



Assessment of the Causes of Indiscipline among Students of Mbarara City Secondary Schools in Uganda

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Abstract: *The study's main purpose was to assess the causes of indiscipline among students of Mbarara City Secondary Schools in Uganda. The main argument was that although secondary schools have put rules and regulations in place, indiscipline cases have continued to increase which has affected students' career prospects and damaged schools' reputations. The study was guided by quantitative research methodology. The sample size of the study was 175 respondent teachers who were purposively selected for data collection. The findings were that indiscipline in Mbarara city secondary schools was caused by inadequate career guidance programs, students' failure to comprehend school rules and regulations and drug abuse among others. It is recommended that secondary schools should make career guidance programs compulsory, communicate effectively to students on rules and regulations, encourage sports activities in leisure time and above all ensure that school premises are properly fenced.*

Keywords: *Indiscipline, Secondary School, Student leadership, Discipline management*

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1. Introduction

Students' educational careers in secondary schools can only be advanced by providing a good learning atmosphere free from severe disciplinary incidents. This, however, requires among other things, excellent leadership that is transformational from both the students and school management to meet this goal. The ability of a person or a group of individuals to motivate and direct followers or members of a team, organization, or community is referred to as leadership (Bass, 2019 & Gandolfi, 2018). The five major leadership styles that are most commonly utilized include authoritarian (autocratic), participative (democratic), delegation (laissez-faire), transactional (managerial), and transformational leadership (visionary) (Sousa,2019). Every style has its

advantages, disadvantages and approaches leading people in different ways. Therefore, Student leadership is specifically key in contributing to a good disciplinary environment in secondary schools. Student leaders consist of all those individuals entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing rules and regulations and organizing other students towards orderliness to enhance the achievement of intended education objectives. Examples of student leaders include prefects, councillors, captains or monitors, club executives and student court judges. In particular, student leaders, help in maintaining discipline and order in the school environment, prevent bullying and the use of indecent language, and make children understand that rules are made for their betterment and hence they should be followed.

A student who has a responsibility of leadership can inspire, encourage, and direct others toward the accomplishment of an objective (Kouzes,2018). To do this, they need to be able to create and express a clear vision of what they want to accomplish as well as cultivate deep connections to further the objectives that will enable the realization of the vision (Deng,2020). Students will be dedicated to comprehending people, themselves, and the communities they serve during this process, all the while attempting to identify and effectively handle the ethical problems they encounter. Previous research undertakings have examined the relationship between academic achievement and school discipline, and none have provided a thorough analysis of the immediate and long-term consequences of this phenomenon (Ezeanolue, 2020).

Conversely, the word "indiscipline" describes any behaviour that deviates from socially acceptable norms and values and violates school policies, potentially impeding the efficient and well-organized operation of the educational system (Atunde,2019). Unruly students are becoming a big issue in the majority of Uganda's secondary schools. Press stories of indiscipline incidents resulting in fatalities in certain schools occur daily (Awor, 2016). Research projects have observed that most Ugandan secondary schools now have a culture of violence in place of teaching and learning, undermining efforts to build a positive civil society and a disciplined workforce in the future (Francis,2021 & Korugyendo,2022). The majority of research on school indiscipline has been from the viewpoints of either teachers or students (Ruzindana, 2017). Although the majority of research has typically focused on the behaviour of students, a few studies have revealed that teachers can also contribute to a lack of discipline in the classroom (Silva, 2017). There have been instances documented in Ugandan secondary schools when instructors have faced charges and expulsion for mistreating students, as well as instances where students have been expelled for attacking teachers (Musabyimana, 2018). The lack of discipline in schools is reflected in these acts. Stated differently, indiscipline in schools refers to the absence of regard, affection, acceptance, harmony, and empathy from all parties involved in the school to fulfil the school's purpose.

