**THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE ON LEARNING IN EKURHULENI PRIMARY SCHOOLS, GAUTENG PROVINCE**

By

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**DECLARATION**

I, Nossy Tsotetsi, hereby declare that this dissertation titled: **The influence of learner discipline on learning in primary schools of Ekurhuleni, Gauteng** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE                           DATE: 20 January 2024

## DEDICATION

I kindly express my extremely profound gratitude to my loving partner and my daughter for their continued support that they have shown during my dissertation. I really appreciate their efforts, unconditional love and support. They mean the world to me.

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## ABSTRACT

In South African schools, especially in Gauteng province, learner discipline problems are a worrying phenomenon. In many schools in the Ekurhuleni region of the Gauteng Department of Education, teachers are battling to deal with learner indiscipline in the post-corporal punishment era. Due to the prohibition of corporal discipline and the proclamation of the new disciplinary system, public schools in this district seem to be in a chaotic state. Prior to their appointment, teachers generally have little or no training in the use of alternative methods of maintaining discipline, yet they have to deal with the worsening levels of learner discipline. This study sought to find out possible ways in which effective discipline can be maintained and identify strategies to overcome poor discipline challenges in Ekurhuleni primary schools. This study followed a qualitative research approach and used semi-structured interviews to collect data. The investigation focused on three primary schools which were purposefully sampled to participate in the study. The research concentrated only on the views of the educators and the principals. The findings revealed that maintaining learner discipline in schools is a difficult undertaking for both principals and teachers as they lack proper training on the use of alternatives to corporal punishment, a lack of clarity on the alternatives to corporal punishment, a lack of administrative and stakeholder support for most teachers, particularly from the Department of Basic Education. To address these shortcomings, it is recommended that all stakeholders be involved in the discussion of learner discipline and policies guiding it. In this sense, it is critical to include the entire community in maintaining learner discipline in a bid to support learning. The community could devise innovative approaches and mechanisms that could assist principals and teachers in maintaining learner discipline in schools. All these strategies could engender good learner discipline in schools, which is essential for effective teaching and learning.

**Keywords**: abolition of corporal punishment, alternative to corporal punishment, behaviourism, choice of theory, code of conduct, discipline strategies, infringement, learner discipline, poor discipline, school management.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC     African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

BBC     British Broadcasting Corporation

CICO     Check-in and Check-out

CRC     Convention on the Rights of the Child

DBE     Department of Basic Education

DoE     Department of Education

HoD     Head of Department

PhD     Doctor of Philosophy

PL1     Post Level One

RSA     Republic of South Africa

SASA     South African Schools Act

TV     Television

UK     United Kingdom

UN     United Nations

UNCRC     United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNESCO     United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF     United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNISA     University of South Africa

USA     United States of America

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Poor learner discipline is one of the biggest problems in basic education currently and interrupts successful teaching and learning in schools, and the smooth running of educational activities in general. This has become a global issue in schools (Emekako, 2016:64), and teachers are desperately looking for successful methods of managing poor discipline. Most of the time, poor learner discipline interferes with the regular educational activities and procedures, and if a learner misbehaves and is not controlled or managed properly, the quality of education would unavoidably decline (Kourkountas & Wolhuter, 2013:550). Emekako (2016:65) indicates that every teacher is well informed of the requirements for using the traditional strategy of ensuring discipline among learners. Discipline is a process used to penalise or correct the behaviour of a learner who misbehaves, impacting their attitudes, self-assurance and psychological wellbeing.

Learner indiscipline manifests itself in different ways such as damage to property, absenteeism, smoking cigarettes or dagga, refusal to obey rules, threatening other learners, delinquency, murder, bullying, rape, stealing and general violence (Daroni et al., 2018:196). Briesch and Chafouleas (2015:5) state that the usual misbehaviour incidents in the classrooms include refusal to obey rules, walking around during lessons, unwillingness to participate in lessons, disturbing fellow learners and shifting classroom equipment such as tables, chairs, cupboards and projectors randomly.

When schools, parents, learners and other stakeholders build strong partnerships and support one another in an effort to reach a common goal of successful teaching and learning, learners can succeed in school. Research has indicated that parental involvement in school improves the learners' academic achievement, school attendance and behaviour at school (Jeynes, 2016:195). However, South African schools are beset with problems associated with a lack of learner discipline due to increasing antisocial influences and policy changes. The use of corporal punishment in schools is prohibited.

Discipline is one of the most vital attributes required from learners in education. The main purpose of discipline is to nurture an educational environment that promotes or encourages learning and learners to use the opportunities provided for optimal learning. Sound discipline is an essential requirement for understanding the vision and mission of education and leads to learners' development and achievement in all aspects of their education. To achieve this, learners should maintain a high standard of respect and be able to control their feelings (Daroni et al., 2018:200).

In the context of South African schools, alternative discipline needs to be used. This refers to non-traditional or unconventional methods of managing learner behaviour and promoting a positive learning environment. Instead of relying solely on punitive measures such as detention or suspension, alternative discipline approaches often focus on understanding and addressing the root causes of misbehaviour. These methods may include counselling, conflict resolution, restorative justice practices and positive reinforcement strategies. The goal is to foster a supportive and inclusive school culture that helps learners learn from their mistakes, develop social and emotional skills, and ultimately contribute to a more positive school climate. The most basic social skills that are taught in this system are motivation, and respect for learners, elders, parents, teachers and mentors (Gastic, 2017:163).

Different teachers who used to administer corporal punishment often complain about its prohibition in South African schools and claim that its abandonment has had a detrimental effect on the management of learner discipline in many schools (Jeynes, 2016:195). Observing the cruelty inflicted upon children by their parents, teachers and certain members of the community, the world did not merely watch; instead, it took action to enact laws aimed at safeguarding their rights (Jeynes, 2016:195). This law calls on the authorities to protect children from any type of abuse, neglect, danger or harm. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) calls on governments to ensure that school discipline is managed in a way that is reliable and respects the child's rights (Save the Children, 2015:n.p).

## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The abolition of corporal discipline was supposed to lead to a complete transformation of conduct from oppressive and punitive correction of learners to a constructive attitude that seeks to reward and encourage good behaviour. The South African Schools Act (No 84 of 1996, Section 8) stipulates that poor learner discipline has a detrimental impact on the delivery of quality education since teachers spend a lot of time on disciplining learners. Furthermore, too much focus on discipline takes up much time that should be used for teaching and learning, and the continuous requirement to be involved in disciplinary issues adds to the stress of the teacher. Ultimately, this works against delivery of high-quality teaching and learning.

Since corporal discipline has been outlawed in line with the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), many schools are faced with serious challenges such as ill-discipline, safety and disruptions. Teachers are under immense pressure to ensure that learner discipline is maintained in schools (Etyang & Okoth, 2018:1). In this respect, Na'imah (2018:285) points out that "the learners had lost their trust and a culture of respect towards the teachers". He further contends that learners' protection, safety and accomplishment in education are negatively impacted by disturbing behaviour or other types of misbehaviour by fellow learners. The ban on corporal discipline underscores the need to adopt acceptable alternatives to ensure discipline (Agesa, 2015.n.p). Simatwa (2012:172) emphasised the importance of instilling acceptable discipline to nurture polite and accountable citizens in society.

Globally, countries are under pressure to find solutions to deal with discipline problems. According to Belle (2018:35), there were about 1 000 learners in Mauritius who were suspended from school for abuse and assault. Learner disobedience, substance abuse, disruptive behaviour such as singing and dancing in the classroom and numerous bullying cases have been recorded in the United Kingdom and United States (Arslan & Yildiz, 2019:1). Mwaniki (2018:171) further added that in Kenya, the common indiscipline cases are sneaking out of school, theft, drug abuse and refusing to obey the rules.

## 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In South African schools, especially in Gauteng province, learner discipline issues are a worrying circumstance, particularly in the Ekurhuleni district where teachers battle to deal with learner indiscipline since corporal punishment has been banned. Due to the prohibition of corporal discipline and the declaration of the new disciplinary code as expressed in the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996), public schools in this region appear to be in a chaotic state (ELRC, 2003: B-37; Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996a). In this context, this study seeks to investigate the influence of learner discipline on learning in Ekurhuleni primary schools, Gauteng province. It is based on the idea that a suitable environment is crucial for maintaining successful teaching and learning in schools. Discipline is vital for providing quality education in schools. It also enables teachers to continuously maintain high educational standards. Learner discipline is imperative for stakeholders in education due to the significant role it plays in nurturing acceptable values and beliefs in schools and influences the quality of education significantly (Na'imah, 2018:290).

Research on learner discipline issues in South African schools in the RSA has revealed that the major problem is how to handle them (Aksoy, 2020:79; Sinthumule, 2021). This is because teachers are sceptical on how to maintain discipline. Another challenge is that research on learner discipline issues is largely dependent on teachers' individual methods of coping with discipline.

Discipline in schools is a necessary condition for effective teaching as well as learning. It develops a suitable environment for quality education in public and private schools. Thus, it is critical that teachers should develop a productive classroom setting that is suitable to teaching and learning (Farmanova, 2021:449), safe and keeps learners from being hurt or threatened (Duarte & Brewer, 2019:88).

In most instances, classrooms are peaceful; however, occasional instances of disorder and disobedience do happen. This is partly because learners who misbehave look for attention, possibly because they do not get it from their parents, and they expect to get it from teachers and peers. A teacher's role is pivotal in successful learning, and they should

nurture positive behaviour in learners as well as integrity, respect for diversity and understanding (Dong et al, 2020:4122). Mitchell, Crowson and Shipps (2011:09) state that, since they act in loco parentis, guardians have given teachers permission to inculcate proper conduct and ensure that every learner is safe from harm and danger.

The Bill of Rights as established in the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996 Section 28(1) (d) (RSA, 1996b) provides every learner or child with the fundamental right to be protected from ill-treatment, a lack of care, viciousness or humiliation. According to this section of the Act, the use of corporal discipline constitutes an infringement. Dzhumagulova (2021:319) asserts that education and training should be in sync with the Constitution and the South African Schools Act, eradicate corporal punishment and that discipline should be handled consistently to ensure effective education.

According to Section 8 (1) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) (RSA, 1996a), the school governing bodies (SGBs) have the power to manage discipline and develop a code of conduct that stipulates the conduct expected of learners and seeks to nurture dignity and order at school and protect both learners and teachers' rights. This Act outlaws corporal punishment as a corrective measure for maintaining learners' discipline and order. Learners should be well informed about the code of conduct, which should also incorporate aspects like communication channels. Moreover, learners should understand that when they violate the provisions of the learner code of behaviour, they may face disciplinary action which needs to be an integral part of the code. The following research questions are posed to bring the main research problem of this study into clearer focus.

## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 1.4.1 Main Research Question

What is the influence of learner discipline on learning in Ekurhuleni primary schools?

### 1.4.2 Sub-research Questions

1.  What are the perspectives of Ekurhuleni primary school teachers on discipline?

2. What are the main causes of poor discipline in Ekurhuleni primary schoo ls?
3. How can teachers manage effective discipline without the use of corporal punishment?
4. Which discipline strategies do teachers use to maintain discipline in schools?
5. Why is learner discipline important in the process of learning?

## 1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify the influence of learner discipline on learning in Ekurhuleni primary schools.

### 1.5.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study that seek to address the aim of the study more precisely are as follows:

- To explore the perspectives of Ekurhuleni primary school teachers on discipline.
- To identify the main causes of poor discipline in Ekurhuleni primary schools.
- To explore how teachers can manage learner discipline effectively without using corporal punishment.
- To identify the strategies used by teachers to maintain discipline effectively in schools.
- To investigate the importance of learner discipline in the process of learning.

## 1.6 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews preliminary literature on learner discipline in schools and alternatives to corporal punishment.

According to Greenhalgh (2019:n.d.), a literature review is a systematic method of identifying, classifying, interpreting and assessing documents containing material that is pertinent to the study. Its purpose is to discover gaps in comprehension and research requirements in a specific field. According to Booth et al. (2016:n.d.), the literature review helps the researcher in analysing and discovering inadequacies in the literature. Singer and Alexander (2017:1007) add that the fundamental objective of a literature review is to

discuss with the reader the findings of studies that are closely related to the one being conducted. The literature review is presented in detail in Chapter 2.

### 1.6.1 Theoretical Framework

This research study is supported by a theoretical framework that provides a solid structure for the research process and assists the researcher to determine an acceptable research approach, analytical tools and the processes to be followed in the study. Two theories have been selected to underpin this study, namely behaviourism and choice theory of behaviour, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Behaviourism is a theory of learning which states that learning occurs through a system of rewards and punishments that lead to changes in behaviour (Duchesne et al., 2014: 110). It also states that all behaviours are learned through interaction with the environment and a process of conditioning (Krapfl, 2016:123). The choice theory developed by Glasser (2010:41), is also known as rational theory, and was formerly called control theory (Mason & Dye, 2017:46). Control theory asserts that behaviour is central to our existence and is driven by five genetically driven needs, namely the need for attachment, the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, the need for power, and the need for autonomy (Snyder & Bub, 2014:27).

### 1.6.2 What is Discipline?

The concept "discipline" derives from the Latin word "*disciplina*" which means to educate (Rohman, 2018: 18). Williams et al. (2020:505) explain that discipline means teaching that assists individuals in cultivating self-control, fostering a positive personality, instilling a preference for order or competence, exercising firm control to enforce rule adherence, and establishing a framework of rules to regulate positive behaviour. Wahyudi (2019:351) states that discipline can be defined as self-control in obeying the rules and tasks that should be managed by teachers where they lead by example, and instruct, motivate and encourage good behaviour.

Discipline focuses on correcting and teaching more than penalising. It seeks to educate learners to comprehend, as well as obey the rules, both within as well as outside the classroom, in the absence of using physical punishment or viciousness. It accentuates educating learners to do the right things rather than penalising them for wrongdoing and

seeks to promote self-control, common understanding and a peaceful and nurturing environment. It includes instructing learners by giving them clear rules of acceptable behaviour and supports them as they learn to stand by these rules (Nelsen 2013:64).

Rohman (2018:18) concurs that discipline underscores the need for a person to behave in decent and dignified manner, to respect himself or herself and others, and not violate the rights of others. According to Coetzee (2010:480), discipline ought to be a positive strategy through which duty is acknowledged by everyone who is involved, and where learning happens through motivation and cooperation instead of penalising and negative reinforcement.

Aslianda and Nurhaidah (2017:33) explain that the concept "discipline" means assisting children to develop self-control by inspiring as well as guiding them to feel positive about themselves and develop their intellectual skills. Wahyudi (2019:351) notes that discipline is sometimes mistakenly conceived as something that teachers should impose whenever learners behave badly at school to curb disorderly conduct when it happens. Discipline is also defined as a system using guidance, demonstration and other suitable methods to uphold the behaviour necessary for maintaining a secure, efficient, and productive educational environment by transforming unacceptable behaviour into satisfactory conduct (Ningrum, et al, 2020:4). Expressed in a positive way in an educational environment, the term "discipline" seeks to provide direction and desire for order and to avert, defeat, and discourage misconduct" (Cvetkova Dimov et al., 2019:94).

1.6.2.1 Discipline versus Punishment

Punishment is described as "a remedial degree or a penalty that causes pain on someone who has to endure the results of offence for the sake of preserving the controllable and responsible society of the school" (Department of Education [DoE], 1998:8.1). Punishment is also defined as the use of physical constraint levelled against a learner. It involves the use of physical force intended to make a learner encounter torment but not harm to rectify or control their conduct. It also includes spanking, slapping, grabbing, hitting and shoving a learner roughly (Straus, 2014:4). For Venter and Van Niekerk (2011:251), discipline involves teaching learners reasonable or acceptable conduct and

maintaining societal values and standards. Moreover, discipline is a strategy for teaching a learner self-discipline, self-esteem and accountability. It entails coaching children to be good and encouraging appropriate behaviour (Nelsen 2013:65).

1.6.2.2 The legal framework on corporal punishment

In terms of the Constitution and the South African Schools Act (SASA), physical punishment is banned and criminalised in South African schools. Accordingly, the DoE (2000:25) characterises its application as an infringement of the law. Maree and Cherian (2004:72) observe that since 1996, physical punishment has not been allowed in schools in the RSA.

The National Education Policy Act of 1996 (RSA, 1996b, A-47) asserts, "No individual should use physical punishment or expose a learner to either psychological or physical molest at any educational facility." The use of physical punishment in schools is banned by SASA, which stipulates that: (1) No one is allowed to use physical punishment on a learner at school; and (2) anybody who applies physical punishment on a learner commits an offence and will be subject to imprisonment for assault if convicted.

The Constitution and SASA seek to uphold the children's rights, reduce the use of corporal punishment and ensure that they always get the humane treatment that they deserve (Conley & Mestry, 2010:2; De Waal, 2011:176; Masitsa, 2011:164; Motseke, 2010:120). Section 10 of the Constitution stipulates that everybody has intrinsic dignity and the fundamental right to have their dignity valued and preserved.

**1.6.2 Discipline Strategies Used by Teachers**

According to Manning and Bucher (2013:19), a special conduct report card should be used by teachers to give feedback to learners about their behaviour in the classroom. It is a system that teachers use for learners to check-in/check-out. It is used to control learner discipline and is promptly and easily accessible and affords teachers an opportunity for continuous checking, dealing with troublesome learners and maintaining contact with parents. It also helps learners understand how well they are following school rules. According to Lee et al. (2018:1762), teachers should state the rules unequivocally,

expectations and the results of misbehaviour to discourage learners from partaking in harmful behaviours that interrupt teaching and learning in the classroom.

Gershoff (2017:224) asserts that numerous schools use a point system which focuses on rewarding good conduct and penalising bad conduct. Teachers explain that in January when the school year starts, learners can start by having a certain number of points and when they misbehave, those points should be deducted. Alternatively, they could start without having any points and as they continue to behave in a correct manner, they are awarded points. According to the DoE (2000:25), small sanctions such as detention or sweeping the classroom can be used for level-1 misconduct, such as late coming to class, bunking classes, not completing class and homework activities, not being able to follow classroom rules and instructions, and being untrustworthy. Small sanctions could include verbal warnings, written warning or reminders; loss of privileges (e.g., limited access to certain activities); extra assignments or tasks; short-term detention; parent-teacher meetings, writing of a reflective essay or letter of apology; participation in a behaviour improvement programme, counselling or guidance sessions, restitution or making amends for the misconduct.

## 1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study adopted an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative methodology, which are discussed briefly below and in greater detail in Chapter 3.

### 1.7.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

An interpretivist paradigm was chosen for this research study because it embraces concepts possessed by participants in the form of conscious thinking (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010:36). The interpretivist paradigm relates well with the discourse of learner discipline and teacher authority because it allows participants to interact spontaneously and subjectively without being prejudiced (Marshall & Rossman, 2014:64). Reeves and Hedberg (2019: 345) note that the "interpretivist" paradigm emphasises the reasons for putting context into an analysis. The interpretive paradigm seeks to comprehend the world via the subjective experiences of humans. They use meaning-oriented (rather than

measurement-oriented) approaches such as interviewing or participant observation, which rely on a subjective interaction between the researcher and the participants.

## 1.7.2 The Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research focuses on several strategies and takes an interpretative, naturalist approach to its subject matter. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:2) state that qualitative research includes a process of investigation during which researchers gather data in face-to-face circumstances by communicating with chosen individuals in their environment (field research). It is concerned with comprehending the social interactions from the participants' viewpoints. In the same way, Yin (2018:89) submit that qualitative research translates data by giving it meaning, interpreting it or making it justifiable. Rahman (2020:101) contends that a qualitative methodology concentrates on the comprehension of social life as well as meanings that people attach to their daily lives. Qualitative methods allow researchers to watch the world around them and discover outcomes that clarify what they observed.

## 1.7.3 Sampling Method and Procedures

In this research, purposive sampling was used to select participants as it was deemed to be the most appropriate method for the purpose and objectives of the study. It is mostly used in qualitative research when the researcher intends to acquire comprehensive knowledge about a specific phenomenon rather than making statistical judgements (Bhandari, 2020:17).

Purposive sampling can also be referred to as judgemental, selective or subjective sampling. It is a sampling approach where the researcher uses their discretion in selecting individuals from the finite population to participate in the study. It is a non-probability sampling approach in which the components picked for the test are chosen according to the researcher's discretion. Researchers believe that by using reasonable judgement, they may get a representative sample (Black, 2010:24). Alvi (2016:30) added that purposive sampling involves approaching the sample with a specific goal in mind. The criterion for the selection of participants in the research is predetermined. In this sense, the researcher does not simply include anyone who is accessible, but those who meet

the predetermined criteria, namely teaching qualifications, experience and gender. Table 1.1 depicts the sample.

Table 1.1: Participant group and sample size

| DISTRICT | SCHOOLS | PRINCIPALS | DEPUTY PRINCIPAL | TEACHERS | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ekurhuleni South | A | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | B | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | C | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |

### 1.7.3 Data Gathering Method

Data for this study was gathered using focus-group interviews and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative techniques were used to gather data in the form of words and offer detailed discourse descriptions to capture the richness of behaviour that happens in a characteristic setting from the perspectives of the participants. The researcher observed how teachers dealt with problematic learners and obtained their perspectives through interviews.

### 1.7.4 Focus-Group Interviews

McMillan and Schumacher (2013:231) describe focus-group interviews as conversations using open-ended questions that bring out participants' meaning and how they make sense of important occasions in their lives. A focus-group interview helps the researcher to better comprehend how individuals are feeling and to think about a problem, service or product (De Vos et al., 2005:299).

### 1.7.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research tool for gathering qualitative data. Face-to-face interviews were used in this study to gather data by directly communicating with the participants according to prepared questions. To acquire the required

information, a semi-structured interview was used for school principals, deputy principals and teachers to gather first-hand information and experiences directly, instead of analysing secondary data. According to Laverty (2018:8), the benefit of using semi-structured interviews is that they are comprehensive and are the most productive technique of data gathering in qualitative research, particularly when the researcher wants to investigate the participants' viewpoints and the meanings they attach to the phenomenon. Additionally, an interview is a versatile and adaptable technique that involves communication between the researcher and the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:2) where the researcher is an essential element in data generation. Similarly, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for this study. An interview is a useful data gathering approach since it allows the researcher to acquire detailed information from a small sample of participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014:45). A voice recorder was used with the permission of the participants to record the interviews.

