



Perspectives of Rural Teachers on the Effects of Peer Pressure on Learners' Behaviour – A Case of the Mqanduli Magisterial District, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

There is general unhappiness and insecurity concerning school dropouts and reports of criminal activities through various news sources and media platforms in cities, villages and townships of South Africa. This research therefore examined the effects of peer pressure on learners' behaviour. This research was conducted in schools geographically located in rural villages of the Mqanduli magisterial district, which is one of King Sabata Dalindyebo's local municipalities in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and a case study research design involving five randomly selected teachers from five schools where each school was represented by one teacher. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used to gather data from the five teachers. Document study of records was also used to collect, triangulate and analyse the data from the conveniently sampled five secondary schools. It emerged that peer pressure influenced the learners' behaviours either positively or negatively. It is recommended that there is a need for learner support agents (LSAs) and full-time employed psychologists in schools to counteract the possibility of school dropouts, truants, and misbehaving learners impeding the quality of learning and teaching. The study recommends the collaboration of stakeholders such as schools, the Department of Education and sister departments as well as municipalities in introducing or strengthening programmes inculcating acceptable and desirable morals to learners.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning activities are central to the existence of a school, yet they cannot take place in the absence of good discipline. Notwithstanding the requirement that every public school should have a disciplinary policy or a learner code of conduct to ensure a disciplined teaching and learning environment, there has been a perception amongst stakeholders like teachers, Department of Basic Education (DBE) officials, school governing bodies (SGBs), parents and communities that learner discipline is a serious problem that renders many schools ineffective institutions of teaching and

learning.¹ Chinese teachers complained about the challenges they face in classroom management due to the misbehaviour of learners which impact negatively on the quality of education for some learners as some of them get disturbed which hinders their full participation and concentration.² In a study conducted in secondary school in Zambia by Sigande, it was found that learners' indiscipline poses academic underperformance in learners and in schools which continuously achieve less than 50% in the majority of various subjects.³ Similarly, in a study conducted in some schools of Limpopo province by Masingi, amongst other factors that cause indiscipline in learners included peer pressure, unmonitored Television programmes viewing and usage of cellphones for non-educational gains which contribute to indiscipline of learners and consequently leads to academic underperformance in some of learners.⁴

Based on this background, this research engaged various stakeholders in one of the rural villages of the Mqanduli magisterial district who were 21 years and above, to find out how to develop acceptable child-rearing programmes to help the children become responsible and impactful people in future. The current study therefore sought to answer the following question: *How does peer pressure affect learner discipline in primary schools?* This is an attempt to find solutions to issues of indiscipline which affect learners in primary schools. The following subquestions also guided the study:

RQ 1: How does peer pressure affect the learner's discipline in primary schools?

RQ 2: To what extent does home background influence the learners' behaviour?

The findings of the study are presented in the subsequent sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is the direct influence on people by colleagues or influence on a person being encouraged to follow their colleagues.⁵ Various scholars allude to the effects of peer pressure on learners' discipline. Peer pressure occurs when an individual's experience involves or demonstrates a conviction to adopt similar values, beliefs, and goals to engage in peer group-like activities.⁶ Indiscipline can also be described as disrespecting educators, parents and senior officials, reducing the morals of young people.⁷

Findings from a study conducted in Russia indicate that learners portray social problems like immoral behaviour, and unruly characters epitomised by drug addiction, alcoholism, strikes and sex. Mudis and Yambo have reiterated that peer pressure influence contributes to indiscipline in the form of an uncomfortable environment where learners fear their parents.⁸ In addition, they added that ineffective teaching in schools influences discipline and educators who behave in uncaring ways influence learners negatively on discipline management in schools.⁹ Castillo suggests that learners influence others by displaying undisciplined behaviour and becoming role models to negatively influence others. In addition, at a certain age, learners do a comparison of what they have, eat and wear

¹ R. A. J. Mestry and J. Khumalo, *The Design and Implementation of Learner Code of Conduct in Rustenburg Rural Secondary School* (Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg, 2010).

² Theo Wubbels, "An International Perspective on Classroom Management: What Should Prospective Teachers Learn?," *Teaching Education* 22, no. 2 (2011): 113–31.

³ Eugene Sigande, "The Effect of Learners' and Teachers' Indiscipline on the Learners' Academic Performance: A Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools of Lusaka District." (The University of Zambia, 2017), <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-03-23-more-than-300-covid-related-deaths-and-health-staff-shortages-push-eastern-cape-hospitals-to-the-edge/>.