On the other hand, discipline management is often used to refer to behaviour modification for good reasons. Enforcing compliance, obedience, and order inside an organization is referred to as the discipline concept of management (Ahmed,2020). It entails setting guidelines, norms, and expectations for workers to preserve a positive and productive work atmosphere (Cho,2020). Discipline is adhering to the norms set out by the workplace culture. Discipline is therefore seen as a necessary part and indeed

the fundamental part of education because it trains compliance to collective norms. It is against this context that this study thought to the assessment of the causes of indiscipline among students in Ugandan secondary schools to propose sustainable recommendations that can mitigate the challenge.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding the Concept of Indiscipline in Secondary Schools from a global perspective

Acts of indiscipline in schools are not an inexplicable issue or occurrence for which there is no clear explanation. Research has studied it in great detail and have been able to pinpoint several causes that have contributed to its appearance in our educational institutions on a local, national, and worldwide scale. Ngalya (2017), for example, lists seven potential reasons for the phenomena in schools, including; the concept of democracy, which places a strong focus on an individual's rights and freedom, and the "generation gap" in terms of concepts, opinions, and ideals regarding the nature of society, life, and humanity. The two generations, the young and the old have very different opinions on these issues, and there is a high degree of sophistication that regularly carries reports on students' power against authority. This assertion is well shown by the inability of adults in society and at school to establish examples of moral behavior that young men and women should emulate, as well as the failure of many parents to give their children with fundamental moral instruction (Kiwale,2017).

According to Salaudeen (2021), there are eight factors that contribute to indiscipline in secondary school students. These factors include, but are not limited to, the influence of parents or the home, teachers or educators, political, social, and economic factors, emotional problems experienced by students, head teachers or principals, the influence of gender and race, and public versus private schools. In contrast, Mushaandja (2018) takes a different tack when presenting the case, listing the following factors as contributing factors to indiscipline situations in secondary schools: the school, the society, incorrect values, indolence, poor leadership, injustice, a lack of practical norms, inadequate home training, and upbringing.

However, Gyapong (2021) contends that the issue with traditional techniques to discipline is that they are predicated on ideas that, while useful for certain individuals, are not appropriate for pupils who have

persistent behavioral issues. This makes them ineffective in explaining the causes of indiscipline. In addition to the aforementioned, some supervisors enforce strict guidelines and policies when it comes to secondary school student discipline. The term "discipline" in schools used to most frequently evoke thoughts of some sort of punishment or correction in response to wrongdoing on the part of students, and disturbances were taken very seriously, according to authors like Odebode (2020).

In contrast to the aforementioned, Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (Mathes, 2021) advocates for the "stimulation of the individual child's own moral judgment to control his behavior" rather than the teaching of rigid doctrines and standards. This implies a strategy of getting students involved in conversations on relevant moral issues, with the hope that individuals who hear their peers address the matter at a higher level will align themselves with that perspective (Johnson, 2015). Additionally, Kohlberg anticipates that as students mature, there will be fewer external controls and more of an emphasis on their own accountability as independent individuals. This is because children are more free to resolve their own conflicts and develop their own moral convictions when they don't feel pressured to follow authority (Akhmedova, 2022). This indicates that there are a wide variety of occasionally unrelated reasons why secondary schools around the world experience indiscipline. As a result, school administrators have a responsibility to deal with them in order to influence secondary school students' desired conduct.

According to Sadik (2015), there are a number of school-related factors that might contribute to indiscipline, including teachers who are absent or arrive late for class, crammed classrooms, an unfavorable school climate, a lack of enforcement of rules and regulations, subpar instruction, and ineffective administration. Jinot (2018), who believed that arbitrary school rules were the root of indiscipline, lends more credence to this. While the purpose of rules and regulations in schools is to direct and regulate activities, an excessive number of unenforced rules and regulations can lead to indiscipline.

