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## ROLE OF SCHOOL FACTORS IN SHAPING STUDENTS' MORAL CONDUCTS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the influence of school factors on students' moral conduct in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a theoretical framework. The research investigates how parental characteristics (social status, family size, educational qualification) and school-related factors (school type, safety, discipline, and student-staff relationships) shape students' moral behaviour. The study population comprised 1,800 students from 12 Colleges of Education comprising federal, state and private institutions located across four South-Western states of Nigeria. A sample size of 1,254 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Data were collected from a sample of college students and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean values, to address research questions. Inferential statistical methods, such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple rRegression, were applied to test hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicate that student-staff relationships ( $\beta = 0.437, p < 0.01$ ) and discipline practices ( $\beta = 0.104, p = 0.007$ ) significantly impact students' moral conduct. Conversely, school type and safety did not show statistically significant effects ( $p > 0.05$ ). Collectively, these factors account for approximately 24.8% of the variance in students' moral conduct. The study concludes that promoting positive student-staff relationships, and enforcing discipline, are crucial for promoting ethical behaviour among students. It is recommended that moral education should be incorporated into school curricula, strengthening discipline policies, and creating supportive environments aligned with societal values. These measures aim to cultivate morally upright individuals capable of contributing positively to society. This research offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to enhance moral development in educational institutions.*

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Attitudinal conduct, School discipline practices, School safety, Student-staff relationships.

### Introduction

The concept of conduct, often equated with ethics, refers to the behaviours, attitudes, and values that align with societal norms and expectations within specific contexts such as schools or social groups (Anho, 2011). Rooted in universal moral principles, conduct evolves over time and varies across cultures. Colleges of education play a pivotal role in shaping students into well-rounded individuals who uphold acceptable behaviours and contribute positively to society (Porter, 2020).

Beyond academic excellence, these institutions aim to instill moral values such as good citizenship, dignity, patriotism, and respect for societal norms. However, recent concerns about declining moral behaviour among adolescents have highlighted the need for moral education. The term "student conduct" encompasses both ethical and unethical behaviours, reflecting adherence to institutional and societal standards (Porter, 2020). This study categorizes student conduct into academic and moral conducts. Academic conduct includes academic achievements, attendance at lectures and examination behaviour, influenced by both home and school environments (Ayanwale, 2015). Moral conduct, on the other hand, concerns students' ethical behaviour, encompassing their attitudes, interactions, and adherence to societal values. Instances of unethical behaviour among students, lecturers and staff in higher institutions further underscore the importance of addressing this issue (Khair, Hasnah & Ishak, 2016). By fostering positive conduct, educational institutions aim to cultivate morally upright individuals capable of contributing to a functional and ethical society.

Moral conduct refers to students' ethical attitudes, behaviours and manners of interaction with others (Kashem, 2019). It encompasses characteristics such as respect, kindness, empathy, honesty, responsibility, and self-discipline. Attitudinal conduct reflects students' character and ethical ideals, shaping their relationships with peers, instructors, staff and the broader school community. Students are encouraged to adopt positive attitudes, show respect for others, contribute constructively to the learning environment, and adhere to moral principles in their words and actions.

Dressing conduct pertains to how students present themselves in terms of attire within the school setting, including adherence to the institution's dress code or uniform policy (Kashem, 2019). Students are expected to dress modestly and appropriately, following guidelines that may specify clothing length, fit, logos, or symbols. Dressing conduct fosters a respectful and professional atmosphere by ensuring that students' attire aligns with the educational institution's values and standards. By categorising students' moral conduct into dressing and attitudinal dimensions, educational institutions establish norms and expectations that promote a culture of respect, integrity, and personal growth (Kashem, 2019).

Young adults, particularly College of Education students, are expected to exhibit proper conduct in both their attire and behaviour. However, the reverse is often the case. This issue is critical because these students are future educators, and the values they adopt will shape the lessons they impart to their own students. Common trends among College of Education students include wearing miniskirts, spaghetti blouses, skirts with high slits, low-neck blouses exposing parts of the body, bathroom slippers, t-shirts with customised names, or clothing displaying themes of sex, violence, alcohol, human skulls, tobacco, or drugs (Khair et al. & Odole, 2018). Such attire is alien to African societal norms and contradicts cultural values (Khair et al., n.d.).

Additionally, many students exhibit disrespectful behaviour towards lecturers and staff, arrive late for lectures, disrupt classes, use mobile phones during lectures, and engage in examination misconduct (Odole, 2018).

