

**Teachers' Perceptions Towards Mediating Behavioural
Challenges in the Primary School Classrooms of Bojanala
District, Northwest Province.**

by

MASHIGA AMBROSE MOLEKOA

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SUPERVISOR: DR MK. MALAHLELA

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DECLARATION

Name: Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa
Student number: 33092141
Degree: Master of Inclusive Education

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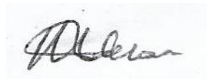
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my devoted wife Jane Mokgaetji Molekoa, my sons Puleng and Lethabo, and daughter Tshiamo. My sister Elizabeth Mokgadi Morifi, who continues to be my number one supporter and pillar of strength, in many ways imaginable. My dearly departed parents, Timothy Chou Molekoa and Caroline Moseki 'Stokie' Molekoa, your teachings will always shine on through me.

ABSTRACT

The perceptions of teachers towards mediating behavioural challenges in mainstream primary school classrooms remains a critical part of the inclusion policy and practice in South African schools. This study is aimed at exploring teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges experienced by grade 7 learners in mainstream primary school classrooms of Bojanala District. The objectives of the study were to investigate teachers' perceptions towards mediation of behavioural challenges, explore the factors influencing the development of behavioural challenges and finally, to establish strategies for teachers to mediate behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms. The qualitative research methodology and data analysis was employed to comprehend and view behavioural challenges from teachers' own interpretations and experiences. In-depth, face-to-face interviews, focus group discussion and non-participant observations were used to collect information from twelve, purposively selected primary school teachers. The study revealed that teachers experienced behavioural challenges daily in their grade 7 classrooms, which caused plenty of disruptions to the teaching and learning process. Various factors were mentioned by teachers as influencing the development of behavioural challenges, such as overcrowding, parental involvement and peer relationships. What emerged further from the findings of the study is that teachers are inadequately trained in inclusive education and effective classroom management, which needs to be urgently addressed to enable them to mediate behavioural challenges in the classroom.

Key terms: Behavioural Challenges; Classroom Management; Inclusion; Mainstream Classrooms; Mediation; Primary School

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LIST OF ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District-Based Support Team
DH	Departmental Head
DoE	Department of Education
IE	Inclusive Education
LEO	Local Education Office
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SIAS	Screening, identification, assessment and support
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the teaching and learning environment, teacher perceptions are crucial. Positive teacher attitudes towards learners who present behavioural issues in the classroom can have a significant impact and potentially lead to the accomplishment of desired results. Conversely, predominantly negative opinions can undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on the teaching and learning process. Kahveci (2023:292) asserts that teachers play a crucial role in the educational process because they support learners' skill development, impart moral and social values, prepare them for the workforce, and provide academic knowledge. The academic achievement, social and personal lives, and general wellbeing of learners are all influenced by the teacher in the classroom. The mediation of challenging behaviour may be impacted by current teacher perceptions, especially regarding Grade 7 learners in mainstream primary school settings.

The proposed study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how teachers currently view behavioural difficulties in the classroom to identify potential solutions. According to Sarkar and Kundu (2021:47), the biggest concern for teachers and the school system in managing a classroom is controlling challenging learner behaviours. Teachers often feel helpless when faced with behavioural challenges, exacerbating the issue. The issue continues as there are persistent instances of problematic classroom behaviours, which generally detract from the standard of instruction and learning in schools. Persistent problematic behaviours hinder effective teaching and learning because they are a barrier for teachers.

A multitude of factors must be present for learners to engage in problematic behaviour in the classroom. In a school setting, it relies on the teacher's knowledge and comprehension of the learner as well as the expectations and demands made of them, according to Oen and Krumsvik (2021:4). In this regard, the proposed study focuses on teachers' perspectives of various behavioural problems and how to mediate such challenges in the classroom. According to Skidmore (2019:14), a teacher's management style, tolerance levels, and expectations will likely influence whether or not they believe a child's behaviour is indicative of an emotional problem rather than just "defiant," "disruptive," or "challenging." Consequently, exploring teachers' perceptions towards challenging behaviour in primary school classrooms, as well as explaining the concept, is equally important. It is reasonable to infer that when learners are not assisted in resolving difficult behaviours, effective teaching and learning will not be possible. A learner's challenging conduct can escalate from joking,

yelling, creating noise, moving around needlessly, and interfering with class activities to more violent actions like hitting, kicking, slapping, and generally hurting other learners. Learners who struggle with behavioural issues may even go so far as to openly break rules and treat their teachers disrespectfully, which is against the school's code of conduct. Thus, it becomes critical to understand how teachers view these learners and how they attempt to mediate such behaviours in the classroom.

The goal of implementing inclusive education in South Africa is to eliminate any obstacles to learning that learners may encounter in the classroom, such as behavioural challenges. This movement in social policy in the mid-1990s was brought to light by the Salamanca Statement (1994), which sought to promote participation and inclusion while battling exclusion. According to UNESCO (1994:11), inclusion is essential to preserving human dignity as well as to the enjoyment and exercise of rights. This process makes it possible to provide all children with an inclusive education that is fair and of the highest quality. Behavioural issues might be seen as barriers to learning; therefore, it is important to accept these learners and offer them as much support as possible. Learners who experience difficulties in the classroom are no longer restricted to specialized institutions; instead, they can now be found in mainstream classrooms where they receive instruction alongside their peers. Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996, which came into force in 1994, guarantees both the right to further education and the right to a fundamental education, including fundamental adult education. Both rights must be consistently made available and accessible by the government. Even with these inalienable rights specified in our constitution, primary school teachers nevertheless encounter challenges when implementing the inclusive education program.

In addition to their fundamental duties of teaching the curriculum, such as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011), which teachers must understand and implement, teachers also have to deal with the reality of inclusive education in mainstream classrooms. The Department of Education's (DoE, 2001) Education White Paper 6, Special Needs Education: Creating an Inclusive Education and Training System, was created specifically to help teachers deal with learners who exhibit challenging behaviours. By fostering the creation of welcoming and encouraging learning environments, this inclusive approach seeks to improve education for all learners, allowing them to fully engage in the educational process, realize their own potential, and fairly contribute to society (DoE, 2001:5). In order to provide and ensure equitable opportunities for learners, all schools must follow the guidelines provided in this document. However, the objectives of policy diverge greatly from reality. Assisting learners in the classroom with a range of needs and learning barriers, including those who have behavioural problems, can be difficult for most teachers.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to ascertain how primary school teachers view the role that they play in mediating behavioural challenges in the classroom.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Nunan (2022: 1) prior research for this study has shown that primary school teachers in South Africa have difficulty reining in learners' behaviour, which hinders teaching and learning. Instead of having negative opinions about these learners with behavioural issues, it may be best to have a positive attitude and show empathy for them. The various learner populations that prevail in schools suggest that teachers struggle with the concept of inclusiveness on a regular basis. Teachers must provide every learner with the opportunity to fully participate in the classroom with the least possible disruptions. The Education White Paper 6 offers a basic framework and policy recommendations for addressing learning problems. The Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS, DBE: 2014), a tool to help schools achieve complete inclusivity, contains additional important inclusive criteria. Teachers' practices in their classrooms with regards to identifying, assessing and supporting learners with behavioural challenges must be consistent with and or be guided by the SIAS policy. The researcher's years of experience teaching in the Inter-Sen Phase, led to the observation that the inclusive methods used by Grade 7 teachers in primary schools and/or classrooms in the Moretele Sub-District, Bojanala District, in the Northwest Province of South Africa, seem to be minimal or non-existent in the wake of these rules. Teachers attend two-hour inclusive education workshops, which are clearly not sufficient to assist teachers in this regard. There seems to be a significant barrier to the implementation of inclusion policies in regular primary schools: teachers' perceived knowledge of how to manage learners with behavioural challenges. According to the study, in this particular context, negative teacher perceptions in primary schools have the potential to negatively impact the intended classroom outcome, which is assisting and/or encouraging learners who display problem behaviours in achieving their academic objectives. Very little, if any, study has been done on how teachers in the schools surrounding the Bojanala District in Northwest Province feel about helping learners who are having behavioural issues.

1.3 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

Given the background information mentioned above, the main research question is: What are teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the grade 7 classrooms?

1.3.1 Sub-research questions

The following research sub-questions are related to the guiding question:

- What are the perceptions of teachers regarding behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?

- What are the factors contributing to the development of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?
- What strategies can teachers apply perceptions in mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?

1.3.2 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms.

It is hoped that the proposed study would pursue the following objectives:

- to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding learners with behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms,
- to explore factors that contribute to the development of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms, and
- to establish the strategies that teachers can apply in mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Teacher perceptions are important in the teaching and learning environment. Teachers deal with a range of behavioural challenges in the classroom that require quick thinking and immediate attention and can impede effective teaching and learning. It was demonstrated by Obadire and Sinthumule (2021: 2) that behavioural challenges manifest themselves in a variety of ways, such as absenteeism, numerous toilet breaks, rudeness, unnecessary chatting during class, bullying, abuse, and theft. They argue that a significant number of learners violate the school's code of conduct, which poses a serious challenge for teachers. Obadire and Sinthumule (2021: 2) further contended that several challenging behaviours—such as stealing, gambling, destroying school property, and verbal and sexual assaults—become considerably more serious when learners carry guns. As they struggle to manage these behavioural problems in their classrooms and grow frustrated in the process, the majority of teachers believe they lack the qualifications, skills, or abilities necessary to address the challenging behaviours. Rather than trying to solve these issues on their own, they would much rather see to it that such learners are referred to stakeholders with specialisation.

Their perceptions are impacted by challenging behaviour, which also results in ineffective classroom management. It's critical for teachers to understand difficult learner behaviours in the classroom. In order for teachers to develop appropriate skills for the successful mediation of challenging learner behaviours, more research into the perceptions of current teachers is required. This research should focus on the factors that lead to the emergence of behavioural issues in primary school classrooms.

This study argues that negative teacher perceptions in schools can negatively affect the teaching and learning environment, which may have long-term consequences for learners who display challenging behaviours and their capacity to meet academic objectives and reach their full potential. There has been little to no research on teachers' perceptions of how behavioural challenges at schools in the Moretele Sub-District of Bojanala District, Northwest Province, are mediated. The schools in Moretele Sub-District are mostly rural, ordinary public schools which fall in the Quintile 3 bracket and consequently depend on government allocations or funding. They are overcrowded and generally regarded as no-fee paying schools due to being categorised as poor and under-resourced in terms of infrastructure. To better fulfil their tasks and responsibilities and assist learners with behavioural challenges in realising their learning potential, an investigation of the perceptions of teachers needs to take place.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore how primary school teachers perceive the role that they play in mediating behavioural challenges in the classroom. The study's conclusions and suggestions may help School Management Teams (SMTs), teachers, learners, parents, and other relevant stakeholders to deal effectively with the challenging conduct that learners often exhibit, especially in the classroom and at schools in general. The study's findings may also have an impact on how the Department of Basic Education (DBE) formulates policies on the management of behavioural issues in the classroom.

1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY

The proposed study intends to investigate teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many theories try to describe the concept and context of inclusive education in various countries across the globe. These ideas have the potential to improve inclusive education by examining how teachers perceive it and by enhancing the teaching and learning environments for all learners, regardless of their differences. In the classroom, disruptive learner behaviour is a cause for concern as it impedes the process of teaching and learning. Rasmussen (2017:62) asserts that it's critical to acknowledge that theory is dynamic and contingent upon its relationship to our lived experiences. Different traditions and/or theories may sound fascinating and alluring, depending on the subject being studied. Therefore, it's critical to investigate how teachers view resolving behavioural issues in the classroom to better understand this phenomenon.

This study's central point is that positive teacher perceptions ought to be based on Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development. Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory (1934) can be used by an inclusive education and learning programme to address some of the challenges faced by learners who have learning barriers, such as behavioural challenges. Human growth is explained by a combination of social, cultural, and individual factors. Factors in both the individual and society influence how people learn and acquire knowledge. It's critical that learners exhibiting problematic behaviour receive the support they need to realise their full potential and make valuable contributions to their communities. Thus, from Vygotsky's perspective, learning is a social process. Children learn new things and absorb information from their social interactions with one another. According to Vygotsky (1978:28), children may overcome impulsive behaviour, plan for a problem before it emerges, and manage their own actions since language is a uniquely human skill. Because language enables people to ask basic questions and convey their ideas, it is crucial for cognitive growth. As a result, learning and teaching interactions need to be organised to support both learning and human growth. Vygotsky also believed that the tools of cultural transmission, i.e., language and symbols, are critical factors of self-regulation. The traits of a culture reflect the way social groups live, as they are shaped by society rather than genetics. Culture is a broad concept that encompasses human beliefs, actions, and understanding, serving as a mirror for society, according to Ajani, Adeniyi and Oyekola (2021: 3). Bojanala District is predominantly Setswana-speaking, a language used at home, in public interactions, meetings, and public notifications; local media; pre-schools and early primary schools with access to resources and teachers. According to Reupert, Straussner, Weimand and Maybery (2022: 2) the sociocultural theory resonates with a common African proverb, which gives rise to the expression "it takes a village to raise a child," which means that many people—referred to as "the village"—are required to give children a secure, safe environment in which they can grow and thrive and pursue their goals. Setswana culture and language, which are dominant in the schools falling under Moretele Sub-District, are part of African tradition and subscribes to this notion. The foundation of sociocultural theory is the idea that social environments, peers, parents, and teachers can all help children develop to their full potential. The classroom environment, home, and community act as zones of proximal development (ZPD) for the learners, who benefit from the guidance they receive from adults or knowledgeable others. Lev Vygotsky emphasises that social interactions are the foundation of learning. The information is subsequently taken in at the individual level as a consequence of these interactions. He also thought that children's minds are physiologically limited from birth. Consequently, each culture has its own means of enabling cerebral adaptation in children. Children are thus more equipped to adapt to the specific culture they find themselves in. The sociocultural approach places a strong focus on learning

as a social process in which values and beliefs are formed by interactions with those in our social environments who provide direction for our personal and professional development.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous reviews claim that the terms "behavioural issues," "challenging behaviour," "behavioural problems," "disruptive behaviour," and "behavioural diseases" have all been used indiscriminately. The literature review for this topic will include the elements of how teachers perceive challenging behaviour in the classroom. One aspect of a teacher's capacity to adapt lessons for a range of learners is how well they can manage the classroom. To help teachers support these learners, it is also essential to understand the reasons that contribute to the development of behavioural difficulties. In the South African environment, government policy is crucial for both teachers and mainstream public schools' learners alike. Teachers can mitigate behavioural issues in the classroom because of the essential role perceptions play in the learning process. These will be presented in a manner that emphasises local and global perspectives on the topic under study.

1.8.1 Teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviour in the primary school classrooms

The way that teachers view problematic behaviour in the classroom may be the most significant element in determining whether the teaching and learning process is successful or not. Critical and significant stakeholders, such as learners and teachers, need to have their viewpoints altered, according to Maguvhe (2015, mentioned in Tshangela 2019:91). As part of the larger concept of inclusion, differences among learners in the classroom must be welcomed, valued, acknowledged, and accepted. Three essential psychological processes are needed to bring about this transformation, according to Maguvhe (2015, mentioned in Tshangela, 2019:92): self-awareness, convictions, and a behavioural shift towards an inclusive society and its corresponding pedagogical paradigm. Teachers must become more knowledgeable and understanding of learners who present behavioural issues.

Therefore, it is in the best interests of the learners and the school when teachers address challenging behaviour in primary school classrooms. It is imperative to underscore the vast range of human perceptions and the potential disparities between subjective reality and objective truth. The main point is straightforward: every learner matters, and they all matter equally. It becomes more complicated when we attempt to apply this message in real life. Implementing this message will likely require changes in behaviour and way of thinking at every level of an educational system, from national policymakers to classroom teachers and other individuals who directly provide educational experiences (UNESCO, 2017:12). Perception is a complicated process that varies from

person to person. It's even conceivable for different people to have varying perspectives on the same subject at times. Many factors, including attitudes, motives, expectations, time, location, and background, can affect perception. Every learner, depending on the situation, tends to act out at some point. When problematic behaviour occurs in the classroom, teachers must develop strategies for dealing with it. Understanding the reasons behind such behaviour is essential for teachers to handle such situations and minimise disruptions in the classroom

1.8.2 Factors contributing to development of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms

The responsibility of the educational system is to assist learners who suffer from problematic behaviours or behavioural challenges, which often manifest as learning barriers. Maccarthy, Mosley and Dillard (2022: 192) contend that the biggest predictor of teachers' negative emotions and stress response was the disruptive attitude and behaviour of the learners, which falls under the category of "disrespectful behaviours." It is impossible to pinpoint a single explanation for challenging behaviour due to the multitude of factors that contribute to it. Behaviour problems can be caused by factors in the learner, the home, the school, and society at large. Learners exhibit a range of aggressive and harmful behaviours that could impede their ability to study and jeopardise the safety of others.

Furthermore, this might negatively affect the quality of life for the learner, parents, teachers, and peers. Such behaviour typically occurs when a learner lacks the communication skills required to communicate for themselves, according to Clasquin-Johnson (2018:24). Because challenging behaviour is a way to seek attention, it's critical for teachers and parents to understand what causes such unpleasant behaviour. Less anxiety in the learners as well as support and praise for good behaviour are also essential. Teachers who understand and identify the factors that contribute to challenging conduct may be even more able to tolerate and accept individuals, environments, and circumstances.

1.8.3 Classroom management

Managing children with behavioural problems is the biggest challenge faced by most teachers in the classroom. This affects how lessons are presented and hinders overall classroom effectiveness. There are several causes for children to display difficult behaviours both within and outside of the classroom. There isn't just one thing to blame for problematic behaviour in the classroom; rather, a variety of factors, both internal and external to the individual, may be involved. Teachers need to understand the causes of behavioural challenges to prevent such behaviour and create workable

strategies. Chiroodza (2020:96) states that an appealing, comfortable, and barrier-free classroom setting is essential for learning. For the sake of all learners, teachers should try to minimise distractions. According to Chiroodza (2020:96), efficient classroom management will increase learning time, facilitate quick access to information, and support learners in taking charge of their own education. Teachers' daily experiences and decision-making are therefore more heavily influenced by classroom management.

In a variety of educational environments, teachers are faced with a broad spectrum of behavioural problems. There is a violation of the rules and regulations established by the school, which could be the outcome of a behaviour problem. Classroom behaviour problems have a detrimental influence on the teacher's capacity to properly and competently manage the learning environment. Behavioural disorders, according to Woolfolk (2016:174), are defined as actions that diverge from the norm to such an extent that they affect the child's own development and/or the lives of others. Learners that behave challengingly are a danger to classroom decorum. Effective teaching and learning would be difficult where there are examples of such demanding learner habits. Teachers need to be adept at classroom management to establish a connection with learners who behave problematically. The teacher should provide the appropriate interventions once they have thoroughly observed the learner's behavioural issues. Programmes of this kind must increase desired conduct while decreasing unwanted behaviour. Teachers need to focus on providing a supportive learning environment to achieve the intended learning outcomes. This clearly illustrates how crucial effective classroom management is to the process of teaching and learning.

1.8.4 Government policy

Significant reforms were implemented by the South African Department of Education to bring about change that is in line with the democratic dawn, founded on equality, and remedies past injustices.

