

**EDUCATORS' MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER ILL-DISCIPLINE IN
SEKHUKHUNE EAST DISTRICT PRIMARY SCHOOLS, LIMPOPO**

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Sethololo Thomo Makgoga (60266961), declare that this research study: *Educators' management of learner ill-discipline in primary schools of Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo*, is my original work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature:



Date: 07/10/2025

Supervisor Signature:



Date: 07/10/2025

DEDICATION

To my beloved husband, Ronald Lehong, and my dear mother, Mmathoto Makgoga, this dissertation is dedicated to you in deepest gratitude and love.

Your unwavering support, constant motivation, and boundless emotional care have been the pillars that held me up through this journey. Thank you for being by my side through every late night, every moment of doubt, and every small victory. Your belief in me never wavered, even when mine did.

You have been my strength, my encourager, and my greatest source of inspiration. Without your love and presence, this achievement would not have been possible.

With all my heart

Thank you.

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To the participants, I sincerely thank each one of you who took the time to contribute to this research. Your honesty, insights and willingness to share your experiences have made this dissertation possible. Your voices are the foundation of this work, and I am deeply grateful for your participation.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
BEd.	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
INTERSEN	Intermediate and Senior Phase
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PL1	Post Level 1
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
UK	United Kingdom
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America

ABSTRACT

This study explored educators' management of learner ill-discipline in primary schools of the Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo. The main aim of the study was to explore how educators manage learner ill-discipline. A qualitative research approach was adopted, employing a case study design to guide the inquiry. The study was guided by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face with nine participants, comprising three principals, three departmental heads and three PL1 educators purposively selected from the primary schools. The data were examined using the thematic analysis method. This study addressed the main question: *How do educators manage learner ill-discipline in Sekhukhune East District primary schools?* The primary research question was complemented by sub-questions that centred on how educators define, causes, strategies and influence of learner ill-discipline. The study revealed that educators encounter several challenges in addressing learner misconduct, including limited parental involvement, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of alternative disciplinary strategies. The findings show that educators view disrespect, disengagement, and defiance as the main causes of learner ill-discipline, influenced by socio-economic challenges such as peer pressure, overcrowded classrooms, and limited parental involvement. Positive strategies identified include fostering respectful relationships, involving learners in rule-setting, and encouraging parental participation. The study also highlights the need for educator training by the Department of Education. The recommendations were directed to the Department of Education, educators and parents. For educators, building positive and healthy relations with learners, establishing clear classroom rules and attending training workshops were emphasised. In addition to supporting learners' academic efforts, parents were urged to interact with schools and enforce discipline at home. The study recommended that the Department of Education provide ongoing support to schools and invest in the improvement of infrastructure.

Keywords: ill-discipline, primary school, classroom management, discipline, challenges, parental involvement, strategies, learners, educators, Sekhukhune East.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Learner ill-discipline is an international problem experienced in countries such as Mexico, Italy and Spain, where schools experience challenges related to learner ill-discipline (Kingston, 2019). Educators across the world hold the responsibility of maintaining discipline within their classrooms and influence learners' behaviour within the school environment (Molefe, 2017). Incidences of learner misconduct are becoming increasingly common in South African schools, with primary schools in the Sekhukhune East district of Limpopo Province being particularly affected (Mkandla, 2019). Since the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, as stipulated in Section 17 of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), there has been a noticeable rise in incidents of learner misconduct. Educators have been compelled to explore alternative and effective strategies for managing learner behaviour while fostering a constructive teaching and learning environment (Tlhapi, 2015). As a result, schools have become a battleground for learners and educators. This issue is a significant concern for both the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the broader public (Jacobsz, 2015). Multiple stakeholders have actively addressed disciplinary challenges through research and the implementation of various interventions (Lekganyane, 2011). Studies have suggested that poor discipline in schools contributes to learners' underperformance academically (Jacobsz, 2015; Mkandla, 2019; Tlhapi, 2015). However, even though the absence of good conduct does not guarantee successful learning, it offers the opportunity for learning (Lekganyane, 2011).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how primary school educators in the Sekhukhune East District manage learner ill-discipline. It aims to understand the underlying causes of learner ill-discipline and the strategies educators are using to maintain a positive learning environment. The chapter begins by reviewing relevant literature on learner discipline and theoretical perspectives. It then examines the research methodology employed in this study, followed by a presentation and discussion of the findings. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for improving discipline management in primary schools.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Learner misconduct encompasses actions that disrupt the flow of teaching and learning, such as breaking school rules or acting out in ways that show a lack of self-control (Section 8 of the SASA, Act 84 of 1996). Research has identified that learner ill-discipline behaviour includes bullying, fighting, late coming, making noise and failure to do schoolwork (Egunlusi, 2020; Molefe, 2017; Oosthuizen, 2018; Tlhapi, 2015). Learner ill-discipline can also include behaviour such as speaking out of turn, distracting classmates from learning activities, shouting, showing disrespect or defiance towards educators, neglecting homework, sleeping during lessons and refusing to follow instructions leading to interruptions that compromise learning and affect academic growth (Jacobsz, 2015; Naicker, 2018; Tlhapi, 2015).

Even though educators put in great effort to deliver successful lessons, managing learners who are disruptive and unwilling to cooperate can be a major challenge (Naicker, 2018). When learners are disruptive, it may hinder the progression of teaching and learning, sometimes forcing the educator to pause the lesson to restore order in the classroom (Naicker, 2018). Educators are required to formulate classroom management strategies that are compatible with their pedagogical style and responsive to the diverse needs of their learners (Egunlusi, 2020). Educators use a range of strategies to keep their classrooms in order, from setting clear rules to maintaining firm boundaries, while creating a space where learners feel comfortable and ready to learn (Egunlusi, 2020).

There may be several reasons for ill-disciplined learners, one of which is that learners may come from a wide range of economic and cultural backgrounds, and, as a result, some learners' behaviour may not align with the school's expectations or policies (Tlhapi, 2015). In many cases, poor learner behaviour is linked to low academic performance (Tlhapi, 2015). Psychologists Baker and Dankaert (2015) suggest that learners often seek to satisfy their personal needs, and when they are unable to do so, they may feel anxious or frustrated. Without the tools to express these emotions appropriately, their behaviour can become disruptive in the classroom. These tools may include emotional regulation strategies such as mindfulness and stress management, communication skills like assertive expression and active listening, and social competencies such as empathy and problem-solving. Providing these tools

through structured programmes and classroom practices enables learners to channel negative emotions constructively, reducing ill-discipline and fostering a positive learning environment.

Molefe (2017) encourages educators to support learners in building reliable habits they can confidently rely on and use instinctively. One such aspect is classroom management designed to ensure that learners collaborate positively and engage constructively with the educator (Molefe, 2017). Because the educator holds the responsibility for ensuring that learners consistently demonstrate appropriate and respectful behaviours, they need to ensure that all issues of ill-discipline are quickly resolved to avoid wasting teaching time, ensuring that learners do not lose focus and can concentrate on the lesson in place (Molefe, 2017).

According to Smith and Firth (2018), it is inevitable that educators will encounter learners who display challenging behaviour at some point in their professional journey. Tlhapi (2015) reported that educators indicated that learners' behavioural challenges represent a significant and ongoing concern that educators are required to manage on a daily basis. To deal with the issue of ill-discipline, educators need to be equipped to know how to manage it (Molefe, 2017). This aligns with research (Molefe, 2017; McCaw, 2018; Oosthuizen, 2018) indicates that many educators still need to build their understanding and awareness of how to guide learner behaviour in ways that support a healthy and effective learning environment.

Access to quality education is a fundamental entitlement of all learners, with the fundamental aim of schooling being to equip them for the future, empowering them to grow into responsible individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society (Oosthuizen, 2018). According to Jacobsz (2015) and Tlhapi (2015), when a school implements strong disciplinary systems and educators consistently apply effective classroom management strategies, it creates an environment that supports improved academic performance. McCaw (2018) recommends that educators provide learners with consistent support and create a welcoming atmosphere, fostering a space where learners feel safe to explore and engage in meaningful learning. When educators manage their classrooms effectively, they create the conditions for learners to perform well academically (Jacobsz, 2015). This means that learners benefit from proper classroom management, particularly where there is a balance of what they learn and

how they learn (Tlhapi, 2015). Having the best strategies for managing learner ill-discipline is good for both learners and educators (Jacobsz, 2015). Building on the preceding discussion, this research explored the strategies employed by educators to manage and sustain learner discipline within their classrooms, with the aim of promoting effective teaching and learning.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Educators continue to face significant challenges related to learner ill-discipline, which often disrupts teaching and contributes to poor academic performance. Drawing from my informal teaching experience in a primary school in the Sekhukhune district, I developed a strong interest in understanding learner behaviour and discipline. Over the past six years, I have seen how ill-discipline can halt lessons completely, and in one of the schools where I taught, educators dealing with persistent behavioural issues were blamed for poor classroom management rather than supported.

Existing literature shows that scholars such as Egunlusi (2020), Molefe (2017), Oosthuizen (2018) and Tlhapi (2015) emphasise how challenging and complex it is to manage learner ill-discipline. Current debates question whether schools can still function as supportive learning environments as disciplinary challenges increase (Egunlusi, 2020; Oosthuizen, 2018). While ill-discipline has been widely studied in secondary schools, limited attention has been given to how primary school educators in the Sekhukhune district manage these issues.

Classroom discipline remains essential for maintaining safety and enabling effective learning (Molefe, 2017). Although disruptive behaviour is often associated with adolescents, behavioural problems among primary school learners have increased in recent years (Lekganyane, 2011). Educators are frustrated by the amount of teaching time lost to managing ill-discipline (Jacobsz, 2015), and disciplinary approaches designed for secondary schools do not always suit learners in primary schools (Mkandla, 2019; Tlhapi, 2015). This study therefore aims to address this gap by examining how ill-discipline is managed in primary schools in the Sekhukhune district, with the intention of contributing to improved disciplinary practices and support for educators.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Learner ill-discipline has become a growing concern in South African primary schools, where educators struggle to maintain order and create a conducive learning environment (Egunlusi, 2020). Challenges such as disrespect, disengagement, and defiance among primary school learners often disrupt teaching and learning processes. Although corporal punishment was abolished to protect learners' rights, many schools have not fully adopted effective alternatives such as positive discipline, restorative practices, classroom management strategies, and social-emotional learning programmes. The absence of these structured approaches leaves educators without practical tools to manage behaviour constructively. This gap compromises the quality of teaching and learning, negatively affecting learner performance and educator well-being. Persistent ill-discipline can lead to increased stress and frustration among teachers, sometimes resulting in attrition from the profession (Tlhapi, 2015). To ensure improved learner outcomes, schools need proactive, rights-based disciplinary measures that promote respect and accountability without resorting to punitive practices (Naicker, 2018). However, little is known about how educators in primary schools of Sekhukhune East District are currently managing learner ill-discipline and whether these strategies are effective. This lack of empirical evidence creates a critical gap in understanding which approaches work best in promoting positive behaviour and sustaining a conducive learning environment.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Main question is: *How do educators manage learner ill-discipline in the primary schools of Sekhukhune East district?*

The sub-questions that emerged from this main research question are:

1. What do educators regard as ill-discipline behaviour?
2. What are the causes of ill-disciplined behaviour?
3. How does learner ill-discipline affect teaching and learning?
4. What challenges do educators face in managing learner ill-discipline?
5. What strategies educators use to manage learner ill-discipline?

1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to explore how primary school educators in the Sekhukhune East District manage learner ill-discipline.

As per the above questions, the objectives of the research are:

1. To explore what educators regard as ill-discipline behaviour.
2. To identify the causes of learner ill-discipline behaviour.
3. To determine how learner ill-discipline affects teaching and learning.
4. To establish challenges that educators face in managing learner ill-discipline.
5. To investigate strategies educators use to manage learner ill-discipline.

1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a concise overview of the relevant literature to help situate the study within the wider academic conversation on addressing learner ill-discipline. Reviewing literature is the most important part of research, whereby researchers work through the concerns and interests raised in previous research work (Nembahe, 2021). Mkandla (2019) emphasised that the review of literature should place greater emphasis on the research questions and goals linked to the selected topic. Furthermore, The number of sub-topics may vary extensively, provided they remain conceptually connected to the central theme. This section reviews literature on the following topics: discipline, learner ill-discipline, causes of learner ill-discipline and the importance of classroom discipline and classroom rules.

1.7.1 Discipline

According to Nembahe (2021), discipline is the process of guiding learners to follow a set of behavioural expectations, helping them develop habits that are considered acceptable and respectful. Discipline is understood as a specific pattern of behaviour that learners are expected to follow (Mkandla, 2019; Nembahe, 2021; Tlhapi, 2015). For educators to achieve their educational goals, discipline must be established as an important aspect in the classroom (Tlhapi, 2015). Institutions such as schools operate within frameworks of established rules and regulations; therefore, discipline includes the ability and readiness to respect those rules and regulations. In schools, discipline is put in place to help maintain order and manage learners who display disruptive behaviour (Egunlusi, 2020). In the context of education, the aim is to create a

classroom setting that fosters effective instruction and supports meaningful learner engagement in which discipline is maintained.

Discipline is essential in establishing a structured and conducive learning environment where meaningful lessons can occur, with a well-managed classroom being conducive for teaching and learning (Mkandla, 2019; Nembahe, 2021; Tlhapi, 2015). School authorities and other departments of the government have conceptualised discipline in the form of policies and codes of conduct (Mkandla, 2019). These policies with the codes of conduct, clearly state the way learners are expected to behave as well as outlining the roles and responsibilities of educators in ensuring that learners comply with those rules (Mkandla, 2019).

1.7.1.1 *Learner ill-discipline*

Various researchers have offered different perspectives on how learner ill-discipline is understood and defined. Lekganyane (2011) and Jacobsz (2015) demonstrate that the term 'ill-discipline' is often used interchangeably with related concepts such as indiscipline, disruptive behaviour and misconduct. Learner ill-discipline refers to any conduct that causes fellow learners to feel unsafe, disrespected or insecure within the classroom environment (Lekganyane, 2011). Egunlusi (2020), Molefe (2017), Oosthuizen (2018) and Tlhapi (2015) agree that Learner misbehaviour is any kind of action in the classroom that disrupts teaching and learning, and takes away from the safe, respectful space that every child deserves. Several researchers have identified examples of learner ill-discipline in the classroom, such as making excessive noise, bullying, neglecting homework, being disobedient and refusing to follow educators' instructions (Molefe, 2017). Other learner ill-discipline behaviours include teasing, theft, name-calling, dodging lessons, fighting, lying and aggression, considered common learner ill-discipline behaviours (Okeke, 2022; Oosthuizen, 2018).

1.7.1.2 *Causes of learner ill-discipline*

Researchers such as Egunlusi (2020), Molefe (2017), Oosthuizen (2018) and Tlhapi (2015) have explored various reasons behind learner ill-discipline. They point to the challenging socio-economic conditions many learners face, arguing that primary schools located in under-resourced communities, where difficulties at home and in the neighbourhood are common, tend to experience higher levels of disruptive behaviour

among learners. According to Okeke (2022), learner ill-discipline can stem from both internal and external influences, some rooted within the learners themselves and others shaped by their surroundings and circumstances.

Learner ill-discipline is also believed to be influenced by both biological and environmental factors, ranging from individual traits and developmental challenges to the conditions learners face at home and in their communities like poverty, parental death, child abuse, sickness, divorce, disability and adolescent (Egunlusi, 2020; Molefe, 2017; Okeke, 2022), while causes of ill-discipline amongst learners is considered as a combination of family, educators, classroom environment and school itself (Okeke, 2022; Oosthuizen, 2018).

