

**TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF MANAGING LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN MMASHADI CIRCUIT, SEKHUKHUNE EAST DISTRICT**

by

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DoE	Department of Education
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
IE	Inclusive Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SAC	South African Constitution
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation

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## **ABSTRACT**

The management of learners' discipline is a practice that disproportionately burdens teachers' teaching and learning experiences. Teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline are guided by codes of conduct, the legislative framework, and school regulations. Grounded within existing literature on learner discipline and teacher management of learner discipline, this study explored teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools at Mmashadi Circuit, Sekhukhune East District. To achieve the study aim, a qualitative research approach was employed underpinned by an interpretive paradigm. A case study research design was applied. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were adopted for data generation. A total of 10 teachers were selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the data generated. A humanistic theoretical framework was used to explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. The study revealed teachers' understanding of learners' discipline to involve implementation of school rules and establishing positive behaviour. It was evident that learner discipline is facilitated by learner factors, teacher factors, peer pressure, family factors, societal factors, gender factors, and school factors. Teachers experienced bullying, disrespect, violence, and learners bringing prohibited objects. To address learners' disciplinary challenges, the research recommended stakeholders involvement, clarification of school regulations, developing a positive attitude, and initiate comprehensive disciplinary planning procedures coupled with use of professionally trained individuals. The study proposed that disciplinary processes for learners should increase their participation in the formulation of school discipline guidelines. It further recommends that teachers provide explicit guidance to learners on school and classroom rules and regulations. The study suggested that parents should be involved in learners' education.

**KEY TERMS:** Teachers' experiences, Learner discipline, and Management of learner discipline

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction and background to the study

Teachers' duties are disproportionately burdened by learners' lack of self-control (Magabane, 2021). The distinct teachers duties are listed in the Norms and Standards for Teachers in Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) (2003:47) including supervisors, administrators, and managers. The ELRC (2003) indicates that teachers should have a variety of academic backgrounds and a desire to continue professional development throughout their careers. Additionally, teachers are expected to perform a wide range of other jobs, including leadership and management roles, in addition to their classroom duties (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Teachers are constantly relying on their own reservoirs of knowledge, strength, compassion, and wisdom to manage the many obligations they are expected to handle (Coetzee, 2021). As a result, teachers continuously display psychological well-being in their behaviours and responses to gain the respect of their superiors, colleagues, learners, and the greater community (McInerney, Ganotice, King, Morin & Marsh, 2015).

Due to regular duty rotation, teachers' mental and social health are challenged. The South African Constitution (SAC) (Section 10), the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Section 8 and 10), the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (Section 3), the Department of Education (DoE), and school administration structures provide the parameters within which the teacher's main duty for student discipline should be fulfilled. This comprises all the necessary principles, concepts, and procedures that the teacher will need to follow when instructing learners. However, well-designed a classroom management system may be, a teacher's mood and behaviour in the classroom nevertheless have a significant impact on how learners process and retain knowledge (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). This is supported by the perspectives of Valente, Monteiro and Lourenço (2019), who argue that instructors' emotional state is critical to learners' success. A good classroom atmosphere is formed by a teacher who enjoys their job, and a bad classroom climate is created by a teacher who is frustrated with their work.

Research shows that teachers experience stress and disciplinary challenges in the management of learners' discipline. Muthusamy (2015) revealed that teachers are irritated by continuously reprimanding learners, deal with disruptive learners' behaviour and manage overcrowded classroom. These conditions result in emotional and psychological strains. In addition, Sprick, Sprick, Edwards and Coughlin (2021) explained learners behavioural instabilities which culminate to classroom chaos because teachers have limited control in punishing learners. Makendano (2019) confirmed that Namibian teachers have a sense of humiliation and insecurities owing to learners' disobedience. Relatedly, Sandra (2021) indicated that teachers in KwaZulu-Natal schools personalities are negatively impacted by unruly learners culminating into harming teachers' professionalism. These studies underscore continental and provincial teachers' experiences while managing learners' discipline.

Sandra (2021) underscore that teachers experience feelings of sadness and pessimism due to difficulties in managing their learners' discipline. This has the potential to cause teachers to suffer from mental and physical health issues that prevent them from attaining their full potential. Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) add that uncondusive teaching environment cause teachers' emotional suffering and stress-related disorders. During an informal engagement in Limpopo province, it became evident that teachers at Mmashadi Circuit Secondary School in Sekhukhune East District are under significant stress and strife, which negatively influences disciplinary policies and professional development. Despite mandated to manage learners' discipline, teachers are stressed out because of learners' continued bad behaviour and violence which makes teachers feel powerless, impotent, and paralysed (Mpolase, 2021).

This research aims to address a knowledge gap regarding the experiences of Mmashadi Circuit teachers in managing learner discipline. This was accomplished by interviewing secondary school teachers in the Sekhukhune East District's Mmashadi Circuit about how they manage learners' discipline. The focus of this research is on teachers' experiences in dealing with disciplinary issues. Teachers may use the results of this research to fine-tune their strategies for dealing with learners who struggle with self-control. This project examines teachers' sentiments, reactions to learners who lack self-control, and talents in psychology and social interaction. The study aimed to examine teachers' experiences with classroom disruptions and violent attitudes.

## 1.2 Rationale for the study

Limpopo is home to the Mmashadi Circuit in the Sekhukhune East District. Learners in the district's schools are becoming more disobedient (Masingi, 2017; Magabane, 2021). Tlhapi's (2015) study found that occurrences of learner misbehaviour in the Sekhukhune East area vary widely including school grounds fighting, use of prohibited objects, and violence against teachers. Considering that efficient teaching and learning must occur in a disorganised educational environment, Tlhapi (2015) concludes that a lack of discipline among learners lowers learners' academic achievement. Teachers' safety and security are a major factor in Sekhukhune East District's Mmashadi Circuit, considering tales of teachers being killed in schools have become more prevalent (Debushe, 2017; Mudau, 2018).

In the study of orphaned high school students in Limpopo Province, Ringani (2018) found that student-on-learner, student-on-educator, and educator-on-learner violence had the greatest impact on learners' academic performance. Violent attitudes are commonly exposed to physical and verbal hostility, which is an important consideration. The study also indicated that school demographics had a significant influence on a variety of forms of violence and aggressive behaviour. Secondary schools with 500 or more students or those in rural areas had the highest rates of student and teacher aggression and violence (Ringani, 2018).

Despite section 8(4) of the SASA provide teachers' extensive discretion to enforce code of conduct to address learners misconduct, learner misbehaviour persists. This issue has chiefly affected teachers due to the disruptions it has caused in the classroom. Despite numerous studies on teacher experience in managing learner discipline, there remains a geographical gap in research focused on secondary school teachers' experiences in this regard in the Mmashadi Circuit. A plethora of studies explored teachers' obligations in the management of learners' discipline (Hagenauer, Hascher & Volet, 2015; Allen, 2015; Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021), factors that contribute to learners' misbehaviour (Van Deventer, 2018; Maponya, 2015), and the occurrence of learners' misbehaviour (Tlhapi, 2015; Ringani, 2018; Mpolase, 2021). This study addresses the gap by exploring teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools at Mmashadi Circuit, Sekhukhune East District.

### **1.3 Statements of the problem**

The research explored teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline, primarily in secondary schools in the Mmashadi Circuit in Sekhukhune East District. Teachers at Mmashadi Circuit Secondary School in Sekhukhune East District are under significant stress and strife from continued learners' misbehavior such as violence against teachers, bringing prohibited objects, and bullying. This negatively influences teachers' implementation of disciplinary policies and professional development. Despite numerous studies on teacher experience in managing learner discipline, there remains a geographical research gap in the Mmashadi Circuit focused on teachers experiences of managing learner discipline in secondary schools. This study addressed the gap by exploring teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools within the Mmashadi Circuit of the Sekhukhune East District.

#### **1.3.1 The research questions**

##### **1.3.1.1 Main research question**

What are teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline in secondary schools at Mmashadi Circuit, Sekhukhune East District?

##### **1.3.1.2 Sub-research questions**

- How do teachers understand the concept of learner discipline?
- What factors contribute to disciplinary problems in secondary schools?
- How do teachers handle learners' disciplinary problems in secondary school?

#### **1.3.2 Aim and objectives of the study**

##### **1.3.2.1 Aim**

To explore teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline in secondary schools at Mmashadi Circuit, Sekhukhune East District.

##### **1.3.2.2 Objectives**

The study objectives are:

- To explore teachers understand the concept of learner discipline.

- To determine factors contributing to learners' discipline in secondary school.
- To determine ways in which teachers handle learners' disciplinary problems in secondary school.

## **1.4 Literature review**

### **1.4.1 Theoretical framework**

A theory can be defined as a set of propositions that are logically related, expressing the relations among different constructs and propositions (Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage & Young, 2020). This explains the theoretical framework as an abstract description of the relationships between concepts that helps us understand the world. The purpose of a theoretical framework is to develop a logically connected set of concepts and premises that scaffold a study (Babbie, 2020; Varpio et al., 2020). This study's theoretical framework was essential for developing concepts and patterns that provided research grounding.

#### **1.4.1.1 The humanistic theoretical framework of human behaviour**

The human theory of education was utilised to explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline, as it underscores the human tendency toward responsiveness. Winston (2016) defined humanistic theory as a school of thought that emphasises human beings' innate goodness and that a person's fundamental needs are significant to their behaviour. Therefore, the theoretical framework's concepts of the centre are based on the notion that learners are fundamentally good and that teachers should teach them in ways that help them develop as full people. Therefore, learners' needs should be met for them to learn and behave appropriately.

The humanistic theoretical framework focuses on the mental, physical, social, and emotional health of people as its primary concern. It posits that human beings are always progressing and striving to achieve a higher level of happiness and fulfilment in their lives in a variety of different domains (Tolstova & Levasheva, 2019). The physical, social, and emotional well-being of teachers plays a significant role in how teachers' experiences shape the management of learners' discipline. For example, when a teacher is suffering from a persistent physical illness, it is almost inevitable that they will miss significant class time. The psychological, social, and emotional atmosphere in the classrooms is significantly affected by teachers' frequent absences.

Furthermore, the study employed the humanistic theory because it emphasises that

humans are formed by the connection of different parts (Varpio et al., 2020). As a result, the environment in which this study was characterised by a complex web of interdependencies. Through the application of humanistic philosophy, I was able to understand teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline inside and outside the classroom. As noted by Varpio et al. (2020), exploring various aspects of a teacher's identity can provide insight into individuals' overall well-being.

#### **1.4.2 Literature review**

A literature review examines ongoing dialogue in the field and provides a framework for establishing the study's importance (Babbie, 2016; Sajeevanie, 2021). The purpose of the literature review is to identify existing knowledge about teachers' experiences in managing learner discipline. Moreover, a literature review examines existing research on learner discipline to gain insight into the topic. This was essential for establishing the research conceptual context and identifying research gaps. Additionally, the literature review provided an opportunity to formulate research questions that address the research gap.

#### **1.4.3 The concept of discipline**

Downs et al. (2019) define discipline as retributive and aimed at reducing the likelihood and frequency of misbehaviour. Discipline is perceived as a means of training to mould learners' character and behaviour into an ideal state (Makendano, 2019). Van Deventer (2018) highlighted discipline as punishment intended to correct or train learners. This explains discipline as an approach that provides guidance and direction to learners after they engage in wrong actions. Consistent with this view, Van Deventer (2018) believes that learners should be taught self-control as a tool to promote self-actualisation and empowerment. However, Bayraktar and Dogan (2017) revealed that discipline is grounded in teachers creating a classroom environment that allows teaching, establishing rules that control learners' behaviour, and implementing practices that instil responsibility.

The importance of discipline involves establishing order within a group, maintaining a group's attention on a single objective, and protecting students from damage (Gastil, 2017). Discipline maintains behavioural control that meets school academic performance, behavioural control, and self-regulation (Himarwa, 2019). Van Deventer (2018) argued that discipline in schools helps learners gain a better grasp of life by having teachers introduce them to concepts and societal values. The DoE (2016)

emphasised the importance of discipline as the provision of time, imagination, effort, and resources to improve learners. This cultivates shared values of human dignity, respect, and empathy.

#### **1.4.4 Factors contributing to learner discipline**

##### **1.4.4.1 The learner**

A review of the literature suggests that biophysical variables, including disease, nutrition, neurological functioning, temperament, genetic anomalies, physical limitations, and medicine or medication, may affect a learner's behaviour (Maponya, 2015). In a similar vein, Ringani (2018) indicated that learners with sickness challenges are less inclined to listen in class and are more likely to provoke disruptions. This contributes to learners missing many classes due to health problems (Maponya, 2015). Psychologically related experiences such as trauma, sexual abuse, substance abuse, pornographic media exposure, and physical violence trigger learner disciplinary problems (Sibanda, 2017). What is apparent is that learner discipline develops from individual factors that vary depending on each learner's past.

##### **1.4.4.2 The family**

A review of the literature raises concerns about several family dynamics' contributions to learner discipline. Maponya (2018) demonstrated that family structures are an important aspect of learners' discipline, as families serve as the primary micro-community for socialisation and the development of behaviour. However, Van Deventer (2018) offered a different view on the role of income in shaping learners' discipline. Van Deventer (2018) emphasised that households with working parents also contribute to learners' disciplinary problems by limiting parents' time to nurture and instruct children with appropriate manners, values, and respect. Ringani's (2018) study of learners' involvement in violent behaviour in Limpopo province demonstrated that households from black communities neglect and lack interest in the education of children. As a result, students in Venda's schools suffer from poor academic performance, high dropout rates, and a lack of discipline. Therefore, learners' primary micro-community of socialisation directly impacts discipline.

##### **1.4.4.3 The school**

Several studies agreed that learners' capacity to self-regulate behaviour is impacted by school leadership and administration. Van Deventer (2018) placed learners' discipline in the hands of school leadership and administration to effectively manage

learners' behaviour, which might influence learners' ability to self-regulate. There is a correlation between school administrators who employ an authoritarian leadership style and learners' aggressive behaviour. Himarwa (2019) noted that autocratic management often results in learners revolting due to factors such as favouritism, dishonesty, absenteeism, authoritarian or dictatorial tendencies, and inaccessibility. Similarly, Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020) asserted that learners' discipline stems from classroom management and school-level management. The two levels of management are essential because they coordinate the activities of a group to achieve specific goals through planning, organising, guiding, and supervising those activities (Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2020). Therefore, there is a direct link between the school environment and learners' discipline.

#### **1.4.4.3 Teachers**

Effective classroom management aims to keep students interested in important learning activities. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) study of teachers' roles in learners' discipline management in the province of Mpumalanga indicated that teachers play an important part in the administration of school discipline. The primary findings from the Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) study were that learner academic performance benefits from teachers' involvement in promoting excellent learner behaviour. Ringani (2018) stressed that fewer disciplinary issues arise in classrooms where teachers engage learners in the learning process, perceive learners as autonomous individuals who can think independently, and resist treating learners as subordinates. However, Gastil (2017) stressed that learners prefer strict teachers who involve them in the management of discipline, determine the consequences of their behaviour, and hold them responsible for those consequences.

#### **1.4.4.4 Society**

Belle (2017) attributed learners' discipline to the traditions and atmosphere of the society in which the child was brought up, because these factors have a significant bearing on how learners act as adults. This is framed by the idea that lack of discipline in educational settings has been linked to several aspects of society. Sharma's (2017) study on the lack of parental involvement in learners' education also established an interconnection between the influences of family and society and concerns pertaining to discipline. Sharma (2017) noted that children who are made to feel rejected at home and by society are more likely to seek approval in ways beyond societal norms. Jinot (2018) emphasised that learners may behave inappropriately due to societal

pressures to challenge authority. This pressure is exerted because learners experience acting daily in their communities (Jinot, 2018).

#### **1.4.5 The impact and effects of learners' lack of discipline**

Learners' lack of discipline is associated with disruptive actions that threaten teachers. Disruptive learners' actions can erode learners' commitment and assets, such as social support and unity among teachers and all those involved in education, leading to enormous issues in schools among students (Miles et al., 2018). Indiscipline problems are therefore not only a threat to the functioning of schools, but they may also be related to other educational and social issues. These problems contribute to abuse of authority, misunderstandings, squabbles, resentments, and violent fights, which may negatively affect the successful management of the school. As a direct consequence, there is an increasing number of disagreements over the roles various school stakeholders play in the educational process.

Learners' poor behaviour makes it more difficult to teach and learn effectively, as well as lowering teachers' morale. According to Obadire and Sinthumule (2021), learners' lack of discipline leaves teachers feeling helpless and enraged. Additionally, Alghamdi and Khadawardi (2024) indicated that teachers in the United States of America identified learners as the essential and central component that impacts their professional enthusiasm. Learners' actions are among the key contributors to the high levels of stress, demoralisation, and burnout experienced by educators and lecturers (Gagnon, Sylvester & Marsh, 2021). Accordingly, low student attendance rates dragged down the mood of the teaching staff. It has been demonstrated that students' actions significantly influence the level of enthusiasm with which teachers approach their work.

The frequency of grade retention and the likelihood of dropping out may both be predicted by a student's disciplinary history, best viewed through the lens of school sanctions. Suh and Suh (2007) found that expelled learners were 77.5% more likely to abandon their education than non-suspended learners after accounting for characteristics such as GPA, absenteeism, fighting, threats in school, family structure, socioeconomic level, and contextual factors at the school. This was discovered by utilising data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY-97). Using a within-student methodology, Chu and Ready (2018) compared quarters among learners with and without suspensions and discovered that learners were more likely

to discontinue their education in the term after a suspension. By comparing students with identical demographics, Grade 8 test scores, and pre-high school histories of absences, tardiness, and suspensions, they discovered that those who had been suspended in the first three sessions of high school had a reduced probability of graduating.

Discipline is an essential part of learning, and without it, no school or organisation can do its work properly (Sibanda, 2017). For adequate teaching and learning, it is essential for the learners and the teachers to show discipline for the school progress and for the result of learners because it plays an important role. When a child begins to learn something, whether formally or informally, they need a safe place, and to create an immune and smooth environment, discipline is the only way a child can learn and grow. Without discipline, a goal can never be achieved. The competence of a learner supervisor and the control of their own behaviour is called self-discipline. Self-disciplined students can focus on their goals and choose their level of academic engagement. Discipline policies should be set out for enquiries into different categories, depending on circumstances. Teachers' competence will be measured by students' academic performance, regardless of how well they prepare their lesson plans.

#### **1.4.6 Roles of the teachers in learner discipline**

##### **1.4.6.1 Maintain discipline**

Teachers have the responsibility to revitalise the classroom environment. Unedified disciplinary practices provide roadblocks to accomplishing the school's stated goals and purpose. According to Section 8(1) of the SASA 1996, discipline should be maintained in the classroom environment so that the student thrives without any detrimental activity. Instructors have a duty to instil order, and they are assisted by parents as stated in Section 7(5) of the Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners of 1996. Moreover, teachers are required to advance the implementation of discipline and to accept responsibility for a learner's conduct.

##### **1.4.6.2 Design classroom rules**

To preserve discipline in the school environment, teachers establish and enforce classroom norms. This enables teachers to perform their professional duties effectively and deliver lessons appropriately. Hagenauer, Hascher and Volet (2015)

agree that clear, concise standards for instructional leadership are crucial to maintaining classroom order. The guidelines will encourage students to gain comprehensive knowledge of what is anticipated and to understand the repercussions of their actions, which may be potentially beneficial or unpleasant. Allen (2015) supports this position by noting that numerous sources argue that learners must be entitled to take part in the design of classroom norms. In doing so, the educators exhibit trust in the students' capacity to collaborate, and it also enhances the likelihood that students will stick to the rules, since they contributed to creating them.

#### **1.4.6.3 Equip learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values**

Students should enter the world armed with knowledge and ready to take on any challenge. Educators have a responsibility to help students achieve not just academic success but also outstanding results in the community and the workplace. They influence student behaviour by showing students how their daily actions and choices shape their academic and professional futures. Students who are disciplined for tardiness may be more likely to make better decisions in the future (Allen, 2015). Learning under disciplined conditions forces students to reflect on their own motivations and values.

In addition, all teachers in South African schools are jointly and severally liable for enforcing the lawful conduct of their respective student bodies (Section 8 of the SASA No. 84 of 1996). Educators who are the first to learn of or witness an issue have a special obligation to either disclose it or take action to resolve it. Educators can report disciplinary issues to a more senior colleague or to the administrator. Unless the infraction is quite grave, the administrator may escalate the case to the tribunal, the school disciplinary committee, the SGB, the provincial education department, and finally the MEC of Education. Discipline measures ought to be proportional to the seriousness of the offence. Section 8 of the SASA (No. 84 of 1996) states that learning institutions are responsible for setting learning standards.

#### **1.4.7 Mitigation of learner unwanted behaviour**

##### **1.4.7.1 Positive Reinforcement**

An important part of this plan is to use techniques such as positive reinforcement to reduce undesirable behaviours in students. Fair punishment for bad behaviour must be used in conjunction with well-defined limits that clearly indicate what is and is not acceptable behaviour, to provide positive reinforcement (Upindi et al., 2016). In

addition, students might be inspired by factors such as personal interest, praise, and approbation. Therefore, teachers should keep in mind the importance of expressing genuine gratitude and interest in students' work. This means that positive reinforcement succeeds when negative reinforcement and mockery fail. A teacher's job is to stop students from misbehaving. This may be accomplished by detecting misbehaviour and devising tactics to redirect it. Students who perform well might be recognised by having their names posted on notice boards or by receiving special awards from their teachers. Rewards may take many forms, including verbal praise or activities that class members especially love.

#### **1.4.7.2 Guidance and Counselling**

The first point should be an improvement in the quality of developmentally appropriate guidance and counselling services. Individual students' behaviour must be regularly monitored to identify and address it (Upindi et al., 2016). This might provide some insight into when bad behaviour is most likely to occur. Teachers are more likely to prevent students from misbehaving if they can identify the root causes of a learner's behaviour and give counselling and advice (Upindi et al., 2016). Students who their peers have bullied might benefit greatly from counselling programmes. Counselling about the dangers of smoking and sexual activity that can lead to AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, for example, may work as a deterrent.

#### **1.4.7.3 A Sound Relationship between the Teacher and the Learners**

Partners in education place a high value on building trusting connections. It is impossible to teach and learn effectively when there is a lack of mutual respect between the teacher and student (Upindi et al., 2016). Teachers are more likely to build harmonious connections with their students when they are more compassionate in their actions. This led to better student behaviour. Mutual trust, loyalty, care, understanding, and respect for the other's rights, along with an appreciation for the individual as a person irrespective of what they do for others, are common factors in a successful teacher-learner relationship (Upindi et al., 2016). Compassion, transparency, inquisitive questioning, providing an ear, and a sense of being cared for are all characteristics of healthy partnerships.

### **1.5 Research methodology and design**

#### **1.5.1 Research approach**

This study used a qualitative research approach, which prioritises exploring human

experiences, perspectives, and outcomes in natural settings (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2019). A qualitative research approach uncovers events and their foundations by recording the operation of attitudes, the boundaries that connect individuals, and interconnections between opinions (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Nassaji, 2020). For this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted to understand teachers' experiences in learner discipline management. This was founded on the understanding that qualitative research aims to explore the heart of social problems by concentrating on social dimensions across various settings (Maree, 2016; Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). Teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline enabled a comprehensive exploration of discipline management in schools. As Pham (2018) states, qualitative research is useful for studying niche populations and for keeping detailed records of experiences. Information from qualitative research provided a better understanding of teachers' experiences in managing learner discipline.

### **1.5.2 Research paradigm**

This study was grounded in the interpretive research paradigm, which emphasises understanding social phenomena through human interaction and experiences (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) characterised the interpretive paradigm as a philosophical approach that interprets and describes activities from a subjective position. Using the research paradigm allowed an understanding of teachers' experiences through a multiplicity of realities. Thanh and Thanh (2015) recognised the interpretive paradigm as founded on relative ontology while supporting a subjective epistemology in conducting research. A relative enabled research processes to be understood from multiple realities, while a subjective epistemology directed the research to acquire teachers' experience by focusing on social interactions. Engagement with secondary school teachers in the Mmashadi Circuit provided a better understanding of their experiences in managing learners' discipline.

### **1.5.3 Research design**

A case study research design was adopted to provide a blueprint for the study. It resembles an approach aimed at providing a detailed explanation of a social phenomenon through the selection of a specific focus (Mouton, 2016; Schoch, 2020). A multiple case study design was applied to emphasise different perspectives formed from varying contexts. The researcher selected four schools in which teacher interaction was centred. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) recognised multiple case studies

as effective in enabling an understanding of teachers' experience in a contextualised research setting. This provided a window into multiple teachers' narratives and experiences. As McFarlane (2015) illustrated, case study design provides a vivid picture of the problem by focusing on various backgrounds to develop an argument. The selection of various schools in the Mmashadi Circuit was purposed to generate a descriptive perspective of teachers' experiences that mirrors the Mmashadi Circuit.

#### **1.5.4 Data collection instruments**

Qualitative research data generation instruments are dominated by tools such as observation, interviews, document analysis, and focus groups. This study's data were generated through semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. The purpose was to combine primary and secondary data sources to arrive at a credible and dependable conclusion.

##### **1.5.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews**

Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with secondary school teachers in the Mmashadi Circuit. Semi-structured interviews involve interactions with participants using open-ended questions that allow participants to share information freely (Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey, 2015; Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions that allowed participants to share their thoughts, while the researcher sought clarification. This was enhanced by a face-to-face interview approach coupled with individual-based interviews that eliminated group influence. Before teachers engage in the interviews, they sign consent forms for voluntary participants, indicating that the researcher informed participants of the research purpose, potential benefits, and the nature of participation. The relevance of semi-structured interviews was that they encouraged participants to express their experiences without hindrance (Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey, 2015; Belina, 2023). This allowed the generation of rich, detailed information on the experience of teachers in the management of learners' discipline.

##### **1.5.4.2 Textual analysis**

In this study, the researcher reviewed key documents that shed light on teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. With the approval of the school administrators and teachers, the researcher was able to study learners' disciplinary records, academic performance, and teacher reports on learners' discipline. Additionally the researcher reviewed learners' profiles, yearly teaching plans, lessons,

the assessment reports, classroom policies, disciplinary procedure booklets, and school codes of conduct. The materials were utilised with the appropriate degree of care, as they contained both potentially beneficial and sensitive information about the participants and the learners. This was crucial since documents are a rich source of anecdotal evidence that sheds light on the issue at hand by reflecting the attitudes and actions of those who participated in the study. According to Lobe, Morgan and Hoffman (2020), document reviews are important because they provide historical context.

### **1.5.5 Population and sampling**

#### **1.5.5.1 Research population**

Research population entails the collection of specified groups of people, entities, objects, units and events with shared interests in the study (Sharma, 2017; Thacker, 2020). It includes every element that resembles research parameters and boundaries (Miles, Huberman & Saldaa, 2018; Casteel & Bridier, 2021). The study focused on secondary school teachers in the Mmashadi Circuit of the Sekhukhune East District. The study population comprised 10 secondary school teachers from the Mmashadi Circuit in the Sekhukhune area. Furthermore, the teachers came from a wide range of backgrounds, including rural and urban settings. Fifty percent of the participants in the research were female. The aim was to have research findings that adhere to inclusive gender norms. This action was taken to ensure that all aspects of teachers' lives are included in the research. The schools were chosen because they met criteria for high levels of discipline, low levels of documented aggressive student behaviour, and strong academic results.

