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## PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND COMPLIANCE WITH RULES AND REGULATIONS AMONG PUBLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Tackling students' non-compliance with school rules and regulations to ensure the attainment of the goals of higher education has become imperative.

**Purpose:** This paper examined the influence of perception of school discipline on compliance with rules and regulations among university students in Cross River State.

**Methodology:** The study adopted survey design. Purposive and accidental sampling techniques were used in selecting two public universities and the study participants numbering 431 undergraduates. Two hypotheses guided the study while data was collected using questionnaire. The instrument was duly validated and reliability established using Cronbach Alpha reliability test which yielded .84 and .83 values for perception of school discipline and compliance with school rules and regulation sub-scales respectively. Data collected were analysed using population t-test for hypothesis 1 and linear regression for hypothesis 2 at .05 level of significance.

**Results:** Results of analyses revealed that the level of undergraduates' compliance to rules and regulations in Cross River is significantly high and that perception of school discipline significantly contributes to compliance with school rules and regulations among undergraduates.

**Conclusion:** In view of the results it was concluded that university undergraduates have a high level of compliance to school rules and regulations. Furthermore this compliance is impacted by their perception of school discipline.

**Recommendations:** Universities should intentionally make students aware of school rules and regulations. Furthermore students should be involved in taking decisions in matters of discipline that concern them. This will further enhance their compliance to rules and regulations.

**Keywords:** Compliance, Rules and regulations, Perception, School discipline, University students.



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## **PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT**

This research is timely as its findings may provide useful information to students', teachers, parents and school administrators about university students' level of compliance to school rules and regulations and the role students' perceptions of school discipline play in the said compliance. The stakeholders in education mentioned above may use the information provided by this study to figure out how best they can support students' to develop positive perceptions of school discipline towards enhancing better compliance with rules and regulation. This will result to having schools that are peaceful and more functional.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is in dire need of producing university graduates with high quality skills who are disciplined with a high sense of responsibility. Government therefore places a high premium on university education as the means to achieve her developmental breakthrough. In light of this, it is expressed in the National Policy on Education section 8 article 58 item a, that tertiary education shall develop and inculcate values in the students to aid the survival of the individual and society; in item b, that university education shall optimally contribute to national development via high level relevant manpower training (FRN, 1998).

Inculcating values in the student through university education can only take place under conditions where rules and regulations are observed and students' can be brought up in ways that will promote an enabling environment where the desired goals of university education will be achieved. Universities thus, have laid down rules and regulations which guide behaviour of members of the system. School rules and regulations represent important control mechanisms to which students conform to as members of the school organisation (McGregory, 2006) and are used to ensure discipline therein. According to Amoah, Francis, Laryea, and Abena (2015), discipline is the readiness or ability to respect authority and observe conventions or established laws of the society. Rules and regulations enable discipline in the school for the benefit of everyone and make the school orderly, maintaining standards that allow things work as they should. It is thus

essential for achieving success in an individuals' life and promotes such behaviours in students as being independent, focused, orderly, organised, punctual, selective, motivated and reliable.

The need to maintain discipline in the school system cannot therefore be overemphasized. Yet it has been observed that university students engage in different forms of indiscipline behaviour which reflect their non-compliance with school rules and regulations. They engage in such unacceptable behaviours as, drug abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, violence, fraud, payment of cash for grades, sourcing out assignment, carrying dangerous weapons, truancy, intimidation (Ajah, 2019) and many other acts perpetrated against fellow students, teachers and sometimes administrators. These acts threaten the peace and tranquillity of the school environment and are inimical to the attainment of school goals.

The incidence of students' non-compliance to school rules and regulations has been recorded in literature. For instance Onah (2015) reported a prevalence of disruptive behaviours (yawning loudly in class, cheating in tests) exhibited by primary school pupils to irritate teachers and distract others. In another report Asiya (2012) recorded a high level of insubordination to school teachers and prefects, vandalism, cultism, exam malpractice, drug and alcohol use and so on amongst his study population. Likewise, Moyer (2015) found a significant high level of indiscipline among senior secondary

students in Ondo State and Simba, Agak and Kabuka (2016) among a sample of selected sub country public primary schools pupils in Kenya. Furthermore, Gaston (2015) found a high occurrence of incivilities among learners in the K-12 education system while Atunde and Aliyu (2019) reported an overall moderate level of prevalence of indiscipline among public secondary students in Ilorin, Kwara State. Basically the observed prevalence of indiscipline among students is evidence of their noncompliance with rules and regulations.

