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## Indiscipline in Higher Education in Zimbabwe: A Case of one University

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### **Abstract:**

*University education, as higher education, is expected to produce ethically educated professionals. Such education is regulated by curriculum design and implementation; rules and regulations and structures as well as roles and functions which are expected to produce professionals. University students are therefore expected to behave as professionals-in-the-making. However, universities have been plagued with cases of students' unrest and indiscipline which often result in destruction of property and even loss of lives. This case study investigated indiscipline in one university in Zimbabwe. It attempted to suggest a way forward towards an indiscipline-free university education. Researchers collected data through document analysis of indiscipline cases for 2013 to 2015 and interviews of selected lecturers and students by the researchers. Findings: For the three years, the university had a total of 38 disciplinary cases that were brought to the attention of the university disciplinary committee. Alcohol related cases remained the major challenge among the male students, that is, 62.5% in 2013; 63.2% in 2014 and 100% in 2015, respectively. Gross immorality, tobacco related as well as theft and forgery related cases were very minimal recording 5, 3 and 4, respectively for all the 3years. Low indiscipline at the university can be accounted by absence of food allocations to the students; geographical location of the university (it is several kilometers from the city) and the absence of beer gardens within the vicinity of the university as well as the moral values that are emphasized at the university to the student body. The study recommended collaboration between university and parents in molding the students and out-of-town locations as new university sites.*

**Keywords:** Indiscipline, higher education, professionalism

### **1. Introduction**

Indiscipline in institutions of learning is a real global problem both in the developed and the developing world. Cases of indiscipline can turn to be violent at times, for instance, Lewis, Vasagar, Williams and Taylor (2010) reported of an outstanding protest in London of about an estimated 50,000 university students over tuition increase. Similarly, Malenya, (2014) and Duale, (2015) reported that in Kenya, over three hundred secondary schools were closed down between July and September 2008 due to students unrest and violence. There were also recent demonstrations at Butula Girls High in 2013. Nganga (2010) also highlighted that the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University in 2010 and 2009, respectively, were temporarily closed due to students' unrest showing how frequent these extreme cases of indiscipline can occur.

It should however, be noted that indiscipline at education institutions is an exception and not a rule, thus, Asare and Adzrolo (2013) argued that a university "serves as an instrument for molding the character and behavior of students and this prepares them to take up their future careers as well as the mantle of leadership". Also, Jepkemei (2015) mourned that indiscipline is a big problem in schools in Kenya and that is no secret.

In order for one to understand the meaning of indiscipline, it is imperative to first understand the meaning of discipline, which is the other side of the same coin. Discipline has been defined by Jekaynifa (2013) as the readiness and willingness of an individual to express decent and modest conduct. She went on to say, the individual should be able to respect authority, have a high sense of responsibility, love for orderliness and is eager to execute duties with promptitude and efficiency. Merriam Webster Dictionary also defined discipline as a way of behaving that shows a willingness to obey rules or orders. This means that when an individual or group fails to show these characteristics, indiscipline is said to have occurred.

The relationship between discipline and indiscipline is highlighted by the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary that explains indiscipline as a derivative of the word *discipline* which is defined as lack of control in the behavior of people. Jekaynifa (2013) explained indiscipline as the contravention of rules and regulations of institutions by an individual or group who willingly or unwillingly violate laid down rules of an institution resulting in hampering the smooth running of the institution. Similarly, Chopra (2015) argued that indiscipline among students is associated with students who fail to take orders from their instructors and take their own decisions; they often take law in their own hands, organize strikes and upset the peaceful institution life.

Indiscipline has therefore negative and often has fatal consequences on the general operation of an institution of learning. Root causes of indiscipline need to be understood so that useful solutions can be found and implemented.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

University education is regarded as higher education and is expected to produce ethically educated professionals. Universities are regulated by curriculum design and implementation, rules, regulations and structures as well as roles and functions which are expected to produce professionals; university students are therefore expected to behave as professionals-in-the-making. However, learning institutions in Zimbabwe have been plagued with cases of students' indiscipline. This research, therefore, wants to find out the nature, causes and possible solutions to indiscipline in Zimbabwean universities using a case study of one university.

## 3. Research Questions

1. Which were the common types of indiscipline at the university for the past three years?
2. How are the indiscipline cases dealt with?
3. Which are the causes and possible solutions to indiscipline among the university students?