Students' misconduct may also stem from school-related factors such as school type, discipline practices, safety, student-staff relationships, class size, peer influence, and school climate. School discipline practices can either positively or negatively influence students' conduct. All Colleges of Education have student code of conduct outlining acceptable behaviour and expectations (Fareo & Jackson, 2018). Discipline involves instruction that helps individuals acquire self-control, orderly behaviour, and direction. The enforcement of these rules by school authorities determines whether students uphold moral conduct (Fareo & Jackson, 2018). Anecdotal evidence shows some behaviours among students. For instance, students are often seen sitting under trees in groups, engaging in casual discussions, narrating films, or sharing experiences instead of attending lectures (Manvin&Narina, 2018). Many students spend lecture time chatting on social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, or Instagram, watching videos, listening to music, or even playing games on their smartphones (Manvin& Narina, 2018). Some students hold unnecessary meetings or search for romantic partners during lecture hours, neglecting academic responsibilities (Okolie et al., 2019).

Indecent dressing has become increasingly common among students in Colleges of Education and other higher learning institutions (Kwanuba et al., 2020). Indecent dressing is defined as any improper or provocative attire deemed morally unacceptable within a specific community (Oluwadare et al., 2020; Trommsdorff, 2018). Examples include clothing that exposes the breasts, stomach, buttocks, thighs, or underwear (Akpan, 2018; Oluwadare et al., 2020). Despite societal concerns, some students perceive modern fashion as liberating, viewing conservative attires as outdated (Kwanuba et al., 2020).

School factors may include School type, that is whether public or private also influences students' conduct. Public Colleges of Education tend to enforce codes of conduct, discipline, and punishment more rigorously than private institutions (Balqis & Fanani, 2021). Also, school safety is another factor influencing students' conduct. A safe school is free from violence and fosters an environment where fear of harm or disciplinary repercussions is minimal (Geofrey et al. & Edok, 2021). Finally, student-staff relationships play a crucial role in shaping students' conduct. Effective teaching and learning depend on the quality of interactions between instructors and students (Kashif et al., 2017).

Anecdotal evidence further shows troubling trends in colleges of education, where students are often observed prioritizing social interactions over academic responsibilities during lecture hours. They engage in inappropriate dressing, use mobile devices for non-academic purposes, and neglect their studies (Manvin&

Narina, 2018; Fareo & Jackson, 2018). Such behaviours raise critical questions about the role of school-related factors such as discipline practices, school safety, student-staff relationships, and institutional policies in shaping students' moral conduct. For instance, studies have shown that public colleges tend to enforce codes of conduct more rigorously than private institutions, potentially influencing students' behaviour differently across school types (Okolie et al., 2019).

Despite the importance of fostering moral conduct in educational settings, limited research has comprehensively explored how school-related factors contribute to students' ethical conduct. While some studies have examined aspects like school safety, discipline, and teacher-student relationships, there remains a gap in understanding their collective impact on students' moral conduct (Ifediora et al., 2019; Kashif et al., 2017). Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses on academic performance rather than moral behaviour, leaving unanswered questions about the interplay between school environments and students' ethical attitudes and actions.

Given the pivotal role of colleges of education in training future educators who will shape the next generation, addressing this issue is imperative. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the role of school factors such as school type, safety, discipline, and student-staff relationships in shaping students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. By doing so, it aims to provide insights that can inform strategies to promote positive moral behaviour and foster an ethical learning environment.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To evaluate the impact of school type on students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.
2. To assess the role of school safety in promoting students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.
3. To analyze the influence of school discipline practices on students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.
4. To investigate the impact of student-staff relationships on students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does school type impact students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria?
2. What role does school safety play in promoting students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria?

3. How do school discipline practices influence students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria?
4. What is the impact of student-staff relationships on students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** School type has no significant impact on students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** School safety does not play a significant role in promoting students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** School discipline practices do not significantly influence students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Student-staff relationships have no significant impact on students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Moral Conduct**

Moral conduct connotes a universally accepted ethical framework that guides individuals in their daily lives. These principles are fundamental to fostering societal harmony, peace, and dignity. Moral ideals are inherently communal, requiring consensus among members of a community to be effectively established and upheld (Trommsdorff, 2018). Moral conduct encompasses the principles of good and evil that influence an individual's behaviour and decision-making. It provides the benchmarks by which human actions are evaluated as right or wrong, promoting virtues such as modesty, love, compassion, and kindness.