## 1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Trustworthiness of the research has to do with being trusted and believed because of a good standard and quality of work. It entails the quality of being transferable, dependable and the extent to which the research findings might be validated. Research findings that are trustworthy, transferable, confirmable and reliable can be valued and regarded as credible by readers due to their usefulness or importance (Hammond & Wellington, 2013:147). These methods seek to enhance credibility of the research. White (2005:205) opines that the quality of being trusted or believed is linked to the quality of the study.

### 1.8.1 Dependability

The concept of dependability, according to Penley (2018:65), refers to whether a study could provide the same results if comparable research is undertaken. In a qualitative study, dependability which includes reliability, ensures that the study findings are compatible and repeatable (Gunawan, 2015:4). Creswell (2013:31) adds that dependability is accomplished when the findings are reliable and can be duplicated with similar participants and contexts.

## 1.8.2 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research findings or results are free from prejudice. Shenton (2004:72) posits that specific methods should be adhered to, to ensure that the results are based on the experiences and opinions of participants. Confirmability is developed when the data correctly reflects the information supplied by the participants and the findings are not manipulated by the investigator (Polit & Beck, 2014:24). McEwen (2007:73) adds that confirmability is a gauge of how well the research findings are supported by the collected data. Credibility is a characteristic that shows congruence between the data and the findings. For this reason, when contemplating confirmability, a researcher should ensure that their conclusions are based only on the information gathered from participants, or whether they also reflect part of the researcher's prejudice, inspiration or other preferences (McEwen, 2007:74). The reader should be able to scrutinise the data to affirm that the findings or the author's interpretations reflect the data. The researcher can increase confirmability by using an audit trail, implying that they should incorporate written field reports, memoranda or excerpts from a field journal to demonstrate the relationship between data and results (Ibid.).

## 1.8.3 Credibility

Credibility refers to the accuracy of the facts or the participants' viewpoints, as well as the researcher's explication and depiction of them (Polit & Beck, 2012:13). Tobin and Begley (2004:388) further explain that credibility is concerned with the "fit" between the respondents' opinions and the researcher's portrayal of them. It is concerned with internal validity whereby the research objectives are stated to ensure that the study is carried out in a manner that is accurately identified and described (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002:24). Internal validity illustrates that data may truly support the explanation of a certain incident or situation (Cohen et al., 2005:98). This research recorded the reality from the viewpoint of participants, using their own words and to counteract any prejudices, and the researcher took the field notes. During the fieldwork, an extended period of time

was spent in the sampled schools to enable observations and data gathering in order to accomplish credibility.

### 1.8.4 Transferability

Transferability highlights the extent to which the findings of qualitative research maybe generalised or extended to another similar circumstances or settings. To make the research findings more understandable and applicable to other situations, a qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by clearly explaining the research context and underlying assumptions (Trochim, 2015:53). Singh (2013:202) concurs that transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of qualitative research may be shared or transferred to different contexts or settings. The research steps should be detailed to ensure that the reader follows the logical progression of this study.

### 1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations remind researchers that they should continuously keep in mind that while executing their research, they are infiltrating the private lives of their participants as part of their research. This poses a few ethical concerns that should be addressed both during and after the research is completed (Silverman, 2000:201). Some of the research ethics and principles that the researcher should uphold are highlighted below and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

### 1.9.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a critical ethical principle that enables participants to be comfortable in divulging personal and confidential information to the researcher (Benson, Brand & Gibson 2013:20).

### 1.9.2 Anonymity

Anonymity implies that that no one except for the researcher can associate or link the participants' answers with them because their identities are protected (Creswell, 2007.n.p.). The researcher ensured that participants were comfortable and assured them that they would remain anonymous.

### 1.9.3 Respect

Respect means that research participants should be treated as independent individuals who do not depend on anyone to make rational decisions. They are assumed to be self-controlled and competent to make decisions and choices for themselves if they are given adequate information. This principle forms the basis for informed consent (Creswell, 2007:n.p.).

### 1.9.4 Informed consent

The term informed consent comprises two critical components implying that participants should be fully knowledgeable about everything that can be asked of them, why, as well where the information may be used, and what (if any) results may emerge. The participants should supply unequivocal, willing permission to participate in the research based on clear understanding. The informed consent procedure may be viewed as a formal arrangement between the participants and the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:47).

### 1.10 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

### Chapter 1

The first chapter presents an introduction and background to the research, the purpose of the study, problem statement, research questions, aim and objectives of the research and outlines the research methodology.

### Chapter 2

This chapter reviews local, international and scholarly literature and presents a theoretical framework underpinning this study on learner discipline in schools.

### Chapter 3

This chapter presents the research methodology and design followed in the study. It covers relevant aspects such as the study's population, the sampling technique, information gathering procedures and data analysis techniques.

**Chapter 4**

This chapter presents and analyses data gathered for the study. The participants' descriptions and narratives are used to support the analysis of different themes which emanated from data.

**Chapter 5**

This chapter provides a summary of the study and a synthesis of literature review and findings, draws conclusions of the study and presents recommendations. These are basically suggestions on how to improve practice in connection the research problem, that is, it proposes some strategies that may be adopted to ensure effective learner discipline in schools.

**1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an introduction and the orientation to the study. It also gave the rationale for the study and stated the research problem followed by research questions and the objectives of the study. The chapter also presented the research methodology and design as well as the scope of the study and research methods. These are discussed in relation to the research topic that probes the influence of learner discipline on schools in Ekurhuleni South District, Gauteng.

The next chapter provides an extensive review of literature on learner discipline as well as theoretical framework underpinning the study.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 discussed poor learner discipline as one of the biggest problems in South African schools, which disrupts successful learning and teaching and the smooth running of educational activities in general. The abolition of physical punishment in South African schools was also highlighted. The introduction and background to the study, the statement of the problem, research questions and research methodology adopted for this study were presented. This chapter reviews literature relevant to learner discipline and presents a theoretical framework that anchors the study. It provides a critical analysis of learner discipline at schools and explores techniques that teachers can use to maintain learner discipline without using physical punishment. It discusses the term "discipline", outlines the elements contributing to a lack of discipline and different types of discipline issues, and explains some discipline methods used by teachers in schools. It also elucidates the differences between discipline and punishment.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework has various advantages for a research project, namely it gives a framework for demonstrating how a researcher defines his or her study philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:12). Ravitch and Carl (2016:49) agree that a theoretical framework serves as a guide for researchers in situating and contextualising formal ideas in their investigations and influences the researcher's research design and data analysis strategy.

The learning theory that has been selected to frame this study is behaviourism. This theory is triangulated with the choice theory of behaviour to provide a stronger theoretical base and overcome some of the shortcomings in behavioural learning theory. Behaviourism theory is about learned behaviour that occurs through interaction with the environment, which learners acquire through conditioning, reinforcement and punishment. The proponents of this theory are Watson and Skinner. These theories are pertinent to the topic and significant to this study because they position successful learner

discipline in the hands of teachers since it is their obligation to ensure that learners behave well. Teachers are expected to be the sources of inspiration to learners and ensure that they are protected from any harm. The theories are also relevant because they highlight some methods that teachers can use to effectively enforce discipline at schools and create an environment that is suitable for optimal teaching and learning. These theories are discussed in the following sections.

## 2.2.1 Behaviourism

Behaviourism is a learning theory that states that education happens through teachers' incentives and punishments, and requires modifications in behaviour (Staddon, 2021:79). It states that every behaviour is learned by interacting with the surroundings and is a conditioning process (Krapfl, 2016:123). Behaviourism "views education as being a cause and influence' mechanism by which external elements produce a reaction, which becomes a learned behaviour over time" (Staddon, 2021:83). According to Pritchard (2017:7), behaviourism focuses on tangible, observable and practical behavioural modifications that stem from the connections between the stimuli and responses created by the learner.

The behaviourist ideas originated mostly in the 1930s and are best known for the work of Pavlov, James Watson, B.F Skinner, and Thorndike (Krapfl, 2016:123). Behaviourism, according to Krapfl, maintained a dominating theoretical perspective throughout the 1960s and 1970s when several of today's teachers were educated, and is still evident in behaviour modification programmes as well as regular practice. Behaviour modification focuses on modifying behaviour and is a systematic way to change behaviour using the principle of conditioning and learning and applying standard punishments and rewards. The strategies propose that precise incentives and punishments might produce predictable consequences in learner behaviour since behaviourism provides a system that could adjust children's behaviour to conform to specified standards (Miltenberger, 2017:5). He further indicates that behaviour modification is a branch of psychology dealing with the analysis and alteration of human behaviour.

In the context of the above discussion, analysing involves discovering a functional link between external circumstances and a certain behaviour or to understand why it occurred or to determine why a person behaved as they did. Modifying entails creating and implementing methods to assist in changing an undesirable behaviour. It entails modifying environmental occurrences in order to impact behaviour. Professionals provide behaviour modification methods that are used to modify socially relevant behaviours to improve some area of a person's life (Miltenberger, 2017:6).

According to Brau, Fox and Robinson (2022:1), the use of behaviourism theory in the classroom is essential for teachers since it influences how learners respond and behave in the classroom and proposes how teachers can directly encourage them to behave correctly. It also helps teachers understand how a learner's familial environment and lifestyle might influence their behaviour and allows them to perceive things objectively. It is also critical to comprehend how to inspire and assist students in their classroom behaviour. In terms of behaviourism theory, the teacher's responsibility is to shape the learner's behaviour through positive or negative reinforcement (Alqurashi, 2018:1442). Reinforcement is used to improve the likelihood of evoking a certain behaviour by producing a stimulus right after a response/behaviour.

Kaplan (2017:373) adds that teachers convey knowledge to learners in responses to relevant stimuli. Learners participate in passive behavioural learning, while teachers deliver information as part of the stimulus-response cycle. They use behavioural strategies to educate learners how to behave and respond to various stimuli. This should be done on a frequent basis to gain a better knowledge of the learners' behaviours (McLeod, 2017:5).

In behaviourism theory, effective reinforcement is crucial. A lack of positive reinforcement can reduce the learners' responses and optimal teaching and learning (McLeod, 2017:5). According to Skinner (2022:27), when learners obtain positive reinforcement, such as praise and rewards for specific behaviours, they are strengthened, whereas negative reinforcement deters behaviours. Teachers, parents and others may promote and nurture desired behaviours by carefully regulating the environment and building a reward system (Jensen, 2018:276).

A basic example of behaviourism in the classroom is a point system where learners are rewarded for good behaviour and penalised for bad behaviour (Delahooke, 2022.n.d.). Finally, the earned points may be exchanged for benefits such as little gifts or homework passes. This method implies that motivation is extrinsic, and that learners will participate in certain behaviours to obtain the rewards. Moreover, Amalia and Fadholi (2018:33) argue that the grading system serves as both a means of positive reinforcement and positive punishment.

When the learner answers all the questions correctly in a test, they obtain something they want, which is a high grade and a positive reinforcement. When a learner performs poorly on a test, they receive something they do not want, which is a low grade which may lead to positive punishment such as attending a morning study. Negative punishment is also a common way to eliminate unwanted behaviours in the classroom; the best example of this may be taking away recess time. If a learner is unruly in class, they can get their recess time taken away from them and be kept in the classroom away from their friends. In this way, the teacher takes away something that the learner wants; this is called negative punishment (Amalia & Fadholi, 2018:33).

According to Nazike (2017:465), a treasure box method can also be used to reward learners for exemplary behaviour either individually or in groups. This technique works exceptionally well with primary school learners as they have developing minds that need positive reinforcement and recognition. Teachers can construct or buy a box and fill it with tiny toys like rulers, pencils, bubbles, erasers and sticker sheets. They may create a point system which enables learners to pick something from the treasure box after completing a task. Alternatively, learners may be awarded with something from the treasure box on a weekly basis.

Lyle and Cushion (2017:23) note that teachers use behaviourism theory to improve learning and reduce disruptive learner behaviour. They should reward positive behaviour, disregard slightly unpleasant behaviour and constantly enforce punishments for infringing rules to control disruptive behaviour that can impede teaching and learning. Rewarding learners for excellent behaviour and motivation is beneficial for reinforcing proper behaviour and fostering academic progress. Rewards, whether actual or intangible, can

improve learner discipline and aid teachers in classroom management. Reward systems and other ways to encourage can be used by learners of all phases or grade levels (Rusmono et al., 2018:434). As proposed by Miltenberger (2017:6), Table 2.1 below indicates elementary concepts and demonstrations of incentives and sanctions.

Table 2.1: Basic definitions, examples of rewards and punishments

|  | REINFORCEMENT | PUNISHMENT |
|---|---|---|
| POSITIVE | Providing something excellent to encourage a behaviour, such as a good mark on an assignment that a learner has worked diligently on. | Presenting something terrible to reduce a behaviour, such as providing pop quizzes to reduce problematic learners' studying/reading tendencies. You apply negative consequences such as detention to change the behaviour. |
| NEGATIVE | Taking away something negative to encourage a behaviour, such as removing due dates for assignments to increase learner autonomy. When learners behave well, you stop bugging them. | Taking away anything beneficial in order to diminish a behaviour, such as prohibiting learners from completing an assignment together to discourage plagiarism and dishonesty. |

Hardesty (2018:n.p.) maintains that teacher-centred behaviourism is counterproductive in the classroom because learners are trained to obtain a reward and please the teacher rather than learning how to behave and become self-disciplined. Furthermore, because the existing reward and punishment system is teacher-centred, it tends to favour the teacher rather than meeting the requirements of both the learner and the teacher, which is unjust. To counteract this, it is vital to promote the concept of a person-centred system that focuses on meeting the needs of both the learner and the teacher by striking a good balance. According to Hardesty (2018:n.p.), despite the obstacles of teacher-oriented behaviourism, there has been a decrease in learner drop-out, increased attendance and less severe behaviour, which is desirable and advantageous to both learners and teachers. Learners not only learn but benefit considerably more in this atmosphere, as it helps them to build self-esteem, become less distracted and develop better behaviour, reducing the strain on the teacher.

Skinner's notion of changing the consequences of an activity or introducing new consequences to steer behaviour is typical of behaviour modification (Grace, 2016:16). In the past, numerous parents and teachers sought to regulate their children's behaviour through negative reinforcement that is, using punishments for misbehaviour or breaking home rules. Today, many parents and school districts choose to use positive reinforcement to motivate good behaviour, with negative reinforcement strategies being used only as a last option (Omemu, 2017:100). While the outcomes are not always instantaneous, they are generally seen as healthy because they equip children with acceptable behavioural rules and permit them to preserve their dignity. Panchoo (2016:36) contends that using reinforcement to penalise a learner for undesirable behaviour only serves to harm their self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Grace (2016:16) further notes that Skinner regarded a regulated setting as a necessary condition for comprehensive behaviour change. As a result, the importance of maintaining a good learning environment in educational settings is seen as one of the aspects that greatly contribute to learner discipline, which facilitates optimal teaching and learning. Skinner emphasises the necessity of generalised reinforcement in the case of positive and negative reinforcers, such as delivering praise, stars, and points to the learner soon after performing desirable behaviours (Rafi et al., 2020:173). This enables learners to repeat the desired behaviour (Brau et al., 2018:21). In support of reinforcement, he advocates the avoidance of punishment in class in favour of just ignoring incorrect behaviour as the best method to extinguish it. Punishment, according to behaviourists, is less successful in terms of stopping incorrect behaviour since it only temporarily restricts behaviour (Jensen, 2018:276).

Although behaviourism is an excellent alternative for many teachers, there are several critiques of this approach. Behaviourism works well for some learning goals, such as foreign languages and mathematics; however, it is less successful for analytical and complete learning. Other opponents of behavioural learning claim that the theory does not emphasis human learning and behaviour sufficiently; hence, it is not completely developed. Other theories that extend behaviourism have been suggested, emphasising

that there are many more aspects to consider when analysing behaviour (Krapfl, 2016:123).

Motivation is crucial in behavioural learning since learners can be motivated by both positive and negative reinforcement. A learner who receives praise for a good test score, for example, is far more likely to memorise the answers efficiently than one who does not receive praise for a good test score. The learner who does not receive praise receives negative reinforcement since their brain tells them that even if they had a decent mark, it does not really matter. As a result, the examination content becomes unimportant to them. Positive reinforcement, on the other hand, provides learners with a direct drive to continue their greatness, which is entirely dependent on that reaction to a good stimulus (McLeod, 2017:5).

A contribution of behaviourism to education is the behaviouristic notion that it is the teacher's responsibility to establish a favourable atmosphere for learners. Teachers that subscribe to this behavioural viewpoint think that learners' behaviour is a response to their past and current contexts, and that all behaviours are learned. The teacher should regulate the learning environment to ensure that it is suitable for learning in order to promote successful learning. Moreover, punishment has been shown to produce negative side effects such as group hatred and sadness (Krapfl, 2016:123).

Positive reinforcement is a frequent example of behaviourism. In this scenario, a learner may be given a little gift if they receive a perfect score on their spelling test. In the future, this may encourage children to work diligently and study for their examinations to receive prizes (Dabell, 2018:1). Behaviourism is important for teachers because it influences how learners respond and conduct themselves in the classroom and assumes that teachers may have a direct influence on how learners behave. It also assists teachers in understanding how a learner's home environment and lifestyle might influence their behaviour, allowing them to observe it objectively and seek to assistance with change (Rafi et al., 2020:173).

Behaviourism theory can be used to analyse and explain how teachers can maintain learner discipline in the classroom using positive and negative reinforcements. It is

pertinent to this study since it backs up behaviour modification, encourages learners to be well-disciplined and ensures that optimal teaching and learning is taking place. It also encourages teachers to be innovative and come up with various learner discipline methods, which enable them to control disruptive behaviours.

## 2.2.2 Choice Theory of Behaviour

Choice theory, developed by William Glasser (2010:41), is also known as rational theory and was originally known as control theory (Mason & Dye, 2017:46). According to control theory, behaviour is important to human existence and is motivated by five genetically determined demands (Snyder & Bub, 2014:27). It asserts that practically all behaviour is selected, and that our genes drive us to meet five fundamental needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and enjoyment (Lyngstad, 2022:18). This idea seeks innovative approaches to comprehend and describe how teachers may assist learners demonstrate positive behaviour on their own through the choices they make.

According to Upindi, Mushaanda and Likando (2016:19), Glasser believed in underlying human motivation, which steers a person in a particular way. The approach recognises the enormous power of the need to encourage learners in schools by including them in decision-making about issues connected to their discipline. The approach promotes mentoring and counselling as vital strategies for helping learners acquire self-discipline. According to this idea, learners should be given the opportunity to investigate methods of obtaining self-actualisation, self-confidence and self-enhancement. Choice theory concepts may be used in schools by providing students with additional responsibilities and chances to exercise freedom, explore, argue, take risks and make judgements about issues that might help improve school discipline. It focuses on ways to assist learners in developing personal responsibilities, resulting in a greater level of internal locus of control and self-discipline (Upindi et al., 2016:19).

Choice theory stresses the necessity for teachers to comprehend and continually evaluate factors of the school environment that impact and decide how learners behave (Lyngstad, 2022:18). Instead of using sanctions to manage the conduct of learners, teachers should address the environmental variables that cause the behaviour.

Overcrowded classrooms, for instance, are a source of disciplinary issues amongst learners. It has been proven that when the classroom environment is not suitable for teaching and learning, learners misbehave (Jinot, 2018:35). Teachers must be able to monitor the environmental factors that influence learners' behaviour in order to maintain control over them. This is vital because knowing what motivates an action or behaviour allows teachers to cope with or manage the behaviour successfully (Putra, 2020:23).

Choice theory, according to Glasser (2016:2), entails making learners cognisant of their responsibility of making their own choices regarding how they learn and behave in the classroom. It stresses that learners must have decision-making powers, and that if they selected their curriculum and took part in determining the rules of the classroom, they would have a sense of ownership over their education, pride in their interaction, higher self-esteem and higher levels of confidence in themselves and their capabilities. Glasser (2016:2) also posits that while managing discipline issues, teachers must keep two objectives in mind, namely, to put an end to the undesirable or troublesome behaviour, and to educate learners how to manage their own behaviour.

Furthermore, choice theory encourages assertive discipline that educates learners to embrace the repercussions of their behaviour. The essential principle of assertive discipline is the reward of proper behaviour. Responsibility is central to assertive discipline (Tassell, 2016:3). Teachers should use forceful punishment and learn to be firm in dealing with problematic learner behaviours. A teacher needs to establish a system of incentives and penalties to notify learners if they behaved appropriately or badly (Tassell, 2016:3).

Watson and Arzamarski (2011:23) have raised two criticisms about choice theory. The first one is that it assumes that a teacher or school is responsible for establishing an atmosphere that satisfies the requirements of learners. The teacher can cultivate a favourable atmosphere if a learner chooses behaviour based on their own needs, which may not be acceptable (Putra, 2020:23), and may prove to be frustrating to teachers. According to Glasser's theory, when a learner behaves inappropriately, the teacher is liable if they failed to satisfy the requirements of that learner. However according to choice theory, the learner selects their own "entire behaviour" (Mushaanda & Likando, 2016:19).

According to Bechuke and Debeila (2012:240), choice theory is important because it emphasises the principles of dealing with discipline and transforming problematic learner behaviour. In terms of this theory, managing discipline should not involve any type of sanctions using physical force with the intention of causing pain in the learner, but recommends using some mechanisms for correcting or controlling learner behaviour. It is concerned with more than just preventing undesirable behaviour and seeks to modify it and avoid resorting to punitive measures by implementing specific rules or rewards of some sort. It is ideal for teachers to use choice theory as it provides disciplinary strategies and guidelines on how to maintain learner discipline effectively without using physical punishment at schools. Choice theory intends to eliminate inappropriate conduct while also teaching learners how to conduct themselves appropriately (Lyngstad, 2022:16).

It is vital for teachers to establish an environment in which learners experience a feeling of belonging, have some authority and control, as well as some independence and enjoyment while learning. This could reinforce the learners' sense of accountability and dignity and minimise discipline problems.