(a) South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996

As a result of laws and policies that encouraged separate growth, South Africa has an unfair and uneven system of education. Due to the political successes of 1994, a democratic society based on the values of basic human rights and dignity was formed. Educational establishments are granted consistency and recourse by the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996. Public schools are required under SASA Act 84, section 5 (1) to admit learners and meet their educational needs without unfairly discriminating against them. No learner shall face discrimination or be barred from attending lessons because of their gender, age, disability, or other forms of learning barriers. As such, there are learners at every academic level who display troublesome behaviours. Refusing to

accept the learner to a learning site would be detrimental to their development on the part of the institution. School principals must implement and update SASA-compliant policies to stay legal.

1.8.5 Strategies to mediate behavioural challenges in the classroom in the primary school classrooms

The diversity of their learners must be acknowledged and valued by teachers, who must also create plans to support their academic success and create a welcoming and tolerant learning atmosphere. Teachers may be able to positively influence students who exhibit problematic behaviour. It's usual for teachers to decide to pair or group learners when they feel overwhelmed and have too many learners in their classrooms. Group, pair, and cooperative learning are useful teaching and learning strategies because they boost learners' active engagement in the classroom. According to a study by Zondo, Mncube, and Adu (2023:83), teachers employed detention and the withholding of privileges in addition to modelling good behaviour, providing positive reinforcement, utilising parental participation and communication, and providing inclusive community support services. In order to foster tolerance and establish equality, teachers' attitudes and ideals must be positive. They must keep in mind that choices made in the classroom and/or the lessons imparted to learners may ultimately have a favourable or unfavourable impact on their families and communities. It is feasible to accommodate learners with a variety of learning needs, including those who have behavioural issues, due to the South African education system.

To manage a variety of demands in the teaching and learning environment, teachers must acquire certain competencies and the requisite knowledge. Teachers are aware that not every learner learns in the same way and that every learner brings unique skills or challenges to the classroom that we are ill-prepared to address. This suggests that when planning lessons, teaching learners, and assessing their work, teachers have a lot on their minds (Study Guide, 2022:21-22). Every learner is unique in their own way, and competent teachers will be able to recognise, accept, and acknowledge that. Learning is hampered by challenging behaviour because it keeps learners from developing and accomplishing their learning objectives.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research approach and design

The study in question employed a qualitative research methodology to investigate, explore, and comprehend teachers' perceptions regarding the inclusion of learners who display challenging behaviour in the classroom. As a result, the proposed study is qualitative in character. Using participant perceptions, the researcher attempted to determine a phenomenon's significance.

According to Leavy (2017:124), qualitative research methodologies give significant weight to people's subjective experiences, the depth of meaning, and their cognitive processes for making sense of the world. Understanding the meanings that participants assign to themselves in research questions is the aim of qualitative research. Because of this, it is crucial to describe the study's topic while taking the participants' varying experiences and opinions into account.

Qualitative research, according to Merriam and Grenier (2019, mentioned in Kahveci, 2023:292), focuses on how individuals make sense of their experiences and interpret them. Using the basic interpretive design, the researcher examines how people view their experiences and lives. Many qualitative research designs have this feature in common. No behaviour or environment is subject to external manipulation, control, or restriction. Consequently, a variety of study methodologies were used, such as focus groups, observations, and open-ended interviews to find out how teachers perceived their roles in assisting and supporting learners who had behavioural difficulties. The information obtained from research participants revealed the breadth and calibre of the researcher's methods in the relaxed and natural environments of the subjects. It is thought that this method helped to expose how teachers perceived the world, which in turn encouraged them to be as inclusive as possible in the classroom.

For the purpose of researching the subject, a case study methodology was applied. Case studies are excellent at helping researchers understand difficult topics or objects because they often answer one or more questions that begin with "how" or "why," according to Lebopa (2018:56). By conducting a case study design, this study involved collecting and analysing data from several cases, in this case, four mainstream primary schools at Moretele Sub-District of Bojanala District, Northwest Province in South Africa. This study focused on investigating teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms. Qualitative studies are the most appropriate for this research design. Its goal was to mediate behavioural difficulties in the classroom by gaining a grasp of teachers' perceptions. This was accomplished by considering the instructional techniques Grade 7 teachers in conventional primary schools employ to successfully handle difficult behaviour in the classroom. According to Flick (2018:5), the aim of these methods is to understand how people make their surroundings, what they do, how they do it, or what is happening to them in a way that makes sense and offers profound insights. This will help us understand more fully how teachers see their interactions with learners that exhibit difficult behaviour in the classroom. Thus, the case study method is appropriate in the educational setting since it promotes cooperation and harmony between teachers, learners, parents, and the entire school community. Teachers' perceptions of behavioural problems based on their everyday experiences will be examined when they arise in the teaching and learning environment. Through an investigation of the interpretations

individuals make of their everyday encounters, events, and possessions, qualitative methods allow us to gain a comprehensive understanding of a subject.

1.9.2 Research Paradigm

The study of theory and its interpretation, or hermeneutics, provided a solid basis for the interpretive approach that was employed to look at the topic at hand. This interpretive paradigm is related to qualitative research approaches because it concentrated on how individuals understand their social settings. Interpretivism's proponents contend that knowledge is relative and accept various realities and interpretations of it. This paradigm allows researchers to gain a profound understanding of things, people, or events in their social contexts. Working with this paradigm highlights social interaction patterns and the processes people employ to assign meaning to situations, events, and other things, claims Leavy (2017:129). It focuses on the ways in which individuals create and reassemble knowledge from their everyday experiences and realities.

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morris (2018:8), the interpretive perspective emphasises how people vary from each other and from inanimate natural objects while still upholding the scientific rigour of the natural sciences and the goal of social science, which is to describe and comprehend human activity. Since our cultures and life experiences differ, Ryan's (2018:9) idea that "truth and knowledge are subjective" is the basis for all empirical investigations that use an interpretive approach to research and inquiry. Humanistic in nature, interpretive study focuses on how meaning is constructed in social environments. This is the outcome of how we interpret social realities and how individuals behave in diverse social settings. Furthermore, interpretive researchers begin with individuals and seek to understand how they understand the world, according to Cohen et al. (2018:20). Interpretivists use techniques like *verstehen* ('understanding') and hermeneutics ('uncovering and interpreting meanings') to see the social environment through the eyes of the participants rather than those of an outsider. According to Berryman (2019:273), interpretive researchers must frame their research questions with an emphasis on understanding "how and why" to obtain answers to qualitative issues. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:13), the interpretive paradigm looks closely at the phenomenon being investigated to comprehend and interpret what the subject is thinking or the interpretation s/he is making of the context. The interpretive paradigm challenges the idea of an objective, universal truth by acknowledging that human action is intentional and interpreting it considering social and cultural settings. When interpretive researchers communicate and engage with their participants on a regular basis, they create significant realities.

1.9.3 Population and Sampling

Qualitative researchers carefully choose the individuals, situations, and events that are most likely to yield pertinent evidence on the evolving research questions. Researchers first look for informants, groups, locations, and events that are rich in information before selecting individuals for in-depth study. A population is a much larger group from which this sample may have been drawn. Two Grade 7 teachers and the departmental head (DH) in each of the four primary schools in the Moretele Sub-District of the Northwest Province were specifically selected to participate in focus groups and in-person interviews for this study. There were three participants from each primary school, for a total of twelve. Purposive sampling strategy, according to Shaheen, Pradhan and Ranajee (2019: 28), is sampling with a purpose assists the researcher in choosing information sources that can address the research objectives. Specific elements from the population group that reflected the research investigation or were as instructional as possible were considered. When evaluating participant characteristics, the researcher considered factors such as gender, age, position, credentials, experience, workload, and the number of developmental in-service training sessions on inclusive education that were completed in the two to three years prior.

The aim of purposeful sampling is to select a subject, location, or activity with the intention of producing important and relevant information that is unlikely to be discovered in any other manner. Purposive sampling was therefore employed for the suggested investigation. This facilitated communication between the researcher and study participants. Shaheen et al. (2019: 28) further state that the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study relies on the logic and effectiveness of purposeful sampling. The research participants were considered subject experts due to their positions and impact on the adoption and promotion of inclusive policies at the school level. The results of the planned study were impacted by the access to significant role players obtained by using a deliberate sampling approach.

1.9.4 Instrumentation

Data was gathered through focus groups, observations, and in-depth, open-ended interviews.

1.9.4.1 In-depth interviews

Queiros, Faria, and Almeida (2017:378) define in-depth interviews as a sort of direct, unstructured, and intimate conversations with every participant. With this method, the researcher will usually pose a broad inquiry at first and then urge the subject to talk openly about the topic. Although they contain pre-planned questions, in-depth interviews resemble semi-structured interviews in that they provide participants enough opportunity to probe further. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions

were used with department heads and teachers to address even the most sensitive emotions and impressions. These provided the participants with a forum to express their perceptions, thoughts, opinions, and points of view, allowing the researcher to gain understanding of actual social circumstances from the participants' perspective.

1.9.4.2 Observations

The study used non-participant observation as a field approach to gather data, with the aim of examining teacher views and decision-making about the mediation of learners exhibiting problematic behaviour. Wellington (2015, mentioned in Cohen et al., 2018: 542) asserts that using observation as a study tool gives the investigator a chance to get direct knowledge of social events taking place in a natural setting. The researcher immerses himself in and observes the daily lives and activities of the persons in their natural contexts, such as an inclusive classroom setting, in order to experience and perceive what is happening as a member of that group while assuming the role of a non-participant. These observations were carried out in the classrooms when normal teaching and learning was in progress. The focus was on identifying forms of challenging behaviours, investigating the factors leading to the development of behavioural challenges and exploring strategies used by teachers to address such problem behaviours. The researcher recorded classroom interactions on an observation sheet of what teachers perceived as challenging behaviours in the classrooms.

1.9.4.3 Focus-group discussions

Morgan (1988, mentioned in Cohen et al., 2018:532) states that focus group interviews are used to concentrate on the interactions within the group as they discuss any subject or topic presented by the researcher. The benefit of focus groups is that each group can hear a description of a phenomenon in a voice that is unique to them. Focus group talks allow the participant and the researcher to delve further into observable conduct and explore a certain topic, which will ultimately inform observations and questions that are raised in the future. Twelve participants from four primary schools in the Moretele Sub-District of the Northwest Province were split into two groups (six participants in each group) for the purpose of this study and asked to participate in focus groups. With the participants' permission, interview responses were audio-recorded as quickly as possible to avoid losing important data.

1.9.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of organising, interpreting, and making sense of data in terms of participants' perceptions of circumstances. Cohen et al. (2018:643) state that this process also

comprises the identification of regularities, themes, categories, and patterns. Interview data analysis was an ongoing procedure. The responses gathered during the interview audio-recording process were transcribed to capture the interviewees' verbatim statements. The data from the transcripts of the interviews needed to be evaluated after the material was arranged and classified according to the relevant themes, concepts, and/or other comparable elements that might emerge during the process. New ideas were developed as and when critical inquiries about teachers' perspectives on handling behavioural problems in the classroom were made.

According to Flick (2018:5) the process of evaluating implicit and explicit dimensions, patterns, and elements of meaning-making in the data and what is represented therein forms qualitative data analysis. This definition extends to the classification and interpretation of linguistic and/or visual data. Meaning making can take several forms, such as societal or subjective meanings. It looks at participants' experiences, values, sentiments, and understanding in addition to their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge to ascertain how they interpret a given phenomenon. The data analysis results were appropriately assessed to provide answers and resolutions to the queries posed by the investigation. This would enable the characterisation of how teachers see circumstances and decide how to handle challenging behaviour in the classroom

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.10.1 Permission

The researcher first obtained the University of South Africa's (UNISA) research ethical clearance before requesting permission from the relevant authorities to attend the study or learning site. I also received approval from the circuit manager and school principals, who are the gatekeepers for the Department of Education (DoE). The teachers who were selected to participate in this study had to read, understand, and sign informed consent forms to voluntarily participate. This was done to make sure we abide by the regulations controlling who is allowed to attend public schools. Once authorization to use the site has been granted, the aim and purpose of the study were made clear and explicit.

1.10.2 Confidentiality and non-disclosure

Participants received assurances that their identities and the data obtained would be kept secure and confidential, as well as explicit explanations of the study's objectives and goals. Bos (2020: 154) asserts that the agreement between the participant and the researcher that ensures private or sensitive information will be handled with the highest care is known as confidentiality. Confidentiality is ultimately based on trust. The subjects' rights to confidentiality, privacy, and other private concerns are very important. The researcher should always come across as personable and non-threatening

while presenting themselves. That is important since it influences the success or failure of the intended research endeavour.

1.10.3 Voluntary informed consent

Decarlo (2018:121) defines informed consent as the willing agreement of research participants to participate in studies after they have been fully told about the study and its risks and benefits. Participation in the study was optional since individuals used their freedom to choose whether or not to take part. The data collection process did not in any way violate the participants' human rights. The purpose of the research study was clearly stated, and the participants' identities were kept secure and confidential. Participants also have the option to withdraw from the study at any time. There is no possibility that the participants will suffer harm throughout the data collection process, nor will their human rights be infringed upon.

1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

1.11.1 Credibility

Credibility can be defined as the degree to which study's conclusions make sense given the original data or as a reflection of the participants' initial perspectives. According to Kasikako (2021:11), using outsiders to exchange ideas about the research subject gives the researcher more ideas for analysis and interpretation and enhances the study's credibility. The integrity of the study could be threatened; thus, the researcher needs to be on the lookout for that.

1.11.2 Dependability

An audit trail may improve a study's trustworthiness. Carcary (2020: 167) insists that a record of the methods used to conduct a qualitative study and the methods the researchers used to come to their results is called an audit trail. With the assistance of an extensive compilation of pertinent documentation, it offers an open account of the procedures followed during a research endeavour. According to Jacobs (2022: 62) the consistency and dependability of the research findings as well as the level of documentation of the research techniques, which enables an outside party to monitor, audit, and evaluate the research process, are demonstrated by this study's dependability. Throughout the investigation, the data gathered for this study are retained.

1.11.3 Transferability

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019, mentioned in Maine, 2022:56), transferability refers to the degree to which findings from qualitative research can be used to different situations or settings with different participants. It is envisaged that the findings of teacher perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in primary school classrooms will be helpful to a larger population of teachers

working with learners who have behavioural concerns in mainstream public primary schools across the nation.

1.11.4 Confirmability

To ensure confirmability as a strategy, the researcher must lessen the amount of bias. By ensuring that the study's conclusions and findings accurately reflect the decisions and viewpoints of the research participants in the classroom, the researcher can reduce the degree of bias in the study and assure confirmability as a strategy. Since the researcher also collected data at his workplace (school), there was zero tolerance for the researcher having any form of personal influence. These interviews were carefully organised and conducted in a non-threatening, non-judgmental setting. The researcher assessed, recognised, and acknowledged her own experiences, biases, viewpoints, and presumptions on the phenomenon before beginning the in-depth interviews. A reflective research journal was kept throughout the entire study. This made it possible for the researcher to gather trustworthy and thorough research materials on the approaches teachers take with learners who are having behavioural issues and to assess how prepared they are to help these learners. Confirmability is the process of determining whether the study's data attests to its conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations, according to Loh (2013, mentioned in Naicker, 2021:128). Liamputtong (2013, mentioned in Naicker, 2021:128) states that it describes the researcher's attempt to avoid motivation, personal bias, interest, or perspective while presenting the results and interpreting the study. The researcher's viewpoints and those of the participants need to be kept distinct. To ensure that the proposed study can be confirmed, it must be constantly monitored and checked. This can be done after the researcher's opinions are distinguished from those of the participants.

1.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Interviews with the stakeholders allowed for an exploration of their perspectives regarding the mediation of behavioural difficulties in primary school classrooms. It is necessary to identify any potential limits that may exist with the research project. The sample size in the first case is quite tiny. From each of the four primary schools that were chosen, only one departmental head (DH) and two teachers of Grade 7 were present for observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. The information gleaned from this method produced results that were specific to certain situations. Secondly, information gleaned from interviews may not always be accurate. The investigation's results may be impacted by how the participants' perceptions were interpreted as well as how often it is for teachers to have unfavourable opinions in the classroom.

1.12.1 Overcoming the limitations

Gaining the trust and confidence of research subjects was the next obstacle after entering the teaching and learning site and explaining the goal of the study. The researcher had no control over what the participants chose to share or reveal in the focus groups and in-person interviews, nor over the results that resulted from them. It was encouraged of the study participants to divulge as much information as they could honestly and completely.

1.13 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Ngoma (2020:98), the scope is what keeps the researcher focused on the data they need to collect and prevents them from deviating from the boundaries they have set. Observations and interviews were conducted with one department head (DH) from each of the four public primary schools and two teachers from the Intermediate and Senior Phases (Inter-Sen), specifically in Grade 7. Because this study was limited to the four official mainstream primary schools within the Moretele Local Education Office (LEO) or Sub-District, its findings might not be applicable to all schools in the Northwest Province of South Africa.

1.14 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Clarifying the definitions of study topics is crucial since they are crucial to comprehending the discourse. In the study's pertinent chapters, there will be more thorough explanations.

- **Behavioural challenges:** the most prevalent types of interpersonal and social connection dysfunction and significantly impede a child's capacity to adjust to all educational levels (Aikaterini and Drigas, 2022: 1). In this study, behavioural challenges imply the undesirable behaviours displayed by some learners in mainstream schools.
- **Teacher:** is a school-based educator whose core responsibility is that of classroom teaching at a school (DHET, 2015). A teacher in this study refers to a government employee who is facing challenges regarding learners with behavioural challenges.
- **Learner:** In the context of education, a person who is actively involved in the process of gaining knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values through study, experience, or teaching is referred to as a "learner." The Department of Education (DoE, 2014) frequently highlights that learning is an ongoing, dynamic process in which the learner must actively participate and engage. With reference to this study, a learner is a person displaying behavioural challenges in the primary school classroom and, therefore, in need of support from teachers.
- **Barriers to learning:** Barriers to learning include things like a learner's intellectual disability, the environment that has an impact on learners' education, and financial issues. (Visser,

2002, mentioned in Kasikako, 2021:15). These undesired behaviours that have a detrimental effect on the teaching and learning environment are the learning barriers in this study.

- **Perceptions:** the process of perception entails the extraction of sensory stimuli, as well as their assessment, interpretation, and backward arrangement. Motivation and feelings are crucial components of perception, which is the result of the interplay between a stimulus and an observer's internal expectations, knowledge and hypotheses (Livingstone, 2008, mentioned in Malahlela, 2017:17). In this study, perception refers to teacher's beliefs and viewpoints on their daily encounters with behavioural difficulties in the classroom.

1.15 CHAPTER OUTLINES

The proposed study will consist of five chapters as indicated below:

Chapter 1: Orientation to the Study

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis and discussion

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

1.16 CONCLUSION

The background and introduction of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the study's purpose and objectives, the theoretical framework and literature review, and the research methodology—including the research approach and design, population and sampling, the research paradigm, the instrumentation for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations of the study—have all been covered in this Chapter.