⁴ T M Masingi, "The Impact of Ill-Discipline on the Performance of Grade Nine Learners: A Case of Ngonyama High School, Limpopo Province." (University of Limpopo, 2017).

⁵ D. Amato and F. J. Calitz, *Assessment of the Economic, Social and Conservation* (London: SAGE, 2016).

⁶ Kenneth H Rubin et al., "Peer Interactions, Relationships, and Groups," *Child and Adolescent Development: An Advanced Course*, 2008, 141–80.

⁷ M Preisig et al., "PsyCoLaus: Mental Disorders and Cardiovascular Diseases: Spurious Association?," *Revue Medicale Suisse* 7, no. 315 (2011): 2127–29.

⁸ Pamela Akinyi Mudis and J M O Yambo, "Role of Peer Counseling on the Relationship between Prefects and the Students' Body in Public Secondary Schools in Migori Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 4 (4): 136 149 (2015).

⁹ Mudis and Yambo, "Role of Peer Counseling on the Relationship between Prefects and the Students' Body in Public Secondary Schools in Migori Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya."

and force that pressure onto their parents.¹⁰ Masingi points out that peer pressure is the main factor that influences disciplinary problems in the school.¹¹ Peer pressure forces learners to be loyal to their friends even to the point of bunking classes, going out with friends during academic activities, completing peers' assignments and missing their own, and rejecting the parent norms to confirm their affiliation with groups.¹²

A study conducted in Nairobi shows that growing children see their peer group as role models, undermining and forgetting the role of their parents.¹³ Mudis and Yambo posit that peer influence adopts social behaviour attitudes to be accepted as a part of a group, and this affects the learners either negatively or positively.¹⁴ Ombuya concurs with Mudis and Yambo that there are three major categories of peer pressure influence that can lead to school dropouts which include outside influence, lack of interest in gaining education and teen pregnancies.¹⁵ The researchers' point of view is that bad habits and peer education are more likely imitated easily by the learners, and peer pressure is significantly powerful in influencing learners. In addition, peer pressure groups tend to break school rules to show their disapproval of school authority attracting more attention from other learners. Marais and Meier found that educators reported handbags and jewellery as the most frequently stolen items followed by outwear such as jackets, coats, cellular phones, and money as well as bank cards.¹⁶ Female educators are the first targets of theft as they always carry their handbags with important particulars inside.

Mnguni affirms that learners are influenced by their peers to be absent and eventually leave school.¹⁷ Mnguni emphasises that these learners want to please their friends by not going to school, especially friends who are anti-social and rejected by the community.¹⁸ Findings from a study conducted in South Africa demonstrate that learners display destructive behaviour in groups, not individually.¹⁹ It is common for a child to misbehave to conform to peer expectations and avoid rejection.²⁰ The influence of peer pressure on teenagers is so bad that the teenagers can hardly stand to be in their own skin, are distanced from family and friends and become depressed and anxious.²¹ Furthermore, teenagers could attempt self-harm or even dream of committing suicide, engage in suicidal thoughts and even ultimately engage in suicide. Padma emphasises that the influence of peer pressure is such that it draws teenagers completely away from family and friends who mean well.²²

Learners' peer group considers school as a joke, learners may go along with the crowd and put little effort into their studies. In addition, frustration at home may result in misbehavior, as the approval and recognition a learner receives from his peer are for challenging the educators' authority. It can be learned from a study conducted in South Africa that school sports grounds, playing areas and school toilets are the most frequent places for violence perpetration.²³ The peer group gives attention to

¹⁰ Gerardo Castillo, *Teenagers and Their Problems* (Nairobi: Four Courts, 1986).

¹¹ Masingi, "The Impact of Ill-Discipline on the Performance of Grade Nine Learners: A Case of Ngonyama High School, Limpopo Province."

¹² Zarina Akhtar and Shamsa Aziz, "The Effect of Peer and Parent Pressure on the Academic Achievement of University Students.," *Language in India* 11, no. 6 (2011).

¹³ D. Ndakwa, *A Simplified Guide: The Making of A New Student* (Nairobi: Pavement Publishers, 2013).

¹⁴ Mudis and Yambo, "Role of Peer Counseling on the Relationship between Prefects and the Students' Body in Public Secondary Schools in Migori Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya."

¹⁵ J. M. O. Ombuya, "Family Based Socio-Economic Factors That Affect Student Academic Performance in Rongo-Sub Country, Kenya," *Journal of Education and Practice* 8, no. 9 (2012).

¹⁶ Petro Marais and Corinne Meier, "Disruptive Behaviour in the Foundation Phase of Schooling," *South African Journal of Education* 30, no. 1 (2010).