Moral values are shaped by various sources, including religion, societal norms, state regulations, and personal introspection. However, these values are not static; they evolve alongside societal changes, reflecting the dynamic nature of moral principles (Ali, Farooq & Idris, 2018). Among all natural values, moral conduct holds a position of prominence. Qualities such as honesty, humility, purity, and compassion are regarded as superior to traits like intelligence, physical beauty, or even political power. Acts of genuine forgiveness and selfless love exemplify a higher moral dimension, transcending mere societal conventions and underscoring the enduring significance of ethical behaviour (Geofrey, Athanas & Polycarp, 2021).

#### **School Factors**

School factors refer to all variables within the school environment that influence students personalities, behaviours, and societal performance. These include school discipline practices, school safety, student-staff relationships, and school type. Additionally, peers, the wider community, and personal characteristics such as age, sex, personality, temperament, and mental or physical health also play a role in shaping student behaviour, learning, and well-being (Kashif et al., 2017). One of the persistent challenges schools face is addressing challenging student behaviours, such as violence, antisocial conduct, bullying, rule violations, and disruptions to other students learning.

### **School Type**

The data on how school characteristics in developing countries such as whether they are public or private, affect students acquisition of cognitive skills and moral behaviour remain diverse. The influence of educational policy on learning in these contexts is poorly understood, with recent reviews noting that much of what has been revealed is methodological rather than substantive (Okolie et al., 2019). A deeper understanding of how school attributes impact learning is essential, as public policy can shape the characteristics of public schools and influence private school costs through vouchers and scholarships.

In Nigeria, regardless of academic level, the education sector comprises two types of schools: government-funded and private institutions. Government schools are supported by national, state, or local governments and typically have low or no tuition fees. In contrast, private schools are funded by private organizations or non-governmental entities and often charge high fees to cover teaching and learning facilities while maximizing profits in the short and long term (Okolie et al., 2019).

Supporters of private schools argue that private involvement in school management leads to greater efficiency and responsiveness to parental demands. Private schools often enjoy greater autonomy in hiring and compensating teaching and non-teaching staff, introducing performance incentives, and adopting curricula and instructional methods tailored to students interests and abilities (Nanda et al., 2021). However, both types of schools present distinct advantages and disadvantages, influencing students' academic and moral behaviour differently.

### **School Safety**

The concept of a safe school varies among individuals, but it generally refers to an environment free from violence and perceived fear of harm or disciplinary procedures (Edok, 2021). In a safe school, students, teachers, staff, and visitors can collaborate to enhance teaching and learning without fear of harm. Safety encompasses efforts to protect the school community and its surroundings, addressing a wide range of issues under the umbrella term of safety. These include health, mental wellness, the school environment, fire safety,

weather safety, building security, dangerous persons, bullying, environmental disasters, local crime, and transportation safety (Ifediora et al., 2019).

Creating a safe environment extends beyond the school premises, ensuring students protection during their commute to and from school. This includes safeguarding against abuse, aggression, mental health issues, natural and man-made disasters, fire hazards, and traffic risks (Geofrey et al., 2021). A safe school prioritises internal threats, such as intimidation or fear among students, teachers, or administrators. For example, a school with a history of violence among students, teachers, or community members would be deemed unsafe (Edok, 2021). The inclusion of safety plans in school policies to address potential risks is a key indicator of a safe school. Despite definitional differences, the most commonly cited components of school safety in literature are physical, psychological, environmental, and social aspects (Ifediora et al., 2019).

### **School Discipline Practices**

Discipline is a critical tool for transforming individuals and society collectively. It has been described in various ways by scholars. For instance, maintaining a predetermined level of behaviour and teaching students etiquette, including respect for school authorities, are integral components of discipline (Fareo & Jackson, 2018). Schools bear the responsibility of fostering discipline among students, and educators are expected to ensure appropriate behaviour. Discipline is defined as the instruction that helps individuals acquire self-control, orderly behaviour, and direction (Fareo & Jackson, 2018). It involves the capacity for restraint, self-control, and respect for oneself and others (Ali et al., 2018).

Discipline can be intrinsic, driven by an individual's internal motivation to adhere to moral obligations, or extrinsic, enforced through fear of penalty or retribution when individuals fail to comply voluntarily (Fareo & Jackson, 2018). It also encompasses a field of knowledge, a system of rules, and training that enhances self-control, character, orderliness, and efficiency (Ali et al., 2018). Discipline thus combines both instruction and self-regulation, playing a pivotal role in shaping students moral conduct.

