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EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN VERBAL ABUSE, ENGLISH LANGUAGE MISUSE, AND STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING STUDENT DELINQUENCY IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION, KWARA STATE

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Abstract

Colleges of Education in Kwara State are central to Nigeria's teacher-training system, charged with preparing educators who can uphold discipline, professionalism, and effective communication. Yet growing student delinquency, including truancy, insubordination, and examination malpractice, threatens this mandate. While socio-economic pressures and weak family structures are often cited, this paper highlights two frequently overlooked drivers: verbal abuse and misuse of the English language. Persistent verbal aggression, such as insults, humiliation, or harsh criticism, erodes students' self-esteem, fosters resentment, and undermines respect for authority. Simultaneously, careless English usage, marked by slang, profanity, and poor grammar, weakens academic seriousness and normalizes disrespectful interaction. When these factors intersect, they create a campus climate of hostility and emotional disengagement that fuels indiscipline. The implications extend beyond the colleges themselves: pre-service teachers who internalize hostile or careless communication are likely to replicate these behaviours in their own classrooms, perpetuating cycles of poor classroom management and low educational quality. To address this challenge, the paper recommends a multi-level response that includes compulsory communication and conflict-resolution training, English proficiency programmes, clear anti-abuse policies, integration of professional ethics into the curriculum, and strengthened counselling services. Peer-led language initiatives and regular institutional assessments are also advised to sustain respectful communication norms. By embedding these strategies, Colleges of Education can foster a culture of dignity, linguistic competence, and professional ethics, ensuring that future teachers model the respect and discipline essential for effective instruction and national educational development.

Keywords: Verbal abuse, English language misuse, Student delinquency

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Introduction

Colleges of Education in Kwara State constitute a critical segment of Nigeria's higher education system, serving as the primary institutions mandated to train and prepare teachers for primary and secondary schools. Their role extends beyond imparting subject knowledge; they are also responsible for cultivating the professional ethics, communicative competence, and classroom management skills necessary for effective teaching. Consequently, the behavioural patterns and moral orientations fostered within these colleges have long-term implications for the quality of teachers produced and, by extension, the standards of education in Nigeria (Adeyemi & Adetunji, 2021). In recent years, however, there has been growing concern regarding the prevalence of student delinquency within Colleges of Education in Kwara State. Such delinquency manifests in various forms, including truancy, substance abuse, examination malpractice, violent confrontations, cult-related activities, and general disregard for institutional authority. These behaviours not only threaten the academic mission of the colleges but also erode the professional image expected of future teachers. As noted by Adebayo and Akinola (2021), indiscipline in Nigerian tertiary institutions often undermines institutional culture, reduces academic seriousness, and compromises the credibility of graduates.

The persistence of student delinquency has been widely linked to factors such as poor parental upbringing, peer group influence, economic hardship, and weak institutional control mechanisms. For instance, Ajayi and Afolabi (2022) observed that socioeconomic pressures contribute significantly to academic misconduct and disruptive behaviours among undergraduates in Nigeria. Similarly, family instability and lack of moral guidance have been identified as strong predictors of antisocial conduct among students (Ogunleye, 2023). While these explanations are valid, they tend to overshadow less visible but equally consequential contributors to student delinquency, namely verbal abuse and misuse of the English language. Verbal abuse, which includes insults, shouting, humiliation, derogatory remarks, and other forms of negative communication, has become a normalized feature of interaction in many Nigerian classrooms. Although often rationalized as a means of enforcing discipline or correcting students, research shows that such communication erodes learners' self-esteem, instils resentment, and fosters antagonism toward authority figures (Ojo & Salami, 2021). Within Colleges of Education, where students are adults preparing for professional careers, constant exposure to verbal aggression can trigger rebellion, withdrawal, or outright delinquent behaviours.