The next chapter offers a review of related literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore how teachers view behavioural challenges in mainstream primary school classrooms within the framework of inclusive education. It is undeniable that learners who struggle with behaviour have a right to education and can attend alongside their peers. However, they do not have the right to disrupt other learners during the teaching and learning process. Learners need to be taught that rights are accompanied by responsibilities and teachers must ensure that all learners in their care receive quality education. The focus of this chapter is on reviewing the literature that is relevant to the research question and trying to address the research questions. Under the following headings, there will be a deeper analysis of the literature that clarifies the research questions: teachers' perceptions of behavioural challenges; factors that lead to the development of behavioural challenges in the classroom; and strategies that teachers may use to mediate behavioural challenges in primary school classrooms.

2.2 TEACHER PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES

Teacher perceptions towards behavioural challenges can make or break the ultimate objective of inclusive education, which is accommodating and supporting all learners and youth because they can all learn. Negative perceptions from teachers will impact negatively on the inclusion agenda. On the contrary, positive views and attitudes must lead to the development of positive behaviour in the classroom. The adoption of inclusive education, according to Al-Shammari, Faulkner, and Forlin (2019:408), necessitates a shift in the perceptions of teachers and school principals. Teachers are expected to encourage inclusion, but it's still problematic to include different groups of learners, particularly those who struggle with social, emotional, or behavioural challenges.

The teaching and learning process should not be harmed by learner diversity in the classroom, including behavioural challenges. As a result, interactions between learners and teachers need to be characterised by a sense of mutual respect to avoid disruptions in the classroom. According to Ainscow (2020:14), promoting inclusion and equity in education is more about social learning processes within specific contexts than it is about implementing new organisational structures or methods. It is necessary to change classrooms, schools, and the educational system to embrace the ideas of inclusive education and create welcoming, encouraging learning environments for all learners.

According to a study by Nazareth, Kvalsvig, Mellins, Desmond, Kauchali, and Davidson (2021:495), a child's behaviour is related to their bad early experiences. A number of factors, including physical and emotional child neglect, parental separation, divorce, or death, exposure to violence outside the home, bullying, living in unsafe neighbourhoods, homelessness, racial/ethnic discrimination, and unstable income, have been included in more recent studies on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). They claimed that experiences of abuse—physical, sexual, or emotional—before the age of eighteen, marital violence, substance misuse by parents, mental illness, and crime or incarceration of household members were among the ACEs. It subsequently affected the child's behaviours.

According to Mathebula (2021:61), learners' classroom behaviour, particularly that of those who struggle with behaviour, is greatly influenced by the way their teachers behave. Misbehaviour is a symptom, according to Rappaport & Minahan (2020:1), because a learner would behave appropriately if he or she could. When a learner exhibits maladaptive or troublesome behaviour, it is an indication of an underdeveloped skill. When learners act out or blow up, it is an indication that they are stuck and cannot handle the circumstances. This means that having a positive attitude and a passion for teaching are crucial for ensuring that learners receive the assistance and support they need.

Teachers are crucial to the reform plan, which includes figuring out how to support learners who exhibit challenging behaviour. According to a study done in South Africa by Nunan and Ntombela (2018:13), teachers can deal with and prevent unwanted behaviour by learning the necessary skills and acting proactively if they know what the problem is at its core. It is not the learners who are challenging, but rather the behaviours. Therefore, since challenging behaviour is learned, teachers can support their learners in unlearning behaviours that are deemed unpleasant or challenging while also encouraging the development of acceptable behaviours in their classrooms and school communities. According to an international study by Wilkinson (2019:32), teachers' perceptions of the causes of challenging behaviour and how situations related to it may limit the self-determination of those involved in the classroom are important considerations, even though some circumstances or underlying explanations for the behaviour may be beyond the child's control. Most of the time, teachers oversee handling difficult behaviour in the classroom. However, they may feel helpless, annoyed, and unsure of how best to assist learners in learning socially acceptable behaviour.

Additionally, they must interact with other teachers and health professionals, maintain regular communication with parents, and pursue professional development in inclusive methods for these learners. The non-remuneration of teachers for their extra efforts makes them reluctant to take on

the extra work without compensation. As a result, inclusion policies and practices are often met with unfavourable sentiments. The emphasis on how to help learners with behavioural challenges has changed because of the current scenario in South Africa and the inclusive principles. The Department of Education and Training (DoE, 2001:19) states that the purpose of the education and training system should be to promote education for all people and give them the chance to actively participate in the learning process to maximise their potential and make an equal contribution to society. In the past, it was believed that because the support and assistance given to learners was so specialised, only teachers with specialised training could offer it. As a result, many learners who had significant behavioural challenges in the ordinary classroom were referred to special schools where they got support services from highly qualified teachers and assistants.

Its principal goal was to provide teachers with the necessary information and abilities to successfully implement inclusive education in the classroom (DoE, 2001:20). To support and help learners with behavioural challenges in the classroom, teachers are urged to have a positive approach towards inclusive education. Due to their ignorance and incapacity to assist and handle challenging classroom behaviours, some teachers have negative views about inclusion techniques. Teachers lack motivation and optimism due to the government's failure to provide proper training and much-needed funding. Awareness of inclusive principles can be entrenched through teacher training and activities aimed at ongoing professional development. Disruptive behaviour occurs in the classroom daily and teachers are trying to find answers to such behaviour. Merrett and Wheldall (1984, mentioned in Jacob, 2022:11) observed that the term "disruptive classroom behaviour" refers to any behaviour that seriously impedes a learner's own progress, interferes with the progress or responses of another learner, interferes with the teacher's ability to carry out their duties, or any combination of these. Setting up daily workshops and making services available can alter teachers' perceptions of behavioural challenges and inclusion strategies. Teachers will be able to form positive ideas about inclusion issues after they are given the direction and incentive to unlearn unfavourable attitudes and behaviours.

When teachers acknowledge and understand that certain learners in the classroom require more help than others, it is a significant step in the right direction. To combat discriminating tendencies in varied environments and manage learners' behavioural challenges, teachers should promote more educated and optimistic attitudes and beliefs. According to Taylor (2021:9), behaviour is determined by the system's current state and its surroundings. This emphasises how a person's behaviour is defined by their "purpose" and the way they respond to internal or external stimuli. Instead of being viewed as a problem that needs to be fixed, the various demands of learners can be viewed as an opportunity to learn through acceptance, delight, and appreciation. The setting in which they teach

and learn must be thoroughly understood by their teachers. Teachers' opinions of their own diversity management or inclusive classroom design skills may provide light on their frustrations with regards to supporting and intervening with learners who have behavioural challenges.

Teachers have different views of what they see and experience as behaviour that challenges them in the classroom. According to Maze (2019:20), Taylor's definition of behaviour is insufficient because he attempted to refute the two most prevalent criticisms of it, such as the claims that it is only capable of pseudo-explanation and is unpredictable. Instead, he showed that teleological behaviour was predictable and that its conditions were evident. According to Perrotta and Fabiano (2021:5), behaviour is the collection of actions and reactions that characterise a person's interactions with others and their environment. Therefore, a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions of behavioural challenges in the classroom may facilitate the development of effective interventions and contribute to the success of inclusive education. When confronted with problematic behaviour in the classroom, teachers who view it negatively typically respond to it by being reactive.

2.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES

Learning is seriously hampered in primary school settings by behavioural issues. Intrinsic and extrinsic impediments to learning can be distinguished. Nunan and Ntombela (2018:01) insist that when challenging behaviours increase, so does teachers' concern towards such behaviours. These types of behaviours are disruptive and lead to lesson interruptions or disturbances in the classroom and destabilise the smooth running of the school in general. The Sociocultural Theory emphasises the value of problem-solving and social interactions both within and outside of the classroom. Vygotsky (1962) emphasised the social aspect of learning because of its impact on cognitive development through learning and interactions between children and their parents, teachers, and peers.

Behavioural challenges may pose a serious problem inside the classroom and affect interactions between learners due to their anti-social nature. There are learners who are born with no evidence of any physical disabilities, yet they experience learning difficulties, such as challenging behaviour. Those difficulties emanate from their immediate environment, family, and school, thereby negatively affecting their learning potential and meaningful participation in society. External circumstances have the power to influence a child's development either favourably or unfavourably. For instance, how a child learns or receives an education is influenced by educational policies, methods, and systems generally, as well as by inclusive education. For teachers to implement tactics that can

encourage positive behaviours, the required resources and in-service training must be made available.

In recent years, South Africa has followed international trends by abandoning the medical model in favour of the social model when looking for explanations for learning or behavioural issues. The Salamanca Statement (1994:45) sped up the global shift in education towards inclusivity. According to this international policy initiative, inclusive mainstream schools are the best way to fight discriminatory attitudes, foster friendly communities, create an inclusive society, and ensure that all learners receive an education. Due to the distinctive features of the South African educational system and society at large, it is impossible to pinpoint a single cause for the predominance of behavioural challenges in the classroom. Activities, interpersonal duties, and connections in a school setting, according to Rosa and Tudge (2013, mentioned in Smit, Preston, and Hay, 2020:7), should promote developmental traits. Because behavioural challenges frequently turn into academic problems, the educational system uses them as a point of reference to teach learners acceptable behaviour.

Learners' challenging behaviour might make teachers very angry and depressed. According to Smit et al. (2020:7), teachers can impact processes for determining positive developmental outcomes by supporting and stimulating human traits in the learning environment. The manifestation of challenging behaviour has a variety of origins since these behaviours cannot be linked to a single cause. Many aggressive and destructive activities that learners participate in have the potential to impede learning and jeopardise the safety of others. Such behavioural problems often result from a learner's inability to communicate effectively, which makes it hard for them to express themselves in a suitable way, according to Clasquin-Johnson (2018:24). Additionally, the quality of life of the learner, teachers, parents, and classmates may suffer as a result.

A study conducted by Mafumbate and Mkhathjwa (2020:4) focuses on the reasons for bad behaviour in primary schools. Their research showed that learners' behaviour was significantly impacted by peer pressure, family dysfunction, family socioeconomic level, and a lack of parental abilities. The main factor influencing learners' maladaptive behaviour is their home environment. As the first individuals a child interacts with and sees, parents and family serve as important role models for the child. According to the study, learners from healthy homes, those where the parents show a lot of love, affection, care, support, guidance, and peace, have a positive influence on their behaviour, whereas children from abusive homes, those where the child is mistreated, hated, and there is violence and hostility, have a negative influence on their behaviour. Teachers and parents should

be aware that challenging behaviour is a way to seek attention, thus it's critical to determine what causes such unpleasant behaviour.

Below are some of the factors that have been found to contribute to the development of behavioural challenges in primary school classrooms:

2.3.1 Systemic barriers

Systemic barriers are the barriers inherent in the system of education. The most common of these in the context of South Africa are overcrowded classrooms and insufficient teacher training. A brief discussion of the two, but not limited to, systemic barriers experienced in South African schools are as follows:

2.3.1.1 Overcrowded classrooms

It is not uncommon to witness classrooms of more than 40 or even 60 learners per classroom. The DoE (2001:56) concurs that smaller classroom sizes promote effective teaching, as opposed to larger classes, which inhibit effective teaching. In such instances, a serious challenge is experienced with regards to the maintenance and control of learner behaviour. Teachers are unable to engage learners individually, adding to their increasing levels of stress and frustration. According to Morufu (2020:42-43), inclusion is a complicated notion viewed by authorities from a variety of angles, including human contact and educational systems intended to enhance schools. Dealing with learners who have behavioural issues is one of the main obstacles that teachers in primary school classrooms confront. The behaviour disrupts not just teachers' ability to present lessons and control or manage the classroom, but also the entire classroom's ability to work efficiently. Learners occasionally misbehave in a variety of situations and for a variety of reasons. Therefore, large class sizes are detrimental to much-needed learner support. The way learners with learning disabilities receive their education may improve as a result of changes that occur both inside the educational system and on an individual basis.

It is important to acknowledge various aspects in which teachers need support to enable them to overcome issues of diversity and inclusion in the classroom. Teachers were finding it challenging to implement inclusive education for several reasons, according to a study by Chisango and Lepheana (2022:252). The fact that the classes were overcrowded was one of the challenges. This made it hard to focus on the unique requirements of each learner and implement learner-centred teaching strategies like group activities. When learners with challenging behaviour do not receive individualised attention, crammed classrooms have a detrimental effect on their development. The role played by teachers influences the potential of learners as they impart knowledge and maintain

sustainable and comprehensive schools in the community. Overcrowded classrooms are a fact, and teachers are expected to make the most of the circumstances, according to du Plessis and Letshwene (2020:82). Learners who are not given enough individual attention in cramped classrooms suffer from ineffective instruction and behavioural issues. Consequently, their perceptions in assisting learners with behavioural challenges can inform the department policymakers.

The changes in the education system, in line with global trends of inclusion, have increased the pressure felt by teachers. Teaching a diverse group of learners takes up an increased amount of time, necessitates cooperation with colleagues, and requires an understanding of available resources to be used in the inclusive set-up. Mathebula (2021:53) claims that teachers today oversee classrooms with a variety of learning challenges, including disabilities, complicated cognitive conditions, emotional issues, and socio-cultural issues. Despite the structural difficulties, teachers must discover strategies for integrating students who have learning barriers into regular classrooms. Given this, teachers require assistance to address these difficulties. The teaching and learning environment have a multitude of aspects that impact the behaviour of learners. As part of a collaborative effort to address behavioural challenges, the relationship between the home and school must be founded on mutual trust and translate into positive values and morals for learners at the teaching and learning site. Healthy relationships between the community, school, and home are necessary to carry out this. The Department of Education (2001) identified four main issues with teaching and learning: a teacher's unprofessional attitude towards learners and their ability to educate; a curriculum that is rigid and does not adapt to different needs; and subpar instruction. Underprivileged learners can present with behavioural issues and subpar work when they are not appreciated and supported.

2.3.1.2 Insufficient teacher training

Classroom behavioural issues cause disturbances to the teaching and learning process and put teachers under pressure to deliver high-quality instruction. It must be acknowledged that such behaviours are barriers to learning and consequently prevent children from reaching their academic potential and contributing meaningfully as members of society later on in their lives. Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018, mentioned in Maine, 2022:5) state that teachers in mainstream schools who interact with learners experiencing learning barriers generally lack the training necessary to address those challenges in inclusive settings. Chisango and Lepheana (2022:253) revealed that some teachers were underqualified and lacked the necessary teaching abilities, and that a deficiency in inclusion skills was cited by some participants as an obstacle to the mediation of challenging behaviour. The Department of Basic Education's lack of support or assistance, including bursaries for additional

studies in inclusive education and ongoing staff development, was cited by nearly all participants as one of the main causes of some teachers' low skill sets. Teachers need to be prepared with the skills and knowledge needed to deal with and assist pupils who exhibit troublesome behaviour.

When teachers are equipped with strategies for effectively handling behavioural challenges in the classroom, they can minimise class disruptions. Teachers need to first understand behavioural challenges to offer support because these challenges come in different forms. Sibiya, Gamede, and Uleanya (2019, mentioned in Masedi, Pila-Nemutandani, Kolobe, and Tsabedze, 2023:4) emphasise that the aim of teacher training is to give teachers the abilities, information, attitudes, and behaviours they need to do their jobs effectively. To effectively help these learners, teachers must receive substantial training in inclusive education practices. Examples of these behaviours in primary school settings include disrespect for teachers and the rules of the classroom, bullying of other learners, lack of focus, and verbal hostility. According to Engelbrecht and Muthukrishna (2017, mentioned in Mpu and Ado, 2021:225), teachers must get high-quality professional development to gain the self-assurance and cognitive flexibility necessary to develop creative, locally relevant teaching methods.

Learners experiencing behavioural barriers in the classroom are part of our schooling system and are to be supported based on their unique needs. As every learner is equal, they ought to receive treatment without bias. In order to help learners overcome learning challenges, the Department of Education (DoE, 2001:15) defines learner support as any type of assistance and guidance given to learners. Learners with behavioural issues may receive low, moderate, or high-intensity help, depending on their specific needs. Support also develops the school's capacity to address learner diversity and further enhances effective teaching and learning. Morufu (2020:19–20) emphasises the importance of stakeholder involvement to attain efficient learner assistance, with the aim of providing mainstream or ordinary primary schools for all learners with a wide range of needs. Thus, the foundation of the teaching and learning process is learner support.

For teachers to succeed in inclusive education methods and be able to recognise, accept, support, acknowledge, and address learner diversity in the classroom, they must receive sufficient training. Due to their role as *in loco parentis*, teachers are responsible for every learner entrusted to their care and are required to uphold classroom discipline (South African Schools Act, 1996:69). According to Grant (2019:48), South African teachers in mainstream schools ought to start and spearhead change projects in the best interests of learners and learning. According to a study by Yeboah, Charamba, and Akola (2023:117), some teachers find it difficult to integrate inclusive education in mainstream classrooms. The lack of inclusive education teacher preparation

programmes at colleges and the scarcity of staff development programmes for working teachers are the main causes of this. Staff development workshops are crucial because they give teachers the resources needed to help implement inclusive education and help them handle behavioural challenges in the classroom. Pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes need to be evaluated to provide teachers with options for helping learners who have behavioural issues.

2.3.2 Social factors

These factors are a combination of family, school, and community dynamics in seeking to explain the complex nature of behavioural challenges. According to Rumjaun and Narod (2020:85), interpersonal connections are essential to social beings' day-to-day existence. As a starting point, learners need to interact meaningfully with others in the family, school, and community through acquiring necessary skills and values. The learner's surroundings have the potential to stimulate both negative and positive behaviour, depending on various contexts. For example, learners from low-income households or families with dysfunction marked by drug and alcohol misuse. According to Ngoma (2020:19), they frequently experience social neglect and exhibit behavioural issues such as wilful absence from school, evading their responsibilities, and physical aggression toward fellow learners. Through modelling and observation, people can learn from one another.

The school community is made up of teachers, learners, parents, and people from the local community. Bates (2019:19) insists that knowledge and meaningful relationships are built through social contacts with family, friends, peers, and teachers. This team is committed to cooperating closely to fulfil the mission and vision of the school. To do that, a whole-school strategy that involves the school community in order to identify needs, create awareness, and pledge to take action is needed. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is consistent with this kind of dedication. Sociocultural theories are integrated into the learner's social interactions as they take place in a collaborative setting with other individuals, things, and events. Human cognitive growth is influenced by social engagement, which occurs when an individual interacts with other people, things, or events.

An accessible, equal, and participatory education for everyone needs to be advocated and put into practice from the standpoint of inclusive education. Such an endeavour is important as it allows all relevant stakeholders and the entire school community to interact in a meaningful way. Effective parental participation acts as a link between the home and school environments, fostering a conducive learning experience for learners, according to Deysolong (2023:3). When teachers and parents collaborate, they can simultaneously support a child's academic and social development. Regular communication makes it easier for people to share information, worries, and ideas, which

promotes collaboration and better serves everyone's interests. This cooperation creates a nurturing learning atmosphere where children can thrive.

