



# An Analysis of Ubuntu Theory of Management: Reimagining Africanised Leadership towards Improving Discipline in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

School indiscipline is an issue that is a worry all over the world. Particularly in Nigerian secondary institutions, the threat of indiscipline poses a challenge to overall academic efficacy and has impeded the achievement of educational goals and objectives. In response to the scourge of indiscipline that has infiltrated Nigerian schools, this paper's goal is to consider the application of the Ubuntu Theory of Management (UTM) in addressing students' indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools. It argued that Ubuntu is an African perspective management tool that can be used to tackle students' indiscipline in African countries in general and Nigeria in particular. In the same spirit, it turns into a helpful tool for maintaining student behaviour in secondary schools in Nigeria. The theory's applicability to disciplinary management has been sufficiently illustrated in this paper.

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## INTRODUCTION

In many secondary institutions around the globe, student indiscipline is one of the biggest problems.<sup>1</sup> This indiscipline is a concern since it undermines school effectiveness and the provision of quality education. Secondary school management is recognised as the development of young intellectuals through knowledge creation consisting of scholars and stakeholders. In a situation where people are domiciled in a particular location, crises are inevitable. Indiscipline is as old as the advent of secondary education in Nigeria. This indiscipline comes in various magnitudes of absenteeism, fights, bullying, proof of seniority and various spates of violence that occur during school hours.<sup>2</sup> This student's indiscipline continued to affect the efficacy of longstanding policies on discipline in secondary education in Nigerian secondary schools. The objectives of education have often been defeated by this

<sup>1</sup> Yulisa Wandasari, Muhammad Kristiawan, and Yasir Arafat, "Policy Evaluation of School's Literacy Movement on Improving Discipline of State High School Students," *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research* 8, no. 4 (2019): 190–98.

<sup>2</sup> Sony User, "Academic Indiscipline and Failure among Secondary School Students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State" (Godfrey Okoye University, 2018).

bedevilled menace of indiscipline.<sup>3</sup> Despite efforts put in place by governments and the enforcement of such policies by stakeholders, to maintain relative peace in the secondary schools, continuous unrest and violence in the school have riddled the school management system over time. In this regard, Lasisi argues that indiscipline has rendered even effective policies useless in school administrations.<sup>4</sup> It has rendered null the predetermined objectives set for actualising school goals. Amatee et al, Gyan et al & Ngidi averred that students' violence that erupts in schools and many relative crises across Africa and many developed countries has led to various closures of schools at one time or the other through cultism, truancy and many other problems.<sup>5</sup> It is apparent that the problem of learners' indiscipline does not only apply to Nigeria but also to other African countries. In probing the learners' indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools, the administrators of the school need to be conscious of how difficult it will be to resolve the issue permanently. In essence, school managers use various leadership approaches, but the indiscipline of the students remains the challenge. Given this, the authors argue that the problem of indiscipline affects the achievement of the desired set goals of secondary education, and therefore calls for relevant African mechanisms, such as Ubuntu management theory. Against this background, to promote productivity and harmony in schools, this article reimagines how UTM might be applied while also addressing student indiscipline. The paper seeks to answer this question; How can UTM be applied to address students' indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The UTM has been employed in this paper's analytical paradigm. Ubuntu is an African statement that dates back to the early age of civilisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though not included in formal writings, it has been part and parcel of the older folk who originates from South Africa and also transcends to other African nations such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Namibia, and Botswana.<sup>6</sup> The advent of Western ideologies did not have effects on the upbringing of the African child, as the tenets, philosophies and components of ubuntu continued to wax stronger. The emergence of scholars like Desmond Tutu brought to light the inexplicable virtues of Ubuntu, which can be used in addressing managerial issues, communal issues and all kinds of problems embedded in society, schools and the community today.<sup>7</sup> The advent of Ubuntu brought peace, love, care for one another and selfless individuals who are not keen to satisfy themselves alone but also the brotherhood and sisterhood, looking out for each other in times of difficulty and needs.<sup>8</sup> The evolution of UTM is discussed in the succeeding section as it transcends through time.

### The Evolutionary Development of Ubuntu Theory of Management

The evolution of UTM can be dated to the early 1930s by Mugumbate and Nyanguru; Tran and Wall when the saying was determined from the adage 'I am because we are.' This saying was raised from

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<sup>3</sup> Lazarus L Maigoro and John G Longkat, "Understanding Historical Values As A Panacea For Curbing Indiscipline Among Secondary School Students In Nigeria," in *2016 International Academic Business Conference Washington DC 2016 International Education Conference*, n.d.