¹⁷ B. Mnguni, *Effects of Substance Abuse and Peer Pressure* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2014).

¹⁸ Mnguni, *Effects of Substance Abuse and Peer Pressure*.

¹⁹ F. J. Bezuidenhout, "Juvenile Delinquency," in *A Reader on Selected Social Issues*, ed. F.J. Bezuidenhout (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2018).

²⁰ Florence Zandile Nene, "The Challenges of Managing Learner Discipline: The Case Study of Two Schools in Pinetown District" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013).

²¹ Padma Venkatraman, *A Time to Dance* (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2014).

²² Venkatraman, *A Time to Dance*.

²³ Anthony Morgan and Peter Homel, "Evaluating Crime Prevention: Lessons from Large-Scale Community Crime Prevention Programs," *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 458 (2013): 1–12.

gaining power and success, as well as neglecting the relationship with the oppressed peers.²⁴ From the researchers' point of view, youth should be encouraged by their parents to develop a positive self-concept in their lives and have ways to overcome peer pressure and peer influence. Pöyhönen, Juvonen, and Salmivalli opine that peers who commit violence towards others are usually seen as those who are physically and psychologically stronger and more popular among peers. Also, peers are given support to show off their ability and violence towards others.²⁵

According to Sekhwama when learners misbehave, they learn less and at the same time disturb their peers from learning too.²⁶ The peer group serves as a socialising agent and meets learners' needs for friendship.²⁷ It is evident that peer pressure victims always support, praise and avail themselves to the group, nursing the fear of being excluded from the peer group. Children should try to listen carefully to their parents and educators at school and know who and what they want to be, to avoid peer group education. Nxumalo confirms that acceptance by the peer group is very important and therefore a rejected learner may display improper behaviour. An educator should intervene when a learner misbehaves by means of appropriate disciplinary actions to correct what is improper.²⁸ Mweru confirms that although the Kenyan government has introduced laws to protect children, teachers are ready to implement them if they believe that they are for the children's good.²⁹

The Influence of Background on the Child Indicipline

In China, Li describes home background as the source of early stimulation and experience in children.³⁰ Wilcox and Stephen assert that a learner's home is seen as the agent that creates the first impression that lasts throughout a child's life, and a place that shapes the child's attitude and behaviour in any area of life.³¹ Simoforo and Rosemary confirm Wilcox and Stephen's assertion by stating that children from lawless homes can be abused, experience and witness domestic violence, and often develop anti-social as well as criminal behaviour.³² In addition, undisciplined behaviour may be the result of reactions to deficiencies in schools and to teachers as directors of the education enterprise. It appears that every adult should demonstrate a positive picture in front of every child as they grow. Adegboyega, Okesina and Jacob indicate that parental attachment affects the behaviour of a learner, when the parents and the child develop negative and unhealthy relationships, then the child manifests negative behaviour.³³ If parents are quick to oppose the School Management Team (SMT) and the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) when they perceive them to be incompetent and unaccountable, this can cause indiscipline.³⁴

Family emotional and material problems also contribute towards learners' behavioural problems at school. It appears that homes and families that do not inculcate principles, emotional and material support to handle family transitions, parental support, and laws, may influence a child's behaviour negatively. Simoforo and Rosemary state that disorganised families, where there is a lack

²⁴ Ersilia Menesini, Annalaura Nocentini, and Marina Camodeca, "Morality, Values, Traditional Bullying, and Cyberbullying in Adolescence," *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 31, no. 1 (2013): 1–14.

²⁵ Virpi Pöyhönen, Jaana Juvonen, and Christina Salmivalli, "What Does It Take to Stand up for the Victim of Bullying? The Interplay between Personal and Social Factors," *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly (1982-)*, 2010, 143–63.

²⁶ Avhashoni Molly Sekhwama, "Alternatives to Corporal Punishment in Maintaining Discipline in Rural Primary Schools" (University of Zululand, 2019).

²⁷ F. Jones, *Tools for Teaching* (Los Angeles: University Printers, 2010).

²⁸ Nokukhanya Nokuphila Nxumalo, *Occurrence, Identification and a Potential Management Strategy of Fusarium Species Causing Wilt of Potatoes in South Africa* (University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2013).

²⁹ Maureen Mweru, "Why Are Kenyan Teachers Still Using Corporal Punishment Eight Years after a Ban on Corporal Punishment?," *Child Abuse Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 248–58.

³⁰ Zhonglu Li and Zeqi Qiu, "How Does Family Background Affect Children's Educational Achievement? Evidence from Contemporary China," *The Journal of Chinese Sociology* 5, no. 1 (2018): 1–21.

