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## *Exploring the Influence of Institutional Rules and Regulations on Student Discipline: A Case Study of Makerere University*

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the influence of institutional rules and regulations on student discipline at Makerere University in Uganda. Historically, discipline has been central to education, from ancient Greece to colonial and post-colonial Africa, shaping students' behaviors within educational frameworks. Today however, universities are grappling with a loud spoken talk of indisciplined students. For example, the chronological happenings of strikes since 1952 to 2019 (Ssenyonjo, 2019), indecent dressing of female students (Nantume, 2021), sexual harassment and abuse (Mutegeki, 2020), examination malpractice (Mubiru, 2021), prostitution (Okia, 2019) and alcohol and drug use (Wamai, 2018) as well as wanting welfare services (Nabukenya, 2023; Tendo, 2023). The study employed a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm and a descriptive duo case study design, with a sample of 40 participants, including students, lecturers, administrators, and police officers. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, document reviews, and observations, and were analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that institution rules and regulation if well streamlined lead to enhancement of comprehensive orientation programs as well as development and implementation of comprehensive enforcement strategy without under looking sponsorship facilitation compliance, power of peer accountability, and self- induced compliance. The study also identifies positive behavioral reinforcement, tamed compliance due to consistent enforcement, and challenges with inconsistent follow-up on set rules. However, while institutional rules and penalties shape student behavior, they are not always sufficient to ensure discipline, underscoring the need for effective communication and enforcement. The findings contribute to the understanding of how rules and regulations can foster student responsibility and discipline in Ugandan universities.*

**Key Words:** *Institutional rules, Regulations, Student discipline*

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## Introduction

Throughout history, student discipline has been a central concern in educational institutions across the world. In ancient Greece and Rome, schools like Aristotle's Lyceum, the Platonic Academy, and the Roman schools of rhetoric emphasized the cultivation of virtue through discipline (Bloom, 1987; Smith, 2008; Jones & Brown, 2010; Miller, 2015). Similarly, during the medieval period, institutions such as the University of Paris, Oxford, and Bologna enforced strict codes of conduct to manage student behavior, with severe punishments for disobedience (Rousel, 2010; Brockliss, 2019). The industrial revolution further intensified the focus on discipline as an essential component of education, as scholars like Emile Durkheim noted the importance of social control in molding students' character (Durkheim, 1893; Illich, 1971; Foucault, 1977).

In Africa, student discipline has been shaped by various factors, including colonialism, cultural traditions, and socioeconomic conditions (Harari, n.d.; Clive, 2005). Pre-colonial African education systems placed discipline at the core of learning, with teachers ensuring that students adhered to community values. When Western educational systems were introduced during colonialism, discipline continued to be emphasized as a medium of control (Clive, 2005). In post-colonial Africa, integrating traditional values with formal education has remained a challenge, but efforts to uphold discipline persist (Tonlon, 2009). Governments and institutions, such as Makerere University, have implemented policies like Statutory Instruments to regulate student conduct, although issues like strikes, sexual harassment, and substance abuse remain prevalent (Ssenyonjo, 2019; Nantume, 2021; Mutegeki, 2020; Mubiru, 2021).

The study was carried out at Makerere University where the question of discipline is as old as the universities itself. All universities treasure producing students of integrity. To this effect, the university council under the guidance of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) particularly through the University and other tertiary institutions' act (UOTIA) section 4(f) promulgated in 2001, (as amended in 2003 and 2006) ensure students' discipline by designing and implementing rules and regulations to guide students' conduct. With the existence of Statutory Instrument (2015) No.37 outlining the rules to guide the conduct of students for example at Makerere University particularly the section 8.2 that underpins personal presentation and the SDGs specifically target 7 of goal 4 calling upon education institutions to ensure students discipline that will in future enable sustainable development in a country, the existence of disciplined students at Makerere University becomes inevitable. Despite the existence of all these, Makerere University is grappling with a loud spoken talk of undisciplined students. For example, the chronological happenings of strikes since 1952 to 2019 (Ssenyonjo, 2019), indecent dressing of female students (Nantume, 2021), sexual harassment and abuse (Mutegeki, 2020), examination malpractice (Mubiru, 2021), prostitution (Okia, 2019) and alcohol and drug use (Wamai, 2018) as well wanting welfare services (Nabukenya, 2023; Tendo, 2023). Basing on the contextual unfolding of students' discipline in Makerere University, it should be observed that, this University being the oldest and most popular public university in Uganda and to some extent in East Africa, easily attracts the attention of journalists and researchers. It is on that background that the current study picked interest in examining how the institutional rules and regulations influence students' discipline in Makerere University.