## 2.3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

This section explores the key legal frameworks that regulate or manage the use of physical punishment to children. Specifically, it looks at the Constitution of South Africa, the SASA, and other legal instruments of international and continental organisations such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the UNCRC.

### 2.3.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The ban on physical punishment in schools not only promotes healthy, nonviolent discipline, but also fulfils the Constitution. To be effective, implementation must include a wide variety of measures aimed at avoiding the use of physical punishment, providing teachers with the required constructive, nonviolent disciplinary tools and responding properly when the prohibition is violated. Information must be disseminated about the hazards of physical punishment and its repercussions. Therefore, it is important that the government should provide detailed guidance to teachers and other stakeholders on how

the legislation forbidding physical punishment should be implemented for the benefit of children (Ebrahim, 2018:2).

The Constitution is the highest law of the country, and any law or activity that is conflicting with it is invalid, and the duties set by it must be met. It has many sorts of rights designed to protect learners from corporal punishment (Ebrahim, 2018:1). According to Section 12 of the Constitution, everyone has the right to freedom and security, which includes the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or humiliating manner, as well as the right to be free from all types of violence from either public or private sources. It also includes the right not to be tortured in any form, as well as the right not to be held without a trial (RSA, 1996a).

According to Section 28 of the Constitution, every child has the right to be safeguarded against mistreatment, neglect, abuse or humiliation. Every child has the right to be protected from exploitative labour practices, as well as the right not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that are inappropriate or endanger the child's welfare, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development. Section 10 states that everyone is born with human dignity and has the right to have that dignity recognised and preserved (RSA, 1996a:10). In terms of this section, by administering corporal punishment, teachers infringe on the fundamental rights of the learner. Therefore, it is critical that every child be safeguarded from mistreatment and neglect, and that their self-esteem and feeling of self-worth be increased (RSA, 1996a:28).

### 2.3.2 The SASA

Corporal punishment as a disciplinary technique is prohibited in South Africa, according to Section 17 of the SASA (DoE, 1996a:5-6). However, it appears that this prohibition is having a detrimental impact on school discipline. To address this, Section 8(1) of the SASA states that school discipline must be maintained so that teaching and learning can continue uninterrupted (DoE, 1996a:8).

Section 10 of SASA stipulates that "(1) no one may administer corporal punishment to a learner at a school; (2) any person who contravenes subsection 1 is guilty of an offence

and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault" (RSA, 1996a), and as such, corporal punishment is illegal (DoE, 2000:18). The DoE specifies the law that prohibits physical punishment, specifically the Constitution and the SASA. As a result, physical punishment is now prohibited and criminalised in South African schools. According to this information, since 1996, corporal punishment has not been allowed in public schools in the RSA (Maree & Cherian, 2004:72).

The South African government wishes to provide a learning environment that respects human dignity and basic freedom. According to Section 8 (1) of SASA (DoE, 1996a), discipline in the classroom is required for learning and instruction to proceed smoothly and without disturbance. Discipline should be enforced in conformity with the constitutional mandate that the best interests of children come first in all situations affecting them (RSA, 1996a).

School disciplinary rules and procedures have a significant influence on both students and school operations, and they not only aid to maintain discipline but also increase classroom performance (Mayworm & Sharkey, 2014:693).

Section 8 of SASA requires an SGB to establish a code of conduct for learners "after consultation with learners, parents, and teachers of the school," while Section 8(4) states that all learners attending a school are obligated to abide by the school's code of conduct. The provision also states that the Minister may develop recommendations for the SGB to consider when establishing a code of conduct for its school. In accordance with this requirement, the then-Minister of Basic Education, Mr Kader Asmal, produced the Guidelines for Governing Bodies to Consider in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners in 1998. The rules state that school regulations must encourage "positive discipline" rather than being "punitive and punishment oriented" (RSA, 1998).

According to the rules, physical punishment has been banned. "Educators and learners must learn the value of mediation and cooperation, as well as the importance of seeking and negotiating nonviolent solutions to conflict and differences and exercising due process of law" (Jinot, 2018: 36). They also require school codes to:

(a) Inform learners about allowed and forbidden behaviour;

(b) Inform learners about grievance processes; and

(c) Inform students about due process procedures during disciplinary proceedings.

The SASA and the Constitution have a significant influence on controlling learners' discipline in schools while respecting their rights. School discipline assists learners in bettering their behaviour (Jinot, 2018:36). As a result, discipline enforcement by teachers and school administration is a crucial responsibility required to promote successful teaching and learning (Tlhapi, 2015:21).

### 2.3.3 The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) is Africa's first extensive children's rights treaty, promoting and protecting children's rights throughout the continent. It aims to address some of the unique issues confronting African youngsters. The Charter was created to serve as a comprehensive tool for dealing with children's rights throughout Africa, with a focus on basic rights. Article 11(5) of the ACRWC expressly requires State Parties to "take all acceptable measures to ensure that a child who is exposed to schools or parental discipline is handled with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the child, and in accordance with the present Charter." This criterion is also in keeping with the internationally accepted concept that educational content should be "appropriate" to the child (Rajalakshmi, 2018:28).

The four cardinal principles of the ACRWC, according to Afranie et al. (2017: 84), do not advocate physical punishment. For example, the notion of "best interests of the child," which should be prioritised, has nothing in common with any type of violence against children, including abuse and torture, no matter how little. This is because the meaning of "best interests of the child" must be consistent with the entire Charter. Even under ACRWC article 11(5), issues arise, including this one: how is it feasible to corporally discipline a child while still treating them with humanity and regard for their intrinsic dignity, and while remaining in accordance with the ACRWC? Because corporal punishment and human dignity are mutually incompatible notions, this is not feasible.

Corporal punishment is one of the most widespread type of violence against children globally, especially in Africa. Prohibiting its use elevates the standing of children in society, who would be similarly protected under assault laws, regardless of who the offender is or whether the abuse is delivered as discipline or punishment. Prohibiting corporal punishment can also help to reduce other types of violence against children.

The State Parties such as Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Ghana and South Africa to the ACRWC have a duty "… to take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse while in the care of the parent, legal guardian or school authority or any other person who has the care of the child" (Afranie et al. 2017:84). In the same sense, article 19 of the UNCRC states that "all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment..." do not allow for any degree of sanctioned violence against minors (ibid.).

Corporal punishment is clearly a kind of concealed cruelty in child upbringing, with devastating effects for both victims and society. As a result, article 21 (1) of the ACRWC explicitly articulates the State Party's responsibility and emphasises the necessity to adopt "all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices" such as physical punishment in all situations. The ACRWC does not deny the positive idea of discipline in any way. Furthermore, physical punishment in schools is incompatible with the principles of the right to education under the ACRWC. According to 11(2) (a), the child's education should be geared at "the promotion along with development of the child's personality, abilities and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (Rajalakshmi, 2018:29).

### 2.3.4 The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UNCRC 2021 is the most well-known approved Convention in the history of international law. It expressly requires states to safeguard children from all types of mental and physical violence (article 19) as well as torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (article 37). According to Article 39, states must give support and aid to children who are victims of violence. The UNCRC states that school

discipline should be "in accordance with the child's human dignity and present conventions" (Article 28.2), and that physical punishment should be avoided (Godwin et al, 2017:10).

States that have signed the UNCRC are liable for clearly prohibiting all kinds of physical punishment of children, including at home and ensuring appropriate enforcement where law exists. Article 42 of the UNCRC requires governments to "make the Convention equally accessible to adults and children through appropriate and functional means." Many youngsters, however, are uninformed of their rights and may grow up feeling that they deserve to be punished or that it is their responsibility. Article 14 of the UNCRC affirms a child's right to freedom of religion. It recognises parents' or legal guardians' rights and obligations to direct their children to exercise their rights "in a manner consistent with the child's growing abilities." As a result, parents cannot use their beliefs to justify corporal punishment for their children (Godwin et al, 2017:8).

Through the passage of the UNCRC, several nations have formally prohibited physical punishment of children (United Nations, International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 1998a; 1998b; 1998c).However, there is a principle of corporal punishment of minors in Islamic law that contradicts this prohibition. While the UNCRC and ACRWC both consider physical punishment to be cruel and inhumane treatment of children, the Children's Act (38 of 2005) in South Africa is mute on the subject. Furthermore, physical punishment is one of the sentencing possibilities for male minors who violate the law. Article 37 of the UNCRC declares that "no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment," and advocates for its abolition.

Article 40 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the minor promotes rehabilitative sentencing options for minor offenders, such as counselling, probation and vocational training. Corporal punishment may inhibit the occurrence of antisocial behaviour, but it is not an appropriate method of nurturing acceptable behaviour in a child (Godwin et al, 2017:3).

## 2.4 LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN A SCHOOL CONTEXT

In an educational context, the word 'discipline' refers to the strategies used by teachers to help learners behave appropriately at school (Maphosa, 2011:76). It comes from the Latin word "*disciplina*," which means "teaching". Nakpodia (2010:144) describes discipline as a guideline that seeks to ensure that learners adhere to school rules. These rules explain the anticipated standards of behaviour and outline measures that would be taken for failure to comply with them. However, the challenge is that they lead to a chaotic environment that squanders important teaching time, leading to a decrease in the quality of education provided.

Furthermore, discipline is a condition established and generated by a series and process of behaviour that demonstrates the qualities of obedience, loyalty, order and regularity and such behaviour is formed by a process of family leadership, education and experience (Yanti & Marimin, 2017:329). According to Stenhouse (2015:10), when used in a positive sense, discipline relates to learning, regulated scholarship, direction and orderliness, and may be regarded as an inherent aspect of an efficient educational endeavour in which both parents and teachers aid learners who are seeking assistance.

According to Masitsa (2008:265), "discipline refers to appropriate behaviour, to concession with accepted behaviour rules and norms". It emphasises correction and education above punishment. It seeks to educate students to comprehend and respect social rules both in and out of the classroom, without resorting to physical or emotional aggression. It focuses on educating children to do the right thing rather than penalising them for doing the wrong thing (Masitsa, 2008:265). Its goal is to instil self-discipline and mutual respect in a nonviolent and compassionate atmosphere. It entails offering learners clear instructions on appropriate behaviour and supporting them as they learn to follow these norms.

Henly (2010:112) states that discipline is a teacher-directed activity aimed at leading, guiding, directing, managing and confronting a student about disruptive behaviour with the goal of promoting learning. It is used to guide learners toward self-control and personal accountability. According to Davidowitz (2017:4), discipline is a necessary

condition for good teaching and learning in a school, and teachers are responsible for enabling and developing an effective discipline structure in a classroom to fulfil learning objectives. Discipline, according to Reyneke and Pretorius (2018:117), should be seen as part of the teaching and learning process in a school setting because it produces an orderly atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning, and encourages learners to act in a socially responsible manner. It should be maintained in accordance with the constitutional mandate that the best interests of children come first in all matters affecting them. Poor school discipline, on the other hand, has been described as serious and pervasive, with a detrimental impact on teaching and learning (Reyneke & Pretorius, 2018:117).

## 2.5 DISCIPLINE VERSUS PUNISHMENT

Punishment is described as "a remedial degree or a penalty that causes pain on someone who has to endure the results of offence for the sake of preserving the controllable and responsible organisation of the school" (South Africa 1998b: 8.1). In addition, punishment is characterised as the use of violence on a learner. It is the use of physical force on a child aimed at inflicting pain to rectify or manage the learner's conduct. It includes spanking, slapping, grabbing, hitting and shoving a learner roughly (Straus, 2014: 4). In contrast, discipline involves teaching learners about appropriate behaviour and supporting standards and morals (Venter & Van Niekerk, 2011:251). It is an acceptable strategy of teaching a learner or child self-discipline, self-esteem and accountability. It incorporates coaching children or learners to be good and encourages appropriate behaviour (Nelsen 2013:65).

According to Ntuli (2012:.8, 25), discipline aims to encourage self-control whereas punishment is a sentence inflicted on a perpetrator for their transgression to maintain school order. Punishment may only deter malfeasance for a short period of time but does not always result in favourable long-term effects. It acts as a negative example and a deterrent for aggressive behaviour for both the penalised learner and those around them. Discipline centred on punishment has the potential to induce violent behaviour among learners (Maphosa, 2011:77, 143).

## 2.6 GLOBAL RESEARCH ON LEARNER INDISCIPLINE

Recent research has revealed that several countries have learner disciplinary difficulties that are similar and comparable to South Africa. Serious misbehaviour among students continues to spiral out of control, which affects teaching and learning to such an extent that academic achievement among learners continues to suffer, and teacher morale in the classroom keeps on deteriorating (Sekhonyane, 2018:16). According to Prasetyarini, Hikmat and Thoyibi (2018:12), teachers in primary schools across the world face a wide range of learner disciplinary challenges. Indiscipline amongst learners in schools is widespread and growing, raising major worries among educational stakeholders, policymakers, parents, and members of the community in practically all nations, including Ghana, about why it endures (Ofori et al., 2018:109). There is no country in the world today that does not have an issue with learner indiscipline (ibid.).

According to Ofori et al. (2018:109), learner indiscipline prevails in Ghana's educational institutions, affecting the smooth functioning of teaching and learning. From an analysis of different studies, they noted that student indiscipline is widespread in Ghanaian schools including tertiary institutions. Some of the common disciplinary problems include disrespect, defiance, bullying, aggression and discrimination. These problems hinder the smooth and successful teaching and learning and educational outcomes ultimately (Ofori et al., 2018:109).

In Sokoto State of Nigeria, primary schools are not free from the manifestations of indiscipline and many guardians and parents are concerned about the alarming rate of acts of indiscipline among children in schools (Sule, 2014:67). Teachers and educational authorities often report on the escalating problems of a lack of discipline in Nigerian institutions. Some of the normal incidents of violations of school rules and regulations include cultism, theft, egotism, drug misuse, absenteeism, truancy, examination malpractices, illicit sex, damage of school property and violence in schools, which indicate a lack of discipline (Sule, 2014:68).

According to Matsoga (2018:47), in Botswana schools, learner indiscipline presents itself in multiple forms that include truancy, destruction, substance or drug abuse, bullying,

violence and the inability or reluctance to accomplish various types of school activities. Similarly, in Zimbabwean primary and secondary schools, learner indiscipline ranges from minor offences such as bullying, theft, late coming, cheating and swearing, to major offences such as sexual harassment, sexual assault and misuse of drugs (Gutuza & Mapolisa, 2015:41).

Although educational institutions are expected to impart knowledge, and nurture character and discipline, there is widespread indiscipline among students to a point where many question if schools are competent in regulating it (Arslan & Oğuz, 2020:126). Many examples of student disobedience have been documented in the United Kingdom and the United States. In both nations, indiscipline amongst learners has been a serious issue, to the extent that teachers leave such schools in search of those with some sanity, discipline and order (Arslan & Yildiz, 2019:1).

According to Arslan and Yildiz (2019:1), various assaults in and around schools have grown significantly. In Hong Kong, Lau (2018:21) notes that some of the problems associated with learners' indiscipline involve disobeying teachers, breaking school rules, assault and other behavioural issues. Similarly, disciplinary issues involving learners have been documented in Malaysia. In this regard, Stones (2019: 22) states that incidents of indiscipline in Malaysian schools included assaults on teachers, verbal abuse, using vulgar language against teachers, sexual harassment, threats and harassment of teachers and other learners, possession of hazardous weapons, the supply or use of illegal drugs, and adult intrusions into schools or classrooms with the intent of confronting teachers.

In the US, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2016) provides the following information on learners who were suspended and expelled from the US schools in 2016: 36% of African-American students, 21% of Muslim students, 14% of White students, and 6% of Asian students. While these are broad figures, there are discrepancies across states. For example, research done in Texas from 2013 to 2016 indicated substantially smaller variations between the United States and Hong Kong (Barnes et al., 2017:15).

From an analysis of a longitudinal study, Lauff, Ingels and Christopher (2014:1) reported that learners, particularly immigrants of the second and third plus generation of African Americans and the third plus generation of Latin Americans in the United States, have a higher probability of receiving caution and punishment at school, despite the fact that their level of undisciplined behaviour resembles that of their Caucasian classmates. Rule violations, profanity, alcohol or drug misuse, stealing, rough play, hostility, sexual harassment, refusal, resistance, violence and destruction are all common behaviours among students (Peguero et al., 2015:200).

In the United Kingdom, there are numerous offences associated with learner indiscipline. Some of these include disrespect to teachers, attending school under the influence of alcohol, gangsterism, cheating when writing formal assessments, reluctance to do school activities, mendacious habit, stealing, disrupting friends, breaking regulations despite being repeatedly warned, drug abuse, disobedience to authority, physical abuse, vandalism, intimidation, carrying weapons to school and bunking classes (Kirera, 2015:552).

In a study that lasted a month and was covered by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), including five Chinese teachers that took over a British classroom with 50 children aged 13 and 14, Jing (2016: n.d.) notes that student discipline is also cultural. In this experiment, neither teachers nor learners expected cultural differences between teachers. Chinese teachers worked in a manner they were used to, characterised by no chatting, no questions, wearing a special uniform and dispensing harsh classroom discipline during an extended school day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Toward the end of the programme, some British students stated that they found it difficult to adjust to the Chinese style of instruction. They found their Chinese teachers to be "rude" and "unreasonable." In contrast, Chinese teachers perceived the British classrooms to be "chaotic" and the learners to be "unmannerly" and "lacking respect for others" (Jing, 2016:n.d.).

While the research cited above demonstrates a relationship between learner indiscipline and educational standards, other studies show that when learners behave appropriately in school, the country's educational levels improve significantly. According to Farrel

(2017:n.d.), Singapore appears to be amongst the few countries that have successfully controlled school discipline, and as a result, its educational standards are recognised as among the best in the world. It is heavily rules-driven, and learners are partly assessed on the ability to follow rules at an early age. Detention is one of the tactics which Singapore uses to punish their learners (Farrel, 2017:n.d.).

## 2.7 TYPES OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline, according to Huth (2020:4), is intended to educate learners how to be accountable, courteous, dependable, productive and innovative members of their communities. It is centred on the teacher developing a positive relationship with each learner rather than damaging it. It requires teachers to implement a proactive discipline culture that students can embrace, respect authority, follow school rules, practise self-control and respect others. The type of discipline a teacher chooses is determined by the nature of an offence, and a lack of cane does not imply that there will be lawlessness in schools (Lilemba, 2018:12). Generally, a teacher who is inconsistent does not use more effective classroom management techniques than a teacher who is consistent. The types of discipline that teachers in schools and classrooms use are classified into four categories explained below.

### 2.7.1 Preventative Discipline

Discipline is primarily intended to avoid behaviour problems, and as such, it should be preventative. Preventative discipline can be used by the teacher to constructively supervise, support, assist and explicate what is acceptable and appropriate for the learner. In agreement, Brunette (2017:36) defines preventative discipline as an administrative action taken by a teacher to motivate learners to obey the school rules. In this case, learners require a safe, conducive and comfortable learning atmosphere (Morin, 2017:03). According to Killen (2020:236), teachers who use classroom management tactics effectively set expectations, norms and standards for behaviour within the first few days of class. Clarifying expectations is a critical component of preventative discipline and ensuring that every learner understands what is expected of him or her. Preventative discipline aims to give learners pre-emptive interventions for

potentially disruptive behaviours by making it obvious to them which actions are acceptable and which ones are not.

Huth (2020:4) adds that the most fundamental component of preventative discipline is a precise statement of classroom expectations for both students and teachers, because students must understand what is expected of them in order to follow school regulations properly. These instructions might include regulations about chatting, schoolwork and language use in the classroom. A preventative discipline approach also specifies the sorts of penalties that would be imposed in the case of prohibited conduct or behaviour. Preventative disciplinary tactics foster a safe, non-confrontational classroom environment in which students feel prepared for what is to come (Huth, 2020:6). Teachers claim that the best strategy to avert disruptive behaviour in the classroom is to give learners a stimulating curriculum that engages them so effectively that they spend their time constructively avoiding opportunities for disruptive behaviour (Lilemba, 2018:12).

### 2.7.2 Supportive Discipline

The second type, which the teacher can resort to when preventative discipline fails is supportive discipline (Woolfolk, 2018:56). Teachers should use supportive discipline when a learner infringes one of the classroom rules (Woolfolk, 2018:57). This form of discipline is distinct from corporal punishment which provides a learner with opportunities to improve their behaviour before the consequences are imposed (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2015:18).

Prior to enforcing a consequence, supportive discipline provides a learner with suggestions and choices for improving their behaviour. For example, if a pupil wanders around the classroom after the teacher has stated that it is time to sit down, the teacher may remark, "I made the announcement that it is time to sit down, find your seat so we can get started or I will need to hold you after class." In this scenario, the learner was given the option of accepting or avoiding additional punishment, and the behaviour was redirected using a positive disciplinary approach implemented by the teacher. Supportive discipline might include things like reminders, redirecting, and nonverbal interactions (Killen, 2020:236).

### 2.7.3 Corrective Discipline

The third type, corrective punishment is defined as any measure used to remedy any disruptive behaviour (Ministry of Education, 2015:18). If preventative and supportive discipline are successful, it might be used as a final option. This is a more pessimistic type of discipline that includes constraints, punishment and consequences. As a result, the positive aspect of discipline must be given more focus, while corrective discipline must be used with greater caution. Killen (2020:237) add that corrective discipline is a collection of sanctions given to students after they commit an infraction. Corrective disciplinary tactics vary widely, with some being more effective than others. Engaging in a verbal confrontation with a student, for example, is a corrective punishment tactic, but it may grow into a volatile scenario and weaken the teacher's position as a leader.

In agreement with the above sentiments, Schlebusch and Ndlovu (2022:19) emphasise that discipline does not intend to suppress undesirable behaviour in the short term. Instead, it aims to invest in a child's long-term development through attempts that foster responsibility and self-discipline.

### 2.7.4 Assertive Discipline

Assertive discipline is a systematic strategy for behaviour management that requires teachers to define the rules, maintain a balance of positive and negative repercussions, and be aggressive in their verbal communication in order to communicate their objectives and requirements to students, parents and principals effectively. The approach is commonly used in ordinary classes. The teacher takes important decisions in its execution and requires learners to accept the rules without asking questions (Gardner, Rebar & Lally, 2020:599).