### **Student-Staff Relationship**

Teachers play a vital role in fostering students' academic, intellectual, and professional growth. Positive teacher-student relationships significantly influence students' academic and moral conduct (Kashif et al., 2017). Scholars argue that improving studentsbehaviour requires strong alignment between instructors teaching methods and students responses.

Effective teaching and learning depend on the quality of relationships formed between instructors and students (Balqis & Fanani, 2021). Teachers possess skills, attitudes, and knowledge that can profoundly impact students' academic progress and their ability to lead successful lives outside school. Students who

maintain positive, respectful, and close relationships with their teachers tend to outperform those who do not (Kashif et al., 2017). For effective learning, teachers must be motivated, passionate, and capable of engaging students. At colleges of education, some students fail or are expelled due to unacceptable behaviour that damages their relationships with lecturers.

Lecturers interpersonal actions significantly influence students' academic progress and moral development. Teacher-student relationships are crucial for social and emotional development, which can directly affect academic success (Balqis & Fanani, 2021). These relationships encourage student achievement by providing consistent monitoring as students progress through academic activities. Thus, the quality of a student's relationship with their teacher determines how much they learn. Research supports the idea that motivation to achieve quality learning is closely tied to positive student-teacher relationships (Kashif et al., 2017).

### **Theoretical Framework**

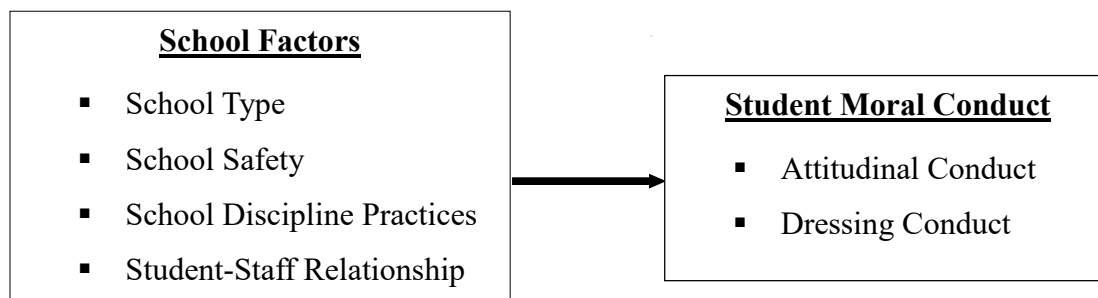
The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) serves as a valuable framework for understanding students' moral and academic conduct in educational institutions, particularly in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. TPB posits that behaviour is driven by three components: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Attitudes reflect students positive or negative evaluations of specific behaviours, such as respect, honesty, and responsibility, which are shaped by their beliefs about the outcomes of their actions (Kashem, 2019). Subjective norms encompass social pressures from parents, peers, and teachers, influencing students perceptions of acceptable behaviour. For instance, school discipline practices, safety, and student-staff relationships play a critical role in shaping these norms (Fareo & Jackson, 2018). Perceived behavioural control refers to students confidence in their ability to perform specific actions, influenced by internal factors like self-discipline and external factors such as school safety (Edok, 2021). However, while TPB provides a robust foundation, it does not account for cultural or religious contexts, which significantly influence moral conduct in Nigerian settings. To address this gap, religiosity is incorporated as a moderating variable, as studies show it strengthens perceived behavioural control and aligns intentions with ethical actions (Kashif et al., 2017; Balqis & Fanani, 2021). Despite its utility, TPB has limitations, as it focuses on internal beliefs rather than real-world practices, necessitating adaptations to fully explain students moral and academic behaviour in this context.

### **Conceptual Model**

**Independent Variable**

**Dependent Variable**





## Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, enabling the examination of relationships among variables without manipulation, thereby ensuring that findings were accurately reported as they occurred. The study population comprised all students in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. These institutions consist of 41 colleges: five Federal, seven State and 29 Private, with a total student population of 27,127 across various levels. The sample size for this study was 1,254 respondents, determined using Taro Yamane's formula with a 0.05 precision level. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select one Federal, one State, and one Private College of Education from each state, specifically targeting 200-level Social Studies students. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select respondents, ensuring equal representation within the sample population. The sample sizes for each college were also calculated using Taro Yamane's formula. A self-structured questionnaire, titled "School Factors on Students Conduct Questionnaire (SFSCQ)," was developed, comprising five sections. Section A dealt with demographic information of the respondents. Sections B to E focused on students' conduct, school factors, utilising a four-point Likert scale. Face and content validity were ensured through expert review and supervision, with necessary revisions made based on feedback before conducting a trial test. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using the test-retest method, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.816, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The researcher obtained approval from relevant authorities, recruited and trained four research assistants, and administered the questionnaires to students in the selected colleges. The data collection process spanned one month, with assurances of confidentiality provided to participants. Descriptive statistics were employed for analyzing demographic data, while inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between variables. All data were analyzed using SPSS version 27 to ensure accuracy.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of the findings, beginning with the analysis of demographic variables and progressing to the hypotheses formulated in alignment with the objectives of the study. Each result is subsequently discussed in detail. **Table 1: Demographic Variables**

