






# The Impact of Learner Ill-Discipline on Teaching and Learning in High Schools of Waterberg District, Limpopo Province

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## ABSTRACT

Studies have indicated that lack of discipline among learners in schools is one of the foremost problems facing schools both nationally and internationally. This paper thus investigated the causal factors of learner ill-discipline at the school level with the intention to come up with practical measures that can be applied by the schools to curb learner indiscipline. The qualitative method with a case study approach was used to conduct an in-depth investigation into the phenomenon of learner indiscipline. Three high schools in the Bela-Bela township were sampled as participants for the study. Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews and document analyses on learner code of conduct and school disciplinary policy. Three (3) school principals, six (6) teachers and six (6) learners were interviewed. The findings revealed that schools are characterised by rampant levels of learner ill-discipline with a negative impact on teaching and learning. The study argued that two primary factors fuelling learner ill-discipline in schools are the inappropriate implementation of the learner code of conduct and the school disciplinary policy. It concluded that there is an urgent need for proper implementation of the learner code of conduct and the disciplinary policy in the schools. This study strongly recommends that education authorities put measures in place to ensure that schools comply with the proper implementation of the code of conduct and school disciplinary policy. The findings of this study contribute to a discourse in the body of knowledge in learner discipline.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bechuke and Debeila, and Ngidi have argued that disciplined learner behaviour creates a peaceful and effective educational environment that is secure for learners and teachers, and in which learners can learn to the best of their abilities.<sup>1</sup> However, literature indicates that lack of discipline among learners in schools is one of the foremost problems facing schools over the years.<sup>2</sup> The efficacy of the educational system is

<sup>1</sup> A L Bechuke and J R Debeila, "Applying Choice Theory in Fostering Discipline: Managing and Modifying Challenging Learners Behaviours in South African Schools," 2012; L.Z. Ngidi, "Reducing School Violence: A Peace Education Project amongst Stakeholders in Umlazi." (Durban University of Technology, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> 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).

impacted by student indiscipline, which also significantly contributes to teacher demotivation. Tlhapi has also affirmed that students' lack of discipline has an impact on their academic achievement since good instruction and learning cannot be achieved in a disordered school environment.<sup>3</sup>

Learner indiscipline is constituted by non-conformity to the schools' rules and regulations. Disobediences of the learners can take the form of the refusal to put on a proper school uniform, making noise, lack of punctuality, refusal to do homework, truancy, vandalism of school property, dishonesty, disorderliness, quarrelling, sleeping in the class, bunking lessons, alcohol and drug abuse, pickpocketing, robbery, quarrelling, being verbally and physically aggressive towards their peers, fighting, violence, and assaulting teachers for taking disciplinary actions against learners.<sup>4</sup> Manamela points out that learner ill-discipline is caused by factors emanating from society, and it has been a source of concern for the schooling system for many years. Factors contributing to learner indiscipline can be classified into learner personality traits, family and societal factors, and variables within the school environment.<sup>5</sup> The degree to which indiscipline incidents happen in schools varies from less serious misbehaviour to more serious misconduct. In extreme cases, learners hurt and even kill one another on the school grounds.<sup>6</sup> Burton and Leonschut, Masingi, and Ngidi have affirmed that the level of learner indiscipline is very high in South African schools, particularly in township schools, which renders the schools ineffective in providing quality education.<sup>7</sup> Effective teaching and learning appear to be the characteristics of schools that have strong disciplinary procedures in place. This suggests that one of the main elements influencing effective educational outcomes is a disciplined school environment.

Bela-Bela schools, like other township schools, are characterised by high levels of learner indiscipline.<sup>8</sup> Although various studies have been conducted on learner ill-discipline in the country, literature is relatively quiet about learner ill-discipline in the schools of the Bela-Bela township in the Waterberg District. It is because of this paucity of literature that the researchers conducted this study to investigate the causal factors of learner ill-discipline within the school context of the high schools of the Bel-Bela. The objective of the study was to investigate and understand the phenomenon of learner ill-discipline within a disadvantaged community. Although the literature indicates that the causal factors of learner ill-discipline emanate from society, the researchers held the belief that, investigating the causal factors of learner ill-discipline within the school context will allow this study to come up with practical measures that schools can apply to curb learner ill-discipline. The findings are presented subsequently in this article.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The causes of learner ill-discipline

Burton and Leoschut have presented the notion that behaviour modeling starts in the family. Children's attitudes, values, and beliefs are mostly shaped by their families.<sup>9</sup> Girls are taught to be sensitive and compassionate, whereas boys are supposed to be bold, strong, and emotionless.<sup>10</sup> This type of socialization supports the argument by Mokhele that, the boys' heroic masculinity requires villains and victims in order to exist. Hence, the majority of the ill-behaviour in schools can be attributed to boys.<sup>11</sup> Children learn

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<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> M Simuforosa and N Rosemary, "Learner Indiscipline in Schools," *Review of Arts and Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2014): 79–88.

<sup>5</sup> L M Manamela, "The Role of Parental Involvement in Improving Discipline in Secondary Schools of the Kgakotlou Circuit" (University of South Africa, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Tlhapi, "Management of Discipline in a Post Corporal Punishment Environment: Case Study of Primary Schools in the Informal Settlements in the North West Province."

<sup>7</sup> 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); Masingi, "The Impact of Ill-Discipline on the Performance of Grade Nine Learners: A Case of Ngonyama High School, Limpopo Province."; Ngidi, "Reducing School Violence: A Peace Education Project amongst Stakeholders in Umlazi. ."

<sup>8</sup> Ngidi, "Reducing School Violence: A Peace Education Project amongst Stakeholders in Umlazi. ."

<sup>9</sup> Burton and Leoschut, *School Violence in South Africa: Results of the 2012 National School Violence Study Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention • Monograph Series, No 12*.

