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FROM COMPLIANCE TO CHARACTER: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL-WIDE DISCIPLINE ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of school discipline practices at the secondary school level and their effect on students' behavior. The research was of a descriptive survey type in which 200 respondents (secondary and higher secondary school principals and teachers) were drawn from 50 government schools out of 100 of each tehsil randomly selected from the District selected based on the theoretical framework of assertive discipline (Canter, 1984) and reality therapy (Glasser, 1969). A structured questionnaire was used to collect data and subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and regression analysis in SPSS 25. Six constructs of discipline: general discipline, assembly practices, school discipline, class discipline, school environment, and rules and regulations, and how they collectively affect student behavior, were studied. The findings showed that discipline, class discipline, and school discipline had statistically significant positive regression coefficients on student behavior ($p < .05$), while the other factors (assembly, environment, rules and regulations) showed positive regression but were not statistically significant ($p > .05$). The elements of proactivity (such as morning assemblies, classroom management, and rules) were identified as practices that foster responsibility, concentration, and positive attitudes toward school. When combined with relational and strengths-based practices, reactive interventions such as "disciplinary" committees and consequence-based explanations of misbehavior were effective in promoting behavioral correction. The results highlight the importance of investing in proactive as well as reactive discipline approaches in the school environments, which ensure safe and orderly learning spaces and foster inclusive learning environments for students' holistic behavioural development in Pakistan.

Keywords: *School discipline practices, student behavior, proactive discipline, reactive discipline, classroom management, secondary schools, Pakistan.*

Introduction

The word discipline comes from the Latin word disciples, which means "student or disciple. In the past it had a connotation of bringing the behavior of the students into line with the behavior and norms of the teacher. Today, it now has a more modern connotation and is more than just self-regulation, it is now external behavior management. As Jim Rohn (2019) said, "Discipline is the bridge between aspirations and accomplishments. This bridge is essential in educational institutions: schools are the settings where the young generation becomes functional citizens, and there is nothing that can compare to the influence of discipline in this process.

School discipline can be broadly defined as rules, consequences and behavioral procedures that are established to control student behavior and maintain order, the purpose of which is to ensure the safety of all persons involved in the school community and to create an environment that is conducive to learning (Duke, 1989). In addition to occasional acts of violence or criminal behavior that garner public attention, the most common disciplinary issues in schools relate to student behavior that is not criminal but happens regularly during school hours: tardiness, inattention, poor classroom behavior, and not following procedure.

Discipline procedures in schools can generally be broken down into a continuum from proactive to reactive. Proactive discipline uses anticipatory strategies: clear rules of behavior from the first day of class, establishing structured class routines, and preventing misbehavior in the environment. Reactive discipline, however, refers to the response to a behavioral

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infraction that has already taken place, e.g., verbal warning, consequence-based intervention, and referral to disciplinary personnel. The literature is growing that neither approach is enough; a blended approach of both proactive and reactive strategies will generate more lasting positive behavioral outcomes (Canter and Canter, 1992; Glasser, 1992a; Kohn, 1996).

The secondary schools are different from other schools in Pakistan context. There are challenges to discipline due to resource limitations, class size, cultural diversity, and different families' engagement. Although the importance of discipline is recognized, there is a lack of empirical research that looks at various aspects of school discipline and its measurable impact on the standards of students' behavior in Pakistani secondary schools. Previous research more often addresses academic achievement or administrative views, and does not make systematic links between disciplinary constructs like assembly procedures, class discipline, school environment, and rule enforcement with teacher and school administrator reported behavioral indicators.

The current study focuses on this gap by empirically analysing the relationship and prediction of six different disciplinary constructs, namely general discipline, assembly discipline, school discipline, class discipline, environment and rules and regulations with appropriate behaviour of the students in secondary and higher secondary schools of District Bahawalnagar, Punjab. The study's results of the correlation and regression analyses of the data obtained from the 200 school-level respondents provide evidence that can shed light on which of the disciplinary dimensions best influence the behavioral standards of students. The results are of important practical significance for school leaders, teachers, educational policy makers, and parents who are working to develop responsible and well-rounded students.