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1. Types of Indiscipline

There are many types of indiscipline that students are engaged in as Jepkemei (2015) pointed out; it varies from homosexuality to bullying, violence and addiction to alcohol and hard drugs. Temitayo, Mohammed and Ajibola (2013) in a study in Nigeria found truancy, absenteeism, fighting, stealing and drug addiction as typical examples of disciplinary problems experienced in the study area. In Kenya, sexual assault, rape, theft, sneaking out of school, fighting, absenteeism, vandalism, drug abuse, truancy, lateness, bullying among others have been cited by Kiongo and Thinguri (2015).

Ali, Dada, Isiaka and Salmon (2014) tried to classify indiscipline by university students. Using their vast experience, research information on different spheres of education and geographical settings, they came up with the following categories:

- defiance to university authority
- truancy
- academic fraud
- examination malpractices
- drug abuse, and
- smoking/alcohol consumption

From the classification above, it can be seen that indiscipline among students come in various natures and forms which, at times, the authorities are not prepared for, hence, the complexity of the problem and the need for research.

### 4.2. Causes of Indiscipline

Nations, educators and parents are very much worried about indiscipline among students, thus, a number of researchers have tried to identify the causes of indiscipline among students. In their research in Nigeria, Ajayi and Adeniji (2009) identified the following notable causes:

- Laxity in the home control and parental supervision
- School factor
- Teacher factor
- Societal factor
- Government influence

Another study in Nigeria by Umo (2013) found that indiscipline among students was greatly influenced by students' attitude to learning, parental style and peer groups. While observing indiscipline among Kenyan universities, Nganga (2010), propounded that some indiscipline cases among university students are caused by external influence from politicians.

Asare and Adzrolo (2013) carried out a study examining some dimensions of discipline as perceived by lecturers, administrators and students in the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast. They wanted to find out whether differences exist in those three groups' perceptions in terms of importance of discipline, forms of indiscipline as well as causes of indiscipline in the Faculty of Education. Results showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of the three groups.

A research carried out by Mankoe (2002) focused on lecturers' contributions to students indiscipline at university and found that some lecturers lack good professional qualities such as bad lesson delivery, having sexual affair with their students, intolerance, dishonesty, not being reliable and humorous, lack of concern for the well-being of the students, being autocratic, dispensing punishment carelessly, giving grades to undeserving students and denying students to be involved in disciplinary matters. Such acts cause indiscipline among students.

Chopra (2015) blamed the university curriculum as the main cause of indiscipline among university students when he argued:

The chief cause of student's indiscipline lies in our present educational system. It neither forms the character of our students nor enables them to earn their living after completing the education. As such, education does not foster the growth of qualities such as initiative, self-confidence etc. in young men.

In a similar study, Jekayinfa (2013) came up with the following classification of indiscipline causes:

- methods of appointment
- negligence of duties by workers
- academic fraud
- poor handling of students' results
- flouting of codes of conduct
- academic dishonesty and examination malpractices
- indecent dressing
- sexual harassment
- cultism
- corruption

The discussed indiscipline causes above show how variegated and vast the causes can be; the current study wants to find out those that apply to the Zimbabwe situation since literature shows that steps are taken to curb students' indiscipline. Gitome, Katola and Nyabwari (2013) pointed out that the education system in Kenya is geared towards nurturing the growth of the whole person through an integrated development of the physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual dimensions. This is so because education, in this context, is geared towards acquiring and developing desired and acceptable knowledge, skills and attitudes among students. Duale (2015) also highlighted the government's effort when he said "The Committee on Education led by hon. David Koech did an inquiry into student unrest and strikes in secondary schools".

#### 4.3. Solutions to Students Indiscipline

Omote, Thinguri, Mosiori and Moenga (2015) in a research sought to justify that maintaining school discipline is a key strategy to foster academic achievement and promote socially and morally responsible behaviour among the students. Their findings showed need for collaborative partnership among parents, teachers and stakeholders in order to inculcate values that enhance discipline among students. The study recommended partnership among all stakeholders to ensure that students develop into ethical responsible members of the society.

The study also recommended the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to ensure that the curriculum include the teaching of social, emotional and behaviour competencies and also provide opportunities for students to put into practice the skills and competencies they learn at university.

Idu and Olugbade (2011) made a study in Zambia examining the factors associated with indiscipline among student and further gave suggestions to reduce indiscipline among students. Findings exposed a number of factors, that is, parental influence, teachers' attitudes, government activities and peer-group influence. The study, therefore, suggested attention by responsible authorities to be given to parental influence, teachers' attitudes, government activities that affect students and peer-group influence so as to reduce indiscipline among students.

