skills in teacher training and professional development. This reinforces the theoretical perspective that communication is essential in education and should be integrated into teacher training curricula and classroom practices. Policymakers and school leaders are crucial in supporting and promoting effective communication strategies among teachers. Fostering a positive communication culture within schools can lead to improved classroom management and student outcomes.

## Implications for Theory

The finding that teacher gender does not significantly impact the management of disruptive behaviours challenges previous studies, such as Nacar & Tumkaya (2011). This suggests the need to reassess theoretical frameworks that assume inherent gender differences in classroom management effectiveness. Future research should explore contextual factors influencing management strategies irrespective of teacher gender, particularly in Nigerian secondary schools.

The significant positive correlation between teachers' communication strategies and the management of disruptive behaviours supports existing communication theories in education. This finding emphasises that effective communication is crucial for fostering a positive learning environment and managing student behaviours. This reinforces the importance of integrating communication theories more deeply into educational psychology and teacher training programs.

### Implications for Practice

The outcome of this study implies that teacher training programmes should prioritise communication skills development, equipping educators with tools to manage classroom behaviours proactively. This includes training on clear articulation of expectations, active listening, and consistent communication strategies, which can help create a more conducive learning environment and reduce disruptive behaviours. In addition, schools should conduct regular professional development workshops focused on effective communication strategies. These workshops can provide teachers with practical techniques for improving communication with students, thereby enhancing classroom management and reducing incidents of disruptive behaviour.

Furthermore, educational policymakers should emphasise communication skills in teacher recruitment, training, and evaluation. Additionally, school leaders should support teachers in developing and implementing effective communication strategies by providing resources, mentoring, and a supportive environment, fostering a school culture that values and promotes effective communication.

Similarly, teachers should integrate clear and consistent communication into their daily classroom practices, setting clear behavioural expectations, providing constructive feedback, and

actively engaging with students. By fostering an environment of open communication, teachers can mitigate disruptive behaviours and create a more positive and effective learning atmosphere.

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