Purpose of the Study

The main focus of this research is to examine the effectiveness of pro-active and re-active school discipline at the secondary school level and see its effect on proper student behavior. Specifically, the study explores the relationships between the dimensions of discipline: discipline, assembly practices, school discipline, class discipline, school environment, and rules and regulations and their relationships with behavioral outcomes of students, and how each dimension of discipline alone and together predicts student behavioral outcomes. This study also seeks to make some useful recommendations for the enhancement of school discipline systems in District Bahawalnagar and other similar public school systems in the province of Punjab, Pakistan.

The study aims were:

1. To investigate the effectiveness of the school discipline practices.
2. To examine student behavior in terms of discipline.
3. To find out the relationship between school discipline practices and student behavior.

Through analysing the following research questions were answered as:

1. To what extent are the practices of discipline in secondary schools effective in District Bahawalnagar?
2. What do students do when it comes to discipline?
3. What is the connection between behavior standards in school and school discipline practices?

Literature Review

In the realm of educational practice, the term discipline can be difficult to define. The American Heritage Dictionary (1978) says of it "Training that is expected to bring about a specific character pattern of behavior" and "Controlled behavior resulting from training. While focusing on the pedagogical, not only punitive, nature of discipline, Reynolds (2000) traced the word to the Latin "Disciplina," which means instruction, or learning. The more modern writers view discipline as referring to a combination of internal self-regulation and external behavioral management systems laid down by institutions (Gnagey, 1969; Taylor and Usher, 1982).

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There are three broad theoretical perspectives that underlie school discipline practice. The first is the assertive discipline model (Canter and Canter, 1976, 1992) that focuses on the teacher's legitimate authority to set and maintain behavior standards. It promotes the use of positive reinforcement for good behavior, a clear hierarchy of consequences for misbehavior, and active parental involvement. It is widely used, but there have been some mixed results across studies: positive (Mandlebaum et al., 1983) and mixed (Emmer & Aussiker, 1990). The second approach is Glasser's (1969, 1992a) reality therapy and choice theory approach, which states that student misbehavior is caused by unmet psychological needs, including love, power, freedom, fun, and survival. From this point of view, discipline refers to the establishment of systems and routines designed to allow students to become effective in fulfilling their needs constructively, with the assistance of behavioral contracts and positive reinforcement. Third, Kohn's (1996) community-based perspective offers a critique of punishment-oriented discipline practices and proposes classrooms and schools as democratic communities where students have a meaningful voice in decisions and thus a motive to engage in prosocial behavior.

Proactive Discipline Strategies

Proactive discipline is based on the prevention of misbehaviour. Wong and Wong (1998) suggested that the three building blocks that teachers need to put in place in the opening days of school are rules, procedures and routines, and that having work-based expectations set early and routinely is most effective in establishing a work oriented classroom. This perspective is consistent with Freedman and Benjamin (2003) who pointed out that discipline helps to prevent plans and ideas from falling through the cracks, and with Stankosky (2005) who associated discipline with the formation of academic control and skillful social order.

The physical and organizational setting of the school is one of the key levers for proactively. Albert (1996), Curwin (1992), and Glasser (1992a) all identified well-organized schools with high academic standards as the best schools with respect to behavioral outcomes. Barker and Gump (1994) showed that the smaller classes had fewer discipline problems and a Tennessee STAR project (Gettinger, 1988) found that in small classes, students had 35 less discipline problems than students in large classes. Morning assembly also has a proactive role in the school day; the norms, expectations, and atmosphere set during assembly help students to be ready to behave in an orderly way throughout the school day (Burbach & Kauffman, 1997).

It is also important to create and openly communicate rules and regulations in a proactive way. McPartland and McDill (1977) showed that students who felt most involved in the formulation of school rules also reported the least behavioral problems, and Paul and Elder (2001) stated that role playing in school rules could be very helpful for students to internalize the rules. Co-constructing rules with student participation (wherever possible) is important for an effective code of conduct and implementing appropriate discipline, as said by Joubert and Prinsloo (2001).