In a similar study, Karanja and Bowen (2012) realized that intensified counselling can reduce indiscipline cases among students while Asare and Adzrolo (2013) recommended the need for university authorities to continuously use learning dialogue to engage students in decision making with the hope of creating a conducive environment for learning.

Diale (2015) observed that the Task Force on the Alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya was formed by the Government in 2010 to inquire on students' unrest and it reported its findings in February 2012. The inquiry found, among other findings, academic competition (ranking of schools according to public results) as a cause for students' unrest, thus, one of its recommendations was to abolish ranking of schools and students when releasing external examination results.

Temitayo, Mohammed and Ajibola (2013) concluded in their study that disciplinary problems can be dealt with if responsible authorities develop a spirit of teamwork, develop a well spelt out code of conduct for all staff and students to follow.

The discussed literature shows how serious indiscipline among student can be. However, the good news is that indiscipline can be reduced through careful and diligent effort.

#### 4.4. Theoretical Framework

To further guide and elaborate meaningfully on the concepts of the study, indiscipline related theories, namely: Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology Theory - modified by Stein (2007) - the Glasser (1996) Choice Theory and the Dreikur's Social Discipline Theories were used.

Adler argued that a person sets a goal which influences his/her behavior and the motivation to achieve that goal causes feelings of inferiority in that person since the final goal of every individual in life is to be superior. He added that the quest for superiority is what guides people to be either constructive or destructive; if an individual's goals are formulated in a destructive manner it leads to domination and exploitation of others around him or her.

However, a person can change his/her goals. Stein (2007) argued that at the heart of Individual Psychology is Adler's belief that everything can be different; all people have the potential to change, especially changing personalities. The theory, Stein argued, encourages people to overcome their difficulties, develop themselves and improve life around them. This gives hope to lecturers and university authorities that indiscipline among university students, when well worked on, can be reduced to very minimal levels. This study therefore wants to find out, among other things, possible solutions to indiscipline among university students.

On the other hand, William Glasser, a physician and psychologist, pointed out that all people are driven by six basic needs of survival, that is, power, love, belonging, freedom and fun. He argued that ninety-five percent of all student discipline problems result from students attempting to achieve power, thus, inappropriate behavior should be viewed as a result of making bad choices, hence the Choice Theory. This means that the university authorities need to understand the triggers to students' behavior so as to be able to produce a university environment that instills in students acceptable and ethical considerations and responsibility so that students are guided to make good choices.

It should also be noted that in his theory, Glasser assumed that students are rational beings capable of controlling their own behavior. This means that there is no excuse for bad behavior, thus, appropriate consequences should always follow good or bad student behavior. It can be argued that Glasser's Choice Theory gives room for lecturers and university authorities to formulate university rules and involve students in the process.

Another theory that was used in order to expose more on students behavior is Dreikur's theory; in his Social Discipline Theory (which was developed in 1968) Dreikur asserted that man is recognized as a social being, whose actions are purposive and directed toward a goal while his/her personality is a unique and an invisible entity. He therefore approved all behavior (including misbehavior) as orderly, purposeful and directed towards achieving social approval since human beings have a need to belong and be accepted (Psychological Resources, 2015).

The other important aspect Dreikur pointed out is the aspect of relativity in people's actions. He said that people do not always act according to reality that surrounds them but according to their own subjective assessment of it. This means that situations are liable to personal interpretations giving room for individuals to make unavoidable mistakes in perception. This is when counselling comes in so that students are nurtured to be responsible and ethical people (Psychological Resources, 2015).

The above theoretical framework is therefore important and necessary for it enlightens on the crucial phenomena of the study while the whole literature review acts as a stepping stone in the current study process.

## 5. Research Methodology

The researchers collected data through the following strategies:

- *Document analysis*: The researchers asked for the Student Handbook for the period 2013-2015. The handbook prescribes the Philosophy and Mission Statement of the university, students' rights and freedom and the student behavior code, among other contents. It is under the student behavior code where indiscipline acts are elaborated and classified according to degrees of offence.

The Dean of Students' Annual Report (2013-2015) was also asked for. This is a document written by the Dean of Students with summarized student issues (disciplinary issues included). The researchers analyzed it taking the necessary information they needed for the study.

The researchers also accessed the Students' Disciplinary File (2013-2015) from the responsible authorities, studied them and extracted the information they needed for the study.