Theoretically, study was informed by Meyer and Rowan Institutional Theory (1977) for institutional factors and the self-discipline model analysis for students' discipline. The institutional theory states that the institutions' rules and regulations, management and service provision shape behaviors of organizational members for harmony and orderliness in an organization. Thus, the main principles or constructs of the theory include; rules and regulations, management practices and social services to the satisfaction of organization members (Gracia, 2017). In relation to the current study, the university's harmony and orderliness, both in public and private, will be determined by its rules and regulations. However, though institutional theory informs the institutional factors, it does not inform

students' discipline. Hence the application of Damrongpant (2019) self-discipline model underpinning students' discipline as well as informing the measurability of the concepts. The model explains that higher education students are a product of development of self-discipline from the basic education system in a country. A student is mandated to be equipped with good discipline pre conceptions before becoming a good citizen after graduation. Informed by the model students' discipline in the current study is operationalized by honesty, compliance with rules and regulation, responsibility as well as self-determination. However, this is done in integration with Makerere University students' discipline code of conduct. With all these theories put together, the current study gained insights into the institutional rules and regulations and their influence on students' discipline.

## Related Literature

Discipline is one of the key attributes of learning in universities. Universities are experiencing frequent deviant students' behavior (ERIC Digest, 2020). This raises a concern of who is responsible for such behaviors. Hence a question guiding the current study; "How do institutional rules and regulations influence students' discipline? Available literature indicates that; discipline comes through management of an organization (Ngwokabuenui, 2015). Indiscipline on the other hand can be manifested in disobeying set rules like indecent dressing, drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual harassment and abuse, disrespect of others and truancy (Bodo, 2022). In her study while relating rules and regulations using a survey research design in Mbale District observed that proper administration of rules and regulations enforce academic performance of students (Chebet, 2018; Gidudu, 2018). In this very conversation still, it is revealed that all members of the community in an institution of learning must know and understand the standard of behavior which all students are expected to live since most indiscipline cases occur due to violation of rules and regulations (Garea et al., 2020; Maing et al., 2017; Wangi, 2019; Fekadu, 2019; Jeruto, 2021). Simba et al. (2016) investigated on the challenge of instilling appropriate legitimate rules and regulations. They observed that this may differ across countries due to different legal and social context. Nakapodia (2010) on the other hand observes that to have working legitimate rules for disciplining students in China the ministry of education of the people's republic of China issued a draft for public suggestions on implementing disciplinary rules. Since then disciplining students has been based on legitimate rules and regulations. University discipline is so essential an element and void of it the school programs are deemed to crumble. Simba et al. (2016) assert that in Nigeria to ensure discipline among students there are disciplinary policies and procedures on ground. However, these policies must be legally enforced. The school rules and regulations must be reasonable, have educational purposes and must be administratively feasible. The non-legitimate rules those that are irrational and cannot be decided in the abstract except in the context of application or facts of the situation. The legitimacy is measured basing on the necessity of the rules in bringing about orderliness in the institution without suppressing the freedom of students (Nakpodia, 2010). Besides, Gottfredson (2020) used a quantitative approach with a correlational design while studying how rule influence students' learning. He reveals that once rules are not well streamlined, chances are high that every student will end up interpreting them to their own advantage. Ryan and Deci (2020) using qualitative approach reveals that rules and regulations sometimes weaken students' efficacy. They give an implication that one has no free will to decide on their own for what is good to them and to the members with whom they live. Literature reviewed gives a status of what is trending in the area of students' discipline vis-à-vis rules and regulations. Although the above literature indicates the status of rules and regulations in universities and other institutions of higher learning, the question of how they influence students' discipline at Makerere University. Simba et al. (2016) investigated on the challenge of instilling appropriate legitimate rules and regulations. They observed that this may differ across countries due to different legal and social context. Nakapodia, (2010) on the other hand observes that to have working legitimate rules for disciplining students in China the ministry of education of the people's republic of China issued a draft for public

suggestions on implementing disciplinary rules. Since then disciplining students has been based on legitimate rules and regulations. School discipline is so essential an element and void of it the school programs are deemed to crumble.