Reactive Discipline Strategies

Reactive discipline involves reactions to behaviour after it has happened. Canter (1987, 1989) suggested that there are three steps involved: (1) instruct the child to perform clearly defined behaviors, (2) repeat that behavior when it is performed correctly, and (3) only provide negative consequences when the child repeatedly engages in the wrong behavior. Glasser (1969) promoted the use of behavioral contracts, which have clear expectations of responsibility and explicitly define any structural contingencies (rewards/penalties). Glasser argued that behavioral contracts enhance persistence and self-regulation in students. This was confirmed by Watkins and Wagner (1987) who found that children's task adherence improves with contracts that include structural contingencies.

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There are several problems cited in the literature concerning reactive discipline. Gottfredson (1989) pointed out that disruptive conduct in school has significant effects on both the person and the school community, and that students who engage in repetitive disruptive behavior will be at higher risk of dropping out of school, using drugs or alcohol, and becoming involved in delinquent behavior. Typical and usually reactive measures such as suspension and expulsion, in fact, reduce learning opportunities and can actually be a means for students to gravitate toward other deviant peer groups (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Muro and Kottman (1995) suggested that problem solving be done face-to-face and from the student's point of view, and they argued that building a student's own motivation to change behavior is essential for lasting behavioral change.

The behavior modification approach is an important difference in the landscape of the reactive approach. According to the group guidance approach (Redl et al.) a disciplinary problem is a result of individual history, group circumstances, or both; and about 90% of all discipline cases involve a group factor and therefore require group level remediation (Madsen & Madsen, 1983). The acceptance approach is connected to Dreikurs, who believes that when students' need for acceptance is not met, they develop wrong goals (attention-seeking, power-seeking, revenge-seeking, and withdrawal) and that, rather than punishing them, the underlying needs must be met through encouragement and positive relationships.

Consequences of Discipline on Student Behavior and Development

Both proactive and reactive discipline have measurable positive impacts on student behavioral development. Discipline offers students a sense of security and social acceptability by giving them a sense of boundaries in behavior, assists youngsters in avoiding guilt and shame in relation to misbehavior, encourages children to live according to social standards, and teaches students how to develop an internal voice that guides their own decision making and behavioral regulation (Perkins, 1969; Savage, 1991). Academic performance is closely linked to disciplinary climate because, Mwamwenda (1995) showed that disciplinary factors including those of social, school and home settings, influence learners' performance in school, class level discipline helps learners to concentrate on learning and limits interruptions to learning.

In the same way Sergiovanni (1994) and Huber (1993) found that a positive school climate, defined by a high level of mutual trust, acceptance of difference, and shared commitment to school discipline, contributes to students arriving on time, attending more often, and being more active in school activities. Visser (1999) emphasized the importance of the home-school relationship to maintain positive behavior modification and that the positive discipline system is a bridge between the home and school environments.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research approach with a quantitative survey was used as a method of this study. Descriptive designs are suitable for studies that aim to describe the current situation of phenomena and examine relationships between variables in natural settings (Muijs, 2004). Tablet-based cross-sectional data collection enabled an efficient and comprehensive snapshot on the practices of disciplines and on the corresponding behaviours across the target population at one point in time.

Thirty-two secondary and higher secondary school principals and teachers of One District in Punjab, Pakistan were the study population. A total of 50 government secondary and higher secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling from the 5 tehsils of that district and 50 questionnaires were distributed to secondary and higher secondary schools in each of the tehsils (N = 250). The sample consisted of 250 respondents from which one principal and three teachers were selected from each selected school. The 250 questionnaires sent out were returned to the researchers by 200. Therefore, the personal administration of questionnaires resulted in an 80% response rate.

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A structured Likert scale type questionnaire was used to collect data which was specially prepared for this study. The instrument was divided into two parts: Part 1 was designed to collect the personal information of the respondents; Part 2 consisted of 40 items, which were spread across seven sub scales: discipline (3 items), assembly (8 items), school discipline (5 items), class discipline (8 items), environment (6 items), rules and regulations (5 items), and behavior (5 items). The responses were given on a 5-point scale from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). It was validated by subject-matter experts and reliability was ensured by item review and pilot testing prior to data collection.