University students' non-compliance with rules and regulations has been attributed to different reasons. The home, school and society at large have been blamed (Ukala, 2018; Ewara, 2018) Gaston (2015) for instance suggested systems thinking and inconsistent school policy enforcement as factors in students expression of incivilities. More so university students come from different backgrounds, have different orientation hence oftentimes see their entry into university as coming of age and being in charge of their concerns with support from peers and friends. They sometimes see school rules as being external to them hence submit unwillingly to discipline, (Amoah *et al.*, 2015). They develop an attitude of unwillingness to comply with rules and regulations (Simba, Agak & Kabuka, 2016) which may be due to the way they perceive discipline. Perception is the process of detecting stimulus and assigning meaning to it (Woolfolk, Hughes & Walkup, 2008). The perception of individuals' is affected by factors like interest and experience (Woolfolk *et al.*, 2008); expectations, past experiences, mood and motivations (Silverman, 1979). Students' perception of school discipline thus could be seen as a product these factors. These factors which reside within the individuals' (students) contribute significantly to their perceptions and how it plays out on their behaviour.

Fundamentally, university students' differ in their perception of school discipline. Discipline is usually enforced based on rules and regulations. Hence while some students may perceive rules and regulation as infringement on their freedom others may see it as liberating. Individuals' perceptions could be either positive or negative (Silverman, 1979). The way people perceive school discipline influences how they react to it. In view of this it became necessary to carry out this study to ascertain if university students' perception of school discipline influences their compliance to school rules and regulation.

Literature on perception of school discipline and compliance to rules and regulations among students appears to be scarce, however a few studies that can be related abound. Infantino and Little (2007) examined students' perceptions of troublesome behaviour and the effectiveness of different disciplinary methods and found a link between students' perception and the indiscipline behaviour of students talking out of turn. The perception of children about discipline through metaphors developed by them was examined by Sadik (2018). Data collected from 445 participants, revealed that out of the 143 metaphors developed about discipline 94 were positive and 49 negative. In terms of positive metaphors discipline was perceived as a phenomenon guiding their behaviour, maintaining order as a necessity for social life and so on. For negative metaphors discipline was perceived as power and control oriented and disciplinary control committee as the ultimate control entity, while teachers were perceived as being harsh. These metaphors developed by the children reflect how they perceive school discipline and could determine whether they will comply with school rules and regulation or not.

In a study of students' of an all-male secondary school in Jordan Haroun and O'Hanlon (2006) found that teachers and

students saw good discipline as an important aspect of good teaching and learning but however differed in their opinion about what constitutes good discipline. This differences in their perception may impact negatively on the students' compliance with school rules and regulations. Secondary school students' positive perception of school rules and regulations promotes acceptable behaviours (Kwayu & Ishikaeli, 2014). Kriskowa, Breyer, Baumann and Wood (2019) on their part explored how university students from different faculties and at different stages of academic progression understand as well as perceive discipline with a view to find out how graduates could become more disciplined and ready for work. Data revealed that students viewed discipline as internally driven rather than externally enforced. This view of the students' will likely motivate them to be more proactive in ensuring compliance with rules and regulations.

In another study Way (2011) found that students' who perceived school authority as legitimate and teacher- student relationship as positive were rated by the study participants' as being less disruptive depicting more compliance; students perception of teacher-student relationship as fair also predicted lower disruptions. Whereas perception of more rules and higher strictness predicted more disruptive behaviour. One can conclude from this review that students' rating of their relationship with their teachers as positive and fair tended to promote compliance to rules and regulations thereby reducing disruptions unlike in the case where the relationship was perceived to be strict and associated with more rules.

On the whole literature reviewed in this study revealed that students' perception impacts on the behaviour of students and determines their line of thought. Generally the area studied lacked empirical literature, the few studies

reviewed did not directly address the variables as they were considered in the current study. More so most of the studies reported in literature used primary and secondary school sample. The current study is important because it is an attempt to provide statistical evidence for the level of university students' compliance with school rules and regulations and to determine the influence of perception of school discipline on compliance to school rules and regulations among university students in Cross River State.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Students' non-compliance to school rules and regulations has been a lingering concern for stakeholders in university education. University student's indiscipline behaviours are expressed through such behaviours as bullying, cheating in examination, intimidation of fellow students, and some cases teachers and other staff. These behaviours generate tension within the school and create unfavourable conditions for the attainment of the goals of university education. Efforts made so far by the government, school administration, NGO's and faith based organisation to curtail the problem have not succeeded meaningfully. Research in the area have implicated variables such as family variables, cultural values, school variables as being responsible for students non-compliance to school rules and regulation. Disciplinary measures of different magnitude have been put in place yet the problem persists. The researchers thus set out to investigate how students' perception of school discipline influences their compliance with university rules and regulations with a view to proffer relevant Solutions.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to:

1. Determine the level of students' compliance with rules and

regulations among university students.

2. Determine how the students' perception of school discipline influences their compliance with rules and regulation in the university.