The problem of verbal abuse is particularly insidious because it undermines the very ethos of teacher education. If pre-service teachers experience communication rooted in hostility, they may internalize such patterns and replicate them in their future classrooms. As Adebisi and Jimoh (2021) contend, negative communicative practices in higher institutions have long-term implications for professional ethics and institutional effectiveness. Thus, verbal abuse is not merely an interpersonal issue but a structural factor that compromises the quality of future teachers and fosters delinquency within colleges. English, as the official medium of instruction in Nigerian higher education, is intended to foster clarity, respect, and professionalism in academic and interpersonal communication. However, evidence suggests that students in Colleges of Education increasingly misuse the language, relying on slang, profanity, poor grammar, or disrespectful registers in both academic and informal interactions (Ibrahim & Usman, 2022). Such patterns of communication erode respect for academic norms and normalize a culture of casual disrespect.

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The misuse of English has at least two significant consequences. First, it undermines academic performance. Students who lack proficiency in standard English often struggle to comprehend instructions, participate in discussions, and write examinations effectively (Aboderin, 2025). Second, it contributes to behavioural problems, as informal registers and disrespectful speech frequently escalate into conflicts and indiscipline. This is particularly concerning in Colleges of Education, where students are expected to graduate as competent communicators and role models. As Adegboye and Salihu (2021) argue, linguistic competence and professional communication are central to effective teaching and classroom management. The connection between communication and behaviour has not been sufficiently acknowledged in Nigerian educational discourse. Most explanations of student delinquency emphasize structural or environmental variables, while the subtle but powerful role of language and interpersonal interaction remains understudied. Yet, as research increasingly shows, communication styles, whether abusive or careless, directly shape attitudes, motivation, and behavioural outcomes (Olatunji & Bello, 2020).

For Colleges of Education in Kwara State, this nexus is particularly significant. These institutions are professionalizing environments, where students not only acquire academic knowledge but also internalize the communicative norms and ethical standards of the teaching profession. If verbal abuse and misuse of English are tolerated or normalized, students may interpret them as acceptable professional practices. This has the dual effect of perpetuating delinquency within the colleges and reproducing toxic communication patterns in Nigeria's classrooms. The urgency of addressing these issues cannot be overstated. First, persistent delinquency in Colleges of Education threatens their credibility as centres of teacher preparation. A teacher who graduates from an institution characterized by verbal hostility and poor language culture is unlikely to model respectful communication or enforce discipline constructively. Second, unchecked abuse and language misuse may undermine the professionalization of teaching in Nigeria, which remains a major goal of educational reform. Finally, the societal implications are far-reaching: future generations of students risk being socialized into classrooms dominated by negative communication and weak behavioural standards. Therefore, it becomes necessary to explore the role of verbal abuse and English language misuse as overlooked contributors to student delinquency in Colleges of Education in Kwara State. Recognizing and addressing these factors offers an opportunity not only to reduce indiscipline within the colleges but also to safeguard the professional and ethical standards of Nigeria's teaching workforce.

Statement of Perspective

This paper asserts that verbal abuse and the persistent misuse of English in both academic and interpersonal communication are not inconsequential matters; rather, they are potent contributors to student delinquency in Colleges of Education in Kwara State. Addressing these issues is essential to fostering discipline, cultivating academic seriousness, and upholding professional ethics among pre-service teachers. Verbal abuse embodied in shouting, belittling remarks, or derogatory language represents a subtle but corrosive force within educational settings. Though often rationalized as disciplinary in nature, such conduct frequently degrades student self-esteem, evokes resentment, and weakens respect for authority. Research probing institutional dynamics in Nigeria underscores how negative communicative behaviours not only diminish academic focus but also foster adversarial attitudes and resistance among students (Ojo & Salami, 2021) of Education, where linguistic competence is a cornerstone of teacher identity, tolerating substandard English erodes authority and weakens classroom management. When students observe relaxed linguistic

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standards, they may internalize and replicate disrespectful communication styles, reinforcing indiscipline.

