



The effect of learner indiscipline on teaching and learning, and interventive strategies to mitigate it in the Ekurhuleni South schools in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Learner indiscipline remains a persistent challenge in South African secondary schools, significantly impacting the learning environment and academic outcomes. Subsequently, the research was directed to inspect how learner indiscipline affects teaching and learning, as well as the efficacy of strategies used to mitigate it in Ekurhuleni South schools. A qualitative research approach and a case study design were employed to investigate the perceptions of principals, school management team members, teachers and school governing body members in selected secondary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District. The study used a purposive sample of seven participants, selected based on their roles and experiences related to learner indiscipline in secondary schools. The study used thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data collected. This iterative process involved a multi-stage approach to systematically identify, analyse, and interpret patterns within the data gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers, school management team (SMT) members, and parents, as well as through the analysis of relevant documents such as school policies, minutes of disciplinary hearings, and school reports. The findings revealed that for many years, school systems have been concerned about disruptive behaviour. Indiscipline issues reflect problems at home. The study also revealed variations in effective strategies for managing learner indiscipline in secondary schools and their impact on learner behaviour. The study recommends that to foster a more positive and supportive learning climate, schools should prioritise several key initiatives. Reducing class sizes will enable teachers to provide more individualised attention and support.

Keywords - Indiscipline, Interventive Strategies, Overcrowding, Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Learner indiscipline poses a significant challenge to the South African education system, hindering effective teaching and learning processes.¹ Indiscipline in schools can have a negative impact on how

¹ Mkhumbulo Ndlovu, Gawie Schlebusch, and Solomon Makola, "A Framework for Implementing Positive Learner Discipline in Public Secondary Schools from the Context of the Mpumalanga Province," *Acta Educationis Generalis* 13, no. 3 (November 1, 2023): 115–48, <https://doi.org/10.2478/atd-2023-0025>.

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learners are taught.² As far as Masingi is concerned, "school indiscipline affects learners' academic performance and their progress in school."³ Additionally, it influences how teachers view their workplace, and as a result, they often miss class due to the despair brought about by the learner's behaviour. Many studies on learner indiscipline have been conducted in various contexts.⁴ For example, Lira and Gomes study in Brazil found that teachers employ unpleasant language and oppression, which contributes to violence and disruptive behaviour among learners.⁵ They face violence because they are unprepared to deal with varied scenarios in schools. As a result, they abuse their power and react aggressively. This demonstrates teacher unprofessionalism.

Examining learner indiscipline in selected secondary schools in Zambezi Region in Namibia, Mwilima looked at learner indiscipline in a few secondary schools in Namibia's Zambezi area educational system.⁶ The study's findings identified a variety of disciplinary issues, including absenteeism, rudeness to teachers, inattention, early sexual activity, failure to complete homework, noise-making, tardiness, and use of harsh language. Furthermore, the data revealed that a lack of parental support in their children's lives, family history, substance and alcohol addiction, balancing instructional content and overloading classrooms, and peer pressure were major causes of indiscipline issues. In the context of South Africa, the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) emphasises the importance of a disciplined learning environment, yet challenges persist. The work highlights the damaging impact of violence and indiscipline on the quality of education in Gauteng province secondary schools.⁷ While various factors contribute to this complex issue, a comprehensive understanding of its effect on teaching and learning is necessary to develop effective interventions.⁸ Therefore, the study aimed to explore the effect of learner indiscipline on teaching and learning and interventive strategies to reduce it in the Ekurhuleni South schools in South Africa.

The study seeks to shed light on how learner indiscipline affects teaching and learning, as well as the strategies used to combat it within the specific context of Ekurhuleni South in Gauteng Province, South Africa. To achieve this goal, the study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- What effect does learner indiscipline have on the teaching and learning process within secondary schools?
- How effective are the current strategies for managing learner indiscipline in secondary schools?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact of Learner Indiscipline on Teaching and Learning

Learner indiscipline presents a significant obstacle to effective teaching and learning, impacting the quality of instruction and learner outcomes.⁹ Research has consistently demonstrated a correlation between disruptive behaviour and academic achievement, which was highlighted in various scholarly works.¹⁰

² Rudzani Israel Lumadi, "Taming the Tide of Achievement Gap by Managing Parental Role in Learner Discipline," *South African Journal of Education* 39, no. Supplement 1 (September 30, 2019): S1–10, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39ns1a1707>.

³ Jabulani. Masingi, "The Impact of School Indiscipline on Learners' Academic Performance," *Journal of Educational Studies* 15, no. 2 (2017): 45–58.

⁴ Ana Carolina Lira and Célio Gomes, "Teacher Behaviour and Learner Violence in Schools," *International Journal of Educational Research* 88, no. 1 (2018): 120–30; Bernard Jinot, "School Indiscipline and Academic Outcomes," *Educational Review* 70, no. 3 (2018): 312–28; Mwilima Bollen Mwilima and Shuti Steph Khumalo, "Examining Learner Indiscipline In Selected Secondary School In Zambezi Region In Namibia: A Case Study," *Social Sciences and Education Research Review* 8, no. 2 (2021): 28–41.

