

Institute for Christian Teaching  
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE IN ADVENTIST  
TERTIARY EDUCATION A CHRISTIAN APPROACH**

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of discipline and correction is pivotal to Adventist Christian Tertiary Education since these institutions are set up for a mission. There are values that are upheld and which these institutions seek to inculcate in their students and therefore discipline and correction is the means by which those who fall out of line are brought in line again.

Discipline and correction has become even more crucial in Adventist institutions not only because the general population of students are ever increasing but more especially because the non Adventist ratio is also ever-increasing and since most of them obviously might not share in our values completely; we are likely to get more problems of discipline and correction. Most of these students, in reference to other secular tertiary institutions especially the public ones, come thinking that tertiary education should be a “free society” without any regulations and especially not Christian values!! They tend to think that education and discipline are mutually exclusive not knowing that they are rather complimentary and that a disciplined environment stimulates and enhances education. (Tamakloe et al 1966). They tend to think that they can have our good education minus the very thing that facilitates our good our education - discipline and correction.

Even though discipline and correction by nature is painful (Straws and Sayles, 1972), the purpose of this paper is to seek how best discipline could be made less painful but more restorative. Yes, we want to discipline students but more importantly we want to still win them as friends but not enemies by the manner in which we administer discipline and correction. If the manner by which we administer discipline and correction gives them the

impression of hatred, excesses, unfairness, injustice arbitrariness then the purported disciplinary measure would only achieve an outward expression (compliance) but not inner correction and true reformation of character.

## **THE CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE**

Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines discipline variedly as follows:-

1. Training to act in accordance with rules: drill
2. Punishment inflicted by way of correction and training.
3. Behaviour and order maintained by training and control.
4. To train by instruction and exercise: drill
5. To bring to a state or order and obedience by training and control.
6. To punish or penalize in order to train and control, correct, chastise.

According to Hoover (1982) discipline in early civilizations implied discipline which is the teaching or helping of people to grow or achieve. This view with time became associated with conformity (external discipline).

Shertzer and Stone (1976) adopted a different approach to defining "discipline". They viewed discipline in four functional parts.

First, the concept of discipline was commonly restricted to situations involving the handling of misbehaviour by imposing punishments. This implied that there was a superior who imposes a certain norm, the violation of which punishment is meted out to the offender.

The second dimension of discipline according to Shertzer and Stone (1976) emphasizes the rehabilitation of the offender through a disciplinary process. In other words discipline institutes corrective action by redirecting the efforts of deviants towards socially desirable behaviours or goals.

Their third dimension of the concept of discipline focuses on its preventive aspect. This is facilitated by the provision of a conducive emotional climate and positively stimulating environments through healthy attitudes and feelings. In other words the disciplinarian removes repressive conditions in students' upbringing to help them develop desirable and constructive attitudes. Invariably this approach is favoured by developmental psychologists.

The final dimension of the meaning of discipline is that it is a process that should help individuals to realize the wisdom in accepting the dictates of those in authority.

The South Pacific Division (1996) defines discipline as the "process of inspiring confidence in the students' ability to achieve goals of Self-reliance and self-control under the discipline of Christ".

True discipline transcends external influence or moderation. It is more intrinsic and internally generated. True discipline is equated to self-discipline. In this context, the student chooses and of his own free will to do what he thinks is good. This training develops self-control, proper character orientation, orderliness and efficiency. This concept of discipline originally was derived from the word "disciple" which meant one

who learns or voluntarily follows a leader. God requires of us inner discipline or self control rather than external control or discipline.

According to Karen M. Carison (2004) discipline is the process of teaching a person the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Good discipline should be a positive force focusing on what a person is allowed to do.

It is therefore clear that discipline is any measure(s) taken to ensure that the person being disciplined does what is expected of him or her. In other words if some one is doing something contrary to what is desirable or expected, discipline is the means by which he is brought back on track

Discipline in the Adventist tertiary institution essentially deals with all processes that ensure that students are in conformity with institutional regulations as well as all efforts that seek to restore students in place who fall out of place (with respect to compliance with institutional regulations which are enshrined in the Student Hand Book)

### **THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE**

Even though correction and discipline are used interchangeably, correction is the object of discipline and discipline as the means by which correction is made. Correction is making the wrong things right by restoring the deviation from the norm.