Gardner, Rebar & Lally (2020:599) further stated that assertive discipline developed by Lee Canter as a systematic behaviour control process seeks to put elementary and secondary school teachers in charge of their courses. Canter (2001) outlined four discipline abilities listed below that all teachers must acquire in order to properly address

problem behaviours by combining the ideas of assertiveness training and behaviour modification (Gardner, Rebar & Lally 2020:609).

• Identifying suitable behaviours that serve as the foundation for classroom regulations;

• Systematically establishing boundaries for incorrect behaviour;

• Constantly reinforcing proper conduct; and

• Collaborating with parents and principals.

Bayraktar and Dogan (2017:30) state that assertive teachers demonstrate and articulate class expectations clearly, boldly and regularly. They strive hard to acquire the learners' trust. When required, they educate students how to behave so that they can study and interact with others more effectively and follow a discipline plan which motivates learners to embrace collaboration. Such teachers help students comprehend and distinguish behaviours that contribute to success and those that lead to failure. Teachers who assert themselves are not tough taskmasters. They recognise the learners' need for regular behavioural limitations while also being conscious of their desire for warmth and support. Learners may require direct teaching on acceptable classroom behaviour.

## 2.8 THE EFFECTS OF ABOLITION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS

This section sheds light on the experiences of teachers and learners resulting from the eradication of physical punishment. A restriction on physical punishment at schools has made it nearly hard to maintain classroom control, and teachers frequently claim that since whipping students has been outlawed, they have little or no power in the classrooms given that they have no other method of maintaining discipline (Rosati, 2017:21).

Although it is illegal, physical punishment is still a contentious subject in some communities (Makhasane & Chikoko, 2016:1), and it is not well received by students. Other tactics that may be used to stamp one's authority in the classroom include emphasising the rules, observing one's body language, being consistent, firm, but fair, moving around the classroom, and having a reciprocal relationship with learners (Rosati, 2017:21).

The current state of affairs in South African schools implies that a lack of discipline and a rise in violence among students undercut teacher authority, resulting in poor learning and teaching. This has an impact on the lives of both teachers and students (Makhasane & Chikoko, 2016:2). Since the removal of physical punishment is a contentious subject in South African schools, maintaining learner discipline is one of the most pressing challenges a teacher has today, owing to pressure imposed by globalisation and social requirements (Kambuga, 2017:25).

A lack of discipline among students leads to ineffective learning and teaching, and undermines teacher authority (Belle, 2019:17). As a result, teachers feel powerless to deal with their students' disruptive behaviour and poor general discipline, which leads to absolute disregard for teachers (Kambuga, 2017:25). This is especially true because, according to Section 10 of the SASA, physically punishing pupils is unethical and illegal.

A study by Naong (2017) revealed that numerous teachers do not follow the regulations prohibiting corporal punishment, and that although being illegal, physical punishment is still used in South Africa. About 12.4% of learners have been subjected to corporal punishment by teachers in an attempt to reduce misconduct, implying that in order to be successful, teachers should create legitimate authority, which may assist in reducing ill-discipline, failure rates and impulsivity (Gershoff, & Gregan-Kaylor, 2016:153). However, in the past few years, schools have exhibited a proclivity to use alternative disciplinary methods such as in-school suspension and after-school detention. Teachers should demonstrate both intellectual and social authority since the goal of discipline is to be helpful rather than harmful (Smith, 2018:23).

According to Maphosa (2011:77), since the removal of physical punishment, students have shown abhorrent contempt for teachers and peers. They are often loud, disruptive, nasty and defiant. Chatting with their classmates while a teacher is teaching has become a habit. Most teachers struggle to adjust to or shift from the present education system, which no longer encourages physical punishment in favour of positive reinforcement through prizes for excellent behaviour (Maphosa, 2011:78). He emphasised that prior to the elimination of physical punishment, the classroom environment was tightly controlled,

and students were fearful because they were not given a platform to express their ideas and concerns about disciplinary issues.

## 2.9 DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES USED BY TEACHERS

According to a research study conducted in the Eastern Cape Province by Bilatyi (2017), teachers at one school disclosed that physical punishment was not used in the school and they depended on successful alternative strategies such as detention for minor infractions, counselling and verbal warnings. Manual work such as cleaning the classroom and picking up papers within the school yard can be successful for minor indiscipline, whereas major cases of indiscipline are best addressed through dismissal, expulsion, guidance and therapy, peer mediation, and educator-student conferences (Chonco, 2019:38). Detaining learners as one of the alternative techniques is beneficial since it allows them to complete their coursework while simultaneously imposing discipline. The application of positive discipline approaches reduce incidents of indiscipline significantly. A mix of counselling and individual conversations with learners is also praised for positively moulding their behaviour and offering a chance for the teacher to grasp the underlying causes of misbehaviour (Alter & Haydon, 2017:114).

According to Manning and Bucher (2013:19), a special conduct report card can be used by teachers and learners as it prepares the latter daily in social skills. It is a system where a teacher can check-in/check-out, and teachers can use it to control learner discipline since it is easily accessible and user-friendly. It enables teachers to constantly check troublesome learners and maintain contact with parents. It bolsters the prospects of consistent feedback and improves interaction and cooperation amongst teachers and parents.

Furthermore, Jinot (2020:120) asserts that one of the techniques that teachers can use to monitor effective punishment is a point system, which focuses on rewarding good conduct and penalising bad conduct. In practice, in January when the school year begins, learners may have a certain number of points, which could be deducted progressively when they misbehave throughout the year. Alternatively, learners could start the year

without any points, and as they continue to behave in a correct manner, they could be given points. In this system, good behaviour or conduct is rewarded.

According to the DoE (2000:25), small sanctions should be used for level 1 misconduct, which is not that significant, as it includes transgressions such as coming late to class, skipping classes, failing to write class and home activities, violating classroom rules and instructions and being untrustworthy. In this regard, the DoE (2000:25) recommends the following small sanctions:

- A verbal reprimand or written warning letter;
- A reprimanding stare;
- Giving more schoolwork that is monitored by the teacher;
- Withdrawal of privileges;
- Minor basic duties like cleaning the classroom;
- Transfer to an HoD, deputy principal or principal;
- Demerits – losing points that one has accumulated already; and
- Detention – a situation where learners are detained to do their tasks.

## 2.10 STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE WITHOUT BREAKING THE LAW

Van der Host and McDonald (2003:105) state that developing learning-friendly classrooms, a structure or system of management should be put in place. This can be accomplished through the strategies discussed below.

### 2.10.1 Code of Conduct

The SASA requires each school to adopt a code of conduct that respects the requirements of the Constitution. As a result, S.8 of the SASA was enacted. (1) Subject to any applicable common law, a governing body of a public school is required to develop a code of behaviour for learners after consulting with them, parents and teachers at the school. A code of conduct, as mentioned in subsection (1), must be designed to foster a disciplined and enthusiastic educational atmosphere, as well as staff devoted to improving and maintaining the quality of the educational procedure.

The guidelines that instruct the SGBs on how to embrace and execute a code of conduct for learners (RSA, 1998: par 1.4, 1.6) and define the goal of a code of conduct seeks to promote appropriate discipline and reinforce positive discipline. According to the DoE (2000:26), punishment must be favourable, productive and based on consensus between teachers, students and other stakeholders.

The implementation of the learners' code of conduct and the formation of disciplinary committees are designed to hold fair hearings on major disciplinary matters, subject wrongdoers to corrective measures, suspend or propose expulsion for unruly students. As part of respecting the code of conduct, every student must sign a statement. A code of conduct encourages correct and acceptable behaviour and establishes guidelines for positive discipline. However, it also addresses negative discipline (for example, undesirable behaviour and disagreement) and gives consequences for such occurrences. In this respect, disciplinary procedures are designed to develop and sustain a well-disciplined classroom atmosphere while also prohibiting and punishing improper behaviour using the methods that motivate offenders to modify their behaviour (Franklin & Harrington, 2019:1).

Moreover, Coetzee and Mienie (2013:93) contend that by embracing an acceptable discipline approach, teachers can also encourage and foster human rights. This can happen by initiating an acceptable discipline approach in a school or classroom and cultivating a solid human rights and values base (Du Preez & Roux 2010: 13, 24). The process of building good discipline is comprised of four interconnected processes listed below.

- Differentiate between discipline and punishment;
- Pay attention to connections;
- Establish a welcoming and compassionate learning atmosphere; and
- Learn and implement beneficial techniques to respond to misbehaviour (UNESCO 2006: 6 -7).

**2.10.2 Key Factors for Maintaining Discipline**

Louw and Du Toit (2010:31) identified several key factors that are vital for maintaining classroom discipline. Firstly, teachers should be effective and energetic in their classroom administration style and develop a learner-centred classroom atmosphere and supervise learners constantly. Secondly, they should handle all students with respect and love and obtain assistance from the administrative team of the school to prevent disciplinary problems from getting out of hand. Thirdly, teachers should plan and prepare lessons carefully and never take a seat while teaching. Fourthly, teachers should set acceptable and sensible class rules through discussion and penalise only in line with the school's disciplinary policy. Finally, they should also deal with today's problems today and always keep the parents informed.

Furthermore, Tauatswala (2018:12) emphasises that teachers must be properly prepared and ready for class, always be on time and organised for lessons. They should also be efficient and confident in their teaching and decision-making, as this fosters discipline in students. The teacher acts as an excellent role model of what is required and should demonstrate that this behaviour is achievable by exhibiting the proper way to conduct themselves.

**2.10.3 Classroom Rules**

One critical part of creating a favourable classroom atmosphere for constructive discipline implementation is developing rules in a collaborative and democratic manner. Each classroom should have four to six straightforward, detailed, unambiguous and quantifiable classroom rules (Huth, 2020:4). Such rules should be clearly explained to all learners, stated explicitly, taught through role play, displayed and reviewed on a regular basis. For the rules to be meaningful, the consequences for breaking them must be consistently applied (Huth, 2020:4).

Coetzee and Mienie (2013:77) state that every class teacher is obliged to implement classroom rules and abide by the established guidelines. They should ensure that learners participate in the development of classroom rules and follow them. Classroom policies and procedures must be consistent with the code of conduct of the school and

the common law needs must be taken into consideration. They must be unequivocal, justifiable and give reasonable warning where necessary. Such guidelines and rules should be posted in the classroom. The declaration of regulations is critical, and all rules should be discussed at the beginning of the year and revisited throughout the year when necessary. The repercussions of breaching a certain rule should be included in the class rules. Such rules should not conflict with the school policy, not inflict an injustice, and should be stated positively wherever possible (Coetzee & Mienie, 2013:77).

## 2.10.4 Proactive Approach

According to Chonco (2019:13), using a proactive positive disciplinary strategy necessitates the establishment of a positive, supportive and child-friendly teaching and learning environment that recognises and supports the rights of the learner. This environment is also distinguished by explicit rules, well-defined procedures and a functional structure. The teacher should attempt to respect and encourage the learners' right to be heard and participate in decision-making by providing them with equal opportunities to share their ideas. Class sessions addressing issues of behaviour and discipline should be held on a regular basis in an environment that is free from threat and conflict. According to Rampa (2020:20), while using a positive disciplinary approach, the teacher should try to create harmonious relationships with learners, which would give each student a sense of safety.

According to the DoE (2000:12), to promote sound learner discipline and productive school environment, teachers should take an active role by, which requires them to:

- ensure that they are ready for lessons;
- implement self-discipline;
- have extra or additional work available;
- make sure that educational activities occur on daily basis;
- ensure that learners are motivated;
- create space for resolving conflicts;
- affirm learners; and
- create acceptable relationships with learners.

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According to Rohman (2018:18), it is important for teachers to keep learners safe and alert. He further stressed that when encouraging self-control, teachers must:

- put more effort to create supportive, conducive, calm as well as affectionate setting;
- display an honest interest in the life of every individual or learner;
- emphasise equity; and
- use agreeable learning tasks.

It is important to encourage learners to have confidence and behave properly because they are able and seek to do so, not because of the penalties that may result from poor discipline.

## 2.11 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO POOR DISCIPLINE

According to Belle (2018:35), bad parenting styles, the phenomenon of working parents, unsuccessful parental discipline, broken families, the learners' state of mind, the teachers' state of mind, the principal's lack of experience, power and leadership skills in disciplining learners in schools, and peer group pressure among learners contribute to poor learner discipline in schools. Other issues include parents' disengagement and children's failure to account for their academic and behavioural attitudes, as well as the teachers' lack of power to enforce discipline.

Some factors that contribute to poor discipline are peer pressure, teachers' unruly behaviour, the non-attendance of extracurricular exercises, the absence of counselling services, and a breakdown in communication between parents and teachers (Belle, 2018:36). According to Oloyede and Adesina (2013:139), the key institution that affects a child's behaviour is the family, and the primary causes of learners' misbehaviour in school are located inside the households. Incorrect parenting methods, working parents, ineffective parental punishment, and broken families are the root causes of student misbehaviour in school (Oloyede & Adesina, 2013:140). Furthermore, Porumbu and Necşoi (2013:707) assert that the way parents behave, particularly the use of verbal and nonverbal discipline, has a significant impact on the learners' behavioural difficulties.

**2.11.1 Bullying**

Bullying is defined as the purposeful and repeated use of poisonous words, deeds, or other behaviour by children against others (Neser, 2005:215). Bullying in all forms (physical, verbal, emotional, social, and psychological) is prevalent in South African schools (Northmore & Potterton, 2003:4). Learners who have been bullied struggle academically and socially because they are humiliated and isolated from their peers. Bullying has been identified as the leading cause of student suicide, and many school officials see a link between bullying, disrespectful behaviour and teen suicide.

Manyike (2014:55) divides bullying into two types: bullying by a student and bullying by a teacher. She found that students were bullied by their peers at school. Bullying appeared to occur most frequently when teachers were absent from their lessons, at recess and in the restrooms. She stated that bullying from learner to learner can take many forms, including direct physical touching such as improper touching, openly made sexual comments, taunting, beating, lying about others and fighting for the attention of the other gender. She argued that both boys and girls are bullied in schools, but that girls are bullied at a higher rate than boys. This is because girls are the physically inferior gender, and as such, they are bullied by both male and female classmates (Manyike 2014:55).

Bullying is manifested by the following characteristics:

- Intention to do harm to others;
- Intention to enjoy teasing others;
- Overpowering the victim due to the bully's age, size, strength, or gender;
- Failing to provide adequate support for the victim;
- Failure to report incidents of bullying;
- The victim's prolonged suffering as a result of bullying; and
- The victim's disengagement from school exercises or activities (Neser, 2005:220).

**2.11.2 Violence**

The increase in violence in South African schools has prompted experts to declare that schools are swiftly becoming breeding grounds for violence, not just among students but

also between teachers and students (Ncontsha & Shumba, 2013:2). School violence encompasses a wide range of activities committed within and outside the school grounds, such as sexual assault of students and staff, bullying, drug use and theft. Poverty increases classroom violence because if a student is hungry, they may steal other learners' lunch or money, and if a victim discovers who stole her lunch, the perpetrator may beat her, leading to assault (Ncontsa & Shumba 2013:6). Furthermore, Senoti (2003:40) recognises the following risk factors as major contributors to the prevalence of school viciousness: access to weapons and drugs, a lack of family solidity or stability, a lack of financial opportunity, failed parenting and a lack of community support.

## 2.12. THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

Learner discipline is crucial because it teaches learners how to distinguish between acceptable and inappropriate behaviour and equips them with the skills to manage their own behaviour in schools. According to Porumbu and Necşoi (2013:706), learner discipline exhibits character and appropriate behaviour, preserves order and stability and helps learners become well-balanced members of society.

While discipline is a complicated phenomenon, it supports all aspects of school life and is recognised as a major indicator of a good school (Squelch, 2006:249). It is critical to maintain order and good behaviour always in order for effective teaching and learning to occur. Learner discipline is crucial in schools because it sets the tone for an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning because students study to the best of their abilities in a safe and appropriate atmosphere (Sekhonyane, 2018). Discipline in schools emphasises the learners' readiness or capacity to respect authority and follow school rules and regulations in order to maintain a high standard of conduct needed for effective teaching and learning. It is critical for students to follow the rules and procedures to create an orderly and conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, a lack of principles in communities, not having people that one can look up to and being exposed to criminal activities also encourages a lack of values between learners (Kambuga, 2017:25). Learners with no morals tend not to comply with the rules and have behavioural challenges. Morals give direction when an individual is unsure of

the option to take. Choices and morals influence learners' conclusions, for instance, to comply with the established rules in a classroom. Values are basic convictions, which act as common rules of behaviour, and guidelines for specific activities (Kambuga, 2017:25). A lack of morals or values in schools largely contributes to poor learner discipline.

Effective school discipline fosters a pleasant and secure educational environment for students, teachers and non-teaching personnel. Learners perform best when they are in a safe and healthy atmosphere. Good discipline is one of the fundamental characteristics that contribute to students' academic progress (Jinot, 2018:33). Student discipline affects the learning process and assists teachers in improving student behaviour. Maintaining good discipline in schools is critical to ensuring effective teaching and learning (Tlhapi, 2015:16).

Discipline is a vital attribute for teachers and students to work effectively in a school. It is a means for advancing students' "academic, individual, and social development" (Rohman, 2018:18). Discipline in the home is inextricably linked to a family's culture and customs (Malcom, 2018:169). For example, the Spartans in Ancient Greece believed in a strong physique, and physical punishment was viewed as a method of reinforcing the body to develop character (Singo, 2017:5). Many American, Israeli, and Muslim families use physical punishment on their children because they believe that it is useful for preserving good behaviour within the family (Mz, 2018:1). In a Russian culture, parents feel that boys should be physically and emotionally stronger than girls; hence, they use harsher forms of discipline, including corporal punishment on boys than on girls (Apalkova et al., 2018:314).

According to Nigrini (2020:7), using positive discipline to teach learners cultivates the development of lifetime skills connected with the ideals of self-esteem, empathy and respect for others and their rights. A positive discipline method not only helps children grow holistically, but it also enhances the school environment by removing fear, teaching children self-control and fostering increased interest, joy and involvement in learning.

## 2.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of contemporary disciplinary issues as well as concerns encountered by teachers and discipline strategies that could be used in schools. It highlighted some strategies that can be used to sustain discipline without resorting to physical punishment. It further explored the causes of ill-discipline such as bad parenting styles, dysfunctional families and a breakdown in communication between parents and teachers. The challenges of unruly and problematic learners that teachers encounter in schools were outlined.

Behaviourism and choice of learning theory that underpin the study were explored and the needs of individuals within an educational setting were highlighted. These theories have an influence on learner discipline within the school, as well as some techniques that can increase quality teaching and learning. The chapter also explored the South African legal framework on corporal punishment, disciplinary methods and ways of handling learner discipline. Punitive measures such as detention and suspension, also known as preventative measures for ensuring positive discipline were explained as stated in SASA. To gain empirically grounded understanding of what perpetuates learner indiscipline in schools, qualitative research methodology and associated data collection processes and instruments are presented in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 reviewed literature on learner discipline and established the theoretical framework that serves as the study's foundation. The chapter presented a critical examination of learner discipline in schools and investigated ways that teachers might use to preserve learner control without resorting to corporal punishment. It also explored the term "discipline", described elements that contribute to bad discipline, several types of discipline issues, and some disciplinary tactics used by teachers in schools. It also elucidated the differences between discipline and punishment.

The research design and methodology are presented in this chapter. It includes a brief explanation or overview of the following subheadings: research paradigm, research design, research technique, sampling and data generating methods, data analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, study limits and a chapter summary.

## 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

The term paradigm is derived from Greek and meaning pattern (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26) and has been extensively defined by different academics. For example, paradigm is defined as "a way of seeing the world that frames a research topic" and determines how researchers think about the topic (Hughes, 2010:35). According to Fraser and Robinson (2004:59), a paradigm is "a set of beliefs about how certain issues exist and a set of agreements on how such issues can be investigated". As consequence, this implies that people have a unique perspective on the world. As a result, since individuals perceive the world differently, it follows that researchers perceive the world differently as well, and researchers' perspectives are impacted by study technique and research methodologies (Maree, 2017:18). Paradigms are also defined as "sets of beliefs that guide action" and are present in every educational studies (Brooke, 2013:430).

According to Zulu (2007: 49), paradigms are patterns or models of perception that shape our understanding of the universe in relation to ourselves and people, we communicate with in our settings. This indicates that the research takes place inside a defined and

chosen research paradigm, which gives direction on the selection of relevant data to gather and procedures to use for data collection, analysis and interpretation. According to Neuman (2011:94), a paradigm is a complete ideology or framework that guides study and activity in a particular area. It encompasses a viewpoint on the nature of existence, both externally and internally from the perspective of the observer. In his view, this could be about what is known both outside and inside someone's understanding – a way of thinking about the type of knowledge that can be produced and the standards for proving it, along with a disciplined method for creating that knowledge.

### 3.2.1 Interpretivism

This research project used an interpretivist paradigm. This technique was deemed appropriate since it accepts participants' ideas in the form of conscious thinking (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010:36). The interpretivist approach is compatible with the debate between learner discipline and teacher authority because it allows participants to participate spontaneously and subjectively without prejudice (Marshall & Rossman, 2014:64).

According to Reeves and Hedberg (2019: 345), the "interpretivist" paradigm emphasises the need of contextualising analysis. The interpretative paradigm is concerned with understanding the world via the subjective experiences of humans. They use meaning-oriented techniques, such as interviewing or participant observation that rely on a subjective interaction between the researcher and the participants.

Cohen et al (2009: 28) adds that an interpretative paradigm recognises that truth is subjective since the researcher is a part of the society under consideration, and its organisations are viewed as a created social reality. That is, reality is created or produced by individuals who exist in their own social worlds. The role of the interpretative paradigm is to discover how diverse persons, whether acting independently or in groups, clarify the reality in which they live. The interpretive paradigm uses comprehension tactics by revealing the subjective interpretations that people place on their behaviours (Ibid.).