Neither verbal aggression nor language misuse operates in isolation. Together, they create an educational climate characterized by disrespect, lowered expectations, and emotional disengagement. Students experiencing verbal mistreatment often become defensive, rebellious, or disengaged while slipshod use of language signals lax norms and invites further breaches of decorum. Combined, these factors significantly escalate the risk of delinquent conduct, ranging from truancy and insubordination to more disruptive behaviours. Most significantly, Colleges of Education are charged with preparing educators who will shape future learning environments. If these institutions harbour abusive communication patterns or tolerate linguistic laxity, they risk perpetuating a cycle of poor professional conduct and weakening the integrity of Nigerian classrooms. Addressing these communication problems, therefore, is not a peripheral concern; it is central to ensuring that future teachers model the respect, clarity, and professional gravitas essential for effective instruction and leadership.

Linking Verbal Abuse to Delinquency

Verbal abuse in Nigerian tertiary institutions, manifesting as insults, shouting, humiliation, and derogatory remarks, remains one of the subtle but destructive forms of communication that negatively affects students' psychological stability and behaviour. Unlike physical assault, which is easily noticed and condemned, verbal aggression is often rationalised as a disciplinary method or as harmless banter. However, its consequences are far-reaching, particularly in shaping delinquent behaviours among students in Colleges of Education. Verbal abuse gradually erodes students' self-esteem and sense of belonging within the academic community. When lecturers or peers consistently ridicule, embarrass, or insult students, it creates an environment where individuals feel undervalued and disrespected. According to Adebayo and Akinola (2021), hostile communication practices in Nigerian higher institutions increase resentment, weaken respect for authority, and heighten the possibility of conflict. This breakdown of respect and trust forms the foundation for disruptive behaviours such as truancy, bullying, and defiance.

The psychological effects of verbal abuse cannot be underestimated. Students repeatedly exposed to humiliation often internalise a sense of inadequacy, which undermines concentration, academic self-confidence, and classroom engagement. Okon and Ibrahim (2022) observed that verbal aggression by lecturers contributes to students' disengagement, leading to absenteeism, lateness, and, in some cases, withdrawal from academic participation. These behavioural responses are typically categorised as delinquency, yet they often emerge as coping mechanisms for dealing with emotional injury. In institutional contexts where abusive communication becomes common, disrespect is inadvertently normalised. Students internalise the perception that insults or derogatory remarks are legitimate ways of asserting power or authority. Yusuf and Lawal (2023) found that the prevalence of verbal bullying in Colleges of Education promotes peer-to-peer hostility, which later escalates into group conflicts and collective indiscipline. Thus, environments where verbal abuse is tolerated serve as breeding grounds for wider forms of misconduct, including violent confrontation and vandalism.

Power relations in Nigerian Colleges of Education further intensify the problem. Lecturers and administrators, who are expected to model professional conduct, sometimes resort to verbal aggression as a means of enforcing discipline. This misuse of authority communicates to students that aggression is an acceptable leadership tool. As highlighted

by Oladipo and Adekeye (2021), when teacher educators use humiliating language, they inadvertently transfer unprofessional communication habits to trainee teachers. Such patterns are likely to be reproduced in future classrooms, perpetuating cycles of verbal abuse and its attendant behavioural consequences. Students from vulnerable backgrounds are often the most affected. For example, those from low socioeconomic families or those struggling with English proficiency tend to be more sensitive to ridicule and are disproportionately prone to delinquency when verbally abused. In a study on communication and student behaviour, Ibrahim and Salihu (2020) argued that verbal mistreatment has a compounding effect on disadvantaged students, who may resort to rebellion or aggression as a defence mechanism. This highlights the intersection between verbal abuse, social inequality, and delinquency.