⁵ Lira and Célio Gomes, "Teacher Behaviour and Learner Violence in Schools."

⁶ Mwilima and Khumalo, "Examining Learner Indiscipline In Selected Secondary School In Zambezi Region In Namibia: A Case Study."

⁷ A. S. Padayachee, "Exploring the Use of Collaborative Strategies by School Management Teams to Sustain Learner Discipline in Secondary Schools" (University of the Free State, 2021).

⁸ Ndlovu *et al.*, "A Framework for Implementing Positive Learner Discipline," 120.

⁹ Motsekiso Calvin Letuma, "Understanding the Complexities: Exploring Secondary School Contextual Challenges Teachers Face in Addressing Indiscipline," *Studies in Learning and Teaching* 5, no. 2 (2024): 334–45.

¹⁰ Christina Gkonou, "Teacher-Learner Relationships," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Psychology of Language Learning and Teaching* (Routledge, 2021), 275–84; Ndlovu, Schlebusch, and Makola, "A Framework for Implementing Positive Learner Discipline in Public Secondary Schools from the Context of the Mpumalanga Province"; Padayachee, "Exploring the Use of Collaborative Strategies by School Management Teams to Sustain Learner Discipline in Secondary Schools."

Firstly, disruptive behaviour directly interferes with instructional time. According to Rassul, constant interruptions, such as off-task conversations, noise distractions, and classroom disruptions, disrupt instruction flow, preventing teachers from effectively delivering lesson content.¹¹ This was also supported in the early work of Finn.¹² This fragmented learning experience, according to Ndlovu et al., can lead to decreased learner engagement, reduced attention spans, and poorer academic performance.¹³

Secondly, Rassul et al., noted that indiscipline creates a hostile and stressful learning environment for teachers and learners.¹⁴ Hence, constant disruptions can increase teacher stress levels, leading to burnout and decreased job satisfaction.¹⁵ This stress can manifest in various ways, which Shamionov identified as increased anxiety, frustration, and even physical and emotional exhaustion.¹⁶ Furthermore, a stressful learning environment can have a negative impact on student well-being, leading to anxiety, fear, and decreased motivation.

In addition, indiscipline can undermine the development of positive teacher-learner relationships¹⁷. This view was furthered by Grammatikopoulos, who stated that frequent disciplinary actions can create tension and mistrust between teachers and learners, hindering effective communication and collaboration.¹⁸ A positive teacher-learner relationship is crucial for fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment, and it plays a vital role in learner motivation and academic success.¹⁹

Furthermore, Grammatikopoulos observed that disruptive behaviour might have a major impact on learners' social and emotional development.²⁰ According to Abdelaziz and Harraz, bullying, cyberbullying, and other forms of aggressive behaviour can produce a hostile and unsafe learning environment, leading to increased anxiety, sadness, and even trauma among learners.²¹ This can have long-term consequences for learners' mental health and well-being, affecting their academic performance and social adjustment. Finally, indiscipline can lead to a decline in school climate and culture. When disruptive behaviour is prevalent, it can create a hostile and unproductive school environment that undermines the overall learning experience for all learners.²² This can manifest in decreased learner engagement, increased absenteeism, and reduced school morale.

Effective Strategies for Managing Learner Indiscipline

Effective ways for regulating learner indiscipline are required to create a positive and productive learning environment.²³ These tactics should be proactive, preventative, and founded on solid educational ideas.

One effective strategy is establishing clear and consistent classroom rules and expectations.²⁴ These rules should be developed collaboratively with learners to ensure their understanding and buy-in. According to Hasanah et al., clear consequences for misbehaviour should be established and

¹¹ Mohammed Hussein Rassul et al., "Handling Students' Disruptive Behaviour in Language Study Classroom: A Descriptive Analytical Study," *Qalaa Zanist Scientific Journal* 9, no. 2 (2024): 1088–1117.

¹² Chester E Finn Jr, *We Must Take Charge!* (Simon and Schuster, 2008).

¹³ Ndlovu, Schlebusch, and Makola, "A Framework for Implementing Positive Learner Discipline in Public Secondary Schools from the Context of the Mpumalanga Province."

¹⁴ Rassul et al., "Handling Students' Disruptive Behaviour in Language Study Classroom: A Descriptive Analytical Study."

¹⁵ George Moyo, Noncedo P D Khewu, and Anass Bayaga, "Disciplinary Practices in Schools and Principles of Alternatives to Corporal Punishment Strategies," *South African Journal of Education* 34, no. 1 (2014): 1–14.

¹⁶ Rail M. Shamionov et al., "The Role of Junior Adolescents' School Well-Being/Ill-Being Characteristics in School Anxiety Variations," *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education* 11, no. 3 (August 17, 2021): 878–93, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe11030065>.

¹⁷ Moyo, Khewu, and Bayaga, "Disciplinary Practices in Schools."

¹⁸ Christos Grammatikopoulos, "Causes and Implications of Organizational School Conflicts: A Theoretical Approach," *International Journal of Education and Research* 10, no. 2 (2022): 77–88.

