



ILLUSTRATION: FAISAL BIN IQBAL

The flawed perception of discipline in Bangladeshi education institutions

SHAIKH SABIK KAMAL

School students in Bangladesh dread the term “discipline”. While for some, it’s a method of dealing with the unreasonable chaos inscribed within the education system, for most it’s something forcing its way into their lives, coercing them into a fit that simply doesn’t account for their size.

So, what exactly has left discipline in the suffocating shell of a ghost that it is today?

Realistically, the discipline that set out with greater intentions could never live up to the billing. It simply became another set of tools that institutions would misuse to fit everyone into their own idealisms.

Discipline in Bangladesh is usually the enforcement of unreasonable codes as rules. “Disciplining a student” stands as an intimidating expression for chiselling them into a common form as they chip away at all that makes them special. This problematic one-size-fits-all view of discipline has been normalised almost everywhere in Bangladesh.

The focus of discipline has largely shifted to physical appearance over behaviour. The generalisation of a definite look being imposed on everyone is a complicated idea that harms an individual’s uniqueness. With the idea of standing out being forsaken, the youth is cornered into cutting down on anything outside of the norm. This is the reality of today’s discipline. An individual’s freedom is seemingly taken away when schools shove down their idea of a disciplined look.

The youth life in Dhaka warrants plenty of small mistakes. One of them, which shouldn’t be as big of a deal, is accidentally

failing to adhere to the school’s uniform and appearance guidelines. But extreme strictness is shown for such acts. Often, students are severely punished for this even when they aren’t frequent to the deed.

“While I do find that imposing a proper uniform-wearing policy is justifiable, schools do tend to take it too far,” said Rahima Khan*, a student of class 11 at Viqarunnisa Noon School & College.

Rahima recalled how her teachers were verbally aggressive towards her when she had forgotten her hair band one day at school, albeit her regular obedience to the rules otherwise.

“Of course, it’s mandatory to follow the rules, but sometimes people trying to keep up with the rapidly progressing life tend to miss a few things, which shouldn’t be looked at so harshly,” she added.

The hyper fixation of school authorities on hair length is another debatable topic.

“We’ve had teachers kicking us out of exam halls or handing us our questions late because of not having an army haircut,” said Arthito Addoy Adhip, a student of class 11 at Dhaka Residential Model College.

“While punishment for breaking rules is bound to be handed out, going to such extremes for such small matters puts unimaginable suffering on students,” he added.

An individual’s hairstyle is a unique, personal, and expressional aspect of them. It is a fraction of their identity and it is no crime to wish to style or grow it however they want. It doesn’t define nor radically change their behavioural patterns, let alone any academic influence. Forcing it, however, has repercussions.

Cutting hair forcefully can mentally

scar a student, leaving their sense of self-worth damaged and leaving a taste of powerlessness that simply can’t be comprehended healthily.

The list of unreasonable acts sheltered under discipline’s grace keeps going on. Wahid Ahmed*, a student of class 10 at St. Joseph Higher Secondary School, shared how they’d been met with disturbing remarks for missing school.

“While I do agree that some students deliberately skip school, how could school authorities be so harsh to every absent student? Not being able to show a proper application the very next day is natural, especially if it concerns illness, a relative’s death, or similar serious matters,” he said.

Wahid added, “They can give them school work or small-scale punishments for faults like these, but teachers and authorities reportedly continue to verbally hound and punish these students.”

Additionally, Rahima mentioned how lavatory break restrictions make students feel uncomfortable. Wahid added on the absurd winter uniform codes disallowing any winter apparel outside of the school ones and warranting a confiscation upon violation. Adhip explained how the restriction of sports essentials for earlier grades in an institution abundant with playgrounds felt unnecessary.

Doing anything against their will impacts a minor’s autonomy, potentially damaging a significant development period. It enforces them into an “encaged” scenario, and in no way does it fall under well-being.

Such problems aren’t aligned only with some selective schools, rather it’s a holistic issue. Schools need to rethink and reinvigorate discipline. Healthy discipline can be a very effective tool in

studying and learning professionalism for young individuals. It can help find safety in learning while forcing it does the opposite.

According to an article published in the Bangkok Post, adolescent medicine specialist Dr Jiraporn Arunakul shared how strict regulation of hairstyles is not related to disciplinary training. She also suggests that one’s hairstyle is not an indicator of their learning efficiency.

Noor Alam*, a teacher at DPS STS School Dhaka, shared his sentiments on discipline and how it could be healthy.

“In educational institutions, where young minds learn to grow, nothing should be taken to an extreme. A healthy balance can be maintained for discipline, in a way that is reasonable and goes beyond the one glove fits all perspective,” said Alam, “Educational institutions should prioritise a healthy and comfortable learning environment for students before anything else. The door to obtaining knowledge with safety must not be shut due to needless punishments in the name of discipline.”