2.2 Management and causes of indiscipline in Ugandan secondary schools

Students, instructors, and school administrators in Uganda are solely accountable for the management indicators of secondary school discipline (Mugizi, 2022). Poverty, overcrowding, a lack of recreational opportunities, easy access to the school compound, intolerance, unemployment, violence, a lack of school democracy, the

generational divide, the influence of the media, a lack of role models at home, and a communication gap are some of the factors that undermine discipline (Christiana, 2022). The learning environment affects these causes. Peer pressure, school curriculum, home background, political and socioeconomic status, and school environment are all blamed for them. These have a detrimental effect on staff participation and student excellence in the day-to-day operations of secondary schools. One has internal conflict when they don't have a defined life purpose and vision, have low aspirations, and more particularly for students who struggle with learning. Such students are prone to building up tension, which they readily release through aggressive ways (Ssenyonga, 2022).

According to Alex (2021), there have been instances of abuse of school discipline in Uganda, including when students have refused to participate in class activities, failed to turn in homework and assignments, neglected to bring necessary materials to class, used debilitating drugs, been absent or late, and cheated on tests. In many Ugandan schools, this pattern of occurrences is regular, and the result is subpar academic performance. According to Ssekiziyivu (2013), secondary school pupils in Uganda become strained as a result of their time-consuming involvement in other activities. They develop a compulsive phobia of school and eventually become afraid of everything in the school. They are the first to join their peers in inciting violence, engaging in peer abuse, and violating the rights of others (Ssekiziyivu, 2013). These pupils attend classes, but they are in continual emotional and physical pain. When it comes to ranking their exam performance, they are always last. This is a result of their being torn between two realities. Truant students frequently struggle to focus throughout their studies because they believe they won't be able to do well on tests. He further emphasized that disturbances that disrupt the school schedule may result in a teacher shortage since some of the impacted instructors may have to be transferred without a replacement. Lack of support from the student for completing homework and classwork because there won't be many teachers available to help.

The quality of the job declines when there are no qualified teachers present. The kid who was harmed can lose their schooling. If the child returns, he or she will have a lot of work to do to manage the other students. These victims may give up and leave school, evolving into dangerous creatures that pose a menace to society. This lowers the enrolment rate and has an additional impact on the group of students who perform well on exams (Sichon, 2020). Teachers must uphold their professional standards and serve as positive role models for the children (Sichon, 2020). In stark contrast to the actual situation, individuals who are supposed to be role models act in ways that paint

a different picture of reality for students. The kid is deceived as a result, and they struggle in school and life. Secondary school curricula in Uganda should be designed to prevent periods of boredom brought on by laziness (Jackline, 2018). Students are typically kept distant from and uninformed about specific school facts by schools. When there is a lack of information, rumours might spread, which puts the school administration under pressure and strains relations. Massive learner failure follows from these. Among other things, schools must maintain discipline by setting up efficient master teaching timetables and activity schedules that best accommodate concealed curricula. However, there are empty periods in many schools where there are few extracurricular activities since there isn't enough room for amenities for leisure. This can cause tension to build up and possibly explode in violent school-related incidents (Nkundaabanyanga, 2015). It's important to combine teaching strategies with a range of tasks that will enable students to effectively stop engaging in undesirable behaviour. Pupils should be situated in the classroom with subtlety, to promote goodwill and problem-based learning-based class discussions

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research methodology. The act of gathering and evaluating numerical data to identify trends and averages, formulate hypotheses, investigate causality, and extrapolate findings to larger populations is known as quantitative research. (Creswell, 2021). In this study, quantitative data were concurrently collected through the use of questionnaires. The items in the survey questionnaire both were closed-ended, did not require respondents to be probed of their answers, while other items were open-ended and required respondents to be probed of their answers.

Regarding the data collection procedure, before the questionnaires were distributed to the student leaders and teachers a brief discussion was first held with the selected respondents. During the brief discussion, the respondents were introduced to the research study focusing on its purpose. Also, the respondents were again reminded of the voluntary nature of participation in the study, the right to withdraw at any time as well as the maintenance of confidentiality. If the teacher agreed to participate in the study, a questionnaire was distributed to be filled in at their time of convenience. The researcher kept in touch with the respondents who would submit the questionnaires upon completion. The student leaders and teachers were also informed of the deadline for returning the questionnaire.