¹⁹ I J Oosthuizen, J M Roux, and J L Van der Walt, "A Classical Approach to the Restoration of Discipline in South African Schools," *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship= Koers: Bulletin Vir Christelike Wetenskap* 68, no. 4 (2003): 373–90.

²⁰ Grammatikopoulos, "Causes and Implications of Organizational School Conflicts: A Theoretical Approach."

²¹ Rafik Abdelaziz and Harraz Fethi, "Unhealthy Psychological Atmosphere of School Bullying and It's Impact on The Learners Learning" (Université Ibn Khaldoun-Tiaret, 2021).

²² Grammatikopoulos, "Causes and Implications of Organisational School Conflicts."

²³ Gawie Schlebusch, Solomon Makola, and Mkhumbulo Ndlovu, "Positive Learner Discipline for Public Secondary Schools," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 16, no. 1 (2022).

²⁴ Lee Canter, *Assertive Discipline: Positive Behavior Management for Today's Classroom* (Solution Tree Press, 2010).

consistently enforced, while positive reinforcement should be used to encourage appropriate behaviour.²⁵ Furthermore, Clark et al., argued that proactive classroom management techniques, such as active engagement strategies, differentiated instruction, and creating a positive and supportive classroom climate, can significantly reduce misbehaviour.²⁶ Hence, by keeping learners actively involved in the learning process and providing a sense of belonging and purpose, teachers can minimise opportunities for disruptive behaviour.²⁷

Restorative justice approaches, which emphasise repairing harm and promoting reconciliation, are gaining increasing attention as effective strategies for addressing learner indiscipline.²⁸ These approaches focus on building relationships, understanding the underlying causes of misbehaviour, and developing solutions that address the needs of all parties involved. Kirksey²⁹ emphasised that parent involvement is crucial for effective discipline management, and as such, schools should actively engage parents in the education process, informing them about their child's behaviour and involving them in developing and implementing school-wide discipline policies.³⁰ Furthermore, Hasanah et al., noted that positive reinforcement and rewards can be highly effective in encouraging positive behaviour and discouraging misbehaviour.³¹ Recognising and acknowledging appropriate behaviour can motivate learners and create a more positive and rewarding learning environment.³²

Finally, it is critical to address the underlying causes of misbehaviour, such as bullying, social-emotional issues, and learning challenges. Schools should provide appropriate support services, such as counseling, social work, and special education programs, to address kids' unique needs while also preventing or mitigating the impact of underlying difficulties. Practical solutions for controlling learner indiscipline necessitate a multifaceted strategy that includes clear standards, proactive classroom management, restorative justice procedures, strong parental participation, positive reinforcement, and addressing the core causes of misbehaviour.³³ By employing these methods, schools can create a positive and supportive learning environment that fosters student achievement and well-being.

This literature review critically examines learner indiscipline in South African secondary schools, exploring its multifaceted nature. Learner indiscipline significantly impacts teaching and learning by disrupting instructional time, fostering a stressful learning environment, undermining teacher-learner relationships, negatively affecting learner well-being, and contributing to a decline in school climate.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ecological Systems Theory provides a suitable theoretical framework.³⁴ This framework emphasises the interconnectedness of multiple systems influencing individual development, including the microsystem (classroom, family), mesosystem (home-school interactions), exosystem (community, media), macrosystem (cultural values), and chronosystem (historical and sociocultural changes). By applying this framework, the study can move beyond individual-level explanations and explore how

²⁵ Mila Hasanah et al., "Teachers' Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behavior in The Classroom During The Learning Process," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 3 (2024): 628–45.

²⁶ Kelly N. Clark et al., "Profiles of Teachers' Classroom Management Style: Differences in Perceived School Climate and Professional Characteristics," *Journal of School Psychology* 100 (October 2023): 101239, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2023.101239>.

²⁷ Mark Glasser, *Open Verification Methodology Cookbook* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2009).

²⁸ Clark et al., "Profiles of Teachers' Classroom Management Style: Differences in Perceived School Climate and Professional Characteristics."; Howard Zehr, "Commentary: Restorative Justice: Beyond Victim-Offender Mediation," *CONFLICT Resol. Q.* 22 (2004): 305.

²⁹ Kirksey, Gottfried, and Freeman, "Does Parental Involvement Change After Schools Assign Students an IEP?"

³⁰ Janeth Kigobe et al., "Parental Involvement in Educational Activities in Tanzania: Understanding Motivational Factors," *Educational Studies* 45, no. 5 (2019): 613–32.

³¹ Hasanah et al., "Teachers' Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behavior."

³² Johnmarshall Reeve and Sung Hyeon Cheon, "Autonomy-Supportive Teaching: Its Malleability, Benefits, and Potential to Improve Educational Practice," *Educational Psychologist* 56, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 54–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2020.1862657>.

³³ J Jacob Kirksey, Michael A Gottfried, and Jennifer A Freeman, "Does Parental Involvement Change after Schools Assign Students an IEP?," in *Thinking Ecologically in Educational Policy and Research* (Routledge, 2024), 18–31.

