

## **Current Discipline Maintenance practices in the public universities of the Punjab**

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### **Abstract**

*The study was conducted to examine current practices of discipline maintenance in the old and new public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan. The sample of study included teachers and heads of departments (HoDs). Document analysis was also done to collect authentic data. The data from teachers and HoDs were collected through questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with HRM experts. The main objective was to analyze the current practices of discipline maintenance in five old and five new universities of Punjab. The results showed that old universities' teachers were more inclined towards accusing each other and were less trying to solve problems than new universities' teachers. HoDs further believed that with many faculty members, the only thing that really works was threats and punitive actions. However, HoDs were informing them about their weaknesses in non threatening way and this stance was also confirmed by the teachers' opinion.*

**Key words:** Discipline maintenance, faculty, management,

Regarding the conduct all the educational institutions have certain rules and regulations that govern the conduct of employees and regulate the affairs of personnel at work. According to Lewis (1983) discipline in its broadest sense means orderliness. On the job discipline means working, cooperating and applying one self in a responsible and orderly manner to accomplish work. Marchington and Wilkinson (2005) defined policies and procedures as 'formal, conscious statements made by the organizations. Universities officially disseminate their policies to regulate the work by the university calendar. In Pakistan, higher education receives considerable importance in all national policies. In National Education Policy 1992, there is a policy statement on campus violence

“Eradication of campus violence will receive top priority in the management of education on campuses. The teachers and educational administrators will be vested with more authority to deal with acts of indiscipline. A code of ethics for students and teachers will be enforced for regulating their activities on the campus” (pp: 43)

There is a difference of meaning in policy and procedure. Policy is a written document that tells about the rules, regulations, obligations, and expectations for administrators and work force that cover areas e.g. recruitment, rewards, discipline etc. Procedure tells about the implementation of policy, how to enact a policy such as disciplinary procedures may include possible sanctions, required code of conduct etc.

Khan (2002) define disciplinary actions as punishment awarded to government servants for lapse of duty or violation of rules, in-efficiency, insubordination, intoxication, immorality and lack of integrity, including violation of recognized code of ethics. He further divides these actions into formal and informal actions and advocates the need to provide a suitable machinery and procedure to do fairness and justice, in taking disciplinary actions against the employees.

In this way disciplinary actions can be classified as formal and informal or major and minor disciplinary actions. The distinction between major and minor is based on the seriousness of the problem and disciplinary action taken. A clear classification of formal and informal actions is given below:

- a. Informal disciplinary measures include oral cautions, warnings and counseling.
- b. The formal disciplinary actions include written warnings, explanation letters and other warnings on misconduct, suspension and dismissal from the job.

Every organization adopts formal or informal/ major or minor disciplinary actions against their employees to regulate work and bring orderliness at the work place. It is generally seen that the emphasis is normally on the informal or minor corrective measures at public sector organizations and especially at universities, the service organizations. If these informal or minor actions fail then more formal methods are adopted by the organizations. According to the Standard Practice Guide of University of Michigan, the policy on discipline requires the employees to maintain a standard of performance and conduct that contributes to the continuing excellence and orderly and efficient operation of the university. Misconduct is defined as any behavior or performance that adversely effects the orderly or efficient operation of the university, for example, violation of rules and regulations, unsatisfactory work performance, off duty behavior which adversely affects the employment relationship. The extent of disciplinary action taken depends on all the facts and circumstances available at the time the decision is made. Nature of misconduct, employees' past record, and years of service are also given consideration. Types of disciplinary actions include, oral and written warning or reprimand, suspension, layoff (time off without pay for misconduct), written reprimand in lieu of disciplinary layoff, and termination following a Disciplinary Review Conference (DRC). DRC provide an opportunity for discussion with employee whose termination at the initiative of university is contemplated.