³¹ Keith Wilcox and Andrew T Stephen, "Are Close Friends the Enemy? Online Social Networks, Self-Esteem, and Self-Control," *Journal of Consumer Research* 40, no. 1 (2013): 90–103.

³² T. Simoforo and C. Rosemary, *Department of Education Foundations* (Zimbabwe: Open University, 2014).

³³ Lateef Omotosho Adegboyega, Falilat Anike Okesina, and Olumayowa Ayorinde Jacob, "Family Relationship and Bullying Behaviour among Students with Disabilities in Ogbomosho, Nigeria.," *International Journal of Instruction* 10, no.3(2017):241–56.

³⁴ Petrus Makganye Tlhapi, "Management of Discipline in a Post Corporal Punishment Environment: Case Study of Primary Schools in the Informal Settlements in the North West Province" (University of South Africa, 2015).

of leadership, guidance, and control, affect learners' behaviour at school.³⁵ Learners need proper guidance, clear direction of what is expected of them to do, and control measures as they grow, from their parents.

A study conducted in the United States of America by Tuner shows that the lack of role models within the family, the incidence of domestic violence, or a family member becoming involved in criminal activities are risk factors in children becoming indisciplined.³⁶ Kakumbi, Samuel and Mulendema suggest that there is a need for the school and family to collaborate, as girls have to perform home chores instead of studying while boys are busy studying.³⁷ It is evident that children in their family homes learn everything done by their elders or parents and copy or imitate it as it is whether it is good or bad. Mbiti complains that parents misbehave in the presence of their children and yet expect these children to behave properly.³⁸ For instance, if a father drinks alcohol with friends at home and smokes tobacco, when the child comes to school, they will do the same, drinking with friends and using swear words. Bandura's theory of learning posits that children tend to copy the behaviours and actions of their parents thinking that it is good to emulate such behaviour and display it to other children.

According to Etesi, single-parent homes are more likely to rear children with the highest level of emotional, psychological and behavioural problems.³⁹ Existing literature indicates that family background is the most important weighty factor in determining the learners' behaviour.⁴⁰ It appears that when children are outside their homes, they portray or demonstrate behaviour that reflects the way things are done back in their homes. Nogqala also posits that parents and elders around communities should act as the basic role models for the youth of that particular area.⁴¹ The South African Council for Educators (SACE) indicates in this regard that children learn by imitating adults and young people can thus become exposed to unruly or brutal behaviour from adults.⁴²

The researchers' point of view is that the normal behaviour of adults, self-reliance, and the community unit can act as a reflection of how society lives. Louis avers that the socio-economic status of the family may influence the behaviour of the child.⁴³ Sonali also asserts that learners emerging from a low socio-economic status have greater academic stress and therefore have behavioural problems than those with high socio-economic status.⁴⁴ Nene avers that learners' outlook on life depends generally on how successful parents and caregivers are helping them, shift from feeling powerless to feeling confident about themselves.⁴⁵ It appears that a child struggling or suffering from poverty as a result of economic status and comparing himself with peers may end up involved in theft as they need money in their everyday lives.

Ada and Anake concur with Seegopaul that divorce or remarriage of either parent are family situations that negatively impact the learner's behaviour.⁴⁶ It is evident that divorce affects learners'

³⁵ Simoforo and Rosemary, *Department of Education Foundations*.

³⁶ Z. Tuner, "Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability," *World Bank Group*, 2013.

³⁷ Zonic Kakumbi, Elizabeth B Samuel, and Peter J Mulendema, "Pupil Home Background Characteristics and Academic Performance in Senior Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Kitwe District, Zambia," *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no. 22 (2016): 19–25.

³⁸ D. Mbiti, *Foundations of School Administration* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁹ M. Etesi, *Curbing Student Indiscipline in Learning Institution* (Nairobi: Shrend Publishers Ltd., 2012).

⁴⁰ Lillian Pindiwe Nogqala, "An Investigation Into Causes of the Underachievement of Junior Secondary Scholl Learners Within Ngqamakhwe District of the Eastern Cape Province" (Walter Sisulu University, 2013).

⁴¹ Nogqala, "An Investigation Into Causes of the Underachievement of Junior Secondary Scholl Learners Within Ngqamakhwe District of the Eastern Cape Province."

⁴² The South African Council for Educators, *Annual Report* (Pretoria: SACE, 2013).

⁴³ J. B. Louis, *Factors That Influence Student Behavior in Secondary Schools* (Dept. of Education. Mauritius: Open University of Mauritius., 2017).