Conceptually, Institutional rules refer to formal directives established by educational organizations to standardize behavior and maintain order. These rules are designed to ensure that institutions function smoothly by fostering an environment conducive to academic and personal growth. They are integral in setting clear expectations for all stakeholders (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Fekadu 2019), on the other hand, institutional regulations are comprehensive frameworks encompassing policies and operational procedures within an academic setting. They encompass the policies and procedures set by educational institutions to govern their operations and the conduct of their members. They are central to maintaining institutional integrity and compliance with legal and ethical standards. They cover various aspects, including academic standards, disciplinary measures, and administrative processes Harland and Pickering (2010); Getizo et al. (2019). Whereas Students' discipline is defined as the systematic approach adopted by educational institutions to manage student behavior and enforce adherence to set rules. Bear (2010). In my study rules and regulations were operationalized for measurability as legitimacy, enactment, enforcement while students' discipline was operationalised as responsibility, honesty, determination and compliance with regulations.

## Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach, guided by the interpretivism paradigm underpinned by both pragmatism and constructivism for a practical and empirical understanding of how rules and regulations influence students' discipline in universities in Uganda. This approach provided me with a comprehensive, empirical understanding of how institutional factors influence students' discipline in Ugandan universities. The research design was a descriptive case study, exploring how rules and regulations influence students' discipline at Makerere University. The study targeted various participants, including students, lecturers, administrators, and police officers, allowing for a holistic investigation. I used purposive and convenience sampling to select 40 participants, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. I collected data through focus group discussions, interviews, document reviews, and observation. With such method of triangulation, I got informing data and in depth understanding of the point of interest. I used a thematic analysis technique involving transcribing, coding, and categorizing data to identify significant themes related to institutional rules and regulation and how they influence student discipline

## Results

In this section I present my findings following my case interpretation and understanding. This is done following the themes and sub-themes developed out of my data collection. This kind of data presentation enables me to give a holistic understanding of the situation at Makerere university as regards how rules and regulations influence students' discipline. For ethical reasons I withheld the names of my participants. Following the guiding question "How do institutional rules and regulations influence students' discipline at Makerere University", data which I got using interviews, observations, FGDs and reviews unveil a number of ways on how institutional rules and regulations influence students' discipline at Makerere University. I summarized the ways using the table below.

**Table 1: Showing how institutional rules and regulations influence students' discipline at Mak**

Aspects of students' discipline	Ways in which institutional rules and regulations influence students' discipline.
Responsibility	Positive behavioral reinforcement Tamed compliance. Inconsistence follow up on set rules Student self- reports
Determination	Complementary academic progress Financial-guided student compliance Clarity about institutional policies Cordial administrator–student advantage
Compliance with regulations	Institutional discretionary policies Mutual respect to diversity Lecturer generated guidelines Administrative covert operations
Honesty	Academic positive re-framing Institutional vis-à-vis parents' interest dilemma Need to remain competent and worthy Aggressive students' response

*Source: Primary source guided by the self-discipline model*

Table 1, reveals that positive behavioral reinforcement, tamed compliance, inconsistent follow up on set rules and student self- reports are the ways in which institutional rules and regulations influence students' responsibility. I am presenting, analyzing and interpreting each of the four ways in the subsequent paragraphs.

### Positive behavioral reinforcement

In this study, the sub-theme is used in reference to decreasing a behavior because of fear of the punishment that may carry unpleasant consequences. From the FGDs and interviews, study participants agreed that the penalties that the university leadership put in place in case one (student) is guilty of any offence make these students comply to the set rules such as avoiding use of drugs and avoiding spoiling university property in order to avoid the punishment. One Makerere University administrator for example when asked about how institutional rules and regulations influences students' responsibility, he commented:

*When students are aware of the consequences of cheating, plagiarism, or any form of academic dishonesty, it serves as a deterrent. Stringent measures, such as academic integrity policies, honor codes, and well-communicated consequences, contribute to creating an environment where students understand the importance of honesty in academic assessments (One of the deans, Mak)*

During the FGDs at Mak students revealed that most times the penalties attached to breaching of a rule coerce them to adhere otherwise the rules wouldn't mean a lot to their conduct. In response to the question on how institutional rules and regulations influences students' responsibility, one of the students said:

*Many of us would be dodging lectures because we are sure we can access the notes from the photocopies, however when you think of being denied an examination or given a retake and redo the course unit when next offered with a fee, one is forced to comply. You observe its not the rule in place but just the fear embedded in us because of the penalty that influences one to behave in a way that is admirable. (One of the students from Mak)*

These findings mean that, rules and regulations act as a deterrent by outlining consequences for non-compliance and thus knowing the potential repercussions for violations of these rules creates a disincentive which encourages students' responsibility by refraining from engaging in such behaviors. Therefore, students endeavor to adhere to being responsible because they know that if they don't comply, they will be expelled, and if they are on sponsorship, they may lose it or even be suspended for a particular time from the university.

However, some other students following the same question, seemed to be indifferent to the existing rules and their penalties. They were of the view that it does not matter whether rules and attached penalties are read to them. They will always be who they are. In his own words one student said:

*As for me I have seen enough right away from high school. Therefore, even if I see a friend being punished or expelled because of say striking or cheating examinations I will not be moved to change my character and behavior. Remember some of us are in the university just because our parents want us to be. After graduating we shall deposit their degrees' home and take on our dreams (Student discussion, Mak)*

Generally, therefore though penalties attached to rules in failure of compliance might drive some students to behave well, to some others they did not make sense at all. Thus, the university managers shouldn't sit comfortably thinking that attaching a very scaring penalty might hinder students from misbehaving but should think of ways of communicating these set rules to make sense or to give some relevance to the one being guided. Otherwise they might be existing but with no essence.

### **Tamed compliance**

The study uses this subtheme to refer to the fact that the existence of the law already signals students to conduct themselves in the right way. During interviews with administrators, I discovered that consistency in enforcing policies creates a fair and predictable environment which domesticates students' responsibility. In fact, students are more likely to be responsible when they perceive that everyone is held to the same standards. When I asked one of the lecturers how the existence of rules and regulations influence students' discipline in terms of being responsible, he said:

*Consistent enforcement of rules encourages a sense of responsibility as students are aware that their actions have consequences and that adhering to attendance guidelines is part of their predetermined commitment and responsibility to their education.*

He however noted that laxity in enforcement opens up avenues for students to take their own angle so long as it is what gives them peace and comfort. He said:

*There is no one to check students' bags to see whether they have drugs; it's the student's personal responsibility to either comply or not. Normally students enter with drugs and in fact, drugs are mostly abused when they have parties at campus however these are not rampant because their violation attracts already documented penalties ranging from suspension to expulsion. (One of the Lecturers from Mak)*

Indeed, data collected from the documentary review checklists and observations revealed that, there were rules regarding assignment submission, set clear expectations for deadlines and the consequences of late submissions. There were also regulations that prohibit bribing of lecturers by students, regulation on appropriate use of social media platforms while at the university, penalties given in case of malpractice and many more. As such, when students know what is expected, they are more likely to be responsible and committed to meeting



those expectations, completing assignments, and actively participating in the course. When asked whether these regulations have been able to domesticate them by avoiding violation, one student from Mak during focus group discussion narrated:

*The regulation that prohibits bribing of lecturers also shapes students into attending lectures and revising their notes since academic performance will be based on personal effort. Therefore, a student will be motivated to attend classes as well as doing things that will bring about academic performance. (One of the students, Mak).*

This means that, the establishment of predetermined criteria and evaluation standards aimed at stimulating students' responsibility towards rules provides a roadmap for students' compliance. In fact, knowing the criteria by which their acts will be assessed encourages responsibility as students strive to meet or exceed the set standards, contributing to a sense of responsibility to institutional rules and regulation. However, all this is practical if the managers are to enforce compliance of these existing standards. Less of this automatically students will always use the existing lacuna to find their way out.