#### **1.5.5.2 Sampling**

The study used purposive sampling to select participants. As Maree (2016) argues, purposive sampling is a technique in which a researcher chooses cases for inclusion in the sample based on subjective evaluations and research objectives. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), the purposive sampling technique enables the researchers to select the study's intrinsic value and objectives to determine the study sample. In this light, research participants were selected because they were qualified secondary school teachers with experience in managing learners' discipline.

Additionally participants were included in the study based on their teaching at one of the selected schools and their experience managing learners' discipline. Teachers

were eligible to participate if they had either managed student discipline themselves or watched it being managed by colleagues in their schools. The fundamental advantage of purposive sampling was that it enabled the selection of respondents who aligned with the study's objectives (Sharma, 2017; Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020). The use of the purposive sampling technique was premised on the need to have a representative sample and diversity among study participants. Therefore, the study selected teachers from rural and urban secondary schools. Considered in the selection of schools were the general academic achievement of the school, the extent to which teachers enforced rules against learners' misconduct, and the frequency with which learners resorted to physical aggression.

#### **1.5.5.2 Sampling size**

Hennink and Kaiser (2022) assert that assessing sample size is important to guarantee that an adequate phenomenon is explored. Berndt (2020) noted that several considerations, including population variability, the quantity of eligibility criteria, the degree to which roosting of criteria is required, groups with shared interests, multiple samples within one study, and the data collection method, all play a role in determining the appropriate size of a qualitative research sample. Semi-structured interviews are often used in smaller study samples (Berndt, 2020). Taking all of this into account, the researcher settled on a sample size of ten participants to ensure manageability while providing sufficient data to address the study's guiding objectives. The number of participants was determined by the time required to complete and the financial resources available.

#### **1.5.6 Data analysis and interpretation**

Qualitative data analysis focuses on making meaning of information about the participants' perspectives on the issue by noticing patterns, themes, categories, and regularities (Babbie, 2020; Coker, 2022). Thematic analysis was used to examine and classify the data for this investigation. It is a method for discovering overarching themes and meaningful connections in a body of information (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Dawadi, 2020). Data analysis was used to elucidate and elaborate on paradigmatic orientations and assumptions, which are essential for the reliability of the results (Creswell, 2015; Christou, 2022). The goal of using a thematic analysis was to allow for a more complete, intricate, and precise description of the data (Braun & Clarke,

2019). Hence, data analysis made it simple to examine and comprehend teachers' common understandings of and approaches to regulating learners' behaviour.

The premise that thematic analysis formulates themes addressing research questions motivated the application of thematic analysis to the study of data from semi-structured interviews. Four overarching themes emerged from the analysis, each contributing to the study's goals. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of data analysis were used to develop themes and analyse data.

## **1.6 Credibility and trustworthiness**

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) argue that the researcher's commitment to factuality and accuracy is the single most important component in establishing credibility. For example, I used a research design and methods that have been extensively used by other researchers in studying teachers' experiences in managing learners' violence in schools. It was also made clear to the participants that there were no universal answers to the questions posed, and participants were urged to openly voice their views without fear of losing credibility. Transferability refers to the extent to which findings from one research study can be transferred to other situations with comparable characteristics (Quick & Hall, 2015; Adler, 2022). To help readers connect the situations described in the research report with those they have personally experienced, I incorporated participants' original comments into the presentation of the study findings (Quick and Hall, 2015; Haq, Rasheed, Rashid & Akhter, 2023).

According to De Vos et al. (2014), dependability in research refers to the extent to which a researcher's findings are characterised by consistency, clarity, and auditability. The study's research design and methodology sections, which detail its execution and data production procedures, provide sufficient and thorough information. For a study to be trustworthy, the researcher must explain any discrepancies that arise. It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the results they have drawn from their data have been correctly interpreted and that these results are not the product of their own invention (Chowdhury, 2015; Stahl & King, 2020). The researcher sought to remove any potential bias by basing all conclusions solely on information gathered during the data collection phase.

## **1.7 Research ethics**

Research ethics refers to the principles, regulations, standards, and norms that members of the research community agree are reasonable, equitable, and suitable

(Davis & Lachlan, 2017; Drolet, Rose-Derouin, Leblanc, Ruest & Williams-Jones, 2023). This implies that, as a researcher, it is important to adhere to a set of moral guidelines when conducting the study. In this study, the researcher was offered letters of permission from the principals of the selected schools and the participants. Additionally, the research was approved by the DoE and the University of South Africa's Research Office. Participants were fully informed of the research's purpose. The researcher ensured that participation in the study was voluntary to prevent participants from feeling any pressure to provide answers. After participants received all necessary information, they were asked to sign a written consent form. Participants' identity was shielded from public view. The researcher ensured that participants were aware of the benefits that might accrue to them and to the research community at large.

### **1.8 Limitations and delimitations of the study**

There are several limitations to this research. The limitations include the small sample size of ten teachers from two secondary schools, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to all schools in the Mmashadi Circuit or beyond. The study's focus on a specific geographic area (the Mmashadi Circuit in the Sekhukhune East District) also limits the extent to which the findings can reflect teachers' experiences in schools from different districts or quintile classifications. Additionally, while the study explores teachers' experiences in managing learner discipline, it does not investigate broader aspects of school management or other factors influencing learner behaviour, which may affect the comprehensiveness of the findings.

The delimitations of the study are intentional design choices aimed at ensuring depth and focus. The research is confined to two secondary schools, allowing for a detailed examination of teachers' lived experiences within a specific context. Participants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in classroom management, ensuring that the data collected is relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. The study deliberately focuses solely on the management of learner discipline, excluding other teaching or administrative responsibilities, in order to maintain a clear and manageable scope. These delimitations enable the researcher to produce rich, context-specific insights while acknowledging that the findings are not intended to be generalised beyond the selected schools.

## **1.9 Definitions of key concepts**

### **1.9.1 Teachers' experiences**

Teachers' experiences entail knowledge received through actual participation in a specific encounter or transaction (Pablé & Hutton, 2015). However, Gastil (2017) explained that teachers' experiences relate to the phenomenon of entrapping information or competence through the perceptions of consciousness. In this study, teachers' experiences were referred to as circumstances and encounters encountered by teachers while managing learners' discipline.

### **1.9.2 Learner discipline**

Learner discipline is the consequence for wrongdoing, which serves to reduce the likelihood or recurrence of such misbehaviour (Downs et al., 2019). Lustick (2021) described learner discipline as the process of training oneself in obedience and self-control, skills. In this study, learner discipline was defined as the measures teachers use to guide learners toward more socially acceptable school behaviours.

### **1.9.3 Management of learner discipline**

Management of learner discipline refers to corrective measures employed to describe any behaviour that defies societal norms or harms others (Van Deventer, 2018). Moreover, management of learner discipline is defined as a wide range of guidelines to correct misbehaviour, including bullying, theft, damage of school property, sexually linked issues, cursing, calling teachers' names, and absence without legitimate grounds (Downs et al., 2019). In the study, management of learner discipline refers to corrective measures teacher apply to learners' deviance from established norms and values in a school environment.

## **1.10 Chapter outline**

The following is a list of all the chapters of the study:

### **1.10.1 Chapter 1: Introduction and background**

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the study; a description of the problem; the investigation's background, purpose, and objectives; research questions; the significance of the study; subject definitions; and chapter summaries.

### **1.10.2 Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework**

This chapter provided a jumping-off point for a study of teachers' perspectives on their

work in South Africa. The challenges of the learner's discipline were examined alongside other contemporary works of literature. The key resources for understanding this field are scholarly works, academic journals, and government regulations.

### **1.10.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology and design**

Study design, sampling strategy, population, data collection tools and techniques, data analysis, and ethical considerations were discussed in this chapter. This is because they relate to the research method and design selected. This chapter's goal was to justify the decision to use specific methodologies, designs, sampling strategies, and data-collection instruments.

### **1.10.4 Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis and discussion on findings**

In this chapter, I provided a description and analysis of the interpretation of findings. I also analysed data using thematic analysis. Importantly, I followed the 5-step data analysis process to draw valid conclusions.

### **1.10.5 Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations**

This is the last section of the study, focusing on its findings and recommendations for further investigation. It is important to note that both the Department of Education and the national government may propose using the study findings.

## **1.11 Chapter summary**

The chapter outlined and contextualised the concept of learners' discipline and described the background of teachers' experiences in managing it. The chapter also highlighted the research problem, specifically the occurrence of learners' violent behaviour in secondary schools within the Mmashadi Circuit of the Sekhukhune East District. Consequently, the chapter indicated that the study aims to explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. The chapter also placed special attention on the difficulties teachers face throughout the disciplinary process. Additionally, the study's research questions and aims were outlined and discussed. The chapter was concluded with a research chapter outline. The following chapter presents the literature review and theoretical framework that provide the background to the study and contextualise it within the broader field of teachers' management of learner discipline.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the context in which the research is concentrated. Moreover, the chapter elucidates the study background, rationale, research problem, research questions, aims, and the chapter outline. In this chapter, a literature review and theoretical framework that contextualise and highlight prior studies on teachers' management of learners' discipline are the central focus. Ebidor and Ikhide (2024) noted that a literature review helps identify material that has already been gathered. This literature review aims to understand existing knowledge and identify gaps in understanding teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. This is essential to the research as it offers an analysis of previous research. The chapter further discusses the concept of learners' discipline and conceptualises it within the field of education.

Additionally, the literature review explores factors that influence learners' discipline in secondary schools and the experiences of teachers in managing learners' discipline. Notably, the strategies teachers adopt in managing learners' discipline will be contextualised in the chapter. The description and contextualisation of the theoretical framework that shapes the study also form part of the chapter.

#### 2.2 The concept of discipline and learners' discipline

According to Downs et al. (2019), the concept of discipline is founded on the idea of retribution for wrongdoing, to reduce the likelihood of recurrent misbehaviour (Downs et al., 2019; Gagnon, Sylvester & Marsh, 2021). This implies that discipline in a learning environment can be considered any form of training that strives to shape an individual's character into a more desirable form. This definition of discipline has also been explained by Van Deventer (2018), who describes discipline as the application of correctional and educational measures in the form of punishment. To put this another way, discipline involves ways of assisting learners with standardised direction. This implies that establishing order and a sense of fairness are essential to proper

discipline in educational and training settings. Van Deventer (2018) and Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) concur that teachers should utilise discipline as a means of teaching learners self-control and self-discipline. A person's potential for self-actualisation and sense of agency can reportedly be increased using discipline, which is another argument in favour of the practice.

Furthermore, learners' discipline is the teacher's responsibility, as it creates a classroom atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning (Bayraktar & Dogan, 2017; Adjei, 2021). In addition, Bayraktar and Dogan (2017) asserted that learners' discipline follows the path of teachers' influence, with appropriate practices and moral development that guarantees learners will feel responsible for the consequences of their acts. In other words, it is truly an extrinsic factor, as it teaches people to behave in accordance with standards that help them achieve the goals they have set for themselves.

Learners' disciplines also involve establishing order within a group and protecting learners from injury or disturbance. Consequently, learners' discipline refers to the practices that an individual or group uses to maintain behavioural control and achieve the objectives of the training (Van Deventer, 2018; Padayachee & Gcelu, 2022). It is feasible to conclude that learners need to be disciplined in schools to better understand how to navigate life (Van Deventer, 2018; Magwa & Mayisela, 2024). This is framed within the idea that, as teachers present learners with ideas and codes of conduct, they are educating them to behave in ways acceptable to their classmates and to the rest of society.

According to the DoEs' (2018) definition of the educational process, human attitudes, values, and perceptions play an essential role in the development of learners' discipline. The DoE emphasises the need to invest time, creativity, labour, and resources in managing learners' discipline. The idea is that relationships between individuals and groups must be managed in a manner that is consistent with commonly held values, such as human dignity, respect, and quality (DoE, 2018). Consequently, learners develop the ability to exercise self-control, respect others, and accept the consequences of their actions through instruction, which typically leads to a cooperative learning approach.

### **2.2.1 Contextualising the concept of learners' discipline**

For the purposes of this investigation, the concept of learners' discipline was framed around Bayraktar and Dogan (2017), who proposed that learners' discipline is any form of instruction designed to foster the development of a particular personality and pattern of action. This indicates that learners' discipline involves implications for training and corrective discipline. In this way, the study viewed learners' discipline from the perspective of an angel and a scenario of guided, directed behaviour. Additionally, the study also comprehends learners' discipline within the framework of Masekela, Ngobeni and Sepeng (2024), which emphasises the establishment of order and fairness as primary characteristics of discipline in educational and training settings. Consequently, the concept of discipline can be understood as a constructive behaviour aimed at promoting appropriate behaviour and cultivating self-control and self-discipline in learners. Additionally, one may argue that discipline is the growth of the individual, as well as the encouragement of self-actualisation and empowerment.

The field of education also considers learners' discipline as the practice of enforcing rules and regulations to preserve a semblance of order that can advance educational goals and provide teachers with an environment conducive to teaching and learning (Bayraktar & Dogan, 2017; Mathungeni, 2024). Considering this, Muliandi and Sulisworo (2023) argued that discipline ensures that learners are at peace with themselves and their surroundings by introducing them to appropriate practices and by fostering moral development and a sense of accountability. Bayraktar and Dogan (2017) argued that learners' discipline ensures that they are at peace with themselves and their surroundings. This is an extrinsic aspect, since it involves training individuals to act in accordance with norms aimed at achieving a goal, which helps accomplish that goal.

The study also considered learners' discipline from the perspective of group control and monitoring. Nkuna (2022) asserted that learners' discipline entails establishing order within a group, ensuring that all members remain intent on achieving the set objective, and protecting students from injuring or upsetting one another. As a result, discipline can be defined as the process through which an individual or group acquires the ability to maintain control of their behaviour to accomplish the goals of training. Considering that the idea incorporates the learner's prior knowledge and areas of

interest, it is possible to conclude that classroom discipline in schools ought to be organised to assist students in developing an awareness of life. Therefore, learners are being prepared to behave in ways acceptable to the community.

## **2.3 Relevance of learners' discipline in teaching and learning**

### **2.3.1 Self-control and academic training**

The ability to behave properly in accordance with the norms and policies established by the learning institution is the essence of discipline (Makendano, 2019; Ntshangase, 2025). This points to the idea that learners' discipline needs to be characterised by respect for oneself, honour for one's fellow humans, and adherence to a disciplined lifestyle. In this way, Moremi and Themane (2024) indicated that learners' discipline is an extremely vital component in fostering a productive educational atmosphere. This is because learning is impossible without discipline, and with discipline, learners can work effectively towards achieving goals. This is essential because learners develop a responsible attitude toward academic work when they are subjected to rules. Consequently, Makendano (2019) highlighted that teaching and learning are significantly enhanced by the practice of self-control and self-discipline, which are central to cultivating learners' discipline.

A well-disciplined school presents a positive image to the community and better prepares learners for successful futures (Gastil, 2017; Cassar, Oosterheert & Meijer, 2023). To put it another way, learners' academic achievement is directly correlated to their level of self-discipline. Therefore, the learners' capacity to recognise what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and to adhere to the school's policies and procedures is, at its core, what is meant by the learners' discipline. In addition, maintaining discipline is critical to the successful administration of schools and to enhancing their reputations. This is because the availability of a high level of academic discipline manifests itself in learners' improved academic performance.

According to Makendano (2019), learners' discipline is classified into two categories: positive discipline and negative discipline. Positive discipline is a term that is occasionally used interchangeably with self-discipline. This aspect of discipline is connected to one's goals and aspirations and occurs in situations devoid of awe (Makendano, 2019; Van Rensburg, Condy & Nyewe, 2024). This element of discipline enables learners to be devoted to academic pursuits and to reach their potential

through appropriate discipline (Himarwa, 2019). Negative discipline is associated with a lack of discipline (Makendano, 2019; Alasmari & Althaqafi, 2024). The lack of discipline causes learners to fail. It creates many difficulties, such as arriving late to school, irregular attendance, punishment, a lack of vision and a mission, and poor time management. Consequently, the description demonstrates a correlation between discipline and academic achievement: the more learners adhere to rules and regulations, the closer they will get to achieving their goals.

According to Himarwa (2019), reducing distracting conduct in the classroom is necessary for fostering a constructive learning environment. Parents, students, and teachers all need to be made aware of the regulations to be followed and the repercussions for breaking them. Additionally, Himarwa (2019) and Van Rensburg et al. (2024) suggested that learners need to exercise self-control, take individual responsibility, respect school property, accept school regulations and authorities, and maintain positive relationships with their teachers. This is crucial because it ensures the creation of a pleasant environment conducive to successful academic performance. Therefore, learners' discipline must be upheld and given precedence over other activities. A student who practices proper self-discipline must arrive early to class and wait for the instructor. To maintain a connection with one's values and aims, positive discipline is analogous to preventative discipline and involves the provision of pleasure.

Negative learners' discipline encompasses elements such as being coerced into following the rules and directives, as well as regulations (Gastil, 2017; Nel, Nel & Malindi, 2022). Students are particularly concerned about the messy environment, which is caused by a lack of discipline and is the most serious problem that schools are currently experiencing (Gastil, 2017). When seniors are present, the students act as though they are engaging in positive behaviour, but when the seniors are not present, the students' behaviour is very different. This type of discipline leads to negative behaviour, and in this discipline, students behave as though they are engaging in positive behaviour. This type of behaviour includes being loud, not paying attention to the teachers, engaging in excessive talking, not getting on with the required work, arriving late to class, harming school property and hygienic conditions, and failing to deliver their homework job on time.

### **2.3.2 Self-discipline**

Gastil (2017) and Cassar et al. (2023) concur that a learner's self-discipline describes the ability of a learner to demonstrate self-control and accomplish appropriate behaviour independently. In a similar vein, Van Deventer (2018) argued that self-discipline involves creating an educational environment that fosters self-development, cooperation, and positive behaviour, as these conditions often promote greater learning. Self-development refers to the process of improving one's knowledge, skills, and abilities (Van Deventer, 2018; Nel et al., 2022). In this context, the concept of self-discipline can be regarded as a tactic for fostering collaboration, in which the roles of the teacher and the students are equally significant. When there is mutual regard and understanding among participants, this kind of collaboration yields the greatest fruit. According to this point of view, it is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that students' emotions, sentiments, values, attitudes, predispositions, and morals are taken into consideration when administering discipline.

### **2.4 Types of learners' disciplinary issues**

Three primary types of misbehaviour overlap and are disciplinary problems for teachers in the classroom. Ringani (2018) defined disciplinary problems as misbehaviour that inhibits the learner's learning, misbehaviour by one learner that is destructive to another learner's learning, and misbehaviour that is disrespectful, defiant, or abusive to teachers. This indicates that learners' disciplinary issues can be divided into individual learners' issues, other learners' issues, and learners' issues directed towards teachers. All three of these types of misbehaviour are disruptive to the learning environment.

Sandra's (2021) study on learners' behaviour in American secondary schools demonstrated that learners' disciplinary issues include fighting, insubordination, little support for teachers, a general climate of disrespect, and distrust of the administration. Additionally, Sandra (2021) noted that learners' disciplinary issues vary from one school to another. This is true because Sibanda's (2017) study of learners' disciplinary issues in Limpopo province indicated that the Venda district in South Africa has been experiencing significant disciplinary difficulties. Sibanda (2017) found that school premises have become battlegrounds because learners bring firearms and other weapons to school with them. It has been reported that students have stabbed

teachers and principals with knives, and the students have also been known to fight with one another (Sibanda, 2017; Moremi & Themane, 2024).

## **2.5 Factors contributing to learners' discipline.**

### **2.5.1 The learner**

Sprick et al. (2021) emphasised that learners' discipline results from individual factors that may relate to their biophysical nature, illness, nutrition, neurological functioning, temperament, genetic anomalies, physical restrictions, and medication use. To support the argument, Sprick et al. (2021) exemplified by asserting that learners with illness are significantly less likely to pay attention in class and significantly more likely to cause disruptions. Additionally, learners who miss a significant amount of class due to ongoing health issues are more likely to have strained peer interactions (Sprick et al., 2021; Alasmari & Althaqafi, 2024). This is framed by the idea that individual illness manifests in problems such as traumatic experiences, sexual abuse, substance abuse, exposure to pornographic media, and physical assault. Consequently, learners who are subjected to traumatic experiences have a more difficult time learning on all levels, including the physical, emotional, and relational.

Furthermore, Sibanda (2017) described learners' physiological factors as influential in shaping discipline. This is related to physiological factors such as diseases, nutritional problems, neurological functioning, temperament, genetic abnormalities, physical limitations, and medication (Sibanda, 2017; Mathungeni, 2024). These factors influence learners who are ill or overly busy. This is because they are less likely to concentrate on their coursework and more prone to disruptive behaviour. Learners who have chronic illnesses and miss a significant amount of school may also have troubled interpersonal interactions. This causes learners to experience traumatic events that influence their behaviour and actions. The interactions impede the learner's social, physiological, and psychological development, as well as their ability to maintain healthy connections with teachers and peers.

### **2.5.2 The family**

The important element in learners' social and emotional development is centred on the family structure and background. Maponya (2018) demonstrated that family structures are an important aspect of learners' discipline because families serve as

the primary micro-community for socialisation and the development of behaviour. Additionally, Ntshangase (2025) added that the socioeconomic position of a family has a direct bearing on the health and happiness of learners in the discipline. Therefore, learners' behaviour at school is primarily influenced by the family socialisation process. This is because learners' discipline at school has roots in their family background. Consequently, Maponya (2018) and Ntshangase (2025) concluded that a lack of learners' discipline is rooted in the family, with attribution to factors such as parenting styles, the presence of working parents, poor parental discipline, and dysfunctional families.

Furthermore, Masekela et al. (2024) emphasise that families influence learners' discipline, taking into account the family's economic position. In essence, factors within the family that influence learners' discipline include low income, residing in informal settlements and council housing, and child, female, and grandparent-headed families (Maponya, 2018). In circumstances like these, there is a scarcity of suitable support networks and mentors because the family has placed a significant focus on ensuring its survival. Therefore, a lack of a sound economic background results in dysfunctional, unsupportive social interaction.

However, Van Deventer (2018) offered a different view on the role of income in shaping learners' discipline. Nkuna (2022) emphasised that households with working parents also contribute to learners' disciplinary problems by limiting parents' time to nurture and instruct children with appropriate manners, values, and respect. This is despite their stable income. According to Van Deventer (2018), students' lack of adherence to school standards is influenced by their relationships outside of school, their family background, and dysfunctional households. Van Deventer (2018) also related family background to factors such as drug abuse, illiterate parents and families headed by children, HIV and AIDS, absent parents, and child-headed households. The central argument in this linkage was that learners develop attitudes and behaviours that seek survival, neglecting values and norms. Therefore, the primary factor contributing to disciplinary issues in secondary schools is family structure, such as a lack of parental involvement.

The lack of parental involvement in learners' discipline has been a recurring argument from a South African perspective. Ringani's (2018) study of learners' involvement in

violent behaviour in Limpopo province demonstrated that households from black communities neglect and lack interest in the education of children. As a result, students in Venda's schools suffer from poor academic performance, high dropout rates, and a lack of discipline. Additionally, Muliandi and Sulisworo (2023) asserted that the most significant factor contributing to disciplinary issues in schools is parents' failure to instil a sense of responsibility in their children by providing them with appropriate disciplinary guidance. This is because parents are the primary influencers of learners. Consequently, learners who exhibit poor behaviour at school are typically raised in homes where they are not subjected to appropriate forms of discipline.

Sibanda (2017) emphasised that parents model appropriate manners and respect for children, thereby enabling respectful interactions with teachers. Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) supported the argument by stating that the important predictors of conduct problems in juveniles that have been uncovered by a vast amount of research include factors such as ineffective, harsh, or erratic discipline, parental conflicts, inadequate supervision of the child, and parental attitudes and actions that condone the child's inappropriate behaviour. In addition, a significant number of young people are having trouble coming to terms with the many losses that have been inflicted upon them because of things such as divorce, blended families, highly transient lifestyles, poverty, discrimination against those with disabilities, ambiguous cultural values, and unclear relationships with adults (Sharma, 2017; Magwa & Mayisela, 2024). All these issues, along with the rapid changes in the economic, political, and social spheres, negatively affect learners' discipline.

Ortzen and Manterola's (2017) study on learners' behaviour concluded that parents' inability, across all socioeconomic levels and racial groups, to care for their children results in a decline in school discipline. This is because the parents are unable to take care of their children. Parents exhibit a lack of tolerance and respect toward governmental authorities and educators, and some adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude toward their children (Ortzen & Manterola, 2017; Adjei, 2021). Moreover, the lack of parental influence on learners is demonstrated through factors such as a lack of parental control at home and the negative influence of television. All these factors are related to the lack of parental involvement in learners' education.

Moreover, Van Deventer (2018) linked family structure and home conditions to the development of learners' discipline. Van Deventer (2018) identified elements within the family that impact children's actions and behaviours. Thus, for example, if a child's parents do not spend much time with them at home, the child is more likely to seek inappropriate social experiences elsewhere, which can frequently have catastrophic consequences (Van Deventer, 2018; Padayachee & Gcelu, 2022). Even when both parents and children are in the same house, fights can still break out between the two groups, and these disagreements may even spread to the child's place of study. The capacity of children to function normally can be negatively influenced by a range of situations, including the divorce or separation of their parents, difficult financial circumstances, and psychological and/or physical abuse. Dysfunctional families are characterised by many different elements, including harm to an individual's sense of self-concept, a lack of attention and affection, an excessive degree of control, and an individual's financial situation.

### **2.5.3 Society**

Belle (2017) and Gagnon et al. (2021) attributed learners' discipline to the traditions and atmosphere of the society in which the child was brought up, because these factors have a significant bearing on how learners act as adults. This is framed by the idea that lack of discipline in educational settings has been linked to several aspects of society. Belle (2017) indicated that societal influence is associated with factors and problems such as gangsterism, ethnic and socioeconomic tensions, and peer pressure. In addition, racial problems are a factor in the growing social unrest and violence in contemporary society. In essence, the challenges children confront in society make their way into the classroom as disruptive behaviours and challenges in maintaining classroom discipline. In this way, learners' discipline in schools is a direct result of the societal socialisation process.

Wolhuter, van der Walt, Broer, Mollo and Mampane (2023) study on the lack of parental involvement in learners' education also established an interconnection between the influences of family and society and concerns pertaining to discipline. Sharma (2017) noted that children who are made to feel rejected at home and by society are more likely to seek approval in ways beyond societal norms. In essence, learners who feel rejected by society resonate with gangsterism, bullying, and joining

criminal groups. Ndlovu, Schlebusch and Makola (2023) explained the idea by noting that such groups foster a sense of belonging and recognition. Rejection by society requires learners to participate in activities to demonstrate their dedication to upholding the gang's values.

Another factor contributing to the overall lack of discipline in schools is peer pressure. Jinot (2018) emphasised that learners may behave inappropriately due to societal pressure exerted by conditions that may question authority. This pressure is exerted because learners experience acting daily in their communities (Jinot, 2018; Schlebusch, Makola & Ndlovu, 2022). The idea is that learners' continuous involvement in societal norms such as gangsterism and violence alters their behaviour to display terrible behaviour that resembles societal beliefs. This is because learners model their behaviour after the society they identify with. According to Jinot (2018), learners behave inappropriately because they feel pressure from peers to conform to their society's norms and avoid rejection. This can lead to the learners' inappropriate behaviour. This suggests that learners are pressured to behave in ways that are not acceptable because of their desire to be accepted and incorporated into society.