³⁴ Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Contexts of Child Rearing: Problems and Prospects.," *American Psychologist* 34, no. 10 (October 1979): 844–50, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.10.844>.

factors within the school environment, such as school climate, leadership, and resources, interact with broader societal influences to shape learner behaviour.³⁵

The Ecological Systems Theory (Figure 1) was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, who posits that a series of interconnected environmental systems influence an individual's development. It moves beyond simplistic, individual-level explanations by emphasising the multifaceted nature of human development.³⁶

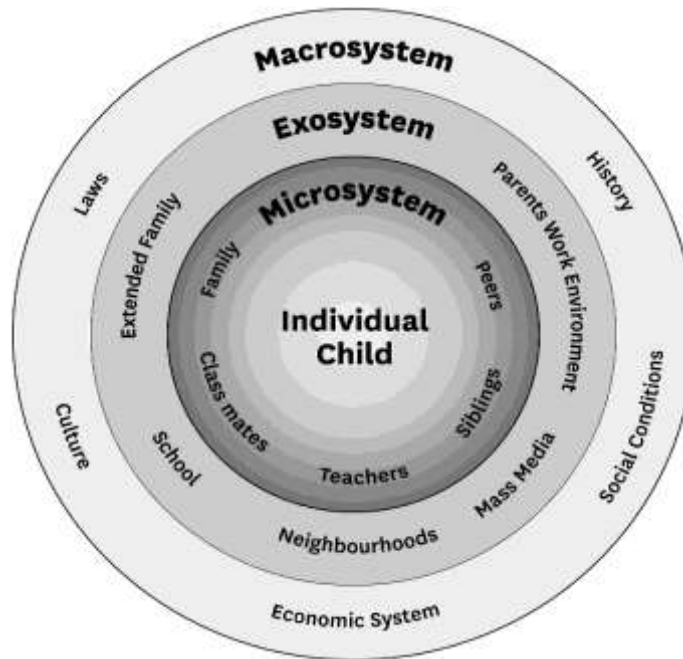


Figure 1: The Child within the Ecological System Falloon (2022)

- **Microsystem:** This layer includes the school and classroom environment, where direct interactions between teachers, learners, and peers occur. In the study, participants highlighted issues like overcrowded classrooms, inadequate resources, and inconsistent enforcement of discipline policies (e.g., SMA1's comment: "The classes are overcrowded, making it difficult to control learners"). These factors disrupt the microsystem, contributing to indiscipline. Teacher-learner relationships, a key theme in the findings, also fall here. Poor relationships (e.g., tension due to frequent disciplinary actions) exacerbate behavioural issues.
- **Mesosystem:** This involves interactions between the school and home environments. The study reveals that weak parental involvement and misalignment between school and home expectations (e.g., lack of parental support for disciplinary measures) undermine discipline. For instance, SMD2's strategy of involving community role models reflects efforts to strengthen the mesosystem by bridging school and community influences.
- **Exosystem:** Broader societal structures, such as community violence, poverty, and limited access to counseling services, indirectly affect learner behaviour. The study notes societal issues like drug abuse and crime as contributors to school indiscipline, aligning with EST's emphasis on external stressors.
- **Macrosystem:** Cultural values and policies, such as the South African Schools Act (1996), shape disciplinary approaches. The study critiques inconsistent policy implementation (e.g.,

³⁵ Honggang Liu, Chunmei Yan, and Jiaying Fu, "Exploring Livestream English Teaching Anxiety in the Chinese Context: An Ecological Perspective," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 111 (March 2022): 103620, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103620>.

³⁶ Sarah Mercer, "The Wellbeing of Language Teachers in the Private Sector: An Ecological Perspective," *Language Teaching Research* 27, no. 5 (2023): 1054–77.

SMT2's observation: "The school code of conduct is not consistently enforced"), highlighting macrosystemic gaps. Prevailing norms around corporal punishment alternatives also influence school climates.

- **Chronosystem:** This dimension emphasises the influence of historical and sociocultural changes over time on child development. Historical shifts, such as post-apartheid educational reforms or the rise of digital media, contextualize evolving disciplinary challenges. The study's focus on contemporary strategies (e.g., restorative justice) reflects responses to these changes.

This theory emphasises that learner indiscipline is not solely an individual-level issue but arises from the complex interplay of factors within and beyond the immediate school environment. For example, within the microsystem, factors like classroom dynamics, teacher-student relationships, and peer interactions significantly influence learner behaviour. The mesosystem emphasises the importance of home-school relationships, such as parental involvement in school activities and teacher-parent contact. The exosystem encompasses broader societal impacts, including poverty, unemployment, and access to resources, all of which can have an indirect influence on learner behaviour (Figure 1). For example, exposure to violence or substance misuse in the community can have a negative effect on a child's mental well-being and lead to disruptive behavior at school. Finally, the macrosystem includes larger cultural values, societal conventions, and government regulations that impact the educational environment and influence student behavior. By utilising this framework, the study can move beyond individual-level explanations of learner indiscipline to explore how these interconnected systems influence learner behaviour within the specific context of secondary schools in Ekurhuleni South. This enables a more comprehensive view of the underlying reasons of learner indiscipline, pushing beyond basic explanations and taking into account the larger social and environmental elements that contribute to this complicated issue.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research, case study design based on the interpretivist paradigm to investigate the effect of learner indiscipline on teaching and learning and interventive strategies to mitigate it in the Ekurhuleni South schools in South Africa. This study was deemed most suitable for qualitative research, which focuses on in-depth understanding and exploration of complex phenomena. According to Creswell, qualitative research provides for a more in-depth study of the research issue, with a focus on understanding the participants' views, experiences, and interpretations.³⁷ Rossman and Rallis, add that a case study design provides a researcher with a better grasp of a situation, allowing for more precise issue solving.³⁸ A case study design enables the selection of small site samples, such as schools, as well as thorough interviews with individuals relevant to the current study. In the context of this study, it was necessary to conduct a detailed investigation of the phenomena of learner indiscipline in selected secondary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District. This methodology allowed for a thorough assessment of the effect learner indiscipline has on teaching and learning and the interventive strategies in place to combat it.