The purpose of discipline is to ensure that students behave appropriately and responsibly, in a manner that would facilitate good relationship and provide a congenial atmosphere; emotionally, academically, spiritually, physically for the pursuit of total development of individuals. Ellen G. White (1952) puts it succinctly in the following manner “ the object of discipline is the training of the child for self-government. He should be taught self-

reliance and self-control.” The South Pacific Division Discipline Code view the purpose of discipline as the establishment and the reinforcement of the will of the recipient for the achievement of organizational goals (1996).

Hoover (1982) postulated that discipline helps the learner to develop socially acceptable ways of satisfying basic and emerging physical and psychological needs. Consequently the learner is expected to develop new and more mature relationships with others in the society emanating from his appreciation of socially acceptable value system, which guides and regulates his thoughts and actions and invariably culminates in the exhibition of socially accepted behaviours.

Put in another way, the purpose of discipline is to prevent students from making wrong choices, which will hurt him/her and those around, or even totally destroy him/her. Discipline seeks to prevent students from being misfits in the society who instead of contributing to the welfare of society rather become unnecessary burdens to society. White states that, “when God says, ‘thou shall not’, He in love warns us of the consequences of disobedience in order to save us from harm and loss”. (1952: 287).

The purpose of discipline is neither for anyone to dominate the minds of students nor to “break the will” of any student (White 1952:288). The purpose of discipline is to assist students to make right and responsible choice (Joshua 24:15, White 1952).

### **NORMING - A PREREQUISITE FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE**

For effective administration for discipline, students must be unambiguously aware of what is required of them and the penalty for not doing what is required of them. For practical purposes, every bit of the student’s lifestyle cannot be strictly prescribed. Most of these regulations would be implied or generated from the core values. For example in

the students Handbook for Valley View University, apart from specific guidelines, students are expected to live in harmony with the Christian aspirations of the school. The following are some of the specific guidelines and their disciplinary measures in case of contraventions.

	OFFENSE	DEMERIT
1	Class tardiness	1
2	Unexcused absence from chapel, worship or church: unexcused absence from work or classroom appointment	3
3	Any unauthorized entry to any University property except in case of fire or other emergency y.	Suspension/Dismissal
4	Deliberate misuse of fire warnings in other emergency equipment	Suspension/Dismissal
5	Meeting persons of the opposite sex in any deliberately clandestine manner or place.	Suspension/Dismissal
6	The contracting of marriage during the school semester in which the student is enrolled unless in very exceptional instances by permission of the University administration and with the parents given at the time of marriage.	Suspension/Dismissal
7	A resident hall student remaining out of that residence overnight without permission of the residence hall dean.	10
8	Maintaining an influence which in the opinion of the University authorities is detrimental to one's associates or to the University.	Suspension/Dismissal
9	Going off campus without permission	4
10	Violating residence hall regulations, violating conduct codes in dress or behaviours.	10
11	Entering another student's room without permission and disturbing his/her property, disrespect for authority of VVU, administration or lectures, and staff exchange or duplicating keys, changing of locks or moving furniture, entering a residence hall, classroom, administration building or library after curfew without approval.	10
12	Sleeping overnight off campus without permission	20

In some instances, without compromising principles, some rules (norms) are arrived at by all stakeholders (enforcers and conformers of the rules). That is to say it should be possible in some instances to formulate and even enforce rules with students which invariably ensure better compliance (Tamakloe et al 1996).

### **MANNER OF DISCIPLINING**

This is the most crucial aspect of discipline. The manner in which discipline is administered has a telling effect on the outcome of the administration of discipline. All things being equal, the effectiveness of any administration of discipline depends on the

appropriateness of the method of its administration. The method chosen must always be informed by the fact that even little children have a high sense of honor; and that everybody wants to be treated with confidence and respect. (White, 1952).

In administering discipline, it is not so much as what we say or do that matter most but rather how we say it or how we do it. The stimulus (such as reprimand) per se may not be the problem but the motive attached to it. In other words does the one being disciplined see beyond the stimulus of discipline (reprimand) hatred, revenge vendetta or love, care, empathy, regret and deep-seated concern for the welfare of the victim of discipline?