<sup>10</sup> Norma L Day-Vines and Beth O Day-Hairston, "Culturally Congruent Strategies for Addressing the Behavioral Needs of Urban, African American Male Adolescents," *Professional School Counseling*, 2005, 236–43.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Rampaola Mokhele, "The Teacher-Learner Relationship in the Management of Discipline in Public High Schools," *Africa Education Review* 3, no. 1\_2 (2006): 148–59.

about behaviours that are acceptable and unacceptable in society mostly from their families. Children who observe their family members acting in an antisocial manner are more prone to imitate and repeat that behaviour. Odebode observed that children raised in dysfunctional families with little parental supervision and leadership often cause disruptive behaviour in schools, while children from stable families with supportive parents are more respectful and behave well in school.<sup>12</sup> Abidoye and Onweazu point out that work-life can lead to neglect of carer roles, resulting in children learning bad habits from friends, which can contribute to learner ill-discipline.<sup>13</sup>

De Wet argues that when the level of community-based risk factors like moral degeneration, racial conflict, poor housing, unemployment, and poverty increases, it will also increase the likelihood of disruptive behaviour among learners.<sup>14</sup> Anti-social behaviour like theft, violence, and crime that is promoted by the media and that people see or experience in society has a predisposing effect that increases the likelihood that a learner will engage in disruptive behaviour. Society also contributes to school disciplinary problems through gang activity that spills over into schools.<sup>15</sup>

Learner personality traits are basically characteristics ascribed to individuals based on their patterns of behaviour, thoughts, and emotions.<sup>16</sup> Learner behaviour such as aggression, feelings of inferiority, stubbornness, bullying, daydreaming, and insolence are among the behavioural patterns that are disruptive in the school and in the classrooms whereby teaching and learning are negatively affected.<sup>17</sup>

Overemphasis on rights can be shown in the fact that many learners are well aware of their rights but lack the motivation to follow through on their responsibilities. Kute discovered that because students have a constitutional right to education, educators are afraid of unintentionally violating their rights and facing accusations of misconduct.<sup>18</sup> For instance, it is difficult for the teacher to remove or expel a disruptive learner from a class even though he or she causes chaos in the classroom whereby teaching and learning are disrupted, and such negative learner behaviour contributes to the poor academic performance of the whole class.<sup>19</sup> Hence, Malenya argues that an overemphasis on human rights rather than responsibility for students promotes indiscipline in schools.<sup>20</sup>

Montesh, et.al., point out that peer pressure often results in drug usage among youth because of the need to fit in, make an impression, or appear cool with friends.<sup>21</sup> Drug abuse leads to delinquent behaviour and disciplinary problems both within and outside of schools. Disciplinary problems emanating from drug abuse include the carrying of dangerous weapons to threaten teachers and other learners. Thus, learner interaction with deviant peers leads to socio-cultural learning of criminality and ill-discipline, disregarding school rules.<sup>22</sup> Masingi points out that the unconscious desire to impress peers traps learners in a cycle of ill-discipline and disrespect for educators. Students' drug use contributes to school indiscipline.<sup>23</sup>

Lukman and Hamadi purport that learner active involvement in classroom activities by the teachers minimises behavioural problems because learners often misbehave due to lack of involvement in

<sup>12</sup> Aminat Adeola Odebode, "Causes of Indiscipline among Students as Viewed by Primary School Teachers in Nigeria," in *Elementary School Forum (Mimbar Sekolah Dasar)*, vol. 6 (ERIC, 2019), 126–40.

<sup>13</sup> S Abidoye and O Onweazu, "Indiscipline among the Female Secondary School Student in Selected Rural Communities of Rivers State in Nigeria: Causes and Effects on Academic Performance," *Journal of Educational and Practice* 1, no. 1 (2010): 8–13.

<sup>14</sup> C De Wet, "Eastern Cape Educators' Perceptions of the Causes and the Scope of School Violence," *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology* 16, no. 3 (2003): 89–106.

<sup>15</sup> Irene McHenry, "Conflict in Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 82, no. 3 (November 1, 2000): 223–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170008200308>.

<sup>16</sup> Laura Parks-Leduc, Gilad Feldman, and Anat Bardi, "Personality Traits and Personal Values: A Meta-Analysis," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 19, no. 1 (2015): 3–29.

<sup>17</sup> B Kute, "Teachers Views about Role of Peer Counsellors in Enhancing Student Discipline in Kisumu Municipality Kenya," *Rjopes Research Journal in Organizational Psychology and Educational Studies* 3, no. 3 (2014): 209–14.

<sup>18</sup> Kute, "Teachers Views about Role of Peer Counsellors in Enhancing Student Discipline in Kisumu Municipality Kenya."

<sup>19</sup> Kute, "Teachers Views about Role of Peer Counsellors in Enhancing Student Discipline in Kisumu Municipality Kenya."

<sup>20</sup> Francis Likoye Malenya, "Students, Violent Protests and the Process of Self-Realization in Kenyan Secondary Schools," *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* 18, no. 2 (2016): 67–82.

<sup>21</sup> M Montesh et al., "Illicit Drug Use in Selected High Schools in Mamelodi Township," *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology* 2015, no. sed-3 (2015): 96–113.

<sup>22</sup> Cosmas Maphosa and Kuttickattu John Mammen, "How Chaotic and Unmanageable Classrooms Have Become: Insights into Prevalent Forms of Learner Indiscipline in South African Schools," *The Anthropologist* 13, no. 3 (2011): 185–93.

<sup>23</sup> Masingi, "The Impact of Ill-Discipline on the Performance of Grade Nine Learners: A Case of Ngonyama High School, Limpopo Province."

classroom activities.<sup>24</sup> Tlhapi found that actively engaged learners stay on task and are less likely to misbehave as they always have work to do despite the absence of an educator in class.<sup>25</sup> Fewer disciplinary difficulties occur when educators involve their students in class and treat them as capable individuals. Fostering a climate of learner belonging and involvement can decrease negative behaviour, and participatory decision-making can encourage positive learner behaviour by making school rules more acceptable to learners. Educators' poor attitudes and punitive behaviour can also contribute to indiscipline. Factors such as teacher laziness, incompetence, autocracy, and educators flirting with female students in front of learners often cause ill-discipline in schools.<sup>26</sup> Forced directives may encourage learner stubbornness and resistance to the school authority, which can make classroom management a difficult task for teachers and thus hinder school success. Bhana highlights that incompetent educators who fail to meet the different learning styles of learners can intensify learner indiscipline in the classroom.<sup>27</sup>

The curriculum's relevance to learners' needs impacts school discipline. The curriculum must meet learners' needs so that they are actively involved in school activities, and such curriculum should connect to societal ideology. Unimportant and dull material can cause classroom misbehaviour that hinders effective teaching. Tlhapi observed that, without adequate resources, the school curriculum provides inadequate self-development opportunities and can lead to classroom deviant behaviour. Thus, deviant behaviour occurs when the curriculum is irrelevant to learners' interests.<sup>28</sup>