Data were analyzed by the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 25. The three analytical approaches were descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to characterize the respondents' perceptions of the discipline practices and student behavior; Pearson's correlation analysis to explore the strength and direction of relationships between the constructs of discipline and student behavior; and multiple regression analysis to assess the predictive power of each construct of discipline for student behavioral outcomes. A statistical significance of .05 was used.

Findings and Results

The results of descriptive analysis of the discipline subscale showed that the majority of respondents showed positive confirmation regarding disciplinary practices. About 46% of the teachers agreed that discipline helps students to be responsible, and 41.5% agreed that discipline helps students to behave constructively. As far as assembly practices are concerned, 46.5% of the respondents said that morning assembly encourages students to observe rules and behave in proper ways; 45.5% said that students actively and voluntarily participate in all school activities by being motivated during assembly. 75% of teachers agreed that students come to school on time, while 75% said that teachers also make it to the school assembly ground in time.

Regarding class management, 45.5% indicated that students are more active in doing tasks during class and 47.5% agreed that discipline simplifies class management. Additionally, teachers indicated they had high levels of student compliance, with 42.5% saying that students do not leave class without permission and 46.5% saying that students are silent in the classroom when the teacher is not present. As far as the school environment is concerned, 42.5% of the teachers indicated that the cleanliness in disciplined schools is exemplary for other schools while 45% indicated that discipline will ensure positive academic performance for other schools. As far as behavioural outcomes, 41.5% said that having children's needs respected leads to better behaviour, 42.5% said that explaining when children misbehave helps them to behave better and 45.5% said that emphasizing students' strengths encourages good behaviour. Importantly, 47.5% said that incidents of misbehaviour were reported to the disciplinary committee in an appropriate manner, highlighting the importance of a formal reactive process.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all disciplinary constructs and student behavior (all $p < .05$). Table 1 summarizes the main correlational results.

Table 1. Correlation Coefficients Among Disciplinary Constructs and Student Behavior (N

Construct Pairs	r	p
Discipline – Behavior	.326	.000
Discipline – Class Discipline	.554	.000
Discipline – School Discipline	.472	.000
Discipline – Rules and Regulations	.419	.000
Discipline – Assembly	.180	.000

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School Discipline – Behavior	.440	.000
School Discipline – Rules and Regulations	.813	.000
Class Discipline – Behavior	.730	.000
Class Discipline – Behavior	.730	.000
Assembly – Environment	.771	.000
Rules and Regulations – Behavior	.406	.000
Environment – Behavior	.266	.000

The strongest correlation was between class discipline and behavior ($r = .730$, $p < .001$), suggesting a significant positive relationship between effective classroom management and appropriate student behavior. School discipline was also significantly related to rules and regulations ($r = .813$, $p < .001$) suggesting that formal school-wide discipline structures and rule-setting are closely related. Discipline had a high positive correlation with class discipline ($r = .554$), and moderate correlation with school discipline ($r = .472$), rules and regulations ($r = .419$) and behavior ($r = .326$). Assembly had a strong positive association with school environment ($r = .771$) and a moderate association with behavior ($r = .357$). All correlations were significant at the .05 level or higher.

Regression Analysis

Two separate multiple regression analyses were performed to assess the predictive power of the six disciplinary constructs on student behavior. The results of the first regression model (discipline, assembly and school discipline as predictors) are shown in Table 2, and the results of the second model (class discipline, environment and rules and regulations as predictors) are shown in Table 3.

Table 2 Regression Analysis: Discipline, Assembly, and School Discipline on Behavior (N = 200)

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.218	.305		.713	.477
Discipline	-.149	.051	-.174	-2.926	.004
Assembly	.192	.103	.140	1.860	.064
School Discipline	.146	.071	.170	2.054	.041

Discipline ($\beta = -.174$, $p = .004$) and school discipline ($\beta = .170$, $p = .041$) statistically significant predictors of student behavior. Assembly tended toward significance ($\beta = .140$, $p = .064$) suggesting a small direct effect on behavioral outcomes in this model, but not a definitive one.