The perception of the victim about the motive of the administrator of the discipline is very crucial to the effectiveness of the measures of the discipline. If the victim is given cause to assign negative cognitions and emotions to the measures of discipline then we stand the risk of shifting his focus from the substantive issue that calls for correction to the creating of another problem – wondering why for example the person administering the discipline hates him. This has the tendency of making someone who comes to this stage feeling helpless, hopeless and dejected. A lot of frustration sets in and while they may comply outwardly, they may at heart become determined rebels! (White 1952)

Our Lord Jesus Christ was always very mindful of His approach to discipline. He was never judgmental, needlessly harsh nor **condemnatory**. Whereas the Jewish leaders (Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes) thought that discipline should be harsh, judgmental and **condemnatory**, Christ thought otherwise. Christ displayed understanding sympathy and deep concern for the restoration of the adulterous woman to human dignity and righteousness in the Lord when He said “Go and sin no more”. The life after (of the



woman) is a vindication of the efficacy of Christ's gentle, loving and empathetic approach to discipline (John 8)

## **BIBLICAL APPLICATIONS OF DISCIPLINE**

Arguable the concept of discipline appears to be a theme that runs through the Bible. The Bible abounds with discipline or disciplinary measures right from Genesis to Revelation. The list can never be exhaustive. However some obvious examples would be sufficient to exhibit the Biblical applications of discipline.

Adam and Eve contravened God's law and commandment not to eat of the Tree of Good and Evil. God disciplined them by withdrawing some benefits from them by sending them out of the Garden of Eden. Eve was to endure pain in child birth and Adam was to sweat through hard work before getting his daily bread. However since discipline is not only about correction but also about restoration., God in His mercy gave them the hope of the coming Saviour, Jesus Christ, who would restore the Lost Eden to them forever (Genesis 3:1-24).

Moses hits the Rock twice contrary to God's instruction. For his discipline he was denied entry to the earthly promised land-Canaan. This served to draw his attention to the seriousness of flouting Gods orders regardless of the circumstance.

The evidence thereafter indicates that were he to be given a second chance to speak to the Rock he would not hit it even once no matter the frustrating pressure from his followers (Israel). He would now be more careful with God's instructions. (Numbers 20:7-12)

David causes adultery with Uriah's wife, kills Uriah and marries the wife. God sent the prophet Nathan to discipline David. (2 Samuel chapt.11, 12). The result of the discipline was a total repentance and submission to God and a cry for deliverance from the depraved spiritual state, (Psalm 51).

The case of Mary Magdalene is cited again to underscore the point that discipline does not always go with an overt punishment or withdrawal of benefits. Sometimes mere verbal warning should be enough to bring about the necessary change. Even secular courts sometimes do not impose fines nor cause offenders to render community service or any punishment of any sort. Based on their circumstances, sometimes a mere warning is given and they are acquitted and discharged. The crucial issue about discipline is whether it brings about the desired change in behaviour. Therefore the efficacy of any disciplinary measure is the extent to which it brings about the desired behavioural change. Even though our Lord Christ did not mete out any punishments to Mary Magdalene, He did not condone with her misbehaviour. He registered his disapproval by merely saying "Go and sin no more" (John chpt. 8:11). And this was discipline enough!! This brought about the greatest transformation of character ever exhibited in one's life.

In another instance, Christ Jesus chases out the money-changers and the sellers of offering animals from the Temple with a whip. (Mark 11:15-19). Christ' method of discipline in this instance is radically different to what pertained in the case of Mary Magdalene. Probably it is because in this instance the offenders were well aware of their misdeeds but willingly and carelessly perpetuated their misbehaviour. Either way, the desired behavioural change was achieved when he succeeded in riding the temple of God

of corrupt and mundane practices, because the Temple was supposed to be a house of prayer (Mark 11:17).

Paul after rebuking the Corinthians Church in a letter of in-fighting division and fornication (I Corinthians. Chapters 3,4,5,6) he latter rejoiced of the positive impact of that disciplinary measure he took. He rejoiced at the transformation of their character and behaviour. (2 Corinth. 7:9-16)