According to Bernardin (2007) some people focus on discipline approach and others focus on punishment. Punishment is the provision of a negative consequence following a behavior. It focuses on past and penalizes undesirable behavior. On the other hand discipline is more future oriented and its goal is to point the way to more positive and productive behavior rather than to penalize the person for his or her mistakes. Mohanty (2000) defined campus indiscipline as a process whereby an institution fails to realize its objectives. It leads to less number of teaching hours, irregularity in examination schedules, delays in declaration of results, increases politicking, reduced office hours, damages in physical resources and other facilities. Marchington and Wilkinson (2005) cited a survey (IRS employment trends survey) of 46 organizations, among other offences absenteeism was ranked on the top. The most common offences resulting in disciplinary actions are outlined below:

- a. absenteeism
- b. performance
- c. time keeping
- d. theft/ fraud
- e. refusal to obey instructions
- f. aggression/verbal abuse
- g. health and safety infringements
- h. alcohol/ drug abuse
- i. assault
- j. sexual/ racial harassment

Lewis (1983) described three reasons for employee misconduct; the first type includes employee related discipline problems. They become discipline problems because they lack knowledge to perform their duties, they dislike their job or they resent authority, rules, regulations or orders. Other reasons to respond inappropriately to the work situations may also be their unsuitability for the job or they carry their financial and family problems to work. Second reason is supervisor related, they contribute to discipline problems if they are excessively negative and authoritarian, ignore human relations. Stresses, pressures, coercion and punishment could also lead towards indiscipline behavior. Employees may react to such management techniques with sabotage, slowdown and unnecessary waste or they may resort to aggressiveness or repression. Another way supervisors contribute to disciplinary problems is by ordering improper assignments which are beyond the employees' capabilities. Third reason is misconduct related to organization e.g. unstable and unnecessarily restrictive policies and regulations or improper expectations lead towards violations by the workforce.

### Research Methodology

Discipline maintenance practices were analyzed through document analysis, teachers' opinions and HoDs' opinions.

Three out of the ten universities (two new and one old university) provided the record on types and number of disciplinary problems on which actions were taken against teachers during the last five years on a Performa given by the Researcher. The Researcher observed that universities' administrative staff was a bit reluctant and provide no or insufficient information. The provided information was not sufficient enough to know the nature and type of disciplinary problems in both types of universities. However, following table is showing the type, number and causes of disciplinary actions in the last five years reported by two new and one old university:

Table 4. 23: *Disciplinary cases reported by old and new universities*

University type	Year	Type of Problem	Number of cases	Reported causes
New Universities	2005	1. Theft case on computer steeling (estimated cost was 5 million rupees)	1	No cause was reported
	2006	2. Misconduct towards performance against the decorum of university	1	Behavior towards seniors. He challenged the appointment in the court
	2006	3. Compulsory retirement on violation of discrepancy undertaking given at the time of induction	1	Breach of trust
Old Universities	2003	1. Misconduct (not clearly mentioned that what type of misconduct by the teacher)	1	No cause was reported
	2007	2. Plagiarism	3	Stealing others' research work

Source: Researcher made Performa filled in by universities' administrative staff

Opinions of teachers and HoDs on discipline maintenance practices were analyzed, using chi-square statistics and computing mean values.

### Teachers' opinions

Old and new university teachers' opinions were solicited on five indicators of discipline maintenance. Chi-square test was applied to determine the significance of association between the teachers' responses and university type. Mean values were also computed to get average response pattern from both type of universities. Summary statistics are presented in the table given below:

Table 4.24: Old and new universities teachers' opinions on maintaining discipline

Discipline maintenance indicator	Type of University	Number of teachers	Degree of response level					Mean value	$\chi^2$	Sig. level
			S.D %	D %	UD %	A %	SA %			
1. Disciplinary problems are treated fairly by the HoD.	Old	403	2.0	8.2	16.1	51.6	22.1	3.84	10.868	.028
	New	187	2.7	4.3	12.3	47.6	33.2	4.04		
2. HoD maintains discipline in a good way.	Old	402	1.7	7.7	17.2	48.8	24.6	3.87	5.007	.287
	New	187	1.6	5.9	16.6	42.8	33.2	4.00		
3. Teachers are informed about their weaknesses in a non threatening way by the HoD.	Old	403	2.7	10.2	17.4	48.6	21.1	3.75	8.175	.085
	New	186	4.3	5.9	16.7	43.5	29.6	3.88		
4. Teachers try to solve problematic situations rather than accusing each other.	Old	402	2.5	8.7	17.7	51.7	19.4	3.77	7.084	.132
	New	186	3.8	3.2	17.2	52.7	23.1	3.88		
5. Teachers conscientiously follow university rules and procedures even when no one is watching.	Old	401	.5	4.5	4.5	52.6	37.9	4.23	7.173	.127
	New	188	.0	1.6	3.7	47.9	46.8	4.40		

Chi-square test revealed that response pattern of teachers from old and new universities was similar on four of the five discipline maintenance indicators. Response pattern was not similar on the statement “disciplinary problems are treated fairly by the HoD”.