Overcrowded classrooms lead to increased disciplinary problems as teachers struggle to monitor student behaviour and address discipline issues. Ineffective supervision caused by school overcrowding creates a conducive environment for ill-discipline behaviour. Due to the difficulty of maintaining order in packed classrooms and the tendency of students to misbehave undetected, large class sizes and inadequate facilities are contributing factors to learner ill-discipline.<sup>29</sup>

The Department of Education emphasises a consensus-based disciplinary policy and highlights the value of school community involvement in creating the Code of Conduct. Learners' lack of discipline and resistance to accepting the rules and regulations outlined in the school disciplinary policy and learner code of conduct is often caused by a lack of learner involvement in the preparation of these documents. The unwillingness to act in accordance with what is expected by the school will ultimately result in learner indiscipline behaviour.<sup>30</sup>

One of the main causes of learner indiscipline, according to Odebode, is the absence of recreational facilities. Participating in extracurricular activities helps students become more dedicated to school activities by fostering personal growth, social skills, and self-identification with the school, which promotes positive learner behaviour. Conversely, insufficient extracurricular activities can cause hyperactive learners to misbehave.<sup>31</sup>

### Effects of learner ill-discipline on teaching and learning

Carroll-Lind, Chapman, and Raskauskas point out that learner ill-discipline has a negative impact on teaching and learning.<sup>32</sup> According to Sun and Shek misbehaving learners distract their classmates by preventing them from focusing, and complicating their learning through clowning, making noise, singing, and pulling a classmate's braid.<sup>33</sup> Indiscipline school environment results in students who struggle with

<sup>24</sup> Ajibola A Lukman and Ali A Hamadi, "Disciplinary Measures in Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools: Issues and Prospects," *IOSR Journal of Research and Method in Education* 4, no. 3 (2014): 11–17.

<sup>25</sup> Tlhapi, "Management of Discipline in a Post Corporal Punishment Environment: Case Study of Primary Schools in the Informal Settlements in the North West Province."

<sup>26</sup> Deevia Bhana, "'Girls Are Not Free'—In and out of the South African School," *International Journal of Educational Development* 32, no. 2 (2012): 352–58.

<sup>27</sup> Bhana, "'Girls Are Not Free'—In and out of the South African School."

<sup>28</sup> Tlhapi, "Management of Discipline in a Post Corporal Punishment Environment: Case Study of Primary Schools in the Informal Settlements in the North West Province."

<sup>29</sup> Vusumzi Nelson Ncontsa and Almon Shumba, "The Nature, Causes and Effects of School Violence in South African High Schools," *South African Journal of Education* 33, no. 3 (2013): 1–15.

<sup>30</sup> Russell Joseph, *Stress Free Teaching: A Practical Guide to Tackling Stress in Teaching, Lecturing and Tutoring* (Routledge, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Odebode, "Causes of Indiscipline among Students as Viewed by Primary School Teachers in Nigeria."

<sup>32</sup> Janis Carroll-Lind, James Chapman, and Juliana Raskauskas, "Children's Perceptions Of Violence: The Nature, Extent And Impact Of Their Experiences," *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, no. 37 (2011).

<sup>33</sup> Rachel C F Sun and Daniel T L Shek, "Student Classroom Misbehavior: An Exploratory Study Based on Teachers' Perceptions," *The Scientific World Journal* 2012, no. 1 (2012): 208907.

feelings of fear, insecurity, and anxiety, find it hard to concentrate on their studies, and they might also stop attending school, or develop an apathy toward learning and other activities.<sup>34</sup>

Students misbehave more during break time because of a lack of supervision, and some students become targets of verbal aggression, including attacking, quarrelling, and teasing.<sup>35</sup> Teaching contact time is also reduced as more time is devoted to managing misbehaviour rather than teaching. The South African Council of Educators (SACE) points out that teachers have a feeling of being alone in the education system and with no support from the Department of Education as they battle learner ill-discipline.<sup>36</sup> Hence, teachers become disengaged.<sup>37</sup> In certain instances where the ill-discipline escalated to a fatality, students have been held accountable for the deaths of teachers and other students.<sup>38</sup> The school environment characterised by learner ill-discipline is one of the main contributing factors to teacher stress. Stress being a mental condition, has accompanying symptoms of persistent feelings of helplessness and decreased enthusiasm which impact negatively teaching and learning.<sup>39</sup> Singh and Steyn purport that, teachers working in unruly schools frequently take extended leaves of absence due to stress and depression at work, which has a detrimental impact on learner performance.<sup>40</sup>

### Measures to curb learner ill-discipline

Teachers must avoid using corporal punishment because it is a form of violence. The idea behind this is that kids pick up lessons from the people who role model for them. A child who witnesses violence, for example, is more likely to use violence as a coping mechanism later in life.<sup>41</sup> Learner discipline benefits from learner involvement in decision-making pertaining to issues such as personal safety and school safety planning. Students who are involved in the development of the code of conduct at their school are less likely to break the rules.<sup>42</sup> In order for students to make wise judgements based on school regulations, Blum contends that students should be informed of what is expected of them.<sup>43</sup> Hence, classroom rules and expectations should be clear, concise, and easy to observe. Guidance and counselling are two strategies for upholding learner discipline. Guidance serves to encourage student development of self-direction and to support personal progress. Mbiti points out that teachers should provide expert guidance to their students to help them to make decisions that would help them to manage their various life situations.<sup>44</sup>

When children behave well and follow expectations, teachers need to give them more praise, which serves as positive reinforcement in the form of a reward. The Department of Education affirms that to motivate students to continue positive behaviour, they must be rewarded with a positive reaction.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, it is important to discourage bad behaviour. When a teacher notices a student exhibiting undesired behaviour and knows what prompts it, they need to come up with strategies to divert the bad behaviour before it takes hold. Another important method of lowering classroom indiscipline is the school recreation program. Njoroge and Nyabuto argue that students need to be actively involved in extracurricular activities in order to redirect their negative energy into positive and productive behaviour.<sup>46</sup> Students who take part in after-school programs improve their social and life skills and strengthen their

<sup>34</sup> G D Singh and Trudie Steyn, "The Impact of Learner Violence in Rural South African Schools," *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* 5, no. 1 (2014): 81–93.

<sup>35</sup> Sun and Shek, "Student Classroom Misbehavior: An Exploratory Study Based on Teachers' Perceptions."