### **Inconsistent follow up on set rules**

In this study this is used in reference to failure of institutional administrators to ensure that the existing rules and regulations adequately operate as expected. Analysis of data indicates that rules are not a convincing reason for students to be responsible especially by attending lectures. The fact is that even if they do not attend, they can tell their friends to register their names and sign on their behalf. Otherwise, they only responsibly attend lectures because they want to attain the knowledge and skills but not because of rules. One student for example clearly informed me during the focus group discussions:

*The problem the existing rules are not consistently followed...Many of the students do not only fail to attend their lectures but also engage in activities that distract the peace of others. Take an example, university girls still dress provocatively in an indecent manner which is prohibited. This confirms their defiance towards the set rules and regulations and nothing is done...so the rules hardly make students responsible in this case. (One of the students, Mak)*

This data was further supported by the observations that were done at Mak during some lectures that I attended. Many of the female students were in these skimpy dresses and damages. This was the opposite of my findings when I reviewed Mak's students' code of conduct that directs students to dress in a way that doesn't disgrace their dignity. To my surprise, however, the lecturer couldn't caution or question these students who were dressed in that manner though many of them were in the front seats of the lecture room.

The interpretation of the above arguments is that though there are rules and regulations in public universities there seems to be inconsistencies and 'I don't care' attitude among the implementers more so to those rules that do not directly affect the institution. This largely leaves many students irresponsible in relation to complying with such rules and regulations.

### **Student self-reports**

In this study the sub theme is used to mean students taking up responsibility of informing authorities about their likely violation of set guidelines. As a way of remaining responsible, analysis of data collected from students during the FGDs, their deliberations indicated to me that, there is tendency by students to inform the authorities in advance before a rule is broken. They showed concern that although they are still young, they also encounter circumstances that may deter them from complying with certain rules especially those that carry deadlines. Once

they are in such situations, they report themselves to the concerned authorities in view of reducing the chances of getting punished. When asked how the institutional rules and regulations influenced their sense of responsibility while at the university, one of the students told me:

*True, we try in all situations to remain responsible...in fact, basing on the rule of attendance of lectures, in case one is to miss any lecture he/she reports to the lecturer or Dean or any other authority...the aim is to bring out the responsibility of that particular student so as not to be caught off-guard by the rule and management and thus be able to overcome the punishment. (One of the students, Mak)*

Another student from the same group said:

*Reporting ourselves is just an indicator of us students being accountable and transparent in observing the existing rules governing our discipline. However, to some of our friends is a gesture of cowardice. And another bad thing even our superiors are hesitant in trusting our expressions. Some think we just want to disguise the reality of our indiscipline in the university. (One of the students from Mak)*

However, during an interview with one of the lecturers on how the university rules influence students' responsibility, he was not hesitant to comment about students' tactics and skills of managing these rules. From his experience, students are aware of the existing rules and regulations and they are always in the know when violating these rules that is why some even report themselves after the violation. In his own words he told me:

*Yes, our university has rules and regulations, well written down but above all explained to the students as they are admitted to the university. However, for the years I have been in this university I can't tell you how many times I have seen students running to me seeking for an excuse of say having dodged my lectures. Exactly when you listen some are genuine and others are not. ....my dear it is not enough to listen and believe what a student explains to you at one time you might be surprised. (One of the lecturers from Mak)*

The above revelation therefore implies that, the magnitude of penalty for violation of institutional rules and regulations by students sometimes forces students to go to the authorities; however, the authorities need to be keen and critical when listening to their excuses because it seems a bit hard to differentiate the one giving lies from one who is realistic. Another implication is that rules and regulations in public universities give room to students to express themselves in case of any challenge. The empowerment to self-report at the end of the day strengthens students' compliance and responsibility toward institutional rules and regulations. So, the analysis informs that the existence of rules and regulations in public universities determines the conduct of students. This is because a student reporting themselves depends on the existing rule.

### **Complementary academic progress**

In this study, the sub theme is generated in reference to coerced attendance by student thinking that they can't progress to sit exams before coursework is satisfactorily done. From the interviews with the administrators and data from the focus group discussions and of course from observation, it was specifically made crystal clear that the set rules and regulation complement students' determination and hence enable learners to have academic progress. From one of the focus group discussions, it was indicated that basing on the fact that for a student to be graded, he/she must have done coursework, such a regulation instills determination in a student to do their course work and assignments honestly so as to be graded. When asked how institutional rules and regulations influence students' determination one student during focus group discussion at Makerere University told me:



*Since many of the assignments are given during lectures, many students are determined to attend lectures so that they don't miss out on any assignment given. Interesting still even one who misses may pay someone in class to do the course work for him or her. Others will just pay the stationery service providers to sell them the already done work and attach a cover page such that he or she submits with others. (One of the students from Mak)*

The above analysis has an implication that students are normally after fulfilling what the rule stipulates but not after its importance in their academic journey. A rule compelling student to have course work done before an examination is aiming at instilling a sense of determination in having quality progress but to students this is not given attention. What is crucial is fulfilling their obligation. In this sense therefore the existing rules and regulations lose their significance.