Teachers may also be better equipped to manage behavioural difficulties successfully and effectively in a setting that encourages meaningful interactions within and beyond the classroom. The emergence of behavioural issues in learners can be attributed to a variety of social variables. According to Jacob (2022:13), the dynamics of the family must be understood by teachers to enable them to fully comprehend the behaviour of children. There is no one cause or set of issues that contributes to learners' inability to behave well in the classroom, so a holistic approach is required to find and eliminate these learning barriers. Any recurrent pattern of activity or perception of behaviour that prevents or may prevent healthy learning or engagement in pro-social relationships with peers and adults is considered a difficult behaviour, according to Patnaik, Sharma, and Subban (2022:57). This includes any interactions the learner may have had with family members and housemates in addition to their immediate surroundings. According to Patnaik et al. (2022:58), there are three general groups into which researchers have placed the causes of problematic behaviour: factors linked to families, causes related to learners, and causes related to teachers or schools. Teachers, as well as family members and parents of learners with behavioural challenges, should accept and embrace them. By minimising labelling and ostracising learners with behavioural challenges, the concept of inclusion would come to fruition. The following is a summary of peer, teacher, and parent relations that may cause behavioural issues to arise:

2.3.2.1 The parent-learner influence

The family is a child's immediate environment and influences the formation of healthy or harmful behaviours. Learners coming from different homes are impacted by various parenting philosophies. The child's cognitive and psychological development is impacted by a mother's drug use during pregnancy. The use of drugs by the mother during pregnancy affects the child's cognitive and psychosocial development. Memory loss, social and emotional difficulties, scholastic difficulties, difficulties understanding mathematics, limited visual and auditory processing, and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are some of the detrimental effects, according to Ngoma (2020:16). To comprehend and support learners who have behavioural issues, teachers must have a thorough awareness of the family background of the learners.

The bond between parents and families of learners who exhibit problematic behaviours is essential to shaping and improving the behaviour of their child. In order to guarantee that children grow up to participate and contribute as community members, it is crucial to involve them in community activities. Parents contribute to children's behavioural issues by providing poor examples, neglecting

to enforce rules, and failing to teach social skills at home. Teachers see a lack of parental involvement as a sign of disruptive behaviour in the classroom. In summary, disruptive classroom behaviour is the outcome of a confluence of forces from both the home and the school. Acceptance and tolerance can assist in developing a sense of pride and belonging, which would be evident when people start embracing and accepting the diversity of one another. Ngoma (2020:13) asserts that a child's cognitive development is influenced by their surroundings. As a result, it is crucial for teachers, parents, peers, and the entire community to communicate socially to discuss children's behavioural difficulties and to advance each person's thinking, learning, and development.

Children must be raised in a society with positive values that support their overall wellbeing. This includes their culture, customs, and attitudes. In terms of legislation and enforcing the implementation of inclusive education, society and the government must play a significant role. What children observe in their homes through their parents shapes their values, attitudes, and language. What they see and experience at home tends to be imitated and internalised. A lack of positive role models leads to the youngsters' development of low and/or negative self-esteem. Ngoma (2020:16) claims that neglectful, indulgent, and negligent parents who don't care to instil in their children excellent morals and values may behave violently toward school officials and teachers. Undoubtedly, children will imitate and pick up on their parents' harsh behaviour. This is an obvious indication that the child's family lacks appropriate leadership, values, and mature behaviour. Having dysfunctional parents and growing up in a violent household might make a child violent.

The development of the learner's positive interactions at school is negatively impacted by factors in the home, such as physical and mental abuse, poverty, and divorce. Naicker (2021:90) claims that dysfunctional families have characteristics that affect how learners interact with one another at school, including harm to the child's self-concept, attention problems, and love deprivation. Most of the time, when these children misbehave, their parents will occasionally become involved. Relationships between parents, teachers, and learners are impacted negatively by the poor behaviours that learners carry over from home to school. The love and attention children so desperately crave from their parents makes them display challenging behaviour in the teaching and learning environment.

2.3.2.2 The teacher-learner influence

The environment for learning should also be friendly, non-threatening, and tolerant. In the process of teaching and learning, both teachers and learners should collaborate equally. Respect for and attention to the ideas and opinions of others are lessons that learners must learn. Similarly, their viewpoints should be respected and valued as well. Clasquin-Johnson (2018:61) asserts that

teachers should assist learners in understanding their emotions, expressing those emotions in appropriately, and seeing how their actions affect other people.

When learners respect and accept one another's different points of view, bullying, conflicts, and fights will decrease across the school community in general, especially in the classrooms. Masedi et al. (2023:4) found that the direct involvement that teachers play in helping learners to develop coping mechanisms for difficult situations in the classroom can serve as a foundation for intervention techniques. Similarly, the indirect roles that teachers play can also influence the way in which these coping mechanisms are applied. Managing behavioural challenges and maybe facilitating comprehensive intervention initiatives aimed at resolving behavioural issues in the classroom might be aided by understanding the experiences and coping mechanisms used by teachers. This shows that there are many parallels between parent-child connections and teacher-learner relationships, where mutual respect serves as the foundation for healthy partnerships and acceptable learner behaviour.

Orderly behaviour, respect for authority, and discipline in the classroom are necessary for a positive teacher-learner interaction. Naicker (2021:91) explains that it is expected that the teacher will have the skills essential to perform the responsibility of attending to the learner's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Learner behaviour must, in turn, mirror that of the teacher in terms of attitude, speech, mannerisms, and prejudices. Masedi et al. (2023:4) further postulate that unfavourable teacher-learner interactions with learners who have behavioural challenges may also exacerbate problems with classroom behaviour management. Teachers who show signs of emotional fragility, irritation, or intolerance towards learners with behavioural challenges are less likely assist such learners effectively.

2.3.2.3 Peer influences

According to Masingi (2017:66) peer influences are seen by teachers as a role in children's unruly behaviour. Naicker (2021:92) further explains that learners build self-efficiency for conflictive behaviour and set standards of approval in peer groups, much as they model disruptive behaviour from experiences in their homes. Some students experience behavioural difficulties because of relationships that they develop out of a need for peer acceptance. One of the key objectives of mainstreaming is the social integration of learners who need instruction in acceptable and appropriate behaviour to form and sustain strong peer connections. Many children with emotional and behavioural issues may display behaviours that cause their peers to reject them socially, according to Sarkar and Kundu (2021:49). Learners must be continually provided with such positive

behaviour support to reduce any chances for challenging behaviour to emanate. It is also critical to convey messages of high expectations to learners in an inclusive classroom.

When learners are regularly made aware of the lesson outcomes they need to achieve, their involvement in the teaching and learning activities become more meaningful. These high expectations must be based on the understanding of the learners' unique strengths and learning preferences. The human ability for language, according to Vygotsky (1978:28) helps children to offer support skills for solving challenging problems, to control impulsive behaviour, to organise a solution before acting on it, and to control their own behaviour. As a result, communication becomes a helpful tool for both parents and teachers to encourage good learner behaviour and assist them to utilise language to control their own or peers' behaviour. To effectively address any behavioural issues these learners may be having, a classroom manager must have a thorough awareness of their requirements.

Furthermore, Mafumbate and Mkhathjwa (2020:5) suggested that schools also have a significant impact on a child's behaviour, due to the influence of peer pressure and a lack of school discipline on a child's behaviour. If a child is around classmates or peers who misbehave or display problematic behaviour, they may be persuaded to behave in the same manner. The results of the study "showed that there aren't any intervention strategies in schools right now to help learners better manage their behaviour" (2020:6). Children's challenging behaviour is a major problem that can be caused by a variety of things, such as the child's home environment, poor parenting, dysfunction in the household, and the socioeconomic position of the family. Their learning potential and what they can achieve must not be underestimated or compromised. By constantly praising their efforts, motivating and encouraging them to overcome barriers to learning, are just as important for these learners to reach their social, emotional and academic potential.

2.3.3 Psychopathological factors

Berger (2017, mentioned in Ngoma 2020:17) states that these are the factors that can lead to behavioural problems or psychological distress in learners, as well as worsen mental health conditions or other problems in their overall lives. Children encounter these challenges, including parent-child separation, divorce, and the death of one or more relatives. Such occurrences force the child to gradually adapt to new surroundings, which leads to a stressful new life for the child. Learners become rebellious, restless, impatient, violent, and incontinent in these conditions. To properly intervene and help the learner, teachers must first recognise the challenging behaviour of the learner and examine its origins and effects. Teachers must be aware of hidden mental distress among learners in the classroom.

2.4 STRATEGIES TO MEDIATE BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

In inclusive classrooms, learners can take an active role in both teaching and learning. A strategy is a thorough plan of action for teaching and learning activities with the aim of achieving one or more learning outcomes, according to Mahaye and Jacobs (2004, mentioned in Chirooza, 2020:38). When teachers choose effective teaching methods, learners can overcome behavioural challenges and perform at their best. These instructional methods help learners acquire the knowledge and morals needed to achieve desired results.

2.4.1 Classroom management

Concerns among South African teachers over the rise in disruptive behaviours in the classroom are growing. In order to address South African teachers' concerns about managing challenging behaviours in the classroom, appropriate and effective strategies must be put into place, according to Jacob (2022: iv). Inclusive teachers must strive to continually improve themselves and their classroom management styles in their daily classroom practices. Since effective classroom management is essential to education, assessment, and learning, careful planning is required to guarantee its execution. A key component of inclusive education is acknowledging and appreciating the fact that each learner is unique, has different needs, and is a natural aspect of the human experience (DoE, 2001:16). An inclusive classroom comprises learners with diverse needs, who should be continually accommodated and supported accordingly.

Even though the SIAS document was developed to facilitate the smooth implementation of IE, according to Lebopa (2018:4), many children with disabilities and learning challenges are still turned away from mainstream schools, regardless of the severity of their condition or the level of assistance they require. According to Lebopa (2018:99), teachers are not adhering to the principles outlined in the Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) document when they fail to assist learners who are facing behavioural challenges or to manage them. The implementation of the SIAS process is designed to assist learners who have special educational needs in the system. Generally ill-disciplined, unruly and badly behaved learners are a result of inadequate discipline structures at school level. This is very different to children on the severe end who have a pathological Behaviour Disorder – such as Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, and Juvenile Delinquency - these are long-term and severe conditions that require diagnosis by a psychologist - and these children can be managed with the SIAS process and may need a special behavioural school. The SIAS process, is designed to address special needs disabilities and also children who exhibit severe behaviours. Teaching and learning activities, cultures, policies, and practices must be promoted by teachers to address the diverse needs of learners.

Effective learner behaviour management can be used as an intervention method to support the development and enhancement of positive classroom behaviour. It is included in the process of teaching and learning. According to Hepburn and Beamish (2019:82), environments with unfavourable and chaotic classroom climates, no structure and support, or few opportunities for active engagement prevent learners from learning or fully developing as much as possible. These factors are intrinsically linked to classroom management. Correcting inappropriate behaviour can be accomplished effectively by keeping the classroom atmosphere positive, reducing distractions, and assisting learners in getting involved in the learning process. One way to implement responsive classroom management tactics is to acknowledge appropriate learner behaviour with praise and rewards. Schools should give learners the chance to develop in a setting that strengthens their capacity for self-regulation, behaviour control, and resilience. Sarkar and Kundu (2021:47) insist that when learners' disruptive behaviours escalate in frequency, duration, and severity, many teachers find it difficult to effectively manage their classrooms.

Teachers have long struggled with effective classroom management, which jeopardises the teaching-learning process and negatively affects learner and teacher performance in the classroom. Effective classroom management is necessary to foster a pleasant teaching and learning environment that deters disruptive behaviour. Teachers may more easily concentrate on their work in such an environment since they spend less time dealing with disruptive activity. Rappaport and Minahan (2020:2) indicate that the way learners behave makes sense to them, so it is appropriate when it comes to problem-solving. People wouldn't repeat a behaviour unless they were benefiting from it. Typically, inappropriate behaviour is fuelled by responses from other people. Learners may behave in problematic ways to get attention or feel good about themselves. It is crucial for teachers to develop strategies for preserving and fostering favourable teaching and learning environments. Behaviour that is contrary to this purpose is detrimental to the learning process, for example, having side conversations, making loud noises, interrupting others, arguments and so forth. Such a negative environment prevents learners from being accommodated and supported, resulting in the inability to meet academic goals and reach their full potential.

Effective and efficient classroom management must therefore be aligned to the policy of inclusion, and to achieve it, teachers' classroom management strategies should be aimed at eliminating behavioural challenges from the onset. According to Miller (2020:2), redirecting learners pleasantly, as opposed to berating them for the behaviour you are attempting to discourage, is crucial. Rewarding acceptable behaviour in the classroom is important, and encouraging misbehaving learners to adopt good behaviour patterns might help those who do not behave well. This is known as the reverse psychology method. Since these strategies work, teachers are usually encouraged

that learners should be praised for their good behaviour, acknowledged for it, and given rewards when they follow the rules. Giving them credit for their good behaviour encourages them to repeat it frequently, according to Oestar and Oestar (2022:76). There is no prescribed classroom management style designed for dealing with behavioural challenges. Teachers rely on their own experiences and intuition based on various contexts to adapt to their needs in the classroom. Learners are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making within the teaching and learning environment when classroom management is done democratically. Sarkar and Kundu (2021:48) maintain that teachers who take the initiative to establish rules and procedures for their classrooms are less likely to encounter serious behavioural issues. Clasquin-Johnson (2018:57) argues that these guidelines are required to direct and steer learner behaviour, because in an inclusive environment, learner behaviour can impact the classroom climate and how much learner participation in teaching and learning is active.

Classroom rules help to create a disciplined learning atmosphere. Learners in the classroom are required to follow a set of rules to keep the learning environment orderly. These guidelines, according to Jacob (2022:88), are meant to assist teachers in managing learner behaviour and offering a secure, encouraging learning environment to all learners. Affective education strategies, which help learners to have a better awareness of their feelings, attitudes, and values, can also be used to promote good classroom behaviour, according to Sarkar and Kundu (2021:49). These strategies assist learners in developing in all domains—emotional, social, and behavioural—by fostering their sense of self-worth and ability to express emotions in a positive way.

2.4.2 Teacher development

The successful implementation of inclusive education concepts is contingent upon ongoing professional development for teachers, according to the South African Council for Educators (SACE). SACE management is determined that the teaching profession never remains the same for an extended period of time. A duty is placed on teachers to continue their education throughout their careers (SACE Gazette, 2018:6). It was created as a professional council for South African teachers primarily to control teacher credentials, standards, and a code of conduct or ethics for teachers. While a few hours of seminars have been scheduled, the DoE (2006:5) argues that they are insufficient to acquaint teachers with the purposes and objectives of policy, despite the fact that training and orientation of teachers is crucial to putting into practice an inclusive framework. If teachers are not rigorously trained and assisted, learners with behavioural challenges might not be adequately supported or assisted. In-service teacher training in South Africa is not ongoing and completely ignores the various contexts of the schools concerned.

The post-1994 democratic changes led to new legislation being passed, abolishing corporal punishment across South African schools. The new law gave the rights of learners as outlined in the Constitution (RSA, 1996: 529) and SASA (DoE, 1996: 512) top priority. Teachers felt powerless since they had to acquire new skills to come up with creative approaches or substitutes for physical punishment. Despite the fact that corporal punishment is prohibited, according to Gagnon, Sylvester, and Marsh (2021:2), there is not much published empirical research that concentrates on behavioural interventions in South African schools, and teachers have said they don't have any useful substitutes for corporal punishment. Many teachers still believe in and use corporal punishment because they lack the necessary abilities to manage a classroom.

For inclusive education to be implemented and promoted effectively, teachers must make sure that their classrooms are able to accommodate the diversity of learners. Most teachers lack the necessary expertise to deal with behavioural obstacles and inclusive education issues. The way they were educated, and the delivery of teacher preparation must adhere to the necessary requirements. The South African Ministry of Education has instructed the district support teams to provide teachers with the pre-service, in-service, and professional support services they need. The Ministry of Education states that in order to satisfy the range of learning demands, the criteria for teacher education will change to incorporate the development of abilities to recognise and resolve learning impediments (DoE, 2001:49). When evaluating learner progress and approving new teachers, special needs education-related abilities should be considered (UNESCO, 1994:28). This is a reference to the importance people place on teachers' professional development to give them the skills they need to promote inclusion in the classroom.

Implementing positive behavioural interventions, aiding, and devising a strategy for managing problem behaviours were under the purview of the South African Department of Education. A serious cause for concern is the incidences of corporal punishment long after it has been outlawed, which is a direct violation of the constitution. Dwarika (2019:2) maintains that beyond harsh punishment, there is always a need for strategies and procedures that support the growth or development of nonviolent school norms and values that encourage constructive self-control and behaviour. Although it is illegal to use corporal punishment in South Africa, according to Mahlangu, Chirwa, Machisa, Sikweyiya, Shai, and Jewkes (2021:3), there has not been much of an attempt to enforce the law and ensure that those who do so are found guilty. Furthermore, teachers have not received enough training on alternative methods of discipline and classroom management. Although there has been a rise in behavioural problems across the nation since physical punishment was outlawed, this must be weighed against the development of workable solutions for handling learner misbehaviour or behavioural challenges in the classroom.

Primarily, teachers must possess the ability to screen learners, pinpoint the origins of disruptive behaviour, assess learners, and implement the most effective intervention strategies inside the classroom. Secondly, teachers ought to value and inspire learners by adopting a child-centred mindset, especially in mainstream classes (DBE, 2014). Teachers need to possess the necessary knowledge and abilities to handle the increasing number of learners who exhibit challenging behaviours. They will be able to build learning settings that encourage positive behaviours and guarantee academic success once they have acquired it. The DBE's (2014:8) goal is to assist teachers in putting inclusive education techniques into practice to raise the level of instruction in regular public primary school classrooms. The current situations in schools raise the need for teachers to devise new strategies to support and develop learners in a way that effectively addresses diversity in the classroom. Due to a lack of classroom management skills, teachers are finding it more and more difficult to handle disruptive behaviour in the classroom, which lowers teaching quality and lowers learner progress.

2.4.3 Parental involvement

Parents and other caregivers should be ready to spend time, money, and personal sacrifice to ensure that their children receive the education to which they are legally entitled. To guarantee that the expression of feelings, ideas, and thoughts is understood, communication between people is essential. Effective communication improves relationships between teachers, learners, and parents, according to Jacob (2022:93). Primary school classrooms contain a diversity of learners; thus, it is important to talk with them about the difficulties. If teachers showed learners that they were concerned and took the time to talk to them, they would feel taken care of and might open up to them. Schools must therefore inform the parents, guardians, and carers of the learners about the value of instilling moral principles in their children. It should be noted that learners internalise negative behaviour, which is contrary to positive and desirable behaviour. Common among children of school-going age are peer pressure, substance abuse, bullying, and absenteeism, which result in shows of disrespect towards teachers and adults.

It is expected of learners to respond appropriately and respectfully towards figures of authority such as teachers, parents, and support staff. According to Mathekga (2016, mentioned in Lunga, Koen & Mthiyane, 2021:80), parents' full participation in school activities is essential because it enables them to understand their children's actions and participate in the teaching and learning processes. When learners are regularly made aware of the lesson outcomes they need to achieve, their involvement in the teaching and learning activities becomes more meaningful. These strict requirements need to be based on an understanding of each learner's unique skills and preferred method of learning. Parents must be involved and work together as a team to effectively monitor

and support their children's behaviour both inside and outside of school. In this sense, it was believed that including parents, educators, learners, and other community members would alter how everyone views disruptive learner behaviours.

Sociocultural theory provides a paradigm for rigorously examining cognition without separating it from the social environment. As a result, in the teaching and learning environment, interactions between classmates, teachers, and parents in the mediation of behavioural issues are vital. The views towards including learners with physical disabilities are the most positive, followed by those towards including learners with learning disabilities, but the attitudes or perceptions towards including and accommodating learners with behavioural challenges are more negative, according to Paseka and Schwab (2020:262). The learner is a product of social interaction with adults, such as parents and teachers. They may interact with them and avoid feeling alone at special schools since they are included in or taught alongside their peers. Children interact with more knowledgeable community members who support their learning and skill development. Schools must recognise that there are other types of barriers besides physical ones and that these learners' development is influenced by informal institutions like the home and community.