1.7.2 Importance of Classroom Discipline

Learner misbehaviour has become a growing concern in many schools across South Africa, this negatively impacts the overall learning atmosphere and poses challenges for educators in delivering instruction effectively, which brings up the topic about the importance of learner discipline (Oosthuizen, 2018). Every school hopes to create a space where teaching and learning can thrive, an environment that supports both educators and learners in reaching their full potential. However, many researchers have found that schools continue to struggle with identifying the most effective approach to discipline, despite ongoing efforts to create safer and more respectful learning environments (Egunlusi, 2020; Molefe, 2017; Okeke, 2022). Many policies and procedures have been put in place to solve learner disciplinary issues for the efficient functioning of schools (Egunlusi, 2020; Okeke, 2022). To cultivate an optimal setting for teaching and learning to thrive, educators must establish a classroom environment that supports and enhances learner engagement (Okeke, 2022). Egunlusi (2020) suggests that educators believe a calm and disciplined classroom is possible, provided that learners who struggle with discipline are guided and managed effectively.

1.7.2.1 Classroom rules

Educators establish classroom rules as a means of regulating learner behaviour and promoting a structured learning environment (Okeke, 2022). Learner ill-discipline cannot be completely prohibited, but classroom rules are there to promote order

(Molefe, 2017). Classroom rules assist in establishing a disciplined classroom environment that strengthens and sustains the quality of the learning experience (Egunlusi, 2020), establishing a secure and supportive setting that facilitates effective learning and secure whereby learners have the right to be treated with fairness and responsibly, treated with respect and dignity (Egunlusi, 2020; Lekganyane, 2011; Molefe, 2017; Oosthuizen, 2018; Tlhapi, 2015).

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Learner ill-discipline in primary schools remains a pressing concern for educators, particularly in rural districts such as Sekhukhune East in Limpopo. Effectively addressing learner misconduct is essential for preserving a safe, respectful, and productive educational environment (Parsonson, 2012). However, educators often face challenges rooted in socio-economic conditions, community dynamics, and institutional limitations.

According to Burnham (2024), every learner brings their own background and experiences into the classroom, which can make it challenging to apply discipline strategies consistently to support them effectively; as a result, It is important to allocate time to explore and understand the underlying causes of learners' behaviour. To address these complexities, this study adopted Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory as its guiding theoretical framework offering a lens through which to explore how learners acquire and replicate behaviours within their social environments (Bandura, 2014).

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Khothari (2004) define research methodology as organised and structured process used to plan, carry out and evaluate research to meet the study's goals (Kothari, 2004). The primary objective of this research was to investigate how educators in primary schools address and manage learner ill-discipline. This section outlines the key methodological steps undertaken to fulfil the objectives of the research. These steps include the research paradigm, the chosen research approach and design, the population and sampling methods, the tools used for data collection, and the strategies applied to analyse and interpret the data, all aimed at exploring how educators manage learner ill-discipline.

1.9.1 Research Paradigm

This study is based on the interpretivist research paradigm, which rejects the notion that universal standards for research exist, believing that knowledge can be acquired without any right or correct method (Creswell, 2007). The interpretivist paradigm is grounded in the belief that participants play an active role throughout every stage of the research process as they try to understand the world they live in (Creswell, 2007). The adoption of the interpretivist paradigm enabled the researcher to explore participants' experiences and perspectives in depth, shaped by their own experiences and perspectives.

1.9.2 Research Approach

According to Kothari (2004:5), a research approach can be described as a “structured plan or a procedure that decides the overall process of research, deciding the methods for data collection, analysis and interpretation”. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), there are three main methods commonly used to collect research data and resolve any problem that may arise during the process of gathering data, namely, quantitative, mixed methods and qualitative approaches. A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study to enable a thorough exploration and understanding of the topic. The reason for the choice of a qualitative approach was interviews with educators on their experiences of teaching ill-disciplined learners and how they manage them was possible; thus, their opinions and realities were explored. A qualitative approach is all about collecting and interpreting qualitative data to gain insights into individuals' experiences, perspectives and conceptual understandings. It is about what people think and why they think so, offering first-hand experience from educators. Qualitative research is naturalistic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and focuses on real-life situations. It analyses people's beliefs, perceptions and thoughts, which was the main purpose of this study (Kothari, 2004).

1.9.3 Research Design

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), research design refers to the systematic arrangement of methods and strategies selected by the researcher to effectively achieve the study's objectives; it may include selecting the research site, participants and data generation strategies. Similarly, Kothari (2009) defines research

design as a detailed blueprint that specifies the methods employed for data collection and analysis, including when, where, and how the process will take place. This research adopted an exploratory case study approach, selected for its ability to generate comprehensive and thorough understanding of the subject matter by utilising various sources of information within the participants' natural settings (Creswell, 2007). As noted by Creswell and Creswell (2017), A case study design utilises multiple sources of data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation such as interviews, observations, and document reviews. This study relied only on information that educators provided during their interviews based on their experiences of teaching ill-disciplined learners.

1.9.4 Research Methods

Research methods comprise the systematic procedures and instruments used to identify the study population, select samples, conduct data collection and analysis.

1.9.4.1 Population and sampling

As defined by Leavy (2017:76), a population “encompasses a large group of individuals or elements that possess shared characteristics pertinent to the focus of the research”. This research was conducted in the rural communities of Limpopo, South Africa. Limpopo province has five districts, which are further divided into areas. An area is divided into circuits, each of which has between 15 and 30 schools that are managed by circuit managers. The target population for the study included all primary school educators based in the Sekhukhune East District of Limpopo province. Participants were selected from three primary schools chosen within the Sekhukhune East District, comprising nine educators who were selected, three from each school teaching the Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase that include Grades 4 to 7.

Leavy (2017:76) explains that sampling is “essentially about choosing a few individuals from a larger group to represent the whole”. Cohen et al. (2007) emphasise that researchers need to think carefully about whether their chosen sample truly reflects the broader population. Since the sample in this study did not reflect the entire population, a non-probability sampling technique was employed. Non-probability sampling is a technique where not all individuals or elements in the population have an equal likelihood of being chosen for the study (Kumar, 2014).

Purposive sampling was employed to identify and select the schools and educators who participated in the study. Purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of participants by the researcher, based on informed judgement, with the intention of including individuals most likely to provide rich and relevant insights for the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Participants were purposefully selected from educators teaching in the selected primary schools of the Sekhukhune East District. The sampled educators were a combination of newly appointed educators and experienced educators, different age groups, gender and seniority in the school ranks, and the sample comprised a total of nine educators, including three principals, three departmental heads, and three PL1 educators from the Intersen Phase.

1.9.4.2 Data collection

This study used one data collection instrument, namely, interviews, to collect the relevant data. Data were collected from participants by conducting an interview with each participant. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on the school premises and audio-recorded to ensure comprehensive capture of all relevant information

1.9.4.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves interpreting non-numerical information to uncover insights into individuals' experiences, viewpoints and underlying meanings by collecting it, organising it clearly, and interpreting it to understand the deeper meaning behind what people have said or done (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the data were examined using thematic analysis, which facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and central themes within participant responses. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a way for researchers to explore and make sense of recurring ideas or patterns within qualitative data. To make sense of the interview responses, the study followed six steps outlined by Creswell (2014). These included organising and preparing the data, reading through it carefully, identifying key points through coding, grouping similar ideas into categories, and presenting the main themes and descriptions. Lastly, the findings were interpreted to understand what they revealed.

1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Nieuwenhuis (2007:113) explains that trustworthiness in a study is about “having confidence in the reliability of the data, how it is interpreted, and the methods used, making sure the research is solid and of high quality”. Lincoln and Guba (1982) point out that a study’s trustworthiness depends on how believable, consistent and applicable its findings are. In other words, the results should be credible, able to be confirmed, reliable over time and relevant in other contexts. In this study, to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, member-checking meant sharing the collected data with participants to confirm that their views and experiences have been accurately captured, interpretation and conclusions of the study so that participants can give clarity to their intentions and correct any mistakes that may have occurred, and if necessary, provide additional information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

1.11 RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethical research involves a framework of principles that inform how studies are designed and conducted (Bhandari, 2021). When conducting research that involves human beings, all relevant rules and regulations that guide research must be observed (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Therefore, an application for ethical clearance was formally submitted to the University of South Africa (UNISA) to ensure that the study adhered to established ethical standards. Approval was also sought from the Limpopo Department of Education and consent from the principals of schools in the Sekhukhune East district was obtained. With the permission of the principal, educators were invited to participate in the research. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) stress that researchers have the responsibility to follow ethical guidelines, which includes getting informed consent from participants, protecting their privacy and confidentiality, keeping their identities anonymous, ensuring that participation is voluntary, and taking steps to avoid any harm. Therefore, all educators who agreed to participate signed consent forms.

Participants were duly informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and that they retained the right to decline or withdraw from involvement at any stage without consequence. Participants were further assured that both their identities and the information they provided would be treated with strict confidentiality and safeguarded throughout the research process and that the names of the schools, principals and educators would remain anonymous. Participants were informed about

the objectives of the study and reassured that it posed no physical or psychological risk, as it focused solely on the management of learner ill-discipline within classrooms

1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

This section presents concise definitions of the core concepts underpinning this study.

1.12.1 Classroom Discipline

Classroom discipline refers to the process whereby an educator ensures maintenance of routine, enforces school rules and ensures that learners are in a safe learning environment (Burden, 2020). Furthermore, Savage and Savage (2009) views discipline as a control over learners' activities while assisting and guiding them to take responsibility for their actions. Classroom discipline teaches learners limits and boundaries.

1.12.2 Learner Ill-Discipline

According to Abongdia and Ngoqo (2018), learner ill-discipline is any disruptive behaviour that disturbs the classroom order and disrupts the process and objectives of teaching and learning. Furthermore, Curwin, Mendler and Mendler (2018) define learner ill-discipline as any behaviour that makes other learners feel unsafe, insecure and disrespected within the classroom.

1.12.3 Management

Management is a task of planning, organising and leading to achieve a goal efficiently and effectively (Bose, 2012). For this study, management refers to the process whereby educators have to deal with and control learners to keep discipline in the classrooms during teaching and learning.

1.13 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 – Introduction - This chapter outlined the contextual background underpinning the study, presented the rationale for conducting the research as well as the problem statement along with the research questions and objectives.

Chapter 2 – Preliminary literature review - This chapter examines relevant literature on managing learner ill-discipline, including definitions of discipline and learner ill-

discipline, underlying causes, the significance of maintaining classroom discipline, and the role of classroom rules.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology - This chapter systematically describes the research methodology underpinning the study, including the chosen research paradigm and design, the defined target population and sampling techniques, the instruments and procedures used for data collection, the strategies employed to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, and the ethical considerations adhered to throughout the research process

Chapter 4 – Research Findings - This chapter provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of the collected data, aimed at addressing the core research questions and objectives of the study. The interview findings are compared with insights from the literature review

Chapter 5 – Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations - concludes the study by providing the summary, conclusions and recommendations for further studies.

1.14 SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine educators' management of learner ill-discipline in the primary schools of Sekhukhune East District in Limpopo. This chapter presented a detailed background in highlighting its intentions regarding the management of learner ill-discipline. The introduction, aims, and objectives of this study were also provided. A preliminary literature review and theoretical framework were also given. This chapter also presented a brief outline of the methodology and design of the study. The next chapter reviews literature pertaining educators' management of learner ill-discipline in primary schools.

CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Managing learner ill-discipline has emerged as one of the most significant challenges faced by educators. In Chapter 1, it was emphasised that learner ill-discipline, arising from disciplinary problems in schools (Nhambura, 2020), is a global concern and educators hold the responsibility for guiding and managing learners' behaviour. Scholars worldwide have identified learner ill-discipline as a persistent and pressing issue within primary schools. Research in United States of America (USA) (Wheeler, 2013), Italy (Shala, 2021), Kenya (Karuri, 2015) as well as in South Africa (Egunlusi, 2020 & Okeke, 2022) has emphasised the consequences of learner ill-discipline on the effectiveness of instruction and the overall educational experience. South African scholars (Mkandla, 2019; Nembah, 2021; Tlhapi, 2015) have highlighted that educators encounter numerous difficulties when managing learner discipline. The increasing cases of learner ill-discipline in primary schools have become a major concern for the Department, educators, parents, and the broader community.

This research investigated how primary school educators in the Sekhukhune East District manage learner ill-discipline. This chapter explores the perspectives of researchers on learner ill-discipline and what is regarded as ill-discipline behaviour, causes of learner ill-discipline and challenges educators face in managing learner ill-discipline. In addition, strategies that educators can use to manage learner ill-discipline are identified.

2.2 DISCIPLINE

As noted by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2012), discipline supports the development of learners' self-regulation and key competencies essential for both personal and academic success. Discipline is a process, and it does not happen overnight (Karuri, 2015). Positive discipline seeks to guide learners towards socially acceptable and constructive behaviour, for them to be responsible for their own choices and it must be nurturing and corrective (DBE, 2012). Maintaining discipline is essential for successful teaching and learning in the classroom. A disruptive classroom environment hinders both effective teaching and meaningful learning. Educators

encounter ongoing challenges in sustaining a safe and orderly learning environment (Karuri, 2015)

Discipline is crucial for maintaining order and peace in the classroom and protecting learners while correcting ill-disciplined learners. A classroom needs to be free of ill-disciplined behaviours for effective teaching and learning (Okeke, 2022). Recent studies also emphasise that disciplined learning environments improve learner engagement and reduce disruptive behaviour (Daniels, 2024). Tiwari (2018) asserts that effective teaching is closely linked to the presence of discipline. According to Shala (2021), discipline should not be autocratic, it should be reasonable and cooperative; learners should not perceive discipline as an assertion of authority by educators. Every school should implement clear and effective disciplinary practices to promote a positive culture of teaching, learning and respectful behaviour (Wheeler, 2013). This means that a well-managed school that promotes good behaviour should have a school discipline policy to manage ill-discipline learners (DBE, 2012).

A disciplined school typically reflects strong leadership, especially from the principal, clear communication among stakeholders and well-established policies like codes of conduct for both learners and educators, as well as classroom rules. These elements contribute to a safe, supportive learning environment and are often linked to high academic achievement among learners (Tiwari, 2018).

2.2.1 Learner Ill-Discipline

The situation in South African primary schools shows that there is a lack of discipline which leads to disruptive teaching and learning (Okeke, 2022). According to the 2022 Annual Report of the South African Department of Education, improvement of learner ill-discipline leads to improved academic results (DBE, 2022). Prior to 1994, South African educators employed various disciplinary methods to manage learner behaviour in schools. Some of these measures included picking up litter around the schoolgrounds, corporal punishment, standing against the wall with one foot up, working in school gardens, and starvation during break. Educators used these measures to try and discipline ill-disciplined learners and ensure good behaviour (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). The use of corporal punishment in schools was formally banned under the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996). SASA explicitly prohibits any individual from administering corporal punishment to learners,

stating that such actions are a criminal offence and subject to legal consequences. However, since the promulgation of this legislative, incidents of learner misconduct have reportedly increased in many South African primary schools (Okeke, 2022).

Ill-discipline can be defined as behaving badly and with a lack of control (Collins English Dictionary, 2024). Learner ill-discipline can also be defined as behaviour that interferes with or disrupts the processes of teaching and learning, which could be in the form of defying rules and behaving badly with a lack of control (RSA, 1996). Lekganyane (2011) further describes learner ill-discipline as disruptive behaviour that undermines an individual's right to safety, respectful treatment and access to learning (Szulevicz, 2019). According to Ur (2024), learner ill-discipline can be defined as any negative or explicit behaviour that violates classroom rules and affects other learners and the process of teaching and learning.

Okeke (2022) highlights that educators must be conscious of how they define learner ill-discipline; educators may define learner ill-discipline differently and what may be bad behaviour for one educator may not be a problem for another, therefore it is vital to consider contextual factors. These varying insights on the nature and meaning of learner ill-discipline indicate that learner ill-discipline is not a fixed idea but something educators interpret through their own experiences and contexts. This conceptual clarity is important because it shapes how learner ill-discipline is recognised, interpreted, and ultimately managed in schools on daily basis.