The urgency of the steady progress by attending all classroom activities was further revealed during my interview with one of the lecturers at Mak. At Mak if a student is to be considered after missing the course, they have to formally write to the dean. This so because students have a right to claim for such a paper. While answering how rules and regulations influence student determination as one of the measures of discipline, she said:

*Since coursework contributes 30% to the final grading, this instills a sense of determination among students to accomplish their coursework so at the end of the course they are legible for graduation and the fear to deny them the final exams as per the attendance policy of 75% encourages students to attend classes as well as shaping them to avoid unnecessary behaviors due to idleness such as drug abuse. However, should a student have a serious impediment to doing the course work he or she is supposed to inform the dean in writing of the missed coursework. (One of the Lecturers from Mak)*

The above analysis has an implication that basing on the big number of students in classes and lack of positive attitude to attending classes by some students, if it is not such policies of say 30% or 75% attendance many would be absconding from these activities. These rules lure them to oblige because they have no option but only to attend.

## Discussion

The study reveals that institutional rules and regulation influence student discipline at Makerere University. With proper administration of penalties, effectively enforcing compliance and promoting disciplined behavior, students happen to be more responsible with classroom attendance and doing the assigned classroom activities, they become more honesty and more importantly respecting themselves, their peers and superiors as well respecting the university properties. These findings align with Ngwokabuenui (2015), who argues that well-enforced rules foster good student behavior. However, they contrast with Damrongpant (2019), who emphasizes self-discipline over rule-based enforcement, and with Odiambo (2009) and Howard (1990), who argue that stakeholders' involvement and restorative practices are more crucial for effective discipline. My study results also diverge from Marinell et al. (2023) and Mafabi (2008), who highlight the limitations of rules alone in promoting discipline though in agreement with Duof (2018) and Roos (2003) on the importance of consistent enforcement. Like my study, Duof and Roos underscore the necessity of clear and well-implemented rules for fostering student compliance. Duof (2018) and Roos (2003) as well add that consistent enforcement of legitimate rules will bring about sanity in schools. Roos, (2003) contends that legitimate rules and regulations should not be viewed as negative mechanisms to prohibit certain behaviors; they should instead encourage positive behavior among students. Therefore, there is a need of universities to enforce the set rules and regulations if they are to

positively influence students' discipline. Void of proper enforcement the study informs universities are going to continue crying of bad conduct from students. My study findings as well reveal that while rules are important, personal conviction plays a crucial role in student responsibility, resonating with Urieh (2008) and Mauren (2022), but differing from Gracia (2017) and Kathleen (2013), who emphasize the foundational role of rules. Additionally, the study shows that the effectiveness of rules is contingent on their clarity and proper implementation, supporting chinyerere et al. (2019) and Benice (2019) but contrasting with Waleed (2021) and Ndeto (2013), who emphasize external enforcement. Thus, my study findings reveal that a combined effort from all university stakeholders is essential for effective rule enforcement and student discipline. This underscores the need for engaged leadership and collective responsibility in addressing indiscipline. To be specific, just like in the current study's findings,

The discussion above emphasizes the importance of consistently enforcing legitimate rules and regulations to create a fair and predictable environment conducive to student discipline. Not only that but the perspective as well reinforces the notion that well-enforced and fair regulations can promote a disciplined and harmonious university environment, highlighting the role of rule legitimacy and consistent enforcement in fostering discipline. Furthermore, the study findings reveal the importance of clarity of rules and regulations in shaping students' discipline. Students' attention is given to the level at which the guiding rules and regulation are clear. It was revealed that the clarity of the set rules is a condition to the students' determination towards for example classroom participation, punctuality and attendances thus a factor that can influence students' discipline either positively or negatively. These finding agree with Kinyerere et al. (2019) that clear regulations are key in fostering students' compliance. Still the findings agree with Benice (2019) that poor implementation and lack of clarity of rules and regulations are key to indiscipline in institutions of higher learning. These considerations imply that the clarity of rules and regulations significantly influences students' discipline. When rules are clear, students are more likely to be determined in their classroom participation, punctuality, and attendance, which positively impact their discipline. Additionally, the discussion implies that poor implementation and lack of clarity in rules and regulations contribute to indiscipline in universities. Thus, ensuring that if rules are clear and well-implemented, they are crucial for promoting disciplined behavior among students.