<sup>4</sup> Adekola Kamil Lasisi, "Parenting Styles as Determinants of Indiscipline among Secondary School Students in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State," *Al-Hikmah Journal of Educational Management and Counselling* 1, no. 1 (2019): 9–19.

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence K Ametepee, Morgan Chitiyo, and Susan Abu, "RESEARCH SECTION: Examining the Nature and Perceived Causes of Indiscipline in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools," *British Journal of Special Education* 36, no. 3 (2009): 155–61; Emmanuel Gyan et al., "Causes of Indiscipline and Measures of Improving Discipline in Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana: Case Study of a Senior Secondary School in Sunyani.," *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 11 (2015): 19–25; Lucia Zithobile Ngidi, "Reducing School Violence: A Peace Education Project amongst Stakeholders in Umlazi" (2018).

<sup>6</sup> Christian B N Gade, "What Is Ubuntu? Different Interpretations among South Africans of African Descent," *South African Journal of Philosophy= Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif Vir Wysbegeerte* 31, no. 3 (2012): 484–503.

<sup>7</sup> Collium Banda, "Ubuntu as Human Flourishing? An African Traditional Religious Analysis of Ubuntu and Its Challenge to Christian Anthropology," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 5, no. 3 (2019): 203–28.

<sup>8</sup> Simon Khayala, "A Model for Conflict Transformation: Ubuntu, Mediation, and Forgiveness" (Earlham School of Religion, 2015).

communal engagements and commitment toward shared community goals through love, selflessness, and communalism.<sup>9</sup> The development of Ubuntu was slow because of the infiltration of Western paradigms that came with education in Africa.<sup>10</sup> This was evident in the Western scholarship and literature that generally relegated the values of Ubuntu espouses to the back in the league of other management theories. These Westernized theories, however, failed to address learner indiscipline in the African context because the expected goal of the theories was defeated because of the lacuna set between objectives and achieved objectives.<sup>11</sup> In the struggle to find an indigenous effective solution to an African educational management setting, Ubuntu gradually became a suitable approach to a more humane approach to scientific management theory and has become a strong force to reckon with over the years.<sup>12</sup> According to Msila and Ncube, the indiscipline in schools today points to the fact that leadership theories that emanated from the Western context and ideologies have provided limited means to manage the problem in the African context.<sup>13</sup>

### **Assumptions of UTM and their Reflections**

The assumptions of this theory according to Msengana, Ngwenya, Malunga and Mukwedeya have been categorised under the following themes: belongingness, love, care, respect, and communal responsibility towards each other within an organization, inclusive decision-making of students in administration procedures, the show of empathy, care and love in discipline learners, communal engagements between stakeholders, students and parents should be encouraged and developed in the organization.<sup>14</sup> These themes (which have been grouped) and their reflective observations are explained in the subsequent sections based on the Nigerian educational context.

### **Belongingness and Love**

The first assumption of Ubuntu captures love and belongingness. These traits of belongingness and love within an organisation, bring a sense of belonging to the school. When teachers and students feel self-worth in the daily running of the school, there is likely to be relative peace. Indiscipline and violence may not have a place in the school environments due to the students and the teachers feeling a sense of belongingness and ownership of the schools. Several studies show that belongingness brings development to any organisation.<sup>15</sup> Ubuntu espouses belongingness and if implemented as an Africanised leadership system, it will bring productivity and encourage oneness within the school community towards the fulfilment of oneness actualising the school goals and objectives in schools.

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<sup>9</sup> Jacob Mugumbate and Andrew Nyanguru, "Exploring African Philosophy: The Value of Ubuntu in Social Work," *African Journal of Social Work* 3, no. 1 (2013): 82–100; Ly Thi Tran and Tony Wall, "Ubuntu in Adult Vocational Education: Theoretical Discussion and Implications for Teaching International Students," *International Review of Education* 65 (2019): 557–78.

<sup>10</sup> Ethne Swartz and Rae Davies, "Ubuntu-the Spirit of African Transformation Management-a Review," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* (1997): 290-294.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin James Inyang, "The Challenges of Evolving and Developing Management Indigenous Theories and Practices in Africa," *International Journal of Business and Management* 3, no. 12 (2008): 122–32.