Research Sampling Technique and sample

The study included a purposeful sample of individuals chosen for their roles and experiences with learner indiscipline in secondary schools. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, purposeful sampling is a strategy in which researchers select samples to include based on their perception of the specific features they seek.³⁹ According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhout, purposeful sampling enables the researcher to select participants based on a set of traits established by the study's

³⁷ John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, SAGE, Ca; Ofprnia (California: Sage Publications, 2013).

³⁸ G B Rossman and S F Rallis, *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (SAGE Publications, 2012), 103.

³⁹ Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (routledge, 2002).

topic.⁴⁰ Purposive sampling was more appropriate in this case because the researchers chose individuals for a specific reason.⁴¹ The participant pool included

- **Principals:** Since they are the headmasters of the chosen schools, principals were asked to share their perspectives on school-level policies and tactics for dealing with learner indiscipline.
- **Teachers:** Teachers with experience in various subject areas and grade levels were chosen to provide their perspectives on learner indiscipline in the classroom.
- **School Management Team (SMT) members:** Deputy principals and HODs were included to provide insights into school-level policies and strategies for addressing learner indiscipline.
- **School Governing Body (SGB) members:** Parents of learners enrolled in the selected schools were included to provide perspectives on parental involvement and their experiences with learner indiscipline.

Sampling

The sample for this study consisted of two instructors, one principal, two SMT members, and two SBG members (parent components). They were selected from four secondary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District of the Gauteng Province. The sample size was established using the data saturation principle, which in qualitative research refers to the point at which no new themes or insights emerge from the collected data.⁴² In layman's terms, it signifies that the researcher has gathered sufficient data to thoroughly comprehend the topic under inquiry, and that further data collection would not yield any new or meaningful knowledge. Data saturation is critical for the reliability and validity of qualitative study conclusions. It assures that the phenomenon under examination has been thoroughly investigated and that the findings are sound and significant.⁴³

Data Collection Methods

This study included two basic data collection approaches. Initially, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected principals, teachers, members of the school management team (SMT), and parents from the school governing body (SGB). The interview guide includes open-ended questions that aim to elicit their experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints on learner indiscipline. This semi-structured method allowed for greater flexibility and the study of developing themes that were not anticipated in the initial research plan. Second, documentation was analysed, including learner discipline policies, disciplinary hearing minutes, and school reports. This investigation shed light on the school backdrop, particularly the tactics used to address learner indiscipline and the overall school culture.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was the primary method used in this study to analyse the qualitative data acquired through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. This iterative process used a multi-stage strategy to identify, analyse, and interpret data patterns.⁴⁴

Firstly, the researchers immersed themselves in the data by meticulously reviewing interview transcripts and relevant documents, such as school policies, minutes of disciplinary hearings, and school reports. This first phase included a comprehensive reading and rereading of the data to better understand the participants' perspectives, experiences, and the broader context of learner indiscipline in the selected schools. Second, the researcher employed open coding, methodically reviewing the data

⁴⁰ A. Strydom and R.M. Bezuidenhout, "Qualitative Data Collection," in *Research Matters*, ed. Du Plooy Cilliers F., C. Davis, and R.M. Bezuidenhout (Cape Town: Juta, 2014), 228–63.

⁴¹ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*.

⁴² Khim Raj Subedi, "Determining the Sample in Qualitative Research," *Scholars' Journal*, December 31, 2021, 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.3126/scholars.v4i1.42457>.

⁴³ Sharan B Merriam, "Introduction to Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis* 1, no. 1 (2002): 1–17; Subedi, "Determining the Sample in Qualitative Research."

⁴⁴ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

line by line to identify initial codes and groups. These codes represented meaningful units of text, such as phrases or sentences, that reflected specific themes, concepts, and ideas related to learner indiscipline.

Following open coding, the researcher engaged in axial coding, which involved identifying relationships between the initial codes and organising them into broader categories and subcategories. This process involved examining how different codes related to each other and identifying core categories that captured the essence of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Subsequently, the researcher engaged in selective coding, focusing on identifying and refining core themes and sub-themes that best represented the study's key findings. This involved reviewing the identified categories and subcategories, refining their definitions, and developing a coherent narrative that integrated the findings from different sources. The researcher kept a reflective notebook throughout the data analysis process to record their thoughts, interpretations, and any difficulties encountered. This journal was an invaluable resource for documenting the research process, assuring the rigour and transparency of the analysis, and identifying potential biases or constraints.