It is quite common to witness parents abdicating their responsibilities to the teachers, who in turn go that extra mile to get that much-needed parental involvement. White Paper 6 states that effective learning and development are based on parental involvement in the teaching and learning process. Since parents are the ones who spend the most time with their children, they have a significant role in the educational system. Chisango and Lepheana (2022:254) found that parents had a critical role in their children's education. Parents supply the school with information, and the parents request certain things from the school where their children are enrolled. This is a two-way process. The degree to which parents participate in their children's education is largely dependent on resources, policies, collaboration, and knowledge. Mutual trust and cooperation are essential in the relationship between teachers and parents of learners with challenging behaviours. Under these circumstances, school principals have a vital responsibility to guarantee that parental involvement occurs in an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

Most parents in rural communities have poor reading skills; therefore, they are frequently unaware of their rights, which prevent learners from achieving their full academic potential. There are numerous such cases, whereby most disabled children are not exposed to the learning environment due to the way society perceives them. Parents must contribute to encourage inclusion in their communities. They have a responsibility to help learners who encounter behavioural challenges by offering them resources, facilities, access, and assistance. Their role can be amplified through

attendance at parent meetings and taking up positions as school governing body members. As a result, they can ensure that legislation, policies, and practices prevalent in schools are inclusive for all learners coming from different backgrounds.

2.4.4 Stakeholder collaboration

Effective learning environments cannot exist in isolation. They are reliant on extremely efficient systems, in extremely efficient classroom environments. All pertinent parties in the entire school community should be included in appropriate intervention and support initiatives. Human cognitive development is entwined with social, cultural, and historical development. Tshangela (2019:23) asserts that inclusive education is a strategy for change and reform that is in tune with human existence. Humans can think deeply due to social contact and cultural influences like language, signs, and other resources. Stakeholder collaborations or interactions are aligned to sociocultural theory, which emphasises the link between social contact and the growth of one's own cognitive abilities.

The sociocultural approach stresses that learning and growth are mediated by social and cultural interactions rather than just by greater cerebral stimulation. According to Vygotsky (1978:57), social interaction occurs on two different levels during cognitive development: first, on a social level, and then, individually, between individuals (inter-psychologically), and last, internally or within the learner (intra-psychologically). First, it asserts that social interactions, particularly those between people, are the primary means through which learning occurs. Human development is also a product of interactions between emerging individuals and the societies around them. Human thinking differs from one culture to another. Some cultures teach children to cooperate and share, while others develop the child's competitive spirit from an early age. Therefore, human interactions occur and are understood in cultural contexts, and our mental processes are a result of how we interact with others. As a result, culture has a big impact on how a child develops cognitively.

Fostering support and collaboration are important characteristics of inclusive settings, and schools need to put mechanisms in place for such a culture to flourish. Networking with other stakeholders beyond the classroom would also ensure that teachers and parents will succeed in promoting and implementing inclusive education. Al-Shammari et al. (2019:412) assert that stakeholder partnerships and collaborations are therefore seen as essential to inclusive education to embrace social participation in ways that are closely tied to the roles that communities, families, and schools play. Additionally, it offers chances to improve learners' social integration, even for learners who have behavioural issues in school. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the health department, both at the district and local levels, may be included in these networks of cooperation.

In institutions of higher learning like universities, more partners for inclusion should be sought out, as well as support for both teachers and schools. With the right assistance and teamwork, learners with behavioural challenges or difficulties can overcome their daily struggles and make valuable contributions to society.

2.4.5 Government policies

Government policies and or laws have changed due to South Africa's transition to democracy. The country's political and economic changes had an impact on and contributed to the transition of education into an egalitarian, non-discriminatory system. Several laws take the idea of "inclusive education" into consideration. According to the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 2005), government schools must accept all learners and provide for their individual learning requirements. The Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996 grants rights and protections to all learners, including those with disabilities (Republic of South Africa 1996). Everyone has a right to higher education, which the state shall progressively make available and accessible through reasonable measures, as well as a right to a basic education, including a basic adult education, according to Section 29 of the Bill of Rights.

Additionally, it demonstrates that no one, including those who have behavioural issues, is subject to discrimination by the state because of a disability. A framework for developing an inclusive educational system is provided in the portion of the Education White Paper No. 6 (DoE, 2001) titled Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. The goal of this approach is to meet the different demands of every learner who is struggling with a new subject. The policy, which is predicated on the notion that learning breaks down when the system is unable to recognise and respond to the vast range of learning demands, states that all children, teens, and adults have the capacity to learn given the correct assistance.

The Department of Education has developed two strategies to guide the process of implementing inclusive education: the Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DoE, 2001). It also prevents learners from enrolling in special schools who don't need to. The SIAS policy also identifies supports, determines the kind and level of help necessary, and provides better learning settings for learners who face barriers.

2.4.6 Reflection and improvement of classroom management

In an inclusive classroom, all learners should receive the necessary learning help and accommodations. The promotion of diversity, provision of access, active engagement, and learner

accomplishment all depend on effective classroom management. For teachers to get better at managing the classroom and ensure that they support the learners as well, support is also necessary. To effectively teach learners who are experiencing behavioural issues, it is crucial for teachers to maintain a positive outlook and the capacity for self-reflection. DoE (2010) stresses that teachers regularly meet to discuss and find answers to any behavioural issues those learners may be having. This is how general and ongoing support is provided in the school. Together, parents, principals of schools, and teachers might find ways to remove barriers to learning and teaching. The sense of belonging that each member of the school community, within and outside the classroom, requires to be continuously nurtured.

Without a suitable classroom management strategy, schools will not succeed in mediating behavioural challenges in the classroom. According to Marais (2010, mentioned in Ngoma, 2020:32), the most common behavioural issues in primary school classrooms are defying teachers, bullying other students, tugging, shoving, or kicking, not paying attention, verbal aggression, and attention-seeking. Teaching and learning activities should first and foremost be carried out in a learning-friendly classroom. Some children learn more effectively in groups, pairs, or as a class. Learners should be provided with opportunities to learn desirable behaviours without experiencing any negative consequences. According to Berns (2012, mentioned in Pillay, 2019:30), schools are seen as places where learners can learn more about societal standards. Establishing a supportive learning atmosphere in the classroom is essential to managing learner behaviour and getting them ready for meaningful adult participation in society. Such ongoing positive behaviour support for learners is necessary to lessen the likelihood of problematic behaviour. It is also critical to convey messages of high expectations to learners in an inclusive classroom. When learners are regularly made aware of the lesson outcomes they need to achieve, their involvement in the teaching and learning activities becomes more meaningful. These high expectations must be based on the understanding of the learners' unique strengths and learning preferences.

To effectively address any potential behavioural issues these learners may be having, a classroom manager must have a thorough grasp of and familiarity with their needs. The DoE (2011b) states that learners who have learning challenges frequently struggle to work independently and may need a lot of initial instruction and/or help. When a teacher, parent, or more experienced peer personally guides, helps, or supports a learner, this is referred to as scaffolding (DoE, 2011b). These learners can achieve their social, emotional, and intellectual potential by consistently receiving praise for their accomplishments, being motivated, and being encouraged to get through learning obstacles. Due to the diversity of inclusive classrooms, teachers must work as a team to advance, cultivate, establish, and uphold the concept of inclusion. The establishment of such support structures within

inclusive schools is important because they do not have to work in isolation. Through innovative thinking and problem-solving techniques, teachers and their peers can benefit from that kind of support to remove behavioural challenges faced by learners in an inclusive classroom.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted teacher perceptions towards behavioural challenges in the classroom. Various factors stimulating or influencing the development of challenging behaviours such as overcrowding in the classrooms, inadequate teacher training and development, social factors and psychosocial issues were mentioned as well. The importance of effective classroom management, reflection on classroom management, meaningful collaboration between stakeholders and rigorous teacher development were mentioned as some of the best approaches that can be applied by teachers in the primary school classrooms to address challenging behaviour. The following chapter entails information about the research methodology to be followed in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research methodology selected for the study, and the methods used to investigate the perceptions of teachers towards mediating behavioural challenges in the Bojanala District, Northwest Province of South Africa. The chapter provides the research approach and design, research paradigm, sampling strategies, instrumentation, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

According to Madiba (2020:26), researchers are in support of the notion that human behaviour, actions, beliefs, and emotions are significantly influenced by the situation in which they take place. As a result, the research methodology for this study was qualitative. A qualitative approach is a research methodology that aims to comprehend the underlying assumptions, viewpoints, and motivations that individuals use to create their reality and interpret their experiences. Qualitative research methodology and strategy is the most appropriate for this investigation. This method is less concerned with determining cause and effect, formulating predictions, or mapping out the distribution of a certain attribute throughout a population, and more focused in finding out what a phenomenon means to the people involved. The goal of qualitative research is to understand how individuals create their own worlds, understand their experiences, and assign meaning to them. This research approach was suitable for this study as it focused on concepts, events, or individuals' personal experiences. This study placed a strong emphasis on the subjective perceptions of the participants (Cohen et al., 2018).

The qualitative approach serves as an excellent strategy to communicate with participants and learn about the circumstances in which they live. This qualitative methodology sought to address the following main and sub-research questions, as indicated in chapter 1: What are teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the grade 7 classrooms?

The following research sub-questions are linked to the guiding question:

- What are the perceptions of teachers regarding behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?
- What are the factors contributing to the development of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?

- What strategies can teachers apply perceptions in mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?

To explore this phenomenon, qualitative researchers use a developing qualitative approach to inquiry, context-sensitive data collecting that considers the people and places under study, and inductive data analysis. Okeke (2015:209) urges qualitative researchers to devise methods that enable them to faithfully represent the voices or actual words of research participants. He continues, "The researchers can claim that their method is thorough, descriptive, and has deeper significance by using the participants' own words." The final written report or presentation includes the participant voices, the researcher's thoughts, and a thorough description and analysis of the subject under investigation. Qualitative researchers frequently collect data in the field at the location where participants encounter the problem under study. They do not put participants in a lab, which would be a staged environment, or send them equipment to complete.

The detailed information gathered from talking to people and seeing them in their natural environments is a crucial component of qualitative research. Over time, in the natural setting, the study participants engage in numerous face-to-face interactions with the researchers. The qualitative research approach is the one chosen by the researcher since it is more suited to the study's goal of investigating teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding mitigating behavioural challenges within the confines of putting Inclusive Education into practice in mainstream primary school classrooms. Tshangela (2019:74) claims that this methodology is context-sensitive, meaning that it examines conduct as it happens in a natural setting and takes situational factors into account. The purpose of the study was to learn about and understand the teachers' perceptions about mediating behavioural challenges in grade 7 mainstream primary school classrooms of Moretele in the Bojanala District, Northwest Province, by using a qualitative, interpretivist technique.

The researcher examined and studied the social interactions between teachers in both individual and group settings in primary school settings in order to find the answers to the primary and/or secondary research questions. This was done using a qualitative research design. Leavy (2017:124) asserts that using qualitative methodologies enable us to completely comprehend, unravel, and attribute significance to individuals' circumstances, pursuits, experiences, and settings. The current study was designed as a case study research design with the goal of examining teachers' perceptions regarding mitigating problematic behaviours in primary school classes. When examining an understudied issue or seeking a comprehensive understanding of the situation, phenomenon, incident, place, group, or community, this design is quite beneficial. When a study is focused on deeply exploring and comprehending rather than confirming and measuring, it becomes extremely

relevant. The best strategy for developing a deeper understanding of the issue under investigation is case study research. The study's primary focus is on teacher perceptions toward mediating behavioural issues in the classroom. Case studies, in Caddy's opinion (2015:50) aim to provide a comprehensive picture of participants' interpersonal relationships and sense-making processes. In this sense, interactions between research participants and their behaviour in their natural contexts are crucial. The focus of the study is on four mainstream primary schools situated in the Moretele Sub-District on the Bojanala District, in the Northwest province. That is mainly because a case study in the context of this study includes significant role players like parents, teachers, and learners. The knowledge gained from case studies is specific and situational.

A case study research design uses a range of methods or instruments to collect data. Teachers in the selected schools. A case study, as per Cohen et al. (2018:376), provides readers with a unique representation of real people in real situations, making topics easier for them to understand than if abstract theories or principles were all that was given. Since the case study approach assumes that the case under investigation is unique among cases of a given type, a single example can provide insight into the circumstances and occurrences that are typical in the group from which the case was picked. Furthermore, according to Cohen et al. (2018:380), case studies generally adhere to the interpretive tradition of research, which entails seeing the circumstance from the perspective of the participants.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The researcher employs the interpretivist paradigm because it makes a link between human experiences and behavioural patterns. According to Kwadwo and Hamza (2015, mentioned in Malahlela, 2017:58), the interpretive paradigm is based on the interpretation of the gathered data in order to give it meaning by making connections between the data and some abstract pattern and in order to understand phenomena by the meanings that people have given them. Leavy (2017:129) claims that this paradigm is centred on how people assign meaning to their social interactions. Working with this paradigm highlights how individuals interact and the ways in which they understand events, situations, and other things. In the study process, researchers who employ this paradigm prioritise or emphasise people's subjective interpretation and meanings.

According to interpretivists, reality is relative and depends on an individual's individualised viewpoints, perception, attitudes, intentions, beliefs, and values. According to Cohen et al. (2018:19), the interpretivist viewpoint creates meaning by drawing on participants' interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The interpretative paradigm aims to comprehend the subjective domain of human experience. To preserve the integrity of the phenomenon being studied, the

objective is to understand the subject from within. To comprehend how the participants perceive the occurrence of behavioural problems, this study tries to investigate their social surroundings. According to Cohen et al. (2018:288), behaviour and data are socially located, related to context, dependent on context, and rich in context. Different contexts affect behaviours and viewpoints, and vice versa, and researchers need to comprehend context both explicitly and broadly to grasp a scenario. Understanding, describing, and elucidating the various and disparate interpretations of situations, as well as their distinctiveness, causes, and outcomes, is one of the researcher's tasks. To put it another way, the interpretive paradigm supported the development of the reality of behavioural challenges in primary school settings.

With the interpretative paradigm, the researcher can also get detailed information from the participants by establishing connections based on reciprocal exchanges. Cohen et al. (2018:288) assert that people act with purpose, intentionality, and creativity and that social interactions, events, and relationships give rise to meaning, which is then shaped by the participants' individual interpretive processes. The interpretative method, as Okeke (2015:209) notes, is centred on the interpretation of meaning that is specific to their social milieu. The conclusions of this study were derived from an interpretation of teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding handling behavioural problems in the classroom. The interpretive paradigm in the current study depends on in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Population and sampling require that one must choose which individuals, environments, and activities to include in the study. Sampling, as defined by Tuswa (2016:10), is the process of selecting research subjects from a wide population. It involves making decisions about which people, places, activities, and social processes to examine. The participants in this study are the department heads (DHs) and teachers at the selected primary schools in the Bojanala District. A population, according to Decarlo (2018:264), is the set of people in which a researcher is most interested; it's frequently the "who" you want to be able to answer at the end of your investigation. The population of the study, which consists of a larger number of participants, was selected for the sample. The study's sample consists of one departmental head (DH) and two Inter-Sen (grade 7) teachers from each of the four selected primary schools. The selected schools are situated within the Moretele Local Municipality and are mostly overcrowded and under-resourced. Twelve people in all, from four rural, public mainstream primary schools in the Moretele Sub-District of Bojanala District, Northwest Province, participated in this study.

Purposeful sampling is used to select participants who contribute to the informational demands of the study, to develop theories and notions about the topic being examined, and to better understand people's experiences. The approach of purposeful non-probability sampling was employed to choose the sample. The sample for this study was selected using a sort of non-probability sampling called purposeful sampling, in which the researcher made judgements about the individuals included in the sample. The selection of a study sample needs to be predicated on its propensity to yield insightful information and pertinent data regarding the subject under investigation. Purposive sampling is a tactical approach that looks for cases with a lot of information in order to choose the best examples to address the research's questions and problems, according to Leavy (2017:79). The researcher thought that through teacher preparation, in-service training, or structured workshops, the teachers had been given the chance to learn the principles of inclusive education, even if she had no personal connection to the instructors or the schools selected.

When a participant is purposefully selected based on the individual's characteristics, this is known as a purposive sampling technique. In this study, a small sample of teachers' experiences with the mediation of behavioural challenges in their primary school classrooms were investigated. The implication therein is that the participants are advised and encouraged to speak in-depth about and offer specific information regarding the subject of the study. The four mainstream primary school teachers who are dealing with behavioural challenges in their classes were chosen to provide rich data for the study. The researcher retained discretion over which primary schools or participants would generate or provide rich and extensive information. The four schools where the study was carried out employed different techniques, concepts, locations, and strategies to address behavioural concerns. The conclusions were unique to the setting in which the data was collected. The way teachers view behavioural difficulties in the classroom was influenced by several factors, which are unique to each learning site.

3.5 INSTRUMENTATION

As is the case in this study, qualitative researchers frequently collect data from multiple sources, such as focus groups, interviews, and observations, in addition to relying on one primary source. All options and techniques for obtaining the data are carefully considered to enhance the study's capacity to address the research questions and/or objectives. The current study used field observations to observe and gather data about behavioural challenges as and when they occurred in mainstream primary school classrooms. The three techniques used in this study to collect data were focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observation. Teachers were interviewed, and then interactions between learners and teachers were observed. The following sections included a discussion of the data collection tools used in this investigation.

3.5.1 In-depth interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to facilitate communication between the researcher and the participants. This method is the most crucial instrument for data collection in this qualitative research because it allows for active listening and helps interpret the meaning of the participants' experiences. Cohen et al. (2018:535) state that semi-structured formats are common for in-depth interviews as they allow the participants' answers to guide the conversation. Semi-structured interviews, according to Naicker (2021:133), involve questioning and elaboration based on a pre-written list of themes that the researcher wishes to explore. Consequently, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were the primary technique used to investigate teachers' perspectives on moderating behavioural difficulties in primary school classes. To gather information about the Inter-Sen phase heads of department and teachers' perspectives on managing behavioural difficulties in their classrooms, the researcher conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with them.

The main research question, framed as "What are the teachers' perceptions toward the mediation of behavioural challenges in primary school classrooms?", was best addressed through in-depth interviews with teachers. These interviews are valuable for thoroughly exploring new issues or gaining an in-depth understanding of subjects' beliefs and behaviours. Creating an interview schedule was one way to collect the data. According to Lebopa (2018:59), interviews are used in qualitative research because they provide direct information from those interested in the subject matter, offering deeper insights into the topics under investigation. This method allows researchers to pose pointed questions that enhance their understanding of both the phenomenon being examined and the feelings of the participants. Because they encourage the admission of genuine experiences, the expression of emotions, and the creation of a realistic image of the phenomenon being examined, interviews were the primary strategy for gathering data for this study.