<sup>12</sup> Nomalungelo I Ngubane and Manyane Makua, "Intersection of " Ubuntu" Pedagogy and Social Justice: Transforming South African Higher Education.," *Transformation in Higher Education* 6 (2021): 113.

<sup>13</sup> Vuyisile Msila, "Ubuntu and School Leadership," *Journal of Education* 44, no. 1 (2008): 67–84; Lisa B Ncube, "Ubuntu: A Transformative Leadership Philosophy," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 4, no. 3 (2010): 77–82.

<sup>14</sup> Nontobeko Winnie Msengana, "The Significance of the Concept " Ubuntu" for Educational Management and Leadership during Democratic Transformation in South Africa" (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 2006); Jabulisile Cynthia Ngwenya, "Ubuntu and School Leadership: Voices of the Teachers in Hammarsdale Circuit." (2015); Chiku Malunga, *Understanding Organizational Leadership through Ubuntu* (Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd, 2009); Joel Mukwedeya, "Peace and Harmony through Ubuntu in a Globalized World," in *Comparative Education for Global Citizenship, Peace and Shared Living through UBuntu* (Brill, 2022), 221–41.

<sup>15</sup> Kwame Asamoah and Emmanuel Yeboah-Assiamah, "'Ubuntu Philosophy' for Public Leadership and Governance Praxis: Revisiting the Ethos of Africa's Collectivism," *Journal of Global Responsibility* 10, no. 4 (2019): 307–21; Bagele Chilisa, Thenjiwe Emily Major, and Kelne Khudu-Petersen, "Community Engagement with a Postcolonial, African-Based Relational Paradigm," *Qualitative Research* 17, no. 3 (2017): 326–39; Reuel Khoza, *Attuned Leadership: African Humanism as Compass* (Penguin Random House South Africa, 2012).

According to various scholars, belongingness is a social motive that helps a community or a leader to understand human behaviour within an organisation.<sup>16</sup> That is, belongingness improves motivation for the learners to learn and the teacher to teach. The teacher needs belongingness to perform better within an organisation and needed money (better pay) to be motivated in schools; teachers and students must be involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. It is observed that when teachers and learners feel self-worth, relevant to the administration of the school, it will improve their morale to work and reduce resistance to the school rules and regulations thereby curbing indiscipline.

### Reflective Observations

The inclusive decision-making process is one of the major tenets of discipline management in schools, according to Mangaliso<sup>17</sup> Bowen contends that inclusive-decision making involves critical stakeholders in management decisions through dialogue.<sup>18</sup> Hence, to decide among alternate actions, school management decides on which school stakeholders to involve in the decision-making process, and whether it will be inclusive or not. In general school administration, the importance of students participating in decision-making in Nigerian secondary schools cannot be overstated. Newman and Usman outline that learning and instruction cannot occur without students because they are partners in the educational framework.<sup>19</sup> Day, Gu and Sammons, have outlined six categories in which a student can participate in making decisions about recreational activities, construction, maintenance and repair, human relationships, curriculum, and teaching, as well as the administration of technical schools and overall school governance. Secondary school management seems to have struggled in all spheres involving learners in school governance. The open decision-making of the students helps the learners feel at home and when they participate in decision-making, they perform well in scholastic and extracurricular activities at school.<sup>20</sup>

The United Nations Treaty on the Rights of the Child from 1989 states that students have a right to participate in decisions that could have an impact on their lives while they are in school.<sup>21</sup> Baroutsis et al. opined that participation in inclusive decision-making for learners means that they are involved in the dialogue between teachers, school management and learners on matters they feel deprived of.<sup>22</sup> Imam asserted that young learners are seen in the context of secondary schools as too inexperienced to be involved in decision-making procedures as they lack the requisite knowledge to be involved in their matters.<sup>23</sup> Thus, school managers decide to leave out learners and made rules for them which they must obey failure which will attract punishment of various kinds and dimensions. This has attracted various recalcitrant behaviours characterised in schools today. That is why, Mncube

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<sup>16</sup> Tyler F Stillman and Roy F Baumeister, "Uncertainty, Belongingness, and Four Needs for Meaning," *Psychological Inquiry* 20, no. 4 (2009): 249–51; Mark R Leary and Cody B Cox, "Belongingness Motivation: A Mainspring of Social Action.," 2008; Niek Hoogervorst et al., "When Do Leaders Sacrifice?: The Effects of Sense of Power and Belongingness on Leader Self-Sacrifice," *The Leadership Quarterly* 23, no. 5 (2012): 883–96.