#### **2.5.4 The school**

Van Deventer (2018) placed learners' discipline in the hands of school leadership and administration to effectively manage learners' behaviour, which might influence learners' ability to self-regulate. There is a correlation between school administrators who employ an authoritarian leadership style and learners' aggressive behaviour. Administrators believe that learners' misbehaviour in educational institutions may be traced back to a general lack of commitment to working in these environments (Van Deventer, 2018; Tsotetsi, 2024). Because the administrator is responsible for monitoring everything that takes place within the school, the way they manage and direct others is a significant component of both classroom and overall school discipline. In this regard, Mahlangu et al. (2021) noted that autocratic management often leads to learners revolting due to factors such as favouritism, dishonesty, absenteeism, authoritarian or dictatorial tendencies, and inaccessibility. Additionally, learners perceive and characterise autocratic management through negative attitudes, such as reprimanding and lecturing learners for their mistakes, issuing written warnings, and other disciplinary actions.

Poor relationships between teachers and students, limited communication channels, and inadequate management systems all influence learners' discipline. According to Mabena, Mokgosi and Ramapela (2021), the principal sets the tone for a healthy school environment. They will play an important role in the ongoing educational reform. The students' actions influence the staff's conduct, and, similarly, the staff's behaviour is influenced by the learners' activities. It is common practice to attribute students' good behaviour to the principal's capacity to foster an atmosphere that promotes effective instructional leadership.

Management needs to play an active role in resolving disciplinary issues (Cook et al., 2018; Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). The inability of school rules and regulations to shape learners' discipline stems from a lack of the management skills necessary to function effectively in a contemporary, democratic school environment. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for educators to equip themselves with management skills to help them deal with today's youth. This merely indicates that the subject of school and classroom management should be explored to ensure that the classroom and school environments are conducive to efficient teaching and learning. Similarly, Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020) asserted that learners' discipline results from classroom and school-level management. The two levels of management are essential because they coordinate the activities of a group to achieve specific goals through planning, organising, guiding, and supervising those activities (Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2020; Tsotetsi, 2024). Therefore, teachers serve as classroom managers, while principals oversee the entire institution.

### **2.5.5 Teachers**

Teachers are an important instrument in shaping learners' discipline. Du Plessis and Mestry's (2019) study of teachers' roles in learners' discipline management in the province of Mpumalanga indicated that teachers play an important part in the administration of school discipline. The primary findings from the Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) study were that learner academic performance benefits from teachers' involvement in promoting excellent learner behaviour. Moreover, educators who do not actively involve their students in classroom activities could face disciplinary issues. According to Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), a connection between learners' participation in educational decisions and a reduction in behavioural issues is evident

and enhanced by teachers' responsibilities. Therefore, learners are inclined to act inappropriately at school because they perceive education as something done to them rather than a process in which they are valued as significant participants. Learners who are less interested in and involved in classroom activities can maintain focus on the work at hand at a lower level than learners who are actively engaged and interested.

Ringani (2018) stressed that fewer disciplinary issues arise in classrooms where teachers engage learners in the learning process, perceive learners as autonomous individuals who can think independently, and resist treating learners as subordinates. Teachers influence learners' discipline by ensuring that learners are involved in the design of learning content and respect is given from both ends (Ringani, 2018; Mathungeni, 2024). The overall idea is that a teacher's ability to view learners as persons capable of advanced ways of thinking and interacting shapes learners' discipline. Ringani (2018) also emphasised that teachers' behaviour serves as a window into the realities of the society that learners inhabit. Consequently, negative learners' behaviour appears to decrease in schools where educators have fostered cultures of learner belongingness and involvement.

Teachers also influence learners' behaviour through irresponsible acts that focus on instructing learners and handling matters with a closed eye (Kathindi, 2018; Nkuna, 2022). This implies that teachers may use personal variables, such as gender, marital status, and tenure, to determine learners' discipline. However, Gastil (2017) stressed that learners prefer strict teachers who involve them in the management of discipline, teachers who allow learners to determine the consequences of their behaviour, and teachers who also hold them responsible for those consequences. The idea is that learners' discipline is cultivated through learners' participation in decision-making.

Learners' discipline is also a result of teachers' inability to prepare their lessons, which fosters a low sense of self-esteem among learners and leads to little or no participation in the classroom (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018; Masekela et al., 2024). Additionally, Segalo and Rambuda (2018) emphasised that teacher education does not adequately address classroom behaviour issues and impacts teachers' preparedness, as they lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and training in classroom management. This

implies that poorly qualified and unskilled teachers, in addition to the "work-to-rule" mindsets that teachers have, contribute to the development of learners' discipline.

### **2.5.6 The leadership style of the principal**

School principals are responsible for ensuring that the school environment is conducive to teaching and learning. This is based on the idea that achieving high academic performance among learners and a healthy learning environment are intertwined (Steyn & Singh, 2018; Ntshangase, 2025). Consequently, the administration of learners' discipline by the principal should be the foundation of effective instruction. This is because learners lack discipline, a direct result of the principal's inability to demonstrate leadership and authority.

In addition, principals' lack of dedication to their work is the primary factor contributing to inappropriate student behaviour (Van Rensburg et al., 2024). As a rule, the principal's administration, along with their methods of supervision and leadership, determines the level of discipline in schools and classrooms (Van Deventer, 2018; Nel et al., 2022). This is because principals oversee all aspects of a school. There are behaviours that principals have reported seeing in their schools that could spark protests against school leadership. These behaviours include favouritism, dishonesty, absenteeism, authoritarian or dictatorial behaviour, and inaccessibility. In contrast, an autocratic style of management is characterised by negative attitudes, such as repeatedly rebuking and scolding when a student makes a mistake, issuing threats, giving written warnings, and other disciplinary actions of a similar nature.

Learners are typically disciplined using punishment under the direction of school principals who employ an autocratic management style (Antonio, 2017; Cassar et al., 2023). The domineering style of leadership, characterised by strict interactions, commanding compliance, and unrealistic control over learners, as well as the uninspiring and obsessive exercise of dominance, works against learners' feelings of freedom and security. In situations like these, learners are subjected to excessive control to ensure they perform well. However, the learner's efforts, as well as the development of a sense of personal growth, self-esteem, and self-control, receive very little attention (Antonio, 2017; Mabena et al., 2021). Under these conditions, learners' capacity for self-realisation almost always suffers.

### **2.5.7 Management**

The purpose of effective classroom management is to keep learners' attention focused on the important educational tasks being carried out (Steyn & Singh, 2018; Patnaik, Sharma & Subban, 2022). This strategy emphasises student initiative, improved time management, and enhanced student access to instructional resources. There are many situations in which educators do not design classrooms that enable students to learn and develop as individuals. This has implications for the psychological and behavioural challenges faced by learners.

According to Segalo and Rambuda (2018), a vicious cycle of learners' discipline failure is spawned when teachers have low expectations for the ability and performance of learners and when teachers lack the skills necessary to deal with learners' behaviour individually and collectively. The argument is that teachers' inability to manage classrooms through reading learners' discipline manifests itself in learners' inability to follow school codes of conduct. As Segalo and Rambuda (2018) argued, a lack of teachers' capacity to manage classrooms is a contributing factor in learners' poor behaviour in school.

A lack of teachers' classroom and discipline management skills results in a sense of disempowerment to exercise authority over learners and an unwillingness to discipline learners (Gastil, 2017; Wolhuter et al., 2023). This implies that learners are encouraged to exhibit a lack of discipline because teachers lack classroom management skills and fail to manage learner discipline. Consequently, learners challenge teachers' authority because they are legally protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Protection Act, and the Constitution. This is based on the lack of classroom rules that learners need to follow. Therefore, teachers' ignorance of classroom management and learners' discipline management processes cultivates negative behaviours among learners.

### **2.5.8 Peer influence**

Learners' development behaviours and attitudes as a response to interactions with peers, as well as the socialisation process. In the study by Himarwa (2019), a central point was emphasised that learners' involvement and interactions with peers within and outside the school form deep connections and influence learners' discipline. Ndlovu (2021) exemplified the idea by stating that learners raised in cold, loveless

families seek solace and support from their contemporaries. The influence of one's peers might lead one to admire and then imitate disobedient behaviour. This might result in learners being persuaded to join gangsterism because of unfavourable pressures from peers.

The actions of the learners are a direct reflection of the influence and attributes of their friends and classmates. Kathindi (2018) explained that learners mimic the actions and behaviour of their friends. For example, learners who are involved in incidents of sexual harassment and bullying other learners share similarities because they understand each other. Peer pressure influences learners to engage in activities such as bullying as a form of retaliation to end harassment and boost standing among peers (Kathindi, 2018; Kariithi, Mukolwe & Mwaura, 2022). Additionally, similar explanations can be made for learners who have suffered a loss as a direct result of the dishonesty or theft committed by their classmates, but who have exhibited different patterns of behaviour. Consequently, peer relationships are obviously significant for learners, but it is crucial to recognise that they can also have a negative impact on conduct.

Studies exploring the relationship between peer pressure and changes in attitudes demonstrated that learners can be easily swayed in their decisions at school by peers' behaviours. Makendano (2019) asserted that peer pressure influences learners to lack self-discipline because it results in learners becoming followers of friends' actions. As Ngidi and Kaye (2022) noted, peer influence, particularly in schools, involves the dynamics of a leader and a follower. Therefore, learners model their behaviour after that of their classmates to avoid being left out of the group. This might result in learners' involvement in pornographic films, the use of marijuana at school, and encouraging each other to verbally confront teachers. Makendano's (2019) study also found that peer influence affects the choice of school attire. This is because learners will be inclined toward ways that guarantee inclusion in the group.

### **2.5.9 Political and social factors**

Learners' discipline is also influenced by external factors, such as a lack of basic needs (Ringani, 2018; Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). In a way, Ringani (2018) stated that social exclusion is a complex matter that affects many learners, as a lack of food, housing, and parental authority triggers a sense of need and a sense of liberty. In essence, the inadequacy of social factors triggers learners to behave inappropriately; for example,

girls might get involved in prostitution to get food, while boys might engage in theft and robbery as a way to earn a living. Ngidi and Kaye (2022) stipulated that the lack of parental authority in child-headed families affects learners' struggles with hormonal changes, religious selections, and child abuse. These factors prompt learners to join groups where they feel a sense of belonging, such as gangs, leading them to lose self-control and discipline.

Furthermore, Kathindi (2018) also underscored that learners who are socially isolated from significant individuals frequently act inappropriately. The problem is attributed to children who experience rejection and emotional disconnection from family, friends, and peers. Kathindi (2018) explained that learners who experience such events suffer "psychological pains," which produce problems such as physical assault, gang violence, substance abuse, and a wide variety of other issues.

An excessive focus on children's rights is one of the social elements that influence learners' discipline in secondary schools (Himarwa, 2019; Ndlovu et al., 2023; Kariithi et al., 2022). Himarwa (2019) emphasised that democratic values eroded teachers' power and authority to implement disciplinary measures on learners, for example, through corporal punishment. These elements are detrimental to learners' discipline because they create uncertainty, bewilderment, and fear among teachers about infringing on learners' rights and being accused of misconduct. In addition, Ndlovu et al., (2023) asserted that an excessive focus on learners' rights results in learners developing a "don't care attitude" and disregard for the role that teachers play in the classroom. Consequently, learners resist teachers' instructions, leading to classroom misbehaviour.

The democratisation of the education system that ensures children's rights is referred to in the introduction to the SASSA 1996. The act banned the use of corporal punishment in South African schools. According to the SASSA, Act 84 of 1996, Subsection 8(1), the learner has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman, or degrading way. The rights are also supported by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Notably, the SASSA places responsibility on the school governing body to create a code of conduct that instils morality in learners and promotes appropriate behaviour. In this relation, Himarwa (2019) pointed out that the elimination of physical punishment in South Africa led to a significant increase in

learners' violence, gangs in schools, and the use of guns and knives in schools. This is evidenced by the fact that the Minister of Education at the time introduced a document in 2000 titled "Alternatives to Corporal Punishment" that aimed to provide solutions to learners' disciplinary processes.

The involvement of youth in political struggles influences learners' discipline, as politics can be violent and aggressive. Padayachee and Gcelu (2022) refer to learners' involvement in the South African struggle for independence and suggest that learners from the pre-1994 and immediate post-1994 periods develop an arrogant attitude towards teachers due to ideological indoctrination. Mabena et al. (2021) asserted that some of the responsibility for the violence in schools can be attributed to the political climate in South Africa throughout the nineties, when the reasons for the violence were politically motivated. The result is that learners will be involved in behaviours associated with gangs, the absence of transformation, the use of guns, smoking dagga, as well as intolerance of school management and apathy toward political ideologies.

#### **2.5.10 Emotional problems**

Learners who are struggling emotionally are more likely to engage in inappropriate behaviour (Matsepe, Maluleke & Cross, 2019; Magwa et al., 2024). This is because emotional disorder is associated with the need for special attention, leadership, and loneliness, as well as frequent interruptions. Matsepe et al.'s (2019) study indicated that learners with emotional problems act aggressively when they are reprimanded, and they might use violence to impress fellow learners. Additionally, Magwa et al., (2024) noted that learners who struggle with emotions tend to be highly disruptive when instructional strategies are implemented. This is also associated with a lack of respect for human dignity. In essence, learners might misbehave due to family and home circumstances, peer group influence, the school climate, a lack of personality, and resentment of teachers' teaching styles.

#### **2.5.11 Gender and race**

The learner's gender is another key factor in the severity of learners' disciplinary issues. Ringani (2018) indicated that African male learners experience disproportionately higher rates of disciplinary referrals than females. This is also comparable to suspension and expulsion, which take responsibility for environmental

factors. The overall argument is that expulsion rates are significantly higher for males than for females in schools. These include misconceptions and disputes that are rooted in both the culture of origin and the educational environment. The difference in gender discipline attributes indicates a greater frequency and severity among peers. This contrasts with the experience of African women, who are disciplined less frequently and with less severity.

School administrators tend to consider boys' behaviour more threatening than girls'. This manifests in boys subjected to rigorous, punitive discipline. Gastil (2017) indicated that boys are more likely to resort to physical and verbal aggression in the classroom. This is the opposite of girls, who tend to engage in more subtle forms of spiteful gossip and ostracism that demonstrate malevolence (Gastil, 2017). This concept is embedded in the conceptual framework that boys are naturally better suited to learn dominant, competitive, and aggressive behaviours than girls. This is also related to the socialisation process for girls and boys, in which girls are socialised to exhibit greater self-control.

Researchers have found distinct differences in how boys and girls dispute school authority in disciplinary situations. Sandra (2021) highlighted that boys' challenges manifest through conflict and confrontation. The comparable element in girls is demonstrated through maturity to teachers by flaunting sexuality, wearing jewellery and makeup, disobeying the dress code, and ignoring the requirements of the uniform.

#### **2.5.12 The curriculum**

The relevance of the curriculum to learners' needs is another factor that determines school discipline. Sandra (2021) underlined that learners are more likely to engage in a variety of forms of deviant behaviour when the curriculum fails to provide opportunities for self-development and a sense of personal worth. This suggests that the curriculum should address the goals promoted by society. This can be seen in incidents such as the #Rhodesmustfall movement, which calls for the decolonisation of the South African education system. Sandra's (2021) primary argument was that learners' impressions of the curriculum's content that cultivates interest and may result in learners resorting to problem-solving. As a result, learners will constantly be exposed to deviant behaviour if the curriculum that is provided to them is unrelated to their interests and the requirements of the communities in which they live.

Consequently, it is of utmost importance to ensure that the curriculum aligns with the community being studied's beliefs and practices.

## **2.6 The impact of learners' disciplinary problems**

A lack of discipline in secondary schools is a problem teachers face daily. The frequent occurrence of disciplinary problems, such as violence and disruptions to teaching and learning, also affects learners who want to learn (Sibanda, 2021). This is because learners' bad behaviour manifests as insubordination, talking out of turn, making noise, and abusing drugs. The disciplinary problems stem from issues at home, in society, and at school. Taylor (2021) indicated that a lack of classroom discipline is to blame for disruptions that occur in the learning environment. As a result, the school's administration has become significantly more difficult to predict due to learners' misbehaviour.

Obadire and Sinthumule's (2021) study of learners' discipline found that learners' discipline in secondary schools is inadequate and has become a severe concern for stakeholders in the education system. Therefore, learners' academic success is significantly influenced by how they conduct themselves in class. Problems with students' behaviour might negatively affect the school's infrastructure or other resources and equipment. As a direct consequence, learners' overall performance will fall significantly.

### **2.6.1 Weakens teachers' commitment.**

Learners' lack of discipline is associated with disruptive actions that threaten teachers. Disruptive learners' actions can erode learners' commitment and assets, such as social support and unity among teachers and all those involved in education, leading to enormous issues in schools among students (Miles et al., 2018; Mabena et al., 2021). Indiscipline problems are therefore not only a threat to school functioning but may also be related to other educational and social issues. These problems contribute to abuse of authority, misunderstandings, squabbles, resentments, and violent fights, which may negatively affect the successful management of the school. As a direct consequence, there is an increasing number of disagreements over the roles various school stakeholders play in the educational process.

### **2.6.2 Weakens the teachers' morale.**

Learners' poor behaviour makes it more difficult to teach and learn effectively, as well as lowering teachers' morale. According to Alasmari and Althaqafi (2024), learners' lack of discipline leaves teachers feeling helpless and enraged. Additionally, Moremi and Themane (2024) indicated that teachers in the United States of America identified learners as the essential and central component that impacts teachers' professional enthusiasm. Learners' actions are among the key contributors to the high levels of stress, demoralisation, and burnout experienced by educators and lecturers (Alasmari & Althaqafi, 2024; Moremi & Themane, 2024). Accordingly, low student attendance rates dragged down the mood of the teaching staff. It has been demonstrated that students' actions significantly influence the level of enthusiasm with which teachers approach their work.

The school's ambience influences the morale of the teaching staff, which, in turn, influences the number of disciplinary issues in a school setting. The school climate is directly reflected in the number of violent incidents on school grounds (Otzen & Manterola, 2017; Ntshangase, 2025). Several factors, including strong educator morale, high expectations for student performance among school employees and students, and school surroundings, lead to positive treatment of children. This will, in turn, lead to learners' active participation in school activities that are significant to the school, as well as the formation of positive social bonds among learners, which may reduce the number of disciplinary concerns raised in the classroom.

Punishing for emotion is easy to implement in classroom management, since a large portion of an individual's emotional state is the product of self-indulgence. Teachers often complain that their learners get them so angry that they have no choice but to lash out at the first thing that comes to mind rather than carefully consider their words (Sandra, 2021). This indicates that teachers take a hard line when it comes to correcting student behaviour issues. They may, for example, adopt a hostile attitude, lose their composure in front of the class, and begin shouting. In turn, some teachers' frustration with pupils' unwarranted actions leads them to take harsher measures than they intended. Teachers' morale and the number of disciplinary issues faced by students. The educational setting would suffer in either case.

Teachers with low self-esteem are less likely to have the capacity to understand in a straightforward, impartial, and successful manner. This has repercussions for teaching and learning in individual classrooms (Sharma, 2017). Many teachers must battle low enthusiasm despite working in agonising solitude, which may have a negative impact on their mental and physical well-being.

### **2.6.3 Influence academic performance**

The frequency of grade retention and the likelihood of dropping out may both be predicted by a student's disciplinary history, best viewed through the lens of school sanctions. Bell and Puckett (2023) found that expelled learners were 77.5% more likely to abandon their education than non-suspended learners, after accounting for characteristics such as GPA, absenteeism, fighting, threats in school, family structure, socioeconomic level, and school-level contextual factors. This was discovered by utilising data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY-97).

Using a within-student methodology, Chu and Ready (2018) compared quarters among learners with and without suspensions and discovered that learners were more likely to discontinue their education in the term after a suspension. By comparing students with identical demographics, Grade 8 test scores, and pre-high school histories of absences, tardiness, and suspensions, they discovered that those who had been suspended in the first three sessions of high school had a reduced probability of graduating. This was the case even though the cohorts had identical demographics, eighth-grade test scores, and attendance, punctuality, and suspension records prior to entering high school. There is no consideration for the variety of actions that led to expulsions.

Discipline is essential for developing a rational and complete worldview and for keeping things in good working order. As a result, learners gain confidence and can identify and seize opportunities. Instead of relying on external rewards and penalties to inspire students, teachers should focus on cultivating intrinsic motivation (Van Deventer, 2018; Elkadi & Sharaf, 2023). It is also helpful to instil in young people the belief that the world is orderly through strict legislation and regulatory frameworks.

Eventually, learners will discover which types of conduct teachers expect and which they may safely ignore in the classroom. This is something that learners should continue to understand throughout time. Learners who understand the value of self-

control are more likely to cultivate a sense of personal responsibility, which in turn helps them pay closer attention to the need for order in their lives and to exhibit greater self-control. Everyone must work together to ensure that the rules and expectations are upheld. There is just one world, and all of humanity, every nation, and every community, inhabit it.

Nothing could be accomplished in the fields of science, industry, technology, law, or exploration without strict adherence to established norms and procedures. It is impossible to carry out these actions. Because of this, developing a strong sense of self-control is vital to personal development and achieving national goals. To reach whatever objective an organisation sets for itself, discipline is essential. Discipline measures are essential in schools where students do not share the view that following the rules is in their educational advantage. Discipline is a tool that schools may employ to restore order and create a conducive environment for learning. When there is no order in a school or workplace, normal activities must be put on hold. Alternatively, when rules are not enforced and individuals are free to do as they choose, anarchy and mayhem are possible outcomes.

Discipline is only beneficial if both the teaching and the learning processes produce outcomes that are useful. If students want a positive, fruitful school year, they must adhere to certain behavioural expectations. This is essential for creating a productive and stimulating learning atmosphere in the classroom. According to research by Pitsoe and Letseka (2018), a well-disciplined school environment is a major factor in determining whether or not pupils succeed academically. Strengthens students' moral fibres and drive, enables leadership by example, and ultimately leads to improved performance or higher test scores (Sharma, 2017). Discipline influences the learning process because it reduces anxiety about how to divide one's time between different subjects, improves planning through diverse activities, and moulds the learner's character, among other effects.

#### **2.6.4 Disrupt the teaching and learning process**

Discipline is an essential part of learning, and without it, no school or organisation can do its work properly (Sibanda, 2017; Lumadi, 2025). For proper teaching and learning, learners and teachers need to show discipline to support school progress and learners' results, as they play an important role. When a child begins to learn something,

whether formally or informally, they need a safe place, and to create a supportive, smooth environment, discipline is the only way a child can learn and grow. Without discipline, a goal can never be achieved. The competence of a learner supervisor and the control of their own behaviour is called self-discipline. Self-disciplined students can focus on their goals and choose their level of academic engagement. Discipline policies should be set out for enquiries into different categories, depending on circumstances. A Teacher's competence will be measured by students' academic performance, regardless of how well they prepare their lesson plans. A disciplined person knows his rights and duties towards society because discipline prepares a man to be a good person and to be aware of his obligations.

## **2.7 The role of teachers in learners' discipline management**

### **2.7.1 Maintain discipline**

The revitalisation of the educational setting falls squarely on teachers (Mile et al., 2018; Sithole, Ngobeni & Phage, 2024). The school's declared aims and purpose can be difficult to achieve when its disciplinary practices are not aligned with them. The SASA 1996 stipulates in Section 8(1) that a classroom shall maintain a high level of discipline to ensure that students can flourish in an atmosphere free of activities that could harm them. According to Section 7 (5) of the Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners of 1996, teachers have a responsibility to maintain order in the classroom, and parents are encouraged to assist in this endeavour. Teachers are obliged to enforce discipline and to bear responsibility for a learner's conduct in the classroom.

### **2.7.2 Establish ground rules for the classroom**

Maintaining order and discipline in the educational setting is the teacher's responsibility, as they establish and enforce classroom rules. As a result, educators can fulfil their professional responsibilities and effectively manage classroom activities (Sprick et al., 2021). It is essential to have clear, concise criteria for instructional leadership to maintain classroom order. Learners will be able to appreciate the consequences of their activities, whether positive or negative, thanks to the guidelines, which will encourage students to acquire a full understanding of what is expected of them and help them understand these consequences. Various sources argue that students should be allowed to participate in shaping the classroom norms (Sithole et

al., 2024). By doing so, the teachers are demonstrating their faith in the students' ability to work together, and it also increases the likelihood that the students will follow the rules, given that they helped develop them.

### **2.7.3 Providing learners with relevant knowledge**

Students should graduate equipped with knowledge and prepared to overcome any obstacle they encounter in the real world (Antonio, 2017; Schlebusch, Makola & Ndlovu, 2022). Teachers have a moral obligation to assist learners in excelling in the classroom and in extracurricular activities such as community service and workforce development. Teachers influence student behaviour by demonstrating to learners how to take action and make decisions. Learners who are punished for tardiness may be more likely to make better choices in the future. Students are compelled to examine their own drives and priorities when they are required to study in an orderly environment.

In addition, all teachers working in South African schools share the responsibility of enforcing lawful behaviour among student bodies in the classroom (Schlebusch et al., 2022). Educators who are the first to become aware of a problem or to witness it have a unique responsibility to either reveal it or take steps to fix it. The option to report disciplinary issues to either a more senior colleague or even the administrator is available to those working in education. The administrator may escalate the issue to the tribunal, the school disciplinary committee, the SGB, the provincial education department, and lastly the MEC of Education, unless the infringement is particularly serious. The SASA (No. 84 of 1996) stipulates that learning institutions are responsible for establishing standards. The SASA further states that disciplinary procedures ought to be proportional to the degree of the offence.

## **2.8 Emotional and social experiences of teachers on learners' discipline**

Emotional and social intelligence are useful tools for understanding why some people behave more intelligently than others. This is frequently evident in the intelligent decisions made in a person's personal life and in their interactions with others (Ringani, 2018; Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Inadequate intrapersonal knowledge of oneself is transmitted successfully and meaningfully and tends to link with poor decision-making. Ringani (2018) indicated that individuals who have a pattern of making poor choices are less able to exercise self-control over their feelings, maintain

a positive and optimistic outlook, and select options that are most likely to be successful.

When confronted with disciplinary issues, teachers can either respond to the situation or react (Sharma, 2017; Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). To respond indicates that the circumstance has been appraised, that the feelings that were elicited have been identified, and that the repercussions of the proposed action or actions have been analysed prior to the implementation of the suggested action. For instance, when a student curses at a teacher, the teacher may become aware of their own anger and may wish to embarrass the student by engaging in a verbal storm. Nevertheless, the instructor is aware that such an action may make the situation even worse. Instead, the instructor may ask the student to leave the room in a calm, collected manner. In the event that the educator chose to launch into a verbal rant, the educator's rant would be considered a reaction to the educator's rant. To react is to decide in the heat of the moment, without considering how the action will affect others or other events.

Teachers who are more likely to respond to students' questions and comments are more likely to be seen as emotionally sophisticated and to report higher levels of satisfaction with their own mental health than teachers who are more likely to react (Gagnon et al., 2021). Educators who respond to students who lack self-control in the classroom often bear the additional responsibility of addressing the negative effects of their students' behaviours (Coetzee, 2021). For instance, a teacher who responds by slapping a learner who clicks their tongue in defiance may face a charge of assault, in addition to having to deal with the disciplinary issue. This is because a click of the tongue is considered an act of defiance. These kinds of consequences shift the focus away from the student and onto the instructor, which may have a negative impact on the instructor's mental health.