3.5.1.1 Interview procedure

Notifying the principals of the selected schools was the first step in preparing for the interviews. Once potential participants were chosen, the researcher introduced himself and explained the goals of the study transparently. After obtaining consent, the researcher audio-recorded the participants' words, mentioning specific individuals whenever possible, as teacher A, B, C and C, to maintain anonymity. The interviews occurred in a quiet environment, a staffroom or classroom during and after school, depending on the availability of the participants. According to Waafa (2019:66) the interviewee is given the chance to clarify and expand on their responses after the interviewer, who is the researcher, explains the questions to them. The formation of the relationship between the researcher and the participants is facilitated by the interpersonal interaction that occurs between the

two sides. Participants' perspectives must be acknowledged and believed. Guiding questions are asked to seek clarification on specific pieces of information, and there should be zero tolerance for any form of personal influence from the researcher.

These interviews were carefully organised and conducted in a non-threatening, non-judgemental setting. Participants were informed before the interview that they could use the language in which they felt most comfortable. The interviews were conducted in a calm environment with minimal outside disturbances. Interviews were recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate data capture. According to Leavy (2017:139), in-depth interviews may occur between the researcher and one participant at a time. These interviews can be open-ended, inductive, semi-structured, or unstructured. In other words, there are no set lists of acceptable responses, such as true or false. Rather, participants are allowed to respond in whatever manner they see fit, using their own words and providing in-depth, long-form answers if desired.

Through semi-structured and open-ended interview questions, we expect the in-depth interviews with carefully selected instructors to yield rich and pertinent material, addressing the sub-research questions of this project. Informing the principals of the chosen schools is the first step in organising the interviews. Prospective participants are then chosen, and the researcher introduces himself and the study's goals without deceiving anyone. After receiving permission, the researcher conducts one-on-one interview sessions, takes field notes, and audio records the participants' responses. Participant perceptions on behavioural challenges in the classroom, factors leading to the development of problematic behaviours in primary school classrooms, and strategies for mediating these challenges were discussed. Participants were asked several crucial questions aimed at extracting relevant responses to the research questions of the current study.

The researcher approached the participants to learn more about their impressions of behavioural issues in primary school classrooms after carefully designing and selecting probing questions. Using open-ended questions was an effective strategy to elicit more specific information from the participants. See Appendix H, used by the researcher as a set of questions to guide and conduct the interview process. Doody and Noonan (2013; mentioned in Tshangela, 2019:81) contend that these inquiries seek to elucidate participants' knowledge of the phenomenon, their experiences, feelings, attitudes, and values, as well as, in some cases, demographic information. This approach frees teachers from the constraints imposed by closed-ended or structured questions, allowing them to respond based on their own views and perceptions. The interviews were tape-recorded to ensure all information was accurately and thoroughly captured without prejudice. For ease of data synthesis

and analysis, the researcher was allowed to ask follow-up questions if needed to gain clarification or elaboration on any point presented during the interview.

3.5.2 Observations

The researcher observed people in their natural environments to gain a true sense of the situation. Field observations were crucial to this study as they illuminated teachers' genuine attitudes and behaviours towards learners with behavioural difficulties in various school and classroom settings. According to Ross (2018, mentioned in Madiba, 2023:31), the observation method is an active procedure that involves closely observing and documenting items, events, and participant behaviour patterns for a research study without approaching or interacting with participants. The researcher had the opportunity to observe the methods teachers employed to manage difficult behaviour in learners during classroom interactions. The goal of inclusive education is to be fully implemented in settings where the majority of learning goals are achieved. Consequently, primary school teachers' classrooms served as the main observational sites for this investigation. The observation tool included specific items to examine, assessing the classroom environment's overall accessibility, conduciveness, and adaptability.

In the classroom settings, twelve teachers from four distinct Bojanala District schools were observed during teaching and learning processes. Tshangela (2019:80) emphasises that observation includes listening to casual discussions and noting body language both during interviews and non-participant classroom observations. The researcher must maintain an objective viewpoint, avoiding any bias. Observation is a purposeful, systematic, and focused act of observing and listening to phenomena or interactions as they occur. Malahlela (2017:67) regards field observations as extremely important, revealing teachers' genuine beliefs and behaviours regarding behavioural difficulties in school and classroom settings. Observations were conducted during regular school hours, with additional arrangements made only during unforeseen circumstances. The focus was on characterising behavioural problems, examining the factors that led to their emergence, and assessing the strategies teachers used to address these difficulties. The researcher adopted a non-participant role, observing and listening to natural occurrences at the research site. Non-participant observation involves watching and listening to group activities without participating, drawing conclusions from the observed interactions. Neuman (2011, mentioned in Malahlela, 2017:66–67) specifies that field observations, supported by an observation sheet, are necessary to determine if teachers successfully employ inclusive education strategies to mediate behavioural challenges in primary school classrooms.

The interpretive paradigm in qualitative research aims to examine social interactions in their natural setting through observation, to comprehend and interpret how individuals construct meaning in their social environments. Therefore, the researcher valued field observations to triangulate and confirm information gleaned from semi-structured interviews. Flick (2018:23) explains that triangulation allows researchers to view a topic from multiple perspectives or address research questions using various methods. This approach involves combining different data types and considering various methodologies to understand the data comprehensively. Triangulation should produce information at several levels, promoting the improvement of research quality. Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2016:93-94) insist that triangulation involves gathering insights from different participants or various data sources. By incorporating data from different sources and categories, the researcher gained a more thorough and clear understanding of the study's surroundings and subjects.

The aim of the observations in this study was to understand how teachers perceived mediating behavioural difficulties in the classroom. Observations focused on the methods teachers used to manage disruptive behaviour, how teachers and learners interacted, the behaviours teachers found challenging, and the overall environment and mood of the classroom. The researcher paid close attention to classroom dynamics, methods used to encourage good behaviour, and how teachers addressed behavioural challenges and employed inclusive teaching methods to mediate such challenges.

3.5.3 Focus group discussions

Another common skill methodologically systematised and employed in qualitative research is focus group discussion. According to Leavy (2017:19), focus groups provide members with the chance to freely discuss what they believe to be essential based on their experiences, using their own stories as examples. They can be utilised to elicit information from people who may be hesitant to do so. The researcher employed focus groups as an additional technique to gather data from participants who were purposefully chosen because they are believed to be rich sources of knowledge about the study at hand. This method enabled the researcher to collect data on the study's research topic with thorough descriptions and examples using the participants' own language, which were later translated verbatim into English. Focus group discussions are a qualitative research approach where attitudes, opinions, or perceptions of a topic are examined through a free-flowing conversation between group members and the researcher. They are facilitated group conversations in which a researcher introduces topics or poses questions that prompt discussion among participants.

Focus group conversations, which are often casual but directed towards the study's research topic, can assist participants in revealing what might not be disclosed through other data collection methods. Participants engaged in informal discussions about what teachers identified as behavioural issues in the classroom, the causes of problematic behaviours, and the strategies used to manage these challenges in primary school classrooms. According to Tuswa (2016:10), the interpretive method regards interviews as a way to ascertain people's true feelings. The researcher worked to foster an atmosphere of openness and trust to allow participants to express themselves authentically. Focus group interviews are useful for discussing issues with a select group of people, as opposed to one-on-one, to gain a deeper understanding. Decarlo (2018:386) asserts that focus groups can be just as effective as individual interviews. These sessions allow researchers to observe participants' body language in addition to listening to their words, making them particularly effective for studying social processes. As noted by Cohen et al. (2018:532), focus groups facilitate the expression of participants' perspectives by enabling communication among participants rather than solely with the interviewer.

Focus group discussions can be dominated more by participant opinions than by the researcher's agenda. Cohen et al. (2018:532) state that these discussions occur in artificial settings, which is both a strength and a weakness. Although they are structured and intensely focused on a specific issue, yielding insights that might not be obtained from a simple interview, they are still unnatural settings. Focus group discussions are time-efficient, often producing a lot of data quickly, though typically less detailed than in-depth interviews. The key benefits of group interviews include yielding a wealth of data, eliciting responses beyond those of a single interviewee, and stimulating participants to recall events.

Table 1.1. Strengths and weaknesses of focus group discussions. *Adapted from Decarlo (2018).*

Strengths	Weaknesses
— -Yield detailed, in-depth data.	— -Expensive
— -Less time-consuming than one-on-one interviews	— -May be more time-consuming than survey research.
— -Useful for studying social processes.	— -Minority of participants may dominate entire group.
— -Allow researchers to observe body language in addition to self-reports.	— -Some participants may not feel comfortable talking in groups.
— -Allow researchers to observe interaction between multiple participants.	— -Cannot ensure confidentiality.

Focus groups are popular because they foster discussion and cooperation on the subject matter. Additionally, they let researchers to see how members of the group interact with one another and behave in different ways to obtain data on human behaviour. Two focus group discussions were conducted, consisting of six participants in each group, after school hours in a venue agreed to by all participants, for example at school A or school B. The venues were convenient for all teachers due to the proximity of the four selected primary schools. The researcher facilitated the discussions by posing guiding questions pertinent to the investigation and allowed the participants to discuss freely and openly among themselves. The group discussions lasted between 40-55 minutes, see Appendix I for a set of guiding questions pertaining to focus group discussion. Focus groups, like one-on-one qualitative interviews, can be expensive and time-consuming. Decarlo (2018:383) states that the researcher should be prepared to clarify to focus group participants their responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of the material disclosed in the group. While the researcher can and should encourage everyone in the focus group to maintain anonymity, it is also important to let members know that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because of other factors present in the group setting. After focus groups end, the participants' conversations with others are not under the researcher's control.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a challenging process that necessitates alternating between concrete data points and abstract concepts, inductive and deductive reasoning, and descriptive and interpretive logic. The results of a study stem from these interpretations, comprehensions, and insights. According to Tuswa (2016:59), categorising the data and detecting patterns or links within the categories—most of which originate from the data—represent the main steps in qualitative data analysis. Most

qualitative researchers use an interpretive and subjective method when analysing data, while an analytical approach may be structured or appear intuitive. When analysing qualitative data, the researcher seeks to generalise connections between data categories.

The qualitative researcher describes, categorises, and connects events using their conceptualisations of the phenomenon throughout the data analysis process. They build their patterns, categories, and themes from the ground up by organising the data into increasingly abstract informational fragments. This inductive approach involves going back and forth between the topics and the database to arrive at a comprehensive set of themes. Researchers deductively review the data they have collected from the themes to determine whether they need to collect further data to support each theme. Consequently, as the analysis progresses, deductive reasoning also gains importance, even though the process begins inductively.

The next step is to code and classify any emergent patterns. The practice of identifying codes in qualitative data is called "coding." Coding, as defined by Maxwell and Miller (2008, mentioned in Naicker, 2021:136), involves grouping and classifying data into categories that are subsequently compared within and between groups in subsequent readings. Finding recurring themes in qualitative data requires coding, which involves reading and rereading transcripts until the researcher is confident in the patterns that emerge. The data from each participant are coded using various coloured highlighters, which are beneficial for highlighting trends and connections. According to Decarlo (2018:388), with qualitative data analysis, a compilation of transcripts from focus groups or interviews is usually the first step. To obtain these transcripts, thorough notes must be taken or, preferably, the focus group or interview should be recorded and then transcribed. Decarlo (2018:389) further states that the goal of qualitative data analysis is to extract some inferences, lessons, or conclusions by distilling massive amounts of data into comparatively smaller, more manageable chunks of comprehensible information. The researcher initially reviews the field notes and transcripts to gain familiarity with them, requiring total immersion in the collected data.

When analysing qualitative data, a generic inductive methodology is often used, meaning that no explicit theories are imposed on the data to test a particular hypothesis. Instead, conceptual categories and descriptive themes allow the data to 'speak for themselves'. These themes are typically contained within a coherent framework of related concepts. Christensen and Burke (2017: 271) assert that qualitative data analysis is inherently eclectic, resulting in the absence of a singular, definitive technique for data analysis due to the characteristics of the collected data. The data collected via in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions were arranged, transcribed, and coded by the researcher. Numerous themes and/or categories were inductively

established from the coding to analyse and display the results. The researcher considered how the themes contributed to the overall theoretical perspective and the evidence. Themes that shed light on the main research issues were identified. Data gathered during observations were catalogued, coded, organised, and placed into themes. The same coding and analysis were applied to follow-up interviews to identify common patterns between the two data-gathering techniques.

Using the coded and categorised data as well as the interview transcripts, the final analysis of any patterns and interpretations that emerged from the data was confirmed. Consequently, themes, interpretations, and patterns began to take shape. Most of the time, the collection and analysis of qualitative data occurred simultaneously; new information shaped the types of data collected and the techniques employed. Making notes during the data collection and analysis process was an essential method. The notes showed the researcher's thought process and guided a final conceptualisation that provided theories to explain the results and addressed the original or related research questions. Taylor et al. (2016:169) claim that data collection and analysis are intertwined in qualitative research. The researcher continually theorised while conducting non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions to interpret the data acquired. The researcher needed to read through their transcripts or field notes and identify new themes or ideas before interpreting the data. Taylor et al. (2016:169) assert that the process of data analysis is inventive and dynamic. The purpose of analysis is to assist the researcher in developing a deeper understanding of the content and making ongoing improvements to interpretations. Cohen et al. (2018:315) define data analysis as the process of organising, accounting for, and evaluating the data. In other words, it involves interpreting the data by considering the participants' definitions of the circumstances and identifying trends, themes, classifications, and regularities. In qualitative research, data collection usually precedes data analysis.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Some behaviours may be seen as ethical while others may be unethical in social science studies on people and their interactions with the outside environment. Tshangela (2019:85) indicates that ethical concerns are prevalent in all studies and cannot be avoided. Conflicts between the goals of the study and participant rights are likely to result from this. Ethics is concerned with avoiding harm and acting morally no matter what. Applying moral standards to a study nullifies the possibility of injury and other unethical behaviour. The following steps were taken in the study to ensure that it was ethical:

3.7.1 PERMMISION

The researcher first obtained the University of South Africa's (UNISA) research ethical clearance before requesting permission from the relevant authorities to attend the study or learning site. The circuit manager and school principals, who serve as gatekeepers for the Department of Education (DoE), also granted consent to the researcher. The Bojanala District Office of the Northwest Provincial Department of Education granted authorization for the researcher to conduct research in the four primary schools prior to starting this project. Prior to visiting the location and collecting data, permission was also requested from the principals of the schools. To learn more about teachers' opinions, ideas, attitudes, and experiences with regard to mediating behavioural difficulties in the classroom, in-depth interviews were conducted. To document even the slightest details during these interviews, it is necessary to make recordings that capture even the little details of the research process. Before each interview begins, permission was obtained from each participant to record their comments to protect their feelings of security and comfort. The participants gave their agreement before the interviews were recorded. In addition to maintaining impartiality and professional integrity, this was done to prevent fraud.

3.7.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE

In print, neither the participants nor the schools they represent will be recognisable to preserve the confidentiality of the data. According to Christensen and Burke (2017:317) confidentiality in this sense can be understood as an agreement between study participants and researchers on the uses of the information collected about them. The researcher won't ask for the participants' or schools' names or addresses. The names of the participants won't be noted anywhere. The participant responses will be labelled according to code names. Every piece of information, whether from the data, publications, or other research reporting methods like conferences, was cited in this way. Confidentiality was ensured because each participant's name was kept separate from the data obtained. Code names and places were used to safeguard the identities and privacy of the individuals whose data was collected. The identity of the participants in the study was kept confidential. Participants received guarantees that any data they volunteered in the interviews would only be utilised for research purposes and that no one else would learn about their experiences with disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

3.7.3 VOLUNTARY INFORMED CONSENT

Before conducting an interview, one must, as Lebopa (2018:65) states, "obtain written permission granting consent from all the participants, who need to acknowledge that they fully consent to complete specific tasks." Volunteers were asked for their informed consent before being asked to

participate in the study after being informed about the procedures and goals for potential research subjects. It was made clear to every participant that participation in the study is completely voluntary, and they are not obligated to take part. According to Berg and Lune (2017:46), it is a cornerstone of ethical research practice for subjects to knowingly consent to participate in a study without experiencing any instances of fraud, dishonesty, pressure, or manipulation. They are free to join or not, and they are allowed to withdraw at any time. I ensured that everyone participating in this study gave their informed consent.

To obtain participants' informed consent to engage in the study, the researcher must ensure that the necessary procedures are in place. A person gives their free agreement to participate in research after fully understanding the study's purpose, potential dangers, and advantages, according to Decarlo (2018:121). To obtain participants' agreement, the researcher must also fully disclose any dangers or other elements that could result in their physical, psychological, legal, or social harm and seek ways to minimise these risks. Achieving informed consent requires a trusting relationship between the researcher and participants. The researcher must also balance adequately informing participants about the study's goals and risks without overwhelming them with information. Providing participants with the choice to decide whether or not to participate in the study is a crucial aspect of obtaining informed consent.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The validity of this study was assessed by asking participants or mainstream primary school teachers questions that are relevant to the current South African educational system, which demands the promotion and implementation of inclusive education. Transparency regarding teachers' assessments of behavioural issues in the classroom was ensured by allowing them to view their responses to the questions that were presented to them as well as the way they were recorded. Finding credibility is the real challenge of data analysis, claims Maree (2016:123). By using several strategies to stop the results from being skewed, the validity of this study was established. To show my gratitude for their participation, I gave the participants comments on the research's findings. The most common questions that researchers have about empirical studies in order to verify their reliability.

It is imperative for the researcher to ensure the use of various data collection approaches, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observations. In order to triangulate the results, the researcher asked his supervisor to verify that the interview questions were comprehended by the interviewees and that the observation checklist matched these questions. All of these suggestions should be noted by the researcher, who will use the qualitative research approach, and adhered to

within the parameters of ethical requirements. The researcher observed teachers, did focus groups, and then conducted interviews to finish this study.

3.8.1 CREDIBILITY

Making sure that records of the findings about the phenomenon being studied are accurate and reliable requires credibility above all else. To guarantee that only individuals who truly prepared or were willing to engage in the methods for gathering data are included. If study participants no longer feel comfortable participating, they can opt out, according to a provision contained in the informed consent form by the researcher. When the researcher's conclusions align with the opinions of the participants, the study gains credibility, according to Singh (2013; mentioned in Adjei, 2021:38). Credibility is increased by getting to know the participants early on. I became acquainted with the participants, did member checks, took reflective notes, and had regular briefing sessions with my supervisor.

The participants were questioned to confirm that the information obtained from earlier interviews or casual chats was appropriately interpreted during follow-up in-depth interviews. According to Dladla (2021:49) credibility in qualitative research pertains to the ability of the researcher to accurately portray the realities of the study subjects. In order to remedy any factual errors, the participants' field notes or transcripts were sent for the purpose of doing member checks. To ensure that the qualitative results of this study on the mediation of behavioural issues in mainstream primary schools are accurate, specific descriptors or themes that arose from the transcribed material were revisited. This ensured that readers could trust the study's conclusions as true.

3.8.2 DEPENDABILITY

According to De Vos et al. (2009, mentioned in Adjei, 2021:39), dependability is the consistency of outcomes when the same individuals are used for the study within the same setting. To ensure dependability in this study, taped responses from interview sessions were replayed to participants to confirm their statements. According to Dladla (2021:49) the notion of dependability in a qualitative investigation is attained through a thorough and adequately full explanation of the procedures. Two studies conducted in the same setting or with identical participants may produce different findings, but as long as they both accurately reflect the situation as it stands today, they can both be trusted. The research design and implementation for this study, along with the operational details of data collection and analysis, were clearly outlined to aid readers in understanding how the procedures have been applied effectively to ensure their dependability and trustworthiness. It was anticipated that the details of the research technique would increase the study's reliability.