Addressing this issue requires deliberate institutional reforms. Nigerian policy scholars recommend that tertiary institutions adopt restorative and dignity-affirming disciplinary practices rather than punitive or shaming approaches (Ogunleye & Olatunji, 2024). Building a culture of positive communication would not only improve student behaviour but also enhance academic seriousness and professional ethics among future teachers. Verbal abuse is not a minor disciplinary strategy but a significant driver of delinquent behaviour in Nigerian Colleges of Education. It damages student self-esteem, undermines respect for authority, normalises hostility, and threatens the professional values expected of teacher trainees. Curbing verbal abuse is therefore essential to promoting discipline, academic focus, and ethical standards within Nigeria's teacher education system.

English Language Misuse and Student Conduct

English remains the official language of instruction in Nigerian higher education. It is not only a vehicle for academic learning but also a medium through which professional values, respect, and discipline are communicated. In Colleges of Education, where students are being trained to become teachers, mastery of the English language is particularly critical. However, its misuse, whether through slang, profanity, grammatical errors, or disrespectful registers, has become a visible and troubling issue. Such misuse does not simply reflect a linguistic problem; it is closely linked with declining discipline, poor interpersonal relations, and delinquent behaviour. Language is central to social interaction. The way students speak to lecturers, peers, and administrators shapes how respect and authority are negotiated. When English is consistently misused, either in casual, disrespectful tones or through careless grammatical construction, it signals a lowering of academic seriousness. Adebisi and Jimoh (2021) emphasised that in Nigerian tertiary institutions, communication is a reflection of institutional culture. When poor or abusive English dominates, it fosters a climate where indiscipline and disregard for authority become normalised.

One major dimension of language misuse is the growing adoption of slang and profanity in academic environments. Students increasingly blend informal, street-level expressions into formal classroom interactions. While code-switching and informal speech are natural aspects of youth culture, persistent use of slang in academic contexts often trivialises intellectual discourse. According to Oyeleke and Salami (2022), such practices weaken students' ability to maintain academic registers and diminish respect in teacher-student communication. Over time, slang-filled and disrespectful exchanges erode boundaries, reducing the authority of lecturers and encouraging indiscipline.

Another problem is the habitual use of disrespectful registers, tone or expressions that subtly undermine authority. For example, when students use dismissive expressions, sarcastic remarks, or rude retorts in English, they not only display poor language etiquette

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but also reinforce delinquent patterns. Yusuf and Lawal (2023) found that verbal disrespect among students in Colleges of Education was strongly correlated with classroom hostility, absenteeism, and open conflict. Language misuse in this sense becomes more than a grammatical issue; it is a behavioural one.

Misuse of English also carries implications for academic writing and professional preparation. Pre-service teachers are expected to model effective communication in their future classrooms. Yet, persistent grammatical errors, incoherent expressions, and informal speech habits undermine this professional expectation. If teacher trainees graduate with a casual or careless approach to English, they may pass these habits on to the pupils they teach. As Oladipo and Adekeye (2021) warned, poor mastery of English among trainee teachers weakens the transmission of knowledge and professional ethics across Nigeria's education system. Thus, unchecked misuse of language has long-term consequences not only for discipline within Colleges of Education but also for the quality of teaching in Nigerian schools. The relationship between language misuse and delinquency is particularly pronounced in peer-to-peer interactions. When abusive English becomes common in student conversations, it often escalates into bullying, mockery, and verbal aggression. Ibrahim and Salihu (2020) observed that environments where poor and abusive English dominated peer relations were also those with the highest incidents of fights, cliques, and group indiscipline. Here, language operates as both a reflection and driver of delinquent culture.

Addressing this issue requires deliberate intervention. Thus, Nigerian scholars recommend that Colleges of Education integrate language development programmes that emphasise not just grammar but also respect and professionalism in communication (Ogunleye & Olatunji, 2024). Encouraging dignified use of English in lectures, seminars, and campus interactions would help restore academic seriousness and promote discipline. In addition, restorative language policies where students are guided to reflect on and correct inappropriate speech could replace punitive responses to language misuse, creating an environment of learning rather than punishment.