The study used both primary and secondary sources of information. The study population comprised of Student leaders and Teachers of secondary schools in Mbarara Municipality. Regarding sampling techniques, four secondary schools were purposefully selected for this study and the total number of student leaders and teachers was determined. Using Krejcie's and Morgan's table of sample determination of 1970, the sample size for teachers was determined. Teachers were purposely selected because of their positions and responsibilities of dealing with disciplinary cases directly.

Regarding the sampling procedure, four secondary schools were purposefully selected for this study and the total number of teachers was determined. Using Krejcie's and Morgan's table of sample determination of 1970, the sample size for teachers considered was 175 respondents. Teachers were purposely selected because of their positions and responsibilities of dealing with disciplinary cases directly. The respondents were randomly selected until the required sample size was attained as represented.

To ensure the content validity of the questionnaire items, the questionnaires were sent to academic experts who included lecturers who were well-versed in the area of discipline. These experts examined the items of the questionnaires systematically and indicated whether they measured what they intended to and whether their views were taken into consideration. Concerning reliability, data collection tools were pretested on a smaller number of respondents from each category of the population to ensure that the questions were accurate, clear and in line with the objectives of the study. The initial pilot testing was conducted with a total of 20 student leaders and 20 teachers.

Regarding data processing interpretation and analysis, the ratings from the Likert scale were numerically coded as: 4- Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2 - Disagree and 1- Strongly Disagree. Student leaders and teachers responses were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21 for analysis. For every item in the questionnaires, descriptive statistics were created, including the mean and frequencies for each response. The study's objectives for the data analysis of qualitative data included content analysis, which involved reading through each piece of work submitted in response to an open-ended question carefully in order to identify themes to which it belonged. Quotations and narrative statements were also used to represent the opinions of the respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

This study assessed the causes of indiscipline among students of Mbarara City Secondary Schools in Uganda.

The study's numerous causes of indiscipline discipline included teachers' lack of leadership abilities, student leaders' carelessness, their disregard for school policies, students' disdain for school leaders, and the escalation of

financial hardships. Table 2 shows the responses of teachers that were computed to obtain frequencies and percentages. Findings from open-ended items were presented as quotations.

Table 1: Teachers' responses to items related to causes of indiscipline in schools

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
Lack of leadership skills by teachers	22	12.9	66	38.8	58	34.1	24	14.1	2.51
Student leaders are irresponsible	30	17.6	98	38.8	34	20.0	8	4.7	2.88
Failure of student leaders to follow school rules and regulations	36	21.2	78	45.9	34	20.0	22	12.9	2.75
Students lack respect for school leaders	18	10.6	86	50.6	48	28.2	18	10.6	2.61
Growth of economic difficulties	30	17.6	72	42.4	48	28.2	20	11.8	2.66

Source: Primary data 2023

Table 1 indicates the analysis of responses item by item that related to causes of indiscipline in schools. The mean scores reveal that most of the students strongly agreed or agreed with the items of the discussion. Furthermore, the above table indicated that 17.6% and 38.8% of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed that student leaders are irresponsible. This cause of indiscipline has the highest mean score of 2.88. 21.2 % and 45.95% strongly agreed and agreed respectively that there is a failure of student leaders to follow school rules and regulations. Also, the table indicated that 10.6% and 50.6% of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively that students lack respect for school leaders. In addition, the above table revealed that 17.6% and 42.4% strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the growth of economic difficulties is the cause of indiscipline in schools.

The above findings revealed by teachers were in line with some existing literature on the topic. Rizzotto (2022), presents seven likely causes of the phenomenon in schools which include: the idea of democracy with its emphasis on the rights and freedom of the individual, the generation gap in ideas, beliefs and values about the nature of man, the influence of the media (that is to say newspapers, radios and televisions) which carry regular reports about students power against authority, the failure of many homes to provide basic and essential moral training in the upbringing of the children, poor

communication between young men and women in schools. In fact, Mares (2019) noted that occurrences involving indiscipline are a significant issue that schools face and that they have a broad impact on both student achievement and school safety.