<sup>17</sup> Mzamo P Mangaliso, "Building Competitive Advantage from Ubuntu: Management Lessons from South Africa," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 15, no. 3 (2001): 23–33.

<sup>18</sup> Shannon A Bowen, "Expansion of Ethics as the Tenth Generic Principle of Public Relations Excellence: A Kantian Theory and Model for Managing Ethical Issues," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 16, no. 1 (2004): 65–92.

<sup>19</sup> Yunusa Dangara Usman, "Educational Resources: An Integral Component for Effective School Administration in Nigeria.," *Online Submission* 6, no. 13 (2016): 27–37; Jay B Newman, "Student Involvement in School Restructuring.," *ERS Spectrum* 10, no. 3 (1992): 19–22.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Day, Qing Gu, and Pam Sammons, "The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: How Successful School Leaders Use Transformational and Instructional Strategies to Make a Difference," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2016): 221–58.

<sup>21</sup> UN General Assembly, "Convention on the Rights of the Child," *United Nations, Treaty Series* 1577, no.3(1989):1–23.

<sup>22</sup> Aspa Baroutsis et al., "Student Voice and the Community Forum: Finding Ways of 'Being Heard' at an Alternative School for Disenfranchised Young People," *British Educational Research Journal* 42, no. 3 (2016): 438–53.

<sup>23</sup> Hauwa Imam, "Investigating How Teachers and Students of Secondary Schools in Nigeria De-Scribe and Understand Participation in Their Educational Institution," *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education* 12, no. 1 (2020): 80–101, <https://doi.org/10.14658/pupj-ijse-2020-1-6>.

averred that learners ought to be involved in the decision that can make or mar their educational future.<sup>24</sup>

It has been observed that a lack of inclusive decision-making in Nigerian secondary schools often leads to students' unruly behaviours in schools.<sup>25</sup> This is evident in the learners' unrest that led to the closure of a school in Ado-Ekiti in 2021. The learners pelted their teachers with stones and on top of the school's roof to vex their displeasure at some management decisions. This happened not only in Ekiti state but is also evident in almost states of the Nigerian Federation.<sup>26</sup> This irritation can be attributed to a lack of participation in decision-making and has resulted in the ruin of school benches, gates, and fences.

### **Compassion, Trust and Interdependence**

Compassion, trust and interdependence as one of the assumptions of Ubuntu also play important roles in the management of discipline in Nigerian secondary schools. Mboya has submitted that Africanised leadership system espouses compassion, trust and interdependence are human behaviours that promote Ubuntu.<sup>27</sup> To manage a successful society or community, personhood with the characteristics of compassion, trust and interdependence is greatly needed. This is why it is recommended that a leader should have the qualities and traits of compassion and not be beclouded by his decisions. The subordinates in place of teachers and learners should trust the decision coming from the school managers and be interdependent on decisions made for the school.<sup>28</sup> To achieve this, leaders should be rooted in the UTM. The implication of this theory will ensure better cooperation between managers and subordinates as trust, compassion will be employed.<sup>29</sup> Ncube has argued that proponents of Ubuntu believe organisations should be built on trust, fostering collaboration and reciprocity. Hailey is of the view that leaders who are compassionate show respect, consideration and kindness towards subordinates and others.<sup>30</sup> Thus, indiscipline can be treated with respect and compassion. When learners observe that leaders are compassionate, they will behave well in school.

### **Reflective Observations**

The secondary school administration in Nigeria has witnessed various spates of violence which have erupted from indiscipline in schools. Ubuntu, with compassion, trust and interdependence assists the school management to relatively deal with indiscipline in schools. Building trust in an organisation ensures the growth and development of schools and the realization of school goals and objectives.<sup>31</sup> There are, however, challenges to building trust within an organisation which include distrust between subordinates, ineffective information flow between the channels of communications and conflict of interest.<sup>32</sup> The lack of compassion from leaders has often been the main barrier that makes it difficult to ensure trust and the achievement of school goals and objectives.

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<sup>24</sup> Vusumuzi Mncube, "Democratisation of Education in South Africa: Issues of Social Justice and the Voice of Learners?," *South African Journal of Education* 28, no. 1 (2008): 77–90.

<sup>25</sup> T O Adeyemi, "Principals' Management of Conflicts in Public Secondary Schools in Ondo State, Nigeria: A Critical Survey," *Educational Research and Review* 4, no. 9 (2009): 418–26.