2.2.2 Forms of Learner Behaviour and Ill-Discipline

Research has identified various forms of learner behaviour and ill-discipline; this is outlined in the subsequent sub-sections.

2.2.2.1 Aggression

According to Krysanova and Herezhun (2023), aggression refers to verbal or physical actions that pose a threat or cause harm to others or property. According to Saputra et al. (2020), aggression is generally categorised into two forms: physical and verbal. Physical aggression may involve behaviours such as hitting, kicking, pulling, or pushing. Verbal aggression may involve behaviours such as yelling, shouting, using offensive language, or name-calling (Saputra et al., 2020) with both behaviours being disruptive in the teaching and learning process.

2.2.2.2 *Learner defiance of authority*

According to Nallasivam, Chawla and Shrivastava (2023), defying authority can be a verbal or non-verbal refusal to comply with a fair request from an educator. Some learners openly defy rules and try to irritate educators on purpose with their hostile behaviour. It is required for educators to be equipped with effective strategies to manage defiant learner behaviour confidently and constructively.

2.2.2.3 *Disengagement*

Learners who are distracted in class and do not put any effort into the teaching and learning process are classified as disengaged (Xue, 2023). They do not participate in tasks, their work is delayed, they give up easily when they encounter challenges or failure, they are ignorant and do not care about their academic performance. When learners lose motivation and interest in a lesson, it can affect their academic performance (Xue, 2023).

2.2.2.4 *Confrontation*

It can be very stressful for educators to deal with confrontational learners, though it does not happen often, when it does, it can be particularly intimidating for both the educator and other learners (Kelly, 2023). Learners may be confrontational if they feel the educator or the lesson is unfair, if they do not want to complete assigned tasks or simply because they do not want to be told what to do (Kelly, 2023).

Taken together, these behaviours show just how varied and complex learner ill-discipline can be in schools. Recognising these patterns helps us understand what educators are dealing with, the pressures they face, and why certain approaches are needed to manage ill-discipline effectively.

2.3 CAUSES OF LEARNER ILL-DISCIPLINE

Learner ill-discipline can be caused by several factors, some of which include a negative school environment, educators with professional incompetence, overcrowded classrooms and a school that neglects its physical appearance (Marais & Meier, 2010). According to Marais (2016), a major factor is poor infrastructure which leads to overcrowding of learners with limited space which frustrates learners. According to Obadire and Sinthumule (2021), learner misconduct at school often

mirrors challenges and circumstances experienced at home. Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) further highlight that some learners seek attention by being disruptive and being unable to adjust to the different teaching styles of their educators. Recent research shows that growing socio-economic pressure is increasingly affecting learners' behaviour, especially in primary schools that already struggle with limited resources (Nkosi & Mokoena, 2023). In addition, Pillay (2024) found that inconsistent discipline practices at school level contribute to increased rates of classroom disruption and learner defiance. One of the major contributors to learner misconduct is the lack of active parental involvement, as in many cases, parents do not support educators with their children's disciplinary issues, and parents do not respond positively when educators try to discipline their children, as they tend to defend their children even if they are in the wrong (Sibanda, 2021). Understanding these diverse causes of learner ill-discipline helps clarify the underlying factors that shape learner behaviour in schools. This insight is important for examining how educators make sense of learner ill-discipline and what contributes to the behavioural challenges they encounter in their classrooms.

2.3.1 Family-Related Issues

Research by Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) has indicated that most learners' ability to function well is negatively affected by their background issues such as physical and emotional abuse that takes place in their homes. Poverty and family breakdowns, such as divorce, significantly contribute to learner ill-discipline. Most learners are from dysfunctional families; they do not feel loved, have anger issues and seek attention by misbehaving resulting in poor behaviour. These family-related influences illustrate how a child's home environment can shape their behaviour at school. Recognising these dynamics helps explain the behaviours educators face daily and supports a deeper exploration of the root causes of learner ill-discipline.

2.3.1.1 *Physical and psychological abuse*

It is the responsibility of adults to look after their children when they start their journey of life (Ardita & Rabiye, 2016). A developing child is physically and emotionally sensitive (Cohen & Curran, 2022) and that parents have the responsibility to meet their children's basic needs such as love, shelter, nourishment and guidance to support their overall development.

However, physical abuse of children has been identified as a major worldwide issue. Merskey (1990) defines physical abuse as an intention to cause physical pain to a child against their will which can harm their development and health, with forms of physical abuse including beating, kicking, choking, hitting, biting, and burning. Studies by Merskey (1990) and Ardita and Rabije (2016) agree that physical abuse can affect a child's behaviour and academic performance. Physically abused learners are aggressive, angry and moody and this can manifest in disruptive behaviours (Morton, Curran & O'Gorman, 2022).

Psychological abuse refers to emotional or mental abuse, an abuse that involves using verbal or non-verbal communication to cause emotional harm to others (Nesheen & Alam, 2015). It is difficult to detect psychological abuse as it does not leave bruises or broken bones, but leaves learners with being disruptive, aggressive and disrespectful (Gupta, 2022). Experiences of abuse can surface as disruptive or aggressive behaviour in the classroom. Understanding this connection is essential for interpreting why some learners struggle to regulate their behaviour and how educators are affected by such challenges.

2.3.1.2 *Poor parent-child relationship*

A parent-child relationship is the meaningful connection between a parent and their child that helps shape the child's emotional, social and physical growth (Frosch, Schoppe-Sullivan & O'Banion, 2019). These researchers further highlight that the child's behaviour, personality and life choices depend on this relationship as it influences their school, home or other environments either negatively or positively (Frosch et al., 2019). According to Hong et al. (2022), learners who have poor relationships with their parents have behavioural issues. Recent research highlights that the bond between parents and children plays a vital role in how learners absorb information and perform academically (Lanjekar, Joshi, Lanjekar & Wagh, 2022).

A negative parent-child relationship affects learners negatively, as they could develop mental issues such as anxiety and depression and low self-esteem, and behavioural issues such as aggression and delinquency, difficulties in school and disrespect. As a result, learners' academic performance is poor. By shedding light on how strained parent-child relationships influence behaviour and academic performance, this

literature helps explain why some learners present persistent disciplinary challenges and why educators often struggle with managing these behaviours effectively.

2.3.1.3 *Dysfunctional families*

A family is the first place where a person learns ethical principles, where behaviour is shaped and traits are displayed (Anderson, 2022). A family is where a child finds peace and love, but some families are dysfunctional and contribute negatively to the upbringing and development of a child (Mphaphuli, 2023). According to Richard (2022), learners from dysfunctional families are impeded in their physical and mental development as most suffer from psycho-emotional disorders. In addition, a child's family background affects their behaviour and academic performance (Fosu-Ayarkwah, 2020).

A dysfunctional family is a family that has issues of abuse such as physical, emotional, sexual, mental, substance abuse, negligence, addiction and disorders and more often such issues are ignored (Barrett et al., 2022). In some families, the emotional needs of the children are not met as some parents are immature and are not supportive of their children. In some cases, parents are physically absent and the children end up heading the families in the absence of their parents. The events that occur in dysfunctional families result in children suffering with low self-esteem (Laurén & Malinen, 2021).

According to Qwabe, Maluleke and Olutola (2022), learners from dysfunctional families often end up becoming homeless, dropping out of school, being ill-disciplined, depressed and in some cases, become victims of substance abuse and suicide. Dysfunction within families can contribute to behavioural difficulties at school, offering important context for understanding the issues educators face when dealing with learners who display patterns of ill-discipline.

2.3.2 Community-Related Factors

Learner ill-discipline in primary schools is often shaped by external influences stemming from the communities in which learners are raised (Harland et al., 2024). Socio-economic difficulties can create conditions that negatively impact learners' emotional health and behaviour (Jafari & Shoar, 2024). For educators to handle learner ill-discipline with both effectiveness and empathy, it is important that they

understand the challenges learners face in their communities. Recognising how community conditions shape learner behaviour helps illuminate the broader social pressures that contribute to learner ill-discipline. This understanding supports a fuller exploration of why learners behave as they do and how these behaviours influence teaching and learning.

2.3.2.1 *Family socio-economic background*

The socio-economic background of learners is the most researched area amongst South African scholars as they try to find answers for learner ill-discipline, learner poor performance, demotivation of learners, absenteeism, child-headed families, learner gangsterism, violence and substance abuse (Wolhuter & Walt, 2020). The socio-economic background describes a person's financial situation, type of work and social environment (Wani, 2019). The measures of socio-economic background are occupational status, level of education, income and social lifestyle (Nagasu, Muto & Yamamoto, 2021). According to Magnuson and Duncan (2019), parents from poor socio-economic classes fail to provide support for their children due to lack of resources and poverty.

Research has shown that there is a direct influence between socio-economic background and learner ill-discipline. In a study about managing learner behaviour, Tiwari (2018) found that the major source of learner ill-discipline relates to a child's socio-economic background. Similarly, Okeke (2022) in a study dealing with learner misconduct in the Foundation Phase, found that learner ill-discipline in classroom is influenced by unemployed of parents, uneducated parents, poverty, less attention from parents, abuse and divorce. For great development and good behaviour, children should be raised in a healthy environment (Barrett et al., 2022). Maseko and Dube (2023) reported that financial stress within households increases behavioural challenges among learners. In addition, Khumalo (2024) found that schools in low-income communities experience higher rates of classroom disruption due to the compounded effects of poverty and limited parental support.

2.3.2.1 *Lack of parental involvement*

Parental involvement encompasses the various ways in which parents participate in their children's educational experiences, including assisting with homework, attending

parent-teacher meetings, and volunteering at school events (O'Toole, Kiely & McGillicuddy, 2019). Certain parents encounter barriers that hinder their active engagement in supporting their children's education due to time constraints, poor levels of education and socio-economic background (Zhang et al., 2020). Researchers such as Papadakis, Zaranis, and Kalogiannakis (2019) and Novianti and Garzia (2020) agree that the relationship between parents and the school plays an important role in the development and education of a learner.

For parental involvement to be effective, parents must partner with educators and work together. In a case where parents are not involved, learners miss out on the opportunity to be motivated and supported by their parents (Kartel, Charles, Xiao & Sundi, 2022). Recent work by Molefe and Radebe (2023) shows that when parents engage consistently with their children's school activities, learners display improved motivation and academic confidence.

Parental involvement starts at home, where parents develop a supportive and safe space that encourages their children's learning and development (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). Learners whose parents are less engaged in their educational journey often face greater challenges in maintaining discipline and may exhibit disruptive behaviour, as they lack the guidance and attention that parental support provides. They do not have a positive attitude to school, and their learning experience is very poor. Studies indicate that poor academic performance of learners is often an outcome associated with a lack of parental involvement (Chen, Huang, Lu & Zhang, 2021).

2.3.2.3 *Violence/gangsterism*

For teaching and learning to be effective, they must take place in an environment that is safe, secure and free from crime or violence (Lamoreaux & Sulkowski, 2020). However, recent studies by Geldenhuys (2023) and Viltoft (2022) have revealed that gangsterism/violence is a growing concern in South Africa. Educators and learners' lives are in danger as gangsters bring their fights into schools (Venter & Jeffries, 2020). Several incidents of violence, crime and injuries across South African schools have been reported. School learners are becoming members of community gangs, which target learners to sell drugs and weapons to fellow learners (Viltoft, 2022). Becoming a member of a gang affects learners' concentration and school work, and they do not have time for school (Geldenhuys, 2023).

Learners while underage are violent, carry dangerous weapons, are members of gangs, sell drugs and other illegal substances, attend taverns and drink alcohol irresponsibly (Bell, 2021). The community that is supposed to protect learners is destroying them. Children are easily influenced, they look up to their elders, so it becomes easy for them to join gangs and attendance becomes poor as some crimes require them to work in the early hours of the morning or during the day (Annan, Gaoua, Mileva & Borges, 2022).

2.3.3 School-Related Factors

Learner discipline in primary schools is not only shaped by individual behaviour or community influences, but also by the conditions within the school itself (Welsh, 2024). Poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms and limited resources can create stressful learning environments that make it difficult for educators to maintain order and engage learners effectively (Barrett et al., 2019).

2.3.3.1 *Inadequate infrastructure*

Infrastructure refers to the facilities and structures in a country, it may be bridges, power supplies, roads, bridges airports or in the case of this research, school buildings (Proag, 2021). Some South African public schools have inadequate infrastructure which is a contributory factor to the overcrowding of classrooms (Meier & West, 2020). Although the Curriculum and Policy Statement (CAPS) has set the learner-to-educator ratio at 36:1 in secondary schools and 37:1 in primary schools (DBE, 2011), this standard is often not met. According to Matsepe, Maluleke and Cross (2019), some public schools experience significantly higher ratios, placing a major strain on teaching and learning conditions.

According to Maphalala et al. (2023), inadequate school infrastructure combined with an excessively high learner-to-educator ratio adversely affects the quality of education. A school with poor infrastructure lacks motivation or desire to learn and an overcrowded classroom can create high levels of stress for both educators and learners. Overcrowded learning environment significantly complicate classroom management and instructional delivery, often resulting in disorder that disrupts both the teaching and learning process (Osai, Amponsah, Ampadu & Commey-Mintah,

2021). Classroom overcrowding impairs effective learning; there is little space for movement, no fresh air and there are uncontrollable high levels of noise that are disruptive. The overcrowding of classrooms affects struggling learners who need extra attention, as the educator is unable to pay attention to every learner to (Matsepe, Maluleke & Cross, 2019) and, as a result, learners perform poorly (Meier & West, 2020). It is easier for learners to be disruptive in an overcrowded classroom as compared to a class that is not overcrowded (Farhat, 2021).

2.3.3.2 Corporal punishment

SASA officially banned corporal punishment in schools. However, following this ban, many schools across the country have seen a noticeable increase in learner misconduct. Researchers such as Ntuli (2014), Soni (2023), and Makola, Ndlovu and Schlebusch (2022) argue that the ban on corporal punishment has contributed to increased learner misconduct in schools even though it remains a widely used method for enforcing discipline. Corporal punishment is described as the deliberate infliction of physical pain with the aim of correcting behaviour, control and correct disruptive behaviours by hitting, kicking, punching, pinching and shoving amongst others (Veriava & Power, 2017). Corporal punishment aimed to cause temporary physical pain not injuries, to teach good behaviour and respect (Lenta, 2017).

Since the ban on corporal punishment, there has been a sharp increase in learner ill-discipline in schools (Lenta, 2017). Moyo, Noncedo and Bayaga (2014) argue that corporal punishment was a swift manner of dealing with learner misconduct rather than following the disciplinary hearing procedures which consumes time. Chimbamu (2016) further highlights that corporal punishment motivates and sets clear boundaries for learners to behave in schools and the majority of learners would prefer corporal punishment over detention or suspension.

2.3.3.3 Lack of discipline

Discipline is a vital foundation for maintaining order and promoting effective learning in schools. Discipline plays an important role in building a foundation for children's later success in life; it maintains order and helps learners perform well academically (Bodo, 2020). According to Classroom Discipline: Definition & Strategies (2017), discipline refers to the structured guidance of learners in adhering to established rules,

often involving the use of punishment to correct misbehaviour. A school that lacks discipline, results in disruptive behaviours which leads to poor performance of learners (Simba, 2016). Learner ill-discipline interrupts instructional activities and consumes valuable teaching time (Mkandla, 2019), particularly as ill-disciplined learners are influential and can influence their fellow learners to behave the same way and challenge the educator's authority.

Learners require discipline to build and learn good ways of behaving (Aken, 2016). Discipline must be strictly enforced so that learners learn what is right and wrong (Bodo, 2020). Clear policies should be in place in schools to deal with discipline, where rules are set and adhered to.

2.3.3.4 *Inadequate curriculum*

A curriculum that is not relevant to learner needs might influence discipline in schools (Mupa, 2015). According to the South African Council for Educators (SACE), the curriculum that is taught to learners must be meaningful, fair and unbiased. If learners find the curriculum boring, they tend to misbehave, a curriculum offered to learners must be relevant to their interests and needs (Alsubaie, 2015).