This type of data analysis enabled a systematic and in-depth examination of the data, allowing the researcher to identify important themes and patterns related to learner indiscipline and its impact on teaching and learning in the context of secondary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research phase, ethical issues were top priorities. Before data collection began, all participants provided informed consent. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality procedures that would be employed to protect their privacy. The research was conducted in strict confidentiality. To maintain anonymity, participants' names and identifying information were substituted with pseudonyms. All data obtained was securely stored, with access limited to the research team. The study followed the Tshwane University of Technology and South African Research Ethics Association's (SAREA) ethical criteria. Ethical clearance was granted by the University Research Committee.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the study's key findings, arranged thematically to represent the core features of the school context found in the literature review. Codes were used to keep the participants' identities hidden. For example, schools are referred to as School A, B, C, and D. Principals are denoted as PA, PB, PC, and PD, with PA stationed at School A, PB at School B, and so on. SMTs, teachers, and SGBs are all coded similarly, as are the documents.

The Effect of Learner Indiscipline on Teaching and Learning

The findings revealed that schools have long been concerned about disruptive conduct. Indiscipline concerns reflect domestic issues. As drug abuse, crime, and physical abuse grow increasingly common in society, so will school discipline problems.⁴⁵ Undisciplined behaviour among students may also be caused by inappropriate reactions to school failures and instructors' roles as educational directors. Thornberg argues that acceptable and descriptive behaviour among students is socially produced within a complex network of interactions in which both teachers and students actively influence one another through their acts and judgments.⁴⁶ Several participants, including SMT members (SMA1, SMC2) and teachers (STD1, STC2), expressed concerns about overcrowding in classrooms. "*The classes are overcrowded, making it difficult to control learners and maintain order,*" remarked SMA1.

⁴⁵ Deauke Lochan, "Students' Perceptions of Indiscipline at Three Primary Schools in One Educational District in Central Trinidad," 2010.

⁴⁶ Robert Thornberg, "A Classmate in Distress: Schoolchildren as Bystanders and Their Reasons for How They Act," *Social Psychology of Education* 10, no. 1 (2007): 5–28.

While **STD1** put it as follows: *"Overcrowding in classes leads to a scarcity of textbooks and other materials, resulting in indiscipline among students."* This aligns with Mokhele's assertion that overcrowding exacerbates stress and contributes to disruptive behaviour.⁴⁷

Furthermore, participants highlighted the effect of inadequate infrastructure on learner behaviour, such as insufficient ventilation, poor lighting, and limited access to resources. *"The lack of proper facilities, like a library and sports grounds, makes it difficult to engage learners and keep them occupied during breaks"*, observed **STC2**.

"Learners' lack of discipline has a big impact on effective learning and teaching, as does instructors' competence in their specific areas. Teachers frequently underperform in their specific subjects as a result of inadequate student discipline. They are likewise scared of violence and rowdy students", stated **PA**. This finding supports the notion that a conducive and supportive physical environment is crucial for creating a favourable school climate and minimising indiscipline.

Effective Strategies for Managing Learner Indiscipline

The study identified differences in effective ways for regulating learner indiscipline in secondary schools, as well as their effects on learner behaviour. While some participants praised their principals' leadership skills on managing indiscipline in their schools, e.g., *"Our principal is very approachable and always willing to listen to our concerns"* said **STA2**, others expressed concerns about a lack of clear leadership and ineffective communication. *"There is an absence of understandable communication between the SMT and educators regarding disciplinary issues"*, noted **STB1**. Some survey participants believed that training parents and school disciplinary committee members was a useful technique for managing student indiscipline. In their comments, they emphasised that one of their roles is to ensure that a school has a functional disciplinary committee made up of school stakeholders, including educators, parents, and students.

Learners are tactful, and depending on their advancing level, they can, to some extent, follow counsel, reprimands, and positive impact. This illustrates SMTs' technique for managing learner indiscipline. **SMD2** indicated that: *"We employ both role models and rewards to encourage positive behaviour. So when they see those things, they get a prompt. We can assist you in applying for bursaries and scholarships. Recompense fine conduct and inform them of what is and is not acceptable. Do not yell at them without first pointing out their faults. Sit down with them and demonstrate their faults. They will then avoid making the same mistakes again. However, the important thing is to reward excellent behaviour while simultaneously showing children role models and discussing those role models."*

PB also specified that: *"Education is a societal concern that requires the participation of all societal stakeholders. As a result, when I want to inspire students, I go to the community and look for people who might inspire them, such as role models. They can influence others through role modelling. Those people must be intellectually competent in order to excite and inspire learners, which would improve learners' performance and change their mindset."*

Findings also highlighted the importance of effective school-level policies and procedures. Participants discussed the importance of having a clear and consistently applied code of conduct. *"The school code of conduct is not always consistently enforced, which sends mixed messages to learners"* observed **SMT2**. This finding highlights the importance of strong, consistent leadership in implementing and enforcing school policies.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into instructors' perspectives of effective tactics for regulating student indiscipline in South African secondary schools. The study emphasises the significance of a multimodal approach to indiscipline, which includes classroom management approaches, positive behaviour interventions and supports (PBIS), and restorative justice.