<sup>36</sup> South African Council of Educators (SACE), "An Overview of School-Based Violence in South Africa," *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* 24 (2011): 529–60.

<sup>37</sup> Jenni Donohoo, "Collective Teacher Efficacy Research: Productive Patterns of Behaviour and Other Positive Consequences," *Journal of Educational Change* 19, no. 3 (2018): 323–45.

<sup>38</sup> Aloyce John Kiwale, "Factors Leading to Indiscipline in Secondary Schools in Siha District Council, Tanzania" (The Open University of Tanzania, 2017).

<sup>39</sup> Donohoo, "Collective Teacher Efficacy Research: Productive Patterns of Behaviour and Other Positive Consequences."

<sup>40</sup> Singh and Steyn, "The Impact of Learner Violence in Rural South African Schools."

<sup>41</sup> Department of Education, *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment. The Learning Experience* (Pretoria: Pretoria: Government Printers, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> I.N. Egwuonwu, "A Managerial Perspective of the Role of Secondary School Learners in the Development and Implementation of a Code of Conduct" (University of South Africa, 2008).

<sup>43</sup> P. Blum, *Surviving and Succeeding in Difficult Classrooms* (London: Clays Ltd, 1998).

<sup>44</sup> J. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann Press, 1988).

<sup>45</sup> Department of Education, *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment. The Learning Experience*.

<sup>46</sup> Philomena Mukami Njoroge and Ann Nduku Nyabuto, "Discipline as a Factor in Academic Performance in Kenya," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 4, no. 1 (2014): 289–307.

ties to the school. Learner involvement and self-identification with the school minimise learner involvement in disciplinary problems and thus promote good learner behaviour.

Joubert and Prinsloo are of the view that students should be informed about the Bill of Rights and Chapter 2 of the Constitution's human rights section as well as school policies.<sup>47</sup> The purpose of a school's code of conduct is to uphold each student's right to dignity and foster respect for both oneself and other people, and for learners to take responsibility for their behaviour, either positive or negative behaviour. The necessity to safeguard children's rights against inhumane and severe treatment, as well as the preservation of fundamental human rights, should be prioritized. Learner's understanding of human rights minimises misbehaviour. The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) envisage classrooms and the schooling environment that are disciplined in order for students' education to thrive in the absence of disruptive behaviour and infractions. Hence, teachers are tasked with upholding discipline. Teachers must, therefore encourage parents, principals and community members to be involved in finding solutions to disciplinary challenges faced by the school.<sup>48</sup> According to Kiprop and Chepkilot, parental involvement in their children's education has a tremendous positive impact on students' behaviour in the classroom.<sup>49</sup>

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The social learning theory served as the basis for this investigation. The theory states that children pick up behaviours from observing how other people behave in a community. While children can learn positive behaviour from positive role models, they can also learn negative behaviour, especially ill-discipline by watching the typical negative behaviours of others.<sup>50</sup> Literature indicates the causal factors of learner indiscipline emanate from society, and ill-discipline behaviour in schools mirrors the types of ill-discipline taking place in society.<sup>51</sup> Schools are thus, a microcosm of society. Indiscipline is an anti-social behaviour that children learn within their social context, hence, social learning theory provides a useful lens to investigate the phenomenon of learner ill-discipline within the school setting.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used qualitative research with a case study approach to investigate the causes and effects of learner ill-discipline and to come up with measures to curb ill-discipline in high schools. A case study approach was chosen because it allowed the researchers to collect a piece of in-depth information on the phenomenon under investigation. Purposive sampling was employed, and three schools were sampled using the data collected from the Warmbaths Circuit Office in Bela-Bela, and the selection criteria of the three schools were based on two schools with a high incidence of learner ill-discipline and one school with a low incidence of learner ill-discipline. In each school, the principal, two teachers, and two learners participated in the study. In total, the study reached 15 participants, 3 principals, 6 teachers, and 6 learners.

Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to obtain in-depth insights into their understanding and their experiences of learner ill-discipline. Document analysis was conducted to examine and uncover data relating to the management of the phenomenon of ill-discipline by the schools. The sources of data for the desktop study were the learner code of conduct and the school disciplinary policy. Research ethics were adhered to in this study, with permission to conduct the study granted by the Tshwane University of Technology and the Education Department of Limpopo.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Interview Findings**

The findings are presented according to the hermeneutic steps of data analysis. What appears in this paper are the themes and verbal quotations from the participants. Participants are categorised as follows: School

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<sup>47</sup> R Joubert and S Prinsloo, "The Law and a Practical Guide for Education," *Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers*, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> L J Belle, "The Role of Principals in Maintaining Effective Discipline among Learners in Selected Mauritian State Secondary Schools: An Education Management Model" (University of South Africa, 2016).

<sup>49</sup> Catherine Jematia Kiprop and Ronald K Chepkilo, "Factors Influencing Kenyan School Discipline in the Post-Caning Era," *International Journal of Current Research* 3 (2011): 270–76.

<sup>50</sup> J. Nieuwenhuis, *First Step in Research* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Vusi Mncube and Nomanesi Madikizela-Madiya, "Gangsterism as a Cause of Violence in South African Schools: The Case of Six Provinces," *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* 5, no. 1 (2014): 43–50.

A participants: principal of school A (PA), teacher 1 (T1A), teacher 2 (T2A), learner 1 (L1A) and learner 2 (L2A). School B participants: principal of school B (PB), teacher 1 (T1B), teacher 2 (T2B), learner 1 (L1B) and learner 2 (L2B). School C participants: principal of school C (PC), teacher 1 (T1C), teacher 2 (T2C), learner 1 (L1C), and learner 2 (L2C).

### **Description of learner ill-discipline**

In terms of comprehending the notion of student indiscipline as perceived by educators and learners in schools, the study found that their views are relatively the same, indicating a common understanding of the meaning of learner indiscipline. Participants cited the following:

T2A: *“It is when learners misbehave in class, outside the class and on the school premises.”*

T1B *“I think it is when learners do unwanted things within school premises, disrespecting teachers and other learners.”*

PC: *“Learner ill-discipline is constituted by the unbecoming behaviour of learners, not following the rules and regulations.”*

Data revealed a higher level of ill-discipline in the schools. Teachers and students alike reported that there is a significant degree of antisocial behaviour in the society, which contributes to the high degree of indiscipline in schools. Negative effects on teaching and learning have been observed in schools as a result of students' bad behaviour, which is influenced by societal factors.