⁴⁴ Sonali K Shah and Andreea D Gorbatai, "Structural Sampling: A Technique for Illuminating Social Systems," in *Handbook of Qualitative Organizational Research* (Routledge, 2015), 251–61.

⁴⁵ Nene, "The Challenges of Managing Learner Discipline: The Case Study of Two Schools in Pinetown District."

⁴⁶ Peter Adigeb Ada and P M Anake, "Child Abuse and Students Academic Performance in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State," *British Journal of Education* 3, no. 3 (2015): 34–42; R. Seegopaul, "An Analysis of the Causes and Types of Discipline Problems Faced by a School; the Strategies Used by the School Administrator to Improve Discipline: A Case Study in a Model School in Mauritius" (Reduit: Open University of Mauritius, 2016).

behaviour in that maybe a boy child lacks a father figure with whom he can compare himself and secure the attachment of both parents. One study conducted in South Africa indicated that children who experience social alienation from others often misbehave.⁴⁷ From the researcher's point of view, when a learner experiences anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of connection and is unable to participate in class activities, he/she may misbehave. It has been revealed in another study conducted in Canada that some parents watch violent films together with their children which affects their behaviour.⁴⁸ Also, disruptive behaviour problems in schools emanate from parents who attempt to discipline children by constantly threatening them with violence.

Garcia and Santiago opine that parental participation helps to develop a positive sense of efficacy in learners whose self-esteem is raised and therefore, they manifest less disruptive behaviour.⁴⁹ People who have important roles in society such as educators, deserve respect from the learners that they teach.⁵⁰ It is evident that a lack of parental involvement in school activities may also encourage learners to misbehave and perform poorly in schoolwork. Parents may assist or encourage children at home to draft a timetable for home chores and schedule time for studying and focusing on their books and homework. It appears that disruptive behaviour by parents at home almost affects learners' academic performance at school and the manner of behaving among other learners. Burton and Leoschut state that the community in which a learner grows up, also influences the inclination for violence and victimisation at school.⁵¹ Moreover, in the home context, the attitudes and actions of parents, caregivers and siblings have a strong impact on children's behaviour as well as their norms and attitudes. It is common that when a child watches violence in their home or community, this may influence the child's behaviour as he/she may violate other learners at school.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social Cognitive Theory was used as a theoretical lens for this study. According to Bandura, the prevailing environment has the potential to reinforce the modelling and imitated behaviour to reinforce consequences.⁵² According to the Social Learning Theory, an observer's behaviour changes after viewing the behaviour of a model. This implies that the learners, as opposed to adults, tend to emulate what is modelled to them by elders and peers thinking that it is orderly, commendable and brave behaviour to do so.

METHODOLOGY

A case study research design was used to provide more focus on five conveniently selected secondary schools. Each secondary school was represented by one teacher. A qualitative approach was adopted. The researchers chose to use semi-structured face-to-face interviews and observations to collect the data.

The researchers employed an interpretative paradigm. Interpretivists assume that the researcher, as a social scientist, grasps the subjective meaning of social action.⁵³ The collected data was analysed using a thematic approach. Similar responses were grouped and coded to constitute the themes. The researchers employed purposeful sampling to identify a primary school with learners who had characteristics of interest for the current study. The researchers sampled five educators employed in secondary schools in the Mqanduli Magisterial District.

⁴⁷ Tlhapi, "Management of Discipline in a Post Corporal Punishment Environment: Case Study of Primary Schools in the Informal Settlements in the North West Province."

⁴⁸ L. J. Bell, *Factors That Influence Student Behavior in Secondary Schools* (Mauritius: Open University of Mauritius, 2018).

⁴⁹ R. Garcia and V. Santiago, *Behavior of Unconfined and FRP-Confined Rubberized Concrete in Axial Compression* (United Kingdom: Warwick University, 2017).

⁵⁰ Nxumalo, *Occurrence, Identification and a Potential Management Strategy of Fusarium Species Causing Wilt of Potatoes in South Africa*.

⁵¹ P Burton and L Leoschut, *School Violence in South Africa: Results of the 2012 National School Violence Study Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention • Monograph Series, No 12 •* (Cape Town • March, 2013).

⁵² Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986).

⁵³ A. Bryman, *Business Research Method-Paperback Higher Education*, 5th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2018).

Ethical considerations before collecting data were adhered to by seeking permission from the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education, Principals and teachers of research sites to conduct the research. Informed consent forms and permission were solicited. Pre-sessions were made with the participants to make them aware of their roles and rights in this research. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by making sure that the information shared could not be associated with them and pseudonyms were also used to avoid reflecting their real names.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The responses provided by the participants are presented in this section.