⁴⁷ P. R. Mokhele, "The Teacher-Learner Relationship in the Management of Discipline in Public High Schools," *Africa Education Review* 3, no. 1–2 (2006): 148–159.

The Impact of Learner Indiscipline on Teaching and Learning

Effective classroom management is a cornerstone of a constructive and productive learning environment. It encompasses a wide range of teacher actions and strategies aimed at creating and maintaining order, maximising learning time, and fostering learner engagement. The literature review highlights several key aspects of classroom management that clash with student indiscipline in educating and learning, which are reflected in the study's findings.

One of the most crucial elements is the initiation of understandable and compatible classroom regulations and expectations.⁴⁸ These rules, when developed collaboratively with learners, ensure understanding and buy-in, promoting a sense of shared responsibility for maintaining order. The research findings support this, with participants emphasising the significance of a clear and consistently applied code of conduct. However, the study also revealed that this is not always the case, with some teachers being perceived as too lenient, while others are perceived as too strict. This inconsistency can send mixed messages to learners and undermine the effectiveness of disciplinary measures. This inconsistency echoes the challenges highlighted by Clark et al., regarding the need for proactive classroom management techniques, suggesting that professional development focused on the consistent application of rules and expectations across the school is crucial.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the literature emphasises the importance of proactive classroom management techniques, such as active engagement strategies and differentiated instruction.⁵⁰ When students are actively engaged in the learning process and have a sense of belonging and purpose, the likelihood of disruptive behaviour is reduced. The study's findings back this notion, with participants reporting that when students are engaged in important learning activities, they are less likely to participate in disruptive behaviour. This aligns with the work of Ndlovu et al. who indicated that a fragmented learning experience can lead to decreased learner engagement and poorer academic performance.⁵¹ Conversely, a rigid and exam-oriented curriculum can lead to learner disengagement and frustration, potentially contributing to indiscipline. This underscores the need for teachers to employ diverse and engaging pedagogical approaches, such as group work, project-based learning, and the use of technology, to cater to various learning styles and maintain student interest.

The quality of teacher-learner relationships also plays a significant role in effective classroom management.⁵² When learners feel admired and valued by their educators, they are more likely to behave appropriately. Positive relationships foster a sense of trust and mutual respect, creating a conducive environment for learning. However, as the findings indicate, inconsistencies in teacher practices can undermine this. This reinforces the need for in-progress professional development for teachers, not only in classroom management techniques but also in fostering positive teacher-learner relationships. As noted by Moyo et al. and furthered by Grammatikopoulo, frequent disciplinary actions can create tension and mistrust, hindering effective communication and collaboration, which are critical for a constructive learning domain.⁵³ Therefore, building strong teacher-learner relationships should be a priority for schools seeking to improve learner behaviour.

In conclusion, effective classroom management is a multifaceted endeavour that requires clear expectations, engaging pedagogy, consistent application of rules, and positive educator-learner relationships. The study's findings underscore the problems that schools experience in maintaining consistency in these areas, emphasising the importance of continued professional development and educators' assistance in designing and executing successful classroom management practices.

⁴⁸ Hasanah et al., "Teachers' Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behavior."

⁴⁹ Clark et al., "Profiles of Teachers' Classroom Management Style: Differences in Perceived School Climate and Professional Characteristics."

⁵⁰ Clark et al., "Profiles of Teachers' Classroom Management Style: Differences in Perceived School Climate and Professional Characteristics."; Glasser, *Open Verification Methodology Cookbook*.

⁵¹ Ndlovu, Schlebusch, and Makola, "A Framework for Implementing Positive Learner Discipline in Public Secondary Schools from the Context of the Mpumalanga Province."

⁵² Melinde Coetzee and Rudolf M Oosthuizen, "Students' Sense of Coherence, Study Engagement and Self-Efficacy in Relation to Their Study and Employability Satisfaction," *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 22, no. 3 (2012): 315–22.

⁵³ Moyo, Khewu, and Bayaga, "Disciplinary Practices in Schools and Principles of Alternatives to Corporal Punishment Strategies"; Grammatikopoulos, "Causes and Implications of Organizational School Conflicts: A Theoretical Approach."

Effective Strategies for Managing Learner Indiscipline

Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a framework for enhancing school climate and promoting prosocial conduct. It encourages a proactive and preventative approach to learner indiscipline, rather than reactive, punishment-based methods. PBIS is strongly associated with Ecological Systems Theory, which recognises that learner behaviour is influenced by a variety of interconnected systems and that interventions should be implemented throughout these systems for maximum effectiveness. The literature review supports the use of positive reinforcement and incentives as an essential component of PBIS.⁵⁴ Recognizing and praising acceptable behavior helps inspire learners, creating a more constructive and fulfilling studying environment. This aligns with the research's findings, which highlight the importance of engaging learners in meaningful learning activities. When learners are actively involved and experience success, they are less likely to seek attention through disruptive behaviour. From the Ecological Systems Theory perspective, positive reinforcement within the microsystem (classroom) can have a ripple effect, influencing interactions within the mesosystem (home-school interactions) as parents are informed of their child's positive behaviour.