Table 3 Regression Analysis: Class Discipline, Environment, and Rules & Regulations on Behavior (N = 200)

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.218	.305		.713	.477
Class Discipline	.797	.068	.711	11.756	.000
Environment	-.109	.085	-.096	-1.290	.198
Rules and Regulations	.054	.074	.058	-1.290	.470

Class discipline was the strongest single predictor of student behavior in the entire study ($\beta = .711$, $p < .001$), accounting for the lion's share of behavioral variance in this model. Environment ($\beta = -.096$, $p = .198$) and rules and regulations ($\beta = .058$, $p = .470$) were not

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statistically significant predictors of behavior in the regression model, although both were positively correlated with behavior in the earlier correlational analysis. This divergence implies that the behavioral effect of environment and rules and regulations operates indirectly, probably mediated through class discipline and school discipline rather than as direct independent predictors.

Discussion

The results of this study corroborate and build on existing research on how school discipline and student behavior are related. The descriptive findings are generally positive: very high percentages of teachers and school principals believe that discipline, school discipline, class discipline, assembly, and related practices are effective in fostering student responsibility, attention, and orderly behavior; and that these various components of discipline are effective in fostering student responsibility, attention, and orderly behavior. This is in line with Killion (1996) who reported that students behave better in a disciplined environment, and Makwarela (2000) who reported that good discipline cannot happen by chance, it must be intentional and consistent.

The strongest predictor of student behaviour, by far, is class discipline ($\beta = .711$), which directly addresses the proactive versus reactive discussion. The first line of proactive discipline is classroom level discipline, which includes teacher punctuality, task engagement, classroom discipline procedures, and consistent behaviors. Teachers who are on time, who have good classroom conduct, who use audio-visual equipment and who involve students in learning activities provide a setting where misbehavior has few chances to become entrenched. This corresponds to Wong and Wong (1998) who stated that "the best classrooms are those that have a shared understanding of expectations between the teacher and students" and Gettinger (1988) whose STAR project concluded that "disciplinary incidents are measurable and can be reduced in smaller, well-managed classrooms."

The significant positive impact of school discipline ($p = .041$) further supports the importance of school-wide proactive structures. If school-wide norms, administrative leadership and institutional expectations align (as reflected in the finding that school discipline and rules and regulations are strongly correlated, $r = .813$), students will be given the same behavioral cues in all school situations. This is consistent with the research of Evertson et al. (1998) and Sergiovanni (1994) who all indicated that school discipline is a shared responsibility and that individual responsibility from all involved, including parents, administrators, staff, and students is necessary.

Interestingly, discipline as a construct overall revealed a negative beta coefficient ($\beta = - .174$) in the first regression model and positively correlated with behavior ($r = .326$). This is a statistical artifact that often occurs when predictors are correlated, which is the case when the variables of discipline and school discipline are used in the same model. The general variance of general discipline has a different direction, when controlling for school discipline and assembly, more general disciplinary expectations have a positive relationship with good behavior in isolation. This is important to note, as it does not indicate that discipline has a negative impact on behaviour but rather that school discipline is responsible for the majority of the impact discipline has on behaviour.

Although all the assembly, environment, and rules and regulations variables are significantly correlated, the non-significant regression effects indicate that they do not appear to be direct predictors of behavior but more so as enabling conditions to behavior. For example, the behavior of morning assembly had a strong positive association with the school environment ($r = .771$), which indicates that having an orderly and welcoming school environment through the routines of assembly indirectly supports behavioral standards. Similarly, rules and regulations correlated moderately with behavior ($r = .406$), but did not have a direct predictive

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power in the regression model as such, since the model absorbed this power in the definition of class and school discipline. This follows Paul and Elder's (2001) belief that rules should be taught and internalized before they independently affect behaviour and also with McPartland and McDill (1977) who concluded that student participation in developing rules improves behavior compliance.