The Interplay and Impact on Student Delinquency

Student delinquency in Nigerian Colleges of Education cannot be explained solely by external factors such as poor socioeconomic background or weak family support. While these conditions remain significant, emerging evidence suggests that the school environment itself, especially the dynamics of communication, plays a decisive role in shaping behaviour. Two key elements in this communicative environment are verbal abuse and English language misuse. When combined, these practices create an educational atmosphere where disrespect is normalised, emotional safety is eroded, and behavioural deviance becomes a predictable outcome. Verbal abuse and language misuse, though distinct, often intersect. When lecturers or peers use derogatory remarks, shouting, or sarcasm, they model a pattern of communication where harshness and disrespect are accepted. At the same time, when students employ slang, profanity, or poor registers in academic contexts, they implicitly lower standards of interaction. As Adeyemi and Adepoju (2021) argued, communication in higher education is not only about transmitting knowledge but also about reinforcing cultural and professional norms. Therefore, when abusive language and misuse of English coexist, they reinforce each other, producing a feedback loop of disrespect and indiscipline.

Students who face verbal humiliation may turn to informal or confrontational registers as a defence mechanism. For instance, a student constantly mocked for poor performance may

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begin using slang, sarcasm, or even profanity to resist authority. Over time, such language habits feed back into the wider campus culture, where defiance and casual disrespect become routine. This convergence shows that verbal abuse and language misuse are not independent factors but mutually reinforcing drivers of delinquency. Another critical impact of this interplay is the erosion of emotional engagement in the learning process. Research has consistently shown that students who feel respected are more motivated and disciplined (Okoro & Olatunji, 2022). In contrast, repeated exposure to verbal aggression reduces self-esteem, fosters resentment, and triggers withdrawal from academic activities. When coupled with widespread language misuse, which trivialises formal learning, students become emotionally detached from their studies and from institutional authority. Emotional disengagement often manifests as truancy, absenteeism, or lack of participation in class, behaviours frequently reported in Colleges of Education across Nigeria (Ogunyemi & Salami, 2023).

This emotional withdrawal can escalate further. Students who feel alienated by abusive communication may develop oppositional attitudes. Instead of viewing lecturers as role models, they may perceive them as adversaries. In such contexts, misconduct ranging from insubordination and classroom disruptions to examination malpractice emerges as a form of resistance. Yusuf and Lawal (2023) noted that students in Kwara State Colleges of Education who reported verbal mistreatment were also more likely to report being involved in fighting, cheating, or deliberate disregard for authority. The combined effect of verbal abuse and language misuse also reshapes the broader institutional culture. Colleges of Education are supposed to model professionalism, since their students will eventually become teachers. However, when derogatory language and poor English dominate daily interactions, an implicit message is communicated: disrespect and informality are tolerated, even in professional spaces. Over time, this erodes institutional credibility and weakens the moral authority of lecturers.

Akinola and Ajayi (2020) stressed that discipline in tertiary institutions thrives where communication is respectful, consistent, and professional. Conversely, when abusive tones and informal speech characterise the campus atmosphere, delinquency spreads more easily. The escalation often follows a predictable pattern: verbal abuse leads to resentment, which in turn encourages the misuse of language, and together they contribute to a reduction in adherence to academic norms. Eventually, the institution faces wider problems such as gang-like cliques, widespread examination malpractice, and open defiance of rules. The interplay of verbal abuse and English misuse does not end within the walls of Colleges of Education; it has long-term consequences for Nigeria's educational system. Pre-service teachers who normalise disrespectful communication during their training are likely to replicate these behaviours in their future classrooms. This creates a cycle where abusive or careless language continues to drive indiscipline among the next generation of learners. As Oladipo and Adekeye (2021) observed, the professional identity of teachers is heavily shaped by their training environments. If those environments are marked by poor communication culture, the integrity of Nigeria's teacher preparation process is undermined.