### **OUTCOMES OF DISCIPLINE**

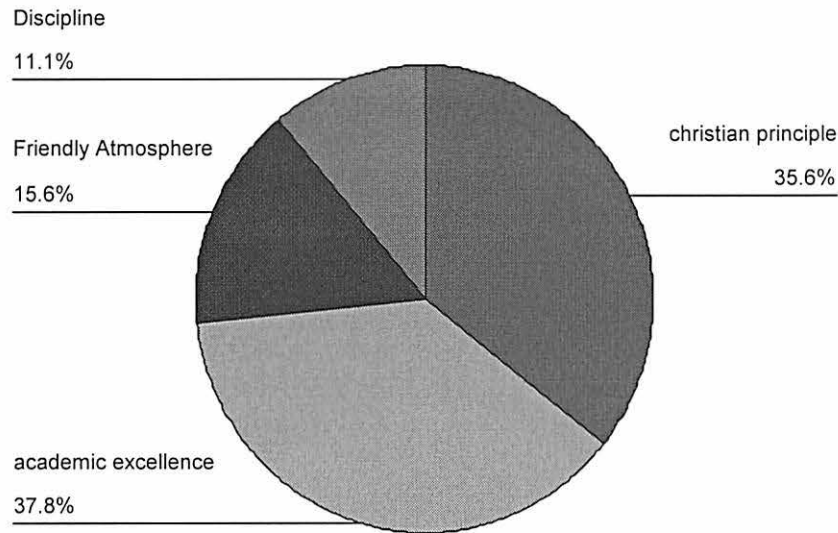
Discipline even though has the objective of assisting people to develop acceptable value system which guide behaviour as well as assisting to put back on track those who might have deviated, the outcome does not always match up with the objective. Discipline is supposed to be restorative but depending on how it is administrated it might not always be restorative.

If discipline is administered in such a way that the victim feels hated, with no human dignity then chances are that we might miss the mark and the person to be disciplined might rather harden his heart. On the hand if the victim or culprit gets the feedback of love, concern and care, chances are that he would focus on the substantive issue and that will bring about restoration or appropriate behavioural change. Once again, the classical case of how Christ dealt with the adulterous woman who later become the first to see the resurrected Christ is a case in point.

## EMPIRICAL STUDIES

A study to assess the perception of discipline at Valley View University among graduating students in July 2006 reveal the following results.

**Chart 1: Most Cherished Memory**



In chat 1, the most cherished memories of Valley View University, 11.1% cherished discipline most, 15.6% cherished its friendly atmosphere most, 37.8% cherished its academic excellence and 35.6% cherished its Christian Principles most. Obviously discipline is not the most cherished memory.

**Chart 2: Least Cherished Manner**

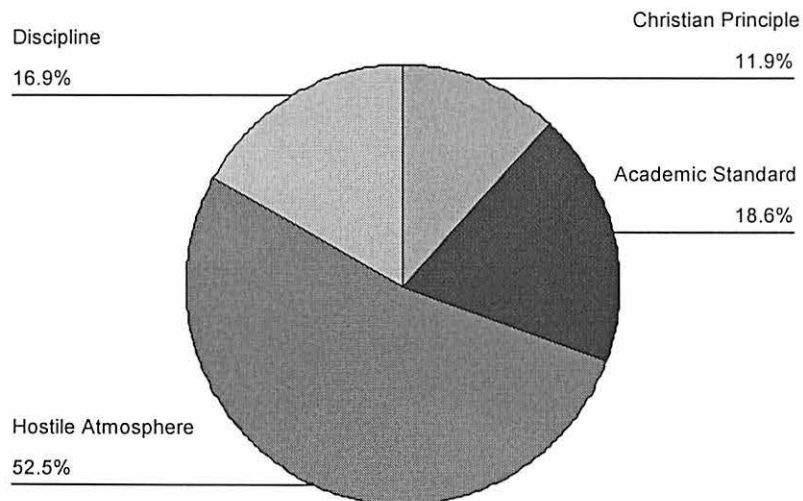


Chart 2, On the Least Cherished Memories, 16.9% deemed discipline as their least cherished memories, 52.5% deemed Hostile environment as their least cherished memories. Another 11.9% and 18.6% respectively deemed Christian Principles and Academic Standard as their least cherished memories. Therefore the majority of students felt that the environment was hostile.