RQ 1: How does peer pressure affect the learner's discipline in primary schools?

This research question resulted from the fact that the general observations have shown an increased downward trend of discipline among primary schools in South Africa. The responses from the participants indicate that participants unanimously agreed that peer pressure influenced the behaviour of the learners. Some participants' responses are presented below:

Nom: *"Some children end up involving themselves in doing bad or wrong things as they want to fit in and be recognised by the peer group."*

Tim: *"Peer pressure causes anger inside my heart when I am thinking about how they treat me and the names they call to me."*

Popy: *"Influence individuals to smoke dagga and tobacco."*

Jackal: *"It encouraged me to insult elderly people and tell lies to my family so that they can give me money for socialising with my friends."*

Zet: *"Peer group influenced learners to fight after school and make verbal bullying to other learners."*

Nom: *"It forced me to be naked and do things I do not want to do."*

Popy: *"Peers forced individuals to drink alcohol and inhale glue just to be part of the group and to impress friends."*

Zet: *"Group pressure affected me badly because they make me demand things from my parents which they cannot afford to buy for me by force."*

The responses indicate that peer pressure influences learners' behaviour when a child depends on another person's views. Learners are more advanced in learning wrong things due to peer pressure practices. Thus, parents should make time to sit with their children and educate them about the dangers of peer pressure because outside influence proves stronger than guidance from home.

Participants highlighted two types of peer pressure, which can affect learners' behaviour: Positive peer pressure, which encourages someone to be disciplined and be protected from immoral activities by being advised to be engaged in important or useful undertakings, where a learner is encouraged and groomed to develop. Positive peer pressure enables the learner to be a responsible adult. On the other hand, negative peer pressure and influence can lead someone to involve themselves in social ills or dangers which may ruin their life. These social ills may lead to possible negative consequences such as unplanned teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency health issues, substance abuse, drugs and alcohol abuse, HIV and AIDS, self-harming behaviours, suicide, sexual violence and rape, crime, ill-health, gangsterism, threats of compromised standards of living and low self-esteem.⁵⁴

Negative peer pressure influences other learners to regard peer dressing in a certain way; to listen to a specific type of music and avoid certain groups of people in class; force other learners to smoke cigarettes, dagga, and join gangsters and drink alcohol; engage in unprotected sex and to participate in shoplifting from stores to steal valuable things. Onsoti indicates that the majority of

⁵⁴ F. J. Bezuidenhout, "Sexual Violence and Human Rights," in *A Reader on Selected Social Issues*, ed. F.J. Bezuidenhout (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2018); M. Ramphela, "The Culture of Impunity," *City Press*, August 4, 2011; Johannes L Van der Walt, "Religion in Education in South Africa: Was Social Justice Served?," *South African Journal of Education* 31, no. 3 (2011): 381–93. H. Biko, *Africa Reimagined: Reclaiming a Sense of Abundance and Prosperity* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2019); Bezuidenhout, "Juvenile Delinquency."

students abused drugs and engaged in unprotected sex in order to be accepted among their peers.⁵⁵ These behaviours lead to a negative change in behaviour. Learners are encouraged to insult elders and tell lies to family members to get money for socialising with friends. When a negative attitude is imitated by other students, it causes more aggressive behaviour and violence.⁵⁶

In Kenya, lack of parental guidance, poor guidance and counselling services within the school lead to many students succumbing to the influence of peer pressure, resulting in indiscipline and hence social problems.⁵⁷ Friends have a great influence over a child if that child really cares about what they think for example, someone can push a friend into doing things that they really do not want to do.⁵⁸ Peer pressure can force someone to dodge classes and hide in school toilets, disobey school rules and regulations. If a student mingles with a group that goes against school rules, the possibility of that student becoming involved in committing disciplinary misconduct is high.⁵⁹

RQ 2: To what extent does home background influence the learners' behaviour?

On home background influence in learners' behaviour, some participant's comments were such as follows:

Nom: *"By experiencing poverty, when the learner is hungry, it is easy to steal someone's lunch box."*

Zet: *"Students get distracted by the theft at home which leads them to steal any material they come across."*

Popy: *"Parent education can influence the child's behaviour when the parent is experiencing a challenge in helping their children in doing schoolwork at home. Also, if the parents are always abusive, shouting or insulting each other, learners may think it is the right thing to do. Furthermore, families are seen as role models by the growing child."*

It is evident that learners may lose focus and concentration at school and develop low self-esteem because of their backgrounds which do not favour them.