Teachers of both types of universities opined that HoDs were maintaining discipline in a good way and teachers were informed about their weaknesses in a non threatening way by the HoDs. Comparison of mean scores showed higher mean values for opinions of teachers of new universities on all the indicators as compared to old universities which indicated more favourable opinions of new university teachers on all indicators of discipline maintenance. However, association between teachers' opinions and university type was significant at 0.05 level on item 1, where they said that disciplinary problems were treated fairly by the HOD. Teachers from new universities have more positive opinions about the fairness of the HoDs in treating disciplinary problems as compared to old university teachers. The mean scores for old and new universities were 3.84 and 4.04, respectively.

Further, teachers' opinions in new universities were more positive towards solving problematic situations rather than keep accusing each other as compared to old universities teachers. However, the relationship between the university type and teachers' opinion was not statistically significant. The mean score on item 5 shows similar opinion in both types of universities. Mean difference was in favour of new universities teachers. In other words, teachers in new universities were more conscientiously following the universities' rules and procedures even when no one was watching them as compared to old universities teachers. However, no significant relationship was found between the university type and teachers' opinions. The mean scores for old and new universities were 4.23 and 4.40, respectively.

Following figure shows the relative difference of both types of university teachers’ opinion on a scale ranging from 1-5, on all the indicators:

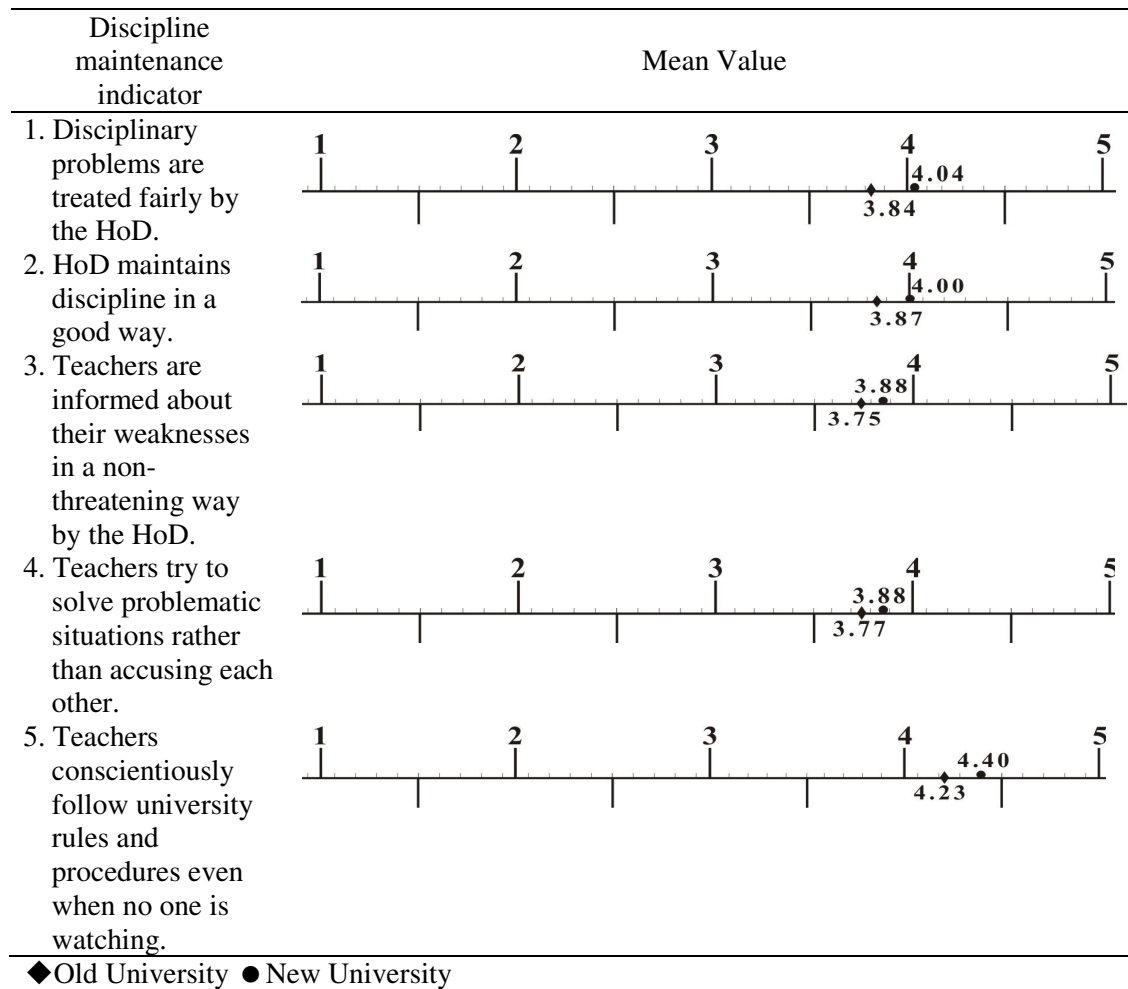


Figure 4.18: Relative means difference of old and new university teachers’ opinions on discipline maintenance indicators

**HODs’ opinions**

HoDs’ opinions regarding discipline maintenance in universities’ departments were solicited on seven indicators. Summary of results is presented in the following table:

Table 4.25: Old and new universities HoDs' opinions on maintaining discipline

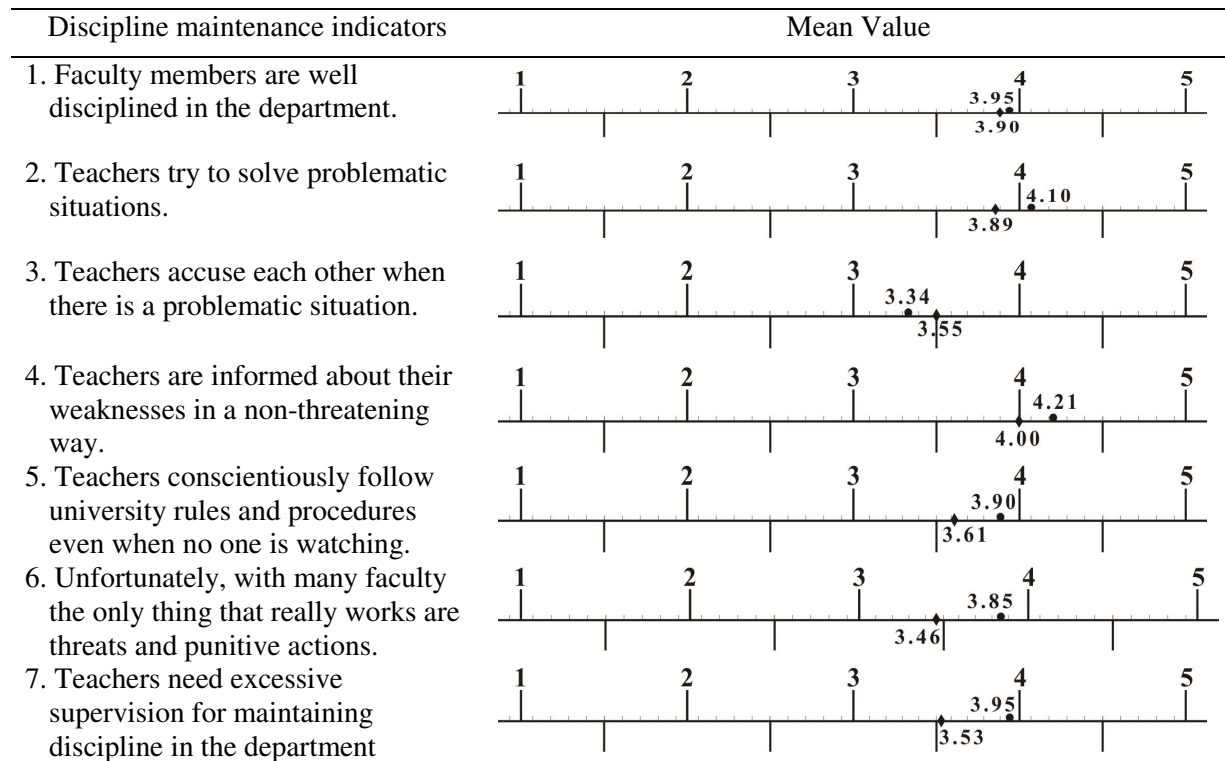
Discipline maintenance indicators	Type of University	Number of HoDs	Degree of response level					Mean value	$\chi^2$	Sig. level
			S.D %	D %	UD %	A %	SA %			
1. Faculty members are well disciplined in the department.	Old	72	.0	11.3	8.5	64.8	15.5	3.96	1.521	.677
	New	41	.0	9.8	9.8	56.1	24.4			
2. Teachers try to solve problematic situations.	Old	72	1.4	6.9	6.9	70.8	13.9	3.89	2.607	.626
	New	41	.0	2.4	7.3	68.3	22.0			
3. Teachers accuse each other when there is a problematic situation.	Old	69	2.9	20.3	10.1	52.2	14.5	3.55	6.921	.140
	New	38	2.6	21.1	28.9	34.2	13.2			
4. Teachers are informed about their weaknesses in a non threatening way.	Old	71	1.4	1.4	12.7	64.8	19.7	4.00	2.957	.565
	New	38	.0	.0	5.3	68.4	26.3			
5. Teachers conscientiously follow university rules and procedures even when no one is watching.	Old	72	2.8	15.3	15.3	51.4	15.3	3.61	4.261	.372
	New	41	.0	4.9	19.5	56.1	19.5			
6. Unfortunately, with many faculty the only thing that really works are threats and punitive actions.	Old	71	5.6	16.9	11.3	57.7	8.5	3.46	8.333	.080
	New	39	2.6	15.4	5.1	48.7	28.2			
7. Teachers need excessive supervision for maintaining discipline in the department	Old	70	2.9	17.4	31.9	31.9	15.9	3.53	3.732	.443
	New	41	.0	23.7	39.5	18.4	18.4			