The emotional and social competencies and skills that teachers possess, therefore, determine the way they address disciplinary issues in their classrooms (Sibanda, 2017; Mahlangu et al., 2021). Teachers who have an in-depth understanding of themselves and their feelings can cultivate an empathetic, mutually beneficial relationship with learners by investigating the reasons learners act inappropriately. Emotionally intelligent teachers may have better interpersonal interactions because

they are better able to manage their students' emotions. This allows them to better connect with their students.

Emotionally intelligent teachers can manage and control their emotions, and apply their minds to realistic, adaptable solutions when they are confronted with students who are having behavioural issues in the classroom (Upindi et al., 2017; Bell & Puckett, 2023). Teachers who choose to deal with problematic learners at school rather than calling parents are likely to adapt realistically to the socio-economic demands that do not allow parents to take time off from work to address their children's educational needs. In other words, teachers who choose to deal with problematic learners at school rather than calling for the parent are more likely to adapt (Antonio, 2017; Elkadi and Sharaf, 2023). Teachers who solve students' behavioural issues in novel and successful ways tend to have a positive outlook on their jobs and report high levels of job satisfaction. Teachers who have a high emotional intelligence are more likely to have a psychologically balanced disposition. This is because they have a better grasp of their own feelings and are more resourceful in managing them.

## **2.9 Strategies in mitigating learners' discipline**

### **2.9.1 Professional intervention**

The concept of professional intervention is an essential element because it points to efforts that are grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the learners' social and academic skills, learners' family background, school experiences, classroom experiences, and the nature of relational patterns and social relationships (Gastil, 2017; Padayachee, 2021). To accomplish this, substantial data collection is needed across a variety of constructs and the child's life levels or domains. Professional interventions are essential because they shape learners' discipline at key developmental stages. Kathindi (2018) indicated that a risk factor for behavioural issues in the classroom is that behaviours progress in phases. Therefore, an intervention strategy can be planned before learners' discipline falls short of the full extent.

### **2.9.2 Parental involvement**

Parental involvement in learners' discipline is the process of including learners' parents and guardians in learners' formal education (Himarwa, 2019; Rubela, 2022).

This can be achieved through active and passive parental involvement, for example, through parents' academic and extracurricular participation (Himarwa, 2019). In this context, involvement refers to a parent's participation in their child's education. Therefore, schools should make it a top priority to involve parents in their children's education to the greatest extent possible. This is because maintaining order and discipline in the classroom falls under the purview of teachers and parents. Consequently, maintaining order in educational institutions ought to be the result of a concerted effort by students' parents, educators who work in such establishments, and students themselves.

When parents and teachers work together to find a solution to an issue, they are more likely to bring about a positive shift in learners' behaviour (Kathindi, 2018; Padayachee & Gcelu, 2022). The fundamental models of morality, cognitive development, and spirituality are found in parental models. There is a strong correlation between the interactions parents have with their children and how those children conduct themselves in school. Kathindi (2018) indicated that children who grow up in households characterised by acceptance, understanding, love, trust, and self-confidence are more likely to develop successful relationships in adulthood. They develop a positive attitude toward themselves and grow into learners who are responsible, respectful, and conscientious in the classroom. The dynamic triangle that supports academic accomplishment comprises the educator, the parent, and the student. When parents and teachers work together in a cooperative partnership, there is a greater chance that the child will be effectively helped to acquire new knowledge and cultivate desired behaviours. This increases the possibility of success.

### **2.9.3 Counselling**

The skill of supporting other individuals is at the heart of the counselling profession. Professional counsellors have received the appropriate education and training to share their knowledge and experience with clients who need assistance. Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) defined counsellors as educated professionals who work with clients to help them accomplish their personal, social, professional, and educational objectives. Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) explained that counselling may be applied in an educational institution through interactions between a student and a counsellor or teacher. This interaction is important because it helps learners make independent

judgements and choices, resolving misunderstandings, and coping with suffering in a manner that is personally realistic and meaningful.

Obadire and Sinthumule's (2021) study of learner discipline in the post-corporal-punishment era in South Africa emphasised that counselling is a vital component in helping learners transform their behaviour and discipline. The study also indicated that attending counselling offered learners an opportunity to focus on identifying the problems leading to unacceptable behaviour and to strive to discover solutions to the problems (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021; Mpolase, 2021; Lumadi, 2025). Therefore, the role of the counsellor in counselling is to assist learners in coming to terms with what drives them to engage in improper behaviour, and resolving this issue allows for the resolution of issues related to the absence of discipline in schools.

Fundamentally, Nhambura's (2020) study of ways to address violent behaviour in secondary schools in Vryburg, North-West Province, indicated that guidance and counselling programmes for learners foster responsibility and develop learners through various stages of development. Additionally, Nhambura (2020) argued that counselling enables consistent monitoring of learners' behaviour, helping them recognise and become aware of it. This may shed light on the times and places where inappropriate behaviour is most likely to occur. Nhambura's (2020) overall argument was that counselling is paramount in allowing teachers to determine the reasons behind a learner's behaviour and offer counselling and assistance. This will be more likely to prevent learners from engaging in disruptive behaviour. This can be crucial for learners who are involved in bullying, as the counselling program helps learners to overcome their weaknesses and establish a sense of belonging.

#### **2.9.4 Provision of learners' exceptional requirements**

Segalo and Rambuda's (2018) study of South African public school teachers' views on the right to discipline learners indicated that learners have the right to receive adequate requirements that allow for the development of appropriate discipline. This concept can be applied to learners with specific educational requirements who are enrolled in mainstream secondary schools. The important discovery in Segalo and Rambuda (2018) was that learners with learning difficulties require a greater degree of assistance in upbringing and educational pursuits. Therefore, teachers can assist in establishing discipline by taking time with learners, meeting their needs, such as

providing free time and love. These actions are important because they culminate in a sense of belonging, which in turn fosters respect and love. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) noted that guaranteeing learners' success requires building a sense of self-confidence and helping learners overcome difficulties such as emotional control.

### **2.9.5 Provision of psychological services to learners**

The importance of psychological services in decreasing violent behaviour has received considerable attention from academic researchers in education. Respondents in Singh and Steyn's (2013) research stated that schools should have access to layperson therapists as well as psychologists. The study indicated that a shortage of therapists contributed to learners' inappropriate discipline, as a single psychologist is responsible for a circuit of around 450 schools. In a similar study on the importance of therapists, Govender (2015) found that schools need access to resources to help modify the learning of individuals who exhibit antisocial tendencies, in addition to teachers' efforts to reduce unacceptable behaviour in the classroom setting.

According to Govender (2015), educational psychologists are crucial in assisting learners with disruptive behaviour. Thus, the DoE must hire competent individuals to guide troubled learners. Learners exhibiting aggressive behaviour and conduct issues may benefit from therapeutic intervention and behavioural change tactics (Govender, 2015; Sithole et al., 2024). Additionally, McGaha-Garnett (2013) investigated how violent acts affected learners' classroom performance and conduct. This study's results also underline the importance of including psychological support to reduce violent and disruptive behaviour in the classroom. The study demonstrated that although teachers play a crucial role in providing a safe learning environment and assisting learners in making a full recovery from traumatic events, they require the assistance of mental health care providers to develop an efficient working relationship between teachers, learners, and parents.

### **2.9.6 Involving stakeholders to address learners' discipline**

Research conducted in Alexandra, South Africa, by Mthimkhulu (2015) found that to address school violence, it is crucial for all relevant parties to work together. Among other things, the research aimed to gather parents' thoughts on potential interventions to reduce classroom violence. Most respondents stressed the need to work together with the DoE, parents, teachers, law enforcement, and community members to reduce

school violence. Participants expressed hope that a concerted effort by all these concerned parties would yield results in addressing the learners' discipline pandemic (Mthimkhulu, 2015; Nel et al., 2022). Similar comments were also made by Burton and Leoschut (2013), who argued that improved school safety was achieved through collaboration and that corporate influence ensures a favourable impact on learners' discipline.

McGaha-Garnett's (2013) research examined how parents' concerns about school violence influenced their children's academic performance. The research highlighted the important roles that parents and school officials may play, as well as the utilisation of community resources, such as counselling and case management facilities, along with the offering of mental health treatments. McGaha-Garnett's (2013) study also underscored that problematic learners' discipline, which contributes to classroom dysfunctional behaviour and academic decline, may be more effectively addressed through cooperative discussions.

### **2.9.7 Establish positive discipline**

Restructuring disciplinary processes in a way that promotes and supports good acts for learners is advocated by researchers as an alternative to corporal punishment because it improves learners' behaviour. According to Van Deventer (2018), the most crucial element of a successful pedagogical practice is the encouragement of obedience coupled with self-discipline. This happens when a school implements strategies such as setting clear expectations, fostering positive connections between learners and teachers, using effective teaching strategies, empowering students to take initiative, and including parents and outside experts (Van Deventer, 2018; Moremi & Themane, 2024). This happens when a school implements strategies such as setting clear expectations, fostering positive connections between learners and teachers, using effective teaching strategies, empowering students to take initiative, and including parents and outside experts (Van Deventer, 2018; Mpolase, 2021).

Additionally, appropriate and incorrect behaviour must be clearly defined, with a healthy dose of positive reinforcement and suitable consequences for misbehaviour (Van Deventer, 2018). To achieve these goals, it is anticipated that administrators and instructors will treat their students with dignity and that sarcasm and efforts to humiliate

students will not be tolerated. Effective management and behavioural changes are inseparable companions of today's innovative instructional methods.

A study conducted in the United States by Wheeler (2013) confirmed that suspension, expulsion, and other punitive methods are ineffective in addressing problematic and unpredictable student behaviours. The Republic of South Africa is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Article 19), so the country's Ministry of Basic Education and Culture has encouraged schools to foster learners with positive disciplinary practices while also adopting appropriate policies and measures to protect students from abuse (Wheeler, 2013; Mpolase, 2021; Ntshangase, 2025). Consequently, disciplinary measures that guarantee human rights and children's rights ensure a shift from punitive to constructive approaches to maintaining order in schools.

Smit and Amushigamo (2016) highlighted the fundamentals that can be achieved through strategies such as swiftly resolving a problem, emphasising students' agency in decision-making, and having them contribute to the formulation of guidelines for acceptable classroom conduct. The UNCRC mandates that people who encounter students include them in decisions that will affect their lives. Smit and Amushigamo (2016) asserted in relation to the United Nations (UN) resolution that a school policy that actively involves students in their own development is more likely to be successful and well-supported. Including students in policy development may foster a strong feeling of pride in the work produced if they grasp the rationale behind the policy.

### **2.9.8 Positive teacher-learner relationships**

Among teachers' crucial responsibilities in teaching and learning is establishing and maintaining productive connections with learners. The ability to teach and learn effectively is hindered by the absence of mutual respect, which is fostered by positive interactions (Upindi et al., 2016; Ntshangase, 2025). Additionally, Upindi et al. (2016) contend that rapport is the secret sauce that transforms a learner's resistance to control into an eagerness to be directed. Teachers are more inclined to establish positive connections with their learners when they behave kindly, which, in turn, improves students' conduct. This is because trust, loyalty, knowledge of care and interest, shared understanding, tolerance, and the value of the individual are key components of a healthy teacher-student relationship.

Furthermore, researchers such as Shanley and Dalley-Hewer (2017) argue that students are more likely to interact positively when their teachers model respectful behaviour. In contrast, students are more likely to behave inappropriately when their teachers model disrespectful behaviour. Moreover, Shanley and Dalley-Hewer (2017) believed that students thrived in an educational setting that supported their individual growth and development. Ntshangase (2025) found that when learners are treated with respect by teachers, they are more likely to collaborate with teachers, demonstrate good classroom behaviour, and achieve academic success. In most cases, learners will be open to having teachers aid them if the teachers treat them with dignity and the teachers benefit from the mutual exchange. Intuitively, having strong social skills helps form deeper connections with others, including with teachers.

### **2.9.9 Classroom management**

Establishing and maintaining an appropriate learning environment among classmates is essential for the successful management of the classroom (Van Deventer, 2018; Nkuna, 2022). As a result, the absence of effective classroom management leads to difficulties in teaching and learning. Van Deventer (2018) asserted that the lack of a proper classroom management framework renders teaching and learning in vain (Van Deventer, 2018; Mpolase, 2021). This is because problematic student behaviour interrupt classroom instruction, distract school administrators' attention, and even lead to teacher fatigue in the classroom (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010; Mulianti & Sulisworo, 2023).

According to Bayraktar and Dogan (2017), effective classroom management is evident in the classroom's structure, social dynamics, ambience, norms, and values, as well as in how teachers and students interact. In a well-regulated classroom, learners can concentrate on their studies. Rule-breaking, disruption, class cutting, profanity, bullying, sexual deviance, reluctance to collaborate, disobedience, violence, and vandalism are only some of the indiscipline problems that schools face (Bayraktar & Dogan, 2017; Mulianti & Sulisworo, 2023). The inability to appropriately address disruptive behaviour is a contributing factor in poorly managed classrooms.

According to Osher et al. (2010), an ecological approach to management may help improve a classroom's atmosphere. An approach like this may help teachers and students alike feel more in charge of classroom endeavours. Using an ecological

perspective is crucial if teachers believe that the classroom setting is a major determinant of learners' performance. Osher et al. (2010) stated that, under an ecological approach, teachers construct activity segments throughout teaching time, expose students to the learning environment, solicit student participation, and evaluate and adapt student performance over time. The result is a learning environment where teachers and learners work together to establish classroom rules and norms. This enhances group learning, collaborative action, and mutual respect. As asserted by Osher et al. (2010), the focus is on learners learning to be part of a dynamic system. A classroom with these characteristics creates an environment for care, support, high expectations, and guidance.

## **2.10 The theoretical framework**

A theory is a collection of propositions that are logically connected and express the connections that exist between various structures and propositions (Varpio et al., 2020). To put it another way, a theory is an abstract description of the relationships between concepts that helps us comprehend the broader world. In this sense, a theoretical framework is a logically developed and connected set of concepts and premises, derived from one or more theories that a researcher creates to scaffold a study. This set of concepts and premises is derived from the theory(ies) the researcher believes best explain the study's results. A theoretical framework is necessary for the research, as it enables the development of concepts and patterns that serve as its basis. This is why the theoretical framework is crucial. In a nutshell, a theoretical framework reflects the effort a researcher makes to use a theory in their study.

### **2.10.1 The humanistic theoretical framework of human behaviour**

The human theory of education was utilised to explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline, on the grounds that the theory underscores the human association with elements of responsiveness. Winston (2016) defined humanistic theory as a school of thought that emphasises the idea that human beings have an innately good nature and that a person's fundamental needs are critical to their behaviour. Therefore, the theoretical framework's fundamental concepts are based on the notion that learners are fundamentally good and that teachers should teach them in ways that help them develop as full people. This is because learners have authority over how they learn. Therefore, learners' requirements should be met for them to learn

and behave appropriately. An individual who is hungry while studying will find it difficult to concentrate on what they are being taught. Therefore, to fulfil this requirement and allow learners to concentrate on their academic work, schools provide them with meals. As part of their education, social, practical, emotional, and intellectual skills, among others, are engaged through the humanistic theory method. The humanistic learning theory identifies self-esteem, objectives, and complete autonomy as essential components of the learning process.

There is a connection between learners' discipline and the theory of human behaviour, as the theory focuses on human lived experiences. The theory is connected to the study of learner discipline, as it focuses on human aspects in humanistic psychology, such as self-respect and self-acceptance (Winston, 2016). The foundations of these characteristics include self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, integrity, and the ability to take ownership of oneself, problem-solving abilities, excitement, and faith. Humanistic psychologists believe that one's well-being, happiness, and flourishing may be attributed to factors such as physical and mental health, achievements, the ability to make sound decisions, creativity, and a sense of life's meaning.

The humanistic theoretical framework focuses on the mental, physical, social, and emotional health of people as its primary concern. It posits that human beings are always progressing and striving to achieve a higher level of happiness and fulfilment in their lives in a variety of different domains (Tolstova and Levasheva, 2019). The physical, social, and emotional well-being of teachers plays a significant role in how teachers' experiences shape the management of learners' discipline. For example, when a teacher is suffering from a persistent physical illness, it is almost inevitable that they will miss significant class time. The psychological, social, and emotional atmosphere of the classrooms is significantly affected by teachers' frequent absences.

Educators who have a solid understanding of humanistic psychology are likely to focus on the human and emotional concerns beneath problematic behaviour rather than simply punishing the behaviour itself, because of the concept that humans are motivated by their feelings (Winston, 2016). The humanistic learning theory was further expanded and posits that when students feel disturbed, sad, or worried, they are less likely to be able to focus on learning. This is one of the basic tenets of the humanistic learning theory. For students to concentrate on their education and behave

in a manner conducive to success, their teachers must foster a classroom environment that makes them feel at ease and secure. Human behaviour is driven primarily by our feelings and emotions.

According to Hartono, Haryanto and Asrowi (2018), the humanistic theoretical framework emphasises the value elements of health and wellbeing. This is because the theory posits that individuals are constantly striving to improve and attain higher levels of contentment (Hartono et al., 2018). Therefore, the theory was linked to teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline, in relation to their emotional, social, and mental health. These elements were important because they are critical to the quality of the relationship teachers have with learners. As underscored by Hartono et al. (2018), individuals' psychological state determines their ability to respond to extreme situations. Therefore, the theory framed the perspective through which teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline were perceived in terms of physical abilities, emotional, social, and psychological environments. This is because a lack of emotional capacity impairs teachers' ability to manage learners' discipline professionally.

Furthermore, the study employed the humanistic theory because it emphasises that humans are formed by the connection of different parts (Varpio et al., 2020). As a result, the environment in which this study was conducted was characterised by a complex web of interdependencies. Through the application of humanistic philosophy, I was able to understand teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline inside and outside of the classroom. As noted by Varpio et al. (2020), exploring various aspects of a teacher's identity can provide insight into individuals' overall well-being.

The study also linked the humanistic theory to Abraham Maslow's views. Varpio et al. (2020) indicated that limited conceptions of human nature are corrected by taking cognisance of a variety of factors, including cognition, emotion, feeling, the will, morality, ethics, and interpersonal and transpersonal relationships. These factors are consistent with the holistic study of human nature and experiences. Additionally, Maslow referred to the humanistic theory as a holistic-dynamic theory. This was due to the premise that the complete individual is continually motivated by one need or another in their evolution toward psychological health, which he dubbed self-actualisation. Consequently, the study employed a humanistic theory to discuss

teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline from the framework of a subconscious valuing process that directs a person toward growth.

## **2.11 Chapter summary**

This chapter reviewed the existing literature relevant to teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools. I focused on the background and purpose of the study, which was to explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. The literature review also elucidated the meaning of learners' discipline and contextualised it within the study's aims and objectives. The chapter also reviewed factors that influence learners' discipline, including society, the learner, the school, the family, and teachers' abilities. The chapter revealed teachers' experiences in 'managing learners' discipline, for example, lack of parental involvement, disruption of teaching and learning, as well as a lack of respect from learners.

Additionally, the literature review discussed strategies to manage learners' discipline, such as counselling and parental involvement. The chapter also discussed the theoretical framework that shaped the study. The humanistic theoretical framework was explored in relation to the study aims. The next chapter will focus on the research methodology that was employed. The discussion will offer a detailed description of the research paradigm and design that provided a concrete framework for the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter gave an overview of a literature review that outlined teachers' experiences in handling learners' discipline in secondary schools. Significantly, the literature conceptualised and assessed circumstances that stimulate learners' discipline, in addition to establishing the overarching nature of learners' discipline. The literature review also examined previous studies on teachers' involvement in managing learners' discipline. Chapter 2 also discussed the research's theoretical background. This chapter explains the rationale for the approach used and the paradigm selected for the study. The chapter continues by detailing the study's sites, sample strategies, data generation instruments, and data processing procedures. The study's limitations, ethical considerations, and concerns about the research's trustworthiness are also examined.

#### 3.2 Research methodology

##### 3.2.1 Research paradigm

The concept of a research paradigm refers to an accepted body of knowledge for tackling research challenges and the underlying assumptions that underpin research (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017; Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). According to this definition, a research paradigm was considered as the overarching theory or set of beliefs upon which the study is based. Research paradigm, as defined by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), is a philosophical position that shapes the research apparatus. This perspective was applied in the interpretation of study findings to be shaped by underlying participants' experiences. Similarly, a research paradigm may be understood as a set of rules that guide the researcher's actions during data collection (Wahyuni, 2012; Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022). Simply expressed, a paradigm is a viewpoint that dictates how academic enquiry should proceed. As such, research paradigm served as a roadmap for addressing the study's research questions. Consequently, the study applied an interpretivist research paradigm as a philosophical starting point.

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), an interpretivist paradigm seeks to describe the subjective realm of human existence by considering how people's unique histories, worldviews, and life circumstances shape the many realities they perceive. This means that the issues that matter to each person are best understood through the lens of an interpretive study paradigm. The goal of the interpretative paradigm, as underscored by Khatri (2020), is to comprehend how people's social behaviour is shaped by the meanings they assign to their experiences. This research used an interpretivist approach to construct accounts of teachers' efforts to maintain order among their secondary school learners. This is because an interpretivist worldview holds that reality is relative and a social construction. As a result, the paradigm provided a more fruitful framework for understanding teachers' practices regarding learners' discipline.

Researchers used the interpretative paradigm because it permits gaining insight and generating conclusions from information by considering the perspectives of study participants (Woolfolk, 2014; Khatri, 2020). Teachers' participation in the research process lends credence to the idea that their perspectives were reflected in the study's results. As such, according to Woolfolk (2014), new information is generated through the consolidation, classification, and categorisation of existing data. Therefore, the paradigm enables the grasp of teachers' communication about the management of learners' discipline. In addition, an interpretivist paradigm helped me develop a solid understanding of the issue by encouraging in-depth conversations with teachers. According to Woolfolk (2014), a researcher may learn more about the topic under study by adopting an interpretivist paradigm.

The study also used an interpretative paradigm on the premise that it is to comprehend the sense individuals make of the world and the setting in which they find themselves. According to Babbie (2020), the interpretivist paradigm encourages data generation through naturalistic participant observation and conversation. In this approach, the interpretative paradigm prioritises meaning-making and contextual analysis (Babbie, 2020). This is relevant to the study, as the researcher's objective is to explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. Most crucially, the fact that this research delved into teachers' perspectives on how best to handle student punishment suggests that it is a strong match for the interpretivist conceptual framework. During this research, I had the opportunity to talk to teachers about their experiences

managing learners' discipline, with the goal of better comprehending the meanings, interpretations, contexts, and descriptions that these professionals have socially constructed.

The study also ensured that the ontological and epistemological concerns within the interpretivist paradigm were taken advantage of. Ontology, as defined by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), is a person's perspective on the world. This implies that, in an interpretivist paradigm, study participants, socially and individually, build knowledge (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Hence, an interpretivist paradigm was applied to comprehend secondary school teachers' perceptions of upholding learners' discipline. This resulted in a plethora of perspectives from secondary school teachers regarding the management of learners' discipline.

As a researcher, my core ontological conviction was that there are many possible worldviews, each constructed in response to a variety of social, economic, political, and cultural forces. It was clear to me that the study's two diverse school settings each had distinct sets of circumstances. My hypothesis was that teachers would have unique perspectives and understandings of their experiences with enforcing rules and regulations among learners. Also, I assumed that teachers have varied views on the importance of context in shaping students' actions. As a result, I collaborated extensively with the participants in a cordial way to learn about their backgrounds and viewpoints.

The epistemology of an interpretivist paradigm is grounded in the idea that knowledge is a form of creation (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). This suggests that the research's epistemology is centred on the possibility and means of producing various forms of knowledge. Meanings ascribed to the phenomena under study were central to the interpretivist paradigm (Wahyuni, 2012; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). According to Thanh and Thanh (2015), researchers who use the interpretative paradigm draw on the experiences of study participants to build and interpret meaning. The epistemology of this study was the meanings teachers shared when describing their experiences in managing learners' discipline. A qualitative method was used to document the interpretations participants developed.

In terms of my epistemology, I held that information is socially situated and that the researcher and the researched form an interactive relationship. In this study, I

interacted with participants to learn more about their perspectives and how they related to my own ideas, therefore contributing to the body of knowledge. In my role as a researcher, I was acutely aware of the potential effects of hierarchical connections and social circumstances on this cooperation. I considered it essential to hear from teachers' first-hand accounts of working with students who exhibited aggressive behaviour. Thus, data were generated through semi-structured interviews, enabling a rich, in-depth description of the social phenomena of interest. Under the premise of a subjective epistemology, the researcher interprets data generation from participants through their own unique set of experiences and perspectives, which are shaped by their interactions with the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2015; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

### **3.2.2 Research approach**

The concept of research approach describes the study's overall plan and techniques, for example, hypotheses, literature reviews, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation (Babbie, 2020). According to Maree (2016), a research approach is the set of steps used to form hypotheses and procedures, gather data, recruit participants, analyse data, and draw conclusions. The descriptions above express the idea that the researcher's philosophical beliefs guide the researcher's decisions about how to conduct the study and what data to gather, how to analyse it, as well as the sample of participants. The approach used depends on several variables, including the nature of the research question, the researcher's experience and training, and the availability of relevant data. Thus, a qualitative research approach was used to achieve the study's purpose of exploring teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools.

In a qualitative research approach, researchers aim to understand how different people and groups value different aspects of society (Babbie, 2020). Similarly, Maree (2016) characterises qualitative research as a philosophical method that depends on respondents' accounts of truth, viewpoint, and experience. As such, the major characteristic of a qualitative approach to study is that it generates information and descriptions that are drawn directly from individuals' experiences. Qualitative research findings are subjective because they may be interpreted in several ways, and those

ways change depending on the circumstances. This suggests the research was successful in eliciting a range of examples of how secondary school teachers have handled learner discipline. This study used a qualitative research approach since it was predicated on the assumption that it would provide exploratory information. According to Maree (2016), the heart of a qualitative research approach is an open door for a subjective examination of reality from an insider's vantage point.

The study's use of a qualitative research approach was crucial, as it provided insight into the experiences and viewpoints of specific individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Busetto et al., 2020). The study's overall purpose was to shed light on teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. Therefore, a qualitative research approach enabled focused, in-depth contact with teachers. Consequently, a qualitative research technique was used to shed light on the path to comprehension and perception by bringing the evidence closer to participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative research approach provides greater room for candidates' opinions and behaviours to be expressed. This goes hand-in-hand with the idea that a qualitative method allows for a more in-depth understanding of concepts such as meaning, intention, attitude, and behaviour (Cohen et al., 2011; Nassaji, 2020). This method was ideal for this research, as the researcher wanted to know how instructors handled student discipline, what characteristics made them more or less susceptible to student punishment, and what they thought might be the causes of student misbehaviour. Lichtman's (2023) view, which holds that qualitative data are generated through interviews, document analysis, and observation, is consistent with this idea. Hence, I played a pivotal role in the research, serving as the primary means of gathering data from the participants. This is relevant because the researcher in this study crafted the semi-structured interview questions and organised the sessions to collect this information.