**Chart 3: Conformity with the Concept of Discipline**

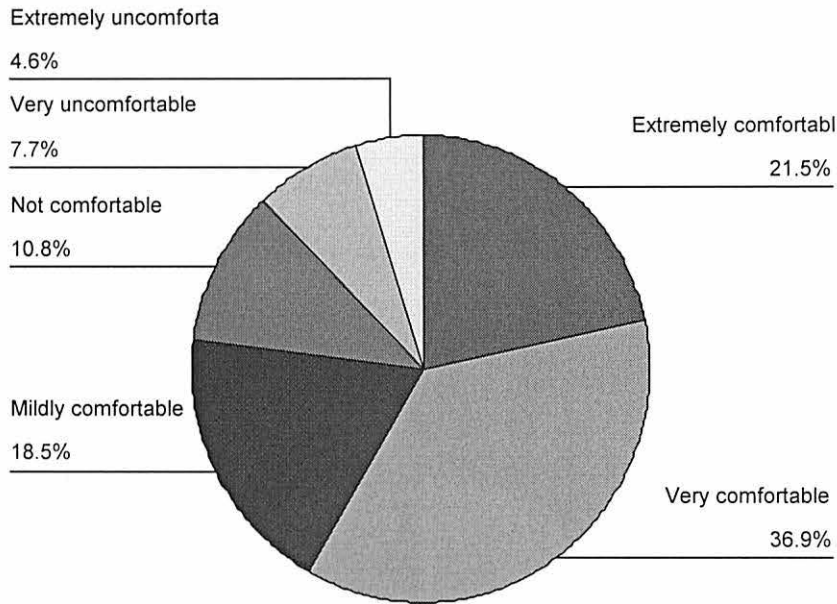


Chart 3, On conformability with the concept of discipline revealed that 21.5% were extremely comfortable, 36.9% were very comfortable and 18.5%, 10.8%, 7.7% and 4.6% were mildly comfortable, not comfortable, very uncomfortable and extremely uncomfortable respectively. So a total of about 57% (21.5% and 36.9%) were comfortable with the concept of discipline.

**Chart 4: Favourability with manner of discipline with respect to dressing**

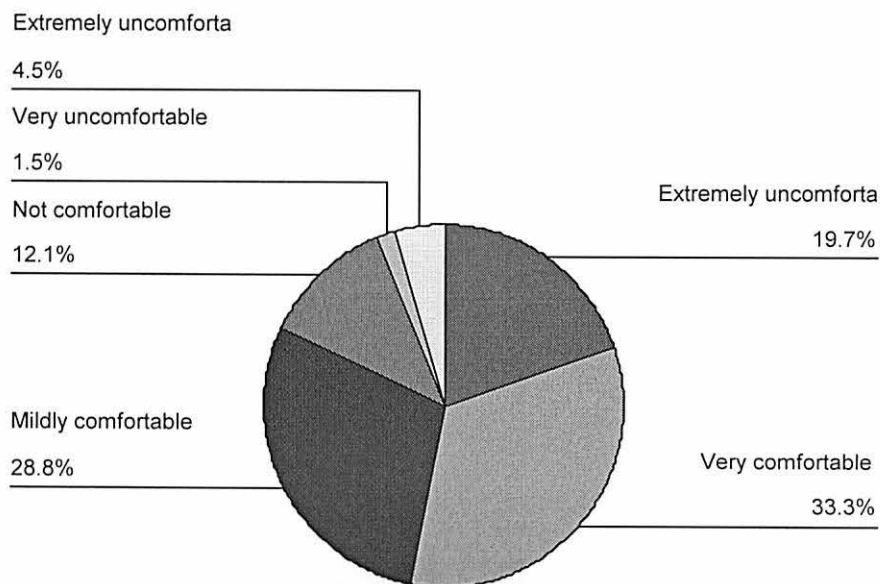


Chart 4, on the manner of discipline with respect to dressing is how favourable students were with the manner of execution of discipline. Responses were extremely comfortable, very comfortable, very uncomfortable and extremely uncomfortable corresponding to 19.7%, 33.3%, 26.8%, 12.1%, 1.5% and 4.5% respectively.