## 3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is described as a particular process or techniques used to recognise, choose, process and analyse information about a topic. It is an approach or global perspective that is worried with how the researcher can go about discovering what they accept to be true and familiar. It elucidates how a research should be conducted (Mukwambo, 2016:78). Terre Blanche et al. (2006: 278) add that methodology is a pragmatic procedure that leads to epistemology. It can be interpreted to mean that information can be gained when a plan to guide the acquisition of knowledge is followed. There are several points of view on the approach for gathering information or facts through research (ibid.).

### 3.3.1 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative approach was selected for this research considering that it needs in-depth information from participants, such as teachers, deputy principals and principals. The definition of qualitative research is "an approach for investigating and comprehending the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human issue" (Creswell, 2014:32).

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016:6), the goals of qualitative research are to uncover the significance of an event for the people who are engaged in it. Researchers are concerned in recognising how individuals explicate their own experiences, "how they manufacture their worlds, and what meaning they ascribe to their experiences" when conducting a qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:6).

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2013: 3-4) state that qualitative research "uses words as data... collected and analysed in a variety of ways." This is distinct from quantitative research, which examines the relationship between measurable variables in order to evaluate objective ideas. A qualitative study, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), has numerous distinguishing qualities or features. Foremost among these, the study's goal is to grasp people's experiences.

## 3.4 CASE STUDY DESIGN

A case study is described as a comprehensive examination of a single event rather than a comprehensive statistical survey (Shuttleworth, 2008:8). According to Rule and John (2011:13), a case study is a technique that provides crucial insights into unique conditions, events, organisations or people. It allows the researcher to focus and investigate a certain case extensively or comprehensively. The case study uses several data collection procedures, such as interviews, observations, and analysis of primary and secondary sources (ibid.).

White (2005:105) adds that in case study designs, the researcher thoroughly investigates a single case or phenomenon (the case), which can be either a bound method, a programme, an occasion, a task, an organisation, institution, or a set of people bounded by time and environment and context by using various sources of information found within the setting.

Furthermore, Kombo and Tromp (2006:72) agree that a case study is a method of organising educational data. Because the research was designed to collect educational data, a case study was chosen. The researcher selected the case study design after taking into consideration the objective and the end result of this study. It provided me with the opportunity to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the maintenance of effective learner punishment in Ekurhuleni primary schools.

## 3.5 SAMPLING

For this study, purposive sampling was chosen. This type of sampling entails the researcher using their discretion to pick a sample that is most beneficial to the study purpose. It is most commonly used in qualitative research, when the researcher seeks precise knowledge about a specific phenomenon rather than making statistical judgements (Bhandari, 2020: 17).

Purposive sampling is often referred to as judgement, selective or subjective sampling. It is a sampling approach in which a researcher uses his or her discretion in selecting individuals of the population to participate in the study. It is a non-probability sampling

approach in which the components picked for the test are chosen at the researcher's discretion. Many researchers feel that by using competent judgement, they may get a representative sample while saving time and money (Bhandari, 2020: 17).

My participants were selected according to the number of years in the field of education and I considered the proximity of their schools as this was conducive for me to visit their respective schools without travelling a long distance. Travelling expenses were also taken into consideration even though this did not prevent me from sampling the most suitable participants and schools. I opted to conduct this study at Ekurhuleni South primary schools as it is not far from my workplace to the selected schools.

The sources of data were three primary institutions. Amongst the primary institutions, the participants selected were as follows: the principal, deputy principal and a PL1 teacher. These participants were also part of the school discipline committee, were responsible for teacher and learner indiscipline problems at their institutions and responsible for ensuring that discipline policies were implemented.

Table 3.1: Selected primary schools at Ekurhuleni South District

| DISTRICT | SCHOOLS | PRINCIPALS | DEPUTY PRINCIPAL | TEACHERS | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | 01 | 01 | 01 | 03 |
| Ekurhuleni South | B | 01 | 01 | 01 | 03 |
| | C | 01 | 01 | 01 | 03 |
| | | 03 | 03 | 03 | 09 |

All three primary schools were situated at Katlehong South and Brackenhurst in the Ekurhuleni South Region and were within a radius of 10 kilometres from my workplace.

## 3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Focus-group and semi-structured interviews were used to acquire data from participants. Focus groups interviews enabled participants to share and compare their experiences and views. As De Vos et al. (2005:299) observe that focus groups are an effective means of investigating complex phenomena and uncovering the truth. The type of

communication used in focus groups can be categorised as interactive, where participants engage in open discussions, share perspectives and collectively contribute to the exploration of specific topics or research objectives (Morgan & Krueger, 1998:23).

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method used to collect qualitative data. An interviewer controls the discussion process and presents questions to the interviewee. Interviews are ideal data-collecting methods because they allow the researcher to get in-depth information about participants' ideas, beliefs, experiences and feelings (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2018:7). Face-to-face interviews were used in the study to gather information by directly talking with participants in an interview schedule.

The term "interview" refers to "a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the interviewee questions in order to collect data and learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the interviewee" (Maree, 2012:21). Semi-structured interviews allow for a variety of data collection methods from participants. It allows the researcher to identify fresh developing avenues of inquiry relevant to the topic being examined (Creswell, 2014: 190).

All participants were interviewed in semi-structured interviews since it was necessary to communicate with them in order to fully comprehend their experiences. I chose semi-structured interviews because they allowed me to interview the participants, hear about their viewpoints and gather additional information regarding preserving learner discipline in Ekurhuleni primary schools. To save time and to be able to revisit the interviews if required, they were recorded using a voice recorder.

### 3.6.1 Data Analysis

The data analysis used in this study was content analysis, which is defined as "a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012: 150). Content analysis in qualitative research involves systematically examining and interpreting the content of textual, visual or audio materials to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within the data (Krippendorff, 2018:403).

This method allows researchers to gain insights into the underlying meanings, societal influences and recurring concepts present in the collected materials. Formal content analysis is based on the subjective interpretation by the researcher. The participants were recorded using a voice recorder, and their comments were transcribed. This includes rereading the content to ensure comprehension. I looked through the full transcripts with the purpose of identifying the prevalent patterns, which were then highlighted and labelled. I grouped together all the phrases and terms that appeared to have commonalities. Each category was then divided into themes.

## 3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The research's trustworthiness is defined as the ability to be trusted and believed in, the quality of being transferable, the quality of being dependable, and the degree to which the research's conclusions can be validated. A research that is trustworthy, transferable, confirmable and dependable might be regarded and believable by a reader because of its use or significance. (Hammond & Wellington, 2013:147). These strategies boost the research's credibility. According to White (2005:205), the quality of being trusted or believed in is concerned with the quality of the study. To ensure that the study is of high quality and credible, the researcher must follow all necessary procedures before making any findings (White, 2005:203).

### 3.7.1 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the consistency and stability of the study's findings, ensuring that the research process and data analysis are conducted in a manner that allows for replication and verification of results. It emphasises the reliability and trustworthiness of the research outcomes over time and under similar conditions (White, 2005:206). According to Elo et al. (2014:2), dependability is the measure of the extent to which research study could be repeated by a separate researcher and reveal the same findings.

### 3.7.2 Confirmability

The term "confirmability" refers to the degree to which the findings are devoid of bias. Shenton (2004:72) proposed that certain procedures be used to ensure that the findings are based on the experiences and views of participants. Confirmability is created when the data accurately matches the information provided by the participants and when findings are made that were not anticipated by the inquisitor (Polit & Beck, 2014: 24).

McEwen (2007: 73) added that confirmability is a measure of how effectively the study conclusions are supported by the data gathered. This characteristic of credibility is concerned with the association between the data and the findings. For this reason, when contemplating confirmability, a researcher ought to assess whether their findings are exclusively formed by information gathered from participants, or whether the findings reflect researcher bias, motivation or other interests (McEwen, 2007:74).

The reader should be able to examine the data to ensure that the results or explanations are accurate. A researcher can boost confirmability by using an audit trail which involves using written field notes, memoranda, or extracts from a field diary to support the relationship between the data and conclusions (ibid.).

### 3.7.3 Credibility

Credibility refers to the veracity of the facts or participant viewpoints, as well as the researcher's explanation and description of them (Polit & Beck, 2012: 13). According to Tobin and Begley (2004: 388), credibility addresses the "fit" between respondents' opinions and the researcher's depiction of them. Internal validity assesses whether the study design, implementation and analysis effectively address the research questions without introducing any bias (De Vos et al, 2011:24). Internal validity needs to show that the data genuinely contributes to the understanding of a particular event or situation (Cohen et al., 2005:98). This study recorded reality through the eyes of participants, through the use of verbatim quotes from their interview transcripts and field notes. To achieve credibility, extensive time was spent at the sampled schools to ensure for successful data collection.

### 3.7.4 Transferability

The degree to which the findings of qualitative research may be generalised or transferred to different contexts or settings is referred to as transferability. The qualitative researcher can improve transferability by doing a good job of clarifying the research setting and the assumptions that underpinned the investigation (Trochim, 2015: 53). Singh (2013:202) agrees that transferability refers to the degree to which qualitative research findings may be shared or transferred to different contexts or settings. The researcher ensured transferability by providing detailed information on the processes followed in undertaking this study, which makes it possible for the research findings to be applicable to similar research populations in other contexts.

### 3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations encourage researchers to bear in mind that when doing their study, they are in fact accessing the personal spaces of their subjects. It poses a few ethical issues that should be discussed both during and after the research has been completed (Silverman, 2000: 201). Renuka and Jonathan (2015:40) assert that researchers must be informed about the ethical duties and the legal implications that come with acquiring and disclosing information in order to preserve the privacy and wellbeing of the participants.

### 3.8.1 Applications for Consent to Conduct the Research

The researcher forwarded an application to the university ethics committee for ethical clearance, and the Gauteng Department of Education, requesting permission to conduct research in primary schools of Ekurhuleni South District. Request letters were also sent to the principals of the sampled schools, requesting permission to conduct the research. The permission documents are included as Appendix A, C and D.

### 3.8.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to accessing and sharing individual information only as approved by the individual concerned, and it typically includes assuring participants that their information will not be accessed by anyone other than the researchers (Felzmann, 2013:

20). According to Ellenchild (2000: 5), confidentiality is a mutual understanding between two or more people in which the sender believes that their information will not be revealed and the recipient promises to safeguard and not release the information supplied.

Resnik (2015:n.p.) adds that participants' confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained at all costs. The participants should be aware of the aims and purpose of the research, as well as what will be done with the data obtained. The assurance extends beyond safeguarding their names to include the avoidance of using self-recognition statements and information. Anonymity and secrecy are important steps in protecting people from potential harm or risk (Berg, 2017:23). The researcher assured participants that they would remain anonymous by not divulging their personal information or identities and the data they shared.

### 3.8.3 Anonymity

Anonymity implies that that no one, including the researcher, can associate the participant's answers with their identity (Creswell, 2007:n.p). The anonymity and privacy of study participants should be protected, and individual information about participants should be kept secret and secure. Researchers should follow the rules of current data protection and privacy regulations and consider whether it is appropriate or convenient to collect specific types of confidential data (Conelly, 2014:55). The identities of the participants were anonymised by using pseudonyms. Accordingly, the participants who took part in this study were informed that all the data they supplied throughout the interviews would be used solely for research purposes.

### 3.8.4 Respect for Persons

Respect for persons is an elemental principle in research which focuses on protecting an individual's autonomy and rights and includes broader, well-understood, ethical obligations to regard individuals' rights, needs, interests and feelings. Respect means that research participants ought to be treated as independent operators meaning that they are not dependent on anyone, are self-controlled and competent to make choices for themselves as long as they are given adequate information. This principle forms the basis

for informed consent (Creswell 2007:59). Respecting an individual ensures that their personal integrity is appreciated (Rivera et al., 2005:88).

### 3.8.4 Informed Consent

The term consists of two important components, 'informed' and 'consent', both of which require careful consideration. Participants should be thoroughly aware of what will be asked of them, how the data will be used, and what (if any) outcomes may be expected. Participants should provide explicit written permission to participate in the research, including understanding their rights to access their information and the ability to withdraw at any time. The informed consent procedure may be viewed as a formal agreement between the researcher and the subjects. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:47).

The concept of informed consent is founded on the concepts of individual autonomy and beneficence. In general, it means that researchers are committed to giving all the necessary information to participants about the study's purpose, duration, techniques, risks and rewards, while participants have the absolute freedom to withdraw at any moment (Marzano, 2012:443).

Moreover, the method of getting consent comprises of the following: consent ought to be granted unreservedly (voluntary), subjects ought to comprehend what is being requested of them, and a person who is included should be capable of providing consent. This implies that in order to take part in a research study, participants must be adequately informed about the research, understand the material, and have the freedom to decide whether to participate or not (Conelly, 2014: 54). The researcher provided the participants with a form to sign to give their consent to participate in the study.

### 3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter summarised the study methodology, research design, sample and sampling processes, data collection methodologies, data analysis and ethical issues. To ensure the legitimacy and authenticity of this research to other researchers, issues of trustworthiness such confidentiality and anonymity were clarified. The qualitative technique was used in this study, and the motivation for doing so was explained. The data

gathering approach used for this study was a semi-structured interview. In Chapter 4, the data gathered through the qualitative approach and the findings are presented.

# CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an overview of the research paradigm, research methodology, research design, research methodologies, ethical issues and other strategies used to improve research quality. This chapter discusses the outcomes of a study that included interviews with twelve teachers from Schools A through C. They were questioned to understand about the problems they encountered and their role in maintaining good learner discipline at Ekurhuleni South primary schools in South Africa, Gauteng province. Data from all of the selected participants was gathered through face-to-face interviews. In this chapter, data was analysed and presented using content analysis. The participants' responses were recorded, transcribed and also classified into themes.

## 4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

This section provides biographical information on the research sample, such as gender, age, experience and school, as shown in Table 4.1 below. The study's participants were three primary schools in Brackenhurst, Ekurhuleni South. To protect their identities, the three schools are referred to as School A, School B and School C. Three participants were chosen from each school: the principal, the deputy principal and a PL1 teacher.

All the selected teachers had teaching experience ranging from 6 to 33 years, and their ages varied from 27 to 58. The participants comprising three men and six women were picked based on their teaching qualifications and gender. Schools were chosen based on the methods they used to maintain effective learner discipline in order to promote successful teaching and learning. The profiles of all the participants are displayed below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Profiles of participants

| SCHOOL | NO | PARTICIPANTS | GENDER | EXPERIENCE | AGE | CODE |
|--------|----|--------------|--------|------------|-----|------|
| | 1 | Principal | Female | 25 years | 49 years | SAP1 |
| SCHOOL A | 2 | Deputy principal | Female | 20 years | 45 years | SADP1 |
| | 3 | PL1 teacher | Female | 12 years | 37 years | SAT1 |
| | 4 | Principal | Female | 33 years | 56 years | SBP2 |
| SCHOOL B | 5 | Deputy principal | Male | 29 years | 48 years | SBDP2 |
| | 6 | PL1 teacher | Female | 11 years | 39 years | SBT2 |
| | 7 | Principal | Male | 31 years | 58 years | SCP3 |
| SCHOOL C | 8 | Deputy principal | Male | 26 years | 50 years | SCDP3 |
| | 9 | PL1 teacher | Female | 6 years | 27 years | SCT3 |

## 4.3 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

This section presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews. The researcher asked different questions to gather data from nine participant teachers.

Table 4.2: Classification of themes

| Themes | Sub-themes |
|--------|------------|
| Theme 1: Effective discipline should be maintained in Ekurhuleni primary schools | Sub-theme 1:1<br>How effective learner discipline be maintained |
| | Sub-theme 1:2<br>Learner discipline policy and code of conduct |
| | Sub-theme 1:3<br>Learner discipline committee |
| | Sub-theme 1:4<br>Factors contributing to poor learner discipline |
| | Sub-theme 1:5<br>The role of a teacher in terms of learner discipline |
| Theme 2: Discipline interpretation by teachers | Sub-theme 2:1<br>Difference between discipline and punishment |
| | Sub-theme 2:2<br>Abolishment of corporal punishment |
| | Sub-theme 2:3 |

| | Learner discipline cases likely to occur |
| --- | --- |
| | Sub-theme 2:4<br>Frustrated teachers who are struggling to maintain learner discipline |
| Theme 3: The importance of learner discipline in the process of learning | Sub-theme 3:1<br>Importance of learner discipline in the process of learning |
| | Sub-theme 3:2<br>Educational programmes |
| | Sub-theme 3:3<br>DoE's assistance |
| Theme 4: Discipline strategies used by teachers | Sub-theme 4.1<br>Factors that teachers should consider when disciplining learners |
| | Sub-theme 4:3<br>Discipline strategies used by teachers |
| | Sub-theme 4:3<br>Reward good behaviour |

## 4.3.1 Theme 1: How Can Effective Discipline Be Maintained in Ekurhuleni Primary Schools?

This theme discusses how teachers in Schools A to C explained how effective discipline could be maintained. The theme also elucidated the part that teachers play with regard to maintaining learner discipline and elicited their experiences in this regard.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: How can effective discipline be maintained

The researcher posed the above-mentioned question. The goal of this question was to determine that teachers possess the similar comprehension on how effective discipline can be maintained in schools. The sub-theme explored how effective learner discipline can be maintained and participants stated below.

SCT3 proclaimed that:

*At my school, we have a good system where learners get merits, if they do something good, and a demerit, if they do something wrong, like homework not done, disruptive behaviour and fighting. If they get 10 demerits, they have to sit in detention on a Friday, and if they get 10 merits, they get free civvies where they are allowed to wear whatever they want on a Friday. To us that really works as it motivates learners to want to do better.*

SBT2 divulged that:

*Firstly, you need to know your children and where they come from. Then you need to explain what is expected of them and specify the boundaries. Lastly, it is important that you become consistent with your boundaries* (SBT2.)

SAT3 responded as follows:

*In my short experience, maintaining learner discipline requires respect. As a teacher, you should respect learners; they should see that respect and they will reciprocate it. Children must know that for every action, there is a consequence, whether it is good or bad. We maintain discipline by having and following rules.*

The participants presented their perspectives and experiences on how learner discipline can be maintained in schools. They indicated that there is a need to have a system in place where learners get a merit if they do something good and a demerit if they do something wrong, like homework not done or written, disruptive behaviour and fighting. If they get 10 demerits, they have to sit in detention on a Friday and if they get 10 merits, they can be rewarded with a day on which they are allowed to wear whatever they want on a Friday.

With reference to the above discussion, Nazike (2017: 465) and Jinot (2020:120) assert that amongst the techniques that teachers can use to sustain effective discipline is a point system, which focuses on rewarding good conduct and penalising bad conduct. In practice, in January at the beginning of the year, learners may start having a certain amount of points, and when they misbehave, then those points could be deducted.

Alternatively, learners could start the year without any points, and as they continue to behave in a correct manner, then they earn points. In such a system, good behaviour or conduct is rewarded.

The DoE (2000:25) stipulates that small sanctions can be imposed for level 1 misconduct, which is not that significant, as it includes transgressions such as coming late to class, skipping classes, failing to write class and home activities, violating classroom rules and instructions and being untrustworthy.

4.3.1.2 Sub-Theme 1.2: Learner discipline policy

When the interviews were conducted with teachers, the researcher anticipated that they would describe the learner discipline policies that they used in their respective schools to maintain effective learner discipline.

SAP1 communicated as follows:

> *The learner discipline policy gives you various levels and forms of discipline to monitor. You will have from your least serious to your more serious disciplinary issues to deal with. The learners understand what levels we are dealing with, when we record levels in the discipline book or the behaviour file. Once this is done, then they are informed about the form of discipline level that is issued to them depending on the behaviour they are showing. The behaviour file also specifies the discipline policy that we follow, and the consequences that will happen if a learner does not obey the rules in a specific behaviour.*

SPB2 proclaimed:

> *We follow the guidelines from the Gauteng DoE as well as the DBE regarding the learner discipline policy. From our learner discipline policy, we have developed our learner code of conduct that flows from it. Our learner code of conduct addresses every possible problem or disciplinary case that may occur at school. We tried to cover that in our discipline policy. It is very detailed; therefore, we follow the prescribed guidelines we received from the DoE. We make sure that this is*

*captured in our learner discipline policy because I think the Department is strict in terms of how learner policy and learner discipline should be conducted.*

According to the participants' responses, the schools followed the discipline policy to maintain learner discipline. Mayworm and Sharkey (2014:693) agree that school disciplinary ethics and procedures have a tremendous impact on learners as well as school operations, and not only help to maintain discipline but also improve performance in the classroom.

SBP also indicated that they followed a code of conduct to address possible situations or problems that might occur at school. This is in line with Section 8 of SASA, which specifies that an SGB must create a code of conduct for learners after consulting with learners, parents and educators, but Section 8(1) states that all learners attending a school are obligated to abide by its code of conduct. The provision also states that the Minister may develop recommendations for the SGB to consider when establishing a code of conduct for its school. In accordance with this requirement, the then-Minister of Education, Prof Sibusiso Bengu, released the Guidelines for Governing Bodies to Consider in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners in 1998. These recommendations aim to ensure that the standards of behaviour in schools adhere to the Constitution and protect the rights of learners.

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Learner discipline committee

A disciplinary committee is designed to provide impartial hearings on significant discipline matters, subject wrongdoers to corrective measures, suspend or propose expulsion for unruly students. Every student must sign a statement to uphold the code of behaviour. A code of conduct encourages correct and good behaviour and establishes norms for constructive discipline. However, it also addresses negative discipline, such as undesirable behaviour and disagreement, and gives solutions to such occurrences. Disciplinary procedures are designed to develop and maintain a well-disciplined school environment by prohibiting and punishing improper behaviour while also encouraging the perpetrators to modify their behaviour (Franklin & Harrington, 2019:1).

Moreover, Coetzee and Mienie (2013:93) contend that, by embracing an acceptable disciplinary approach, teachers can fulfil their role, which requires them to advocate and watch over human rights. This can happen by initiating an acceptable discipline strategy in a school or classroom that necessitates a strong human rights moral foundation (Du Preez & Roux, 2010:13, 24).