### **HYPOTHESES**

1. University students' level of compliance with school rules and regulations is not significantly high.
2. Students' perception of school discipline does not significantly influence their compliance with school rules and regulations in the university.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

The study adopted the survey research design. Survey was the preferred design because the researchers used questionnaire to gather information from the study sample on the variables under study in order to gain a better understanding about university students' perception of school discipline and their compliance to school rules and regulations.

#### **Population and Sample**

Participants were drawn from two public universities purposively selected in Calabar Metropolis. The two universities selected being public universities, met the criteria for being used for the study. Faculty of education and faculty of social sciences were also purposively selected for the study. Accidental sampling technique was used in selecting the 449 participants from population of undergraduates (N=4699) used for the study. The general course for undergraduate classes were targeted and only students who were willing to participate in the study constituted the study sample (n=469). The number of questionnaires retrieved however was 466, some participants' failed to turn in their completed

questionnaires. Again some copies of the questionnaires were poorly filled thus reducing the sample size further to 431.

#### **Instruments for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection was developed by the researchers who were guided by knowledge from interaction with students and teachers, information from literature and related theories. The instruments titled students perception of discipline and compliance to rules and regulation questionnaire (SPDCRRQ) has three sections A, B and C. Section A elicited information on the students personal data viz-a-viz sex, programme and age, section B measured students perception of school discipline while section C measured students compliance to rules and regulations. The students were asked to respond on a four-point scale with options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The items were score on a scale of 4 to 1 as follows Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). The negative questions were reverse coded thus Strongly Agree (1); Agree (2); Disagree (3) and Strongly Disagree (4). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity to ascertain the quality and usability of the items for collecting data for measuring the variables under study. At the end of the exercise, only 25 items (10 measuring perception of school discipline and 15 measuring compliance to rules and regulation) constituted the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established with Cronbach Alpha reliability test carried out on data collected from 50 students of University of Uyo and this yielded .84 and .83 values for perception of school discipline and compliance with rules and regulations respectively. The values were considered adequate and the instrument reliable.

#### **Procedure for Data Collection**

The instrument was then administered personally by the researchers

to ensure that participants will see the seriousness of their participation and fill the questionnaires independently to a reasonable extent. The participants completed and returned the questionnaires immediately. In spite of the precaution taken some of the questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete information hence out of the 466 questionnaires retrieved only 431 were used for data analysis. The SPSS Version 26.00 software was employed for manipulation and analysis of data collected.

**Methods of Data Analyses**

The questionnaires that were adequately filled were sorted, scored and coded for analysis. Population t-test was used in analysing Hypothesis 1 while Hypothesis 2 was analysed with Linear Regression.

**RESULTS**

**Hypothesis 1:** Compliance with school rules and regulations is not significantly high among university students in Cross River State.

**Table 1: Population t-test analysis of level of compliance with school rules and regulations by university students in Cross River State (N=431)**

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\mu$	Mean difference	t-value	p-level
Compliance to school rules and regulations	54.22	3.95	37.5	16.72	285.122*	.000

\*Significant at .05 level; df =430  
 Source: Field work (2021)

The results presented in Table 1 showed that the mean and standard deviation of the samples compliance to school rules and regulations. The comparison of the sample mean with the reference mean score of 37.5 yielded t-value of 285.122. The calculated absolute t-value is higher than the p-value of .000 at .05 level of significant with 430 degrees of freedom. With these results, the null

hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the level of compliance with school rules and regulations by university students in the study area is significantly high.

**Hypothesis 2:** Students’ perception of school discipline does not significantly influence their compliance with school rules and regulations in the university.

**Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Result of the influence of students perception of school discipline on their compliance with school rules and regulations (N=431)**

R	=	0.949
R <sup>2</sup>	=	0.901
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	=	0.901
Standard Error of Estimation	=	1.243

  

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	p-level
Regression	6038.589	1	6038.589	3911.191	.000
Residual	662.344	429	1.544	*	
Total	6700.933	430			

  

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-level
(Constant)	10.811	.697		15.520	.000
Perception of school discipline	1.202	.019	.949	62.540*	.000

\*Significant at .05 level;  $p < .05$ ;  $df = 430$ .  
 Source: Field work (2021)

Table 2 shows that the  $F(1, 429) = 3911.191$ ,  $p < .000$  produced from the linear regression analysis, was statistically significant. This indicates that hypothesis one is rejected, suggesting that the students' perception of school discipline significantly influenced their compliance with school rules and regulations. The result also shows that the  $R$  of .949 and multiple  $R^2$  of .901 were obtained from the analysis. This also means that the students' perception of school discipline significantly influenced their compliance to school rules and regulations. The  $R^2$  of .901 indicates that perception of school discipline contributed 90.1% percent to the variation in the compliance with school rules and regulations. Accordingly from the Beta weight, the identified expression to understand the relationship was compliance with school rules and regulations by students =  $10.81 + 1.20$  (perception of school discipline).