The results of this study indicate that the most effective proactive classroom management strategies for creating the most positive behavioral outcomes are structured class routine, consistent teacher behavior, and active student involvement from a proactive-versus-reactive lens. Reactive practices such as referral to disciplinary committees and consequence-based explanations of misbehavior remain important for corrective purposes, as evidenced by the high agreement rates (47.5% and 42.5% respectively) for these items among respondents. These are reactive interventions, however, which seem to be more successful when integrated in a proactive program that is based on the student's needs, strengths and positive relationships with the teacher (Glasser, 1969; Kohn, 1996; Canter and Canter, 1992).

The findings also suggest that the teacher-student relationship is a mechanism that needs to be taken into consideration. Effective discipline has been proven to foster compliance, contribution, dedication, civility, and cooperation in students (Emmer et al., 1984). It is important for teachers to work closely with parents so as to help maintain this discipline at home and in school (Visser, 1999). Teachers who develop respectful, responsive relationships with students in District Bahawalnagar, where certain specialized behavioral support might not be available due to resource limitations, may be the most powerful tool for disciplining students.

Conclusions

The present study aimed at analyzing the effectiveness of school discipline practices and its effect on students' behavioral standards in secondary schools of District Bahawalnagar, Punjab, Pakistan. Based on the results of the descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses of the data collected from 200 school principals and teachers, the following conclusions were drawn: Descriptive analysis proves that discipline, class discipline, school discipline, assembly, environment and rules and regulations have a positive influence on student behavior. Majorities of respondents across all constructs think that disciplinary practices are significant contributors to student responsibility, orderliness and positive behavioral attitudes.

Second, correlation analysis indicated that all six constructs of the disciplines are significantly and positively correlated with student behaviors and that the highest correlation was found between class discipline and student behaviors ($r = .730$). There are strong correlations between discipline and class discipline ($r = .554$) and between school discipline and rules and regulations ($r = .813$), indicating that disciplinary structures are systemic and interconnected in schools.

Third, class discipline ($\beta = .711$, $p < .001$) and school discipline ($\beta = .170$, $p = .041$) are statistically significant predictors of student behavior, and assembly, environment and rules and regulations are correlated with student behavior but not independent (singificant) predictors of behavior when controlling for the other constructs. It highlights the importance of classroom-level and school-wide disciplinary norms as direct mediators of behaviour and implies that assembly and environment are indirect mediators.

These conclusions collectively support the idea that proactive approaches to discipline, specifically a structured classroom management system and cohesive school-wide discipline system are the greatest tools for establishing positive behavioral norms among students. Reactive practices are still valued and important parts of a well-rounded discipline plan, but when these practices are built into a culture of relationship respect, consistent expectations and strengths-based interactions they are more likely to be effective.

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Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on findings and conclusions:

1. Schools should establish, disseminate and consistently apply a clear code of conduct, which is co-constructed with student participation. Rules should be made explicit, discussed with parents during the year, and demonstrated with students and encouraged to be internalised. (Paul & Elder, 2001; Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001).
2. Teacher professional development programs should focus on proactive classroom management skills, which are the most direct predictors of student behavioral standards: design of structured routines, use of interactive classroom instructional strategies, and establishment of positive teacher-student relationships.
3. Morning assembly should be used as a proactive tool to support the school-wide expectations for behaviour, to encourage school time on time and to develop community. All schools should ensure that the program for assemblies is purposeful, inclusive and consistently implemented.
4. Student/teacher ratio should not be excessive and should be kept in a manageable ratio that will support effective class discipline. The high ratio of students to teachers in crowded classrooms is a barrier to disciplining students and is less effective in teaching them (Barker & Gump, 1994; Gettinger, 1988).
5. Future studies should extend this study to the wider province of Punjab and ultimately to the national level, employing multi-level modeling to capture school-level and district-level contextual factors. The use of qualitative techniques should be used in addition to quantitative to capture the lived experience of a student's disciplinary experience as they see it.

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