The teachers in this study stated the following regarding the learner discipline committees, as well as how the committee assisted in terms of with the maintenance of learner discipline:

SCP3 articulated that:

> *The discipline committee comes together to discuss different disciplinary issues. You know, learners change every time, therefore, you need to look at the consequences that can be followed. You should ask yourself questions like: What methods will work? How can we change our measures and our procedures to make the school function more effectively? How can we ensure that we do not have a lot of discipline issues? We discussed such topics and how to follow up on discipline issues.*

SBP2 disclosed,

> *A discipline committee consists of me, the deputy principal, one of our teachers as well as the SGB members. Typically, it relies with the situation and the capability of the learner involved. If it is a Grade 7 learner, then a Grade 7 teacher will be involved. Essentially, the teacher of a grade involved will serve on that specific committee. We have discipline committees where we have meetings to discuss our activities and plans, how discipline should be conducted and what should be done. So, yes, we have a discipline committee.*

The quotations above reveal that teachers from various schools understood the importance of having a learner discipline committee as it plays an important role in maintaining learner discipline and ensuring that learner discipline policy and disciplinary measures are followed and implemented correctly.

4.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Factors that are contributing to poor learner discipline

This section presents the variables that lead to lack of learner discipline. When learners spend too much time doing nothing in the classroom, they tend to be frustrated. Since they have a lot of spare time, they begin to misbehave. Poor learner discipline can also be influenced by one's family background, and most misbehaviour can be attributed to the typical family lifestyle. The participants in this research stated the following about the factors that contributed to poor learner discipline:

SADP1 shared:

> *I think, there are lots of factors because of the times we live in, particularly poor parenting and a shortage of structural punishment at home. We exist in different times in South Africa where social media is widespread, and where and children see undisciplined people on TV. This is not ideal for them and we have many social problems.*

SBT2 commented on this issue as follows:

> *The biggest cause of learners' ill-discipline is emotional difficulties. A child cannot concentrate, and they behave badly if they have emotional difficulties. Another main cause is that they have never been taught how to behave appropriately.*

SCT3 revealed that:

> *I think disciplinary problems crop up when your class is boring. The second one, for me, it is when the children are not stimulated. Also, when you do not know your content as a teacher, learners' behavioural problems often occur. I mean, if you do not know content, you do not know how to deliver it effectively, then you will get poor discipline. The other issue is favouritism, when children feel like you favour others. In such a scenario, there is no need for them to respect you.*

SAT1 reported that:

*The problem is that teachers do not follow the same rules every day. As a teacher, if one day you say something is okay, and the next day you disapprove of the same thing, it confuses learners. To them, they see that as a gap and then they will take chances. Teachers need to be very strict and consistent and make sure that all learners are on the same page.*

SBDP2 affirmed that:

*I think this is caused by an absence of appropriate teacher training, and an absence of consistency. Teachers like that are not consistent in disciplining learners, which causes a lot of problems. However, more than anything else, I think proper training is lacking.*

The participants' responses confirm what Belle (2018:35) identified as the contributing factors to poor learner discipline, namely inappropriate parenting styles, the phenomenon of working guardians, unsuccessful parental discipline, the broken family, the troubled learners' state of mind, and the unstable teachers' state of mind. According to Belle, additional contributory factors include inexperience from the principal, power struggles and management skills in punishing learners at schools, and peer influence. Other factors include parental disengagement; unfavourable academic and behavioural attitudes among children; teachers' lack of power to maintain discipline; teachers' unruly behaviour; non-attendance at extracurricular activities; the absence of counselling services; and poor of communication between parents and teachers (Belle, 2018:36).

From the participants' responses, it appears that some had similar views while others had different perspectives on the factors that contributed to poor learner discipline. Consequently, some participants mentioned lack of proper training and a lack of consistency when maintaining learner discipline, while most of participants highlighted poor parenting skills and a lack of structural discipline at home as the contributory factors to poor learner discipline. This shows that through their upbringing, parents have a big impact on children's discipline at home. In turn, this affects how such learners behave in

school and it becomes difficult for teachers to control learners without proper parental guidance.

4.3.1.5 Sub-theme 1.5: The role of a teacher in learner discipline

Teachers play an important role in supporting schools in improving learner discipline, learner performance and educational outcomes in accordance with the strategic goals of the schools. They also help to create and administer school policies. They should also ensure that classrooms are well-organised, safe and conducive to effective teaching and learning. The following statements were made by the teachers in this study on their involvement in learner discipline in their individual schools.

SCT3 divulged the following:

> *We possess a very important part in learner discipline, as we also act as parents while learners are at school because they are in our care and we should look after them. We need to teach them what to do and what not to do. So, it is important for the teacher to set a good example and to have clear rules for the class to follow. If other teachers can follow this, there can be unity in schools.*

SAT1 declared that:

> *I think the part that a teacher plays is very important in discipline because as a teacher delivers content and should develop a learning-friendly school atmosphere. Therefore, if a class is conducive to learning because of good discipline, effective learning can take place. However, if there are discipline issues, there will be no effective learning. A teacher's responsibility is to ensure that discipline is properly and consistently maintained in the classroom.*

SBT2 indicated,

> *It is our role to teach them subject content, but you can only teach it when you have taught them how to be disciplined because a child requires to be disciplined with a purpose to learn.*

SADP1 stated:

*I oversee discipline at our school, nut I am not the first in line, and I am not a post level 1 teacher. However, when discipline problems get out of hand, they get passed on to me. So, if there are children that we have tried to work with and it has not worked, then I get a call or they avail themselves, and then I will handle it at a higher level of the school.*

SBDP2 stated that:

*My responsibilities include monitoring learner discipline through D6 plus, and I inform parents about their children's behaviour. Afterwards, this is recorded in our discipline book and from the districts plus, we print out notifications to parents to notify them about the learner's misbehaviour. Together with guardians or parents, we then indicate whether children should go through detention or we should just have class detention. By doing so as the deputy principal, I'm trying to make sure that this is a disciplined school. As I said in response to your first question, where there is no discipline, there is no learning. So, that's my responsibility in terms of maintaining discipline and making sure that discipline prevails in our school.*

The findings above support Chonco's (2019:13) claim that a teacher's role is to ensure the implementation of a proactive and positive disciplinary approach, which necessitates the creation of a positive, supportive and child-friendly teaching and learning environment that recognises and promotes the learner's rights. This environment is also distinguished by explicit rules, well-defined procedures and a functional structure. The educator should endeavour to respect and encourage the learners' right to be heard and participate in decision-making by providing them with equal opportunities to share their ideas.

Furthermore, the participants expressed their opinions regarding the role of a teacher in learner discipline. SCT3 and the SAT1 stated that they played an important role in learner discipline as they acted in loco parentis and always ensured that discipline was constantly maintained in their schools.

SBT2 and SAT1 asserted that their role was to know the subject content and how to deliver it competently. These findings reveal that teachers play a vital part in making sure that students behave properly, focus on their studies and learn in a safe setting suitable for educating as well as learning. In addition, the teachers' part is to inculcate acceptable behaviours, and guide and support learners. They should create a stress-free environment, plan properly, mould learners' character, enhance their motivation and assist them to learn good values and morals.

**4.3.2 Theme 2: Teachers' Understanding of Discipline**

This theme presents different perspectives on how discipline was interpreted by teachers. It is imperative for teachers to comprehend what discipline is as this can enable them to administer or apply proper discipline procedures and strategies. As part of their core duties, they should interpret the discipline concept correctly and be able to distinguish between discipline and punishment.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme: 2.1 Difference between discipline and punishment

This sub-theme discusses the difference between discipline and punishment, since it is critical for teachers to comprehend and distinguish between these two. Punishment involves the use of violence aimed to make a child encounter torment; however this is not acceptable as they should not inflict harm in order to rectify or control the learner's conduct. This includes spanking, slapping, grabbing, hitting and shoving a learner roughly (Straus, 2014: 4). Discipline is all about teaching learners reasonable or acceptable conduct and maintaining moral values and standards (Venter & Van Niekerk, 2011:251). The participants in this study responded as follows:

SCT3 reported thus:

> *Basically, I think punishment causes a child or anyone to suffer. It means ill-treating or administering punishment in a way that a child or a parent suffers. However, in our classrooms, we do things right. Therefore, discipline is more than learning the practice of how to behave in a particular setting. So, that is the distinction for me, which means punishment can come in the form of drastic measures such as physical*

*abuse, spanking and inflict pain, while if you are disciplining a child, trying to teach them how to follow the rules, or how to behave in a particular way, you develop a healthy relationship and set clear expectations around the behaviour.*

Furthermore, SBT2 shared,

*My view on this is that discipline is when you try to teach a child correct behaviour, and there are consequences if the behaviour is not correct. Punishment is the consequences that they get when their behaviour has been incorrect.*

Commenting on the same subject, SAT1 indicated,

*Punishing a child is to have certain measures that require them to put time to serve, for example, in my class. In discipline, we have a certain system of merits and demerits that we use to discipline children. If they do something wrong, like not doing homework, whatever they do not do, or do, there is a code or penalty for that. Again, when they have a certain amount, they have detention that they have to serve. But punishment is something different.*

Masitsa (2008:265) confirmed the participants' responses expressed above and asserted that "Discipline means appropriate behaviour, compliance with established behavioural standards and norms." It emphasises correction and education above punishment. It seeks to educate students to comprehend and respect social rules both in and out of the classroom, without resorting to physical or emotional aggression. It emphasises educating children to do the right thing rather than penalising them for doing the wrong thing. Meanwhile, punishment is defined as "an act of punishing or a penalty that causes pain on someone who has to endure the results of the offence for the sake of preserving the controllable and responsible society of the school" (Masitsa, 2008:265). Furthermore, punishment is defined as the use of violence against a learner.

All the participants gave similar responses in terms of in distinguishing between discipline and punishment. Participants 1, 2 and 3 at Schools A, B and C explained that discipline is when a teacher or elder wants to teach a child correct behaviour, while punishment causes a learner or someone to suffer. This finding shows that teachers are cognisant of

the difference between discipline and punishment. Hence, this could enable them to make better choices when they are required to discipline learners.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme: 2.2: Abolishment of corporal punishment

This sub-theme concentrates on the thoughts and experiences of participants about the abolition of physical punishment. Teachers are not permitted to physically discipline students since corporal punishment is prohibited, as this violates the SASA and the Constitution. According to both laws, no one may apply physical punishment to a student at a school, as this is a serious offence.

Corporal punishment as a disciplinary technique is prohibited by Section 10 of SASA (RSA, 1996a). However, others argue that the prohibition on physical punishment has a negative impact on school discipline. Section 8(1) of SASA (RSA, 1996a:8), on the other hand, states that discipline should be sustained in school so that teaching and learning may take place without disruption. Participants in the study commented as follows about the abolition of corporal punishment:

SCT3 stated that:

> *I think it was a good stance because we live in a violent society. I do not think violence is a solution to a lot of problems we face. For me, it has a long-term effects and perpetuates violence. Again, as the saying goes, violence begets violence. For me, if you physically assault a child, destroy their dignity and humiliate them, how can you encourage learning the next day? You know, the prohibition of physical assault was a good move, and I am totally against it. You cannot rule a class out of fear. My motto is: learning is fun. So, if I am going to assault a child, make a tense atmosphere, then expect them to write a test within the same environment where I am perpetuating these kinds of acts, that does not work for me. So, I think the abolition of punishment was a very good stance.*

Expressing similar sentiments to those above, SBT2 articulated:

*Corporal punishment had its place in the past, and I am not so sure how effective it was. However, because of human nature, some people abuse it. So just to make it general, punishment should not be allowed.*

In contrast to the above, SAT1 highlighted,

*I believe it is a wonderful thing. I think there are other ways in which we can discipline learners. I have noted that children do not like to sit in detention on a Friday, so to them that is not very nice. So, yeah, that is my take on it.*

Stressing the deleterious effects of corporal punishment, SAP1 asserted:

*I think for a long time, teachers misused corporal punishment to punish learners and many learners have suffered because of this. I feel that it is a good thing that they have abolished corporal punishment because I do not think hitting a child teaches them how to behave. For me, corporal punishment is about control. It does not teach the child the right way to behave and what is expected of them in society.*

SAT2 articulated that:

*I have never believed that hitting a child is proper for learning. It instils fear in learners, and they are not free to approach you as a teacher because they are fearful. There should be other ways of dealing with learners who have problems. You can address issues with a child without hitting because hitting is violence. If we hit children we are teaching, then they assume that it is okay to hit another person. So, yeah, I think abandoning corporal punishment was the best thing that I could do because in my generation, teachers used to hit us, and I do not wish that upon anyone else.*

SBP2 affirmed that:

*I feel that the prohibition of physical punishment was a wise decision considering that you cannot teach a child values and morals with violence. The teacher should go to the brain, the heart and thinking, because we cannot solve problems with*

*violence. I think that is where we went wrong in the past. We have a situation where people are violent towards each other because it was socially acceptable at school, yet it is a place of teaching and learning. So, I think abolishing corporal punishment was the best thing to do.*

The above findings underscore that abolishing corporal punishment was a good decision, as all the participants strongly supported the decision and strongly expressed their dislike for it because they viewed it as an infringement of the learners' rights. A participant at School C indicated that violence begets violence and when a teacher physically assaults a child, they are violating their dignity and humiliating them, which makes it difficult to facilitate learning the next day. SAT1 and SBT2 stated that some issues can be addressed without hitting learners because doing so is violence. They added that a teacher cannot teach a child values and morals with violence, as this would encourage them to be violent citizens, which would lead to a violent society. The participants' responses confirm that corporal punishment teaches children to address issues with assault by modelling aggressive behaviour. It may also result in harassment, anger as well as other behavioural problems.

4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2:3 Common learner discipline cases in schools

This sub-theme presents learner discipline cases that are likely to occur at various schools. Participants were invited to share their learner discipline cases that are most likely to happen at their respective schools, and they responded as follows:

SBP1 highlighted that:

*We are actually very lucky to have very few discipline problems in this school. However, we do have cases of learners who are disrespectful towards our staff members. The most common cases are disrespect and stealing one or two things. That is basically the majority and of course the normal thing. However, the most common incidents include not doing homework and talking in class. Often, we have children getting out of their seats walking around in the classroom. That is basically what we struggle with. We do not have big problems like fighting, drugs and things like that. We are still very fortunate in this school.*

SAP1 expressed that:

> *During the first term, we had many learners who were not school ready, but they come to school. It is the five-year olds. It is actually Grade R learners who are in Grade 1. If a child is not school ready, they will tend to disrupt a classroom. The incidence of disruptive learners is common because after COVID, some learners have lost social contact with other people. Some of them cannot socially interact anymore. Therefore, you will find that disruptive* behaviours *are a problem and destructive.*

Lau (2018:21) confirmed the participants' responses stated above and identified some of the problems associated with learners' indiscipline such as disobedience to teachers, breach of the classroom order, bullying and other behavioural issues. A number of disciplinary issues from students have been documented in Malaysia. In this regard, Stones (2019: 22) observed that incidents of indiscipline in Malaysian schools included assaults on teachers; verbal abuse; using offensive language against teachers; sexual harassment; threat and intimidation of teachers and other students; possession of hazardous weapons; supplying or using illegal drugs; and adult intrusions into schools or classrooms with the intent of confronting teachers.

The findings above indicate that schools experience different discipline cases even though some of them are similar, such as disruptive learners, bullying, late coming, stealing, noise-making, peer pressure issues, failure to do homework, disrespect for teachers and bunking classes. Schools are subjected to learner ill-discipline as learners have lost their morals and values and are unruly and arrogant. They are more concerned with their basic rights and disregard their duties. One participant at School A highlighted that learners tended to disrupt classrooms because they have lost social contact with people due to COVID-19. However, a participant at School B indicated that they were actually lucky to have very few discipline problems. In view of this, they often dealt with minor cases such as disrespect for teachers and others and walking around the classrooms.

4.3.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Frustrated teachers who struggle to maintain learner discipline

This sub-theme presents how principals and deputy principals assisted frustrated teachers who were struggling to sustain learner punishment at school. Learner classrooms may be chaotic for some teachers; often the novice teachers feel like quitting because of being under immense pressure and failing to maintain learner discipline.

According to Makhasane and Chikoko (2016:2), the current scenario in South African schools implies that a lack of discipline and a rise in violence among students weakens teacher authority, resulting in poor learning and teaching. This has an impact on the lives and productivity of both teachers and students. Belle (2019:17) went on to say that a lack of discipline among students has resulted in the continuation of poor learning and teaching, which undermines teacher authority. As a result, teachers feel powerless to deal with disruptive students' behaviour and poor general discipline, leading to absolute disregard for teachers. Furthermore, keeping student discipline is one of the most challenging challenges that teachers face today, due to a high number of disruptive learners and a lack of alternative methods to corporal punishment. With reference to the above, participants (principals and deputy principals) shared their ways of assisting teachers as follows:

SBP2 disclosed:

> *We try to workshop our staff as often as we can, if we see that a staff member is struggling and getting very frustrated with a learner. We give very detailed guidelines of how to deal with specific learner problems and what needs to be done. We also have a specific line of command and protocol that we follow when it comes to learner discipline. So, personally, when I see there is a frustrated teacher, I usually have a one-on-one meeting with such a teacher and ask what the problem is. Afterwards, I try to use different strategies to solve those specific problems.*

SBDP2 revealed that:

> *We have run several workshops, where we try and educate teachers on how to maintain discipline in the classrooms.*

SAP1 highlighted that teachers should be supported in their endeavours thus,

> *I believe that it is critical for teachers to understand that they are never alone and that they do not need to live within a disruptive classroom. They should follow a discipline policy, which clearly states different levels of discipline and consequences. They should be advised that we are not on an island, they can go to their peers in the next classrooms to get assistance.*

SADP1 asserted that:

> *We have regular meetings in our grade where help each other. If there are discipline problems, we advise and support each other. We are there to help teachers as a member of the executive team and assist them to cope if they are not coping anymore. We have a system in place that starts with the teacher, then you go to the HoD, and to the deputy principal. So, if teachers are not coping, they are always welcome to our offices. They should indicate when they need help '. We might step in, call the parents, be there and support our teachers in that way.*

SCP3 reported that:

> *There is an HoD, your deputy principal and the principal. These teachers are there for protecting you, to support you and to make sure that we are all walking in the same line. So, I believe it is of paramount significance that teachers are continuously be encouraged that they are not alone. If they follow the process, they will see a difference because I think most of us want instant change. Sometimes it is a procedure and fair process that you need to follow so that you can see the improvement.*

The participants' responses above show that principals and deputy principals are always available to assist teachers who are frustrated and struggle with sustaining order in their

classes. In this context, SBDP2 asserted that they had an open-door policy where everyone is allowed to ask for help at any time. Moreover, SADP1 revealed that they had regular meetings where they advised and supported each other. Lastly, SBP2 indicated that they often tried conducted workshops for their staff members and gave them detailed guidelines on how to deal with specific learner problems.

### 4.3.3 Theme 3: The Importance of Learner Discipline in Learning

This theme discusses the reasons why good behaviour is important in the process of learning. Nowadays, teachers face chaotic classrooms where disruptive learners make it hard for them to carry out their everyday duties of teaching learners successfully as well as shaping their futures.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Importance of learner discipline in the process of learning

This sub-theme presents the participants' views regarding the significance of good behaviour in the process of learning. Good behaviour plays an important role at school as it assists learners to remain focused, learn optimally and achieve good academic results. Learners who know that they will be held accountable for their actions both within and outside the classroom tend to get better marks or scores on academic testing. Learner discipline helps learners to stay on task, limits distractions and improves the flow of information in the classroom. It develops a stress-free class that is suitable for optimal learning as well as teaching. In this regard, the participants responded as follows:

SAP1 responded that:

> *My view is that you cannot teach in a disorderly classroom; you cannot teach where learners are jumping all over, and they are on the desks. You cannot teach where learners are interrupting and disrupting your classroom while you are trying to teach because you are not teaching one person, you are teaching a class of 40. All these learners have an impact on the concentration of others. You cannot have effective education, where you have discipline problems.*

SBP2 expressed that:

*Without good behaviour learners cannot learn, if there is constant chaos in the classroom, most learners will suffer because of one or two learners who are not behaving. Effective teaching may occur in a suitable setting. ; It cannot happen in an environment where the scales and learners are uncontrollable, and Ill-disciplined. In such an environment, learning is not happening and teachers are wasting energy attempting to reprimand learners rather than teaching and facilitating learning. So, discipline is of paramount significance in the teaching process because without discipline, proper teaching cannot take place.*

SCT3 asserted that:

*I think discipline is central because that is the only way where learning process will be able to occur effectively. If you are constantly shouting and constantly disciplining learners during contact time, you lose that productivity time, and you cannot regain it. So, having a class that is disciplined means that you will reach your outcomes, and what you set out as a teacher. In such a scenario, both the learner and the teacher would have gained something within a classroom setting.*

SBT2 placed an emphasis on the significance of learner behaviour as follows:

*A child who cannot listen, cannot learn. So, we must teach them to listen. For you to be able to listen and respond meaningfully, they should be disciplined so that they can focus.*

SAT1 explained that:

*When learners are misbehaving, there will obviously be a lot of noise in class. They would not pay attention to what the teacher is stating and that would disturb their fellow children in class. They would not be capable to comprehend what is happening in class because of the noise and disruptions.*

The above excerpts agree with Sekhonyane's (2018:10) claim that learner discipline is critical in schools because it sets the tone for a conducive learning environment. He goes

on to say that learners learn to the best of their abilities in a safe and appropriate setting. Discipline in schools emphasises learners' readiness or capacity to respect authority and comply with school rules and regulations in order to maintain the high level of conduct necessary for efficient delivery of teaching and learning. It is critical for learners to follow the rules and procedures in order to create a disciplined and conducive learning environment.

Managing classroom discipline as well as order requires a healthy learning environment. Participants emphasised the need for learner discipline, stating that teaching and learning cannot take place in an unruly classroom. Learners cannot focus in a chaotic setting, and teachers are unable to fulfil their main roles as expected. In this regard, SCT3 emphasised that discipline is essential because it allows for successful teaching and learning. SBP2 emphasised that students cannot study if there is no discipline and if there is continual turmoil in the classroom. Many learners are experiencing difficulties as a result of one or two misbehaved pupils who are disruptive in class, according to one principal. The emotions expressed above illustrate the need for learner discipline in the educational process.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Educational programmes in schools

This sub-theme discusses educational programmes that address poor learner discipline in schools. Educational programmes are crucial as they can be useful to the field of education and teachers. The participants described the type of educational programmes they had in their respective schools as articulated next.