De Vos et al. (2014) state that the goal of a qualitative research strategy is to gain insight into naturalistic observation through an in-depth, subjective examination of reality. The study's goals included clarifying participants' perspectives on how schools discipline their students. I took this tack because it enabled me to participate in a data-generation process that yielded comprehensive, detailed results. Creswell (2013)

noted that there may be multiple viewpoints on a topic, and respondents' interpretations of their experiences may lead to different options. This was appropriate, as the research employed semi-structured interviews to understand the participants' perspectives.

### **3.2.3 Research design**

Research design is a component of scientific research methods (De Vos et al., 2014; Schoch, 2020). An alternative definition of research design was supplied by Bertram and Christiansen (2017), who defined it as a procedure for gathering and analysing the data needed to produce meaningful, objective answers to the study questions. In addition, Creswell (2013) considered the research design a blueprint for conducting the research. Hence, a research design is more like a philosophical stance that helps researchers figure out and build the right instruments to get to the bottom of research questions. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), the research design determines the nature of the data to be collected, the research questions, and the methods of data collection. The study design also considers how the data will be analysed and interpreted. The study used a qualitative research design, a multiple-case study, that was both exploratory and descriptive.

An exploratory case study research design seeks to gain a deeper understanding of a subject, uncover novel ideas, and explore alternative viewpoints (Swedberg, 2020). This illustrates that the goal of exploratory research design is to provide additional knowledge that may be incorporated into existing knowledge. The purpose of a descriptive research design is to paint the clearest picture possible by investigating, analysing, and reporting occurrences without making any presumptions (Swedberg, 2020; Schoch, 2020). This lends credence to the idea that researchers often use descriptive research methods to document interesting events as they occur in the wild. The research combined the two into a multiple-case study to provide a more in-depth and triangulated data that looks at how educators have addressed the challenge of maintaining order among their students.

Two secondary schools in the Mmashadi Circuit of the Sekhukhune East District were the focus of the study exploring teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), a case study provides a means to identify relevant themes and patterns in data and to delve deeply into the complexities of

experience. According to Ngozwana (2018), a case study is an in-depth analysis of a specific instance or a limited system that uses a broad range of real-world data. By this measure, the 'fit for purpose' criteria proposed by Ngozwana (2018) served as a guide for the selection of a research technique. Given the study's exploratory character, conclusions were based on teachers' explanations of their experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools. This is indicative of the employment of a case study research approach, which enables the systematic and in-depth examination of instances within a specific setting (Rule & John, 2011; Pathirana, Jayatilake & Abeysekera, 2020). The purpose of this research was to gain insight into how teachers form their worldviews and the meanings they assign to their experiences in managing learners' discipline.

As circumstances vary, Siedlecki (2020) proposed that case studies explore and describe the specific, ongoing, and illuminating interactions among phenomena such as events or human relations. Therefore, the case study approach allowed for drilling down from an enormous study area to a manageable subfield (Cohen et al., 2011; Siedlecki, 2020). Additionally, Martinsuo and Huemann (2021) provided further evidence that case study approaches require a detailed and sometimes longitudinal investigation of occurrences. In this study, the case study research design allows for a more organised examination of occurrences, data generation, analysis, and reporting. As a result, I gained a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline.

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) hypothesised that researchers operating under the interpretivist paradigm are more likely to use case studies. This provides further evidence of the validity of the present investigation, which uses a multiple-case study technique and is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm. As pointed out by Lapan et al. (2012), multi-site case studies are used to depict complex phenomena and to gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding. In this study, data from two secondary schools served as the foundation. This was not done to identify differences, but rather to collect sufficient evidence to lend credibility to my conclusions. According to Cohen et al. (2011), case studies allow for a comprehensive analysis of a specific situation. A variety of data collection techniques, including interviews and document reviews, are used to delve deeply into a case. Specifically, semi-structured interviews and document reviews were used to compile information for this investigation.

The goal of the study's multiple-case study method was to learn about the nature, scope, and effects of teachers' experiences in managing students' behaviour in school. The study included cases from two settings: rural and urban. I used the multiple case study method because it allowed me to learn more about instructors' perspectives on students' aggressive behaviour in secondary schools in the Mmashadi Circuit of the Sekhukhune East District. It taught me how teachers deal with learners who demonstrate aggressive behaviour and how they explain the causes of such actions. This method of enquiry was appropriate for my research, as I wanted to explore how teachers perceived the importance of learners' discipline.

#### **3.2.4 Research site**

The research was conducted among secondary schools within the Mmashadi Circuit in the Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province. The historical elements of the study area are linked to the introduction of a new system of local administration in South Africa in 2000. Therefore, the Sekhukhune municipality is one of Limpopo province's five district municipalities. Four municipalities make up this region, which is split between rural and urban areas. The district municipality is committed to promoting the coordinated, long-term, and distributed growth of its community, as mandated by law. In the study area, families are constantly struggling to meet basic living expenses. This is evidenced by reports that some learners arrive at class hungry and often lack basic necessities such as notebooks and pens.

The study selected two secondary schools in different locations, one in a rural area and one in an urban area. The schools were selected because they are secondary schools with Grades 8 to 12. The schools have an estimated 3,180 learners each, around 119 teachers, and 32 aides collectively. It has been discovered that certain employees were serving in salaried positions for the SGB. The schools' success rate ranged from 83.9% to 91.1% over the last five years. Moreover, the schools were selected because of previous learner discipline challenges coupled with represent contrasting socio-economic contexts.

### **3.3 Research population and sample**

#### **3.3.1 Research population**

The research population entails the entire group of individuals, elements, or objects research have interest to study (Miles, Huberman & Saldaa, 2018; Staller, 2021). Ahmad and Wilkins (2025) offered an alternative definition of the research population,

arguing that it includes individuals, objects, locations, and moments associated with the research. In this study, the research population consisted of teachers who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Consequently, it is crucial that the population accurately represents the phenomena under investigation. The research population in this study comprised the teachers who participated in semi-structured interviews. Thus, 10 secondary school teachers from the Mmashadi Circuit in the Sekhukhune area comprised the study population. Furthermore, the teachers came from a wide range of backgrounds, including rural and urban settings. Fifty percent of the participants in the study were female. The aim was to have research findings that adhere to inclusive gender norms. This action was taken to ensure that all aspects of teachers' lives are included in the research. The schools were chosen because they met criteria for high levels of discipline, low levels of documented aggressive student behaviour, and strong academic results.

### **3.3.2 Sampling**

A research sample is a predetermined subset of the whole population from whom representative data may be collected (Babbie, 2020). Therefore, sampling is the process of selecting participants from a larger group for a study (Maree, 2016; Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). In addition, Babbie (2020) defined sampling as selecting people or a subset of a community to make conclusions about the whole population based on the characteristics of the sample. Therefore, sampling is the process of selecting participants for a study. The selection of participants follows a tried-and-true procedure aligned with the research objectives. Maree (2016) broadly defined sampling procedures as the techniques used to choose research participants. Hence, the term 'selection process' referred to the selection process, whereas sampling techniques referred to the actual procedures by which study participants were selected.

Sampling procedures may be grouped into probability or nonprobability sampling categories. To conduct a probability sample, a researcher must first determine in advance the proportion of the given population to be included (Maree, 2016; Gill, 2020). However, nonprobability sampling techniques do not concern themselves with estimating the likelihood of an element's occurrence in each sample (Gill, 2020). This lends credence to the notion that the researcher's use of discretionary judgement in selecting a study sample is important to the non-probability sampling method. Nonprobability sampling techniques include convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling, and consecutive sampling. Given the

qualitative character of the study, which employed a case study research design, a non-probability sampling technique was used to choose study participants. The study used purposive sampling to select participants.

As Maree (2016) argues, the purposive sampling technique is a form of sampling in which a researcher selects cases for inclusion in the sample based on subjective evaluations and research objectives. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), the purposive sampling technique enables researchers to select the study sample based on the study's intrinsic value and objectives. Thus, the ability to select the study sample in line with the study's aims and purposes is essential to purposive sampling. In this light, research participants were selected because they were qualified secondary school teachers with experience in managing learners' discipline. Participants were included in the study based on their teaching at one of the selected schools and their experience managing learners' discipline. Teachers were eligible to participate if they had either managed student discipline themselves or watched it being managed by colleagues in their schools. The fundamental advantage of purposive sampling was that it enabled the selection of participants who aligned with the study's objectives (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

The use of the purposive sampling technique was premised on the need to have information-rich participants and depth of insight. Therefore, the study selected teachers from rural and urban secondary schools. Considered in the selection of schools were the general academic achievement of the school, the extent to which teachers enforced rules against learners' misconduct, and the frequency with which learners resorted to physical aggression. This was in line with Cohen et al.'s (2011) assertion that purposive sampling helps participants gain in-depth knowledge of a subject, based on factors such as experience, degree of authority, and field of expertise. This was crucial since it ensured that more data would be collected credibly.

Purposive sampling, as explained by Creswell (2013), is useful for research that aims to focus on specific individuals. Thus, a subset of teachers was selected based on their personal experience in managing learners' discipline. The selection of teachers was also because they are in a prime position to provide insightful commentary on the type, degree, and probable causes of learners' disciplinary issues in the classroom.

Teachers would have first-hand knowledge of the classroom setting and the difficulties of working with students who exhibit disruptive behaviour (Bush, 2013; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The researcher felt that these participants might contribute valuable information and that much could be gained from them.

### **3.3.3 Sample size**

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) argued that it is critical to consider sample size to ensure that the sample is either significant enough to draw valid conclusions or small enough to avoid predictive value. Berndt (2020) noted that several considerations, including population variability, the quantity of eligibility criteria, the degree to which roosting of criteria is required, groups with shared interests, multiple samples within one study, and the data collection method, all play a role in determining the appropriate size of a qualitative research sample. Semi-structured interviews are often used in smaller study samples (Berndt, 2020). Taking all of this into account, the researcher settled on a sample size of ten participants to ensure manageability while still providing sufficient data to address the study's guiding objectives. The number of participants was determined by the time required to complete and the financial resources available. The responding teachers came from two distinct institutions and communities. In doing so, I want to ensure that secondary school teachers' perspectives on how to discipline learners are as comprehensive as possible.

### **3.4 Data collection methods and procedures**

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) state that researchers have a wide range of methods available for gathering information, including observation, interviews, artefacts, life experiences, narratives, and surveys. The researcher in this study used a mixed-method qualitative research approach, combining semi-structured interviews and document review to collect detailed information and gain a thorough understanding of teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. Using a variety of qualitative approaches is seen as a sort of triangulation that would provide credibility to the research. Analysing information from several sources is a crucial part of triangulating qualitative research data, and using multiple methods of data collection enables integrating each source's unique insights into the larger whole (Cohen et al., 2011; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). In addition, Gill (2020) argued that a data collection strategy that is attentive to the fundamental context while acquiring and analysing data is

necessary for a qualitative investigation that concentrates on significance in context and employs many sources of evidence. So, I used several data collection strategies, including semi-structured interviews and document reviews.

### **3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Participants' responses regarding their experiences in managing learners' discipline were generated through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the data generation method because they allowed the researcher to elicit more details by asking clarifying questions and further exploring topics of interest. Semi-structured interviews may be thought of as a map that is sufficiently free-form, flexible enough to be reconfigured and enlarged to include potential new paths of exploration, and open to future exploration (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Semi-structured interviews are beneficial because they allow the researcher to get extensive information from a manageable sample (Belina, 2023). Furthermore, I used semi-structured interviews since they helped me get insight into the participants' perspectives on how they might best contribute to improving the quality of learners' discipline. According to Brown and Danaher (2019), semi-structured interviews are common in qualitative research because they resemble natural conversations.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to explore teachers' lived experience in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools. Teacher profiles and questions on dealing with disruptive learners were included in the semi-structured interviews. Questions were designed to elicit an explanation of the phrase "learner's discipline," identify elements that contribute to learners' discipline in secondary school, enquire into the impact of learners' discipline on teachers' personal and professional lives, and identify strategies for resolving disciplinary issues among secondary school learners. The in-depth exploration of the issue and the extraction of complex textual interpretations from respondents' replies necessitated the use of qualitative interviews. Every effort was made to conduct the interviews in a neutral setting and at a time that was practical for the interviewees. The interviews were one-on-one so that the participants could feel at ease and provide their honest responses without being scrutinised. The average interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. To keep a permanent record of the interviews and the participants' words, I used an audiotape.

Participants were sent letters that explained the study's goals and the interview process in detail. This made it easier for both the researcher and the participants to trust and understand each other. According to Mikuska (2017), interviews are the preferred method of generating data since they provide in-depth insights into human behaviour. The questions were worded to prompt participants to elaborate on their experiences and the implications of those experiences for their daily work and personal lives. I was aware of the problems associated with the interview as a method of gathering information, but I did what I could to work around them. According to Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021), a good interview begins with non-threatening questions that allow the respondent to relax. As a result, I began interviews with basic questions, then moved to more complex ones as the interview progressed.

### **3.4.3 Textual analysis**

In this study, I reviewed key documents that shed light on teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. With the approval of the school administrators and teachers, I studied learners' disciplinary records, academic performance, and teacher reports on learners' discipline. I reviewed learners' profiles, yearly teaching plans, lessons, the assessment reports, classroom policies, disciplinary procedure booklets, and school codes of conduct. The materials were utilised with the appropriate degree of care, as they contained both potentially beneficial and potentially sensitive information about the participants and the learners. This was crucial since documents are a rich source of anecdotal evidence that sheds light on the issue at hand by reflecting the attitudes and actions of those who participated in the study. According to Lobe, Morgan and Hoffman (2020), document reviews are important because they provide historical context.

Through document review, I gathered information on the school's disciplinary rules, teachers' responsibilities, powers, and constraints, and the disciplinary codes put into practice. Teachers' qualifications, roles, and disciplinary power in the classroom were documented for use as supporting evidence. Moreover, the materials revealed the teachers' perspectives and the methods they used when faced with learners'

behavioural issues in the classroom. Overall, document review was crucial for triangulating data from semi-structured interviews, leading to credible conclusions that contributed to the existing body of knowledge on teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline.

### **3.5 Data analysis and interpretation**

Qualitative data analysis focuses on making meaning of information about the participants' perspectives on the issue by noticing patterns, themes, categories, and regularities (Babbie, 2020). This lends credence to the idea that understanding how the data were created is crucial to any effort to analyse it for insights. Maree (2016) added that data analysis entails looking at information gathered, such as that from semi-structured interviews, and transforming it into a logical narrative. This highlights that different types of information can be distinguished through data analysis. Thematic analysis was used to examine and classify the data for this investigation.

Thematic analysis is a method for discovering overarching themes and meaningful connections in a body of information (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Specifically, data from semi-structured interviews and document review was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a robust and versatile approach to qualitative data analysis as it focus on theme and pattern searching (Maree, 2016). The goal of using a thematic analysis was to allow for a more complete, intricate, and precise description of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Hence, data analysis made it simple to examine and comprehend teachers' common understandings of and approaches to regulating learners' behaviour.

The premise that thematic analysis identifies themes that address research questions motivated its application of thematic analysis to the study of data from semi-structured interviews. Themes are crafted patterns extracted from unstructured data to address research issues (Creswell, 2015; Dawadi, 2020). This is crucial because it paves the way for a comprehensive investigation of the collected data to identify patterns of thinking, feeling, and action. An inductive approach was applied to ensure that themes and patterns emerged from study findings. Four overarching themes emerged from the analysis, each contributing to the study's goals. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of data analysis were used to develop themes and analyse data.

### **3.5.1 Six stages of data analysis**

#### **3.5.1.1 Phase one: Familiarisation**

This is the preliminary stage of data analysis based on thematic analysis. At this stage, I have read the textual data many times to fully immerse myself in the facts. To understand the information gleaned from interviews and documentary analysis, I listened to the transcripts and reviewed the notes repeatedly during the gathering phase. At this stage, I also synthesise the information I have gathered. As a result, I worked with the audio recordings and information from generated from documents ensuring that everything was accurately transcribed and translated into English. After that, I went over my field notes and document extracts looking for parallels. Braun and Clarke's (2019) suggestion that researchers should start by looking for patterns that might be used to develop theme codes was followed.

#### **3.5.1.2 Phase two: Generating initial codes**

This stage focuses on classifying information. The information revealed in the interviews and documents may be thought of as a code, which is a shorthand way of describing that knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In this sense, the phase was associated with categorising information. As part of this process, I extracted key aspects of the data and coded them, keeping the questions I set out to answer in mind. Assigning meaning to data were thus the primary focus of this stage, with the end goal of categorising, labelling, and integrating data as the foundation for further research.

#### **3.5.1.3 Phase three: Searching for themes**

The focus of this stage is on the researcher categorising the generated codes into themes by combining comparable codes. Consequently, I examined the evolving codes in the data to identify any recurring trends. The thematic map was launched after an analysis of the interplay between the themes and the codes. To analyse, I sorted the codes into useful categories.

#### **3.5.1.4 Phase four: Reviewing themes**

In this step, I compare the coded data with the complete data set to identify emerging trends. I double-checked the themes using the codes. Each coding theme must be evaluated for its potential success. For this reason, I ran prospective themes through

the dataset to determine if they made sense in the context of the whole and if they answered the study objectives. The themes were then honed, divided into cases, and merged into a single overarching theme. The entire data set was used to evaluate and develop the theme's consistency in terms of its essence, quality, limits, variety, and extent.

### **3.5.1.5 Phase five: Defining and naming themes**

The focus at this point is on identifying and defining the themes by specifying what makes each one special. I began by outlining the themes' core ideas and organising them into subthemes so I could evaluate whether there was enough evidence supporting each theme and whether the themes covered all the topic's salient points. I double-checked the interconnectedness and relevance of the themes and sub-themes.

### **3.5.1.6 Phase six: Producing the report.**

At this stage, the report is being compiled. Finally, I developed analytical scenarios by combining the themes with quotes from the data. After spending time identifying the overarching concepts and their subthemes, I conducted a rigorous analysis and documented my results. Following the suggestions of Braun and Clarke (2019), I sought to present the themes in a unified manner and to draw meaningful connections between the data. I was well aware that I needed to frame the information to facilitate reading and analysis.

According to Braun and Clarke (2019), thematic analysis is used in research to provide a detailed description of the collected data. In this study, inductive reasoning was used to analyse the data since it is closely linked to qualitative research techniques (Zalaghi & Khazaei, 2016). Additionally, inductive reasoning uses previously established data by extrapolating it to unexplored contexts (Hayes, Heit & Swendsen, 2018). The study's themes and explanatory mechanisms were presented through generalisations derived from mechanisms identified in semi-structured interviews. The primary problem with inductive reasoning, according to Zalaghi and Khazaei (2016), is the researcher's need to filter through a large database and decide which data elements are significant and how they should be transferred onto the current scenario.

### **3.6 Trustworthiness**

Uniformity, durability, and the repetition of informants' reports, as well as the researcher's capacity for reliable data generation, are all factors that contribute to the trustworthiness of the data. Factors related to participants and testing processes should have been handled to prevent measurement errors, and the researcher should have formed consistent reactions and habits while applying techniques and scoring or rating the findings. It is crucial to evaluate the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research before using it in a study. Bertram and Christiansen (2017) suggest three factors that qualitative researchers should evaluate to guarantee the trustworthiness of their studies. The factors are credibility, transferability, and dependability.

#### **3.6.1 Credibility**

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) argue that the researcher's commitment to factuality and accuracy is the single most important component in establishing credibility. For example, I used a research design and methods that other researchers have extensively used to study teachers' experiences in managing learners' violence in schools. It was also made clear to the participants that there were no universal answers to the questions posed, and participants were urged to openly voice their views without fear of losing credibility. Using a tape recorder, I took meticulous notes of each interview, ensuring accurate transcriptions and minimising distractions. According to Sbaffi and Rowley (2017), this strategy is useful for fostering trust since it facilitates the expression of the genuine circumstances under investigation.

Researchers using a qualitative research approach ought to check their reconstructions and portrayals of participants' perspectives against the participants' perspectives (De Vos et al., 2014; Adler, 2022). After this, interviewees were given enough opportunity to review the transcripts and double-check their contributions. My confidence in my interpretations was further bolstered by this approach. According to Sbaffi and Rowley (2017), participants' statements carry more weight when the researcher allows them to verify their accuracy and correct any inaccuracies they find. Throughout this investigation, I ensured the results reflected the teachers' actual opinions and feelings. During interviews, I made a point of regularly confirming with participants that I had understood their accounts accurately. This was crucial because it allowed participants to reprimand me. Thus, the credibility of my data analysis was guaranteed.

### **3.6.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings from one research study can be transferred to other situations with comparable characteristics (Quick & Hall, 2015; Adler, 2022). To help readers connect the situations mentioned in the research report with those they have personally experienced, I incorporated participants' original comments into the presentation of the study findings (Stahl & King, 2020). Haq et al. (2023) noted that, including several instances, multiple informants, or different data gathering methods in a study's design may significantly increase the study's transferability to other contexts. This research followed a similar routine, using two different strategies to gather information.

### **3.6.3 Dependability**

According to Haq et al. (2023), dependability in research refers to the extent to which a researcher's findings are characterised by consistency, clarity, and auditability. A study's credibility may be ensured by including a thorough analysis that allows the reader to judge for themselves how closely standard research methods were adhered to (Chowdhury, 2015; Stahl & King, 2020). The study's research design and methodology sections, which detail its execution and data production procedures, provide sufficient and thorough information. For a study to be trustworthy, the researcher must explain any discrepancies that arise (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). Equally applicable is a discussion of how these results differ from those of a related study.

### **3.6.4 Confirmability**

It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the results they have drawn from their data have been correctly interpreted and that these results are not the product of their own invention (Chowdhury, 2015; Adler, 2022). The researcher sought to remove any potential bias by basing all conclusions solely on information gathered during the data collection phase. Participants' perspectives and first-hand knowledge informed the final report's results.

### **3.7 Ethical consideration**

Research ethics refers to the principles that should guide every scientific study (Davis & Lachlan, 2017; Moraña, 2021). Thus, the goal of research ethics is to ensure that the established norms and values are maintained. The four cornerstones of research ethics are informed consent, anonymity, data management, and transparency. In this context, data anonymity refers to the fact that readers cannot identify participants who contributed data (Badampudi, Fotrousi, Cartaxo & Usman, 2022). This makes it impossible to maintain participants' anonymity if their personal data may be readily linked to a specific person's name or other identifiers (Badampudi et al., 2022). In a similar vein, Babbie (2020) classified anonymity as the impossibility for either the researchers or the readers of the results to attribute a particular response to a particular responder. As a result, protecting one's anonymity necessitates not recording data that may be used to identify a particular individual. The researcher ensured confidentiality by obliterating all participant records. This suggests that only the researcher had access to the primary data. The original data transcript provided only participant numbers, not names.

Participants provided informed consent because they voluntarily participated in the study and were not forced, threatened, or otherwise influenced to do so. Informed consent, as defined by Babbie (2020), requires that research participants have a clear understanding of the risks involved before they voluntarily agree to participate. As such, the researcher needs to actively seek volunteers and obtain written confirmation from them that they agree to participate in the study. The researcher was careful to get informed consent by explaining the study's purpose, methods, risks, benefits, the importance of the subjects' free will, and the researcher's availability to answer any questions the participants may have. Thus, participants were required to sign a letter stating their understanding of the informed consent documents for the research. The letters also described the research's background, methods, schedule, and anticipated results.

Research participant anonymity and data integrity are essential to protecting study participants' privacy, regardless of the researcher's level of knowledge about the people involved (Badampudi et al., 2022; Moraña, 2021). In accordance with Maree's

(2016) definition, participant confidentiality requires that any data collected from participants be kept secure and inaccessible to anyone other than the researcher.

Moreover, confidentiality is defined as a situation in which a researcher has the power to identify a particular person's responses but voluntarily agrees not to do so (Babbie, 2020; Morriña, 2021). The implication is that secrecy necessitates not disclosing any personally identifiable information and instead sharing only aggregate conclusions that cannot be traced back to any one entity. Participants were assured in writing that their confidentiality would always be protected throughout this research. Each person was given a fictitious name for privacy and secrecy. All respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that they could decline to answer any question if they so desired. As a crucial step, participants were assured that their anonymous replies and other data submitted for the research would be kept confidential.

### **3.8 Study limitations**

There are several limitations to this research. The research topic was a limitation because it introduced the area of study too specifically. This was essential because the study focused on a single phenomenon that was essential to the study area. Additionally, the study was limited in its geographic scope, focusing on secondary schools in the Mmashadi Circuit in the Sekhukhune East District. However, this was critical because it provided focused study areas and provided an opportunity for extensive analysis. The study's sample size is also a limitation, as it included only 10 participants from two secondary schools. The selection of the sample size was important given the time and resources available for the study. The use of a relatively small sample size in qualitative research is an important feature because it improves the credibility of the results.

### **3.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter began with an explication of the paradigm upon which the study is based. The research design and methodology were elaborated upon. The discussion centred on the qualitative research design and non-probability sampling strategies for selecting participants. The chapter further furnished and discussed the target population, the sampling method, and data generation and analysis techniques. An outline of procedures to address the trustworthiness and quality of the study was given. The

study's anticipated limitations and the ethical practices considered in conducting it were also discussed. The next chapter presents study findings, data interpretation and discussion of the findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presents the research methodologies applied in the study. It demonstrated the research approach, design, and paradigm. Data generation tools, sampling methods, and data analysis methodologies were discussed. This chapter engages with generated data by analysing, interpreting, and discussing the findings. It commences with profiling participants, followed by a listing of themes generated from the gathered information. The chapter also presents findings from participant voices, interprets them, and links them to the literature. This ensures the development of conclusions from the study's findings. Data were gathered using primary and secondary sources, including semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. Information was gathered through teachers' participation in interviews. Therefore, the chapter presents research findings that were analysed using thematic analysis.

#### 4.2 Population and research sample

The study involved teachers from two secondary schools in Mmashadi Circuit, Sekhukhune East District to provide information-rich knowledge of how teachers manage learner discipline in secondary schools. The study included teachers with extensive experience in managing learners' discipline, focusing on teachers with 5 to 15 teaching experience. Participants' qualification was another important component, as the focus was on teachers with bachelor's degree, postgraduate degree, and diplomas. This study included teachers between 30 and 59 years. Participants were selected from three positions: school principal, head of department, and disciplinary committee which provided broader perspective on teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. In this study, teachers of both gender were included to generate holistic perspective on teachers' lived experiences in managing learner discipline in secondary schools.

### **4.3 Themes creation**

Data generation using semi-structured interviews and document analysis was analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved creating themes to address fundamental research questions and objectives. Braun and Clarke (2019) emphasise that thematic analysis allows researchers to discover patterns and meaning in the collected data. The researcher used thematic analysis to identify patterns that addressed the research questions. The researcher employed an inductive approach within thematic analysis to generate themes. This implies that themes were generated from the gathered information, and that the researcher's assumptions and perceptions were excluded from the study. Essentially, the researchers focused on developing themes from teachers' experiences.

Furthermore, the process of creating themes for the study findings followed Clarke's (2006) six stages of data analysis. The initial phase involved understanding the gathered information. This involved reading and listening to the gathered information. This enabled the transcription of audio into notes essential for creating themes. The second phase was creating codes that allow for data categorisation. This was attained by extracting key aspects from the data. Subsequently, the researcher embarked on searching for themes that fit well with the identified codes. This phase was also essential because it allowed for the creation of a thematic map.

In addition, phase four of the theme creation focused on reviewing the data grouped into codes. The researcher double-checked the information and correlated the identified data to develop an understanding of it. This allowed the process of defining and naming themes to align with research objectives and questions. The themes were labelled and given sub-theme names that strive to answer the study objective. In essence, four main themes, coupled with sub-themes, were formulated. The table above demonstrates themes generated through data analysis.