**Names have been changed upon request*

References:

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Shaikh Sabik Kamal needs to sleep. Send him something to sleep to at sabik2005kamal4787@gmail.com

YOUTH

Not fitting into any category at university

RUDAIBA MAHBUB

Do you sometimes feel alienated in your friend group? Is there a thread tying everyone in your group while you sometimes lose track of the thread and fall out of the loop? If so, you might be a perfect fit in the category of people who do not really fit into any category at all in your university. This is not the category of the stereotypical loner that goes to university just for classes and leaves as soon as they end. It’s about those who are part of various groups but often find themselves questioning their place in the respective groups.

When hanging out with the smart or studious ones, do you have intellectual discussions that you really enjoy? But when that same conversation escalates, and you find the group concerned and inquiring about the exams you feel like it’s time to run? No matter how much the nerdy debates excite you, you just cannot concern yourself about the upcoming exam and how that is going to affect your future.



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It was about time you took your leave from the group of toppers. And who do you meet on the way but the Carpe Diems? As you can guess, this group likes to “seize the day”, or “live in the moment”. You are reminded of last week when you had spent two entire days with them living in the moment. Yeah, it was fun the first day, which started to wear off the next. So, this time, you choose to skip out, only to find yourself out of the loop with the group the next time you all hang out.

Don’t worry, this is all normal when you have friends from all corners of the university and the habit of drifting from one group to another. This is not necessarily bad.

When you have friends all around, it certainly means you have got a friendly charm to you. That is an attribute to be treasured. With an aura like that, you not only make diverse friends who understand you in different situations but also gain or learn a lot from the different friend groups.

Being part of diverse friend groups means you’ll be opened up to many different situations and your experiences might give you a broader view of the world. Try to soak up as much as you can. It’s an experience at university that’s worth having.

Also, imagine all the tea you will be served with. All the drama to spice up your day-to-day life. However, make sure to not indulge yourself in all this. Try not to become that friend that goes from one group to another spreading rumours and adding fuel to already existing feuds.

While the friend groups from *Friends* or *How I Met Your Mother* might seem like a dream come true, they might not always be realistically possible. Even if you are already part of such a wholesome group, with friends, it’s always the more, the merrier.

Dhaka Flow - National Youth Wellness Festival 2023 promotes healthy living and mental well-being

NAHIAN JAMAL JOYEETA

Dhaka Flow, the first National Youth Wellness Festival, took place at University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) on June 3. The initiative aims to provide the youth with the resources they need to live healthy, balanced lives in order to combat mental health disorders.

The opening session of the event featured speeches reiterating the value of youth health and wellbeing, yoga workshops and demonstrations, and talks from health experts on topics like nutrition, discovering passions and purposes, battling mental health issues, understanding consent, setting boundaries, and developing healthy coping mechanisms. The event also launched a photo contest on the theme of SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, inviting photographers of all levels to share their images symbolising health and wellness on Dhaka Flow’s Facebook page.

The Honourable Mayor of North Dhaka, Atiqul Islam, attended the event, as did Professor Imran Rahman, vice chancellor of ULAB, and Mokhlesur Rahman, Senior Operations Officer of the World Bank, among others.

In his speech, Mayor Atiqul Islam praised Dhaka Flow for its efforts to promote health and fitness and emphasised the value of discipline, self-love, and self-worth. He believes that young people, as future world leaders, must find time to pursue their passions every day in order to keep their minds healthy, rejuvenated, and energised.

“Loving yourself will help you love others and your country,” he added. “Your physical and mental wellbeing, along with time management and discipline, will enable you to serve your country and the world.”

“One cannot be healthy in isolation; it requires a holistic community, as well as physical, mental, psychological, and emotional well-being,” said Shazia Omar, co-founder of Dhaka Flow and a yoga instructor. Upon conversation, Shazia revealed that discovering yoga and meditation helped her overcome many mental and physical challenges during her 20s, which inspired her to organise this event and impart the knowledge to others.

Professor Imran Rahman, vice chancellor of ULAB, emphasised the significance of this festival in light of the crucial stage of life that university students are in by iterating that the choices and



habits they form now will shape their adult health and wellbeing.

“Mindful and healthy youth are the backbones of a country and the global village, to combat challenges in the future, including climate change and

the technological revolution,” stated Mokhlesur Rahman, senior operations officer of the World Bank.

In order to promote the wellbeing of Dhaka’s youth, prominent business organisations including Prime Bank,

Turaag Active, Aarong Earth, and Rise, facilitated the festival and provided participants with goodie bags. These organisations support sports and youth development initiatives while promoting activewear, recycled clothing, organic skincare products, and other items that support healthy lifestyles. Sajida Foundation representatives, who strongly support wellness and mental health, demonstrated how to use their services, including Kaan Pete Roi (a suicide hotline), Shojon (mental health counsellors), and Relax (an emotional management app), in partnership with Dhaka Flow.

Dhaka Flow, as a platform, is committed to promoting wellness through blogs, workshops, and insightful information on yoga, meditation, and healthy eating. The young people of Dhaka City greatly value activities like these because they teach them how to effectively manage stress, lessen physical and mental illness, and cultivate compassion and peace both within themselves and in their community. The event took place over the week at IUB, NSU, AIUB, and Brac University.

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