3.8.3 TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability is the process of adapting study results to different contexts. The study presented the opinions of the participants on their beliefs and experiences with behavioural difficulties in primary school classrooms. According to Naicker (2021:127), the rich and vivid details about the people and surroundings pique the reader's interest and help them visualise the information, which enables the findings to be applied to other situations and settings. Transferability allows readers to connect study components to their own studies or experiences without requiring them to make generalised assertions. Transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be used broadly or in other contexts or settings. I concentrated on how normal the participants were and how they handled behavioural issues in the classroom to achieve this. I focused more on giving readers a clearer picture of the setting being examined so they may investigate and see whether the findings could be transferable and relevant to their own contexts.

3.8.4 CONFIRMABILITY

How much the researcher's values or principles interfered with the study might be referred to as confirmability. According to Berger (2015:229), the researcher's bias, assumptions, and personality cannot be isolated from the study's operations, even despite the researcher's best efforts to remove personal bias from the investigation. According to Berger (2015:229), reflexivity is an approach that considers the researcher's role in the study and requires recognising each individual decision and action taken within the parameters of the inquiry. Furthermore, it is advisable to accept any predispositions by deciding not to relate to the research participants or the researcher, even if there is a relationship between them and the researcher. Rather than taking part, the researcher observed as an observer to gain insight into the participants' perspectives on how they address disruptive behaviours in the classroom. Participants were then questioned by the researcher if they agreed with the interpretations made of their focus group and interview responses. This facilitated readers' understanding of the researcher's methodology.

3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The Northwest Province's Moretele Sub-District, located in the Bojanala District, served as the research site. Many of the schools in the province were inaccessible to the researcher because of time constraints and distances between them. A rather modest sample size was used in the investigation. The survey only included four mainstream primary schools. Two grade 7 teachers and the departmental head of each school were observed and interviewed from the four research sites that were chosen. We observed and conducted interviews with twelve participants in all. The results were context specific and cannot be used to make generalisations to other situations. Collecting

data using interviews can also be a limiting factor because teachers might understand questions differently. There could be a lack of awareness among teachers regarding how to handle behavioural challenges in the classroom, which could lead to various difficulties when implementing inclusive strategies. The study's teaching and learning sites, as well as the individuals selected, were determined by their eagerness and readiness for the study. There's no doubt that alternative conditions and participants would have produced different results. The results, however, were adequate to provide the DoE for the Northwest province and the DBE, with significant recommendations regarding the perceptions of mainstream primary school teachers regarding the mediation of behavioural problems in the classroom.

3.9.1 OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS

After entering the teaching and learning environment and stating the purpose of the study, the next challenge was gaining the trust and confidence of research subjects. The outcomes of the focus groups and in-person interviews, as well as the things the participants decide to say and reveal, may be beyond the researcher's control. The research participants were urged or encouraged to answer questions honestly and completely during the interviews.

3.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was limited to four primary schools in the Bojanala District in order to control the gathering and analysis of data. Teachers in the Senior phase (Grade 7) and the departmental heads participated in the research study eager to contribute to policy and practice.

3.11 CONCLUSION

The chapter consisted of a broad outline of the systematic way in which the research problem was addressed. The methodology included research design and approach, research paradigm, population and sampling, data instrumentation, data analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations of the study, and overcoming those limitations. The following chapter deals with the analysis of data and the findings thereof.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of primary school teachers' perceptions regarding the mediation of behavioural challenges in mainstream classroom settings. By examining and analysing the research discussed in Chapter 2—which explored what teachers consider to be behavioural problems in primary school classrooms and the potential causes of such behaviours—we aim to better understand the phenomenon in the Bojanala District. The study paradigm, design, and data collection techniques were reviewed in the previous chapter, Chapter 3. This chapter presents and discusses the information gathered from focus groups, in-depth interviews, and non-participant observations. The findings are presented in response to the study's main research question: What are teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classroom?

The study's sub-research questions and objectives, which include 1) teachers' perceptions about behavioural challenges, 2) factors contributing to the development of behavioural challenges, and 3) strategies to mediate behavioural challenges in primary school classrooms, formed the basis for the predetermined concepts derived from an overview of the data analysis. The results presented in this chapter will also be examined in light of recent research to strengthen and validate their reliability. The next section presents the biographical information of the participants. The study targeted departmental heads and Grade 7 teachers at selected primary schools in Moretele, Bojanala District, Northwest Province, South Africa. To protect the confidentiality of the schools and participants, codes such as P-1 to P-12 and School-A to School-D were used during the data analysis process.

Table 4.1. Participants' biographical data

Participants' code, School & Phase	Gender	Position at work	Years of teaching experience	Highest qualification	
SCHOOL-A					
P-1	Inter-Sen	Female	Grade7 teacher	25	Med
P-2	Inter-Sen	Male	DH	24	BTech: Education Management
P-3	Inter-Sen	Male	Grade7 teacher	10	BEd Hons in Education Management
SCHOOL-B					
P-4	Inter-Sen	Male	Grade7 teacher	26	BA. Ed
P-5	Inter-Sen	Female	Grade7 teacher	6	BEd (GET: Intermediate Phase)
P-6	Inter-Sen	Female	DH	6	BEd Hons
SCHOOL-C					
P-7	Inter-Sen	Female	Grade7 teacher	8	Postgraduate diploma (PGdip) In Inclusive Education
P-8	Inter-Sen	Male	DH	23	UDEP
P-9	Inter-Sen	Male	Grade7 teacher	7	BEd Hons in Education Management
SCHOOL-D					
P-10	Inter-Sen	Female	Grade7 teacher	8	BEd (GET: Intermediate Phase)
P-11	Inter-Sen	Female	Grade7 teacher	14	Advanced Certificate (ACE) in Education Management
P-12	Inter-Sen	Male	DH	30	UDEP

The personal information of the participants who were purposefully chosen is shown above, together with information about their gender, job position, number of years spent teaching, and greatest level of education (ideally in the area of inclusive education). The participants were purposefully chosen by the researcher based on their extensive background in assisting learners with challenging behaviour in the classroom. Thus, in the context of this study, the chosen participants were seen as informants with a wealth of knowledge.

4.2 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the predefined themes of the study that arose from the sub-research questions and/or objectives. The sub-themes that the researcher identified while transcribing the recorded data and conducting the analysis are also presented. The themes and sub-themes then assisted the researcher in providing answers to the study questions.

Table 4.2. Summary of the predefined themes of the study

<p>Theme 1: Teachers' perceptions towards behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms</p>	<p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Perceptions of behavioural challenges. — Inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges. — Positive and negative experiences of inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges. — Mainstream teachers' understanding of behavioural challenges — -Teacher training and continuous professional development
<p>Theme 2: Factors contributing to the development of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms</p>	<p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The influence of overcrowded classrooms. — Family background — Teacher influences — Parental involvement. — The influence of peer relationships.
<p>Theme 3: Strategies to mediate behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms</p>	<p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — How to accommodate of learners with behavioural challenges. — Types of support by the school. — How teachers deal with disruptive behaviour. — Effective classroom management. — Stakeholder involvement and promotion of inclusive education.

The section that follows contains the data analysis and the precise quotes that bolster the researcher's interpretation of the ideas and emotions expressed by the participants in focus groups and in-depth interviews. Qualitative data analysis, according to Dye (2021:1), explores the stories

concealed in non-numerical data, such as observational notes, open-ended survey questions, and interview transcripts. Through shedding light on the "whys" and "hows," it provides a profound comprehension of individuals' emotions and experiences. Jnanathapaswi (2021:2) continues that qualitative data analysis is the process of organising, deriving meaning from, and presenting findings from gathered data. Non-participant observations yielded data that supplemented the findings from the data collection tools. The presentation of the study's findings was guided by the main themes, which emerged from the sub-research questions and/or objectives.

4.2.1 Findings from In-depth interviews

4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the classroom

Teachers in ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classrooms encounter behavioural challenges in their classrooms, in one way or another, based on the results of a study on teachers' perceptions of mediating behavioural issues. At the mild level, there are generally rebellious, ill-mannered, and undisciplined learners whose actions are typically caused by the specific school system's insufficient discipline structures. This is significantly different from children with severe pathological behaviour disorders, such as juvenile delinquency, conduct disorder, and oppositional defiance disorder. These children can be managed with the SIAS process and may require special behavioural schooling. These are severe, long-term conditions that require a psychologist's diagnosis. The SIAS procedure is intended to help learners with severe behavioural issues and special needs limitations. Teachers may come across a variety of undesirable behaviours at different schools, depending on the situation.

The following sub-themes as illustrated in table 4.2 above, have emerged under theme 1:

a) Teachers' perceptions of behavioural challenges

The behavioural issues that teachers encounter in primary school classrooms have been brought to light, along with the fact that these habits are harmful to the teaching and learning process. Teachers will be better equipped to identify and support challenging students early on if they have a thorough understanding of the types and instances of behavioural issues that each learner presents. Teachers provided examples of their own of behaviours they believed to be problematic in the classroom. The teachers' perceptions of and/or comprehension of behavioural difficulties in their classrooms are expressed in the quotes that follow.

“One of the behavioural challenges in the classroom is that learners disrupt lessons...such as talking out of turn or engaging off-task behaviour which can impact the learning process for both the learners, teachers and the peers” (P3).

“It is behaviour that is challenging to teachers. For example, calling out in class, tantrums, swearing, screaming or refusing to follow instructions” (P5).

“Uhm...you know what I perceive as a behavioural challenge in class...it’s the destructive behaviour where learners who just disrupt you...where learners just throw tantrums...making noise. Yeah, that’s what I feel is disruptive” (11).

b) Inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges

Teachers understood the importance of integrating learners with behavioural challenges into ordinary mainstream classrooms. It was believed that acknowledging inclusion was preferable to excluding someone since it could result in better behaviour. Additionally, teachers indicated that these learners' demanding behaviours frequently interrupted class. Regardless matter how hard they may try to rein in these behaviours in the classroom, the teachers' opinions about the necessity of including learners with behavioural issues are exemplified by the quotations that follow.

“Yeah, it’s unfortunate that we cannot exclude them because of their constitutional rights. We have to accept them in school and then as teachers we need to come up with ways of dealing with such learners with behavioural challenges. So, we cannot exclude them” (P3).

“My perception of inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges...I think it is manageable provided that the root of the behavioural challenge is known. If we say behavioural challenges, it is broad. Now, that behavioural challenge needs to be broken down to know what is the behavioural challenge that we are talking about” (P7).

“Firstly, I believe that each and every learner...each and every person must get an education, okay? So, for me to exclude them I feel like I’m failing them. So, this is a little bit of a problem, but we have to adhere to the policy and include them as much as we can in the classroom” (P11).

c) Positive and negative experiences of inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges

The majority of teachers reported having both good and bad experiences when it came to working with learners who have behavioural problems in primary school classrooms. According to the findings of the participants, teachers primarily reported negative experiences since they were unsure on how to handle learners who had problematic behaviours. Teachers' experiences in the classroom are reflected in the statements that follow.

“My positive experience is that all learners, regardless of their behavioural problems, are included in the Inter-Sen Phase although some still portray the challenges of disrupting the class, and not following simple instructions” (P3).

“As an Inter-Sen educator, the positive aspect of it is that the learners feel a sense of belonging...that actually there is someone who is paying attention to them and actually notices that they are behaving in a certain way...The negative part of it is that the learner can be too emotionally dependent on the educator. Every little, small thing they do...they want to be seen” (P7).

“Positively, many learners open up to their behavioural issues, indirectly so, even though they are not telling you straight but indirectly they are telling you what is causing their behaviour. It’s like they can’t help themselves... you see? Negatively, we are unable to assist the learners that are faced with that kind of behavioural challenges. Firstly, our school, where we are, we are not equipped with such resources to enable us to assist them. I think if we were that equipped, we could help them” (P8).

d) Mainstream teachers’ understanding of behavioural challenges

The results of this study showed that teachers in mainstream classrooms do not fully understand the concept of behavioural challenges. Since behavioural challenges are common in ordinary Inter-Sen classrooms, teachers are left in a difficult situation when handling learners who exhibit challenging behaviours. These conclusions are corroborated by the following statements.

“I can say no, because most of the teachers struggle to work with learners who have behavioural challenges. They tend to exclude them in the classroom when teaching if they start to show those behavioural problems of disrupting the classroom and fighting with other learners” (P3).

“I don’t think the teachers really understand that concept. More especially because they are not workshopped, and they don’t even know. In most cases the teachers that I met are very much confused and they don’t understand or know how to deal with learners who pose behavioural challenges” (P4).

“Most of us do not understand the concept of behavioural challenges. We treat or view learners in totality instead of individually so...forgetting that each learner is different in their own way. So, we don’t understand behavioural challenges maybe because we are not well-equipped in that concept” (P7).

e) Teacher training and continuous professional development

The results of the study have shown how important it is to prioritise teacher training programmes and continuous professional development in terms of the skills, knowledge, and values of the

teaching and learning environment that enable inclusive education. An atmosphere like this will help teachers manage diversity in the classroom, which will then allow them to work with learners who have behavioural challenges. The researcher was persuaded by the participants' reactions to the fact that teachers' ongoing professional development is desperately needed.

“No, as for being adequately trained, I don't think we were trained. We were made aware that yes, we might come across such learners. But as for the training on how to deal with them...that's another thing. We were not” (P2).

“I feel that I'm not effectively trained to teach those learners because sometimes those learners need people who are basically taught about those behaviours. More especially it becomes frustrating and personally I get frustrated when I'm with those learners” (P4).

“Not necessarily that we are trained, not trained in that manner. We go through our BEd degrees...here and there they will touch on Inclusive Education. Sometimes it also depends on maybe the types of modules that you choose... So, as teachers we learn a lot of things on the work. As for training...no” (P6).

4.2.1.2 Theme 2: Factors contributing to the development of behavioural challenges

The influence of overcrowded classrooms, parental involvement, peer relationships, family history, and social environment were found to be the most prevalent elements related with the development of behavioural problems by the researcher through interaction with participants. Additional variables were mentioned as well, based on and differing from teacher to teacher's perceptions.

The following sub-themes as illustrated in table 4.2 above, have emerged under theme 2:

a) The influence of overcrowded classrooms.

Nearly all of the teachers who participated in the interviews agreed that learners' development of behavioural problems was significantly influenced by overcrowded classrooms. They made reference to the fact that they find it challenging to supervise and handle more than fifty learners at once. They are unable to provide each learner the individual attention they so desperately need because of their large class sizes. Teachers also bemoaned the fact that the 1:35 teacher-to-learner ratio does not accurately represent what is happening in classrooms. The teachers suggested that they might be able to deal with the problem of behavioural problems in their classes if the class numbers were smaller. Their opinions are attested to by the statements that follow.

“Overcrowding does affect learning and leads towards the development of behavioural challenges. Reason being...especially in our school...I would like to emphasise this. Our school is a public

school and overcrowding is a serious challenge where we are. Reason being, we cannot attend to each learner individually so...but if they stick to the ratio of 1:35 in a classroom, I think we can overcome many challenges in the classroom” (P8).

“Yeah...the teacher-learner ratio is a problem. You’re having so many learners in a classroom and they are behaving...let’s say among the 60 learners, maybe 10 or 20 are unruly in that classroom, you have to deal with that one. Overcrowding is a problem...it’s a very serious problem. But if we can stick to that...the government can stick to that 1:35, I think it will be much...much better” (P9).

“Overcrowding is another problem that create this...because as the teacher present in the classroom you cannot have attention for the whole classroom because the learners at the back will not listen...” (P12).

b) Family background

The researcher found that some teachers believed that one of the things contributing to the emergence of behavioural issues in learners is their social environment. The child's home environment and family history are viewed as predictors or contributors to the emergence of problematic behaviours that are observed in primary school settings.

“The one that emanates from the home...the socio-economic status in the home or maybe even the abuse the learners are suffering at home or even the abuse from friends or peers. Those things might cause learners to have behavioural challenges” (P2).

“Yeah...sometimes these factors start from the family background because those kids are simply behaviourally neglected...and when they come to class the other learners don’t accept them as their peers. They become a joke to other learners” (P4).

“It could be a lot of factors. One being the background of the learner, where learners come from, the social group the learner associates himself or herself with, the demographics where the child...the society in which the child grows in, and economical background could also be a factor of how the child behaves” (P7).

c) Teacher influences

Teachers in this study have remarked on the significant roles and duties that they have when it comes to managing, developing, and moulding learners that have behavioural challenges in the classroom. In one way or another, teachers' interactions with learners have an impact on the development of behavioural issues in learners because they often give more attention to well-behaved learners than to parents whose children exhibit challenging behaviours. If teachers receive sufficient training that gives them the requisite values, attitudes, knowledge, and abilities, their roles

with learners who have behavioural challenges may be improved. The participants also indicated that in order to help these learners, teachers and parents need collaborate. Teachers' perceptions of their tasks and responsibilities are shown in the following statements.

“Teachers should always remind the learners about the importance of education and allow them to visit places where there are people who can motivate them” (P5).

“Teachers play a huge part in the life of a child. When a learner has behavioural issues and you're always on the child's case. The child, on top of having behavioural challenges, you are now instilling low self-esteem in that child. The child will start thinking that what the teacher is saying is true... 'maybe I'm stupid'... 'maybe I can't do anything'. They put that into their minds and live with it forever. That is not the correct way of going about things. So, if teachers receive training to deal with these types of learners, it could be better so that we can be able to mediate and help these learners” (P6).

“I think if teachers and parents work together... we can have more knowledge on how to control those learners at school... even at home. Especially the ones that are not coping or the ones that have problems. If we work hand-in-hand together we can be able to solve that problem” (P10).

d) Parental involvement.

The results of this study indicate that parental involvement, or lack thereof, has a direct impact on learners' development of behavioural problems. Teachers told the study that a good working relationship between the family and the school is essential if they are to support learners who exhibit behavioural concerns in the classroom. Their efforts will be ineffective and the inclusion of these learners will not be realised if the parents are not involved. Teachers made the following statements to emphasise the value of parental engagement.

“This one is very important. I always tell the learners that education starts at home. When it comes to life in itself, then they must be taught at home. At school we just go on top, but really at home that's where they give you the foundation for everything. Then when parents are not involved, it becomes a challenge. So, parents play a big, big role” (P6).

“As I said, communication is key. Communication between teachers and parents is very key. Sometimes you call them they don't come” (P8).

“Yah...this is clear that this thing of loco parentis is very much important because what you teach the learners here at school, the parents at home must have that sort of ... checking the learners' books. So, if the parents at home can check the learners' work at home, maybe this will help to develop these learners in the classroom” (P12).

e) The influence of peer relationships.

Peer relations are thought to play a role in learners developing behavioural issues in the classroom, according to the majority of teachers, based on the participants' conversations. The teachers explained this, as shown in the sentences that follow, by stating that children behave a specific manner in order to be accepted into the group because they feel pressure to fit in with their classmates.

“Yes, peer relationships can have an influence on learners developing challenging behaviours. We have seen it many times... some of the learners we know are behaving well...then they come across or when they befriend others that have behavioural challenges, they also tend to adopt such behaviours...So, yeah, peer relationships can have an influence in developing challenging behaviours” (P2).