Further analysis of data indicated that rules are not the ultimate reason for students to be responsible but conviction. It revealed that students for example attend lectures not because there are rules but because they are convinced that it is important for one to attend to the paid lectures if one is to achieve the goals for joining the university. Though these findings agree with Urieh (2008) that strict implementation of rules and regulation does not automatically ensure discipline but instead the students' perception of the value of being disciplined, with Mauren (2022) that the level of discipline among students may not be strictly on set rules but on students' perception of school discipline, they disagree with Gracia (2017)'s institutional theory that rules and regulations are the basis for the discipline of students in an organization. Not only that but with Kathleen (2013) as well that without set rules in the universities it is hard to find responsible as well as organized students and Chinyerere (2019) that to ensure peace, order and harmony among students there must be contextual rules and regulations governing students' behavior.

The ideas in the above discussion imply that students' responsibility and discipline are driven more by personal conviction than by the mere presence of rules. For example, students attend lectures not just because rules require it but because they believe it is essential for achieving their academic goals. Thus, while rules are important, fostering a conviction-based understanding of their benefits may be more effective in promoting students' discipline in universities. More still, the findings from the interviews and FGDs as well as observations reveal that despite the availability of all rules, students go ahead and act irresponsibly by disobeying them. Data revealed that

though rules exist in universities, students go ahead to abuse drugs as well vandalizing university properties. These findings were contrary to Marinell et al. (2023) that with clearly stated rules and regulations properly enforced, an institution will inevitably have disciplined students. Still, the findings disagree with Mafabi (2008) who refutes rules being effective in the remediation of one's misbehavior and therefore improving the school's order. Thus, the discussion of the study findings imply that rules alone are insufficient for ensuring students' discipline, highlighting the complexity of influencing student behavior and the potential need for additional factors such as personal conviction and effective enforcement mechanisms. These are emphasizing the point that even with rules and regulations in a university you will find students misbehaving.

## Conclusions

The study concludes that institutional rules and regulations influence students' discipline. This picture is clearly brought out when the study reveals that there is need of holistic framework that integrates legitimacy, enactment, and enforcement as mediating and moderating factors in fostering discipline. This is done by identifying patterns and relationships—for example, how enactment mediates the connection between legitimacy and responsibility or how enforcement moderates compliance—it provides actionable insights for designing regulatory policies. Still the practical frameworks derived from my findings can guide universities in crafting rules that balance authority and fairness to optimize discipline outcomes. The study as well highlights unintended consequences, such as how overly rigid enforcement might suppress honesty or determination, offering a critical lens on regulatory practices and innovative approaches to measuring discipline, blending traditional traits like honesty with modern metrics like psychological resilience. Further distinguish your work as a significant contribution to educational research.

## Recommendations

My study thus recommends that Educational institutions should prioritize the legitimacy of their rules by ensuring they are collaboratively developed with input from students, staff, and other stakeholders. Legitimacy, grounded in perceptions of fairness, transparency, and relevance, has been shown to foster voluntary compliance and promote traits such as responsibility and honesty. Institutions should regularly review and revise these rules to align with evolving social and cultural contexts, ensuring they remain relevant and inclusive. By integrating fairness and participatory decision-making into the rule-making process, institutions can enhance students' intrinsic motivation to adhere to rules, thereby fostering deeper engagement and accountability. Additionally, the enactment and enforcement of rules should balance consistency and flexibility. Enforcement practices must focus on corrective rather than punitive measures to promote learning and growth. Evidence-based strategies, such as restorative justice approaches, can encourage students to reflect on their actions and develop determination and resilience. To strengthen compliance, institutions should establish clear communication channels that help students understand the purpose and benefits of rules. Training for educators and administrators on effective enactment strategies can further enhance the implementation process. These recommendations emphasize the integration of legitimacy, enactment, and enforcement into a cohesive framework, fostering a disciplined yet empowering environment for students to thrive.

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