**Chart 5: Favourability of Manner of Discipline in Morality**

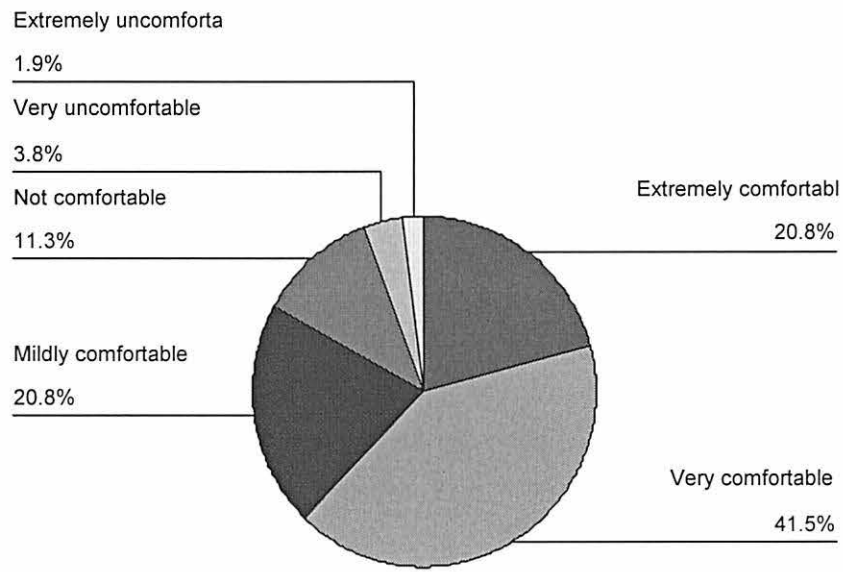


Chart 5, indicates favourability with manner of execution of discipline on moral issues and revealed that 20.8% were extremely comfortable, 41.5% were very comfortable, 20.8% were mildly comfortable, 11.3% were not comfortable, 3.8% were uncomfortable, 3.8% and 1.9% were extremely uncomfortable. So on moral issues majority of respondents felt that the manner of execution of discipline was acceptable.

**Chart 6: Views on Examination Malpractices**

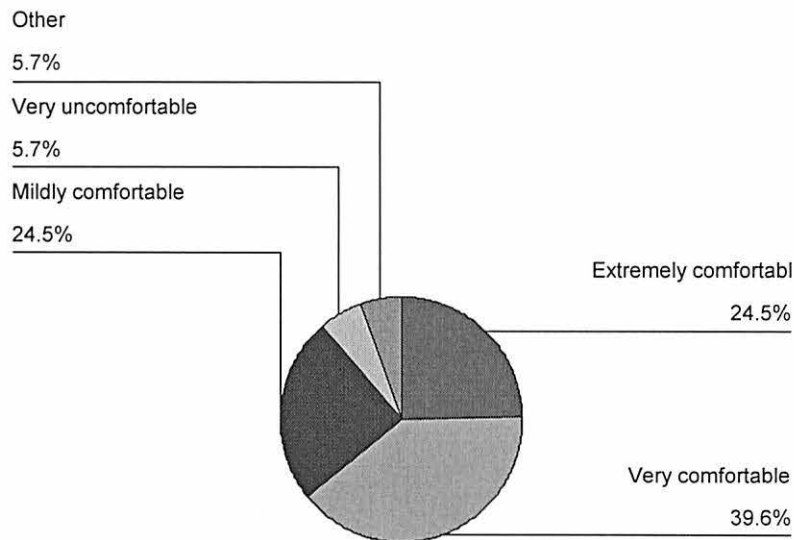


Chart 6 indicates respondents generally felt comfortable with the manner in which discipline was carried and with respect to examination malpractices. Twenty four point 5 percent (24.5%) felt extremely comfortable, 39.6% felt very comfortable and 24.5% felt mildly comfortable with the other negative responses being fairly insignificant.

**Chart 7: Views on Discipline at Halls of Residence**

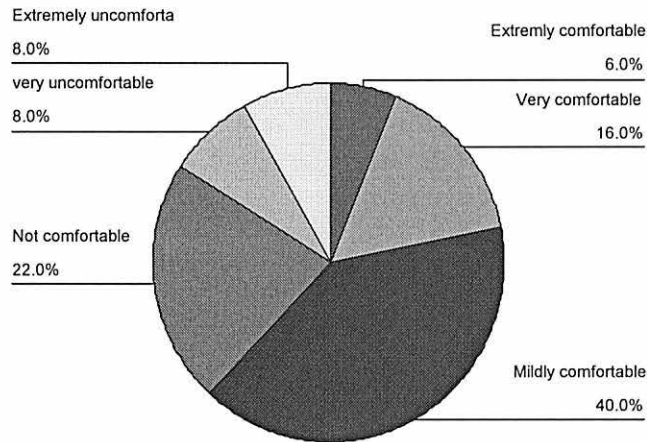


Chart 7; indicates conformity with manner of discipline in the Halls of residence. Only 6.0% and 16.0% respectively, majority of respondents felt mildly comfortable (40.0%) and 22.0% not comfortable with discipline measures in the Halls of Residence.