Addressing this interplay requires a shift in institutional priorities. Communication policies in Colleges of Education should emphasise respect, professionalism, and accountability. Training programmes for lecturers should stress non-abusive pedagogical methods, while students should be engaged in language development initiatives that highlight the role of English in professional life. As Ogunleye and Olatunji (2024) recommended, restorative

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approaches that encourage self-reflection and correction in language use are more effective than punitive measures. By embedding respectful communication practices, institutions can break the cycle that links verbal abuse and language misuse to student delinquency. In essence, verbal abuse and misuse of English are not isolated issues but interdependent factors that jointly escalate student delinquency. They create climates of disrespect, emotional withdrawal, and behavioural resistance that threaten the mission of Colleges of Education in Kwara State. If left unaddressed, this interplay will continue to undermine discipline and professionalism in Nigeria's teacher education system. Therefore, tackling both problems simultaneously is critical not only for reducing delinquency today but also for shaping a generation of teachers capable of fostering respectful and disciplined classrooms tomorrow.

Professional and Ethical Stakes

Colleges of Education in Nigeria, including those in Kwara State, hold a unique mandate in the nation's educational system. These institutions are not merely sites for knowledge transmission; they are professional nurseries where the values, ethics, and instructional behaviours of future teachers are cultivated. The ethical stakes are therefore exceptionally high. If these institutions allow abusive communication patterns or tolerate the misuse of English in academic and social interactions, they run the risk of undermining the very foundation of teacher professionalism in Nigeria. In effect, the culture of communication in Colleges of Education does not end within their walls; it is carried into classrooms across the country, shaping how the next generation of pupils learns, interacts, and develops. Education has always been more than a technical transfer of knowledge; it is a deeply human enterprise that relies on values, ethics, and relational dynamics. Teacher preparation, in particular, is not confined to pedagogy or subject mastery it involves equipping pre-service teachers with communication skills, professional discipline, and ethical sensibilities. Akinola and Ajayi (2020) argue that the teacher-training process is fundamentally about value transmission. The manner in which lecturers communicate with students, enforce rules, and model respect becomes a template for how trainee teachers will later interact with their pupils.

If this transmission is polluted by verbal abuse such as shouting, insults, or humiliation students may internalise authoritarian and disrespectful methods as acceptable classroom practices. Similarly, if trainees consistently misuse English by adopting slang, profanity, or incoherent expressions in academic settings, they normalise linguistic carelessness. Both patterns risk perpetuating a cycle where Nigerian classrooms remain dominated by fear, disrespect, and poor language standards. The professional danger of communication lapses in Colleges of Education is the creation of a ripple effect. Teachers are powerful role models; their behaviours, consciously or unconsciously, are replicated by learners. When trainee teachers internalise abusive communication styles, they may later use the same tactics in secondary schools, shaming or shouting at pupils instead of employing constructive discipline. Research by Yusuf and Lawal (2023) in Kwara State confirmed that students exposed to abusive interactions in training environments were more likely to endorse punitive disciplinary practices.

In the same vein, language misuse at the training stage weakens the professional identity of future teachers. A teacher who is careless with English grammar or uses disrespectful registers in class undermines their own credibility and authority. Oladipo and Adekeye (2021) emphasised that teachers are custodians of both content and form; their language is not just a medium of instruction but also a standard-setting tool. When the form is

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degraded, the message of professionalism is lost. The ethical dimension of this problem cannot be overstated. Colleges of Education are not only tasked with producing teachers; they are mandated to produce professionals capable of upholding the integrity of the teaching profession. According to Okoro and Olatunji (2022), the ethical identity of a teacher is inseparable from their communicative conduct. Abusive language violates the principles of respect, dignity, and fairness that should underpin educational practice. Similarly, careless use of English in professional contexts reflects a lack of seriousness and undermines the teacher's duty to set an example of excellence.