PB: *“The high crime rate in the community contributes to the extremely high level of ill-discipline in the school.”*

L1A: *“There is a high level of indiscipline in our school which is similar to a high level of crime, indiscipline and disrespect in our community.”*

PA: *“Due to the high crime rate and anti-social behaviour in our community, learners have easy access to illegal substances and weapons which they bring to school, and this perpetuates high levels of indiscipline and violence in the school.”*

The findings of the study support the argument of Manamela that disciplinary problems in schools are a reflection of problems in society.<sup>52</sup> As problems like drug abuse, crime, and physical abuse increase in society, so will the disciplinary problems in schools. The analysis and the findings are also in line with the social theory of learning, which states that children learn antisocial behaviour through witnessing and emulating the negative behaviour of others<sup>53</sup> within the community.<sup>53</sup>

### **Forms of learner ill-discipline**

Data analysis revealed that the participating schools have the following common forms of ill-discipline: gangsterism, bullying, fighting, stealing, vandalism, physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and lateness to school and class. The interviewees mentioned the following:

T1A: *“We are having gangs in our school such as The Wrong Turn and Skhothane, they come to school high on drugs, such as nyaope and dagga, hence teaching and learning is disrupted by their indiscipline behaviour and aggressiveness.”*

L2B: *“When the gangs are fighting, they damage school property, they break tables, windows and doors while throwing chairs around.”*

PB: *“Bullying, stealing, fighting, vandalism, physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, late coming to school and class, and gangsterism are common in our school.”*

The interview analysis indicates that bullying, gangsterism, theft, and vandalism are the most common forms of anti-social behaviour in schools. The study finding is in line with the findings of Zubaida that bullying, absenteeism, vandalism, theft, tardiness in getting to school on time, drug use, and insulting or assaulting others are among the secondary school students' forms of indiscipline.<sup>54</sup> Ngidi identified the following as the common forms of indiscipline in schools: theft and robbery, vandalism, gangsterism, and bullying.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Manamela, “The Role of Parental Involvement in Improving Discipline in Secondary Schools of the Kgakotlou Circuit.”

<sup>53</sup> Molly Zhou and David Brown, *Educational Learning Theories* (Education Open Textbooks, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> A N Zubaida, “Indiscipline and Its Management Techniques: A Case Study of a Special Education School in Kano State,” *The Journal of the National Council for Exceptional Children* 11, no. 2 (2009): 455–63.

<sup>55</sup> Ngidi, “Reducing School Violence: A Peace Education Project amongst Stakeholders in Umlazi. .”

### **Causes of learner ill-discipline**

The participants observed the following:

PA: *“Learner code of conduct is not properly implemented in our school. We do not call meetings to discuss the code of conduct with the parents and learners, hence learners don’t know what is right or wrong.”*

L1C: *“Code of conduct is not properly explained to us hence some of the school rules are not known by learners.”*

L2C: *“Disciplinary policies are not followed, because ill-discipline learners still continue to violate school rules, without being punished or suspended.”*

Poor discipline is a result of the schools' improper application of the code of conduct and disciplinary policy, according to data analysis.

The study revealed that peer pressure is a contributory factor to learner indiscipline in schools.

T1A: *“Peer group pressure is the most common problem in our school because learners like to imitate bad behaviour from their friends.”*

T1C: *“Peer pressure leads learners to use drugs so that they may be accepted in the group, to fit into the group, or to impress their friends and to appear cool in front of their friends, and they come to school being high on drugs which contributes to misbehaviour in the schools.”*

T2A: *“We have problems with learners who conform to the negative subculture and values of their peers. Some learners disrespect teachers because they see their friends doing it.”*

The above analysis also indicates that peer pressure has a significant impact on students' substance and drug use, which fuels an environment of antisocial behaviour in schools.

The finding is in line with the assertion by Majani that learners misbehave because of pressure from their peers at school, there is a leader-follower relationship among learners when they are in groups, and they develop a feeling of togetherness in order not to be excluded from the group.<sup>56</sup> The finding of peer pressure as a cause of learner indiscipline supports the findings of Musa and Martha that peer pressure causes learner disciplinary problems in schools.<sup>57</sup> The study found that inadequate family background causes disciplinary problems at schools. Interviewees mentioned the following with regard to the family background:

PC: *“Learners bring their home problems to school and take out their anger and aggression on other learners.”*

T2C: *“Lack of parental involvement in their children’s education results in learner indiscipline, as children do not receive sufficient discipline at home.”*

These findings are supported by Ngidi who posits that if the parents are largely unavailable, the children grow up in an environment of inadequate support, guidance, and leadership, and such a family environment creates disciplinary problems for schools.<sup>58</sup>

Data further revealed that learner ill-discipline is hugely fuelled by easy access to drugs. Data analysis also indicates that substance and drug abuse is prevalent in schools, and results in learner indiscipline. Interviewees said the following:

T1A: *“Learners come to school high on drugs such as nyaope and dagga, hence teaching and learning are disrupted by their indiscipline behaviour and aggressiveness.”*

L2B: *“With easy access to alcohol and drugs in the community, learners come to school drunk and under the influence of illegal substances and disrupt the school activities, including teaching and learning.”*

L1A: *“Many learners are on drugs; hence they don’t cooperate in class and disrupt teaching and learning. Students come to school with drugs and they smoke them in the toilets. They also bring dangerous weapons to the school.”*

Drug use on school property and students' ability to bring in dangerous weapons indicate that the schools are marked by easy or unrestricted access to the property, endangering the safety of students and teachers alike and creating an environment that is not conducive to effective teaching and learning.

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<sup>56</sup> William Pastory Majani, “Student-Teachers’ Experiences and Strategies of Managing Disruptive Behaviours in Tanzania Secondary Schools,” *African Journal of Teacher Education* 9 (2020): 152–74.

<sup>57</sup> Matovu Musa and Atim Agnes Martha, “School Management Mechanisms and Control of Discipline among Pupils in Primary Schools: An Analysis of Discipline in Upper Primary Level,” *Anatolian Journal of Education* 5 (2020): 16.

<sup>58</sup> Ngidi, “Reducing School Violence: A Peace Education Project amongst Stakeholders in Umlazi. .”