2.3.4 *Learner-Related Factors*

In primary schools, learner ill-discipline often reflects the personal and social hardships children experience in their everyday lives (Simuforosa & Ngara, 2014). Socio-economic hardships, such as poverty and unstable home environments, can affect a child's emotional stability and ability to focus in class (Miller et al., 2024).

2.3.4.1 *Negative peer pressure*

Carnevale (2023) describes peer pressure as the influence that leads individuals to adjust their attitudes and behaviours to align with the expectations and norms of their peer group. Negative peer pressure can be defined as a negative influence from peers to do something to be accepted, fit in or valued, it can lead to stealing, smoking, drinking and bunking classes (Hartney, 2022). Teenage learners mostly fall into this trap as they want to experience and experiment with life which leads to disruptive behaviours (Carnevale, 2023). Several factors contribute to negative peer pressure such as family environment, gender and their grade level (Hartney, 2022).

2.3.4.2 Ignorance

In some cases, learner ill-discipline occurs due to ignorance not on purpose; learners ignore the school rules unintentionally because they are young and do not understand some of the rules (Okeke, 2022), further highlighting that educator's expectations regarding learner behaviour are sometimes unreasonable and unrealistic. Educators have a responsibility to understand their learners' developmental stages and build meaningful connections with them before introducing rules that may seem unreasonable. Nene (2013) further highlighted that educators sometimes make classroom rules without communicating with the learners and learners simply ignore the rules as they do not understand them. This frustrates the educators as they see learners as disobeying rules, therefore it is essential that educators should collaborate with learners in the development of classroom rules and their expectations.

2.3.4.3 Substance abuse (drugs and alcohol)

The misuse of drugs and alcohol is a major contributor to learner misconduct in schools (Chauke, 2021). Learners often turn to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism for challenges like low self-esteem, bullying, stress and feelings of rejection, while others use these substances simply for recreational purposes (Chauke, 2021). According to research by Beck and Heinz (2013), an intoxicated individual easily becomes aggressive when provoked. Studies by Walton, Avenant and Van Schalkwyk (2016) suggest that learners who use alcohol are disrespectful and aggressive.

Alcohol and drug abuse have a negative impact on individuals such as loss of intellectual functioning, depression and reduced self-awareness (Beck & Heinz, 2013). The results of drug and alcohol abuse in learners include a high rate of absenteeism, poor academic performance and a high rate of dropout among others (Chauke, 2021). Learners who are on drugs and alcohol are no longer goal-driven and they are less ambitious (Walton et al., 2016).

2.4 EFFECTS OF LEARNER ILL-DISCIPLINE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

The impact of learner misconduct on teaching and learning has been explored through three key themes: reduced instructional time, declining academic performance and increased rates of absenteeism and school dropouts.

2.4.1 Loss of Teaching and Learning Time

As stated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024), teaching and learning time refers to the officially allocated school hours, whether inside or outside the classroom, during which learners experience changes in thinking and behaviour, either through formal instruction or informal interactions. Okeke (2022) refers to teaching and learning time as the official time in a classroom where educators impart and learners acquire knowledge. Recent studies on learner ill-discipline by Molefe (2017) and Mkandla (2019) suggest that learner misconduct leads to a reduction in valuable teaching and learning time which lead to a poor teaching and learning environment. Egunlusi (2020) highlights that educators experiencing disruptions in their classroom during teaching lose their teaching time trying to bring ill-discipline behaviours to order while learners also lose their learning time. This results in educators feeling that their lessons less successful.

Researchers are more interested in the amount of teaching time lost due to learner disruptions. In a USA survey conducted by Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2021) entitled *The Big Problem with Little Interruptions to Classroom Learning*, educators (N=1,576), students (N=13,958) and (n schools = 13) completed the survey. It was found that educators lose almost 45% of their teaching time due to disruptions caused by learner ill-discipline and maintaining classroom management. In the survey, educators were asked to list the type of learner ill-discipline that affects them. Amongst others, they mentioned making noise, late arrival, failure to do class activities, bullying, aggressive behaviours and using cell phones during a lesson. The survey found that in every school there is an educator who loses teaching and learning time due learner ill-discipline.

2.4.2 Learner Academic Performance

According to Briones, Dagamac, David and Landerio (2022), learner academic performance can be defined as a measure of learner achievement across different subjects, measured by educators or academic officials using different academic measuring tools. Mardliyah (2019) refers to learner academic performance as meeting the goal, objectives and achievements set in a subject or programme that learners attend. McCaw (2018) suggests that learner misconduct negatively affects academic

achievement. Nhambura (2020) also notes that both educators and learners are affected by ill-discipline and poor behaviour.

In a study from United Kingdom (UK) conducted by Lopes, Silva, Oliveira, Sass and Martin in 2017, it was found that educators are unable to deliver quality education and maintain an environment conducive to learning due to learner ill-discipline which leads to poor learner academic performance and a compromised education. Ofori, Tordzro, Asamoah, and Achiaa (2018) investigated the impact of learner misconduct on junior high school students' academic performance in Ghana's Fanteakwa District. The study included 360 participants, comprising students, educators, and school heads. Findings revealed that learner indiscipline negatively impacts academic outcomes by reducing learners' ability to concentrate, increasing absenteeism which leads to loss of study materials, all contributing to higher dropout rates.

2.4.3 Learner Absenteeism Leading to Learner Drop-Out

Learner drop-out can be defined as learners who drop out and leave school before completing their final grade or study programme (Mohlouoa, 2014). Learner absenteeism refers to a learner being absent from school for the whole day (Mboweni, 2014). Mafa (2018) highlights learner misconduct as a significant contributor to absenteeism among students. A learner can be absent due academic failure, avoiding bullying, not doing school work, avoiding educators, poor relationship with other learners and the use of substances amongst others. Otto (2016) noted that learner absenteeism is linked to poor academic performance and Coetzee and Venter (2016) highlighted that learner absenteeism also leads to learner drop out.

2.5 CHALLENGES IN DEALING WITH LEARNER ILL-DISCIPLINE

Primary school educators encounter complex challenges when managing learner misconduct. While discipline plays a vital role in helping learners feel safe and stay focused, educators often face difficulties rooted in both systemic and contextual factors, these include overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure and lack of parental support (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). These challenges highlight the pressure educators face when managing learner ill-discipline and provide important context for understanding their perspectives and experiences.

2.5.1 Violent Learners

An increase of learner violence has been reported across South African schools since the ban of corporal punishment in 1997. South African schools are struggling to manage learner ill-discipline. Research by Jones (2020) noted that learners become aggressive and violent towards their educators when they try to reprimand them. Hughes (2020) argues that previous research focused more on protection of learners against violent educators as compared to protection of educators against violent learners. Educators do not feel safe and free around learners. Educators are afraid to discipline learners as they are threatened, disrespected and violated. A study by De Wet (2020) reported that a learner in the North West threatened to stab a young educator over a misunderstanding during lunch. Nambei and Mefi (2020) highlighted that learner ill-discipline and learner violence are some of the work-related stresses in the teaching profession. Educators are intimidated by learners and work with fear. Some learners refuse punishment and some schools do not have clear policies on how to deal with such learners.

2.5.2 Ignorant Parents

Parents are responsible for their children's behaviour as primary care givers. In a recent study by Oranga, Obuba, Sore and Boinett (2022), it was reported that educators deal with ignorant parents who fail to discipline their own children and leave it in the hands of educators. Effective parenthood is very important in the development of a child. Parents are responsible for legal and morals of their children. Lack of parental involvement in a child's education could lead to challenges with discipline in the classroom (Tan, Lyu & Peng, 2020). Some parents believe it is solely the educator's job to ensure learners behave and do not see the need to get involved themselves. As a result, educators feel let down by lack of parental involvement in shaping learners' behaviour, particularly as some parents do not check their children's work, do not supply them with the relevant learning materials and buy them gadgets that are not allowed at school due to their ignorance (Zhang et al., 2020).

2.5.3 Disrespectful Learners

Disrespectful learners not only disrupt educator's ability to teach and maintain order but it also disrupts learning (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Learners have different

disrespectful behaviours that frustrates educators such as learners who talks back, using their gadgets even after being told to put them away, refusing to do their school work and yelling at their educators and turning the classroom into a comedy house (Grimova & Van Schalkwyk, 2016). The constant disrespect that educators face daily causes stress, anxiety and frustration. Disrespectful learners are killing educators' love and passion for teaching. Learner disrespect during lessons impacts the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and disrupts the whole class. Furthermore, such behaviours lead to poor academic performance (Human-Vogel & Morkel, 2017). Understanding these forms of disrespect shows how they affect teaching effectiveness and contribute to educators' stress and frustration, shaping their overall experience of classroom management.

2.6 STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH LEARNER ILL-DISCIPLINE

Learner ill-discipline in primary schools has emerged as a persistent and multifaceted challenge within the education system (Simuforsa & Ngara, 2014). Even though discipline is widely acknowledged as vital for maintaining a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment, educators frequently encounter behavioural issues that disrupt teaching and learning processes (Parsonson, 2012). These disciplinary concerns are often shaped by a range of contextual factors, including socio-economic conditions, community dynamics, school culture and policy limitations. The strategies offer insight into how educators and schools can respond to behavioural challenges, helping identify practical approaches that support effective discipline and enhance the learning environment.

2.6.1 Effective School Leadership

Schools strive to establish safe and nurturing environments that support uninterrupted teaching and learning. Achieving this depends largely on having strong and effective leadership in place (Nembahe, 2019). Research by Mkandla (2019) has shown that effective leadership can lead to a successful academic performance, disciplined learners and a conducive environment. Molefe (2017) highlighted that school leaders must have analytical skills, problem solving skills, patience and creativity as they deal with different situations on a daily basis. A study by Okeke (2022) found that effective school leadership reduces learner absenteeism and learner drop out. Similarly, a study by Naicker (2018) highlighted that effective school leaders follow school policies, listen

to their learners and empower their educators. Recognising the role of leadership helps explain how supportive school management contributes to better discipline and improved teaching and learning conditions.

2.6.2 Creation of a Conducive Teaching and Learning Environment

According to Hanna and Marzanna (2014), an environment conducive to learning refers to the physical, emotional well-being and safety of learners and educators. In the context of the current study, an environment conducive to learning can be explained as the setting in which educational, physical, social, psychological and cultural needs of learners, educators, parents and other stakeholders are met. Khan (2017) highlighted that learners behave better in an environment conducive to learning would ensure that learners feel supported, safe and free. Mthembu (2023) indicates that well-organised and emotionally supportive classrooms play a key role in reducing behavioural issues. Likewise, Ncube (2024) reports that when schools foster an inclusive and positive learning environment, learners are more engaged and show greater respect for school expectations. A study by Chan-Anteza (2020) found that an environment that is friendly and diverse, correlates to learner's good behaviour. Maoto (2014) argues that an environment conducive to learning combined with other strategies may help educators to deal with learner ill-discipline.

2.6.3 Effective Disciplinary Policies and Procedures

A study conducted in Ghana emphasised that for schools to foster a positive and productive learning atmosphere, it is essential that learners respect the rules, follow the code of conduct and adhere to disciplinary guidelines. When these policies are effectively implemented, they help nurture self-discipline among learners and contribute to a safer, more supportive educational environment (Obaki, 2017). The Department in South Africa has emphasised the importance of school discipline (DBE, 2021), taking into account SASA 84 of 1996 for procedures during the establishment of disciplinary policies such a code of conduct. Research by Prashanti, Hikmat and Thoyibi (2020) noted that implementation and consistency of disciplinary policies can curb learner ill-discipline; however, if learners are aware that no action would be taken against their misbehaviour, they continue misbehaving. If learners are familiar with school policies and procedures, they are unlikely to misbehave as they are aware of the consequences. Hence, understanding the importance of consistent disciplinary

policies helps explain how clear expectations and consequences can reduce learner misconduct and support educators in managing behaviour.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is a structured set of concepts, theories, and assumptions that underpins a research study, guiding the formulation of research questions, hypotheses, and methodologies (Anfara & Mertz, 2014). This study adopted Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. According to Bandura (2014), Social Cognitive Theory posits that behaviour is learned through observation, imitation and modelling, particularly within social contexts such as schools and communities. In the Sekhukhune East district, learners are influenced not only by their peers but also by the attitudes and actions of educators, parents, and community members.

The rural setting of Sekhukhune East presents unique challenges that affect learner behaviour and discipline management. According to Ur (2024) limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and socio-economic hardships often contribute to behavioural disruptions. Social Cognitive Theory provides a practical foundation for developing strategies that focus on proactive modelling and positive reinforcement (Bandura, 2014) to facilitate behaviour change.

According to Weissbourd and Jones (2014), educators have significant influence when they consistently model respectful and responsible conduct, as this behaviour sets a benchmark for learners to follow. Furthermore, the theory supports collaborative approaches involving parents and community stakeholders, recognising that behavioural change is most effective when reinforced across multiple social settings (Bandura & Cervone, 2023). The theory also empowers educators and stakeholders to adopt proactive, collaborative strategies that foster respectful and responsible behaviour (Bandura & Cervone, 2023).

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory is relevant to this study because it explains how behaviour develops through social interaction and observation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). The concept of reciprocal determinism shows that learner behaviour is shaped by a combination of personal factors, such as attitudes, environmental conditions like classroom climate, and the influence of others, including educators and peers (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2017). In rural contexts such as Sekhukhune East, where socio-economic challenges and overcrowded classrooms

are common, these interactions play a crucial role in understanding ill-discipline (Maree, 2021).

The theory's focus on modelling and reinforcement offers practical guidance for strategies that promote positive behaviour (Ormrod, 2016). For instance, when educators consistently model respect and responsibility, learners are more likely to follow suit (Wentzel, 2019). Involving parents and the wider community also reflects the theory's view that behavioural change is most effective when reinforced across different social settings (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). This makes Social Cognitive Theory not only relevant but also a valuable tool for shaping interventions that reduce learner ill-discipline and create a supportive learning environment.

2.8 SUMMARY

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlights that learner misconduct remains a major concern for the Department, educators, parents, learners and other school stakeholders. For teaching and learning to be effective, both educators and learners need a classroom environment that is calm, respectful and free from disruptions. However, maintaining such an environment becomes difficult when learners do not follow rules. Educators play a key role in creating and sustaining a positive classroom atmosphere. Disciplinary strategies are meant to guide learners in respecting school rules, not to punish, but to promote responsibility and self-discipline. Importantly, educators must apply these strategies with care and fairness, avoiding any form of mistreatment. Involving learners in setting classroom rules helps them understand what is expected and encourages a sense of ownership and accountability.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed existing research relevant to this study, helping to place it within the broader academic and practical context. This study focused on how educators manage learner misconduct in primary schools within the Sekhukhune East District. To carry out the research, specific methods were employed for data collection and analysis. These included identifying the target population and applying a sampling strategy, using interviews and applying appropriate techniques for data analysis. Measures were also taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings and adherence to ethical standards throughout the process.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Kuhn (2012) defines a research paradigm as a philosophical strategy of thinking. Maree (2015:332) suggests that a research paradigm denotes a commonly accepted framework of underlying beliefs and assumptions that guide how researchers understand the world and approach their studies. Similarly, Wahyuni (2012) defines the concept of research paradigm as a set of important assumptions and beliefs on the world perception that guides the behaviour of the researcher. This study is based on the interpretivist paradigm whereby the primary source of data is the participant's subjective meanings.

The interpretivist paradigm is concerned with the human lived experiences in the social world (Creswell, 2014). Interpretivist researchers aim to gain a deep understanding of what is happening within the natural setting of their study, focusing on the context and meaning behind people's actions and experiences (Creswell, 2007). The interpretivist paradigm encourages researchers to use methods that help them connect directly and personally with participants, allowing for a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Interpretivists believe that knowledge can be acquired without any particular right or correct method by rejecting the notion that universal standards for research exist (Creswell, 2007).