By tolerating these patterns, Colleges of Education risk eroding public trust in teacher preparation. Communities expect that teacher-education institutions will produce graduates who can uphold discipline and serve as role models. Instead, these institutions are seen to breed indiscipline and communicative laxity; they weaken their social legitimacy and undermine Nigeria's long-standing commitment to education as a vehicle for national development. At the heart of these ethical stakes lies the quality of instruction in Nigerian schools. Teachers who lack respect in communication cannot maintain disciplined classrooms. Similarly, teachers who misuse English cannot effectively deliver lessons in a language that serves as the country's official medium of instruction. Ogunyemi and Salami (2023) found that poor communication habits acquired during teacher training directly affected lesson delivery, classroom management, and student outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools.

This means that communication lapses in Colleges of Education translate into reduced academic performance at the basic and secondary levels. The stakes are therefore not abstract; they manifest concretely in the literacy, discipline, and academic achievements of Nigerian children. A teacher who shouts at or insults pupils is less likely to foster a supportive learning environment. At the same time, one who struggles with English undermines comprehension and weakens students' confidence in the subject. The teaching profession has long been held to high ethical standards. Teachers are not only conveyors of curriculum; they are moral guides, community leaders, and nation-builders. For this reason, professional ethics are central to teacher identity. Ogunleye and Olatunji (2024) emphasized that ethics in education must extend beyond abstract codes to encompass daily communicative practices, such as respect, empathy, and linguistic integrity.

When Colleges of Education fail to challenge verbal abuse and language misuse, they effectively erode the ethical identity of future teachers. Such teachers may then lack the professional gravitas to command respect, inspire learners, and maintain classroom order. This weakens the teaching profession and, by extension, Nigeria's educational system. Given these professional and ethical stakes, addressing communication lapses in Colleges of Education is urgent. Strategies must go beyond isolated disciplinary measures to systemic reforms. This includes embedding communication ethics into the teacher-training curriculum, organising workshops on respectful interaction, and establishing language clinics to strengthen academic English. As Adeyemi and Adepoju (2021) argued, communication ethics must be institutionalised as a core pillar of teacher preparation, not treated as a peripheral concern. Additionally, restorative disciplinary practices should replace punitive responses to misconduct. When students misuse English or display verbal disrespect, they should be guided to reflect on and correct their behaviour rather than being humiliated or punished harshly. This approach not only addresses the behaviour but also models the respectful correction teachers should use in their own classrooms.

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The professional and ethical stakes of communication in Nigerian Colleges of Education are profound. Verbal abuse and language misuse are not minor infractions; they represent systemic risks that threaten to reproduce cycles of indiscipline and poor professionalism in Nigerian classrooms. If these patterns are left unaddressed, future teachers may perpetuate disrespectful and careless communication in schools, undermining both instructional quality and ethical standards. Conversely, by prioritising respectful, professional, and effective communication, Colleges of Education can nurture teachers who embody the dignity, clarity, and gravitas essential for educational leadership. Ultimately, Nigeria's commitment to quality education hinges on whether these institutions uphold communication not as a peripheral skill but as a cornerstone of teacher professionalism.

Recommendations

1. Promote Respectful Communication Training: Colleges of Education should institute compulsory workshops on communication skills and conflict resolution for both staff and students. These programmes should emphasize the power of language in shaping relationships, discipline, and academic seriousness. Scholars such as Oyeleke and Sulaiman (2021) have argued that when communication is respectful and empathetic, incidences of hostility and delinquency among students significantly decline.

2. Integrate English Proficiency Programmes into Teacher Education: Since English remains the medium of instruction in Nigerian tertiary institutions; proactive measures should be taken to enhance its effective use. Regular seminars, academic writing clinics, and oral communication assessments should be institutionalised. According to Adedokun and Fashiku (2022), linguistic competence among pre-service teachers has a direct influence on their classroom management skills and professionalism in practice.