<sup>26</sup> J E Gift, "Indiscipline in Public Secondary Schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area in Bayelsa State," *International Journal of Business and Management Review* 6, no. 5 (2018): 1–13.

<sup>27</sup> Tabitha N Mboya, "The Role of Effective Guidance and Counselling in Curbing Students Unrest in Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Kangundo Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya" (University of Nairobi, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Msengana, "The Significance of the Concept "Ubuntu" for Educational Management and Leadership during Democratic Transformation in South Africa"; Ntsewa B Mokobane and Reinhardt A Botha, "Does Ubuntu Influence Social Engineering Susceptibility?," in *Human Aspects of Information Security and Assurance: 14th IFIP WG 11.12 International Symposium, HAISA 2020, Mytilene, Lesbos, Greece, July 8–10, 2020, Proceedings 14* (Springer, 2020), 97–108.

<sup>29</sup> Ncube, "Ubuntu: A Transformative Leadership Philosophy."

<sup>30</sup> John Hailey, "Ubuntu: A Literature Review," *Document. London: Tutu Foundation*, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> D Hopkins, *Every School A Great School: Realizing the Potential of System Leadership* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2007), [https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=NsXkd9UTn\\_8C](https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=NsXkd9UTn_8C).

<sup>32</sup> Gail Fann Thomas, Roxanne Zolin, and Jackie L Hartman, "The Central Role of Communication in Developing Trust and Its Effect on Employee Involvement," *The Journal of Business Communication* (1973) 46, no. 3 (2009): 287–310.

Often, there have been conflicts within the school management because of a lack of trust which has led to problems in schools. The lack of trust between the Management and learners has led to learner unrest, where most learners feel cheated and turn out to be undisciplined in school. The indiscipline of various spates in schools poses threats to the general effectiveness and objectives of the schools. In Nigerian secondary schools, it appears that the learners are dissatisfied with the way the trust system has been built over time. During the researchers' encounter with the senior prefects of a secondary school in Ado-Ekiti, it was discovered that they perceived there was mistrust between the Management and the learners. This situation led to the crises that erupted in the school, which make the students to disrupt the academic calendar and the general peace of the school in December 2021.

It appears that the learner unrest which leads to the closure of schools may not be disconnected from the way school managers manage the school and build trust. Therefore, for any organisation to be built on trust, compassion and interdependence, it needs to be founded on the principles of Ubuntu. Msengana Nzimakwe posits that for any organisation's trust to be ensured, there is a need for compassionate leaders and those who have the interest of the schools at heart to create a peaceful and purposeful learning environment.<sup>33</sup>

### **Communal Engagements between Stakeholders**

Another assumption of Ubuntu is communal engagement between stakeholders, and this is borne out of the theory of Ubuntu and the cause to find a lasting solution to indiscipline through a collaborative effort by the community and the stakeholders. Communal engagement involves positive interaction and fruitful dealings with human relations where problem-solving is paramount. It is said in an African proverb that "A parent gives birth to a child but the whole community raises the child". Community engagement is not new to the African terrain and it has been the main goal of any society. This is why Poulsen asserted that communal engagement is paramount to the progress of the organisation or school.<sup>34</sup> In Nigerian schools, there is a school Board Management Committee (SBMC) and a Parent and Teachers Association (PTA) that oversees the affairs of discipline and general management of schools. Parents and community leaders must participate in their children's education daily. This promotes obedience and guarantees that the school's goals and objectives are met.<sup>35</sup> The dynamic nature of the school system needs the strong involvement of credible parents and community members with the strong tenets of Ubuntu to administer justice and peace in the school community.<sup>36</sup> That is why Tadle-Zaragosa and Sonsona alluded to the fact that communal engagement brings about the general effectiveness and productivity of the school system.<sup>37</sup> As a result, school administrators who encourage real participation from key players are more likely to succeed in their efforts to maintain order in the classroom. This is especially true for secondary schools in Nigeria.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Msengana, "The Significance of the Concept" Ubuntu" for Educational Management and Leadership during Democratic Transformation in South Africa"; T I Nzimakwe, "Practising Ubuntu and Leadership for Good Governance: The South African and Continental Dialogue," 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Helen Poulsen, "Community Participation and the Politics of Schooling: School Based Management Committees in Nigeria" (UCL (University College London), 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Ahmed Tijjani Ibrahim and Hazri Bin Jamil, "The Nature of Parental Involvement in the Schooling Process in Katsina State.," *Journal of Education and Learning* 1, no. 2 (2012): 37–50.