THEMES	MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1	Teachers' understanding of learner discipline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ School rules and regulations</li> <li>➤ Involvement of stakeholders</li> </ul>
Theme 2	Factors that contribute to learners' discipline at schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Peer pressure</li> <li>➤ Family background</li> <li>➤ Societal influence</li> <li>➤ Gender roles</li> <li>➤ Social influence</li> </ul>
Theme 3	Teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bullying</li> <li>➤ Disrespect</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bringing violent objects</li> <li>➤ Violent behaviour</li> </ul>
Theme 4	Ways teachers handle learners' disciplinary problems at school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Managing learners</li> <li>➤ Creating a learners' pledging culture</li> <li>➤ Stakeholders' involvement</li> <li>➤ Parental involvement</li> </ul>

Table 4.1: Themes developed

#### 4.4 Presentation of findings

##### 4.4.1 Teachers' understanding of learner discipline

The study focused on teachers' understanding of learner discipline. The goal was to generate study findings that demonstrate teachers' perceptions. Participants were asked fundamental questions such as: What are teachers' understandings regarding

learner discipline? It was revealed that teachers explain learners' discipline through school rules, codes of conduct, DoE regulations, and stakeholders' explanations.

#### **4.4.1.1 School rule**

Most teachers understand learner discipline through the lens of school rules. They emphasised learner discipline in connection with provisions in the school code of conduct.

Teachers from School A expressed the following remarks:

Participant 1: *"Learners' discipline denotes the rules and regulations that govern learners in ways to behave at the school, for example, classroom rules."*

Participant 2: *"I think learners' discipline describes the way learners demonstrate their behaviour at school."*

Participant 3: *"Learners' discipline describes the conduct of learners at the school and classroom behaviour. It encompasses factors that are stipulated in the school code of conduct as essential"*.

Participant 4: *"Learners' discipline relates to the behaviours learners exhibit in relation to school rules and regulations, particularly behaviour in classrooms and the school environment."*

Participant 5: *"Learners' discipline involves learners' ability to demonstrate elements of acceptable behaviour that are detailed in school rules."*

On the other hand, teachers from School B offered a similar perspective. The perspectives of participants include:

Participant: *"Learner discipline explains school rules that stipulate guidance and direction in overseeing learner behaviour."*

Participant 7: *"Learner discipline centres on schools' regulations that set, clarify, dedicate, and create learners' behaviour that illustrates good morals."*

Participant 8: *"Learner discipline involves the process of nurturing learners to follow the school rules, for example, dress code, respect, and way of communicating."*

Participant 9: *"Learner discipline is a component of inculcating school rules into learners for the purpose of ensuring that they adhere to school guidelines."*

Participant 10: *"Learners' discipline involves the development of learners in relation to*

*school rules and regulations."*

Considering participant responses, most teachers perceive learner discipline through the lens of school rules. This entails that learner discipline encompasses adhering to school rules, such as the dress code, arriving at school early, and respecting teachers. As elaborated by both teachers from Schools A and B, learners' discipline is a component of the school rules that govern school operations. This study's findings align with Downs et al.,'s (2019) findings that learner discipline is founded on aligning learners' behaviour with school rules and learning (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). The suggestion is that learner discipline adopts a form of training that shapes learners' character into a more desirable form. Conversely, Van Deventer (2018) emphasises that learner discipline is the application of correctional and educational measures, including punishment (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). In this context, learner discipline involves ways of helping learners adhere to standardised values at school.

#### **4.4.1.2 Establishing positive behaviour**

Participants noted that learner discipline involves instilling positive behaviour in learners. The process involves using positive strategies to reinforce and correct learners' misconduct. The emphasis was also on how teachers apply positive attitudes and character traits to learners. Teachers from School A emphasise learner discipline through a positive discipline approach.

Participant 1: *"Learner discipline prioritises the use of instruction aimed at educating learners on comprehending and adhering to social norms. The approach focuses on instructing learners to complete tasks correctly rather than penalising them for mistakes. The objective is to promote self-control and mutual regard in a peaceful and compassionate setting."*

Participant 2: *"Learner discipline involves correcting learners based on a fundamental regard for the principles of human rights. The premise of this argument is that learners are entitled to a secure educational setting free of violence. The objective is to foster a culture that upholds human rights, ensuring the safety and well-being of learners while promoting their dignity and respect."*

Participant 3: *"Learner discipline seeks to collaborate with learners based on leveraging the abilities of learners while correcting their flaws through positive reinforcement to encourage positive conduct. It entails providing learners with explicit*

*instructions on appropriate conduct and then assisting them in adhering to these instructions.”*

Participant 4: *“Learner discipline involves promoting values for personal growth and establishing a South African national identity based on values. The desired learner will embody the principles and behave in a manner that promotes the well-being of society, characterised by reverence for a free society, fairness, the dignity of all life, and equitable treatment.”*

Participant 5: *“The objective of learner discipline is to provide an educational setting that is conducive to learners' learning, where learners, educators, and parents are treated with respect, provided with assistance, and recognised for their worth. This environment allows learners to freely express their thoughts and inspires them to reach their full potential.”*

Participants from School B expressed the view that learner discipline is based on developing learners' behaviour through positive reinforcements. The aim is to ensure that learners' development is grounded in a positive attitude:

Participant 6: *“Learner discipline involves the use of a code of conduct in fostering a pleasant school climate by clearly defining expectations for all school actors, identifying unwanted conduct, and providing rules and processes for addressing it.”*

Participant 7: *“Learner discipline is the process of developing the learner's unique strengths, skills, and talents. The process strives to view errors as shortcomings and a chance to acquire knowledge and enhance one's abilities.”*

Participant 8: *“Learner discipline prioritises the duty of teachers in enhancing learners' esteem and trust in themselves, cultivating their autonomy, and nurturing their belief in their own abilities. Instead of penalising learners for their academic or behavioural errors, the teacher elucidates, illustrates, and exemplifies the ideas and behaviours that need to be acquired.”*

Participant 9: *“Learner discipline, which involves engagement in the learning process, serves as a motivating factor for learners. It entails engaging learners in the process of decision-making using a strategy that actively seeks the thoughts and viewpoints of learners and engages them in the process of establishing a classroom atmosphere that fosters learning.”*

Participant 10: *“Learner discipline consists of teacher involvement in correcting learners’ misconduct and actions through creating a framework that supports, encourages, and promotes community values.”*

Participants noted that learner discipline is based on prioritising learner development. Participants’ consensus is that learner discipline should adopt positive frameworks that support learners’ strengths, skills, and talents. At the same time, learners’ wrongdoings and shortcomings are corrected in a positive way using encouragement rather than punishment. This study’s findings align with Bayraktar and Dogan’s (2017) finding that learners’ discipline is the teacher’s responsibility to create an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1). This implies that learners’ discipline follows a pathway in which teachers influence learners through appropriate practices and moral development that guarantees responsibility. Additionally, Bayraktar (2017) argued that learners’ discipline fosters the development of learner personality and patterns of action (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1). This indicates that learners’ discipline involves implications for training and corrective discipline.

#### **4.4.2 Factors that contribute to learners’ discipline at schools**

This study strives to understand the triggers of learner discipline in schools. Teachers perceive the learner factor, teacher factor, peer pressure, family factor, society, gender, and school factor as essential contributors to learner discipline.

##### **4.4.2.1 Learner factors**

This study’s findings revealed that learner discipline is cultivated by internal factors that activate learners’ behaviour. The teachers from School A held the following perspective:

Participant 1: *“Learner discipline is a result of learner attitude, as most learners with a rude attitude are difficult to teach, and typically, they are aggressive.”*

Participant 2: *“I recognise that learner attitude is the critical factor that enables learner discipline. Why I am saying so is because rude learners engage in actions that are disruptive to teachers and other learners.”*

Participant 3: *“I believe learner psychological factors play an important role in learner discipline in the sense that some learners pay limited attention to schoolwork or are aggressive because of psychological factors.”*

Participant 4: *“Learners are responsible for their actions, as in most cases they try to*

*act as heroes and heroines in front of other learners.”*

Participant 5: *“Some learners are restless, overreacting, and demonstrating actions that illustrate personal problems.”*

However, teachers from School B expressed a similar opinion regarding learner factors. They indicated the following expressions:

Participant 5: *“I think learner discipline is a factor of individual factors, as other learners act out internal frustrations to teachers and other learners that result in disrupting school and the classroom.”*

Participant 6: *“Some learners express their frustrations to teachers by provoking them, potentially leading to their expulsion from the classroom and suspension from school.”*

Participant 7: *“Learner discipline is a factor relating to learner lack of motivation, and role models that determine the correct pathways for learners.”*

Participant 8: *“The negative perspective of learners towards school creates a negative perspective that results in learners resenting and being aggressive towards teachers.”*

Participant 9: *“Learners are responsible for accepting pressure from other learners and being unbalanced to concentrate on their work.”*

Participant 10: *“Personal struggles of learners create a situation in which learners are unable to control themselves, and they demonstrate their frustrations to teachers.”*

This study's findings revealed that the learner factor is a paramount contributor to school discipline. A consensus among participants from Schools A and B demonstrated that learner factors include psychological factors, personal frustrations, negative character traits, and a rude attitude. This suggests that learner discipline is a product of internal learner factors. Sprick et al., (2021) emphasised that learners' discipline is a result of individual factors, including the biophysical nature, illness, nutrition, neurological functioning, temperament, genetic anomalies, physical restrictions, and medication use (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5). The suggestion is that learners are responsible for their behaviour at school. Relatedly, Sibanda (2017) found that learners' physiological factors shape discipline, for example, diseases, nutritional problems, neurological functioning, temperament, genetic abnormalities, physical limitations, and medication. In this context, learners' discipline is a factor of the learner component that shapes interpersonal interactions.

#### 4.4.2.2 Peer pressure

Participating teachers believed peer pressure is a driving force behind learner discipline at school. The contention among participants' perceptions suggests that peer pressure shapes learners' discipline in various ways.

Teachers from School A's expressions include the following:

Participant 1: *"Learners are affected by other learners' ways of behaving as their perspective on teachers is different, and the ways learners react and respond to teachers' instructions."*

Participant 2: *"Influence from other learners is critical in creating learners who lack respect for teachers, for example, a group of boys discuss their dislikes about teachers, which inculcate similar behaviour in other learners."*

Participant 3: *"I have noticed that boys have a challenge in their social groups as they are initiated into behaviours that are foreign to them, which results in discipline problems. This manifests in the creation of unruly gangs of boys."*

Participant 4: *"At my school, I have noticed that boys from well-to-do families or 'rich kids' are socially excluded, and they are called cheese boys. This creates a situation in which those learners fight for their position at the school, which results in a lack of discipline."*

Participant 5: *"Interestingly, learners who come with good manners change their behaviour the moment they mingle with other learners because the existing bandwagon at school initiates learners to different behaviours". My suggestion is that learners are experiencing challenges because of the mixing up of learners."*

However, teachers from school B expressed similar concerns, focusing on the following factors:

Participant 6: *"Learners' school behaviour is a creation of other learners' influence, particularly the informal ways of learning. You see, we know that as learners join a certain group of learners, it will be challenging to correct them."*

Participant 7: *"Learners' discipline is created through learners' interactions that allow other learners to adopt informal ways that are active at schools."*

Participant 8: *"Social pressure is a driving force for learners' involvement in activities such as disrespecting teachers, using vulgar language, and skipping classes."*

Participant 9: *“At our school, the leading contributor to learner discipline that transcends to different learners relates to peer pressure. Learners are socially coerced to participate in activities that are regarded as socially normal, for example, disrespecting teachers, and playing truants.”*

Participant 10: *“I have noticed that learners who are involved in truancy lure other learners to participate through making it look adorable and heroic.”*

This study revealed that peer pressure is an important factor in cultivating learner discipline, both positively and negatively. The positive ways involved learners' effective engagement in schoolwork through encouraging one another. Teachers described this level of pressure as critical to learners' academic achievement, as it moulds learners towards the school staff. Kathindi (2018) found that learners' actions are a direct reflection of the influence and attributes of their friends and classmates (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.8). They mimic the actions and behaviour of friends; for example, learners who are involved in incidents of sexual harassment and bullying share similarities because they understand each other. Peer pressure influences learners to engage in activities such as bullying as an act of retaliation to end harassment and boost standing among peers.

The study also illustrated that peer pressure contributes to learner discipline by creating a negative trend in learners' behaviour. Teachers' explanations were based on the idea that when learners join a group of misbehaving learners, there is a high likelihood that they will join the bandwagon of undisciplined learners. The central argument advanced by teachers also points to social pressure to conform to other learners' behaviour. Himarwa (2019) emphasised that learners' involvement and interactions with peers within and outside the school form deep connections and influence learners' discipline (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.8). Himarwa (2019) exemplified the idea by stating that learners raised in cold, loveless families seek solace and support from contemporaries. This results in learners admiring and then imitating disobedient behaviour.

#### **4.4.2.3 Family background**

Teachers' perspectives also illustrated that family background influences learner discipline. This relates to learners' families as a contributing factor in shaping learners' perspectives, opinions, and educational interests. The perspectives of teachers from school A included the following:

Participant 1: *“Family background affects learners in the sense that learners from disciplined families exhibit discipline, while learners from families that lack discipline demonstrate indiscipline at school.”*

Participant 2: *“Parents lack interest in learners’ education as they fail to attend school meetings and are divorced from advising their children on the importance of education.”*

Participant 3: *“I think learners lack role models within the education field because of high rates of school dropout. This creates a behaviour in learners centred on a lack of interest in school and misbehaviour.”*

Participant 4: *“Family background influences learners in the sense that some parents are uneducated to the extent that advising their children about the importance of school is a daunting task. They offer limited time for consultation with learners and teachers.”*

Participant 5: *Family is an important factor that creates an environment characterised by a continued development of the poverty cycle, as learners lack possible role models that assist them.”*

Furthermore, teachers from School B also concurred on the influence of family background on learner discipline. The perspectives of teachers include the following;

Participant 6: *“Family is a critical factor that develops learners through socialisation that implants beliefs, interests, and understanding of the essence of life.”*

Participant 7: *“Most families in our community are characterised by limited educational knowledge because of parents’ educational history. They have limited knowledge on the importance of education, which also translates to learners’ attitudes towards education.”*

Participant 8: *“The majority of families are reluctant to be involved in the education of learners, which creates a gap between teacher and family. The impact of the gap is that learners are called to select the immediate influence of family as an important factor.”*

Participant 9: *“Learners from families that value education and teachers demonstrate an elevated level of discipline and respond well to teachers’ instructions. However, learners from families that have limited importance of education and value for teachers*

*are more hostile, disrespectful, and arrogant to teachers.”*

Participant 10: *“Family background imparts learners with essential discipline traits, including respect, honesty, and understanding. Learners from families that demonstrate these traits exhibit better understanding by learners, while families that lack essential family discipline manifest through learners’ involvement in unruly activities towards teachers.”*

This study's findings illustrated that teachers perceive family background as critical in determining learner discipline. The emphasis by teachers from School A indicates that family background facilitates learners’ discipline through imparting traits that manifest at school. Fundamentally, teachers from School B's consensus indicated that learners from well-disciplined families tend to exhibit better discipline than learners from violent and aggressive family backgrounds. These study findings confirm Maponya’s (2018) argument that family structures serve as the primary micro-community for socialisation and the development of behaviour (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.2). Maponya (2018) added that a family's socioeconomic position has a direct bearing on learners' health and happiness in the discipline. Therefore, learners’ behaviour at school is primarily influenced by the family socialisation process.

The finding that family impact learner discipline is also supported by Van Deventer’s (2018) finding that a lack of stable income shapes learners’ discipline (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.2). Van Deventer (2018) emphasised that households with working parents cultivate learners’ disciplinary problems due to a lack of time from parents to nurture and instruct children with appropriate manners, values, and respect. According to Van Deventer (2018), students' non-adherence to school standards is influenced by family relationships, particularly in dysfunctional households. In this context, study findings and the literature indicate that family background is influential in determining learners’ discipline.

#### **4.4.2.4 Society**

Teachers were asked their opinion on the influence of society on learner discipline at school. The aim was to understand how society shapes and influences the behaviour of learners that teachers manage at school. In this context, teachers emphasised societal influence as a critical factor in determining learner discipline management.

Teachers from School A opined varying perspectives that include:

Participant 1: *“My experience with the community is that most members lack a better consideration of the value of education, as they view cultural things as important. Owing to these perspectives, valued cultural factors fail to prioritise learner education and discipline, which translates to learners’ lack of discipline.”*

Participant 2: *“I believe learner discipline is a result of societal factors, for example, initiation schools contribute much to learners’ indiscipline because when a learner returns from initiation schools, they behave in an unusual way. I am not sure of the information they are provided in such environments, but it changes the manifestations of learners’ behaviour.”*

Participant 3: *“Most of the communities are characterised by elements of violence and aggressiveness that learners experience daily in their lives. This environment contributes to learners’ demonstration of such behaviour, as in schools that are difficult to manage. My experience indicated that some disrespect from learners is uniform in the sense that they exhibit similar habits that point to community experience.”*

Participant 4: *“Society is a critical enabler of most behaviours that were experienced in managing learners’ discipline. The reason I am saying this is that most of the behaviours in society, such as violence, aggressiveness, disrespect, and bullying of teachers, are traits learners manifest at school.”*

Participant 5: *“Society as a cultivator of learner discipline traits owing to differences in learners’ discipline based on the communities they come from. As an example, most of the learners from so-called townships are arrogant and violent. In contrast, the majority of learners from suburbs and rural places exhibit a different element of discipline.”*

Teachers from School B also reached consensus on the impact of societal influences on learners’ discipline management process. The following are teachers’ perspectives on societal influences on learners’ discipline management:

Participant 6: *“Surrounding communities are known for elements of violence that manifest through demonstration and lack of respect for the law. These components are exhibited by learners at school because the behaviour is inculcated in their blood, for example, violent behaviour when confronted for their actions towards teachers and other learners.”*

Participant 7 also illustrated that *“learners’ discipline is a manifestation of society characteristics. This relates to learners from township communities who experience and are continuously exposed to unruly behaviour such as drinking, drugs, and smoking. These traits are common factors that I deal with and try to manage learners’ behaviour in such situations”*.

Participant 8: *“Learners reflect society’s values and characteristics. This is true for learners at our school because most learners’ behaviour illustrates community traits as well as most elements within the society”*.

Participant 9: *“I am of the view that society influences learners’ discipline through exposing them to things that are near and accessible to them, for example, crime scenes and violent behaviours in communities affect learners’ behaviour. For example, learners come to school with knives and sharp weapons because in their communities it is a norm.”*

Participant 10: *“Society is the immediate socialisation tool for learners after family. Therefore, learners’ behaviour reflects society’s traits and accepted behaviour. The behaviour is opposed to school rules and norms, which makes it challenging to manage learners’ discipline”*.

This study’s findings revealed that society is an important factor that determines learners’ discipline at school. Teachers from School A emphasised that society shapes learners’ behaviour by exposing them to behaviours such as violence, bullying, and disrespect. Correspondingly, most teachers from School B compared learners’ behaviour based on the society they came from; for example, learners from townships tend to be more aggressive than other learners owing to their societal background. The findings align with Belle’s (2017) findings that learners’ discipline is shaped by the societal atmosphere (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3). The emphasis is that societal influence, such as gangsterism, ethnic and socioeconomic tensions, make their way into the classroom in the form of disruptive behaviours and challenges in maintaining classroom discipline.

Furthermore, society’s influence on learner discipline is also attributed to the community’s limited interest in learner education. As elaborated by participants, learners engage in misconduct because community members are failing to hold them accountable. Sharma (2017) argued that a lack of societal involvement in learners’

education influences learners' discipline by making them feel rejected by society and leading them to seek approval in ways beyond societal norms (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.3). In essence, learners who feel rejected by society resonate with gangsterism, bullying, and joining criminal groups. This explains the creation of violent groups as a means of establishing a sense of belonging and recognition.

#### **4.4.2.5 Gender roles**

The study aims to understand the influence of gender on the development and expression of learners' discipline from teachers' perspectives. Participants were posed with questions aimed at understanding differences in discipline management between boys' and girls' learners. In this context, the influence of gender on learners' discipline management underpinned teachers' perspectives.

Teachers from School A had various opinions regarding the influence of gender on learners' discipline and management at school. The following are part of teachers' opinions on the role of gender on learners' discipline:

Participant 1: *"My experience with learner discipline management illustrated that boys demonstrate aggressive behaviour and refuse to adhere to school rules. This might be attributed to the very nature of boys, which is based on principles of strength. However, girls exhibit elements that include being responsive to teachers' instructions and respect."*

Participant 2: *"Gender as a critical factor on learners' discipline, as most boy learners are involved in actions that are aggressive to teachers, for example, violent against teachers, disruptive, and hostile to teachers' instructions. I think boys' nature calls for this kind of behaviour".*

Participant 3: *"Gender is an important determinant of learners' discipline because most incidents I deal with are based on boys who are violent and aggressive towards teachers. Even the process of disciplining boy learners is challenging because they even confront teachers."*

Participant 4: *"My experience in learner discipline management process indicates that most boys are disrespectful to teachers, particularly female teachers. They express every word they feel because society undervalues women. The situation is different to girls as they exhibit elements of respect".*

Participant: *“Boys are involved in extreme cases of indiscipline, for example, gambling, fighting, smoking, and bullying, while girls are involved in minor types of indiscipline like disrespect and failure to write work”.*

However, teachers from School B expressed similar perspectives regarding the influence of gender on learner discipline. The opinions of teachers include the following:

Participant 6: *“Gender is a paramount factor in determining learners’ discipline because over the past 5 years I have been with the learner disciplinary committee, boys tend to be involved in actions that disrespect teachers, verbally assault teachers, and are hostile to teachers. Girls’ levels of disrespect are low as they are involved in petty behaviours such as coming late to school and failing to write work.”*

Participant 7: *“Classroom disciplinary problems are mostly a manifestation of boys as they are involved in varying sorts of disciplinary problems, for example, being hostile to teachers and verbally assaulting teachers. On the other hand, girls tend to be respectful to teachers by expressing their grievance in a lower-toned voice.”*

Participant 8: *“Boys are active initiators of classroom disruptions. I experienced this when learners initiated a protest against an examination; boys were in the lead, particularly because they were not prepared to write it. Accordingly, they opted to protest in a violent way to avoid the proceedings of the examination.”*

Participant 9: *“Sometimes girls can behave in a manner that disrespects teachers. They are involved in verbally attacking teachers as well as sexually attacking teachers. One time, a male teacher was attacked by girls in a classroom. After the incident, learners reported a claim that the teacher was attempting to sexually abuse other learners.”*

Participant 10: *“Learners’ indiscipline is a factor that does not involve gender, as both girls and boys are involved in varying misbehaviours at different rates. I observed that both girls and boys are involved in drugs, violent behaviour, and disrespecting teachers.”*

This study's findings showed agreement among teachers that gender is an important factor in determining learner discipline. The most emphasised argument was that boys participate in behaviours that are violent and hostile to teachers. However, girls are

involved in petty misbehaviours, such as arriving late to school and failing to complete schoolwork. The study's findings align with Ringani's (2018) findings that African male learners experience disproportionately higher disciplinary referral rates than females (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.11). This is also comparable to suspension and expulsion, which take responsibility for environmental factors. The argument is that expulsion rates are significantly higher for males than for females in schools. These include misconceptions and disputes that are rooted in both the culture of origin and the educational environment. The differences in gender discipline attributes indicate greater frequency and severity among peers.

Some of the participants were of the view that learners' discipline has a limited connection to gender, as both girls and boys are involved in indiscipline at different levels. Boys are more aggressive, hostile, and violent to teachers, while girls are involved in misbehaviour that does not require suspension from school. However, from participants' perspectives, some girls participate at the same level as boys in misbehaving. Gastil (2017) indicated that boys are more likely to resort to physical and verbal aggression in the classroom (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.11). This is the opposite of girls, who tend to engage in more subtle forms of spiteful gossip and ostracism that demonstrate malevolence (Gastil, 2017). This is a concept within the conceptual framework that boys are naturally better suited to learn dominant, competitive, and aggressive behaviours than girls.

#### **4.4.2.6 The school**

Participants were asked to explain how school influences learners' discipline. The goal was to understand how school shapes and imparts learners' discipline that differs from family background, society, and peer pressure. In this context, participants' perspectives focused on explaining school factors that shape learners' discipline and the challenges of managing it.

Teachers from School A had different opinions regarding how schools shape learners' discipline. The opinions of participants include the following, among others:

Participant 1: *"Learners' discipline at our school is a result of the school system that is lenient towards learners' behaviour. I believe the school rules and frameworks provide learners with leeway for continued misbehaviour as they are not facing consequences for their actions."*

Participant 2: *“I blame democratic principles at school that limit teachers’ powers to discipline learners at every level, and actions that fit well. Look now, teachers are disrespected and assaulted because of school rules and frameworks that are failing to punish properly learners who are misbehaving.”*

Participant 3: *“School structures are failing to monitor the behaviour of learners because they empower school governing bodies with powers over teachers. Look, I spend the whole day with learners; I observe their actions and better understand the root causes of their behaviour. For me to report to higher offices, I should go with evidence, which is difficult, hence I choose to be silent while learners are misbehaving.”*

Participant 4: *“Learners’ discipline in the classroom is a result of overcrowding of learners. You see, a class has over 40 learners, which makes it difficult for a teacher to monitor every learner’s activity. I believe that learners take advantage of the scenario to misbehave because of limited direct contact with the teacher”.*

Participant 5: *“Teacher-student ratio is affecting us here to ensure that learners’ discipline is at higher levels. Look, I teach Grades 8, 9, 10, and 11. The classes are composed of a minimum of 40 learners. It is challenging for me to take into account every learner’s discipline, which provides ground for learners’ misbehaviour.”*

Teachers from School B were also asked to share their perspectives on the school’s influence on learners’ discipline. The generated teachers’ perceptions include:

Participant 6: *“Learners’ indiscipline is a result of ineffective learners’ discipline management structures. Look, teachers are required to control and manage learners’ discipline in the classroom, but they have limited powers to enforce actions that correct learners’ behaviour, for example, they cannot use corporal punishment or dismiss a learner. This provides learners with a platform to continue misbehaving.”*

Participant 7: *“I fail to understand every learner’s behaviour because of a higher learner-teacher ratio. Classrooms are composed of many learners, and I teach four or more classes. This is too demanding for us teachers that we neglect providing direct attention to learners in terms of behaviour”.*

Participant 8: *“School framework and workload make it difficult for me to call learners one by one to consult, provide advice, and offer counselling. My thinking is that the*

*school environment limits teachers' direct intervention, resulting in learners utilising the gap to embark on activities that are out of conduct".*

Participant 9: *"Most classes are predominated by boys who are considered miscreants of the school. They exhibit weak academic purpose, and I think that because they cannot understand, they cannot concentrate. Owing to their circumstance, supported by ineffective school disciplinary processes, learners are becoming disruptive to cover their weaknesses."*

Participant 10: *"Lack of supporting structures to teachers also provides pathways for learners to be involved in actions that are against school rules. Instances include that, as teachers, our work is demanding because of the large number of learners, and we sometimes forget to monitor learners' actions. This affords learners with avenues to misbehave."*

This study's findings demonstrated that teachers' perspectives on learners' disciplinary management processes are critical in shaping learners' behaviour. The emphasis was on ineffective school rules and structures that create loopholes for learners to exploit to misbehave. Moreover, teachers from Schools A and B acknowledged classroom overcrowding as central to shaping learners' discipline. The emphasis was that classrooms are overcrowded, which increases teachers' workload and limits direct attention to learners. Van Deventer (2018) placed learners' discipline in the hands of school leadership and administration to effectively manage learners' behaviour, which might influence learners' ability to self-regulate (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.4). In this regard, Himarwa (2019) noted that overcrowded schools led to learners revolting due to factors such as favouritism, dishonesty, absenteeism, authoritarian or dictatorial tendencies, and inaccessibility (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.4).