These participants pointed out the influence of drugs and alcohol. Nom stated, *"Bad influence, where kids are raised by grandparents or by parents who severely use drugs and alcohol as most learners compete and apply what they perceive happening as they grow up."* Popy responded, *"Some children grow or develop in a home selling alcohol as a source of income where kids can be influenced by many misbehaviour styles done by the clients."*

It appears that the bad experiences of children in their homes can influence their behaviour negatively. Some participants revealed that parental styles may influence learner behaviour. Zet stated: *"When the parent is very harsh to the child at home his behaviour can be bad."* Jackal stated: *"Good parenting makes a good foundation for good learners."* Tim responded, *"Poor guidance by parents and undisciplined home, influences children with bad behaviour at school."* Also, *"learners quarrel and violate each other because they grow up in an aggressive home that lacks the fear of God and this is bound to produce offspring of a similar attitude. Moreover, vicious parents produce violent learners, and soft parents produce either soft or unruly learners."* Nom asserted; *"too much tender care from the parents and not using "no" when the child is demanding something can negatively influence the behaviour of a learner. In addition, an authoritarian parent who is very strong to the growing child can influence his behaviour. Also when a learner witnesses violence at home, there is a likelihood to adopt that culture emotionally and change the behaviour."* From the researchers' point of view when the background negatively affects a child, that child becomes scared of going home, and their schoolwork suffers.

⁵⁵ Dennis Ogendi Onsoti, "Influence Of Peer Pressure On Form Two Students' Discipline In Public Secondary Schools (A Case Of Embakasi Sub-County-Nairobi, Kenya)" (University of Nairobi, 2018).

⁵⁶ Pöyhönen, Juvonen, and Salmivalli, "What Does It Take to Stand up for the Victim of Bullying? The Interplay between Personal and Social Factors."

⁵⁷ Ombuya, "Family Based Socio-Economic Factors That Affect Student Academic Performance in Rongo-Sub Country, Kenya."

⁵⁸ S. Pearson, *Development of the Self* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 2012).

⁵⁹ Robert McClelland and Shannon Mok, "A Review of Recent Research on Labor Supply Elasticities," 2012.

The following participants introduced the issue of economic status that can influence learners' behaviour back in their homes. Zet stated, "*Learners from rich families usually do not care about their schoolwork or other learners at school whereas learners from poor families work very hard to achieve at school. Moreover, father's and mother's occupations where both parents are not at home for the whole day, the child suffers from parental neglect, and only depends on helpers.*" It appears that the background plays an important role in the sense that if a learner comes from a stable family where a sense of discipline and respect for others is tolerated, that learner will behave well. If a learner comes from a broken family, they will be undisciplined. Popy posited, "*Some children are from child-headed families and as such no adults give them advice on how to live and respect others.*" The same participant also noted that, "*Learners experience problems at home, physical punishment and verbal abuse tend to abuse their friends at school.*" Literature indicates that as children grow, they learn by observing their parents' behaviour and reactions and doing what is done by the elders at home. The researchers concur that when the family, especially parents fight, the learner projects that on other learners at school when the learner is playing. The learner kicks, beats, teases and fights with other children in their school and community. Jackal said, "*It affects negatively, especially when a learner has a single parent or from a home where they strive to make ends meet.*" It is evident that when learners are exposed to social ills in the home or community, their behaviour may be influenced badly.

DISCUSSION

Participants mentioned background and parental styles as some of the factors that influence children's behaviour. The learner's background influences his/her behaviour. Some learners are the heads of their families and so lack proper guidance which also affects them. This confirms the views of Rossou that the lack of care in homes across all socio-economic levels causes some learners to look for attention through misbehaviour or to fail to do their assignments.⁶⁰ Learners get distracted by dishonest behaviour at home which influences them to steal any material that they come across. Learners quarrel and violate each other because they grow up in aggressive homes that lack the fear of God, and they are bound to produce offspring with a similar attitude. Children of authoritarian parents are more likely to be hostile, aggressive, less popular with their peers, less independent, and likely to engage in more substance use at home and in school.⁶¹ If parents are always abusive, shouting, or insulting each other, learners may think it is the right thing to do. A toxic background impacts negatively, especially when a learner has a single parent or is from a home where they strive to make ends meet. Manu, Maluleke and Douglas state that children who are exposed to alcohol on a regular basis through societal or family consumption of alcohol consequently indulge in the consumption of alcohol at school.⁶² Alcohol used by parents in front of their children can influence discipline in learners. The level of education of parents can also influence learner's behaviour, for instance, when the parent has a challenge in helping them do homework or get good results.⁶³ Some participants expressed different views pertaining to community influence in a child's behaviour and that a lawless home which lacks values, norms and standards of doing things, destroys the future of the child. Where there are many illegal outlets such as rape, witnessing crime and vandalism, children can misbehave. These views confirm the views of Bandura and Walters that learners imitate the parent's behaviour and their way of doing things, taking that as a culture of living.⁶⁴

According to the South African Constitution, norms, values and standards of that society must be promoted and maintained.⁶⁵ However, the contrary is the case as this research has shown. Hence,

⁶⁰ J. P. Rossou, *Learner Discipline in South African Public Schools-Qualitative* (Potchestroom: University of Potchestroom, 2020).