SBT2 indicated that:

> *Most teachers incorporate discipline into the learning programme by teaching the learners to obey the code of behaviour or rules on daily basis. We have little role play for discipline, few video clips and we just deal with them in the classroom. Sometimes we use detention, especially for older and younger children. However, to include parents as part of the discipline programme for it to be effective and inclusive.*

SAT1 affirmed that:

*We have training that we attend online, obviously, unlike in the past when we used to go for training physically. These days, there are different courses available online. Our Union (National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa) also has a few courses, and we also have some school courses that we do. We are being trained on how to obey the learners' code of conduct and discipline policies, and also be cognisant of what is allowed and what is not allowed.*

SCP3 declared that:

*We often use NAPTOSA for discipline workshops; we send our teachers there to make sure that they know how to address the incidents of poor learner discipline. As I said, we try to equip our teachers as much as we can, to make sure that they know how to handle every situation, in every class. We also teach our staff that, as a teacher, you cannot give away your power in the classroom, you need to make sure that learners know that you are in control of your classroom.*

SAP1 divulged that:

*We have educational programmes. If you look at life orientation, it speaks about life skills, we have assemblies where we focus on being kind, how to treat your fellow neighbour and how to work hard. All these topics address poor discipline. We also have our occupational therapist, who works mostly with the foundation phase classes and focuses on skills. I think, if you have a good extramural programme because some children are just more athletic and physical and want to be out there and get rid of all the energy they have. If they do not have an extramural programme, they cannot like coming to school with all that energy. We also have a psychotherapist, and a social worker. We also have a very good school-based base support team.*

In agreement with the above responses, Ebrahim (2018:2) states that learner discipline workshops are essential for providing teachers with good, nonviolent discipline strategies

and responding respectfully when a restriction is broken. It is necessary to convey information about the hazards of physical punishment and its repercussions.

The participants revealed that there were educational programmes that address poor learner behaviour in schools, which include attending the workshops organised by the union (NAPTOSA). SAP1 indicated that they involved their educational therapist and a social worker to address poor learner behaviour in school, while SBT2 added that they attended training online. In general, these responses indicated that workshops were conducted at schools.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: DoE's assistance

This sub-theme presents the assistance that is supplies by the DoE to manage learner behaviour effectively. The participants outlined the type of assistance they received as follows:

SAP1 articulated that:

> *I think if you look at the departmental policies, there are clear guidelines on what you need to do and how should instil discipline. In the same way, if you go through the SACE (South African Council of Educators) document, it gives you guidelines on what you can do, and what processes to follow. So, yes, I think DBE is doing enough to ensure that the learner behaviour is managed successfully. It is important to make sure that you stick to the guidelines and the procedures as given.*

SBP1 responded that:

> *There is no help from the DoE side to protect staff members who are targeted and abused by learners. This is because there is nothing in place. If there is a school where they are problematic learners, the process that you should follow becomes too long. Sometimes they take up to six months before they make a decision on a learner discipline problem.*

SADP1 stated that:

*At our school, we have a support system from our IDSO (Institutional Development and Support Officer), who is the person we report to, and we can phone him anytime. We also receive support from the school-based support team. We can also phone them at any time if we have a crisis. Yeah, I think at our school, we are blessed in that we can phone, and the help is available. However, we have a problem in the sense that if a child is out of hand and cannot be at the school anymore, for whatever reason, the Department does not have enough special schools to support them. However, we have support in our area.*

SBDP2 proclaimed:

*I have never seen the DoE holding any workshops where they try to develop teachers regarding behaviour management and inculcation of discipline at schools. All schools do it their own way, because every school has its way of disciplining children. Each and every school has its own learner disciplinary policy suited to its context. I do not think that the Department has done enough to inculcate learner discipline in schools have never seen any district officials coming to any school to speak about discipline.*

The participants had different responses regarding the assistance they received, which is from the Basic Education Department. SAP1 indicated that the DoE and SACE provide them with discipline policies and guidelines that are clear to follow to maintain learner discipline. SADP1 added that they always received support from their IDSO who is always available when required. By contrast, SBP2 and SBDP2 indicated that they did not obtain support on how to manage learner behaviour effectively. These responses reveal that some institutions are supported by the DoE, while others are not.

### 4.3.4 Theme 4: The Discipline Strategies Used by Teachers

This theme discusses different methods used by teachers to manage learner behaviour effectively in their respective classrooms. Since there are no alternative methods to

punishment, teachers use various discipline strategies that are within the parameters of the law.

### 4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Elements that teachers should consider when disciplining learners

This sub-theme presents the factors that teachers should consider when disciplining learners. Essentially, learner discipline should not be punitive but corrective, as this enhances the learner's self-esteem. Learners' rights should not be violated but respected and protected at all times. The participants portrayed their responses as follows:

Commenting on teachers' conduct in respect of learner discipline, SADP1 declared:

> *Well, they should also abide by the teachers' code of conduct, and they cannot step out of line, so there is no corporal punishment. I also think when disciplining learners, you must be careful not to do so in front of everybody. I am a firm believer that you take their child outside and do not shout and scream at them. Sometimes you get angry as a teacher, and yes, you do lose your temper, but I do believe in trying to work with that child alone and not embarrass them in front of the class. You should not make them feel like they are being picked on or whatever.*

SBSP2 disclosed that:

> *I think teachers need to know that when they discipline children, the process should be corrective rather than punitive. They should remember that when they correct some wayward behaviour that they see in a child, it should not be like they are punishing the child but correcting them from doing what is wrong. The SASA says that when we punish children, we should also consider the fact that they are human. We should not make them feel inhuman by the way we correct their behaviour.*

SAP1 shared,

> *We follow the discipline policy 100% and we follow the protocol as well. It starts with the teacher, and the grade head. From there, it goes to the HoD, then to the deputy and the principal is the last person to get involved.*

SAT1 presented that:

> *Firstly, you need to know your children. I need to know where they come from. Then you need to explain what is required of them, as well as the limits of acceptable behaviour. It is important to be consistent with your boundaries.*

In line with the above, Glasser (2016:2) also suggested that teachers should keep two things in mind while dealing with discipline issues. The first is to put an end to the undesirable or troublesome behaviour, while the second is to educate them on how to manage their own behaviour.

In their responses, the participants highlighted that teachers should follow the teachers' code of conduct and not step out of line. SBDP2 stated that teachers should know that when they discipline children, the action should be corrective rather than punitive. SADP1 cautioned that teachers should not discipline learners in front of everybody but should instead take the child outside and not shout or scream at them. In their responses, the participants emphasised that teachers should follow the teachers' code of conduct, understand the learner's background as well as the factors that influenced the learner to misbehave before they can discipline them.

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Discipline strategies used by teachers

This sub-themed discusses different methods that teachers used to sustain learner behaviour in their classes. To ensure effective teaching and studying, a stress-free environment must be created, and discipline applied consistently. In this regard, the participants have responded as follows:

SAT1 affirmed that:

> *Each teacher has their own way of disciplining. You need to know the children, and from there, you can see what kind of discipline strategies you can use. Most of us focus a lot on positive encouragement and we do not make a fuss if a child behaves well. We get involved with the parents a lot and discuss learning behaviour with them. If we are not successful, then there are consequences for misbehaving like sitting in detention, taking breaks away or some of their playtime,*

*and taking some of their privileges away. We also have discipline books that we use quite often.*

SBT2 responded that:

*For me, what works well at our school is a system that I have talked about where learners get a merit if they do something good and a demerit, if they do something wrong like homework that is not done, disruptive behaviour, fighting and whatever the case may be. If they get 10 demerits, they should sit in detention on a Friday.*

SBDP2 affirmed that:

*We use what is called behaviour book. This is a book where we record the learners' behaviour, from class to class, subject to subject and teacher to teacher. These behavioural recordings are then transcribed on to our D6 plus, where the deputy principal is. From there, I then go into the system to check which children are due for letters to go to parents, notifying them about the behaviour of their children. Sometimes it pops out a red indication if a child is due for detention to prompt me to print a letter informing the parents that their child would be in detention. When a child is in detention, we ask the parents to make necessary transport arrangements because the child would not go home at the same time as others.*

SADP1 uttered that:

*We have a code of conduct that children sign as well as parents. We have a disciplinary procedure that is available to children and parents. If children breach this code of conduct, then there are certain disciplinary measures in place. We use a behaviour file system, which has levels of infringements, and the children get the demerits, at different levels. Each level from level one to four has a different punishment. For example, if it is a serious case of misconduct, then we call parents straightaway and we take appropriate action.*

In relation to the above sentiments, Chonco (2019:38) states that manual punishments like sweeping the classroom and picking up papers throughout the school area are useful. However, serious incidents of indiscipline are best addressed through expulsion,

detention, coaching and counselling, peer mediation and educator-student forums. Alternative techniques, such as detaining students, are beneficial since it allows them to complete their coursework while simultaneously imposing discipline.

The participants explained the learner discipline strategies that they used in their respective schools and it was clear that most teachers used a points system, which demerits a learner who has committed misconduct and rewards learners for good behaviour. They also used different levels of punishment (level 1 to level 4) to punish the misbehaving learner. Levels 1 and 2 are for minor misconduct, while levels 3 and 4 are for serious misconduct. SBDP2 indicated that they used a discipline book to record the behavioural problems and informed parents if a learner was due for detention.

### 4.3.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: reward for good behaviour

This sub-theme explains how teachers rewarded a good behaviour. Teachers shared their perspectives and experiences on how they encouraged learners and ensured that they rewarded their good behaviour. It is imperative to recognise the learners' good behaviour, as this would sustain good discipline in the classroom. In this respect, the participants shared as follows:

SCT3 affirmed that:

> *I reward good behaviour with stickers and style for individual successes with behaviour. However, if it is a group, then we can give learners sweets or extra time for break or offer special little things.*

SADP1 expressed that:

> *We praise deserving learning at assemblies and acknowledge positive behaviour, and clap for them in the classroom. We reward them that way, give them merits and free civvies days. It also depends on the teacher because some teachers would let learners have extra break. That is, we give them extra time at break if they are behaving well.*

SBDP2 communicated that:

> *We use the reward system in the sense that a good behaviour is rewarded at our school. We print certificates for good behaviour, and issue them to deserving learners at the assembly so that those who are not disciplined can learn from those who are disciplined, and see that good behaviour is rewarded as much as a bad behaviour is punished. We also recognise good behaviour, and we reward them through certificates. Sometimes we give sweets and invite some learners to come to the office to have coffee with the principal. This is indicated in our learner's disciplinary policy or items.*

The findings reveal that it is important to reward good behaviour as this encourages learners to sustain that behaviour. It is also stimulates the classroom atmosphere, improves the learners' level of discipline and discourages bad behaviour. SBDP2 indicated that they used a reward system by printing certificates for good behaviour and giving them to disciplined learners at assemblies. Lastly, SADP1 shared that they rewarded disciplined learners by allowing them to wear civvies on Friday.

## 4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The conclusions in this chapter are arranged into themes and sub-themes related to the research questions and based on the collected data. The primary objective of the study was to explore how learner discipline can be sustained in the process of learning. Poor learner discipline is amongst the biggest issues facing schools in the RSA, which disrupts effective learning and teaching and the smooth running of educational activities in general. Poor learner discipline appears to be a global problem in schools. To counter this, teachers are desperately looking for appropriate methods of managing poor discipline within the given legal framework. To develop coherent arguments and clarify the findings, participants' verbatim statements were used. The conclusions of the study are also examined in respect to the literature on learner discipline to see if there is alignment. The following chapter summarises the research conclusions, limits and delimitations, concludes the study and makes recommendations.

# CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of learner discipline on learning in Ekurhuleni primary schools, Gauteng province. It investigated how teachers maintain effective discipline. Since the abolition of corporal punishment in South Africa, learner discipline has been practised without the use of physical punishment in most schools. The preceding chapter presented and analysed data gathered from participants during semi-structured interviews held in schools. The information was collected from the following participants: three principals, three deputy principals and three PL1 teachers. This chapter discusses an overview of literature review, the main research findings in connection with the study's questions that directed the study, conclusions of the research, restrictions and delimitations of the study and proposes recommendations which may be adopted to improve learner discipline in schools. It also includes ideas for future research initiatives.

## 5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study is arranged into five chapters to address the key research questions and sub-questions.

Chapter 1 discussed the study's background and justification, the problem statement, the major research question and sub-questions, the study's purpose and objectives, and the research methodology. Additionally, it indicated learner discipline difficulties encountered by teachers in schools.

Chapter 2 reviewed relevant literature and theoretical framework underpinning the research study. It highlighted the role of learner discipline in building a school atmosphere conducive to good teaching and learning. Behaviourism and choice theory were triangulated to establish a theoretical framework for this study on learner discipline in schools. These theories are pertinent to the topic and this study because they position

effective learner discipline with the teachers as they are obliged to ensure that learners are well-behaved.

Chapter 3 presented the research design and methodology used for data analysis and gathering. It prefaced this with a brief deliberation on research philosophies as well as paradigms anchoring the qualitative methodology used in this research study. Moreover, it presented sampling techniques, instruments of gathering data, analysis of data as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 discussed and analysed collected data from participants through face-to-face interviews. The conclusions were categorised into themes and sub-themes.

This final chapter provides an outline of this qualitative study, findings and conclusions of the study, suggests recommendations for improving practice in relation to learner discipline, and proposes recommendations for the future research and closing remarks.

## 5.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of literature incorporated prior research studies on the use of various ways to instil learner discipline in schools both in South Africa and worldwide (cf. 2.6). It was found that learner discipline improves the learning process and aids teachers in improving student behaviour (cf. 2.12). Maintaining effective discipline in schools is critical to ensuring good teaching and learning (Tlhapi, 2015:16).

According to Oloyede and Adesina (2013:139), the family is the major institution that affects a child's behaviour, and the key causes of learners' misbehaviour at school are located inside the households. They further divulged that some of the causes of a lack of learner discipline are parenting styles, the phenomena of working parents, failed parental discipline and broken families (cf. 2.11). Furthermore, Porumbu and Necşoi (2013:707) claim that how their parents behave, particularly the use of verbal and physical punishment, has a significant impact on learners' behavioural difficulties.

**5.4 SUMMARY OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research study was supported by two theories: behaviourism and the choice theory of behaviour. Behaviourism is a learning theory that claims that learning happens through teacher incentives and punishments that result in behavioural changes (Duchesne et al., 2014: 110). All behaviours are taught through interaction with the environment and a conditioning process (Krapfl, 2016:123) (cf. 2.2.1). William Glasser's (2010:41) choice theory is also known as rational theory, and it was formerly known as control theory (Ogu, 2013:9). According to control theory, behaviour is important to human existence (Snyder & Bub, 2014:27) (cf. 2.2.2).

The theories mentioned above are pertinent to the topic and this research because they place successful learner discipline in the hands of teachers who are responsible for ensuring that learners are properly behaved. They are also expected to be role models for learners and to safeguard them from danger. These beliefs have an impact on learner discipline in the classroom and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. They are particularly pertinent since they present strategies for teachers to successfully maintain discipline in schools while simultaneously creating a setting that is suitable for optimal learning and educating.

**5.5 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This section provides a summary of the research findings that emerged from this study. The research questions that directed the study are used to structure the discussion and show how the study addressed them. The study was centred on the following research questions and sub-questions:

**5.5.1 Main Research Question**

What is the influence of learner discipline on learning in Ekurhuleni primary schools?

**5.5.2 Sub-Questions**

- How is discipline interpreted by teachers at Ekurhuleni primary schools?
- What are the main causes of poor discipline in Ekurhuleni primary schools?

- How can teachers manage effective discipline without the use of corporal punishment?
- Which discipline strategies are used by teachers to maintain discipline in schools?
- Why is learner discipline important in the process of learning?

**5.5.3 Findings Relating to the Main Research Question**

In relation to the main research question, the findings revealed that schools should involve parents regularly and discuss the learners' behaviour with them (cf. 4.3.4.2). It has been indicated that if does not work, they should face consequences for misbehaving like sitting in detention, losing breaktime or some of their playtime, and losing some of their privileges. It also emerged that schools have discipline books that they use quite often. The participants indicated that all the factors mentioned above really worked for them and it motivated learners to want to do better (cf. 4.3.4.2).

Selected views from the participants revealed that maintaining learner discipline requires mutual respect, meaning that to cultivate an atmosphere of respect, learners need to see that respect from teachers and then they will reciprocate it. Learners need to know that for every action, there is a consequence, whether it is a good one or a bad one (cf. 4.3.1.1). Teachers reported that they maintained discipline by implementing rules. In some schools, teachers reported that they had charts with rules that were formulated by learners. Learners were required to read aloud what was acceptable and unacceptable within their classroom and to draw up consequences for situations where they violated the rules. Teachers play a critical role in maintaining learner discipline, as they also act as parents when they are at school. They are required to inculcate discipline and to teach learners what to do and what not to do. Therefore, they should be well-prepared when they go to class and should be on time (cf. 4.3.1.5). Teachers must also be strict and comfortable in their teaching and decision-making in order to instil discipline in their students. By modelling appropriate behaviour, the teacher is presented as a good example of what is anticipated and demonstrates that exceptional behaviour is achievable (cf. 2.10.2). They stated that, to maintain learner discipline effectively, teachers should set good examples and strictly enforce the rules for the classes to follow.

### 5.5.4 Findings Relating to Sub-Question 1

The findings revealed that discipline involves trying to teach a child correct behaviour and the consequences that would follow if the behaviour is not correct. Discipline focuses on correcting and teaching rather than sanctions. Its intention is to educate students to comprehend and respect social standards both within and outside of the classroom, without resorting to physical or emotional aggression (see 4.3.2). It also emphasises that it is training students to do the right thing rather than penalising them for doing the wrong thing. Its goal is to instil self-discipline and mutual respect in a nonviolent and compassionate atmosphere. It entails providing learners with clear criteria for what behaviour is acceptable and undesirable, as well as assisting them in learning to follow these principles or rules (cf. 4.3.2.1).

Discipline also involves teach learners how to behave and their boundaries and limits as way of allowing them to accomplish their personal and academic goals. It can also be interpreted as the strategies that a teacher uses to maintain learners' behaviour in the classroom.

### 5.5.5 Findings Relating to Sub-Question 2

In accordance with the study's findings, the main cause of poor discipline is emotional difficulties. Learners cannot concentrate and tend to behave badly if they have emotional difficulties. Another main cause that was highlighted is that many learners have never been taught how to behave properly (cf. 4.3.1.4). Teachers also contribute to poor discipline as they do not follow the same rules every day and are inconsistent. Learners see that as a gap and exploit it to misbehave. Teachers need to be very strict and follow the same rules consistently to sustain good behaviour effectively.

The research study has shown that several factors contribute to poor discipline. These include poor parenting, especially where there is no structural discipline at home. Social media is said to have a negative influence on children in South Africa because they see undisciplined people and those with low morals on television (TV) whom they follow as role models for them, which exacerbates social problems (cf. 2.11). One of the findings that emerged is that learners have cellphones and spend most of their time on the gadgets

that expose them to adult content. These are the main problems that we have to deal with as a country. It was also found that peer pressure, teachers' unruly behaviour, non-attendance of extracurricular exercises, the absence of counselling services, and a communication breakdown between parents along with teachers contribute immensely to poor discipline in schools.

## 5.5.6 Findings Relating to Sub-Question 3

In sharing their perspective and experiences of how to manage behaviour effectively as well as avoiding the use of physical punishment, participants stated that teachers should know that learner behaviour be remedial instead of punishing (cf. 4.3.4.1). In dealing with errant behaviour, teachers should not punish, but guide the learner as to what they are doing wrong. Section 17 of SASA (DoE, 1996a:5-6) defines physical punishment as a disciplinary instrument which has been banned; therefore, teachers should not use it on learners (cf. 4.3.2.2.). Each school has a disciplinary policy that supports the standards of the Constitution. The disciplinary policy is intended to build a well-behaved and conducive school setting for upgrading the learning level. Teachers follow the guidelines from the DoE (2000:26) regarding the learner discipline policy (cf. 2.10.1).

Some participants reported that their schools had learner discipline policies that they used to discipline learners who committed offences. Offences are divided into four levels where levels 1 and 2 are for minor misconduct, while levels 3 and 4 are for serious misconduct. They address every possible situation or problem using the learner discipline policy to avoid the infringement of the law (cf. 4.3.4.2).

As discipline should not be punitive, it should be uplifting: it should encourage the learner to behave well. The learner can do things in a different way and get the same attention. Teachers know exactly that they have to follow the teachers' code of ethics, and they cannot step out of line; therefore, there is no corporal punishment that can be administered.

### 5.5.7 Findings Relating to Sub-Question 4

This section outlines the strategies suggested by participants on how to maintain discipline in schools. Teachers that participated in the study used various discipline methods including discipline books. A discipline book records the learners' behaviour from class to class, subject to subject and teacher to teacher (cf. 4.3.4.2).

The findings further revealed that some schools used the reward system and reward good behaviour to encourage learners. Schools print certificates for good behaviour and give them to learners at assemblies so that those who are not disciplined may learn from those who are disciplined. Learners would also learn that good behaviour is rewarded, and bad behaviour punished. Teachers indicated that sometimes they gave learners sweets, and at other times invited those to the office to have coffee with the principal and deputy principals (cf. 4.3.4.3).

One of the participants indicated that her school had a disciplinary policy that learners and parents signed. They had a disciplinary procedure for learners. If learners breached the code of ethics, there were certain disciplinary measures in place. They tried to find the source of the issue of that the learners' behaviour and involved their parents to assist where possible.

### 5.5.8 Findings Relating to Sub-question 5

Regarding the fifth sub-question, the participants outlined the significance of learner behaviour in the process of learning. The code of conduct assists learners to understand the difference between permissible and undesirable behaviours, and to manage their own conduct in school-related interactions (cf. 2.2.12).