<sup>36</sup> Donna M Mertens, Fiona Cram, and Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Pathways into Social Research: Voices of a New Generation* (Left Coast Press, 2013); Margarita M Abaunza, "Ubuntu's Potential for Further Development in the South African Education System" (Georgetown University, 2013); Charity Nombuso Masondo, "Enhancing the Effectiveness of Principals in Implementing Inclusive Education Using Ubuntu Approach" (University of the Free State, 2017).

<sup>37</sup> Junalyn R Tadle-Zaragosa and Ramir Philip Jones V Sonsona, "Linking Administrative Performance of Principals Vis-à-Vis Public Relations and Community Involvement.," *International Journal of Instruction* 14, no. 4 (2021): 857–72.

<sup>38</sup> Alfred KatambaLutwa, "Stakeholders" Participation in Management of Students" Discipline and Students" Discipline in Secondary Schools in Gulu District" (Gulu University, 2014).

## Reflective Observations

All organisations including educational institutions; irrespective of size or location, always want to be successful in overturning pass rates of learners in schools and the general efficacy of the school is non-negotiable.

## Application of UTM to Secondary School Practice and Discipline Management

This section uses the tenets of UTM to articulate how school managers in Nigerian schools can address students' indiscipline. The school managers may use the Ubuntu philosophy to address indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools by drawing from personhood and respecting its tenets. As argued by Ndlovu, when school managers use the ethics of Ubuntu, it will make them administer justice with personhood and respect for humans, especially in dealing with learner indiscipline.<sup>39</sup> The theory of Ubuntu embraces personhood. A learner is a product of the community to which he or she belongs. Ubuntu is an Africanised theory of management that views stakeholders as partners in progress. That is, Ubuntu emphasises the role of being human in the interrelationship between stakeholders using love, care, belongingness, human hood, selflessness and communal engagements.<sup>40</sup> Latemore et al believe that any school that works with a collaborative effort of the community and stakeholders brings effectiveness and productivity.<sup>41</sup>

The adoption of the Ubuntu Theory of Management can help secondary school administrators in Nigeria establish a respectful learning atmosphere for both staff and pupils. Such a setting can encourage adherence to human rights and abstinence from cruel treatment, such as the use of physical punishment, which may in turn encourage student indiscipline. The general administration of discipline in Nigerian schools is also related to the recommendations of Moemedi and Mizinga who posit that Ubuntu democratises the practice of educational administration, especially in the secondary school system.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, it also laid emphasis on the promotion of relative peace in schools through love, care, and respect for each other (stakeholders).

The use of Ubuntu by secondary school management can promote the right to participation in pursuit of schools' goals and objectives by stakeholders like learners, teachers, parents, non-teaching staff and school managers.<sup>43</sup> Camp has indicated that a peaceful and harmonious relationship among the school community workers is essential. This theory addresses the unequivocal rights of students viz-a-viz the administration of the school, with communal engagement, love, care, respect and selflessness regarding the administration of discipline.<sup>44</sup> Students and employees will be given more weight in the administration of the school if they participate in decision-making and benefit from the Ubuntu Management Theory. This will enhance the relative calm in the learning atmosphere and prevent student unrest.<sup>45</sup>

To avoid challenges of indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools, school management should create a healthy environment and healthy relationships between stakeholders to improve the school's

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<sup>39</sup> Priscilla Mtungwa Ndlovu, *Discovering the Spirit of Ubuntu Leadership* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137526854>.

<sup>40</sup> Khoza, *Attuned Leadership: African Humanism as Compass*.

<sup>41</sup> Greg Latemore, Peter Steane, and Robin Kramer, "From Utility to Dignity: Humanism in Human Resource Management," *Virtuous Cycles in Humanistic Management: From the Classroom to the Corporation*, 2020, 91–118.

<sup>42</sup> M.M.Moemedi, "Educator Involvement in Improving Learner Discipline in Secondary Schools in Rustenburg Area Office" (North-West University, 2015); Tamary Mizinga, "The Role of School Management in Effecting Learner Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Chingola District, Copperbelt Province of Zambia." (The University of Zambia, 2022).

<sup>43</sup> Baken Johannes Lefa, "The African Philosophy of Ubuntu in South African Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 1, no. 1 (2015): 15.