⁶¹ Florah N. Ngari, "The Influence of Home Based Factors on Students' Discipline in Secondary Schools in Manyatta Division, Embu East District" (University of Nairobi, 2014).

⁶² Emmanuel Manu, Xavela T Maluleke, and Mbuyiselo Douglas, "Knowledge of High School Learners Regarding Substance Use within High School Premises in the Buffalo Flats of East London, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa," *Journal of Child & Adolescent Substance Abuse* 26, no. 1 (2017): 1–10.

⁶³ South Africa, *South African Schools Act* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996).

⁶⁴ Albert Bandura and Richard H Walters, *Social Learning Theory*, vol. 1 (Englewood cliffs Prentice Hall, 1977).

⁶⁵ Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1997.

various strategies need to be employed by the various stakeholders to salvage the situation and to build a better future for these learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Department of Basic Education recruits learner support agents (LSAs) and full-time employed psychologists in schools to counteract the possibility of dropouts, truants, and misbehaving learners impeding the quality of learning and teaching. Lessons on the effects of peer pressure should be taught in each grade by class teachers at school. Schools should organise awareness campaigns with various stakeholders like Departments of social development, police, and church leaders to educate learners about the negative effects of peer groups which change their behaviour. Schools should also give rewards for good behaviour in order to encourage well-behaved learners and penalise those engaging in and displaying bad behaviour. The disciplinary committee in schools should often read out and display school rules and regulations for learners and monitor the places where most indiscipline events initiated by gangsters occur, such as toilets, classrooms, and playgrounds.

The South African Schools Act (Act no. 84 of 1996) stipulates that schools must adopt a code of conduct for learners to establish a disciplined and purposeful school environment dedicated to improving the learning process. A school code of conduct should be revised in each term of the year and classroom rules should be pasted on walls and discussed during orientation and familiarization lessons. Schools must be secured by cameras and machines that will detect criminals at school entrances. The government should employ security guards in primary schools. Communities should organise social activities to attract, groom, and shape children by engaging them with valuable skills that can help them develop responsibilities as they grow. School managers should ensure that schools are connected and work collaboratively with a local police station.

Parents should try to resolve their differences without involving children in their misunderstandings. Parents should act responsibly, communicate with teachers, attend school meetings and talk to their children about the safety and value of people because some parents need to restore lost dignity and values in their children. Communities should try to form committees to initiate youth gatherings, coaching, guiding and motivating learners towards good behaviour. Communities should organise social activities to attract, groom, and mould children by exposing them to and inculcating valuable skills that can help them to nurture and develop positive character traits for them to be responsible and accountable as they grow.

Finally, there is a need for Learner Support Agents (LSAs) and psychologists in schools to assist learners who experience family and community influences that have a negative impact on their behaviours.

CONCLUSION

This research has examined the effects of peer pressure on learners' behaviour with a focus on schools geographically located in rural villages of the Mqanduli magisterial district, which is one of King Sabata Dalindyebo's local municipalities in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study concludes that peer pressure and the home background influenced learners' behaviour significantly. Learner indiscipline and misbehaviours have negatively affected the pupils of the primary schools under investigation. The variables explored had some connectivity as follows: First, peer pressure influenced the learners to smoke, and participate in shoplifting and robbery. Further, peer pressure caused anger and mistrust due to ill-treatment by the groups, and led some learners into unprotected sex, truancy and breaking school rules and laws. Secondly, the background of the learners influenced their behaviours particularly those emerging from single-parent households or homes where parents struggle financially. Furthermore, in instances where parents are alcoholics or drug abusers, children are exposed to bad influence and are inclined towards indiscipline at school. It has been recommended that there is a need for learner support agents (LSAs) and full-time employed psychologists in schools to counteract the possibility of school dropouts, truants, and misbehaving learners impeding the quality

of learning and teaching. The researchers hope that the implementation of these strategies by various stakeholders will curb societal discomfort regarding school dropouts and reports of criminal activities through various media platforms in South Africa.

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