		Frequency	Percentage
School Type	Federal	872	69.5%
	State	245	19.5%
	Private	137	10.9%
		<b>1254</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Sex	Male	285	22.7%
	Female	969	77.3%
		<b>1254</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Age	16-20	269	21.5%
	21-24	810	64.6%
	25 & Above	157	12.5%
		<b>1254</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Religion	Islam	698	55.7%
	Christianity	516	41.1%
	Traditional	40	3.2%
		<b>1254</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Family Size	1-4	551	43.9%
	5-8	592	47.2%
	9-12	93	7.4%
	13 & Above	18	1.4%
		<b>1254</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Parental Social Status	Low	272	21.7%
	Medium	694	55.3%
	High	288	23.0%
		<b>1254</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Parental Educational Qualification	WASSCE or below	184	14.7%
	OND/NCE	868	69.2%
	HND/Degree	170	13.6%
	Ph.D	18	1.4%
	Other	14	1.1%
		<b>1254</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 1 presents a detailed demographic analysis of the study participants. The distribution of respondents across different school types indicates that federal colleges constitute the majority, representing 69.5% (n = 872) of the total sample, followed by state colleges at 19.5% (n = 245) and private colleges at 10.9% (n = 137). Regarding gender distribution, there is a significant disparity, with males accounting for 22.7% (n = 285) and females comprising 77.3% (n = 969) of the sample. The age distribution reveals that the majority of participants fall within the 21-24 years age group, representing 64.6% (n = 810). Those aged 16-20 years

account for 21.5% (n = 269), while respondents aged 25 years and above make up 12.5% (n = 157). In terms of religious affiliation, Islam is the predominant religion, practiced by 55.7% (n = 698) of the respondents, followed by Christianity at 41.1% (n = 516), while traditional religion adherents constitute 3.2% (n = 40). Family size analysis shows that 43.9% (n = 551) of participants come from families with 1-4 members, while 47.2% (n = 592) belong to families with 5-8 members. The remaining respondents come from larger family sizes. Parental social status categorization indicates that 21.7% (n = 272) of the respondents belong to low-status families, 55.3% (n = 694) to medium-status families, 14.2% (n = 178) to high-status families, and 8.8% (n = 110) fall into an unspecified category. Finally, parental educational qualifications reveal that 14.7% (n = 184) of respondents' parents possess WASSCE or lower qualifications, 69.2% (n = 868) hold OND/NCE qualifications, 13.6% (n = 170) have HND/Degree qualifications, while 1.4% (n = 18) hold Ph.D. qualifications. An additional 1.1% (n = 14) of respondents reported unspecified qualifications.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Table 2: School Factors and Students' Moral Conduct in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.498 <sup>a</sup>	.248	.246	3.32844		
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4445.869	4	1111.467	100.326	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	13482.589	1217	11.079		
	Total	17928.458	1221			
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	20.603	.384		53.701	.000
	Discipline	.122	.046	.104	-2.684	.007
	Safety	.032	.045	-.029	-.714	.475
	StudentStaffRel	.483	.048	.437	-10.163	.000
	SchoolTypeTotal	.059	.045	.150	1.312	.190

a. Dependent Variable: MoralConduct

b. Predictors: (Constant), SchoolTypeTotal, Safety, Discipline, StudentStaffRel

Table 2 presents a regression analysis investigating the relationship between school factors and students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. The model includes predictors such as School type, School safety, School discipline and Student-staff relationship.

**Hypothesis 1: School Type has a significant impact on students' moral conduct.**

The regression analysis in Table 4.16 investigates the relationship between school factors and students' moral conduct in colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. Among the predictors is school type. The results revealed that School type does not show a statistically significant impact on students' moral conduct ( $\beta = 0.059$ ,  $p = .190$ ). This suggests that whether a college is public or private does not significantly influence the moral behaviour of students in this context. While public institutions are often perceived as stricter in enforcing codes of conduct (Okolie et al., 2019), this study finds no direct association between school type and moral conduct.