PBIS also emphasises the significance of directing the sources of misbehaviour.⁵⁵ This includes providing support services, such as counselling and social work, to meet the individual requirements of students experiencing emotional, social, or learning difficulties. The study's findings underscore this point, revealing concerns about limited access to counseling and help-up services for learners. This lack of support can aggravate existing problems and lead to further behavioural issues. From an Ecological Systems Theory perspective, these support services operate within the exosystem, providing resources that indirectly influence the child's development within the microsystem (classroom). Addressing underlying issues can help schools establish a more supportive environment that encourages positive behaviour.

Furthermore, PBIS is aligned with corrective fairness ideas, which focus on mending harm and encouraging reconciliation.⁵⁶ These approaches emphasise building relationships, understanding the underlying causes of misbehaviour, and developing solutions that address the needs of all parties involved. This resonates with the literature's emphasis on positive teacher-learner relationships.⁵⁷ A supportive and restorative approach fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility, leading to a more positive school environment. Within the Ecological Systems Theory framework, this approach strengthens the microsystem (classroom) and the mesosystem (home-school interactions) by promoting open communication and collaboration. The success of PBIS relies heavily on a consistent and school-wide implementation.⁵⁸ This requires strong leadership, ongoing professional development for teachers, and active parent involvement.⁵⁹ The study's findings emphasise the need for effective school-level policies and processes, as well as constant adherence to the code of conduct. This is consistent with the Ecological Systems Theory's macrosystem level, which considers how broader social norms and policies influence the school environment. A school-wide commitment to PBIS creates a consistent message for learners and reinforces positive behaviour across all settings.

Lastly, PBIS provides a comprehensive framework for promoting positive behaviour and addressing learner indiscipline. By focusing on positive reinforcement, addressing root causes, utilising restorative justice principles, and ensuring consistent school-wide implementation, PBIS can establish a more supportive and fruitful learning climate. Its alignment with the Ecological Systems Theory allows for a multi-systemic approach, recognising the complex interplay of factors that influence learner behaviour and promoting interventions that address these factors at multiple levels.

⁵⁴ Hasanah et al., "Teachers' Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behavior in The Classroom During The Learning Process"; Reeve and Cheon, "Autonomy-Supportive Teaching: Its Malleability, Benefits, and Potential to Improve Educational Practice."

⁵⁵ Kirksey, Gottfried, and Freeman, "Does Parental Involvement Change after Schools Assign Students an IEP?"

⁵⁶ Clark *et al.*, "Profiles of Teachers' Classroom Management Style."; Zehr, "Commentary: Restorative Justice."

⁵⁷ Moyo, Khewu, and Bayaga, "Disciplinary Practices in Schools and Principles of Alternatives to Corporal Punishment Strategies"; Grammatikopoulos, "Causes and Implications of Organizational School Conflicts: A Theoretical Approach."

⁵⁸ Schlebusch, Makola, and Ndlovu, "Positive Learner Discipline for Public Secondary Schools."

⁵⁹ Kirksey, Gottfried, and Freeman, "Does Parental Involvement Change after Schools Assign Students an IEP?"; Kigobe et al., "Parental Involvement in Educational Activities in Tanzania: Understanding Motivational Factors."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcomes of this investigation, the following recommendation is made. To create a more positive and supportive learning climate, schools should prioritise a number of critical efforts. First, comprehensive and ongoing teacher training in effective classroom management, PBIS, and restorative justice is crucial. Reducing class sizes will enable teachers to provide more individualised attention and support. Strengthening school-parent partnerships is essential for promoting positive home-school relationships. Adequate investment in school resources is necessary to support effective discipline practices. Schools should also implement evidence-based interventions, such as PBIS and restorative justice, to address learner misbehaviour. Finally, cultivating a favourable school climate characterised by respect, empathy, and high expectations will further enhance the learning environment for all learners.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated instructors' perspectives on successful tactics for dealing with learner indiscipline in South African secondary schools. According to the findings, instructors believe that a variety of measures are successful, including classroom management approaches, PBIS, and restorative justice. The study emphasises the necessity of having a healthy school climate, setting clear goals, and employing positive reinforcement to encourage positive behaviour. The findings also emphasise the need for good school leadership, parental involvement, and community support in addressing learner indiscipline. It is important to note that the efficacy of these tactics may vary based on the school's unique circumstances and the students' individual requirements. As a result, schools must take a multidimensional strategy that includes a number of tactics and is tailored to their students' individual needs. More research is required to investigate the long-term effects of these interventions on learner behaviour and academic attainment. Furthermore, investigations could look into the significance of cultural and socioeconomic factors in determining learner behaviour, as well as the efficacy of various disciplinary measures in different circumstances. Schools can improve their learning environments by assessing instructors' perceptions and using evidence-based practices. Ultimately, this will lead to better student results and a more efficient education system.

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