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

To explore the phenomenon of educators' management of learner ill-discipline in the primary schools of the Sekhukhune East District, a qualitative approach was used. The reason for the choice of the qualitative approach was because it is analytical, descriptive and interpretive (Kothari, 2004). Kothari (2004) describes a research approach as a plan or a procedure that decides the overall process of research, deciding the methods for data, collection, analysis and interpretation.

The qualitative approach mainly focuses on how people build their reality by interacting with their social world (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:31). Creswell (2007) describes qualitative research as a way for researchers to explore and understand how participants feel, think and view certain issues while Creswell and Creswell (2018) maintain that qualitative research is naturalistic and focuses on real-life situations. In qualitative research, data are collected through fieldwork by using participant's perspectives in their natural setting as compared to quantitative research where responses are quantified such as in a questionnaire. A qualitative research approach was considered suitable for this study, as it sought to explore how primary school educators in the Sekhukhune East District address learner ill-discipline.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Kothari (2009) describes a research design as a detailed plan outlining how researchers intend to carry out their study. Leedy (1997) defines research design as a systematic blueprint that directs the researcher through the stages of data collection and analysis. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), research design is the set of decisions a researcher makes while planning on how to carry out a study. This study adopted a case study design which is a qualitative approach that explores a phenomenon in-depth through data collection that involves different sources of information (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2017) defines the case study research design as a thorough investigation of a phenomenon within its natural context. This study employed a case study research design, as it enabled the collection of rich, detailed data and facilitated a deeper understanding of a complex issue. Using a case study design gives the researcher the opportunity to deeply explore and understand how educators experience and respond to learner misconduct in real-life school settings.

There are different types of case studies such as descriptive, exploratory and explanatory; however, this study adopted an exploratory case study as the researcher wished to study the phenomenon of managing learner ill-discipline in-depth since there seemed to be a paucity of research on this topic.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

This section described the research methods used in conducting of the research and include the population, sampling, data collection and data analysis.

3.5.1 Population

The study population was determined prior to initiating data collection. Leavy (2017) defines population of a study as the entire unit of people or objects considered for research. Denscombe (2017) also defines population as common features of a group of objects, people, or events that a researcher is interested in researching. The population of this study consists of all educators at 72 primary schools in Sekhukhune East District in Limpopo.

3.5.2 Sampling

The sample of a study can be defined as a part of a population of people or things chosen to represent the total population of a study (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013). Thompson (2012) defines sampling as the procedure of selecting a subset of individuals or items from which data will be collected. This study adopted a purposive sampling technique to select participants. As Leavy (2017) explains, purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling where individuals are intentionally selected due to their specific traits that are pertinent to the study. This study's sample comprised three primary schools located in the Sekhukhune East District, with a total of nine educators selected, three from each school, who currently teach in the Intermediate and Senior Phases. The selected educators were a combination of newly appointed educators and experienced educators, different age groups, gender and seniority in the school ranks. By selecting three primary schools, I wanted to ensure that all nine educators were not from one school sharing similar challenges regarding learner ill-discipline.

3.5.3 Data collection method: Semi-structured interviews

This study primarily relied on interviews as the main tool for collecting data from participants, in line with the case study approach. Gerson and Damaske (2020) describe an interview as a data-collecting method that allows the researcher to interact with participants by asking questions. Roberts (2020) further defines an interview as a tool that is easily usable for data collection as it allows different sensory channels such as verbal or non-verbal, spoken and heard. Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2021:113) describe semi-structured interviews as “open-ended and normally qualitative”. Semi-structured interviews offer the opportunity to gather detailed information from participants but allow for probing. Probing involves using follow-up questions to gather deeper, more detailed information beyond the initial answers (Creswell, 2007).

The participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews which allowed me as the researcher, to gain insights into each educator’s management of learner ill-discipline. The semi-structured interviews, guided by an interview schedule (see Appendix E), enabled me to understand participant’s personal experiences, feelings and thoughts.

3.5.4 Data Analysis

Muthiah et al. (2020) state that qualitative data analysis is about organising, accountability and explanation of data. Nieuwenhuis (2020) further defines qualitative analysis as a phenomenon that deals with participant’s feelings, perceptions, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and experiences regarding interpretation of a specific phenomenon. The data was analysed through the lens of Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights how personal factors, behaviour, and the environment interact. Using this perspective made it easier to understand educators’ views on learner ill-discipline within the school context. During the process of data analysis, data are organised into categories and relationships are identified amongst those categories (McMillian & Schumacher, 2014).

The interview data were analysed using the five-step process outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022), which includes organising and preparing the data, thoroughly reading through it, coding the information, identifying

key themes and descriptions, and finally presenting those findings in a clear and structured way.

Step 1 Organising and preparing the data for analysis: This step involves transcribing the interviews and carefully sorting through the collected information to get it ready for review.

Step 2 Reading and examining the data: The transcribed interviews were thoroughly read to gain insight into the participants' thoughts, ideas, and experiences.

Step 3 Coding data: Data were coded and organised into pieces and named accordingly using phrases or words to develop a general sense.

Step 4 Generating descriptions and themes: Detailed descriptions were generated for analysis.

Step 5 Representation of themes and descriptions: Participant's narratives or descriptions are used to analyse and interpret the findings and presented in Chapter 4.

3.6 ASSUMPTIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was guided by several underlying assumptions. It was assumed that educators, as primary agents of classroom management, possess relevant knowledge and experiences regarding learner ill-discipline. It was further assumed that all participants provided honest, accurate, and reflective responses based on their professional practice. The study also assumed that the selected schools demonstrate patterns of learner behaviour comparable to those found in similar public schools within the province.

The study was delimited to selected public primary schools within Sekhukhune east district and therefore does not include schools from other regions. The participants only included educators, departmental heads and Principals, learners and parents were excluded. Methodologically, the study was confined to a qualitative research design using interviews and did not incorporate quantitative measures or classroom observations. These delimitations were necessary to maintain focus and manage the

scope of the research, but they also restrict the generalisability of the findings beyond the study context.

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In research, trustworthiness refers to how well a study upholds the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, key elements that ensure the quality and reliability of the findings (Guba, 1981:80). Trustworthiness can be achieved through ethical principles such as the protection of participant's rights and adherence to trustworthiness procedures for data collection and interpretation.

3.7.1 Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility is defined as the researcher's confidence in the accuracy and truthfulness of their findings. Nieuwenhuis (2020:144) argues that credibility can be strengthened through various strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and description. Member checking allows participants to review their transcripts and verify that they accurately represent their views and experiences. To support this, participants were given the chance to review their transcribed interviews and confirm that the researcher had accurately captured their views.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability describes the extent to which study results can be generalised or applied to different contexts or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). Transferability is crucial in understanding the importance of findings in different settings. To support transferability, the study offered rich, detailed descriptions of the research setting, allowing others to assess how the findings might apply in different contexts.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to how consistently a study can be repeated by other researchers and still produce consistent research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1982). Dependability refers to the reliability and consistency of the research methods and findings over time. To strengthen the dependability of the study, an audit trail was maintained, where the research process was documented and intense scrutiny led to the final report as well as the availability of audio recordings and triangulation of data collecting methods.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the objectivity and bias, ensuring that the research findings reflect the participants' views rather than the researcher's personal influence (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen & Elo, 2020). For a study to be neutral, the study's findings should reflect the participants' input rather than the researcher's personal assumptions or biases or personal motivations. The data were checked and rechecked, an audit trail was provided to highlight all the steps of data analysis, peer debriefing and member checking also assisted in ensuring confirmability.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Baggini and Fosl (2024) define ethics as moral principles. Mayo (2021) further states that ethics are about matters of right or wrong. To uphold ethical standards and ensure responsible conduct in my research involving human participants, I followed all the necessary procedures and consulted the appropriate authorities. I began by seeking ethical approval from the University of South Africa's research ethics committee (see Appendix A: 2024/06/12/00000011/01/RB). Once approved, I sought permission from the Limpopo Department of Education (see Appendix B) to carry out the study in schools within the Sekhukhune East District. I also approached the principals of the three participating schools to obtain their consent (see Appendix C). All Participants were thoroughly briefed about the study and signed consent forms to confirm their voluntary involvement (see Appendices C & D).

Before starting the interviews, I took time to clearly explain the study to each participant, including any potential risks involved. I made sure they understood their rights, especially that they could choose to take part or withdraw at any point without any consequences. To protect their identities and responses, I used a system of alphabetical and numerical codes. Throughout the process, I remained committed to upholding the principles of anonymity and confidentiality.

In keeping with the principles of anonymity and confidentiality, I took deliberate steps to safeguard the privacy of all participants. As McMillan and Schumacher (2014:363) highlight, researchers must assure participants that their identities remain confidential and explain how the collected data would be used. Prior to collecting any data, I provided participants with a clear explanation of the study's purpose. The research

aimed to explore how educators manage learner ill-discipline in primary schools within the Sekhukhune East District. I assured participants that they would not be exposed to any physical or psychological harm. To further protect their privacy, all recorded interviews and transcripts have been securely stored.

3.9 SUMMARY

This research adopted a case study design within a qualitative framework to examine and interpret participants' lived experiences, including their thoughts and feelings about the issue under investigation. The case study approach was chosen because it allowed me to understand people's real-world experiences and the different ways, they respond to how educators manage learner ill-discipline in primary schools within the Sekhukhune East District. In this chapter, the components of the research, interpretive paradigm, qualitative research approach, data collection methods, and the case study design, which are interconnected, was described. The next chapter (Chapter 4) presents and interprets the findings emerging from the analysis of data.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter detailed the selected research design and methodological framework. This chapter presents the findings derived from the data analysis. The study investigated how educators manage learner misbehaviour in primary schools located in the Sekhukhune District of Limpopo Province. It explored participants' views, experiences, and perceptions regarding discipline management (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). This study was guided by the main research question: *How do educators manage learner ill-discipline in the primary schools of Sekhukhune East District?* Data were collected through semi-structured interviews held at three primary schools within the district. This chapter begins with an overview of the participating schools and individuals, followed by a presentation of the findings derived from the data analysis.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

The study was conducted at three primary schools situated within the Sekhukhune District in Limpopo Province, where data collection took place. Data collection involved conducting and recording individual semi-structured interviews. The participating primary schools were purposively selected in the Sekhukhune East District. All three are public schools funded by the government according to their quintile¹; all participating schools are Quintile 2. The three schools are in blocks, constructed with bricks; School B has two extra mobile classrooms. In addition, the three primary schools have resources such as sanitation, water and electricity. To protect the identities of the schools, the three schools are referred to as School A, School B and School C. School A has an enrolment of 521 learners with 15 educators, School B has 868 learners with 20 educators, and School C has 1406 learners with 36 educators.

Table 4.1: Biographical details of participants

SCHOOL	NO	PARTICIPANTS	EXPERIENCE	QUALIFICATION	AGE	GENDER	CODE
A	1	Principal	20	BEd. Hons	57	Female	PA

¹ South African school quintiles are a national classification of public schools into five groups (1 to 5) based on the poverty of the community they serve, with Quintile 1 being the poorest and Quintile 5 being the least poor.

SCHOOL	NO	PARTICIPANTS	EXPERIENCE	QUALIFICATION	AGE	GENDER	CODE
	2	Departmental Head	10	BEd. Hons	36	Male	DHA
	3	PL1 Educator	18	BA	52	Female	PL1A
B	4	Principal	14	BEd.	49	Female	PB
	5	Departmental Head	7	BEd. Hons	31	Female	DHB
	6	PL1 Educator	2	BEd.	25	Female	PL1B
C	7	Principal	13	BEd Hons	42	Male	PC
	8	Departmental Head	23	HED	58	Female	DHC
	9	PL1 Educator	9	BEd.	36	Female	PL1C

4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Thematic analysis is a technique to analyse the data. Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015) describe thematic analysis as a qualitative method used to systematically identify, examine, and interpret recurring patterns or themes within a dataset. In this study, thematic analysis was employed to uncover meaningful themes and insights, as outlined by Clarke and Braun (2006). The goal was to draw out significant themes that could inform the discussion of the findings. Data were gathered through individual semi-structured interviews with all nine participants, which were recorded and transcribed. The analysis involved carefully listening to each participant's responses and systematically organising the data into codes, themes and sub-themes. This process led to the emergence of five major themes.

4.4 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Each main theme is accompanied by several sub-themes, which are presented in the table below and examined individually.

Table 4.2: Questions and themes

Section	Themes
1. Disruptive behaviour	1. Lack of respect 2. Academic dishonesty and disengagement 3. Defying classroom rules
2. The causes of learner ill-discipline	1. Peer pressure 2. Family background 3. Unconducive learning environment
3. The influence of learner ill-discipline on teaching and learning	1. Poor academic performance 2. Disruption of lessons 3. Distraction of other learners
4. Challenges faced by educators in managing learner ill-discipline	1. Lack of parental involvement 2. Lack of strategies to manage learner ill-discipline post corporal punishment 3. Overcrowded classrooms 4. Communication barriers
5. Strategies to manage learner ill-discipline	1. Establishment of classroom rules 2. Enforcement of classroom rules 3. Creating a conducive learning environment 4. Building positive relationships with learners 5. Parental involvement

4.4.1 Theme 1: Disruptive behaviour

This theme discusses the perspectives of educators regarding learner ill-discipline. Educators offered definitions of learner ill-discipline and discussed the types of learner ill-discipline that they come across daily. Educators also shared their experiences regarding learner ill-discipline. Learner ill-discipline includes factors such as lack of respect, academic dishonesty and disengagement, defying classroom rules, amongst others.

Sub-theme 1: Lack of respect

To gain insight into educators' views on learner misbehaviour, the researcher asked: 'How do you define learner ill-discipline?' This question aimed to uncover the

behaviours educators find disruptive and explore how they interpret and conceptualise learner discipline.

PL1B responded as follows: *“I think learner ill-discipline means any learner who won’t follow the rules that we agreed on, those learners who will talk during lessons when they’re supposed to be quiet. Learners will come to school without writing the given assessments that were being issued, or learners who will have excuses or skip classes without a reason or who talk back at educators in a disrespectful manner”*

The above response indicates that educators are faced with disrespectful learners who are ignorant and unruly.

Principal from School B agreed with PL1B by remarking that: *“Learner ill-discipline, according to me, is a learner who does not behave the way he or she is supposed to behave. Sometimes we find that the learner is disruptive. The learner is not sitting down, the learner is making noise during your period when you are teaching, the learner is talking, when you write, the learner does not write, they just disturb other learners from writing, and just misbehave.”*

DHC shared the same sentiments with PL1B and PB that: *“I regard learner ill-discipline as disrespect towards educators, for example, a learner busy talking while the lesson is busy.”*

DHA agreed with DHC by remarking that: *“What I regard as learner ill-discipline is misbehaving in class—making noise, moving around while I am teaching, or disturbing others. This can include touching, hitting, or swearing at other learners. Okay, that’s what I think is ill-discipline.”*

PC concurred with the above by remarking that: *“I think it is learners disrupting—showing disruptive behaviour in the classroom or outside the classroom. Learners who are unruly.”*

The above findings align with Masingi (2017) who defines ill-discipline as a failure to adhere to established rules and expectations. This can disturb the process of teaching and learning. Educators regard actions such as noise making, talking back at educators and failure to write assessments or skipping classes as ill-discipline. According to Curwin, Mendler and Mendler (2018), respect in a classroom environment includes following rules and treating others with kindness and fairness. Fostering mutual respect within the classroom helps create a supportive and engaging learning space where learners are empowered to thrive both academically and socially. Rabo (2022) shared similar sentiments that disrespect creates a negative atmosphere and compromises the relationship between educators and learners, leading to poor academic performance.

Sub-theme 2: Academic dishonesty and disengagement

Academic dishonesty and disengagement are serious issues that educators face in their classrooms. According to Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2022), learner disengagement refers to a situation where learners lose focus or interest during a lesson.