According to Mtsweni, safe and healthy environments are ideal for learning.<sup>59</sup> The issue of poverty, overcrowding in the schools and media contributes to learner ill-discipline. The study findings are in line with the literature that negative peer influence, substance use and abuse, poor parenting, broken homes, unemployment and poverty, and a morally decayed society are the main causes of indiscipline in schools.<sup>60</sup>

### Effects of learner ill-discipline

The study revealed that disciplinary problems in schools contribute to poor student academic performance. The interviewees said the following:

L1C: *"We are always depressed by the ill-discipline from our fellow learners who disrupt lessons in the classroom and that leads us not to do our school activities."*

T2A: *"Learners who experience or witness incidents of violence become depressed and their ability to learn is in turn impacted negatively and their pass rate becomes relatively low."*

The above analysis indicates that learners not only perform poorly, they also withdraw from participating in school activities. The study also points out that disruptive learner behaviour coupled with violence creates a depressive environment for learners. This finding appears to suggest that a school environment characterised by learner disciplinary problems contributes to learner stress. This is in line with the argument by Mncube and Harber that learners who experience ill-discipline tend to have long-lasting emotional, and psychological problems, including low self-esteem.<sup>61</sup>

The study found that learners who are abused and bullied by other learners absent themselves from class and school, and in the most extreme cases, learners drop out of school. This finding indicates that learner ill-discipline contributes to increased learner absenteeism, bunking of classes, and dropout from school. Participants said the following:

L1A: *"Learners who are abused by other students do not come to school regularly, and some even drop out of school."*

L2A: *"Learners who are abused by other learners tend to absent themselves from school, and when they are present at school they bunk classes because they are depressed."*

T1A: *"Unruly behaviour in the classrooms make other learners not come to school, and others just simply bunk classes to avoid toxic classroom situations and in the end, they fail."*

The findings also revealed that teachers are negatively affected by the school environment, which is characterised by the disorderly behaviour of the learners. The participants mentioned the following:

PA: *"As a result of learner ill-behaviour, teachers bunk classes and end up resigning."*

PB: *"Some teachers become afraid to attend class and it results in the bunking of the classes."*

T1B: *"Some educators don't have the courage to stand in front of troublesome learners and they end up not coming to school."*

L1B: *"We saw educators being discouraged and end up moving from one school to another or even resigning from the teaching profession."*

The study found that learner ill-discipline contributes to teacher absenteeism. Another worrying factor is that when teachers are present at school, they tend to bunk their classes. The analysis also points to the existence of fear among teachers towards their learners.

Teachers' fear of their learners is detrimental to their motivation. Kelly argues that the manifestation of teachers' fear of their learners results in inadequate classroom attendance by teachers.<sup>62</sup>

Teachers indicated that they no longer feel safe in the classrooms, and it negatively affects them, hence they resign prematurely.

Interviewees mentioned the following:

T1A: *"We are no longer attending classes regularly because we are stressed by learner indiscipline."*

PB *"When learners misbehave in class it affects educator morale and causes teacher stress."*

<sup>59</sup> Jim Mtsweni, "The Role of Educators in the Management of School Discipline in the Nkangala Region of Mpumalanga" (University of South Africa, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> M. Kelly, "Discipline in Schools. Consistency, Fairness, and Follow-through Reduce Classroom Disruptions," 2020.

<sup>61</sup> VUSI Mncube and Clive Harber, *The Dynamics of Violence in South African Schools: Report* (University of South Africa, 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Kelly, "Discipline in Schools. Consistency, Fairness, and Follow-through Reduce Classroom Disruptions."

L1A: *“Our teachers are demotivated and choose to stay in the staffroom rather than coming to class because of the learner disrespect for teachers, and the learner fighting that is taking place in the classrooms and in the school.”*

The field data has revealed that learner ill-discipline which is compounded by a lack of respect towards teachers results in low teacher morale, demotivation, and increased work-related stress. The study findings support the findings by Odebode that, indiscipline results in teacher stress and poor classroom attendance by educators who are not only demotivated but also scared of being attacked by learners.<sup>63</sup> The findings are also in line with Kelly's finding that teachers have difficulty attending class due to poor learner behaviour.<sup>64</sup>

### **Challenges experienced by teachers in maintaining discipline**

Data further discovered that teachers have difficulty controlling disorderly learners. Participants mentioned the following:

T1A: *“The learners make it difficult for me to teach. When I got in the classroom, they would have their own meetings and would act like they didn't see me. That stressed me to the point of leaving the class unattended and sitting in the staffroom because I could not stand the learner's indiscipline.”*

T2B: *“Educators are experiencing difficulties in managing their classes because learners know that educators won't apply any form of punishment on them and as a result, learners are becoming worse in their behaviour.”*

The findings point out that teachers are increasingly losing control in their classrooms because learners are becoming unrulier and more disrespectful than they used to be in the past. The analysis points out that the high level of indiscipline among learners makes it impossible for teachers to manage and curb learner ill-discipline.

The school principal lamented the following:

PA: *“We are struggling to reduce ill-discipline with some learners who are misbehaving to the extent of beating up, and throwing objects towards their peers in the classroom while teachers are busy teaching.”*

The above interview analysis is in line with the views of Moye, who purports that, when learners swear at each other in the presence of their teacher, it can be considered a lack of respect and a lack of consideration for elders and those in authority.<sup>65</sup>

Data analysis found that learners in participating schools are traumatised by violence, bullying and intimidation, substance and drug abuse, and dangerous weapons carried by learners. The analysis also points out that it is difficult for teachers to teach traumatised learners. Interviewees said the following:

T2C: *“Our learners are facing challenges such as bullying and intimidation, drugs and alcohol abuse and carrying of dangerous weapons to schools, therefore educators find it difficult to teach learners who are traumatised by learner ill-discipline.”*

The study revealed that schools do not have a uniform strategy as an effective measure applied by teachers to curb learner indiscipline.

T2A: *“We are experiencing difficulties in reducing learner ill-discipline because we do not have uniform, compliant and positive strategies to combat learner indiscipline. Teachers are more inclined towards using their own methods in their desperate efforts to deter learners from misbehaving.”*

The head of the institution posited the following:

PC: *“We are really frustrated. We don't have the alternative measures to corporal punishment in order to deal with difficulties educators are experiencing to curb learner indiscipline in schools.”*

The above analysis shows the difficulties and frustrations experienced by teachers because of a lack of appropriate measures that are effective in curbing disciplinary problems in schools.

The study's results are consistent with those of Nene, who found that teachers are finding it difficult to find substitutes that will give them a sense of control over the students they instruct.<sup>66</sup> As a result, they

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<sup>63</sup> Odebode, “Causes of Indiscipline among Students as Viewed by Primary School Teachers in Nigeria.”