<sup>44</sup> Michael David Camp, *The Power of Teacher-Student Relationships in Determining Student Success* (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Msengana, "The Significance of the Concept" Ubuntu" for Educational Management and Leadership during Democratic Transformation in South Africa."

general effectiveness.<sup>46</sup> When learners feel comfortable and connected to the school's affairs, they feel less agitated, and this can bring indiscipline to the school. That is, community involvement in school running brings tranquillity to the school environment.<sup>47</sup> Stakeholders' involvement in decision-making process creates a drive for learners to learn without disturbance in school. The learner's indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools can be lessened through learners' involvement in decision-making and the incorporation of community stakeholders into the management system. From the authors' observation of incessant troubles which led to the closure of schools in December 2021, the lack of meaningful contribution from relevant stakeholders was found to be the major problem causing indiscipline in Nigerian schools. McCray et al opined that it is better to plan how to prevent such violent disruptions to the academic calendar in schools than to manage discipline problems.<sup>48</sup> Ubuntu, with the communal engagement of relevant stakeholders, puts the management of discipline at the forefront through the dialogue of parties involved with the way forward.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made based on the discussions:

### 1. Inclusion of students in the decision-making of students in school administration

The researchers recommend that if including students in decisions could be employed as a strategy, it will improve participation and productivity. School managers should recognise the importance of all stakeholders and the process of decision-making in matters that concern them the most. The theory puts the students in a position to make their thoughts known to other stakeholders in the decision-making process. It is essential to acknowledge the contribution of students in decision-making because they are the recipients of all decisions made. An open decision-making process has a positive impact on the school's overall efficacy. When students participate in the creation of disciplinary rules and regulations and when managers acknowledge their challenges, the students comply without complaint.

### 2. Showing Empathy, Care and Love in Disciplining of Learners

The researchers also suggest that students should be shown love, empathy and care when being disciplined as this will foster positive discipline while at school. The conduct of teachers and school managers in administering justice and discipline without corporal punishments makes it impossible to achieve this in schools. It has been argued that if care, empathy and love which are one of the tenets of ubuntu are shown to students when advising and administering justice to learners, success is guaranteed. Counselling students with love will curb future occurrences of indiscipline in secondary school. When learner discipline is administered with love, care, empathy and good counselling which are the principles of Ubuntu, students behave normally in the classroom and general peace is ensured through the actualisation of school goals and objectives.

### 3. Communal Engagements between Stakeholders, Students and Parents in Addressing Discipline.

Finally, communal engagement between stakeholders is seen as a strategy by the researchers to improve discipline in Nigerian secondary schools. Discipline management in schools across the world is seen as a collective responsibility of stakeholders whereas school-based management has been seen as a planned committee system to encompass general management in the school. Ubuntu has been argued as a communal system which gives the school the system that can contribute meaningfully to

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<sup>46</sup> Adeolu Joshua Ayeni and Modupe A Adedabu, "Improving Learning Infrastructure and Environment for Sustainable Quality Assurance Practice in Secondary Schools in Ondo State, South-West, Nigeria," *International Journal of Research Studies in Education* 1, no. 1 (2012): 61–68.

<sup>47</sup> Mukhammad Abdullah, "School Culture to Serve Performance of Madrasah in Indonesia," *QIJIS: Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019): 71–100.

<sup>48</sup> Meda Desire' Enoch, "Employing African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Managing Learner Discipline: Perspectives of School Management Teams." (University of Kwazulu Natal, 2019).

society at large.<sup>49</sup> The community through its stalwarts, parents and some companies can ensure the achievement of school goals and objectives.

## CONCLUSION

This study has discussed the UTM and how its tenets can be inculcated into the educational framework of Nigerian Secondary Schools to curb the increasing spate of violence. It concludes that Ubuntu remains the best-Africanised strategy for addressing student discipline through the adoption of the tenets that underline the UTM. These include belonging, love, care, empathy and communal engagements among others. The recommendations if adhered to, will assist in decreasing indiscipline in the secondary education system and productivity.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This is part of more extensive research study from the University of the Free State ethical review body with no Ufs-HSD2021/1003/21, South Africa.

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### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

Akinlolu Ademola Onaolapo is the primary researcher, while and Sekitla Daniel Makhasane is the supervisor. The article is an extract from the primary researcher's PhD thesis. All authors made huge and relevant contribution to the completion of this article.