Results of the  $\chi^2$  test on responses of HoDs from old and new universities indicated that their responses on all the elements of discipline maintenance were independent of type of university i.e., there was no association between the type of university and teachers' opinions on discipline maintenance elements. Therefore, it can be concluded that opinions of teachers from old and new universities regarding discipline maintenance were similar.

The mean scores on item 1, 2, 5 and 7 showed that HoDs in both type of universities believe that faculty members of their department are well disciplined; however, they need excessive supervision for maintaining discipline in the department. Interestingly, the distribution of response on five point scale on item No 7, need of excessive supervision, indicated reasonable percentage of HoDs who were neutral on this statement. Further, teachers conscientiously follow university rules and procedures even when no one was watching them and they try to solve problematic situations too. HoDs further opined that teachers are informed about their weaknesses in a non threatening way. The mean response values indicated that new universities HoDs' opinions were more favourable than old universities' HoDs. Mean values for new and old universities are 4.21 and 4.00, respectively. An analysis of degree of response level further indicates zero percent teachers' response on both the options of "disagreement" in new universities. When these statements were compared with teachers' opinions, similar opinions were found i.e. Teachers opinions of both type of universities confirmed that they were conscientiously following university rules and procedures even when no one was watching; they try to solve problematic situations rather than accusing each other; and they were informed about their weaknesses in non threatening way by the HoDs.

Moreover, HoDs opined that teachers of old and new universities accuse each other in problematic situations, yet it was also confirmed that they try to solve problematic situation. They further told that unfortunately, with many faculty members, the only thing that really works were threats and punitive actions. However, HoDs were informing them about their weaknesses in non-threatening way.