DHA concurred with the above statement by stating that: *“Sometimes you will find learners making noise in the class, going up and down in the classroom while I’m busy teaching, a learner may be touching other learners and disturbing them. Learners may be hitting one another or may be swearing at each other.”*

According to Bayaa et al. (2016), academic dishonesty refers to behaviours that are unethical, such as cheating during examinations.

PC stated that: *“Sometimes learners cheat during tests and examinations because they did not have enough time to study, as they misbehave during lessons.”*

PL1A highlighted that: *“You know primary learners lose focus easily, sometimes they find it difficult to engage in a lesson if an educator has to stop and reprimand a disruptive learner.”*

PL1B remarked that: *“those learners who will talk during lessons when they’re supposed to be quiet. Learners will come to school without writing the given*

assessments that was being issued or write the assessment in the morning copying from their friend's book"

DHC highlighted that: *"a learner will sleep during a lesson or just look outside and not paying attention"*

The above findings concur with Mohd et al. (2024) that educators are faced with demotivated learners who easily lose focus during teaching and learning. For learners to remain focused during lessons, the lesson must be interesting, engaging, motivating and learner-centred (Bremner, Sakata & Cameron, 2022). The learning environment must be conducive for teaching and learning.

Sub-theme 3: Defying classroom rules

The findings emerging from the analysis of data indicated that educators are faced with learners who defy classroom rules on purpose. Classroom rules defiance may lead to poor classroom management. According to DHB, *"Learner ill-discipline is anything that is not according to the classroom rules. You'll find that at the beginning of the year, we make some classroom rules together with the learners, and then if he does not adhere to those rules, that is what we call ill-discipline. Some learners purposefully defy classroom rules."*

PL1C also highlighted that: *"if a learner can talk in the classroom while the lesson is busy, and the educator did not give the learner permission to talk, that is ill-discipline"*

PA reported that: *"Some learners defy classroom rules due to peer pressure and naughtiness, which usually leads to disruption of lessons."*

PL1A said that: *"I regard learner ill-discipline as a disobedient, unruly and mischievous learner and again a learner without intention."*

PB explained that: *"sometimes a learner will not sit down, the learner is making noise during your period when you are talking, and the learner is talking when you are teaching, when you are writing the letter is not writing. Maybe she's disturbing other learners to write and just misbehave."*

The above findings correspond to findings reported by Obadire and Sinthumule (2021), that when learners disregard classroom rules, it can disrupt lessons and

negatively affect academic achievement. Isaac (2024) argues that learners may defy rules due to underlying issues such as learning difficulties, attention seeking, emotional challenges, amongst others. Defying classroom rules is not always about being unruly but a sign of learners' unmet needs and struggles (Isaac, 2024). Educators highlighted disrespect and disengagement as major causes of learner ill-discipline. Viewed through Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, these behaviours reflect the influence of both environmental factors, such as overcrowded classrooms, and personal factors, like socio-economic stress. This highlights the dynamic interaction between learners and their surroundings.

4.4.2 Theme 2: The Causes of Learner Ill-Discipline

Motseke (2020) argues that learner discipline in primary schools has a significant impact on the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Primary school is the foundation where children develop academic and social skills; however, disruptive behaviour can affect this development. Addressing learner misbehaviour requires a thoughtful exploration of the deeper factors that contribute to it, rather than focusing solely on the behaviour itself. Causes of learner ill-discipline may include peer pressure, family background, an environment that is not conducive to learning.

Sub-theme 1: Peer pressure

Learners of the same age group tend to influence each other into engaging in different behaviours and attitudes. This is called peer pressure; this can impact learners' behaviour positively or negatively, but peer pressure is commonly associated with negative behaviours (Olaleru & Owolabi, 2021). Some participants said that peer influence is the primary reason for learner misbehaviour in their schools (PA, DHC and PL1B).

PA stated that: *"The causes may differ, sometimes depending on the age of the learner, some of the learners, like those who are 13 or 14 years, might be affected by peer pressure. Some of the learners are practising bad behaviours from one another, depending on what they are doing. Like, if maybe a learner is playing in the classroom, you will find that they are competing in playing in that classroom. Such things as not doing their schoolwork just for show-off"*

DHC reported that: *“Well, there are many causes of learner ill-discipline, such as peer pressure, learners try to 'fit in' by misbehaving to make their friends happy.”*

PL1B explained that: *“Ill-discipline is caused by peer pressure, especially in Grades 4 to 7, those learners will pressure one another to skip classes and hang out in the toilets or just simply engage in negative behaviours.”*

PL1A remarked that: *“To me, learner ill-discipline can be caused by several things such as violence at home, lack of respect for teachers, overcrowded classroom and unconducive school environment. Economic crisis at home, peer pressure and personal issues.”*

DHB reported that: *“sometimes ill-discipline is caused by adolescent stage, some learners feel pressured to misbehave because of their peers.”*

According to Astatke, Weng and Chen (2023), peer pressure can negatively influence learners' academic performance, often leading them to engage in risky behaviours and poor decision-making. Learners are at their exploring stage, and it is not easy for them to resist peer pressure (Astatke et al., 2023).

Sub-theme 2: Family background

Learners are raised in families from different socio-economic status, culture and emotional environment. Family background plays a crucial role in shaping learners' educational success, social behaviours and development (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024). Participants believed that learner behaviour is determined by their family backgrounds.

DHC stated that: *“One thing that I realised is that it relates to the social problems, it emanates from home, most of them emanate from home, when you try to check with the family background is then that you will understand why a particular learner will constantly misbehave”*

PL1B remarked that: *“Sometimes you will find that the problem starts back at home, a learner may not be okay in their household in different ways. You will find that they're living alone, a child-headed family, or they are abused at home.”*

PA highlighted that: *“Our learners go through a lot back home, they face different challenges such as abuse, child-headed families, poverty and so forth, these issues distract them and some of them become disruptive during lessons.”*

DHA highlighted that: *“Learner ill-discipline may be influenced by their family backgrounds. In some cases, a learner who is not performing well may try to gain recognition by misbehaving. The learner may want to be noticed by peers and may act out in ways that make them appear outstanding, even if the behaviour is negative.”*

PC also remarked that: *“family issues may cause learner ill-discipline in such a way that some learners are heading their families or they are orphans with no guardian.”*

The above findings are supported by Craig (2023), who reports that a supportive family background provides learners with the stability that they need in school to succeed. Diab and Schultz (2021) also argue that poor family background, such as financial instability and abuse, may contribute negatively towards learners' performance.

Sub-theme 3: Unconducive learning environment

Jafri et al. (2025) define an unconducive learning environment as a learning atmosphere that is not supportive and effective for learning. Both Muliwana (2024) and Jafri et al. (2025) agree that an unconducive learning environment is one that fails to nurture learners' academic, social and emotional needs. Okoi, Okoi, and Eteng (2022) report that an unconducive learning environment affects learners' academic achievements negatively. Participants were asked about the causes of learner ill-discipline, and PL1A stated that *“I think learner ill-discipline can be caused by several issues such as an unconducive school environment, where learners are overcrowded, or the physical appearance of the classroom is not conducive.”*

PB commented that: *“There are many causes, I think one of them is a learning environment that is not conducive for learning, like when the classroom rules are not clear, or learners don't have enough learning materials.”*

DHA highlighted that: *“One of the causes of learner ill-discipline is an unconducive learning environment. Our school does not have enough infrastructure, we don't have enough resources such as textbooks, and our learners are overcrowded.”*

PL1C commented that: *“The cause might be that the teacher is not strict enough, especially regarding classroom rules and sanctions. You should not favour certain learners, and it is hard to teach in an overcrowded classroom as you cannot move freely and learners are congested.”*

DHB highlighted that: *“Sometimes us teachers may be the cause, sometimes we can go to class unprepared, the moment you're still looking for what to do with the class, learners will start misbehaving.”*

According to Sayfullo (2023), creating a safe and supportive learning environment is essential, as it helps boost learners' academic performance, social development, and emotional well-being. Saleh, Rejeki and Maemunah (2024) explain that an uncondusive learning environment can be one that lacks resources, lacks emotional support, has demotivated learners. Aithal and Aithal (2023) attest that a conducive learning environment yields positive outcomes for learners academically, emotionally and socially.

4.4.3 Theme 3: The Influence of Learner Ill-Discipline on Teaching and Learning

Increasing learner misbehaviour in schools raises serious concerns, as it disrupts the flow of teaching and hinders effective learning. Learner ill-discipline includes disrespect towards educators, absenteeism, making noise and general disruption of lessons. It is difficult for educators to teach in a classroom environment that is not conducive to the teaching and learning process. Educators spend more time addressing learner ill-discipline, while disciplined learners are distracted. Management of learner ill-discipline requires a collective effort from learners, educators and parents.

Sub-Theme 1: Poor academic performance

Learner misbehaviour has a negative effect on academic performance, which can be deeply frustrating for both educators and learners trying to stay focused and succeed. Participants shared a common view that learner ill-discipline interrupts classroom activities and makes it more difficult for both teaching and learning to take place effectively. They indicated that learner ill-discipline is time-consuming, it disrupts lessons, affects academic performance and affects learner-educator relationships.

According to PA: *“When issuing learner results, you'll find that the results are poor, you find that they are failed. The results become bad as learners are not doing their schoolwork.”*

DHA emphasised that: *“To learners, their time is being wasted when the teacher has been busy reprimanding such a learner. So, learner ill-discipline is badly affecting teaching and learning.”*

PC remarked that: *“Most of the learners are affected academically, and then some of them become dropouts due to poor academic performance.”*

PL1C shares similar sentiments with DHA that: *“learner ill-discipline affect teaching and learning because it consumes teaching time, imagine spending 10 minutes solving issues of behaviour it will lead to poor academic performance.”*

DHB highlighted that: *“sometimes you try to mediate between learners or try to reprimand them, they end up thinking that you are taking sides or you don't like them, it becomes difficult to have good relationship, they end up failing”*

The findings align with Obadire (2022) that learner ill-discipline affects learners' academic performance negatively and disrupts teaching and learning. Marlow and Rehman (2021) point out that when learners perform poorly academically, it often leads to increased absenteeism and a higher risk of dropping out. The above findings concur with Liu and Loeb (2021) who suggest that absenteeism due to poor academic performance also affects educators' lesson preparations.

Sub-Theme 2: Disruption of lessons

Learner's ill-discipline disrupts the individual learner and the entire lesson; it disrupts teaching and learning. The lesson is interrupted if learners engage in disruptive behaviours such as making noise, being disrespectful to their educators or peers, being busy with their phones amongst others (Umar & Khair, 2022). These disruptive behaviours hinder the learning experience of other learners. The educator must stop teaching and address these disruptions, which wastes time and shifts their focus on the lesson. Some of the participants claim that most of their teaching time is wasted while they try to bring the class into order.

PL1C remarked that: *“Learner ill-discipline can affect teaching and learning in a way that when I'm in class, and they disturb teaching and learning during class, So I have to take maybe some time to call the class into order, for example If a period is one hour, meaning 10 to 15 minutes, I have to call order, So I think that's where it will cause disruption in the class, So its time wasting, It waste my teaching and learning time.”*

DHA explained that: *“Learner ill-discipline is affecting teaching and learning, I can say in a very negative way, to the teacher, obviously the teacher will be disturbed, I will no longer be able to continue with my lesson as planned, as I have to reprimand the misbehaving learner and it's time wasting.”*

PA commented that: *“As educators, we plan our lessons according to ATPs [Annual Teaching Plan]. By a certain period, we must have finished the syllabus, but our lessons our disrupted by ill-discipline learners, we have to work extra hours to catch-up for the time lost, sometimes we don't even have time to catch up and this will affect our learners poorly during their assessments.”*

PC highlighted that: *“some teachers go as far as walking out of the class due to disruptive learners, the whole lesson will be disrupted with learners unattended and making noise.”*

DHB said that: *“teachers spend most of their teaching time calling learners to order, trying to apply disciplinary strategies while losing their teaching time and learners losing their learning time.”*

The above findings are supported by Obadire (2022), who suggests that learner ill-discipline may lead to lesson disruptions, which affect teaching and learning negatively, especially learner academic performance. Lesson disruptions affect teaching and learning time, academic performance and educators' morale (Chaplain, 2016).

Sub-theme 3: Distraction of other learners

When learners misbehave like making noise, being disrespectful or refusing to obey classroom rules, it creates a disruptive environment that disrupts other learners (Amalia, 2021). This makes it difficult for them to pay attention during lessons, affecting their learning experience.

According to DHC: *“Sometimes it takes time trying to call a particular learner into order. So, as you do that, other learners will be left behind while I’m concentrating on this one learner. So, the content for that lesson must be delayed for the entire class because you must attend to that issue.”*

PA commented that: *“Sometimes you will have to shift the focus from the content that you are supposed to teach and now focus on this learner who is disruptive because ill-discipline also disrupts other learners from learning and also it disrupts the smooth flow of that particular lesson.”*

PL1A remarked that: *“In most cases, disruptive learners distract other well-behaved learners by shifting the attention of the educator and delaying the whole lesson”.*

PL1C said that: *“Learner ill-discipline can affect teaching and learning in a way that maybe I’m in class, and they disturb my teaching and learning during class, So I have to take maybe some time, If a period is one hour, meaning 10 to 15 minutes, I have to call order, So I think that’s where it will cause disruption in the class, So it waste time, It waste my teaching and learning time.”*

DHA remarked that: *“Learner ill-discipline is affecting teaching and learning I can say in a very negative way, to the teacher, obviously the teacher will be disturbed will no longer be able to continue with his or her lesson. Then to the other learners of course, that is their time that has been wasted when the teacher has been busy reprimanding such a learner. So learner ill-discipline is badly affecting teaching and learning”*

The findings are consistent with Masingi (2017), who reports that learner ill-discipline does not affect only those who are involved in disruptive behaviours, but the entire class. When a lesson is disrupted, other learners easily become disengaged and lose focus (Masingi, 2017). If a learner's ill-discipline is not dealt with, learners start influencing each other to misbehave. Learners who want to focus on their studies find it difficult to do so, which may affect their academic performance.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Challenges Faced by Educators in Managing Learner Ill-Discipline

Educators face the ongoing challenge of maintaining discipline while also striving to create a classroom environment that supports meaningful teaching and effective

learning. While maintaining discipline, educators encounter behavioural challenges such as defiance, disrespect and disruptions. Managing learner discipline in the classroom is not always easy. Challenges like limited support from parents, not having clear strategies in place, and communication gaps can make it even harder for educators to maintain a positive and focused learning environment

Sub-theme 1: Lack of parental involvement

According to Zenda (2021), learners tend to achieve better academic outcomes when their parents are actively involved in their education, as this support provides essential resources and fosters constructive behaviour. Participants have shown that they require parental involvement for support and to boost learners and educators' morale.

PL1C commented that: *"The challenge that we are facing is parental involvement. Some of the parents are not reliable, whereby you can call the parent to come in for a parents' meeting so that we can address the learner to change their ill-disciplined behaviour. Most of the parents don't come when you call them. It needs cooperation between the parents and the school; some of them do, but some don't come. You'll find that a Learner repeat a behaviour, but the parents are in denial that their child misbehaves."*

DHC highlighted that: *"We have got kids who are staying alone, their parents are going out for gambling and drinking, and the kids are left at home alone. It's a serious challenge because those learners are disruptive, even if you call a parent, some of their parents don't bother to come."*

According to PL1B: *"In most cases, the parents are not supportive; they are not involved in the education of their learners. So, it becomes impossible to address the issue of their ill-disciplined children."*

PA highlighted that: *"We are having a very big challenge because some of the parents are protecting their children. Some are spoiling their children. Parents are swearing at educators in front of their children."*

PB highlighted that: *"most of the parents here are still young, they are still focusing on their lives and don't have time for their children, they leave the children in the care of their Grandparents who are old and no longer active."*

The findings clearly indicate that parents play a vital role in their children's education but without their support, learners are far less likely to succeed. Kirksey, Gottfried and Freeman (2024) emphasise that when parents are actively involved, it benefits not only the learners but also supports educators and contributes positively to the school. The above findings revealed that parental involvement in schools plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall educational experience of learners. When parents actively participate, it fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment that reinforces the value of education. Parental engagement positively influences learner performance by boosting motivation, improving behaviour and increasing academic achievement (Novianti & Garzia, 2020).