The findings further revealed that discipline impacts the learning process by creating a setting that is suitable to educational processes. It is an attribute that helps people to focus on positive aspects and resist the urge to give in to negative behaviours. It is one of the most important personality traits in everybody's life. It is a character trait which helps an individual to complete tasks within a given deadline. A disciplined learner generally has the time to complete all the tasks within the given deadlines. Discipline

generates a positive attitude within the classroom and provides learners with the confidence and desire to achieve something wonderful. It assists learners to cultivate a mindset that will propel them to accomplishment (cf. 4.3.3.1). Great discipline comes with great responsibility that involves establishing the required rules and regulations, which engenders orderliness and harmony in class and enables successful educational processes.

The findings further revealed that constructive discipline enables students to learn and change their behaviours in the classroom to match classroom norms, and it enables teachers to educate them how to make better choices in adulthood. It allows students to demonstrate their attitudes, personalities and reasoning. Discipline sharpens both the body and the mind. It aids in the resolution of individual issues and the creation of a calm and courteous atmosphere. Meaningful teaching and learning cannot take place without rigorous discipline.

Furthermore, constructive behaviour helps learners to maintain regular attendance, which is very important in subjects that require constant practice like mathematics. It helps everyone to remain calm and composed and teachers and learners to maintain to follow the schedule of all activities which includes time for all the subjects. It improves their concentration and enables them to establish a favourable mindset towards learning and life in general.

## 5.6 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research was to explore effective approaches to discipline in primary schools in the Ekurhuleni South area. The study's goal was to provide thoughts and suggestions that might alter teachers' and principals' perceptions on discipline management. It also sought to draw attention to many successful methods that administrators and teachers may use to effectively regulate behaviour without resorting to physical punishment. Schools could be encouraged to adopt effective and efficient discipline policies as a result of this research.

The purpose of this research was to highlight the significance of effective learner discipline in the classroom for schools and educators. The data revealed that both

administrators and teachers struggle to maintain school discipline. It also indicated that while debating school discipline policies, it is vital to include the perspectives of all interested parties. Because many stakeholders have a role in child development, it is critical to incorporate the entire community in learner disciplinary procedures. It was also determined that the community might design novel techniques to assist administrators and teachers in encouraging learner discipline in their classes.

The research study further divulged that it is it important to reward positive behaviour as this encourages learners to sustain that behaviour. It is also stimulates the classroom atmosphere, improves the learners' level of discipline and discourages bad behaviour.

The following conclusions were reached as a result of the research findings:

- Since the banning of physical punishment in schools, teachers have struggled to maintain pupil discipline as they have been given no other techniques to maintain the behaviour;
- Teachers use the merit system to preserve pupil discipline in schools;
- Schools have learner discipline committees that adhere to disciplinary procedures;
- According to the study, poor learner discipline is caused by poor parenting styles, dysfunctional families, and a lack of communication between parents and teachers;
- The DoE does not provide adequate support and guidance to ensure that learner discipline is effectively maintained in schools;
- There are no professional counsellors in schools, which disadvantages learners who need such services and leads to poor learner discipline; and
- Teachers need proper training on how to maintain effective learner behaviour

## 5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study had several constraints that were beyond the researcher's control, notably a restricted amount of time for completing the study. Moreover, all the participants were full-time teachers and had limited time to participate in the interviews. This may be regarded as a limitation of the study. Considering that some participants had other obligations to attend to after school, they found it challenging to participate in the study.

The researcher had initially planned to gather data from 15 participants from selected primary schools, however, three of them showed no interest in the study and another one withdrew during the interviews, which reduced the number of participants to nine.

The study's conclusions are restricted by the constraints of the qualitative research approach because it uses a small sample size. However, rather than generalising replies from a broad participant population, the researcher used the qualitative research approach for an in-depth study on how learner discipline can be maintained effectively in the process of learning. Additionally, the researcher wanted to understand how teachers manage learner discipline and which discipline strategies were being used. A mixed methods approach could be used in the future since it might enable researchers to use both an in-depth inquiry with a bigger sample.

The inability of one of the participants to convey their personal opinions in English was another limitation of the study. One of the teachers asked to offer his expertise and opinions about learner discipline in his native language which is Afrikaans. Given the study's limitations as highlighted by the above findings, more research is required to further investigate the above conclusions.

## 5.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher opted to use semi-structured interviews to gather information for this study. The information was gathered from primary school teachers of Ekurhuleni South region in Gauteng province.

Teaching is an open career that uses professionals and non-professionals; however, in this study, only experienced teachers were selected. Additionally, the interviews were limited to teachers with at least five years' teaching experience because they were believed to have the required expertise.

The investigation was carried out in primary schools because learner discipline must be inculcated at young age. The study was restricted to primary schools only because that is where learners begin to misbehave and fail to follow the rules. Teachers for all the grades or phases were included in the study.

The goal of sample selection was to find suitable participants who managed discipline effectively in their schools. However, there was a minimal number of participants to choose from.

## 5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are offered to promote learner discipline in primary schools, since it is critical to successful teaching and learning and, ultimately, learner success.

### 5.9.1 Recommendation 1

The principal and teachers should inform learners about the school's disciplinary policy and rules at the beginning of the year. During school assemblies, learners should be well informed of the rules and the repercussions of breaching them. In the process of learning life skills, learners should be constantly reminded that they should behave decently in the classroom. To achieve this, teachers should include topics such as moral issues, tolerance and conflict resolution in some of their lessons and teach basic moral values such as loyalty and responsibility. This may be accomplished through class discussions, debates and role-playing.

Teachers should develop classroom rules and consequences based on the learner disciplinary policy, and class rules should be placed on the bulletin board where everyone can see them. Learners should adopt the rules as a class agreement. Schools should organise workshops and motivational talks that address misbehaviour and encourage self-discipline for learners. Schools, parents and communities should work together to achieve this goal and encourage learners to be accountable in their interpersonal connections and school activities. Learners should see morals and values reflected in their teachers' lives and attitudes, as well as the school's general approach to discipline. Schools should encourage and reward healthy, disciplined behaviour in order to foster and recognise good behaviour.

To improve learners' safety in schools, it may be necessary to install security cameras. In a similar vein, it may be necessary to conduct random searches on learners to be

assured that they do not carry or use deadly weapons at school. In this regard, students should be able to report incidences of indiscipline so that they can be addressed before they cause injuries or deaths.

### 5.9.2 Recommendation 2

School safety is a prerequisite for successful discipline. As a result, all schools should be enclosed and secure. A system for detecting all undesired materials should be put within the school to safeguard everyone on the school premises. This will eliminate disciplinary difficulties including, among other things, hazardous weapons, drugs and alcohol.

All teachers and principals should receive intensive training in dealing with or managing discipline in their schools. Following this rigorous training, the DBE should plan follow-up training for new teachers at the beginning of each school year. A course on learner discipline can also be included in the school curriculum. Schools should also be encouraged to organise learner discipline workshops once a year to educate teachers about disciplinary tactics and reinforce what they have learned.

It is suggested that principals arrange school-based seminars on disciplinary measures for teachers, using the DBE document "Alternatives to Corporal Punishment" as a starting point. Instead of making broad suggestions, the government should adopt standard, clearly defined methods of discipline. The DBE should clarify popular and realistic techniques for controlling school discipline. Managing discipline in schools takes time, and teachers should be aware of this and concentrate on teaching. Schools would thus produce high-quality outcomes.

Teacher collaboration and consistency may aid in the administration of school discipline. All stakeholders in the school should be made aware of disciplinary management. All stakeholders in the school should investigate tactics to preserve learner discipline in their school, and the approaches found must be within the legal limitations to ensure that learners' rights are not violated. Discipline should be addressed at several levels within the schools. For example, it can range from class representatives to the community or parents, and it can include school management teams, class and school representatives and learner discipline committees.

However, schools are not obligated to follow the defined hierarchy, despite the fact that all of the systems indicated are equally effective for regulating student discipline. The hierarchical structure may differ from one school to the next. To sustain effective student discipline in schools, all stakeholders must collaborate. As there is a lack of communication between school administration and teachers addressing the subject of discipline, all schools should ensure that there is open communication between all stakeholders.

### 5.9.3 Recommendation 3

Parents should set clear boundaries for their children's behaviour both at home and at school. Active parental participation in their children's lives is essential for good school disciplinary management. Parents should become involved in their children's education and extracurricular activities by supervising and aiding with assignments, signing learners' books and attending school functions, meetings and extracurricular activities as frequently as feasible. When dealing with learners, the individual family or home circumstances of each learner should be taken into account. Staff and administration must interact with pupils in a considerate, caring and empathic manner. By interacting with learners regularly and effectively, teachers may support healthy learner behaviour and learning.

Teachers must be well-prepared and keep learners actively engaged in the classroom to eliminate misbehaviour. Departmental heads should keep an eye on this issue to ensure that teachers prepare lesson plans properly and teach effectively in their classes. Lessons that are well-planned promote classroom discipline because learners respect teachers who are well-prepared, know their subject matter and have a commanding instructional and teaching style.

### 5.9.4 Recommendation 4

To understand how learners' circumstances impact their education, teachers should become familiar with and learn about their learners' home backgrounds. Each school should promote collaboration or teamwork in the application of school regulations and behavioural standards. As a result, teachers should model and instil self-discipline in their

learners. Teachers should also approach punishment with empathy, understanding the issues that children may be facing at home or at school that are contributing to their poor behaviour.

Every school should have a formal school safety policy in place. This is done to ensure that behavioural expectations and procedures are adequately conveyed, consistently enforced and fairly applied. The SASA must be observed in all enforcement proceedings, especially those involving student discipline. Each school should develop a response team comprised of volunteer teachers, students, parents (as members of the school governing body) and people from the community. This team should be trained in conflict resolution, anger management, mediation strategies and first aid. The core team may be divided into sub-teams with specialised responsibilities.

The DoE should provide in-service seminars to instruct all teachers around the country on alternatives to physical punishment. The government's position on this should be clear, and there should be clear standards for dealing with misbehaviour. Teachers should be taught in the cooperative and supportive disciplinary procedures that are essential to maintain discipline without resorting to corporal punishment.

Teachers should be given relevant the DoE, such as literature on alternatives to physical punishment. Professional assistance, such as psychologists or educational counsellors, should be provided to support schools. It is proposed that school discipline be taught as a course or module at universities so that teachers may learn how to maintain good discipline without inhumanely treating children or breaching the SASA.

## 5.10 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Much has been stated regarding learner discipline; nonetheless, further study is needed to get new views. The major purpose of this study was to determine how teachers can effectively maintain learner discipline in primary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District. Future researchers may do a study on the same issue in accordance with the guidelines for improving learner discipline:

The same investigation might be conducted at primary and secondary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District, as well as other educational circuits around Gauteng province. A research could be conducted to assess the value of learner discipline in South African schools. The changes in learner discipline in South African schools following the removal of physical punishment could be studied. Another research might be conducted to examine the disciplinary circumstances and procedures used in primary and secondary schools in the Gauteng region's rural and urban areas.

A study on the successful adoption of learner disciplinary practices in Ekurhuleni South District primary and secondary schools could be done. Another study on the impact of a lack of discipline (both good and bad) in schools and classrooms in Gauteng's rural and urban districts could be conducted. In terms of primary school learner discipline, research could be undertaken to uncover the causes of a lack of or poor parental participation.

Cultural influences, such as initiation schools should be investigated to determine how they affect learner discipline in schools.

Researchers feel that South African schools should take note of best practices such as the effective strategies or methods in terms of maintaining learner discipline.

## 5.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

It is challenging for both principals and teachers to maintain student discipline in schools. All stakeholders must be included in the debate about learner discipline. Maintaining student discipline in schools requires involving the entire community. The community could develop novel techniques to support administrators and educators in fostering learner discipline in the classroom. In addition, adequate learner discipline is vital for effective teaching and learning since a lack of discipline might undermine the school's performance.

It is apparent that using a variety of classroom management tactics effectively influences and encourages learners' achievement. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to acquire relevant information through information-rich participants in order to uncover the

tactics used by teachers to sustain student discipline in schools for successful education and learning.

The study also found that successful learner discipline can be sustained when there is consistency in teachers in enforcing the rules. Teachers can create a conducive classroom atmosphere by structuring the physical environment, using instructional tactics, setting limits, routines and procedures and curriculum delivery. Learners' high-quality learning increases with instructional engagement and decreases discipline issues. In conclusion, discipline and order are required in every constructive environment for effective teaching, and constructive discipline through effective learner discipline practices must be used to optimise learning and achieve educational goals.

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**APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE**

# UNISA | university of south africa

## UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/06/09

Ref: **2021/06/09/50278827/35/AM**

Name: Mr N Tsotetsi

Student No.:50278827

Dear Mr N Tsotetsi

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from 2021/06/09 to 2024/06/09

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mr N Tsotetsi
E-mail address: 50278827@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 073 656 7965

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof Mapheleba Lekhetho
E-mail address: lekhem@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 429 3781

**Title of research:**

**THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF EKURHULENI, GAUTENG.**

**Qualification:** MEd Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/06/09 to 2024/06/09.

The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/06/09 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.

2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.

4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.

6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.

8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/06/09**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2021/06/09/50278827/35/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,

**Prof AT Motlhabane**
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

**Prof PM Sebate**
**EXECUTIVE DEAN**
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

**APPENDIX B: PROOF OF REGISTRATION**

# UNISA
university of south africa

ISOTETSI N MR
21758/8 PHAPHADIKOTA STREET
VOSLOORUS
1475

STUDENT NUMBER : 50278827

ENQUIRIES  TEL : 0861670411
FAX : (012)429-4150
eMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za

2021-03-24

Dear Student

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

Proposed Qualification:    MED (EDUC MANAGEMENT)        (98485)

| CODE | PAPER | S NAME OF STUDY UNIT | NQF crdts | LANG. | PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION EXAM.DATE | CENTRE(PLACE) |
|------|-------|----------------------|-----------|-------|------------|---------------|
| | | Study units registered without formal exams: | | | | |
| DFEDU95 | | MEd - Education Management | ** | E | | |

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

\# Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations (www.unisa.ac.za/register).
Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that
students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study,
and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year.
Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's ESOnLine for study material and other
important information.
Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be
demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement
in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating
academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express
approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must
be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be
allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same
College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any
such qualification.
Readmission rules for MED: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's
qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a
candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate
must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the
Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT:        10884.00

Payable on or before:
Immediately:10884.00        2021/03/31:    0.00        2021/05/15:    0.00        2021/08/15:    0.00
                            2021/11/15:    0.00        2022/03/15:    0.00

Yours faithfully,

Prof M S Mothata
Registrar

6521 0 00 0

PRETORIA

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

# APPENDIX C: PERMISSION FROM THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**GAUTENG PROVINCE**
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

## GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

| Date: | 18 March  2022 |
|---|---|
| Validity of Research Approval: | 08 February 2022– 30 September 2022 <br> 2022/88 |
| Name of Researcher: | Tsotetsi. N |
| Address of Researcher: | 21750/8 phaphadikota street |
| | Vosloorus extension 6 |
| | |
| Telephone Number: | 073 6567 965 |
| Email address: | tnossy@gmail.com |
| Research Topic: | The influence of learner discipline on learning in Ekurhuleni primary schools, Gauteng |
| Type of qualification | Masters in educational management |
| Number and type of schools: | 2 Primary Schools |
| District/s/HO | Ekurhuleni South |

## Re:  Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

18/03/2022

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1.  Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

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*Making education a societal priority*

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

...................................................................
Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: ....18\03\2022.........................

2

**Making education a societal priority**

**Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**
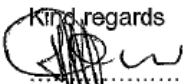7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

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**GAUTENG PROVINCE**
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

To: District Based Support Team

### Subject: Research Approval

Please be advised that the Gauteng Department of Education has given Mr N Tsotetsi permission to conduct research. The research is purely on a voluntary basis and the researcher would be interviewing Principals, Deputies, HOD's, teachers and learners. The research at the schools will be conducted during Term 2 of 2022.

**The research title is:**
**"The influence of learner discipline on learning in Ekurhuleni Primary schools in Gauteng."**

B.P. Luthuli
District Director
28 March 2022

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# APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM PRINCIPALS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

UNISA

11 April 2022

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Nossy Tsotetsi, hereby request permission to conduct research at your school. I am a currently registered student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for Masters of Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management- Student No: 50278827. My research title is: The influence of learner discipline on learning in primary schools of Ekurhuleni, Gauteng.

The participants in this study will be selected from the participating Full-Service schools, and they will be: two school principals, two deputy principals and four teachers.

The purpose of the research is to find out possible ways in which effective discipline can be maintained and identify strategies to overcome poor discipline challenges in Ekurhuleni primary schools of Gauteng. Poor learner discipline is one of the biggest problems encountered by basic education currently, which interrupts successful learning and teaching in schools and the smooth running of educational activities in general. The issue of poor learner discipline has become a global issue in schools. Teachers are desperately looking for successful methods of managing poor discipline. One of the most successful attributes required in the educational space is discipline.

Required data will be gathered through the responses of the participants to be selected for the study: (4) teachers, (2) deputy principals and (2) school Principals.

Participation will be voluntary. Ethical measures (respect, confidentiality and anonymity) of participants will be considered. Your school will not be revealed as pseudonym will be ensured. Findings and recommendations will be forwarded to your school.

Please feel free to contact my supervisor Professor M Lekhetho via his mail at lekhem@unisa.ac.za or 012 429 3781. You can also contact me via my mail at 50278827@mylife.unisa.ac.za / Cellphone number-0736567965.

I hope my request will be considered.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours Faithfully

N. Tsotetsi

Student no: 50278827

**APPENDIX E: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY (Return Slip)**

Dear participant

UNISA | university of south africa

Please read and indicate with your full name in the given space below and sign the declaration.

I _____ (full names & surname of participant in **PRINT**) confirm that I have read and understand the content of this study and give my consent/ do not give my consent to engage in this research study. I acknowledge that I can withdraw/pull out from this study at any time and that I have a right to be treated with respect and confidentiality will be ensured. My engagement or withdrawal will not out-turn in any disadvantages as a participant. There will no rewards /premiums from this study. I hereby give consent to audio-record of the interview that will be conducted either by telephonically or Microsoft teams.

Please tick on the box (X)

| AGREE | | Disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|

_____ _____

Participant's Date

Researcher's Name and Surname (Please PRINT)

Nossy Tsotetsi

_____                04-03-2022

Researcher's Signature                                    Date

**APPENDIX F: RESEARCH QUESTIONS (PRINCIPALS)**



1. What type of school is your school?

2. Please describe what your school entails?

3. Do parents know the type of this school?

4. How often does the school engage with parents?

5. Are parents at this school active or inactive in terms of attending meetings and school projects?

6. Do you have learner discipline policy in your school? What does it entail?

7. Do you have a discipline committee? How does the committee assist in terms of learner discipline?

8. What is your perspective on current learner discipline issues?

9. How do you deal with frustrated teachers who are struggling to maintain learner discipline?

10. How do you manage learner discipline in your school?

11. Why is learner discipline important in the process of learning?

12. What type of learner discipline cases are most common in your school?

13. What is your perspective about the abolishment of corporal punishment?

14. How do you deal with problematic learners in your school?

15. Are there any educational programmes that address poor learner discipline? What are they?

16. Do you think teachers are doing their utmost to manage learner discipline? Why do you think so?

17. Do you think the Department of Basic Education is doing enough to ensure that learner discipline is maintained effectively? Why do you say so?

**APPENDIX G: RESEARCH QUESTION (DEPUTY PRINCIPALS)**

UNISA | university of south africa

1. How does learner discipline impact the learning process?

2. What are your roles and responsibilities in terms of learner discipline?

3. How do you enforce the rules at your school?

4. Do you think parents also have role to play in terms of maintaining learner discipline? Why?

5. Since the abolishment of corporal punishment, how it impacted the academic performance of learners?

6. How do you motivate teachers to ensure that optimal teaching and learning takes place?

7. Which alternative ways do you use to maintain positive discipline?

8. What factors should teachers consider when disciplining learners?

9. What techniques should teachers use to discipline learners?

10. What causes learner discipline problems at your school?

11. Which forms of punishments are acceptable and unacceptable?

12. How do you reward a positive behaviour from learners?

13. Do you think the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is doing enough to inculcate learner discipline in schools? Why?

14. Do you think teachers require assistance in terms of maintaining learner discipline effectively?

**APPENDIX H: RESEARCH QUESTION (TEACHERS)**

UNISA | university of south africa

1. What is the difference between discipline and punishment?

2. What is the role of a teacher in terms learner discipline?

3. What are the main causes of poor discipline?

4. How can teachers maintain learner discipline effectively?

5. What discipline strategies are used by teachers?

6. Why is learner discipline important in the process of learning?

7. How do you deal with a misbehaving learner?

8. How do you discourage inappropriate behaviour?

9. How do you reward a good behaviour?

10. Which discipline strategies do you use in your classroom?

11. What is your view about the abolition of corporal punishment?

12. How does poor learner discipline impact on teaching and learning?

13. Why does poor learner discipline impact on the academic performance of learners?

14. Are there any educational programmes that address poor learner discipline at your school? What are they?

15. What type of assistance do you require in order to maintain learner discipline?

## APPENDIX I: TURNITIN REPORT

The influence of learner discipline on learning in Ekurhuleni primary schools, Gauteng Province

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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1 February 2024

### Declaration of editing

**THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE ON LEARNING IN EKURHULENI PRIMARY SCHOOLS, GAUTENG PROVINCE**

By

**NOSSY TSOTETSI**

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I declare that I have edited and proofread this report. My involvement was restricted to language usage and spelling, completeness and consistency. I did no structural re-writing of the content.

I am qualified to have done such editing, being in possession of a Bachelor's degree with a major in English, having taught English to matriculation, and having a Certificate in Copy Editing from the University of Cape Town. I have edited more than 500 Masters and Doctoral theses, as well as articles, books and reports.

As the copy editor, I am not responsible for detecting, or removing, passages in the document that closely resemble other texts and could thus be viewed as plagiarism. I am not accountable for any changes made to this document by the author or any other party subsequent to the date of this declaration.

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