**Chart 8: Views on Discipline at Classroom**

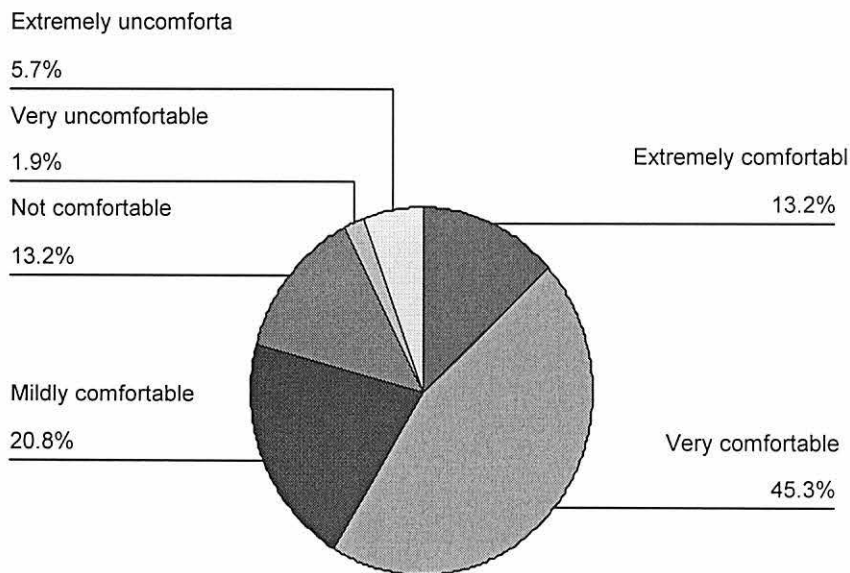


Chart 8, shows degree of likeness of the manner of execution of discipline in the classroom. Majority of Respondents were comfortable in the classroom. This was made up of 13.2% and 45.3% respectively feeling extremely comfortable and very comfortable.

**Chart 9: General Perception Of Discipline Execution**

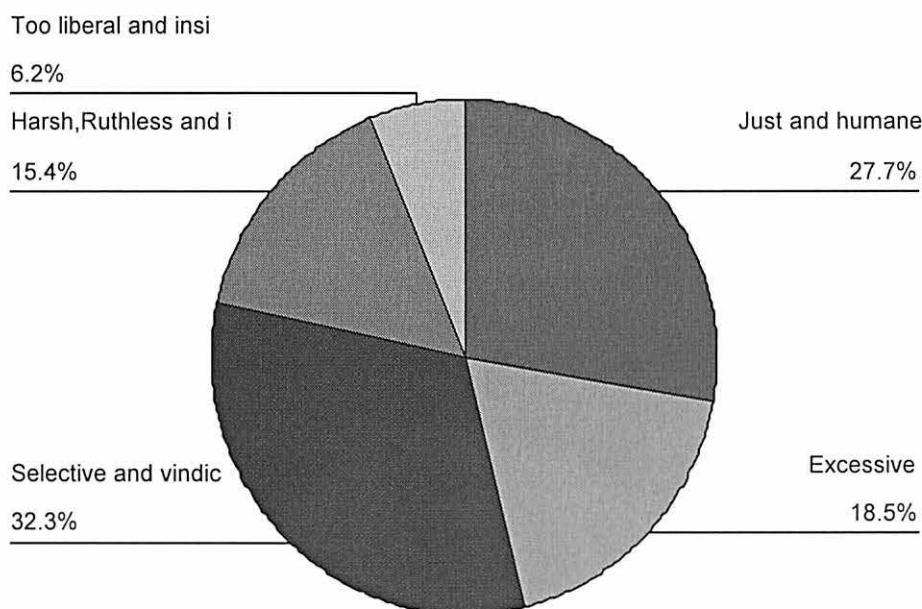


Chart 9 indicates General Perception of Students or respondents with respect to execution of discipline. With the general perception of the execution of discipline at the University 27.7% of respondents (students) felt that it was just and humane whereas 18.5% felt it was Excessive and outweigh affluence. A majority of respondents constituting 32.3% felt that discipline was selective and vindictive. Finally, whereas 15.4% feels discipline was harsh, ruthless and displayed insensitively, 6.2% of the respondents felt that the discipline was too liberal.