Sub-theme 2: Lack of strategies to manage learner ill-discipline post corporal punishment

According to Dlamini, Ede and Okeke (2022), discipline has been a challenge in many schools after the banning of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment has been banned due to its negative consequences, such as emotional trauma, physical trauma and aggression (Heekes, Kruger, Lester & Ward, 2022). Educators have had to devise alternative strategies to manage discipline but participants have revealed that they have faced many challenges in managing learner discipline.

According to PC: *"When trying to manage the behaviour of a child, you find that the child takes it negatively as emotional abuse; they don't take it positively."*

DHB noted that: *"If you want to punish the learner, we believed in corporal punishment previously, and because the department no longer allows us to punish them. We really struggle to manage learner discipline effectively. They do frustrate us, but you must call the learner individually, because if you try and solve that problem in front of the class, the learner will retaliate."*

PL1A commented that: *"Sometimes we do face certain challenges. Let's say you thought you were talking to a learner nicely calling them to order, then they go and report it at home. Then the parents come to school very angry, you will assume that you were doing something right, while on the other side, they will receive it in a negative manner."*

DHC highlighted that: *“Actually, we are living in a chaotic society. The strategies that we use are not applicable to an overcrowded classroom or learners who have social issues.”*

PB remarked that: *“Sometimes these strategies don’t work, leaving us teachers exhausted and frustrated, learners break rules on purpose just to frustrate a teacher.”*

The above findings align with Dlamini (2022) that educators are not well trained in managing learner ill-discipline. They struggle to manage discipline as the policies are not clearly structured, which frustrates educators and learners (Dlamini, 2022). With corporal punishment banned, educators must devise alternative strategies that promote positive behaviour and build positive relationships amongst learners and educators.

Sub-theme 3: Overcrowded classrooms

Overcrowded classrooms and ill-discipline are the main challenges in South African schools, especially schools that are under-resourced (Botha, 2022). Educators struggle to maintain learner attention, manage overcrowded classrooms and deliver quality education to learners (Botha, 2022). Overcrowded classrooms affect the safety of learners, compromise the quality of education and increase disruptive behaviours (Vakili et al., 2024). Participants have shown that they struggle to manage learner discipline in overcrowded classrooms.

PA commented that: *“It is difficult to teach an overcrowded classroom as you have to reprimand learners every now and then.”*

DHA highlighted that: *“Our school classrooms are overcrowded; discipline is a challenge because you can’t keep an eye on all learners.”*

PL1C reported that: *“We are faced with challenges such as overcrowded classrooms because we don’t have enough infrastructure ... we have been applying for at least mobile classrooms, with no luck.”*

PB remarked that: *“we don’t have enough classrooms here at our school as you can see, our learners are overcrowded in the classrooms, it is difficult to discipline them in such an environment, our department is failing us in this case.”*

PC said that: *“our learner ratio is not policy compliant, some of our classes are 1:85 and more, we have a challenge of overcrowded classrooms.”*

Overcrowded classrooms occur when there is an increase in learner enrolment and the infrastructure is insufficient (Likuru & Mwila, 2022). When a classroom is overcrowded, learners are forced to share desks and textbooks as there is a shortage, which will lead to negative behaviours and educators failing to manage discipline. The above findings align with Okechukwu and Oboshi (2021) that overcrowded classrooms disrupts the flow of teaching and hinders learners' progress.

Sub-theme 5: Communication barriers

Communication is crucial in an educational setting (Jalolov, 2024). Communication can build positive relations amongst educators, parents and learners. If a communication barrier occurs, it can affect teaching and learning, and misunderstandings and frustrations can occur (Park & Ramirez, 2022). Participants have shown that they often encounter communication barriers with learners and parents.

DHA commented that: *“In most cases, parents are not supportive. When you call them, they just ignore our calls and claim it was network issues. When you give the learner a letter to give to their parent, they simply do not do that.”*

PC highlighted that: *“Sometimes you reprimand a learner, the learner negatively takes the news home to report to their parents, who will come to school angry, only to find that it was a misunderstanding.”*

PL1B remarked that: *“Our learners are very sensitive these days, if you reprimand them for their wrongdoings, they confuse it with hate or they say you are shouting at them.”*

DHC highlighted that: *“parents and educators are always in disagreements due to ill-discipline, they blame each other for the behaviour of the learners, some parents still force educators to use corporal punishment on their children because they don't understand how the policy work and they feel like that's the only way to discipline a learner.”*

PL1C remarked that: *“often times educators and learners have communication issues as educators feel like learners are disrespecting them by maybe raising their tone, while learners feel like educators don’t care for them when reprimanding, so it is a challenge.”*

The above findings are in agreement with Dewi and Maryanto (2024) that communication barriers may lead to an uncondusive environment and hinder the process of teaching and learning. Participants believe that good communication may create a more inclusive environment that is supportive and effective.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Strategies to Manage Learner Ill-Discipline

Learner ill-discipline poses a serious challenge to effective teaching and learning, as it disrupts lessons and negatively impacts academic performance. To manage learner ill-discipline, educators must implement effective strategies to maintain order educators should put in place approaches that encourage mutual respect and help build a positive, supportive environment for learning. By adopting these strategies, educators can minimise ill-discipline behaviours and enhance a positive learning environment.

Sub-theme 1: Establishment of classroom rules

It is important for educators to establish classroom rules to create a well-structured, safe, comfortable and positive learning environment (Ahmad, Deeba & Rehman, 2022). In addition to the Learner Code of Conduct, classroom rules assist in discipline, promoting respect and cooperation (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Participants were asked about strategies that they use to manage discipline in their classroom; it was clear that they establish classroom rules to promote good behaviour.

DHA explained that: *“Each and every class must have classroom rules. The Learner Code of Conduct must be read to all learners. Parents should be notified of the learner code of conduct, how we expect the children to behave at school.”*

PC commented that: *“By setting classroom rules and involving parents in the disciplining of their children.”*

PL1A remarked that: *“At the beginning of the year, my learners and I create classroom rules together with their sanctions. I make sure that I am consistent with the rules so that they can take them seriously.”*

PL1B highlighted that: *“In my class, I establish classroom rules together with the learners so that they are aware what is expected from them and the punishment for misbehaving. This helps a lot in managing learner ill-discipline, sometimes I reward good behaviour in order to promote it.”*

PL1C commented that: *“having classroom rules keep order, I manage my class by being consistent with the rules and they encourage sense of responsibility for the learners.”*

Stronge and Xu (2021) suggest that establishing classroom rules that are clear, consistent and fair promotes a positive and effective learning environment. Prasetyarini et al. (2021) highlight that it is important for educators to involve learners in setting classroom rules, as this helps learners understand what is expected of them and encourages a sense of responsibility. The above findings concur with Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) by reporting that classroom rules not only control learners' behaviour but also teach them about respect and responsibility.

Sub-theme 2: Enforcement of classroom rules

For educators to maintain a positive learning environment, classroom rules must be enforced. Educators must ensure that learners follow the rules consistently as expected. The enforcement of classroom rules must be consistent, fair and promote positive behaviour (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Participants indicated that for classroom rules to work, enforcement is required.

PL1A explained that: *“I use classroom rules as a strategy to manage learner ill-discipline. For rules to work, I have to be consistent and enforce the rules. If learners realise that the educator is not consistent, they won't take the rules seriously.”*

DHB commented that: *“When we open for term 1, I start with setting of the rules together with my learners, the learners will know what is expected from them. I then*

stick to the rules to manage discipline and be consistent with the sanctions, so the learner is aware of the consequences of not following the rules.”

PB reported that: *“I set classroom rules together with my learners, so that they are aware of my expectations, so that they are aware of the consequences of not following classroom rules. I use these rules throughout the year.”*

PL1C stated that: *“after establishing the rules, I enforce them on a daily basis making sure that learners are aware that good behaviour is for their own safety and benefit, for example, no bullying is allowed in my classroom, and my learners know that very well.”*

DHA commented that: *“I strictly enforce classroom rules on a daily basis, before the start of the lesson we remind each other the classroom rules without fail, this encourages my learner to behave well and not disappoint.”*

The above findings concur with Hughes, Riccomini and Dexter (2022) that setting clear expectations from the start reduces confusion and ensures that everyone is on the same page. Enforcing classroom rules helps learners understand routine; it is an ongoing process throughout the year. Enforcing classroom rules assists in creating a safe and supportive environment.

Sub-theme 3: Creating a conducive learning environment

It is crucial to develop a conducive learning environment to ensure the safety, engagement and academic success of learners (Sayfulloevna, 2023). Anokam and Ipem (2022) highlighted that a conducive learning environment is one that is comfortable, emotionally supportive, safe and engaging. Singha and Singha (2023) reported that educators are responsible for creating a learning environment that is respectful, inclusive and encouraging. Participants highlighted that it is crucial to create a conducive learning environment for learners.

DHC commented that: *“As a supportive educator, I need to make sure that I’ll be a good listener to make sure that whatever my learner is telling me is confidential. You don’t share it with anyone; in this way I’m creating a safe space for my learners.”*

PC highlighted that: *“Teachers must create a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning by advocating for a positive discipline, whereby the learners know that by disciplining them, you're not hating them, you just want them to be on the right track.”*

PL1B reported that: *“Learners learn better in an environment that is safe and conducive for learning. For example, if a learner is bullied in class, that particular learner will not be able to focus because their learning environment is not safe.”*

DHA remarked that: *“as an educator, I strive for safe learning space, bullying is not allowed in my class, and I always make sure that the class is neat and clean.”*

PA commented that: *“learners learn better when they are free, we ensure that the learning space is safe and conducive for teaching and learning by applying positive strategies such as classroom rules.”*

The findings are supported by Amerstorfer and Freiin von Münster-Kistner (2021) that when learners feel loved, valued and supported, they easily engage and participate in their studies. Singha and Singha (2023) highlighted that a conducive learning environment builds a good character and promotes learner confidence. An inclusive learning environment builds positive relations between educators and learners. When the environment is conducive, learners perform well academically, they collaborate, share ideas, and engage in positive discussions (Ruijuan, Srikhoa & Jantharajit, 2023).

Sub-theme 4: Building positive relationships with learners

According to McKay and Macomber (2023), it is important for educators and learners to build positive relationships as it creates a learning environment that is safe, respectful, trustworthy and engaging. Educators can build relations with learners by getting to know them better, knowing their names, backgrounds and understanding their learning styles (Faulkner Watson, Pollino & Shetterly, 2021). Muradas (2021) highlighted that educators must be friendly, approachable and empathetic so that learners can share their struggles and engage comfortably with them.

PL1B explained that: *“I think the first thing is to know your learners, know them, know their names. When you talk to them, address them using their names. When they talk to you, pay attention and listen to them carefully.”*

DHC commented that: *“Sometimes you must step out of being their teacher and become their friend so that you can be a good listener. You listen to them; they will tell you there is a lot of stories.”*

PA said: *“I build good relationships with my learners; I become their friend so that they can easily open up to me.”*

PL1A commented that: *“my learners are like my own children, we share good memories together and I support them in times of need, they are free to share anything with me, I enjoy the bond I share with them, I miss them so much when schools are closed.”*

PB explained that: *“children can sense our energies, it is easy for them to build relations with a teacher who cares not only about their grades but also their future.”*

Amerstorfer and Freiin von Münster-Kistner (2021) highlight that building positive relationships requires guidance and mentorship in both the academic and personal growth of learners. Trust is an important aspect in every relationship; therefore, educators must be trustworthy, empathetic and supportive (Jaber, 2021). Eldridge and McLafferty (2021) suggest that when learners are loved and supported, they thrive academically, emotionally and socially.

Sub-theme 5: Parental involvement

One of the key contributors to learners' academic success is active involvement from their parents. Zenda (2021) reported that learners whose parents are actively engaged in their education often achieve better academic results, show increased motivation, and exhibit constructive behaviour. Parental engagement plays a key role in fostering positive relationships among educators, learners, and parents (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022).

PL1A explained that: *“I involve parents by making them sign their children's books every Friday; in that way, they get to check their children's books every week.”*

DHB said that: *“As educators, we need parents to support us, especially with discipline; they must teach their children respect and the importance of school.”*

PC also said that: *“Parents should take an active role in supporting their children’s education and to boost their children’s confidence.”*

PL1C reported that: *“parental involvement is very important but the parents in our community are very busy, some go to school during the day while others go to work, over weekend they are busy with community events such as funerals, weddings and church, so they hardly come to school.”*

PA commented that: *“ parents in our school are really trying to support their children, they do attend some of the school events but it is not enough, there is no consistency in it, some parent don’t even collect their children’s progress report cards, we still have report cards from term 1, they will only come to collect for term 4 only.”*

The above findings are supported by Alhumam (2021) that parental involvement gives children stability, a sense of belonging, and builds their confidence. Wilder (2023) highlighted that parental involvement improves support for learning. Sibanda (2021) reported that parental involvement makes educators’ jobs easier and effective.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter concentrated on presenting the findings derived from the analysis of interview data. The responses were categorised into key themes and sub-themes. The results brought attention to several critical areas: the underlying causes of learner misbehaviour, the difficulties educators encounter in managing it, its impact on teaching and learning, and the strategies used by educators to address it. The following chapter provides a summary of the research, outlines key recommendations, and presents the final conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented findings derived from the analysis of semi-structured interviews. Data were collected from three principals, three deputy principals, and three PL1 educators to examine how learner misbehaviour is managed in primary schools within the Sekhukhune East District of Limpopo Province. Following the abolition of corporal punishment in South Africa, educators have had to adopt innovative and constructive approaches to effectively address learner discipline.

The main question guiding this research is: *How do educators manage learner ill-discipline in the primary schools of Sekhukhune East District?*

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This section gives a brief overview of the study.

5.2.1 Chapter 1: Orientation of the Study

This chapter opened with an introduction to the study, providing its context and background. It then explained the rationale for the research and outlined the core issue under investigation. The main research question, along with its supporting sub-questions, was presented, followed by a clear articulation of the study's aims and objectives. The chapter proceeded to describe the research design and methodology used. Ethical considerations and matters of trustworthiness were also addressed. Finally, key concepts relevant to the study were defined to conclude the chapter.

5.2.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter explored the relevant literature that supported and informed the research. It further presented and explored techniques used by educators to manage learner ill-discipline through relevant literature. This chapter covered concepts of discipline and learner ill-discipline. The chapter explored the educator's perceptions of learner ill-discipline and techniques to manage discipline and reviewed a wide range of literature on the difficulties educators encounter in maintaining discipline.

5.2.3 Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter walked the reader through the research design and methodology, beginning with an introduction to the study, followed by guiding paradigm and the chosen research approach and research design. The research was based on a qualitative method and structured around a case study approach. Nine participants were chosen for the study, including three principals, three deputy principals, and three PL1 educators from three different primary schools. The participating schools and participants in the Sekhukhune east district were purposefully selected. The data collection concentrated on how educators in Sekhukhune east primary schools dealt with learner ill-discipline, with the researcher conducting semi-structured interviews with participants. The study was conducted in line with ethical research standards, this included securing permission to carry out the research, ensuring participants' confidentiality and anonymity, obtaining informed consent, encouraging voluntary participation, and assessing the reliability of the study.

5.2.4 Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion

The chapter highlights the insights gained through the process of analysing the collected data. It began with an introduction, and a brief explanation of how the sample was selected. Emerging insights from the interview analysis were examined in detail, with central themes and related sub-themes identified in accordance with the research sub-questions. The study was conducted to gain insight into how educators manage learner misbehaviour in primary schools within the Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. The chapter provided a detailed discussion of the identified themes and sub-themes, concluding with a summary of the main insights.