Following figure shows the relative difference of both types of university teachers’ opinion on a scale ranging from 1-5, on all the indicators of discipline maintenance:



◆ Old University ● New University

Figure 4.19: Relative means difference of old and new university HoDs’ opinions on discipline maintenance indicators

**Triangulated Opinion**

Teachers and HoDs complemented each other over satisfactory maintenance of discipline. Both of them similarly opined that teachers try to solve problematic situations and they were also conscientiously following universities’ rules and procedures even when no one was watching them. Interestingly, HoDs opined that unfortunately, with many faculty members, threats and punitive actions are the only things that really work. The new universities’ teachers were more favorable towards this view. However, they told that they were informing teachers about their weaknesses in a non threatening way. This stance of HoDs was also confirmed by the teachers’ opinion.

**Maintaining Discipline**

**Archival Data**

1. It was observed that universities’ administrative staff was reluctant to provide information on cases of misconduct. Only three out of ten universities (two new and one old) provided the record of disciplinary problems on which actions were taken against teachers. The reported cases include theft case computers, performance against university decorum, violation of discrepancy undertaking given at the time of induction, and plagiarism.

**Teachers’ opinion**

2. Association between teachers’ opinion and university type was significant at 0.05 level on fair treatment of disciplinary problems by HoDs i.e. teachers of new universities more favorably opined that disciplinary problems were treated fairly by HoDs than old universities’ teachers.
3. The mean scores indicated that teachers in new universities were more conscientiously following the universities’ rules and procedures even when no one was watching them as compared to old universities’ teachers. However, no significant relationship was found between the university type and teachers’ opinion.



4. Teachers opinions in new universities were more positive towards solving problematic situations rather keep accusing each other as compared to old universities' teachers. However, the relationship between the university type and teachers' opinion was not statistically significant.
5. Teachers of both types of universities were informed about their weaknesses in a non threatening way by their respective HoDs and they were maintaining discipline in a good way.

#### ***HoDs' opinion***

6. HoDs opined that teachers of old and new universities accuse each other in problematic situation which was contrary to the teachers' stance that teachers try to solve problematic situations rather accusing each other.
7. The HoDs of old and new universities told that unfortunately, with many faculty members, the only thing that really works were threats and punitive actions. However, both the HoDs' and teachers' had stated that non threatening ways were adopted by HoDs to inform teachers on their weaknesses.
8. HoDs and teachers of old and new universities were also of the same opinion that teachers try to solve problematic situations.
9. HoDs of old and new universities opined that teachers are informed about their weaknesses in a non threatening way. The mean response values indicated that new universities' HoDs opinions were more favourable than old universities' HoDs. Teachers were also of the same opinion that they were informed about their weaknesses in non threatening way by their respective HoDs.
10. HoDs in both types of universities believe that faculty members of their department were well disciplined. However, they expressed that faculty members need excessive supervision for maintaining discipline in the department.

HoDs of both types of universities supported teachers' opinion that they conscientiously follow university rules and procedures even when no one was watching them.

#### ***Conclusions and Discussion***

1. Teachers of old and new universities try to solve problematic situations and they were also conscientiously following universities' rules and procedures even when no one was watching them. Though, HoDs opined that unfortunately, with many faculty members, threats and punitive actions are the only things that really work. However, they told that they were informing teachers about their weaknesses in a non threatening way. This stance of HoDs was also confirmed by the teachers' opinion that disciplinary problems were treated fairly by HoDs.

Discipline is a crucial factor to regulate the functioning of universities. The researcher observed that universities' administrative staff was reluctant and provide no or insufficient information on discipline maintenance practices. The provided information was not sufficient enough to know the nature and type of disciplinary problems in both types of universities. Teachers and HoDs similarly opined that teachers try to solve problematic situations and follow university rules even when no one was watching them. HoDs were of the view that teachers accuse each other in problematic situations. However they try to solve problems. Interestingly, old universities' teachers were more inclined towards accusing each other and were less trying to solve problems than new universities' teachers. HoDs further believed that with many faculty members, the only thing that really works was threats and punitive actions. However, HoDs were informing them about their weaknesses in non threatening way and this stance was also confirmed by the teachers' opinion.

#### ***Recommendation***

1. HoDs should work interactively with teachers to minimize departmental politics and other confusions.



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