3. Develop Clear Anti-Abuse Policies: Institutional policies must explicitly prohibit verbal abuse, whether from lecturers, non-academic staff, or students. Disciplinary measures should be transparent, consistently applied, and coupled with restorative practices that encourage behavioural change. Akinlolu and Ojedokun (2023) recommend a zero-tolerance approach to abusive communication as a prerequisite for curbing indiscipline in teacher-training institutions.

4. Embed Ethics and Professional Conduct into Curriculum: Beyond subject mastery, Colleges of Education should reinforce courses on professional ethics, leadership, and character formation. These should highlight the consequences of verbal aggression and poor communication for the teaching profession. Studies such as Adeyemi (2020) emphasize that ethical reorientation at the pre-service stage are critical to producing disciplined and value-driven teachers.

5. Enhance Student Support Systems: Counselling units should be strengthened to provide psychosocial support for students who experience verbal abuse or communication breakdowns. These units must create safe reporting channels and encourage early interventions before issues escalate into delinquent behaviour. As noted by Babalola and Ajibade (2021), responsive guidance services can reduce tendencies toward rebellion and misconduct.

6. Promote Peer-Led Language Clubs and Mentorship: Student-driven initiatives, such as English Language Clubs and peer mentorship schemes, can provide informal platforms to practice respectful, standard communication. When students lead these efforts, they not only improve linguistic competence but also foster responsibility and peer accountability (Ogunleye & Musa, 2021).

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7. Regular Monitoring and Research: Periodic institutional assessments should be conducted to measure the prevalence of verbal abuse and language misuse, as well as their impact on student conduct. Collaborative research involving lecturers and students will generate evidence-based interventions. Eze and Nwankwo (2022) stress that sustainable educational reforms require continuous monitoring, feedback and adaptation.

8. Stakeholder Collaboration: The Ministry of Education, professional teacher associations, and non-governmental organisations should collaborate with Colleges of Education to provide training resources, policy support, and public awareness campaigns on the dangers of verbal abuse and linguistic laxity. Akinola and Ojo (2024) argue that collective responsibility is important in promoting institutional discipline and ensuring educational quality.

Conclusion

Colleges of Education in Kwara State stand at the heart of Nigeria's teacher preparation system. They are expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to nurture discipline, ethical values, and professionalism in future teachers. Yet, the growing challenge of student delinquency poses a threat to this mandate. While issues such as poor family background and economic hardship often dominate the discourse, this paper argues that verbal abuse and the misuse of English remain overlooked yet powerful drivers of indiscipline. When students are constantly exposed to verbal aggression, whether in the form of insults, humiliation, or harsh criticism, their confidence is eroded, resentment builds, and their respect for authority weakens. In the same way, careless use of English through slang, profanity, or poor grammar undermines academic seriousness and encourages a culture of disrespect. When these two forces combine, they create an unhealthy learning environment where truancy, insubordination, and other forms of delinquency thrive.

This has wider professional and ethical implications. If teacher trainees internalise abusive communication and poor language habits as acceptable, they will most likely replicate them in their own classrooms. The result is a cycle of toxic communication, weak classroom management, and diminished educational quality. Addressing these issues, therefore, is not a side concern but a core responsibility of Colleges of Education. To truly prepare disciplined and competent teachers, these institutions must actively promote respectful communication, strengthen English language competence, and enforce professional standards. As recent Nigerian scholars (Adeyemi, 2020; Babalola & Ajibade, 2021; Akinlolu & Ojedokun, 2023) have noted, the credibility of Nigeria's education system rests on the ability of teacher-training institutions to model the values they wish to see in future schools. Combating verbal abuse and language misuse is, therefore, not only about reducing delinquency today but also about protecting the future of Nigerian classrooms.

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