<sup>64</sup> Kelly, “Discipline in Schools. Consistency, Fairness, and Follow-through Reduce Classroom Disruptions.”

<sup>65</sup> Gbemi Peter Moye, “Students' Indiscipline and Principal Attitude in Ondo State Secondary Schools,,” *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 16 (2015): 80–85.

<sup>66</sup> Florence Zandile Nene, “The Challenges of Managing Learner Discipline: The Case Study of Two Schools in Pinetown District” (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013).

are under stress and are considering quitting because of the challenges they face in dealing with students' lack of discipline.

### Measures to curb learner ill-discipline

The participants presented a variety of strategies for curbing student ill-discipline in schools. They mentioned the following measures: learner code of conduct and school disciplinary policy should be explained properly and followed by learners; train teachers on conflict management; involve police officers, pastors, motivational speakers, and social workers; encourage parental involvement; and have more adequate facilities for different sports. Interviewees cited the following:

L1C: *"Code of conduct should be properly explained to us so that we as learners can know what is right and wrong in the school."*

PA: *"Learners don't know the content of the code of conduct. It must be properly explained to them and also to their parents."*

Thus, the analysis shows that adequate implementation of the code of conduct is required. This is consistent with the argument by Leoschut and Makota that creating and implementing student conduct codes is an essential step in creating a school climate that values cooperation, respect, and tolerance.<sup>67</sup>

Participants view parental involvement in their children's education as a way to instill discipline in students.

T2B: *"I think we need to have parents who are involved in the education of their children. Parents who can teach their children to respect us as educators."*

Participants want their schools to have adequate security personnel and proper fencing to restrict the entry of drugs and weapons into the school premises.

PC: *"We want enough security guards. We do not have a proper fence around the school yard and this compromises the safety of all people in the school. Learners bring drugs and weapons into the school."*

The study findings showed that the South African Police Service must form a partnership with schools and conduct the search and seizure of learners.

T1B: *"We need police to search learner's bags at least twice in a quarter so that indiscipline in school can be minimised."*

The analysis revealed the need to have social workers in schools to assist in curbing learner ill-discipline.

T1A: *"We need social workers to come and help victims with counselling and police officers to do search and seizure and to instil discipline in schools."*

The literature points out that lack of extra-mural activities results in learner indiscipline, as they have nothing to engage in after school lessons.<sup>68</sup> The study finding is in line with the literature because participants view the provision of adequate resources for extracurricular activities in the school as a measure to curb learner indiscipline.

T1A: *"We need enough sports facilities in our schools so that we may fully engage learners. I think a lack of extra-mural activities causes learners indiscipline because they are not fully engaged. Extra-curricular activities give learners who cannot excel in the classroom an opportunity to excel in the sporting field. Learner commitment and involvement in the schooling activities minimises ill-discipline."*

Tlhapi argues that a lack of extracurricular activities in schools deprives many learners of the opportunity to show their potential. The academically weak learners lose self-confidence and their talents are hardly noticed. According to Tlhapi, these types of learners can be frustrated and divert their energy into disruptive behaviour in the school.<sup>69</sup>

The participants mentioned religion as another measure to curb misbehaviour. Pastors should be invited to preach in schools and instil moral discipline in the students. The participant responded:

L1B: *"Pastors should come to school and preach about discipline once a month or they can invite motivational speakers. This will minimise indiscipline and will improve class attendance and regular coming to school."*

<sup>67</sup> Lezanne Leoschut and Gillian Makota, "The National School Safety Framework: A Framework for Preventing Violence in South African Schools," *African Safety Promotion* 14, no. 2 (2016): 18–23.

<sup>68</sup> Leoschut and Makota, "The National School Safety Framework: A Framework for Preventing Violence in South African Schools."

<sup>69</sup> Tlhapi, "Management of Discipline in a Post Corporal Punishment Environment: Case Study of Primary Schools in the Informal Settlements in the North West Province."

The above citation also indicates that motivational speakers can assist schools in curbing antisocial behaviour.

Another strategy that was proposed was that there is a need for teachers to be trained in conflict management. The training will equip teachers with the ability to resolve disputes among learners, particularly learner fights.

PB: *“Teachers must be trained on how to resolve conflict so that they may be able to resolve conflict among learners as well as among themselves.”*

T1C: *“Teachers must be well trained to know what to do when learners have conflicts, in order to prevent clashes and fights among learners.”*

T2B: *“We need training on how to handle big and minor issues such as conflicts among educators and among learners.”*

The study findings support Ngidi's assertion that parents, teachers, administrators, and all students should work together to address indiscipline.<sup>70</sup> In keeping with this, the Department of Education encourages parents to take the initiative in managing discipline by setting a good example for their kids.

### Document Analysis

The researchers requested copies of the following documents from the schools participating in the study to conduct the desk-top study: learner code of conduct, school disciplinary policy, minutes of the meetings held by disciplinary committees, and records of learner transgressions.

It was disturbing to find that the disciplinary committees of all the schools in the study do not have a school disciplinary policy, even though the interviews had indicated a high prevalence of learner ill-discipline in the schools. Given the finding of the absence of a disciplinary policy in the schools, it was not surprising to find that minutes of the meetings attended by the disciplinary committee, records of learner transgressions, and the sanctions applied to curb such ill-discipline were non-existent in the schools. This finding suggests that the disciplinary committees of the schools are non-functional. Bayraktar and Dogan argue that learner awareness of the maintenance of the records of all minutes of meetings and transgressions of bad behaviour serves as a measure to curb learner ill-discipline.<sup>71</sup>

According to Goliath et.al., the school learner code of conduct is not just a set of behavioural rules but is the school's framework for the creation of a culture of positive behaviour within which learners should conduct themselves.<sup>72</sup> The document analysis also revealed that the learner code of conduct was crafted on a sound basis for creating a school environment characterised by learner-disciplined behaviour. However, the interview analysis found that learners have inadequate knowledge of the content of the code of conduct. This points to the fact that schools do not appropriately implement the learner code of conduct to take advantage of a well-developed code of conduct to curb learner indiscipline.