5.2.5 Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions

The final chapter summarises the research findings, highlights key insights, and provides actionable recommendations.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter outlines the results of the research, drawing on data collected from three participating primary schools supported by the reviewed literature. The findings are structured according to the main themes that surfaced during the analysis, in line with the research questions.

5.3.1 RQ1: What do educators regard as ill-disciplined behaviour?

Participants see learner ill-discipline as a significant challenge that disrupts lessons. Participants define learner ill-discipline as disruptive behaviours such as lack of respect, defiance of rules, talking back, cheating and disengagement from lessons. According to participants, learner ill-discipline causes lesson disruptions, poor academic performance, and frustration of educators. Such behavioural issues lead to an unconducive learning environment, poor academic performance and contribute to educators' exhaustion and stress.

Participants highlighted that some learners engage in misbehaviour as a result of peer pressure and other underlying social issues. Participants highlighted that some behavioural issues may be deliberate while others might be caused by social and emotional issues; hence, discipline in schools should not be punishment-focused but rather engaging and supportive to address learners' underlying challenges. A supportive approach would promote respect, accountability and a safe learning environment. Some participants have indicated that they are not sure how to discipline some of the disruptive learners, as they have run out of strategies that could work. Findings highlighted the importance of supportive and engaging strategies to learners. The findings also highlighted the need for the Department to offer workshops and training sessions to help educators effectively manage learner ill-discipline

5.3.2 RQ2: What are the causes of ill-disciplined behaviour?

This theme looked into the key contributors to learner misconduct in primary schools in the Sekhukhune East District of Limpopo. Participants shared that the main reasons behind learner ill-discipline include peer pressure, an unconducive learning environment, and social issues. Participants highlighted that learners from Grade 4 to Grade 7 misbehave due to peer pressure; they skip classes, refuse to do their schoolwork to impress their fellow classmates. Learners have different problems and come from diverse family situations, such as child-headed families, poverty, and abuse. These challenges affect learners socially and academically, leading to emotional distress and disruptive behaviour at school. Participants indicated that an unconducive learning environment, Such as cramped classrooms, inadequate learning resources and classroom rules that are not clear, lead to disruptive behaviour.

The above findings suggested that educators must be patient, empathetic and understanding when dealing with disruptive learners.

5.3.3 RQ3: How does learners' ill-discipline affect teaching and learning?

Misbehaving learners negatively impact the consistency of educational delivery, highlighting the challenges it creates for both educators and learners. Participants indicated that disruptive behaviours such as disrespect, late arrival, absenteeism, and making noise affect teaching and learning negatively. These behaviours consume teaching time and lead to poor academic performance. Time spent managing learner behaviour reduces instructional time, thereby lowering the quality of education learners receive. Participants further indicated that disruptions in the classroom not only affect disruptive learners but also affect learners who wish to learn. Participants stressed that parental participation is vital to supporting learners' educational progress, noting that this engagement helps them better monitor and guide their behaviour.

5.3.4 RQ4: What challenges do educators face in managing learner ill-discipline?

Handling disruptive behaviour among learners is a persistent challenge for educators in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo. Participants indicated that they are faced with poor participation of parents, overcrowded classrooms and communication barriers. Participants revealed that it is a challenge for them to correct learners' behaviour if the parent does not participate in their children's studies. Participants further indicated that it is difficult to collaborate with parents as they deny their children's misbehaviour, they abuse educators verbally and ignore any form of communication. Some participants highlighted that the ban on corporal punishment left them with few effective strategies for managing discipline. They further highlighted that they do not have healthy relationships with learners and parents due to alternative disciplinary strategies that are not effective. Overcrowded classrooms are another challenge that educators face due to a lack of infrastructure. It is a challenge for educators to keep discipline and deliver quality education in an overcrowded classroom. Educators must be trained on positive and encouraging disciplinary strategies, and improved communication methods. To establish a supportive learning environment for learners, the Department should invest in the infrastructure. These challenges faced by participants highlight a

need for strong parental involvement, training of educators and improved infrastructure to support effective discipline in primary schools.

5.3.5 RQ5: What strategies can educators use to manage learner ill-discipline?

Educators are responsible for managing discipline in schools; however, to effectively manage discipline, they need to implement strategies that are supportive, respectful, and encouraging. Based on the above findings, educators need to set rules that are clear and consistent. Learners need to be involved when creating classroom rules to promote accountability. Educators must communicate school rules with parents to promote transparency and collaboration. In addition, favourable conditions for learning that include safety, inclusion and support need to be created for an effective teaching and learning process.

Participants highlighted that for educators to reduce learner discipline issues, they are expected to establish meaningful relations with learners. based on trust, empathy and communication. Parental involvement also plays a vital role in strengthening discipline by enforcing school expectations at home. When learners trust their educators, they feel emotionally secure and safe. The findings have also shown that consistency, mutual respect, emotional support and collaboration between educators, parents and learners could lead to effective discipline. In primary schools, managing learner discipline requires a holistic approach and consistency. The findings support Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that behaviour is shaped by the interaction of personal, behavioural, and environmental factors. For example, educators' focus on building respectful relationships and involving parents shows how environmental support can encourage positive learner behaviour.

5.4 COMPARISON OF VIEWS ACROSS POST-LEVELS

Post-Level 1 educators spoke about the everyday struggle of managing overcrowded classrooms, disrespectful learners and lack of parental support, describing how these conditions turn discipline into a constant uphill battle. They shared how these conditions often makes it difficult to create a conducive learning environment, leaving educators feeling stretched and frustrated. Post-Level 2 educators, on the other hand, shifted the conversation towards the need for clear policies and consistent support from school leadership. They emphasised that when management provides guidance

and backs educators, it lightens the load and creates a sense of security in handling challenging behaviour. In contrast, Post-Level 4 educators took a broader view, pointing to systemic issues such as resource shortages and gaps in professional development. They stressed the urgent need for departmental training to equip educators with practical strategies, arguing that without this support, efforts to maintain discipline will remain a challenge and ineffective.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study suggest that addressing learner misconduct in primary schools within Sekhukhune East, Limpopo, necessitates a diverse and well-informed approach. The following recommendations are offered to address the underlying causes of disciplinary issues and to support educators, learners, and key stakeholders in fostering a more supportive and effective learning environment.

5.5.1 Recommendations for the Department of Education

- The Department of Education ought to schedule educators, especially novice educators, compulsory training and workshops regarding effective strategies on management of learner ill-discipline.
- The Department of Education officials should conduct at least a monthly visit to schools to monitor and support parents and educators with challenges they face regarding discipline management.
- The Department of Education should develop clear and practical policies for managing learner discipline. These guidelines should be easy to understand and apply, and educators must be actively involved in creating them.
- The Department of Education should make infrastructural investments to reduce overcrowded classrooms, which lead to disruptive behaviours.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Educators

- Educators, together with the learners, must set simple, clear, and consistent classroom rules at the start of the academic year to reinforce discipline.
- Educators should build positive relations with learners to create mutual respect and reduce learner discipline issues.

- Educators are required to participate in workshops and training sessions organised by the Department on how to manage learner behaviour.
- Educators should incorporate lessons on social and emotional skills to assist learners in managing their behaviour.

5.5.3 Recommendations for Parents

- Parents should reinforce discipline by laying the foundation of good manners at home.
- Parents should cultivate constructive relationships with educators to facilitate effective communication regarding their children's behaviour, academic progress, and any arising concerns.
- Parental involvement is required in the formulation of school disciplinary policies for fostering accountability and promoting collaborative decision-making.
- Parents should emphasise the importance of education to learners. When learners are aware of the value of education, they will respect school rules.
- Parents should participate actively in school activities such as events, meetings and disciplinary hearings to show interest and support the education of their children.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The aim of this study is to understand how educators handle learner misbehaviour in primary schools across the Sekhukhune East District in Limpopo Province. There is a gap in parental involvement, according to the research findings. There should be more innovative ways to encourage parental involvement.

Future studies ought to concentrate more on

- Examining the socio-economic factors that contribute to learner misconduct.
- Focusing on reducing learner misconduct by promoting positive influence amongst peers.
- Examining how classroom size affects discipline, teaching, and academic performance.

- Conduct cross-district comparative studies to identify common and unique challenges in managing ill-discipline.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of post-corporal punishment strategies currently implemented in schools.
- Explore parental involvement interventions and their impact on learner behaviour.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on just three primary schools in the Sekhukhune East District of Limpopo province and involved a small sample of educators, which may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalised. As a result, schools in other parts of Limpopo and across the country were not included, and the findings are context-specific to rural primary schools, which may not reflect urban settings. The aim of the study was to explore how educators deal with learner misbehaviour, especially in the context of primary schools; therefore, secondary schools were excluded from the research. This study was confined to a sample of nine participants, selected based on their teaching experience and professional rank. Since educators may have different experiences when managing learner ill-discipline, and because the data relied on self-reported accounts that may introduce bias, the results of this study may not be widely applicable beyond the specific context in which it was conducted. Parents and learners were excluded from the study since the aim was to explore educators' management of learner ill-discipline.

5.8 CONCLUSIONS

The study found that, following the abolition of corporal punishment, educators, particularly in the schools examined; face heightened difficulties in maintaining classroom discipline. The entire school community including parents, educators, learners, and the Department of Education, should be involved in discipline maintenance. Bandura's Social Learning Theory helps explain this challenge by showing that learners tend to imitate the behaviours they see in the people around them. When the examples they observe at home, in the community, or even at school are inconsistent or negative, learners are more likely to adopt disruptive patterns of behaviour. This highlights the importance of ensuring that clear and positive behavioural expectations are reinforced across all environments they interact with.

Recommendations to address learner ill-discipline have been made based on the knowledge and experience of the educators interviewed. There is a critical need for interventions to support educators in cultivating learning environments that are conducive to effective teaching and learner development. Communities must collaborate with schools to create a safe space and assist learners in dealing with psychosocial issues that they face.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 12 June 2024

Ref: 2024/06/12/00000011/01/RB

Name: Ms Makgoga Sethololo Thomo

Student No.: 60266961

Decision: Ethics Approval form

Dear Ms Makgoga Sethololo Thomo

Researcher(s): Name: Makgoga Sethololo Thomo

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Telephone: 066 286 8662

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr MR Mabusela

E-mail address: mabusmp@unisa.ac.za

Telephone: 012 429 4474

Title of research: Educators' management of learner ill-discipline in Sekhukhune East District primary schools, Limpopo

Qualification: MEd

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period **2024/06/1** to **2029/06/12**.

*The **write risk level** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on **12 June 2024** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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Appendix B: Approval from Department of Education



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 2/2/2 Enq: Makola MC Tel No: 015 290 9448 E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Makgoga ST
P.O Box 1982, Jane Furse
Makwarela
1085
Makgoga.thomo@gmail.com

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: "Educators' management of learner ill-discipline in Sekhukhune East District primary schools, Limpopo."
3. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the District or Circuit Office and the School concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
 - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
 - 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH : MAKGOGA ST Page 1

Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people

Appendix C: Participant Information Letter



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Date: 05 May 2024

Title: Educator's management of learner Ill-Discipline in Sekhukhune East District primary schools, Limpopo.

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Sethololo Thomo Makgoga and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr Mabusela M.R, a Senior lecturer in the Department of Educational leadership and management towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled Educator's management of learner Ill-Discipline in the Primary schools of Mmashadi Circuit in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of the study is to explore educator's management of learner ill-discipline in the primary schools of Mmashadi circuit in Sekhukhune East district, Limpopo.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

I purposefully chose you as a person assumed to have relevant information based on the objectives of this study and based on ethical considerations.

I obtained your contact details from your principal after you gave her permission to share your contacts with me. Eight educators will participate in the study of which three educators are from your school.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves observations and unstructured interviews. I will mainly asked questions regarding management of learner ill-discipline in your classroom. We will meet for the first time to discuss the details of the study and to sign consent forms which will roughly take about 2 hours. The time expected for observations is about 2 hours and interview will take about 30 minutes. It will take roughly 4 hours and 30 minutes to participate in the study.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will be given an opportunity to share your feelings and experienced based on management of learner ill-discipline.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There is no risk or harm involved in taking part in the study. There will only be observations followed by interviews.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder and members of the

Research Ethics Review Committee whom will sign a confidentiality agreement. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Anonymous data will be kept for your right of beneficence, and respect your dignity and fidelity.

In some case, this data may be used for research report, journal articles, and conference proceedings. Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity, e.g. when focus groups are used as a data collection method.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

The audio tapes of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in my study at Mmashadi for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There is no payment for this participation, but the reward is the opportunity that is given to you to discover about this topic, that can be benefit to you, on improving.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Department of education, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Sethololo Thomo Makgoga on 066 286 8662 or email 60266961@mylife.unisa.ca.za. The findings are accessible for a period of 5 years.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact:

Researcher: Sethololo Thomo Makgoga

Cell: 066 286 8662

Email: 60266961@mylife.unisa.ca.za.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact:

Supervisor: Dr M.R Mabusela

Tel: 012 429 4474

Email: mabusmp@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Sethololo Thomo Makgoga

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form



APPENDIX E - CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant's Name and surname (Please Print)

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's name and surname (Please print)

Researcher's signature

Date



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Appendix E: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



Title: Educator's management of learner Ill-Discipline in the Primary schools of Mmashadi Circuit in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo.

Name of student: Sethololo Thomo Makgoga

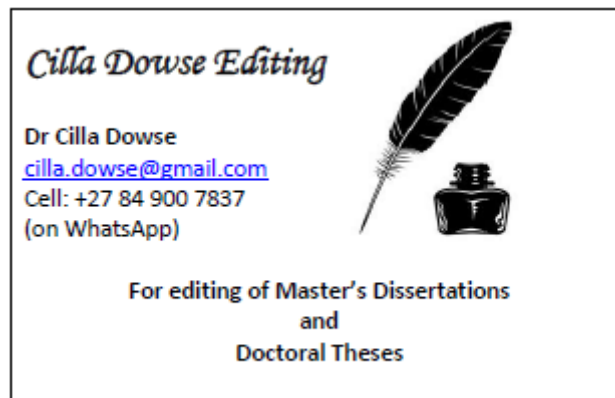
Student Number: 60266961

Main key questions that will be asked:

1. How do you manage learner ill-discipline in your classroom?
2. What do you regard as learner ill-discipline?
3. What are the causes of learner ill-discipline?
4. How does learner ill-discipline affect teaching and learning?
5. What challenges do you face in managing learner ill-discipline?
6. What techniques can educators use to manage learner ill-discipline?

Follow-up questions will be asked based on participant's responses.

Appendix F: Proof of Editing



This letter serves to confirm that editing and proofreading were done for:

SETHOLOLO THOMO MAKGOGA

Master of Education

Educational Leadership and Management

University of South Africa

**EDUCATORS' MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER ILL-DISCIPLINE IN SEKHUKHUNE EAST
DISTRICT PRIMARY SCHOOLS, LIMPOPO**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Cilla Dowse'.

Cilla Dowse
07 October 2025

Cilla Dowse PhD in Assessment and Quality Assurance in Education and Training: University of Pretoria 2014 Basic Editing and Proofreading: McGillivray Linnegar Associates 2008 Programme on Editing Principles and Practices: University of Pretoria 2009 Editing and Proofreading for Academic Purposes: McGillivray Linnegar Associates 2021 Professional Editors' Guild Associate Member, DOW003

Disclaimer: The editor takes no responsibility for any changes or revision to the document after the final round of editing has been completed and the proof of editing certificate issued.

Appendix G: Turnitin Report

Similarity Report

PAPER NAME

**DISSERTATION MAKGOGA final 07.10.2
5.docx**

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SETHOLOLO THOMO MAKGOGA

WORD COUNT

28650 Words

CHARACTER COUNT

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