- *Interviews*: The researchers worked on interview questions and schedules, selected the respondents for interviews and arranged for interview dates and time with them. These were: the dean of students, some lecturers and some students.

The collected data was analyzed, coded and was used to answer the research questions.

## 6. Findings and Discussion

- Which were the common types of indiscipline at the university for the past three years?

For the period 2013 to 2015, the university in question had a total of 38 disciplinary cases that were brought to the attention of the university disciplinary committee. The table below shows the offences and their recurrences under the following subheadings: tobacco related; alcohol related; gross immorality then theft and forgery.

	<b>Tobacco Related</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Alcohol related</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Gross Immorality</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Theft and Forgery</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
2013	1	6.3	10	62.5	4	25	1	6.3	16	100
2014	2	10.5	12	63.2	1	5.2	3	15.8	19	100
2015	0	0	3	100	0	0	0	0	3	100
Total	3	7.9	25	65.8	5	13.1	4	10.5	38	100

Table 1: Disciplinary cases: 2013 – 2015

The types of indiscipline realised by the study are similar to what Jepkemei (2015) (homosexuality and addiction to alcohol and hard drugs) and Temitayo, Mohammed and Ajibola (2013) (stealing and drug addiction) found as typical examples of disciplinary problems experienced in their study areas.

Throughout the three year period, that is, 2013 to 2015, alcohol related cases remained the major challenge among the male students, that is, 62.5% in 2013; 63.2% in 2014 and 100% in 2015, respectively as shown on the table above. All these offences were committed by the male students. This is an indicator that the Zimbabwean adult male community takes in alcohol; university students take themselves to be adults hence they indulge in alcoholic behaviours. This might also be influenced by the alcohol national policy that allows over 18years citizens to take alcohol.

Gross immorality is number two on the occurrences of the disciplinary cases; however on a very minimal scale. Only 4 and 1 such cases were dealt with in 2013 and 2014, respectively. No such case appeared in 2015. The same applies to tobacco related as well as theft and forgery related cases that recorded totals of 3 and 4, respectively for all the 3 years. This shows that these three offences are not a real problem at the university in question.

Generally, it can be argued that there are fewer cases of indiscipline at the university in question when compared to those in the contemporary universities in the country and abroad.

➤ How were the indiscipline cases dealt with?

University disciplinary committee deals with the disciplinary cases according to the stipulations in the Student Handbook. They recommend their decision to the Vice Chancellor of the university. The punishments to the offences are stipulated in the Student Handbook although circumstances surrounding the offence are also considered during the trials. The circumstances include the university year of the offender (new students may not be fully aware of the rules and regulations) and the recurrence of the offence, among other considerations.

An alcohol related offence is described in the Student Handbook as affecting any student who is found in possession, using, transferring or selling alcohol and also other drugs. The penalty for such cases that were found in the Students' Disciplinary Files included: grounded (a process whereby students are not allowed to leave the university premises. It is also coupled by daily reporting to the university authorities at designated times of the day) for the rest of the current semester, one semester suspension and attendance to guidance and counselling office. The offenders were informed that they had the right to appeal according to clause 13 of the student behavior code as sighted in the Student Handbook. This is for the first offence. The second, third etc. offenders, were immediately suspended forfeiting even the current semester attendance.

Theft and forgery was dealt with according to its nature of occurrence, for instance, one offender was involved in US \$7985.00 forgery and theft while on industrial attachment in 2015. The case was handed over to the police and it became a court case.

Rare cases of students' reaction to their offences included one student who just disappeared from the university premises before appearing before the university student disciplinary committee.

Cases of serious vandalism are against section 3.5 of the student behavior code. When such cases happened, the penalty was associated with the offender paying half of the repair charges; the remainder was taken from the student's security deposit which every student pay on their first arrival on campus.

Repeating the same offence and not yielding to punishment and guidance resulted in either expulsion or indefinite suspension. A student on indefinite suspension is allowed to reapply after at least a year and when coming back, s/he is supposed to bring a report from a professional counselor, and to be accompanied by a parent or guardian. This information was found in the student discipline files.

Gross immorality includes cases of pregnancy outside marriage. Such students are sent away from the university. There was a case in 2013 when a male student impregnated a lady outside marriage. He was grounded for the rest of that semester with pending suspension waiting for the production of a valid marriage certificate. Ordinary improper association with a person of the opposite gender warrants grounding and suspension depending on the gravity of the offense.