### Discussion Summary

The reviewed literature indicates that learner ill-discipline is a countrywide problem and that its occurrence is on the increase.<sup>73</sup> The findings of this study are in line with the literature because the study revealed that the schools studied are characterised by high levels of learner ill-discipline. The study identified several factors causing learner ill-discipline which include a lack of code of conduct and non-adherence to the disciplinary policy, dysfunctional families; crime, violence and lack of discipline in the community; peer pressure; alcohol and drug abuse; overcrowding; media; bullying; and lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. The causal factors of learner misbehaviour in the schools were found to emanate within the schools and the surrounding community.

The findings support the argument by Ngidi that poor behaviour in schools is a reflection of antisocial behaviour and violence in the society.<sup>74</sup> Hence, the study findings align with the Social Learning Theory which states that children learn behaviour, including deviant behaviour, by observing and

<sup>70</sup> Ngidi, “Reducing School Violence: A Peace Education Project amongst Stakeholders in Umlazi. .”

<sup>71</sup> Hatice Vatansever Bayraktar and M Cihangir Dogan, “Investigation of Primary School Teachers’ Perception of Discipline Types They Use for Classroom Management,” *Higher Education Studies* 7, no. 1 (2017): 30–45.

<sup>72</sup> N Goliath et al., “Learner Discipline and School Management: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Managing Learner Behaviour within the School Context,” *Education Management & Development Centre: Metropole North. Western Cape*, 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Zhou and Brown, *Educational Learning Theories*.

<sup>74</sup> Ngidi, “Reducing School Violence: A Peace Education Project amongst Stakeholders in Umlazi. .”

emulating the actions and behaviour of others in the community.<sup>75</sup> This is because schools are a microcosm of society and the variables that cause student ill-discipline emanate from society.

The interview analysis indicates that the two primary factors fuelling ill-discipline in the schools are the code of conduct not followed, and drug abuse. The findings in the document analysis are contrary to the interview findings because the two primary factors perpetuating learner ill-discipline in the schools are the code of conduct and disciplinary policy which are not appropriately implemented by the schools. The researchers found that the learner code of conduct is well-developed by the schools to create a culture of discipline in the schools. Through the interviews, it was really concerning to discover that the schools are ignoring the learner's code of conduct because the learners lack the necessary content knowledge of the code. According to Jinot, policies and procedures are designed to direct and regulate school activities, but when they are not properly implemented, they encourage ill-discipline.<sup>76</sup>

The schools complained about the lack of discipline which severely impacted teaching and learning, resulting in poor learner scholastic performance. However, the researchers found that the institutions do not have a school disciplinary policy. Van Deventer argues that a disciplinary policy is crafted to establish order and curb disruptive behaviour that can negatively impact teaching and learning.<sup>77</sup> The absence of the disciplinary policy indicates that the disciplinary committees of the schools are non-functional, hence it was not surprising the finding that the schools do not have minutes of the meetings held by the disciplinary committees on the issues of indiscipline. The interviews found that the use of drugs among learners fuels learner misbehaviour, and yet, the records of learner transgressions, including drug use, sanctions, and learner referrals do not exist in the schools. Bayraktar and Dogan argue that learner awareness of the maintenance of the records of all minutes of the meetings and transgressions of bad behaviour serves as a measure to curb learner ill-discipline.<sup>78</sup>

The study argues that the two primary factors fuelling learner ill-discipline in schools are the inappropriate implementation of the learner code of conduct and the absence of the school disciplinary policy. The non-functionality of the disciplinary committees of the schools coupled with the inappropriate implementation of the learner code of conduct, suggest that there is a serious lack of concerted effort by the schools to curb learner indiscipline. Thus, the two primary factors driving learner misbehaviour emanate from within the schools themselves.

Goliath et.al and Jinot argue that the learner code of conduct and the school disciplinary policy are sets of behavioural rules for the framework of creating a culture of positive behaviour, and when the rules are not appropriately implemented they breed indiscipline.<sup>79</sup> Hence, the study posits that there is an urgent need on the part of the education authorities to ensure that schools appropriately implement the learner code of conduct and the disciplinary policy with the functional school disciplinary committees. In line with the social learning theory that students acquire antisocial behaviour from their society, Makendano argues that negative behaviour can be unlearned by creating a school environment that sanctions bad behaviour and encourages and rewards good behaviour.<sup>80</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The current high level of learner ill-discipline, which is on the increase, is a serious concern to the schooling sector as it impacts negatively on teaching and learning. This study strongly recommends the proper implementation of the learner code of conduct and the school disciplinary policy to create a culture of discipline in the schools which is intolerable to misbehaviour. Education authorities in the District Office must put measures in place to ensure that schools comply with the proper implementation of the code of conduct and school disciplinary policy. Strengthening school security is also important to prevent

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<sup>75</sup> Zhou and Brown, *Educational Learning Theories*.

<sup>76</sup> Belle Louis Jinot, "The Causes of a Lack of Discipline among Secondary School Learners in Mauritius," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2018).

<sup>77</sup> I. Van Deventer, *An Educator's Guide to School Management Skills*, 2nd ed. (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2018).

<sup>78</sup> Bayraktar and Dogan, "Investigation of Primary School Teachers' Perception of Discipline Types They Use for Classroom Management."

<sup>79</sup> Goliath et al., "Learner Discipline and School Management: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Managing Learner Behaviour within the School Context"; Jinot, "The Causes of a Lack of Discipline among Secondary School Learners in Mauritius."

<sup>80</sup> Aggrey Kayabu Makendano, "Investigating Teachers' Experiences of Learner Discipline in Senior Secondary Schools in Zambezi Region of Namibia" (UNISA, 2016).

drugs and dangerous weapons from entering the school premises. The researchers further recommend that education authorities must provide schools with adequate security personnel and proper fencing.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has investigated the causal factors of learner ill-discipline at the school level with the intention to come up with practical measures that can be applied by the schools to curb learner indiscipline. The causal factors of learner misbehaviour were found to be societal and school-related factors. Generally, learner ill-discipline is a complex multi-systemic problem and the causal factors are multifaceted, which creates the need for an integrated approach to curbing learner indiscipline. Schools need to establish collaborative partnerships with their parent community and other stakeholders that provide services such as law enforcement, social welfare, the church, civil society, and other professional organisations that are helpful in mitigating the occurrence of learner misbehaviour. It is imperative for teachers to be trained in conflict management and resolution to be able to manage and resolve conflict between learners and also among educators. There is an urgent need for proper implementation of the learner code of conduct and the disciplinary policy in the schools to ensure that both educators and learners operate in a safe environment which will eventually lead to efficient and effective teaching and learning.

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