#### **4.4.3 Teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline**

The study aims to understand teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. The emphasis was to generate teachers' encounters as they strive to correct learners' misbehaviour. The questions asked of teachers focused on managing learners' discipline, the reactions learners demonstrated toward teachers, and the outcomes of that management. The study findings generated five fundamental teachers'

experiences, including bullying, elements of disrespect, violence, bringing objects, and disruption of learning.

#### **4.4.3.1 Bullying**

Participants were adamant that bullying is one of the leading consequences they encounter in the management of learners' discipline. Teachers' emphasis on bullying suggests it is a reaction by learners who feel offended by teachers' enforcement of school rules. The perspectives of teachers from School A include the following expressions:

Participant 1: *"I was physically attacked by a group of learners who were friends with a learner who was suspended because I reported him to the school disciplinary committee. They physically attacked me while I was going home from school."*

Participant 2: *"Because of my involvement in the disciplinary process of learners, they created a story that I was sexually abusing male learners by demanding sex. This created emotional trauma that affected my ability to concentrate at work."*

Participant 3: *"Sometimes you select to be salient, but learners cartoon us in different ways. For me, they mimic my working style and joke about my dress code. It sometimes creates a sense of humiliation because leaders of such actions are learners who previously faced disciplinary actions."*

Participant 4: *"Until now, my mind is still disturbed because learners emotionally bully me for my involvement in the disciplinary process. They call me names that disrespect my well-being, as well as create jokes relating to my personality."*

Participant 5: *"I experience disturbing conditions in some of the classes, particularly Grades 10 and 11. They use vulgar language and use sexual connotations while I am teaching. This is mostly done by learners who like to sit at the back of the classroom."*

Teachers from School B shared similar perspectives, stating that they frequently encounter bullying due to their involvement in managing learners' discipline. The fundamental difference in experiences relates to the words learners use and the form of bullying learners at School B experience. The following are extracts of teachers' experiences:

Participant 6: *“One moment, while I was discussing several school factors with another teacher, two learners approached me from the back without us noticing. One poured water on my head, while the other was hitting me with sand. It was a funny moment for the learners but a humiliating experience for the other teachers and me.”*

Participant 7: *“I experienced being threatened by learners as they become aggressive towards me after they are disciplined or suspended. In most cases, learners convey their anger through vulgar and abusive statements in front of teachers and learners.”*

Participant 8: *“I was personally attacked and humiliated by a group of learners through making derogatory comments on social media and school billboards that actually hurt me.”*

Participant 9: *“When I usually attend classroom lessons, I find that learners always draw some cartoons that joke about me. It is some sort of emotional abuse because the messages that are demonstrated are sexual and vulgar.”*

Participant 10: *“As a female teacher, I am subjected to a rumour that I slept with other male teachers as well as taking other teachers’ husbands.”*

This study's findings revealed an agreement among teachers that bullying by learners is common in the management of learners' discipline. The majority of teachers from Schools A and B expressed that they encounter physical forms of bullying that include attacks and humiliation in front of other teachers and learners. Furthermore, teachers indicated that they encounter emotional forms of bullying, for example, verbal abuse, use of vulgar language, and negative comments. The study reinforces that teachers are susceptible to all forms of bullying in the management of learners' discipline.

#### **4.4.3.2 Disrespect**

Participants also expressed that disrespect is another form of experience teachers encounter in the management of learners' discipline. The consensus among teachers was that learners become more disrespectful after being disciplined by a teacher. The following are extracts from the participants' teachers:

Participant 1: *“I experience an element of arrogance among learners who were involved in the discipline process that I monitored. Learners become more arrogant in*

*the classroom while I am providing instructions. Also, they demonstrate arrogance through influencing other learners to ignore my instructions.”*

Participant 2: *“In most cases, learners who were involved in the disciplinary process become more argumentative with our instructions in a way that involves conveying abusive words and contesting instructions.”*

Participant 3: *“I remember one time when a learner humiliated me in front of other learners by using vulgar words and language. I felt like leaving the classroom at the same time, I was upset that a learner was embarking on such actions on the grounds of anger over being disciplined.”*

Participant 4: *“One time, a learner stood and argued with me in a classroom. He demonstrated a high level of arrogance. I failed to contain the moment, which resulted in me ordering him to leave the classroom.”*

Participant 5: *“Learners, in most cases, are involved in conveying abusive words like joking with our dressing code, the way we talk, and worse, to mimic our weaknesses. The actions are embarrassing to teachers as they constitute personal identity.”*

Teachers from School B experienced similar elements of disrespect from learners. They cited that learners’ disrespectful behaviour is a culmination of anger stemming from suspensions or punishments resulting from the disciplinary processes. To attest to the teacher's perspective, the following are extracts of teachers’ views:

Participant 6: *“I remember one time when I attended a classroom lesson, I found a group of learners eating in class. They continued eating as if they did not see me, which amounts to disrespect. The moment I tried to instruct them to stop eating or leave the classroom, they continued with their act. It ended in contestation and arguments that turned ugly.”*

Participant 7: *“Learners' form of disrespect is exhibited with the way they spoke to teachers, their responses to questions, and their attitude towards teachers' instructions. In most cases, learners act as if they have the right to abuse and degrade teachers.”*

Participant 8: *“I experienced a high level of disrespect when a group of learners used vulgar language to me while I was in the classroom. I felt disrespected and humiliated.”*

Participant 9: *“A sense of demeaned when a learner from a rich family demonstrated an attitude and spoke in the tone that made him feel ‘much lower’ than the learner.”*

Participant 10: *“I feel disrespected when learners failed to adhere to my directions in the classroom because they are angered by my involvement in their disciplinary process.”*

The participants were very vocal about feeling violated when the learners displayed disrespect and arrogance. It was therefore not surprising that most of the teachers viewed disrespect as their worst experience of learner indiscipline. Alasmari and Althaqafi (2024) emphasised that learners’ lack of respect leaves teachers feeling helpless and enraged (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2). Moremi and Themane (2024) added that teachers in the United States of America identified learners as the essential and central component that impacts teachers’ professional enthusiasm. Learners’ actions are among the key contributors to the high levels of stress, demoralisation, and burnout experienced by educators and lecturers (Alasmari & Althaqafi, 2024; Moremi & Themane, 2024). In this context, learners lack respect for the teacher, as evidenced by limited interest in the workplace.

It is also important to note that the level of disrespect teachers experience influences their morale. The school climate is a direct reflection of the number of violent incidents on school grounds (Otzen & Manterola, 2017). Several factors, including strong educator morale, high expectations for student performance among school employees and students, and school surroundings, lead to positive treatment of children. This results in learners’ active participation in activities significant to the school, as well as the formation of positive social bonds among learners.

#### **4.4.3.3Violence**

Participants cited an unpleasant experience of learners bringing weapons and other dangerous items into the classroom and school environment. A consensus was highlighted from teachers’ perspectives that learners bring items such as knives, guns, and other objects to school. Teachers from School A were of varying opinions, including:

Participant 1: *“It was my first time seeing a gun at close proximity. A learner brought a gun into the classroom to threaten me for my involvement in his disciplinary process.”*

*The event frightened me because of my not understanding the actual thinking of the learner.”*

Participant 2: *“At one time, a learner attempted to use his knife on me while I was in the classroom. He waited for me to pass her desk so that he could stab my back. Thanks to another learner who pushed him.”*

Participant 3: *“Some learners are impacted by a history of disregarding adults because of societal situations. When the instructor makes threats of physical violence against these pupils, they feel inclined to retaliate since they are used to similar forms of aggression. They have acquired the ability to retaliate against the adults through violence.”*

Participant 4: *“There are instances when students have made threats to physically confront teachers after school, maybe in response to disciplinary actions taken by the teachers or instances where the students felt embarrassed in class. Therefore, the learners pose a danger to that specific teacher.”*

Participant 5: *“Throughout my first year at this educational institution, learners subjected me to several assessments due to my status as the newly appointed teacher. For instance, when I give directions, people tend to make impertinent remarks. Their objective was to gain their peers' attention. Their intention was for other learners to see their ability to confront a teacher.”*

The issue of violence against teachers was also experienced by teachers from School B. They emphasised a different scenario relating to violence perpetrated by learners. However, the fundamental argument is that teachers encounter violence from learners:

Participant 6: *“If there is a disagreement between a student and a teacher over particular topics, and the learner is dissatisfied with the penalty given by the teacher, the learners damage the teacher's property. In retaliation against the teacher, the learner vandalises the teacher's belongings. This social issue develops due to the prevalence of violence in society.”*

Participant 7: *“There was a girl who had previously been educated at home. She joined our school, and I believe that the transition was rather challenging for her due to the unfamiliar surroundings. One day, she stood up, and I admonished her, maybe for not*

*doing her homework. In response, she stood up and used profanity. I requested her to repeat her words, and she complied. The individual exhibited latent factors that contributed to her heightened hostility.”*

Participant 8: *“In my class, there is a particular example of twins who exhibit violent behaviour. Both boys display a high level of naughtiness and aggression towards their peers. When faced with an overwhelming number of responsibilities, they often express their frustration by yelling and raising their voices.”*

Participant 9: *“I experience a lack of security at this school. On a certain day, a conflict arose among the learners at the rear of the hall, resulting in two learners being stabbed. We summoned an ambulance to transport them to the hospital.”*

Participant 10: *“On another occasion, when I was occupied with teaching, we engaged in hands-on activities related to technology. The students were using scissors to do their tasks. While assisting a specific group, I was unable to see the events that unfolded. However, on that day, two learners engaged in a violent altercation resulting in mutual stabbing wounds to their oral cavities, causing a profuse discharge of blood.”*

The findings demonstrated consensus on the issue of the violence learners exhibit toward teachers and other learners. The difference between the experiences of School A and B teachers is the form of violence they encounter. The most recurring is the use of sharp objects such as knives and scissors. Additionally, teachers expressed that the use of guns threatens teachers' involvement in disciplinary processes. Sandra (2021) opined that learners' disciplinary issues include fighting, insubordination, limited support for teachers, a general climate of disrespect, and distrust of the administration (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). The emphasis is that teachers encounter varying levels of violence initiated by learners for different reasons. This is true because Sibanda (2017) reported that teachers in Limpopo province have been experiencing significant difficulties due to violence against teachers (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). Sibanda (2017) found that school premises have become battlegrounds because learners bring firearms and other weapons to school that are used to stab teachers and principals.

#### 4.4.3.4 Disruption of learning

Participants expressed that disruption of learning also constitutes a form of experience resulting from involvement in the management of learner discipline. Teachers' emphasis points to learners retaliating against suspension and punishment by disrupting classroom sessions and learning processes. Most teachers from School A expressed concern over the increased involvement of learners in classroom disruption to convey their grievance about discipline management:

Participant 1: *"In one of the cases, learners engaged in disruptive conduct during a lesson, it frequently shifts the attention away from the lesson and hampers the teaching and learning process. The cascading impact of excessive verbal communication demonstrates the acquisition of knowledge. This greatly impedes the process of teaching and learning."*

Participant 2: *"During the review of assignments, learners who default often exhibit disruptive conduct, causing frustration for both the learners and the teacher."*

Participant 3: *"Most learners arrive late. Late arrivals have negatively affected classroom teaching and learning, resulting in wasted time and limited opportunities to complete academic tasks within the designated timeframe. Tardiness consumes a significant amount of time and negatively affects discipline, particularly at the beginning of the class."*

Participant 4: *"I was annoyed in one of the classroom sessions when learners were embarking on back-chatting. They communicate in a way that demonstrates disrespect and disrupts the classroom process. This affects other learners as well as redirecting teacher attention."*

Participant 5: *"My most challenging factor is that disruptive learners are involved in actions such as coming to school late. They utilise this approach to disrupt the learning process and boost their ego."*

Most of the School B teachers cited learning disruptions as a frequent experience at the school. They emphasised different forms of classroom disruption, including late arrival, back-chatting, and eating in class:

Participant 6: *“They I think half of the learners that we involved in the disciplinary process lack proper etiquette. They deliberately disregard the educational institution's established regulations and guidelines. They persistently refuse to listen. They are quite disruptive.”*

Participant 7: *“As teachers have significant challenges when attempting to interact with learners who openly disregard the norms and procedures put in place to provide a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere.”*

Participant 8: *“In one class, a group of learners who are back-benchers embark on disruptive actions such as back-chatting, eating in class, as well as joking at teachers.”*

Participant 9: *“I was irritated during a few of the classroom sessions when the learners engaged in back-chatting. They speak in a manner that shows contempt and hinders the smooth functioning of the classroom. This has an impact on other learners and diverts the focus of the teacher.”*

Participant 10: *“Most learners often come untimely. Lateness has detrimental consequences on the educational experience inside the classroom, leading to time wastage and a restricted window for accomplishing academic assignments within the allocated duration.”*

The majority of teachers reported that learners engage in disruptive behaviour that impacts the teaching and learning process. The consensus among teachers points to experiences such as back-chatting, eating in the classroom, and arriving late to school. The actions were aimed at disrupting teaching and learning in retaliation for teachers' actions in managing the disciplinary process. Sibanda (2017) argued that teachers experience heightened classroom disruption, including back-chatting, eating in class, and late arrival (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6.4). Therefore, discipline policies should be set out for enquiries into different categories, depending on the circumstances of classroom disruptions. A disciplined person knows his rights and duties towards society because discipline prepares a man to be a good person and to be aware of his obligations.

#### **4.4.4 Ways teachers handle learners' disciplinary problems at school**

The study aims to explore and understand ways teachers handle learners' discipline problems. Participants were asked to provide the frameworks they use to correct and

manage learners' disciplinary issues. The aim was to have a clear picture of the approaches employed by teachers. Most teachers cited adopting a managerial role, stakeholders' collaboration, clarity in school regulations, and teachers developing a positive attitude.

#### **4.4.4.1 Managing learners**

One of the solutions to handle learners' disciplinary problems suggested by participants involves adopting a managerial role. Participants' emphasis points to teachers applying skills and abilities that managers exhibit in the management process. The emphasis from teachers at School A points to greater teacher involvement with learners and to monitoring learners' daily behaviour:

Participant 1: *“Teachers should act as managers at school who are involved in managing learners' discipline to eliminate classroom disruptions that impact the learning and teaching process.”*

Participant 2: *“Teachers are involved in determining the type of correcting learners, for example, supportive, corrective, and preventative disciplinary processes. In essence, teachers are involved in ensuring that learners are provided with the right way to behave at school.”*

Participant 3: *“To minimise disciplinary difficulties, I strive to maintain a high level of engagement in the classroom, since most instances of misbehaviour occur when learners are not completely engaged. As part of my routine, I move around the whole class, interacting with learners and taking notes. I then take a seat among the learners and continue my work of marking their assignments.”*

Participant 4: *“I believe that the atmosphere in the classroom is determined by the teachers' demeanour and the way they engage with learners. This engagement may foster a calm, productive learning environment or lead to disruptions. They are aware of when it is appropriate to engage in their tasks and are always under surveillance. That is why I am positioned near their workstations.”*

Participant 5: *“As teachers, it is important that we manage learners in a way that promotes connection and addresses varying levels of openness”.*

The perspectives of teachers from School B also emphasised the importance of teachers taking on the managerial role in handling learners' discipline. Most participants agreed that they utilise the skills and traits that managers apply to ensure that learners follow school rules and regulations. The emphasis includes teachers' focus on effective communication, quick action, and behaviour framing:

Participant 6: *"I discovered that communicating with learners in a freeway allows them to convey their problems. They also become free to seek advice and solutions to their existing problems. I believe this is an effective way to deal with learners' discipline."*

Participant 7: *"It is critical that we are involved with learners in extracurricular activities and informal communications. This provides me with the opportunity to observe and understand the root causes of learners' behaviour at school and in the classroom."*

Participant 8: *"It is important that we act quickly on the wrongdoing of learners, as it allows us to demonstrate that teachers care about learners' well-being. I employ an approach that learners are disciplined the same day they break the law."*

Participant 9: *"Like managers, as teachers we concentrate on learners' behaviour mostly rather than focusing on learners' personality. Our goal is to ensure that we cultivate a sense of moral behaviour in learners."*

Participant 10: *"Teachers have a role in deciding how to discipline pupils, such as through encouraging, rehabilitative, and preventive disciplinary methods. Essentially, instructors are responsible for guaranteeing learners are equipped with appropriate behaviour in the school environment."*

Most participants reported adopting managerial traits when handling learners' discipline at school. They employ effective communication with learners by using formal and informal channels. Most participants stated that acting quickly to address learners' indiscipline is a paramount factor in ensuring proper handling of learners' discipline. The consensus gathered from participants concerns classroom engagement with learners. The study findings align with Sprick et al. (2021), who found that maintaining order and discipline in the educational setting is the responsibility of teachers, who are responsible for establishing and enforcing classroom rules (see Chapter 2, Section 2.7.2). In this context, teachers have the power to fulfil their professional responsibilities and appropriately manage classroom activities. Relatedly,

Antonio (2017) indicated that teachers have a moral obligation to assist learners in excelling in the classroom and extracurricular activities such as community service and workforce (see Chapter 2, Section 2.7.2). Therefore, teachers influence learners' behaviour because they demonstrate ways for learners to take action and make decisions.

#### **4.4.4.2 Stakeholder collaboration**

The study's findings also indicated that stakeholders are a critical component that teachers utilise to handle learners' discipline. Participants' expressions of consensus point to the importance of parental involvement, community, and the DoE. However, differences were highlighted in stakeholders' desires for involvement in the management of learners' discipline. Most teachers from School A believed that stakeholders would reduce teachers' burden and speed up the correction of learners' behaviour.

Participant 1: *“Parental involvement is an essential tool, particularly calling parents when learners demonstrate consistent indiscipline for the purpose of helping to deal with learner behaviour.”*

Participant 2: *“Parental active involvement in learner education is an important factor that allows monitoring of learner discipline.”*

Participant 3: *“Parents, community members, and the Department of Education should collectively bear the responsibility for establishing and sustaining an atmosphere that is favourable for the process of education and acquiring knowledge. Consequently, they all must participate in the maintenance of discipline in an automated manner.”*

Participant 4: *“We sometimes call for the Department of Education to come and explain to learners the school rules to provide a different perspective and opinion to learners. Most importantly, the Department of Education is consulted to review some of the procedures used in managing learners' discipline.”*

Participant 5: *“My experience is that some of the learners' behaviour is a culmination of community problems. In this case, I make sure that I allow community leaders to be involved in learners' disciplinary problems. In one case, learners were called to participate in community service as a way of punishment.”*

Participants from School B also emphasised the importance of stakeholders' collaboration in addressing learners' discipline issues. The emphasis was on the values parents bring to learners, the DoE's implementation of relevant school regulations, and engagement with the community.

Participant 6: *“At our school, a factor that works best in calling police and correctional services to educate learners on the consequences of misbehaviour and outcomes of learners who misbehave. Moreover, we invite the police to discipline learners who demonstrate violent behaviour at school.”*

Participant 7: *“To ensure the maintenance of discipline in the school setting, it is essential that the Department of Education be closely engaged in all school activities. The Department should also provide explicit directives on matters such as the suspension of learners and the requisite processes to be adhered to in instances of severe misbehaviour.”*

Participant 8: *“The Department should provide guidance on addressing undisciplined students and organise seminars to enhance teacher understanding of discipline and classroom management techniques.”*

Participant 9: *“Parents, along with other interested parties such as the society, have the responsibility of providing their children with a social, emotional, moral, and religious education.”*

Participant 10: *“Parental participation is a crucial strategy, especially when learners consistently display disciplinary issues. Contacting parents in these situations may help address and manage behavioural problems.”*

The teachers involved in the study suggested that stakeholder collaboration is an important factor in handling learners' discipline. A consensus among participants was on parental involvement, the DoE, and community engagement. The goal of these stakeholders is to ensure and provide extra support in the management of learners' discipline. Himarwa (2019) asserted that parental involvement in learners' discipline provides guardians and channels for teachers to work together to address issues affecting learner discipline (see Chapter 2, Section 2.9.2). The emphasis is that parents have a greater chance of bringing about a positive shift in learners' behaviour. Moreover, Kathindi (2018) indicated that children who grow up in communities

characterised by acceptance, understanding, love, trust, and self-confidence are more likely to develop successful relationships in adulthood (see Chapter 2, Section 2.9.2). They develop a positive attitude toward themselves and grow into learners who are responsible, respectful, and conscientious in the classroom. This suggests that community is essential in learners' discipline development.

The relationship among parents, the community, and the DoE supports academic achievement through a cooperative partnership. Mthimkhulu (2015) identified that to address school violence, it is crucial for all relevant parties to work together (see Chapter 2, Section 2.9.2). Among other things, the research aimed to gather parents' thoughts on potential interventions to reduce classroom violence. Most respondents stressed the need to work together with the DoE, parents, teachers, law enforcement, and community members to reduce school violence. Participants expressed hope that a concerted effort by all concerned parties would yield results in addressing the learners' discipline pandemic (Mthimkhulu, 2015).

#### **4.4.4.3 Clarity of policies, rules and regulations**

School policies, rules, and regulations are fundamental factors that teachers emphasise in ensuring learners' discipline. The findings illustrated that it is important for teachers to clearly communicate school rules to learners, provide clarity, and allow learners to understand the regulations. Teachers from School A believed that learners often behave because they do not understand the consequences of their actions. Therefore, it is paramount that school rules and regulations are clearly communicated to learners:

Participant 1: *“Effortless implementation of school rules and norms will aid the teachers' efforts to discipline learners. The rules should include precise criteria for determining whether reactive disciplinary procedures are considered appropriate and compliant with the law. Policies should possess qualities of clarity, realism, and straightforwardness.”*

Participant 2: *“The school rules and regulations need refinement and clarity. If a student consistently engages in excessive chatting during class, appropriate disciplinary measures should be implemented. This provides instructors with a contingency plan, since there may be instances when they unknowingly engage in*

*activities that are illegal but not explicitly prohibited. Therefore, the policies must become more explicit and unambiguous.”*

Participant 3: *“School rules and regulations should provide realistic and effective alternatives, considering contextual factors such as huge class sizes and the resulting incapacity of teachers to provide individual attention. The alternatives should include a more stringent approach than just verbally admonishing the learner.”*

Participant 4: *“The department assigns school counsellors to aid learners in addressing personal concerns that often show as disciplinary problems.”*

Participant 5: *“Workshops on learner discipline should be arranged for school administrators and educators, with the purpose of not just addressing disciplinary problems but also actively engaging with concerns raised by teachers at the grassroots level. By providing a venue for teachers to convene, they can exchange experiences and collaboratively identify practical solutions.”*

Furthermore, teachers from School B believed that school rules and regulations need to be implemented through engagement with learners. Communication of rules and regulations implies that learners understand what is required of them and the outcomes of misbehaviour:

Participant 6: *“The school should implement punishment committees in schools to effectively communicate to students that any misconduct in the classroom would result in their appearance before the discipline committee.”*

Participant 7: *“Sometimes in my lessons, I focus on educating learners on fundamental rules and regulations that are expected from learners, for example, dress code, school times, and classroom rules. I discovered that some of the learners are ignorant of the school code of conduct.”*

Participant 8: *“Even in times of disciplinary hearing, learners must be provided with detailed information on school rules, the consequences of breaking the regulations, and the expected outcomes. This provides knowledge to learners and understanding that their behaviour is the one that resulted in trouble, not the teacher's opinions.”*

Participant 9: *“I think the Department of Education should review some of the rules and regulations, as they contradict the position of teachers in disciplining learners.”*

*Above all, we use such rules as a framework to punish and monitor the behaviour of learners.”*

Participant 10: *“In my classes, I prioritise instructing learners on essential protocols and guidelines that they are required to adhere to. This includes topics such as dress code, school hours, and classroom regulations.”*

This study's findings indicated that clarifying school rules and regulations is a critical factor in managing learners' discipline. The emphasis was on ensuring that learners understood school rules, particularly the expected behaviour and the consequences of misbehaviour. Agreement among participants points to the idea that teachers' handling of learners' discipline is framed by ensuring that learners comprehend school codes of conduct. Van Deventer (2018) asserted that establishing and maintaining an appropriate learning environment requires an effective classroom management framework (see Chapter 2, Section 2.9.9). This is because problematic learners' behaviour, such as interrupting classroom instruction and distracting school administrators' attention, might result from a lack of knowledge of school rules and regulations. Additionally, Bayraktar and Dogan (2017) argued that effective classroom management is based on social dynamics, ambience, norms, and values that operate differently from school rules (see Chapter 2, Section 2.9.9). The ability to appropriately address school rules and regulations acts as a contributing factor in managing learners' discipline.

#### **4.4.4.4 Positive attitude**

Among the suggested factors for handling learners' discipline is the development of a positive attitude. Participants emphasised that attitude is an important factor that minimises and remedies learners' discipline most quickly. This is framed from the perspective that most learners copy and mimic teachers' attitudes, considering them role models. In this context, participants from School A believed that a positive attitude by teachers creates a school atmosphere that is friendly and conducive to learners.