**Hypothesis 2: School safety has a significant impact on students' moral conduct.**

Safety is a critical factor in fostering an environment conducive to ethical behaviour. The regression analysis reveals that safety does not exhibit a statistically significant impact on students' moral conduct ( $\beta = 0.032$ ,  $p = .475$ ). Although a safe school environment is essential for reducing fear and promoting positive interactions (Edok, 2021; Ifediora et al., 2019), the findings suggest that safety measures alone may not directly translate into improved moral behaviour among students. This could imply that other factors, such as interpersonal relationships and discipline, play a more prominent role in shaping moral conduct.

**Hypothesis 3: School discipline practices has a significant impact on students' moral conduct.**

Discipline is a cornerstone of ethical behaviour, and the regression analysis confirms its importance. The standardized coefficient for discipline ( $\beta = 0.104$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ) indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship with students' moral conduct. This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the role of discipline in fostering self-control, orderly behaviour, and adherence to moral standards (Fareo & Jackson, 2018). The enforcement of school rules and codes of conduct appears to be a crucial factor in promoting positive moral behaviour among students in colleges of education.

**Hypothesis 4: Student-Staff Relationship has a significant impact on students' moral conduct.**

The regression analysis highlights student-staff relationship as the most influential predictor of moral conduct, with a standardized coefficient of  $\beta = 0.437$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). This underscores the critical role of positive interactions between students and staff in shaping ethical behaviour. Strong student-staff relationships foster

trust, respect, and a sense of belonging, which encourage students to adhere to moral principles (Kashif et al., 2017; Balqis & Fanani, 2021). The findings emphasize that nurturing supportive and respectful relationships in educational settings can significantly enhance students' moral conduct.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The regression analysis demonstrates that student-staff relationship ( $\beta = 0.437$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and discipline ( $\beta = 0.104$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ) are significant predictors of students' moral conduct, while school type and safety do not show statistically significant impacts ( $p > 0.05$ ). Collectively, these school factors explain approximately 24.8% of the variance in moral conduct, highlighting their importance in understanding and promoting positive moral behaviour among colleges of education students in Southwest Nigeria. These findings suggest that interventions focusing on improving student-staff relationships and enforcing discipline practices may be particularly effective in fostering ethical behaviour in educational institutions.

### **Conclusion**

The study examined the role of school factors in shaping students' moral conduct in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a theoretical framework. The findings revealed that student-staff relationships and discipline practices significantly influence students' moral conduct, while school type and safety did not demonstrate statistically significant impacts. These results underscore the importance of interpersonal dynamics and structured discipline in fostering ethical behaviour among students. However, the limitations of TPB, particularly its failure to account for external environmental factors such as cultural and religious contexts, were evident. Collectively, these findings suggest that targeted interventions focusing on improving student-staff relationships, enforcing discipline, and integrating religious values can promote positive moral conduct in educational settings.

### **Recommendations**

**Enhancing student-staff relationships:** Educational institutions should prioritize fostering positive and respectful interactions between students and staff. Professional development programmes for lecturers could focus on strategies for building rapport, offering mentorship, and serving as ethical role model for students. Such efforts can strengthen subjective norms and encourage students to adopt positive behaviours.

**Strengthening discipline practices:** Schools should enforce clear and consistent discipline practices that align with societal values. This includes implementing codes of conduct and dress codes that promote modesty and professionalism. Public colleges, which have been shown to enforce discipline more rigorously than private institutions, could serve as references for best practices in this area.

**Integrating religiosity into ethical education:** Given the moderating role of religiosity in ethical decision-making, schools should consider incorporating religious teachings or moral education into their curricula. This could involve organizing seminars, workshops, or spiritual guidance sessions that reinforce the importance of moral values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility.

**Promoting a safe and supportive school environment:** Although safety did not show a statistically significant impact in this study, creating a safe and inclusive environment remains essential for holistic student development. Schools should address potential threats, such as bullying or violence, and ensure that students feel secure both physically and psychologically.

**Encouraging positive peer influence:** Peer groups play a critical role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviours. Schools should promote activities that encourage collaboration, teamwork, and mutual respect among students. Initiatives such as peer mentoring programmes or ethics-based extracurricular activities can help cultivate a culture of moral uprightness.

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