## DISCUSSIONS

The researcher investigated the influence of university students' perception of school discipline on their compliance with rules and regulations. Two hypotheses were

tested and the analysis yielded significant results. Hypothesis one which stated that the compliance with school rules and regulations is not significantly high among university students was rejected meaning the compliance with rules and regulation by university students is significantly high. The result of the analysis of this hypotheses aligns with some previous findings. For example Atunde and Aliyu (2017) found a moderate level of prevalence among secondary school students in Ilorin, Kwara State. There is indeed a lack of empirical data relating to the prevalence of indiscipline behavior among university students in Cross River State.

Most of the studies carried out on primary and secondary school students in both foreign and local literature in particular contradicted the current findings that university student's compliance with rules and regulation is significantly high. Onah (2015), Asiya (2012), Gaston (2015) and Moye (2015) all found high level of indiscipline among the subjects of their study which implies that their subject were not complaint with school rules and regulations. The result of this hypothesis was rather surprising considering the level of indiscipline the researchers observe

among university students in the study area. For instance students' lack of commitment to attending classes, truancy, cheating in examination, short changing the university and so on are very common rules that students in the university break sometimes with impunity. The students do know the rules, regulations and expectations of their university hence their responses may have been made to align with the extant rules of their university. Furthermore, the use of accidental sampling technique may not have allowed the researcher select participants equitably and may have excluded the highly indisciplined students from participating in the study. This is a major limitation of this study. However, the researchers suggest that the study be replicated with a larger sample using a more objective sampling method.

Hypothesis two which stated that university students' perception of school discipline does not significantly influence their compliance with rules and regulations, was rejected. Thus perception of school discipline significantly influenced the students' compliance to school rules and regulation. The finding is not out of place because individuals' perception is known to influence their behaviour. According to Silverman (1979) individuals' perceptions are tainted by their expectations, past, experiences, mood, and motivations. Humans perceive events and situations in line with these personal variables, which direct their perceptions and determine their behaviours. The more positive an individual's perception is towards school discipline, the more likely will his/her compliance with school rules and regulations be guaranteed.

The finding is consistent with other studies example Sadik (2018) found that children's positive perception of discipline reflected the likelihood that they will comply to rules and regulations if the need should arise; Kwayo and Ishikaeli (2014) found that the participants in his study perceived

school rules and regulations as being capable of making them good citizen, this shows positive perception and will likely promote compliance to discipline, encourage cooperation and harmony in school and so on. These gains can only be made under conditions where rules and standards are respected. Another study that gives support to this work is Way (2011) who observed in his study that students who perceived school authority as legitimate and student teacher relationship as positive, were found to be less disruptive. The rating of the students by the researcher as being less disruptive reflects the impact the subjects' opinion had on them, it made them less disruptive and more compliant with discipline. When students' are aware and know what is happening around them in the classroom and school they will eventually know what is important in school such as how rules apply and be able to prevent anticipated problems. Compliance to rules and regulations engenders discipline. Being disciplined makes one focused, leads to a stress free life, high academic achievement, keeps students active and healthy and makes them good time managers and so on.

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, the result of the present study suggests that the level of students' compliance to rules and regulations among university students is significantly high and that school discipline significantly influences compliance to rules and regulations among university students. Understanding the fact that as individuals' perception of school discipline are different so do their compliance with school rules and regulations will help universities see the need to work on their students' perceptions to make them consistent with the expectations of the school, the students, and the larger society as a whole. When students' thoughts and needs are considered when developing school rules and regulations, compliance by them



become easy. The recipients of disciplinary measures have to be understood, their perception of discipline taken into consideration if success in enforcing discipline effectively must be achieved.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings it was recommended as follows:

1. That students should be made aware of school rules and regulations as they are admitted into the university. This should be one of the items to present during orientation program. It is important to consider the rights of the students while setting rules and regulations, basically because issues of discipline are ethical. Thus stakeholders in education like parents, lecturers, students, administrators and so on should be involved whenever there is need to amend regulatory policies so as to avert ethical problems.
2. Lecturers should endeavour to relate with students in ways that will help them imbibe behaviors that will promote self-discipline, cooperation and acceptance of superior opinions regarding what constitutes discipline.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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### Disclaimer Statement

This research is an independent study carried out by the researchers to determine the level of university students' compliance to school rules and regulations

as well as find out the influence of university students' perception of school discipline on their compliance with school rules and regulations. This article is therefore the outcome of the research.

### Authors' Bionote

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### **Authorship and Level of Contribution:**

The three authors made remarkable contributions towards the execution and completion of this research. However the compilation of the work was done by Dr. M. O. Okon while the proof reading and corrections were taken care of by the two other authors.

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