Additionally, Mwaniki (2018) identified the most plausible reasons why secondary school students exhibit indiscipline. The research noted factors such as the influence of head teachers or principals, parents or homes, educators, political, social, and economic aspects, emotional problems in students, influence of gender and race, and public versus private schools. Conversely, Cvetkova (2019) offers an alternative explanation, stating that the school, society, incorrect beliefs, indolence, poor leadership, unfairness, a lack of practical regulations, and a poor upbringing at home are the root reasons of indiscipline in schools. Regardless of the arguments put up by various scholars in the discipline on the reasons behind the lack of discipline in secondary schools, they all have the effect of negatively affecting students' academic performance, which in turn affects their career chances. This suggests that to develop well-behaved pupils overall, school stakeholders must make every effort to prevent vice from getting worse.

Responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaire on the causes of indiscipline among students

Using the findings from the study, teachers were able to suggest new causes of the indiscipline cases among students as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Showing teachers' responses to causes of discipline among students

Items	<i>f</i>	%
Peer pressure	13	17
Alcoholism and drug abuse	33	43
Loss of hope in academic achievement	10	13
Poor family background	12	15
Poor school administration	09	12

Source: Primary data 2023

Using the findings from the questionnaire, teachers also suggested new causes of indiscipline cases in schools and the majority 33 (43%) revealed that alcoholism and drug abuse have led to indiscipline, 13 (17%) revealed that peer pressure has also brought indiscipline cases, 12 (15%) revealed that poor family background has also led to indiscipline cases more especially those students who come from single families. The minority, 10 (13%) and 09 (12%), showed loss of hope in academic achievement and poor school administration respectively as other causes of indiscipline among students in secondary schools.

The above teacher's responses concur with Wolhuter (2020), who opined that some of the school-related causes of indiscipline may be teachers lateness and absenteeism in class, overcrowded classrooms, uncondusive school environment, unenforceable school rules and regulations, poor teaching and poor leadership by school administrators. This is further supported by De Abrau (2023), who reports that unrealistic school rules were the cause of indiscipline. Rules and regulations are meant to guide and control activities in school but when they become too much and unenforceable, could become a source of indiscipline. The rules and regulations need to be implemented flexibly so that they are owned by the students and implemented by the administration. This means that before punishing a pupil, every stakeholder should make sure the student understands why they are being punished and that they have done something wrong. Enefu (2019) also underlined the significance of student communication and the implementation of discipline. He pointed out that if these factors are ignored, schools may experience hyper-indiscipline, which could have disastrous consequences.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study findings revealed that the main causes of indiscipline in secondary schools in Mbarara city of Uganda included; bias on some teachers, lack of guidance and counselling, loss of hope in academic achievement, poor family back ground, poor school administration, alcoholism and drug abuse and peer pressure. Interestingly, it was noted that if effective communication can be done by enforcers of school rules and regulations to students, perhaps cases of indiscipline could de-escalate to manageable levels.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the above discussion and findings, it is recommended that:

1. The school administration should award disciplined students weekly, termly and at the end of the year to motivate other students.
2. The school should also make games and sports compulsory for all students to occupy their redundant time such as evenings and weekends.
3. Indisciplined students should also be subjected to guidance and counselling services rather than immediate expulsion that extends the problem to the public.
4. The school premises should also be properly fenced to protect students from escaping from school as well as control the infiltration of wrongdoers from the community.
5. The school administration should make it compulsory for students to put on school

uniforms both in school and outside school for identity purposes.

- Schools should organize regular career talks and discussions on consequences of indiscipline for students in schools. Counsellors can also collaborate with teachers to organize talk shows and seminars for the entire public to get acquainted with indiscipline situations.

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