Participant 1: *“I observed that developing a positive attitude based on a mindset of love and caring works best in understanding and disciplining learners. The important factor is to understand learners' conditions and suggest solutions based on learners' circumstances.”*

Participant 2: *“We must commend progress. If the learner has shown consistent absenteeism and has now transitioned to attending school on a regular basis, we must commend them. We recognise learners who arrive late when they adjust their arrival time. We are trying to commend them to the greatest extent possible to inspire them to engage in tasks and attend school.”*

Participant 3: *“As teachers, we strive to comprehend the rationale behind rules and discipline, enabling them to effortlessly absorb and adhere to rules instinctively. This approach is centred on prioritising the act of actively listening and imitating the behaviours and actions of the learners.”*

Participant 4: *“As a teacher, my objective is to instruct learners in comprehending and adhering to societal norms, both inside the confines of the classroom and in the broader community, without resorting to physical or emotional aggression. I prioritise instructing learners in proper methods rather than penalising them for incorrect actions. The objective is to promote self-control and mutual regard within a peaceful and compassionate setting.”*

Participant 5: *“The learner discipline process needs to foster a positive attitude and collaboration with children rather than creating an adversarial relationship. The focus is on leveraging learners' strengths rather than condemning their flaws, and on using constructive criticism to encourage positive conduct. The process entails providing learners with explicit instructions on appropriate behaviour and then assisting them in acquiring the ability to adhere to these instructions.”*

Furthermore, participants from School B revealed that teachers' positive attitude contributes to effective classroom discipline. The emphasis of most participants was on building interpersonal relationships with learners:

Participant 6: *“My methodology is on establishing a learner-centric classroom environment that fosters engagement and promotes active participation and focused, organised discussions. This is essential to ensure the smooth running of lessons and facilitate the enforcement of discipline.”*

Participant 7: *“I guarantee that disciplinary action adheres strictly to the school's code of conduct for students and that children are treated equitably and uniformly. Additionally, I ensure that I collaborate with parents to ensure they are well-informed*

*on the progress of the learner and assist them in implementing constructive disciplinary measures.”*

Participant 8: *“The method I employ acknowledges the interconnectedness of all elements of learner learning and development. For instance, understanding learners’ social development helps explain the reasons for fluctuations in their behaviour and motivation levels. The positive discipline strategy is founded on comprehending the connections among personal growth, education, conduct, scholastic success, familial bonds, and community well-being.”*

Participant 9: *“Positive discipline ensures that the teacher’s responsibility is in enhancing learners’ self-esteem and confidence, promoting their independence, and nurturing their belief in their own abilities. Instead of penalising learners for their academic or behavioural errors, the teacher elucidates, illustrates, and exemplifies the ideas and behaviours that need to be acquired.”*

Participant 10: *“The primary objective is to assist learners in achieving long-term success. Instead of reacting impulsively or with temporary solutions, the emphasis is on comprehending the underlying causes of learning and behavioural challenges and implementing long-term methods to effectively tackle these issues.”*

According to participants’ perspective, a positive attitude by teachers translates into the implementation of approaches that create a conducive learning environment and a disciplinary framework. Additionally, the teacher’s positive attitude led to the development of learner-centred disciplinary approaches and to the creation of a conducive atmosphere for learners. According to Van Deventer (2018), the most crucial element of a successful pedagogical practice is the encouragement of obedience coupled with self-discipline (see Chapter 2, Section 2.9.7). This happens when a school implements strategies such as setting clear expectations, fostering positive connections between learners and teachers, using effective teaching strategies, empowering students to take initiative, and including parents and outside experts (Van Deventer, 2018). This happens when a school implements strategies such as setting clear expectations, fostering positive connections between learners and teachers, using effective teaching strategies, empowering students to take initiative, and including parents and outside experts.

Smit and Amushigamo (2016) highlighted the fundamentals that can be achieved through strategies such as swiftly resolving problems, emphasising students' agency in decision-making, and having them contribute to the formulation of guidelines for acceptable classroom conduct. The UNCRC mandates that people who encounter students include them in decisions that will affect their lives. Smit and Amushigamo (2016) asserted, in relation to the UN resolution, that a school policy that actively involves students in their own development is more likely to be successful and well-supported. Including students in policy development may foster a strong feeling of pride in the work produced if they grasp the rationale behind the policy.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

The chapter engaged with collected data through analysing, interpreting, and discussing the findings. It commenced with profiling participants and listing themes generated from the gathered information. The chapter also presented findings from participants' voices, interpreted them, and linked the study's findings to the literature. This guaranteed the development of conclusions from study findings. Data were gathered using primary and secondary sources, including semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. Information was gathered through teachers' participation in interviews. The chapter presented research findings that were analysed using thematic analysis. The next chapter presents the study summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the study's final analysis. It begins by using study objectives as a measuring tool for understanding the study's intent. The chapter also provides a summary of study findings. The findings are categorised into four fundamental themes that answer research questions. Recommendations based on study findings also constitute a section of the chapter. The chapter advances recommendations for various stakeholders, including schools, teachers, parents, learners, the DoE, and future research frameworks. The chapter culminates with a conclusion that offers a comprehensive analysis of the research.

#### 5.2 Study aim and objectives

The research aimed to explore and describe teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools. It is framed around teachers' understanding of learners' discipline, the factors that influence it, and the strategies teachers employ to manage it. The study's findings are critical to school stakeholders, including school management, teachers, heads of departments, and principals, as they provide insights into teachers' experiences in managing learner discipline. The central question the study sought to address was: What are teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools in the Mmashadi Circuit, Sekhukhune East District? The study was based on the following objectives:

- To explain the meaning of the concept 'learner's discipline'.
- To determine factors contributing to learners' discipline in secondary school
- To explore teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline.
- To determine ways in which teachers handle learners' disciplinary problems in secondary school.

## **5.3 Summary of findings**

### **5.3.1 Teachers' understanding of learner discipline**

This study aimed to explore teachers' understanding of learner discipline. Teachers were asked to demonstrate their understanding of learner discipline. Two fundamental outcomes were recorded from teachers' perspectives. According to the study, teachers understand learner discipline through school rules. Most teachers understand learner discipline through the lens of school rules. They emphasised learner discipline in connection with provisions in the school code of conduct. This entails that learner discipline encompasses adhering to school rules, such as the dress code, arriving at school early, and respecting teachers. Accordingly, learner discipline is a component of school rules that govern school operations.

The study's findings also revealed that teachers view learner discipline as a means of establishing positive behaviour in learners. The process involves using positive strategies to reinforce and correct learners' misconduct. Teachers foster positive attitudes and character in learners through motivation, corrections, and constructive interventions. Positive behaviour is cultivated by prioritising learner development and supporting learners' strengths, skills, and talents. At the same time, learners' wrongdoings and shortcomings are corrected in a positive way using encouragement rather than punishment.

### **5.3.2 Factors that contribute to learners' discipline at schools**

This study strives to understand the triggers of learner discipline in schools. This study's findings illustrated that teachers perceive the learner factor, teacher factor, peer pressure, family factor, society, gender, and school factor as essential contributors to learner discipline. Firstly, the study revealed that learner discipline is cultivated by learner internal factors. Learner factors include psychological factors, personal frustrations, negative character traits, and a rude attitude. This suggests that learner discipline is a product of internal learner factors.

Secondly, teachers believed peer pressure was a driving force behind learner discipline at school. The contention among participants' perceptions points to the idea that peer pressure shapes learners' discipline by imparting norms and values. It also cultivates learners' discipline in positive and negative ways. The positive ways

involved learners' effective engagement in schoolwork through encouraging one another. Teachers described this level of peer pressure as critical to learners' academic achievement. Peer pressure also contributes to learner discipline by creating a negative trend in learners' behaviour. This is attested to by the influence of gangs, which increases the likelihood that a learner will become undisciplined. The central argument advanced by teachers points to social pressure to conform to other learners' behaviour.

Teachers' perspectives also illustrated that family background is influential in shaping learners' discipline. This relates to learners' families as a contributing factor in shaping their perspectives, opinions, and educational interests. The emphasis placed by teachers indicates that family background facilitates learners' discipline through imparting traits that manifest at school. Family is the immediate circle of socialisation to which learners are linked before going to school. Teachers reached a consensus that learners from well-disciplined families tend to exhibit excellent discipline, whereas learners from violent or aggressive family backgrounds are hostile toward teachers.

The study findings also illustrated that society contributes to learner discipline. Teachers emphasised that society shapes learners' behaviour by exposing them to traits such as violence, bullying, and disrespect. Learners mimic the behaviour in society at school, as it is part of the external environment that shapes learner behaviour. Conversely, teachers compared learners' behaviour based on the society they come from; for example, learners from townships tend to be more aggressive than other learners owing to their societal background.

The study findings also linked gender to learners' discipline. The most emphasised argument was that boys participate in behaviours that are violent and hostile to teachers. However, girls are involved in petty misbehaviour, such as arriving late to school and failing to complete schoolwork. Participants were of the view that learners' discipline has a limited connection to gender, as both girls and boys are involved in indiscipline at different levels. Boys are more aggressive, hostile, and violent towards teachers, while girls are involved in misbehaviour that does not require suspension from school. However, from participants' perspectives, some girls misbehave at the same level as boys.

In addition, school factors influence learner discipline. The study's findings demonstrated that teachers' perspectives on learners' disciplinary management processes were critical in shaping learners' behaviour. The emphasis was on ineffective school rules and structures that create loopholes for learners to exploit to misbehave. Moreover, classroom overcrowding was considered central to shaping learners' discipline. The emphasis was on the fact that classrooms are overcrowded, which increases teachers' workload and limits direct attention to learners.

### **5.3.3 Teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline**

The study aimed to understand teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline. The emphasis was on generating teacher encounters as they sought to correct learners' misbehaviour. The study findings generated five common teachers' experiences, including bullying, disrespect, violence, the bringing of objects, and disruption of learning.

The study found that bullying is one of the leading consequences teachers encounter in managing learners' discipline. Teachers' emphasis on bullying points to it as a reaction by learners who feel offended by teachers' enforcement of school rules. Learners are involved in different forms of bullying that can be classified as physical and emotional bullying. The physical form of bullying includes physical attacks and humiliation in front of other teachers and learners. Teachers also experience emotional forms of bullying, such as verbal abuse, vulgar language use, and negative comments. The study reinforces that teachers are susceptible to all forms of bullying in the management of learners' discipline.

Participants also expressed that disrespect is another form of experience teachers have in the management of learners' discipline. The consensus among teachers was that learners become more disrespectful after being disciplined by a teacher. Elements of disrespect manifest through arrogance, humiliation, eating in class, back-chatting, and joking about the teacher's dress. The critical finding is that teachers viewed disrespect as their worst experience in managing learner discipline.

The increased occurrence of violence also constituted another form of experience that teachers expressed. Participants cited an unpleasant experience of learners bringing dangerous weapons to school, for example, knives and guns. The findings demonstrated recurring violence targeted at teachers, for example, the stabbing of

teachers by learners using knives and scissors. Teachers expressed concern about the use of guns to threaten teachers' involvement in disciplinary processes.

The study's findings revealed that learning disruption is another variable affecting teachers' experience in managing learner discipline. Teachers' emphasis points to learners retaliating against suspension and punishment by disrupting classroom sessions and learning processes. Teachers stated that learners are engaging in disruptive behaviour, which impacts the teaching and learning process. The disruptions are due to learners engaging in back-chatting, eating in the classroom, and arriving late to school. The actions aimed to disrupt teaching and learning, leading to retaliatory actions taken by teachers in the management of the disciplinary process.

#### **5.3.4 Ways teachers handle learners' disciplinary problems at school**

The study aimed to explore ways teachers handle learners' disciplinary problems. The most cited strategies include adopting a managerial role, stakeholder collaboration, clarity in school regulations, and teachers developing a positive attitude. In this study, teachers emphasised the importance of assuming a managerial role when disciplining learners. Participants' emphasis points to teachers applying skills and abilities that managers exhibit in the management process. Teachers effectively communicate with learners through formal and informal channels. Additionally, teachers are involved in classroom engagement with learners while establishing and enforcing classroom rules.

The study's findings also indicated that stakeholders are critical components that teachers use to manage learners' discipline. Consensus was reached on the value of parental involvement, the community, and the DoE. The importance of stakeholders includes reducing the burden on teachers and speeding up the correction of learners' behaviour. Parental involvement provides additional support in managing learners' discipline. The DoE supports academic accomplishment through cooperative partnerships. Moreover, community support opens the door to reducing school violence.

The study found that school policy, rules, and regulations are fundamental factors that teachers emphasise in guaranteeing learners' discipline. The findings illustrated that it is important for teachers to clearly communicate school rules to learners, provide clarity, and ensure learners understand the regulations. Teachers believed learners,

in most cases, behaved because they did not understand the consequences of their actions. Therefore, it is paramount that school rules and regulations are clearly communicated to learners. The study found that clarifying school rules and regulations is a critical factor in managing learners' discipline. The emphasis is on ensuring that learners understand school rules, particularly the expected behaviour of learners and the consequences of misbehaviour. Therefore, teachers' handling of learners' discipline is framed by ensuring that learners comprehend the school codes of conduct.

Among the suggested factors for addressing learners' discipline is fostering a positive attitude. Participants emphasised that attitude minimises and remedies learners' discipline most quickly through encouragement. This is framed from the perspective that most learners copy and mimic teachers' attitudes, considering them role models. In this context, a positive attitude among teachers creates a school atmosphere that is friendly and conducive to learning. According to participants' perspectives, teachers' positive attitudes translate into the implementation of approaches that create conducive learning and a disciplinary framework. Additionally, a positive teacher led to the development of learner-centred disciplinary approaches that foster a conducive atmosphere for learners.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The study findings indicated varying opinions among teachers regarding their understanding of learner discipline, the factors that contribute to learner discipline, their experiences with teacher involvement in learner discipline management, and ways teacher employees manage learner discipline. In this context, recommendations are directed to different categories of stakeholders involved in the management of learner discipline, including teachers, learners, parents, the school, and the DoE.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations directed to schools**

The researcher suggests that schools should initiate comprehensive disciplinary planning procedures. Schools must have well-defined protocols for managing learner discipline through a formalised structure. The procedures need to be effectively conveyed to teachers, while protocols for comprehensive training are designed to ensure they are completely prepared. This enables teachers to control the process of

managing learner discipline. Additionally, the learner discipline should acknowledge that the distribution of learner discipline deals with personal issues.

It is advisable to deploy professionally trained individuals at the school to deal with learner discipline. The presence of police officers is critical as it prevents instances of disobedience, including the possession of firearms, drugs, and alcohol on school grounds. Schools need to employ qualified counsellors to provide proficient counselling procedures. Additionally, schools should foster robust, mutually beneficial, and seamless collaboration between parents and teachers to provide a nurturing environment. Accordingly, schools need to conduct workshops with different professionals that equip teachers and learners to recognise exceptional behaviour.

The recommendations to schools are based on the fact that teachers address learner discipline reactively. This fails to address the underlying factors contributing to learner indiscipline, instead offering only transient solutions such as punitive measures or withdrawing the learner. It is evident that, in some instances, the Code of Conduct does not include all aspects of learner disciplinary issues. Therefore, the responsibilities for handling learner discipline are inadequately defined, as principals are seemingly expected to bear the whole burden of disciplinary matters. Therefore, teachers should get training in classroom management, specifically addressing individual discipline.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations directed to learners**

The researcher proposes that disciplinary processes for learners should apply strategies that increase learner participation in the formulation of school discipline guidelines. The emphasis should be on ensuring that learners are actively involved in the disciplinary process to maintain discipline in schools and classrooms. This can be achieved through consistent communication between the teacher and the learner. This allows for the sharing of concerns and maintains consistent contact, thereby reducing learner disciplinary difficulties and facilitating teachers' careful monitoring of learner conduct.

Learners are encouraged to participate in all sub-committees available at the school, including the sports committee, disciplinary committee, fundraising committee, organising committee, student representative council (SRC), and other committees. It is essential to monitor and oversee learners' work to ensure their continued

engagement. Ideally, when learners are consistently engaged in their tasks, they do not have the opportunity to create chaos or engage in misconduct at school.

It is important to promote a culture of mutual respect among learners, including adherence to the school's dress code, which requires maintaining cleanliness and neatness. It is advisable to promote collaborative learning among learners to facilitate mutual assistance. It is important for learners to actively participate in creating rules and regulations for both the school and the classroom. By actively participating in formulating rules and regulations, learners would develop a strong sense of ownership over them, thereby reducing the likelihood of violating them.

The research has unequivocally shown that learners significantly contribute to the occurrence of disciplinary issues in schools. However, learner discipline is likely influenced by a lack of engagement with school issues. In such a scenario, the school is likely to be seen by learners as a malevolent institution that imposes oppressive actions on them. They often experience feelings of exclusion and discrimination inside the system. This suggests that learners no longer perceive themselves as integral parts of the school environment.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendations directed to teachers**

The study recommends that teachers provide explicit guidance to learners on school and classroom rules and regulations. This works to ensure that learners understand the differences between school and home. Teachers can complement the approach by gathering information about the learner's home environment. This includes the surroundings and resources that learners have access to. In essence, teachers should increase their communication with learners to better understand the source of their behaviour.

Teachers should actively promote parental involvement in the implementation of learner disciplinary initiatives. The emphasis is that teachers need to align with parents by communicating and sharing information that parents may be reluctant to accept. In this context, teachers should demonstrate strong leadership to inspire learners to develop exceptional qualities. It is advisable to use inclusive language that caters to the needs of all learners. Teachers should adhere to a professional dress code and, most importantly, maintain a clean and immaculate appearance to serve as a model of outstanding conduct.

Teachers should meet regularly to generate and present ideas to preserve discipline in schools and classrooms. Teachers need a high level of expertise in engaging learners. This is critical for inspiring and clarifying learner discipline in school settings. This can be reaffirmed by delegating leadership responsibilities to specific learners to foster engagement in collaborative tasks. In these instances, teachers provide an environment that promotes equitable involvement in schools and classrooms.

The study's findings emphasised the significant concern about the insufficient training of teachers to effectively apply learner discipline. Teachers must get comprehensive training on the effective implementation of learner discipline. Teachers ought to undergo training in using suitable instructional methodologies and materials to effectively address various forms of learner discipline. Tertiary institutions are supposed to provide teachers with training. It is necessary to have appropriately trained and competent individuals in districts to provide training and development opportunities. Equally important, it is necessary to provide sufficient in-service training on the implementation of learner discipline.

The study found that parents have delegated responsibility for discipline to teachers, many of whom remain deficient in the necessary abilities to effectively manage and enforce learner discipline. Teachers must maintain discipline among themselves. This will help mitigate disciplinary issues in schools, as learners will emulate the appropriate conduct demonstrated by teachers. It is crucial to acknowledge that when teachers lack discipline, learners often take advantage of the situation and resort to taking matters into their own hands. Therefore, teachers must consistently strive to be exceptional to learners by maintaining discipline at all times.

#### **5.4.4 Recommendations directed to parents**

The study suggests that parental involvement in addressing learner discipline is crucial to resolving the challenges teachers experience. Emphasising parental engagement in learner discipline is crucial to establishing a durable connection between the school and parents. Parental participation in managing learner discipline fosters pro-social behaviour and a positive educational experience. Parents have the responsibility to actively participate in and support their children's education. Therefore, parents should actively participate in school events since their involvement fosters a sense of security in children, leading to improved academic performance.

Parental engagement in school events is crucial for ensuring that learners feel comfortable. Parents have a significant influence on learners' behaviour by ensuring they consistently attend school on time, exhibit appropriate conduct, adhere to the dress code, possess the necessary textbooks, and do their assignments promptly. When parents and teachers recognise and cherish the importance of their roles in educating children, it creates greater opportunities for growth and progress. The participants' comments indicate that there is a minimum level of parental participation in secondary schools.

#### **5.4.5 Recommendations to the ministry of education, arts and culture.**

The researcher contends that the Ministry of Education ought to devote attention to the present circumstances that aid teachers in properly regulating learner discipline. They should provide comprehensive training for teachers on effective classroom management and student discipline in schools. This training will help sensitise learners and teachers to the challenges experienced by learners with disciplinary issues.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education should formulate robust, unambiguous education regulations on learner discipline. The Ministry of Education should implement a curriculum focused on specific academic disciplines. This needs to be centred on ensuring the provision of the requisite infrastructure to inculcate learner discipline. The Ministry of Education ought to supply all the necessary resources for the implementation of learner discipline. Therefore, the Ministry of Education ought to provide training focused on learner discipline management.

The Ministry of Education should engage all relevant parties in the management of learner discipline at school. It should organise nationwide in-service seminars to provide comprehensive training for all teachers on appropriate disciplinary methods to replace physical punishment. The government should establish explicit, unambiguous guidelines for managing student misconduct and disciplinary issues in educational institutions. The government should guarantee that all schools are equipped with trained counsellors to facilitate an efficient counselling procedure.

#### **5.4.6 Recommendations for further research**

Extensive literature exists on teachers' experiences in managing learner discipline. Nevertheless, the researcher has determined that more assessment is necessary.

This research aimed to explore teachers' experiences in managing learner discipline in secondary schools within the Mmashadi Circuit of the Sekhukhune East District. To further enhance learner discipline, future scholars may explore its significance and applicability in educational institutions. Research may be conducted to assess the influence of learner discipline in schools after the elimination of physical punishment. Comparative research may be undertaken to analyse disciplinary issues in senior secondary schools in rural and urban areas of South Africa. Research may be undertaken to examine the effective implementation of measures to enhance student discipline in senior secondary schools.

The researcher suggests that secondary schools in the Mmashadi Circuit in the Sekhukhune East area should observe and use effective methods for managing learner discipline. The researcher also posits that the causes of a deficiency in work ethics among teachers and the degree to which teachers' engagement in different types of misbehaviour contribute to a culture of indiscipline in senior secondary schools. Significantly, the research results suggest that teachers in schools have difficulties effectively managing learner discipline. Therefore, it is advisable to undertake comprehensive research with a significant number stakeholders from various areas in Limpopo province to get a representative sample.

## **5.5 Chapter summary**

The chapter presented the study's final analysis. It began by defining study objectives as a tool for understanding the study's intent. The chapter also provided a summary of study findings. The findings are categorised into four fundamental themes that answer research questions. Additionally, recommendations based on study findings also constitute a section of the chapter. Recommendations are advanced to the school, teachers, parents, learners, the DoE, and the future research framework. The chapter concluded with a conclusion that provides an overall analysis of the research.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: PROOF OF REGISTRATION



1933

PHAKOAGO M MR  
P O BOX 695  
LEFALANE  
0741

STUDENT NUMBER : 36084859  
ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411  
FAX : (012)429-4150  
eMAIL : mando@unisa.ac.za  
2023-03-24

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: MED(PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION) (98407)

CODE	PAPER	S NAME OF STUDY UNIT	NQF crdts	LANG.	PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION EXAM.DATE	CENTRE(PLACE)
DFPSE95		Med - Psychology of Education	**	E		

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

- # Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations ([www.unisa.ac.za/register](http://www.unisa.ac.za/register)). Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study, and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year. Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's ESOline for study material and other important information.  
Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any such qualification.  
Readmission rules for M&D: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.
- # Your study material is available on [www.my.unisa.ac.za](http://www.my.unisa.ac.za), as no printed matter will be made available for the research proposal module. Study material can be accessed on the Unisa website. You must register on MyUnisa (<https://my.unisa.ac.za/portal/>) for this purpose. You are also reminded to activate your myLife email address since all electronic correspondence will be sent to this email address.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 0.00

Yours faithfully,

Prof M S Mothata  
Registrar

0108 0 00 0



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## APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE



**Title of the research:** Teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District.

**Date** 21/04/2023

**Dear** Sir/Madam

I, Moleko Phakoago, am conducting research under the supervision of MR N Ndou, a lecturer in the Department of Education, towards an M.Ed. at the University of South Africa. We are requesting permission to conduct a study titled "Teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District."

The study aims to explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline in secondary schools in the Sekhukhune East district.

The study will explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline, primarily in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District. This was established by examining teachers' perspectives on policies that assist in managing learners' discipline. The study highlighted the gaps that need to be filled regarding the management of learners' discipline in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The benefits of this study are that it assists teachers in reviewing school rules and policies and in developing better approaches to the management of learner discipline in schools. The school management, teachers, heads of department and principals will be provided with strategies so that in its implementation to the school disciplinary policies, it reflects the needs of learners, teachers, parents, support agencies, and the community. The study is valuable to the Department of Education and participants. It is also envisaged that there was a commitment to ensuring that all teachers

adequately implement and nurture a culture of exploring effective strategies to improve learner discipline at schools.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Moreover, the feedback procedure will entail the final research report.

Yours sincerely,

Moleke Phakoago



### Contact Details

1. Researcher: Moleke Phakoago  
Cell Phone No.: 27823183495  
Email address: [36084859@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:36084859@mylife.unisa.ac.za)
  
2. Supervisor: Prof N. Ndou  
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Email address: [ndoun@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ndoun@unisa.ac.za)

## APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PRINCIPALS



**Title of the research:** Teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District

**Date** 21/04/2023

**Dear** Sir/Madam

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adequately implement and nurture a culture of exploring effective strategies to improve learner discipline at schools.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Moreover, the feedback procedure will entail the final research report.

Yours sincerely,

Moleke Phakoago



## 1.2 Contact Details

1. Researcher: Moleke Phakoago  
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## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS



### Interview Questions for Teachers

- What is the learners' discipline according to the school code of conduct?
- What is the role of teachers in the management of learners' discipline?
- What are the types of learners' discipline?
- In what ways can learners' discipline be linked to gender?
- What are the influencers of learners' discipline in secondary schools?
- Are learners who perform well in school more disciplined?
- Do learners who are involved in cases of indiscipline lack parental role models?
- What type of experiences can teachers face in the management of learners' discipline?
- How does learners' discipline impact the teaching and learning process?
- Which cultural aspects are incorporated in the management of learners' discipline?

## APPENDIX E: OBSERVATION SHEET



Observation	Time	Date	Responsible persons	Description of what will be observed
School setting and infrastructure			Teacher	Classroom arrangement and availability of facilities
Teachers dressing code	Morning		Teacher	Checking the teacher's dress and adherence to the dress code
Time management			Teacher	Teachers start and knock off time
Teachers' daily activities	Afternoon		Teacher	Teaching and learning approaches
Learners' discipline reports in classrooms	Morning		Teacher	Learners' profile

## APPENDIX F: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET



Name of the document	Period for assessment	Designation of assessor	Given Feedback	Findings
School code of conduct				
Learners' disciplinary reports				
School disciplinary policy				
Teachers reports				
Schools' black book				

## APPENDIX G: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT LETTER



**Date** 07/04/2023

**Researcher:** Moleke Phakoago

Cell Phone No.: 27823183495

Email address: [36084859@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:36084859@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

**Supervisor:** Prof N. Ndou

Cell Phone No.: 078 708 5295

Email address: [ndoun@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ndoun@unisa.ac.za)

**Title:** Teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District

### **DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

My name is Moleke Phakoago, and I am conducting research under the supervision of Prof N. Ndou, a lecturer in the Department of Education, towards an M.Ed. at the University of South Africa. We invite you to participate in a study entitled "Teachers' experiences in the management of learners' discipline in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District."

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

This study is expected to collect important information that could explore teachers' experiences in managing learners' discipline, primarily in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District.

### **WHY AM I INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

You are invited because you are the most effective teacher in managing learners' discipline.

I obtained your contact details from your school principal.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study involves semi-structured interviews, focus groups and audio recording. The interviews will be focused on your experiences with learners' discipline management. Interviews will be conducted for approximately 20-30 minutes.

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

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent. 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.

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

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. 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 assigned 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.

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

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *at the university* 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. Hard copies will be shredded, and electronic copies will be

permanently deleted from the computer's hard drive using a relevant software programme.

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

No payment or reward will be offered.

### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of 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 Moleke Phakoago on +27823183495 or email [Mpphakoago64@gmail.com](mailto:Mpphakoago64@gmail.com). The findings are accessible for 1 year.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Moleke Phakoago on +27823183495 or email [Mpphakoago64@gmail.com](mailto:Mpphakoago64@gmail.com).

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof N. Ndou on 90282701

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

Moleke Phakoago



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 \_\_\_\_\_ (insert specific data collection method).

## APPENDIX H: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

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27 November 2025

### Editorial Certificate

To Whom It May Concern,

This certificate confirms that the Masters dissertation entitled **“TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNERS’ DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS AT MMASHADI CIRCUIT, SEKHUKHUNE EAST DISTRICT”** by **Moleke Phakoago** was edited by an expert English editor with a PhD. The following issues were corrected: grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, phrasing, and formatting.

Signed on behalf of NIM Editorial by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N.I. Mabidi', written over a horizontal line.

.....  
Dr N.I. Mabidi  
Founder & Chief Editor

# APPENDIX I: TURNITIN REPORT

## Similarity Report

### ● 28% Overall Similarity

Top sources found in the following databases:

- 17% Internet database
- 21% Publications database
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#### TOP SOURCES

The sources with the highest number of matches within the submission. Overlapping sources will not be displayed.

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