For final year students who committed serious offences, they were allowed to finish the semester but could not participate in the graduation. They were to collect their certificates later on condition of changed behavior.

➤ Which are the causes and possible solutions to indiscipline among university students?

Most of the data to this research question was obtained from interview, that is, with the Dean of Students, lecturers and with students. The Dean of Students explained that one of the causes of indiscipline is the students' expectations on freedom and rights; the majority age in Zimbabwe is 18 years. Some of the students who are above the age of 18 therefore think that they have the right to drink, smoke etc., however, these national acts are overridden by university rules and regulations. Such a misconception can be overcome by the reading of the Student Handbook.

The Dean of Students also argued that students' background can also contribute to students' indiscipline, for instance, some students grow up where drinking and smoking is not an issue; at times their parents also drink. Some lecturers also echoed the same sentiments. The home issue was also realised by Ajayi and Adeniji (2009) as an indiscipline cause. Such habits by students can be minimised and eradicated by continuous inculcation of Christian values in the whole program of the university as well as referring such students for guidance and counselling, one lecturer propounded. This finding tally that by Karanja and Bowen (2012) who realized that intensified counselling can reduce indiscipline cases among students.

"First year students can fall victims of indiscipline before they are acquainted to university life, rules and regulations" one lecturer noticed. New students should therefore receive their copies of Student Handbooks during orientation sessions, before lectures even start.

Other causes of indiscipline that the respondents talked of included peer pressure and rebellious attitudes towards rules and regulations. Similarly, Umo (2013) found that indiscipline among students was greatly influenced by students' attitude to learning, parental style and peer groups. Such cases can be dealt with by the guidance and counselling personnel. "Such students can also learn and copy from exemplary staff", one lecturer said. "A trustworthy, hardworking and disciplined student leadership can also yield better results", another one added.

Some students and lecturers brought in the idea of idleness as another trigger to indiscipline among university students. They then recommended for a proper curriculum that marries studies and entertainment at a university. This is supported by Chopra (2015) who blamed the university curriculum as the main cause of indiscipline among universities in Africa.

When asked why there were few disciplinary cases at the university, the dean and other lecturers were convinced the absence of food allocations to the students was the answer. Food at that university is on the pay-as-you-eat bases. Students therefore buy what they want and/or afford, hence they have no one to complain to. This relatively new approach to food at the university in particular and in Zimbabwe's universities in general saw the death of early 2000 rampant university riots especially at the University of Zimbabwe, one lecturer explained. Currently in Zimbabwe, there are very minimal university riots since the 2015 demonstration at the University of Zimbabwe (Thornycroft, 2015).

Some respondents found advantage in the geographical location of the university; it is several kilometers from the city and there are no beer gardens nearby serve a loner shop where selected staffs are sold. Other respondents thought that the tough disciplinary measures for offenders deter other students from falling indisciplined victims.

Still others felt that the moral values that are emphasized at the university explain why there are few indisciplined cases. These findings are supported by Simuyaba, Banda, Mweemba and Muleya (2015) who, when commenting on the training and performance of University of Zambia student teachers on teaching practice, argued that the absence of values, attitudes, morals and practical approaches, methods and techniques to suit real life situations in schools make the training offered to teachers ineffective and to some extent irrelevant.

### 6.1. Conclusion

It can be concluded that for the period 2013 to 2015, the university in question had a total of 38 disciplinary cases that were brought to the attention of the university disciplinary committee. Alcohol related cases remained the major challenge among the male students, that is, 62.5% in 2013; 63.2% in 2014 and 100% in 2015, respectively. Gross immorality, tobacco related as well as theft and forgery related cases were very minimal recording 5, 3 and 4, respectively for all the 3 years. It can therefore be argued that there are fewer indisciplined cases at the university in question when compared to those in the contemporary universities in the country and abroad. Low indisciplined at the university can be accounted by absence of food allocations to the students; geographical location of the university (it is several kilometers from the city) and the absence of beer gardens within the vicinity of the university as well as the moral values that are emphasized at the university to the student body. The good news about indisciplined is echoed by Stein (2007) who argued that at the heart of Individual Psychology is Adler's belief that everything can be different; all people have the potential to change; hence there is hope for a reduction in indisciplined cases.

### 6.2. Recommendations

The study recommended:

- A collaborative partnership among parents, lecturer and stakeholders in order to inculcate values that enhance discipline among the university students.
- Moral education to be part of the university curriculum.
- Entertainment should be made available to students during their leisure time.
- Outside town locations to be considered as new university sites.

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