### **FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The general background of the respondents indicates that majority of the respondents were Adventists, single and females.

Whereas majority of the respondents considered Academic Excellence as the most cherished memories (37.8%; chart 1), the majority of the respondents surprisingly considered Hostile atmosphere as their least cherished memories (52.5%; chart 2). In



other words they considered Christian principles as okay but they also felt the environment was hostile. This implies a disparity between principles and practice majority of respondents were comfortable with the concept of discipline but majority felt execution of discipline was vindictive and selective. Respondents were okay with the concept of discipline but did not like the manner of execution of discipline.

Consequently there is an apparent gap between concept and practice. This reveals that all is not well with the manner of execution of discipline.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Without compromising our values we however do not have to be needlessly harsh and judgmental in our administration of discipline. Like our Lord Jesus Christ, we should discipline with love, affection and empathy for the offender. Our manner of discipline should be informed by our consideration of how we would wish to be corrected or disciplined were we to be at the other side of offence and error. (Matt. 7:12). We should discipline with singleness of heart to redeem and restore. The manner in which we discipline offending students should not let us become their enemies but rather solidify the bond of love, affection, care and concern for their welfare.

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## Appendix

**Dear outgoing student, you surely want your siblings and friends to come to VVU and find it better than what you left it.**

**We need your candid feedback to shape up for the better.**

**Please fill this form or select the most suitable and candid alternative.**

Sex M \_\_\_\_ / F \_\_\_\_  
Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Marital status \_\_\_\_\_  
Religion ( please be specific) \_\_\_\_\_  
Family size ( nuclear family) \_\_\_\_\_

1. You have spent several years as a student at valley View University. What memories of the institution would you cherish most?

- |                            |                          |                        |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Christian principle     | <input type="checkbox"/> | b) Academic Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Friendly Atmosphere     | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Discipline          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Other ( Please Specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |                        |                          |

2. Which memory of the institution would you cherish least?

- |                        |                          |                       |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Christian Principle | <input type="checkbox"/> | b) Academic Standards | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Hostile Atmosphere  | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Discipline         | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3) As a Christian institution, Valley View University (VVU) is widely known for its discipline.

As an outgoing student of this institution, how comfortable have you been with this concept of discipline?

- |                          |                          |                            |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Extremely comfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> | b) Very comfortable        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Mildly comfortable    | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Not comfortable         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Very uncomfortable    | <input type="checkbox"/> | f) Extremely uncomfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4.1. How well have you liked the manner in which discipline has been with respect to dressing?

- |                          |                          |                            |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Extremely comfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> | b) Very comfortable        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Mildly comfortable    | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Not comfortable         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Very uncomfortable    | <input type="checkbox"/> | f) Extremely uncomfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4.2 How well have you liked the manner in which discipline has been executed with respect to moral conduct?

b) Extremely comfortable       b) Very comfortable

b) Mildly comfortable       d) Not comfortable

e) Very uncomfortable       f) Extremely uncomfortable

4.3 How well have you liked the manner in which discipline has been executed with respect to examination malpractices?

a) Extremely comfortable       b) Very comfortable

b) Mildly comfortable       d) Not comfortable

e) Very uncomfortable       f) Extremely uncomfortable

4.4 How well have you liked the manner in which discipline has been executed with respect to life in the halls (dormitories)?

a) Extremely comfortable       b) Very comfortable

b) Mildly comfortable       d) Not comfortable

e) Very uncomfortable       f) Extremely uncomfortable

4.5 How well have you liked the manner in which discipline has been executed with respect to the classroom situation?

(a) Extremely comfortable       b) Very comfortable

b) Mildly comfortable       d) Not comfortable

e) Very uncomfortable       f) Extremely uncomfortable

5) What has been your general perception about the execution of discipline at VVU?

a) Just and humane commensurate with offence       b) Imbalanced and outweighs offence (excessive)

c) Selective and vindictive       c) Harsh, ruthless and insensitive

e) Too liberal and insignificant compared to offence.