“Most definitely because I feel friends play a vital role in our daily basis behaviour, ‘I want to fit in’, ‘I want to be the cool guy’, I want to be the cool girl in class’...uhm I start making jokes, making fun of other learners, making fun of educators...just to look good in the eyes of my friends” (P11).

“Peer relations...peer pressure...it’s another problem because when learners are in groups for example, there is a learner with this kind of behaviour. Other learners will follow him...with his behaviour because they don’t know whether this is right or wrong...because they are still learners. That will have a negative impact on other learners” (P12).

4.2.1.3 Theme 3: Strategies to mediate behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms

It is the responsibility of primary school teachers to find strategies for mediating behavioural challenges that develop in ordinary classroom settings. It appears that several teachers are not effectively utilising their skills and expertise to carry out their duties.

The following sub-themes as illustrated in table 4.2 above, have emerged under theme 3:

a) Accommodation of learners with behavioural challenges.

The study's conclusions show that teachers make a sincere effort to provide accommodations for learners who exhibit challenging behaviour in the classroom. For these learners to reach their full academic potential and eventually contribute to their communities, it is critical that their parents and teachers offer them support and understanding. It is imperative that teachers get training on how to support learners who exhibit challenging behaviour in mainstream school environments. To address the educational requirements of these learners, teachers must learn and grow in new skills,

knowledge, attitudes, and perspectives. Teachers listed a few tactics, such as seating arrangements, clear rules, talking to the learner, allocating tasks to learners with behavioural issues, lesson planning, and so on, despite their deficiencies in terms of teacher training. The following quotes highlight a number of the tactics that they use in the classroom.

“The first one is the seating arrangement. I place them next to me and assign classroom duties to them. I usually give them duties like cleaning the chalkboard and the teacher’s table” (P1).

“Ok...uhm... increase the distance between desks and place the learner near the tolerant learners. I organise lesson plans and instruction in a way that minimise interruptions” (P3).

“Setting rules...each and every time when I get into class, I set the rules and make sure that they will follow the rules. Don’t just have these high expectations and set rules you know very well they will not follow. So, set those minimal rules like don’t make noise... if you want to talk raise up your hand... yeah, those kind of rules” (P11).

b) Provision of support by the school.

It is the duty of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and School Management Teams (SMTs) to give teachers the tools they need to foster an atmosphere that supports them as they strive to deliver high-quality education. Teachers will also benefit greatly from having an efficient and well-functioning school-based support team when dealing with behavioural concerns that arise in the classroom. According to the participants' comments, the school was not providing much, if any, help in any way.

“As a school I think it is a prerogative to have a code of conduct... So, in the beginning of the year the code of conduct is being read to the learners to say that this is the kind of conduct that we want as a school. And the punitive measures that will be carried out to the learner who misbehaves. In the classroom again there are rules that are displayed on the walls. So, those kinds of things might be helpful towards controlling the learners’ behaviours” (P2).

“To be honest there is the SBST committee, but it is not as effective as it should be. So, I can’t say the school actually does assist us personally. Educators have to come up with their own strategies on how to deal with learners with behavioural problems” (P7).

“They normally call parents... if a learner misbehaves, they call the parents. I think that’s the only support” (P11).

c) Dealing with disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

The research participants reported that they encounter disruptive behaviour from learners on a daily basis. Teachers in mainstream classrooms are very concerned about disruptions to their lessons and disturbances to other learners. Teachers need to devise a strategy for managing such actions when physical punishment is not an option. The following statements provide an expression of how they handle disruptive activities.

“I usually give them lots of activities so that they don’t get a chance to go out or to disturb others even though it is difficult because they just go out without being noticed” (P1).

“Sometimes I just reprimand them verbally because there’s nothing I can do. Yes, they sometimes listen ... sometimes I just become frustrated as an educator, but I do try to verbally reprimand them” (P4).

“Okay, uhm... as we know that corporal punishment is abolished, I think after school I have to sit with those kinds of learners. Maybe try to teach them separately, aiming to change them from this kind of behaviour. Maybe they will have or develop some positive learning behaviours” (P12).

d) Effective classroom management.

Teachers have a crucial role as classroom supervisors in creating a welcoming environment for learning and teaching for all learners. Every research participant acknowledged that certain learners tend to violate the everyday routines and limits in their classrooms. Teachers become agitated by such inclinations because they disturb the culture of teaching and learning in schools and, in certain situations, even endanger the safety of other learners. Teachers expressed the opinion that using good classroom management as an intervention technique can help reduce behaviours that cause difficulties for them in carrying out their tasks. According to several teachers, establishing guidelines and making sure learners abide by them can be highly beneficial. This can reduce behavioural issues and establish structure and order in the classroom.

“Effective classroom management ... I think it’s the core that can help to alleviate the challenging behaviours. When we talk about classroom management...uhm... we’re talking about things like managing your class... uhm...time on task. Getting to class on time because many times an abandoned classroom... if a classroom is left idling, the learners tend to misbehave. So, classroom management includes going to class on time, being there in the classroom, laying out the rules and showing signs of being fair” (P2).

“Effective management helps to instil a sense of tradition to be followed within the classroom. Uhm... those who do not follow, will suffer the consequences obviously. So, that’s it... there are rules to be followed” (P7).

“I give them rules in the classroom. If they don’t follow those rules, they get punishment. Not the harsh one... I take my time and stay with them in the classroom so that their behaviour may change” (P10).

e) Stakeholder involvement and promotion of inclusive education.

All parties involved should support and put into practice policies like SIAS and White Paper 6, since they have the potential to effect positive change. For these inclusion rules to be successfully implemented and become a reality, all pertinent stakeholders, including teachers, must be involved. Teachers stressed that inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges will become ingrained when learning support teachers, parents, and social workers are evident in our educational system. Some even went so far as to demand that the police be involved in order to maintain school safety and control deviant behaviour in society, as well as the engagement of churches for moral advice and divine support. All the study's participants concurred that involving all relevant parties will undoubtedly advance inclusive education and lessen behavioural issues when they arise in the classroom.

“The involvement of relevant stakeholders does help a lot. That way, learners will see that teaching and learning is not just the responsibility of teachers. It also involves other people outside who are able to impart important life lessons so that when they are wrong, they can be able get advice and follow the right path. Perhaps that might minimise behavioural challenges of learners if they adopt the correct and proper behaviour” (P8).

“The involvement of stakeholders is very key. For example, the social workers... they have a role to play when coming to the behaviour patterns of these learners. If we can have somebody from outside to come and stay at school... a social worker... to monitor the day-to-day behaviour of these learners. The second one, like adopt-a-cop... I think it can also help because most of these learners when they see a policewoman or policeman their behaviour changes somewhat. If the police are there to make them aware that when you behave in a particular way, you will be sent to jail. Just to caution them that if you do this... the result will be that... maybe the challenging behaviour by learners will subside... yes” (P9).

“Yes, I think those stakeholders are more relevant. Especially the social workers. They must come to our schools and help us to deal with those learners that are misbehaving. The social worker must come and assist us, even the parents. They must tell us if the learner is having some problems... maybe the problems at home or mental problems. Even the teachers... they can tell that the learner has a problem, but they don't know how to address that problem. So, if the parents can come to school and explain the learner's problem... maybe we can deal with that. Maybe this of learners with behavioural challenges can be lowered” (P10).

4.2.2 FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The researcher presents the results of focus group interviews to support information gathered from in-depth interviews about how primary school teachers perceive the mediation of behavioural challenges in the classroom. There were two focus group talks, with six people participating in each.

4.2.2.1 Teacher perceptions towards behavioural challenges in the classroom

Teachers defined behavioural problems as any disruptive or disorderly behaviour by learners in the classroom, including swearing, creating noise, yelling at other learners, screaming, fighting, and bullying. It is impossible to conduct regular teaching and learning in a classroom when such activities take place. To effectively assist learners with behavioural challenges in the classroom, teachers must recognise and understand that every learner has the capacity to learn, even though every learner is unique. Even more critical is the need for teachers to welcome learners who struggle with behaviour in mainstream classroom settings. Nonetheless, it seemed that teachers were unaware of the kind of assistance that would be best for learners exhibiting difficult behaviours in the classroom. The study's conclusions showed that teachers do not always agree that learners with challenging behaviours should be included in classroom settings. Some even suggested that learners with challenging behaviours should be referred to alternative educational settings where they will receive specialised support and assistance tailored to their needs.

4.2.2.2 Factors contributing to the development of behavioural challenges in the classroom

It was evident from the participants' comments that the learner's familial history had a significant role in the emergence of problematic behaviours. First and foremost, learners must engage in meaningful interactions with the people in their respective families. Second, unsatisfactory or difficult behaviours in the classroom are indicators of social neglect. It is frequently necessary to assess a child's home and social background in order to determine the root of their inability to get along with other learners. The home, school, and society must all have strong relationships in order to positively influence a child's development into a responsible adult. It has also been shown that classroom

overcrowding influenced the emergence of behavioural problems. Teachers were concerned that they would find it difficult to move around the classroom and provide each learner individualised attention.

Teachers also voiced complaints about huge class sizes, claiming that some learners could leave the room quietly while others were unable to complete their classroom activities. They purposefully did this since they knew that the teacher would not be able to see them because of their restricted movement, especially the learners seated in the back of the classroom. According to teachers, peer relationships can have a beneficial or bad impact on the emergence of problematic behaviours. According to them, the bad thing is learners who want to fit in with the group of people who do terrible things cause behavioural issues in the primary school classrooms. Peer relationships offer the benefit of helping learners with challenging conduct model good behaviour from their peers and act accordingly when they are partnered or grouped with well-behaved and excellent learners in the classroom.

4.2.2.3 Strategies used to mediate behavioural challenges in the classroom.

In order to effectively mediate behavioural challenges, teachers in this study maintain that they require ongoing training and development. To provide teachers with the necessary tools to effectively address behavioural issues in primary school classrooms, they demanded that the Department of Education (DoE) implement teacher training programmes, for example, as the first step in the curriculum. It may also help teachers feel more empowered in their careers and be able to carry out their responsibilities with skill and effectiveness. If they are unable to regulate and handle behavioural issues in their classrooms, inefficiencies and incompetence could become apparent. The teachers' replies repeatedly made it clear that they were irritated by their lack of training and understanding on how to deal with difficult behaviour and encourage the adoption of inclusion policies.

Some teachers disclosed that under the former system, they would use physical discipline to reduce disruptive behaviour in the classroom. To help those learners feel loved and wanted in the classroom, they did, however, highlight the necessity for them to control their emotions. Some of the strategies they suggested using to deal with challenging behaviour included designating learners with behavioural challenges as group leaders, reorganising their social groups, moving furniture around the classroom, assigning them personalised tasks, creating a structured routine, encouraging positive behaviour, and praising and reinforcing good behaviour.

It is the belief of teachers that the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) procedure can be effectively implemented through cooperation with district- and school-based support teams (DBSTs and SBSTs). Parents also need to be informed about the SIAS technique. It is the duty of teachers in the SIAS programme to assess learners and identify those who could be at danger of learning disabilities or dropping out of school. As part of inclusive education, support teams must reply to inquiries from school-based support teams as well as teachers. Teachers who worked with learners who had behavioural issues in the classroom all felt that parents and social workers were important stakeholders to involve. Some even suggested that churches and the police must be involved as well.

4.2.3 FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS

To validate the information obtained from focus groups and in-depth interviews and to triangulate the results, the researcher used observations as one of the data collection methods for this study. Because the nature of their work is interpretive, triangulation is a strategy used by qualitative researchers. Triangulating research findings is a procedure that enhances a study's validity and reliability, claim Noble & Heale (2019:67). Put another way, the validation of study outcomes is the main goal of research triangulation. The primary benefit of triangulation, as highlighted by Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021:3), is its capacity to substantiate study findings. According to Usman and Bulut (2021:3), observation is a method of gathering data that involves witnessing people, things, or characteristics in their actual environments.

When assessing the validity of the study and the quality of the data gathered, it is crucial to take the researcher's position during the observation phase into account. Using an observation checklist is appropriate for gathering data through observation. Howitt (2019, mentioned in Negou, Nkenganyi, Suh, and Ibrahima, 2021:7) defines an observation checklist as a list of the things an observer looks at when monitoring participant behaviour. Negou et al. (2021:8) define qualitative observation as a research method in which an observer's subjective assessment is used to describe a phenomenon's attributes. Consequently, the researcher was able to obtain detailed information about the participants' interactions with learners in their real teaching and learning environments through observations.

The researcher assumed the role of an outsider and acted as a complete outsider, keeping a complete distance from the participants' teaching and learning processes. The main advantage of making observations, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2016:263), is that the researcher can make use of unanticipated data sources as they become available. The researcher can use this data to build a comprehensive and detailed picture of how certain people manage their time.

Table 4.3: Findings from the observation checklist on teachers' perceptions towards mediation of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms.

Criteria for observation	Findings
Displays evidence of knowledge of behavioural challenges in the classroom	Based on their personal experiences and or perceptions in the classroom, participants showed that they were aware of behavioural issues.
Offers reward/praise for good behaviour	A few individuals gave the learners recognition for their proper and admirable conduct.
Evidence of appropriate seating arrangement in the classroom	The furniture could not be arranged in the classroom to best support teacher-learner interaction because of overcrowding. For instance, failing to give learners who struggle with behaviour individual attention.
Evidence of classroom rules	The majority of teachers hung routines and regulations on the walls of their classrooms.
Uses inclusive strategies to accommodate learners with behavioural challenges	Some participants lacked the understanding necessary to apply inclusion techniques to learners who display challenging behaviours.
Collaboration with stakeholders	Evidence of collaboration among colleagues is present. For instance, learners exhibiting difficult behaviours were reported to the department head (DH) to receive additional support and intervention.
Effective classroom management	Certain teachers showed the ability to manage and suppress disruptive behaviours in the classroom.
Teaching and learning environment	For the benefit of all learners, teachers work to provide teaching and learning environments that are friendly and safe.

The observational approach has flaws and or disadvantages. The disadvantage of this approach is that the researcher's presence in the room could influence participant behaviour. As a result, it is crucial that the observer adopt a mostly passive posture throughout the initial phases of the observation process and gradually grow to know the subjects. The researcher needs to be careful not to introduce bias into the teaching and learning process. Therefore, rather than trying to influence participant behaviour, the researcher tried to observe events as they occurred in a natural context to see if teachers were able to support or mediate behavioural challenges when they occurred in primary school classrooms.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.3.1 Teacher perceptions towards behavioural challenges.

According to the study, teachers in regular Inter-Sen Phase mainstream classrooms are able to define behavioural challenges, explain them, and provide examples. However, their limited knowledge and unpleasant experiences with the real-world effects of inclusive education presented challenges. Teachers need to be able to organise consistent, meaningful learning experiences. Additionally, teachers need to assess the learning process and its outcomes in a way that makes sense as they get closer to their goals. To overcome any obstacles while incorporating the sociocultural theory into the classroom, teachers must make use of portfolios, work samples, performances, assessments, and observations. According to Vygotsky (1978), the sociocultural theory has two main advantages: it makes sure that children's development is evident and helps teachers shape their lessons. The zone of proximal development, mediation, scaffolding, and holistic analysis are some of these traits. According to Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel, and Tlale (2015:1), participants' attitudes towards inclusive education and their understanding of its definition and execution play a major role in the program's effectiveness.

Their understanding of inclusive education will probably influence how they apply inclusive educational practices in their classrooms, in addition to systemic contextual factors like the culture of their own schools and the stance taken by the larger educational system on inclusive education. Paseka and Schwab (2020:257-258) have identified three essential elements for implementing inclusive education: (1) cultivating an inclusive culture through the establishment of inclusive values and the creation of a community characterised by caring and trust; (2) formulating inclusive policies by organising diversity support through various activities; and (3) promoting inclusive practices through the organisation of learning and mobilisation of resources for a building free of barriers, a spa For inclusion to be realised in our schools and for behavioural issues in the classroom to be successfully resolved, all three elements must be present. That is crucial and very important for advancing inclusive education.

The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and teaching style of teachers towards inclusive education define their practices. Research has demonstrated, according to Adewumi and Mosito (2019:1), that mainstream teachers are not equipped to implement inclusion policies. But as learning becomes more inclusive, these educators are being forced to assume the responsibility of making accommodations for every student in their classes. Teachers were aware of their responsibility to reduce disruptive behaviours in the classroom and to provide learners with the support they need to engage completely in their education. According to Loannidi and Gogaki (2020:17), learners with behavioural, emotional, or behavioural disorders frequently exhibit behaviour that takes on two dimensions: externalisation and internalisation, and that significantly deviates from the norms of the culture and age groups. It should be emphasised that both types of aberrant behaviour have a detrimental effect on the child's and adolescent's social connections and academic progress.

4.3.2 Factors contributing to the development of behavioural challenges in the classroom.

Numerous factors can contribute to the development of behavioural challenges in the classroom. The study's findings demonstrated that teachers in ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classrooms had to deal with a lack of parental participation. Parents who volunteer to come to school when asked are unable to effectively or clearly explain the needs of the learner with behavioural challenges because of their low literacy and lack of interest. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2001), schools must offer individualised support plans that are created through parent-teacher collaboration and evaluated at various points in order for teachers to fulfil the needs of each individual learner.

The theoretical underpinnings of the study, derived from Vygotsky's theories, underscore the critical role that parents play in supporting their behaviourally challenged children. According to Vygotsky (1978), a child learns through interacting with a parent or teacher. Learning will not occur for the learner with behavioural challenges if there is a breakdown in communication between the parent/teacher and the learner. When needs are met, children can start internalising information and functioning on their own. Parents and teachers can help them reach this zone of proximal development. Ainscow (2020:13) lists a number of methods for accomplishing this, such as the creation of parent support groups, teaching on how to engage with their children, and the strengthening of parents' advocacy skills to assist discussions with the police and schools. It's also important to remember that research suggests that family perspectives, including student perspectives, may give new insights that could assist schools in developing and promoting more inclusive policies.

Teachers also linked classroom congestion to the emergence of behavioural issues. According to a study by Marais, congested classrooms are an unfortunate feature of South African education and

will probably stay that way for the foreseeable future, if not longer (2016:1). The maximum recommended learner-to-teacher ratio for South African primary schools is 40:1, while for secondary schools, it is 35:1. According to Vygotsky's (1993) theory of social interaction, teachers should use peer support and group projects to foster social connection or connections between learners who are academically inclined and those who have behavioural challenges. According to Imtiaz (2014:251), overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to provide learners with relevant instruction, foster a positive learning environment, and pay close attention to each learner's educational needs. As a result, all institutions that train teachers should offer suitable curricula that equip them to handle the pressing difficulties associated with working with large class sizes.

The study's participants acknowledged that children learn best in small groups and that having a lot of learners in a classroom hinders both teaching and learning. Teachers admitted that congested classrooms result in a breakdown in discipline and an increase in disruptive behaviour. According to a study by Marais (2016:5), arguments, boredom, short attention spans, making loud noises, and even causing property damage are examples of problematic behaviour and discipline problems. Participants acknowledged that it is exceedingly challenging to teach learners in packed classrooms due to the frequent interruptions and distractions. According to West and Meier (2020:2), there are multiple reasons why classrooms in South African schools are overcrowded. These include a lack of teachers and inadequate infrastructure, such as a lack of classrooms and schools.

The results of this study also indicated that insufficient or inadequate teacher training is a factor that is linked to the emergence of challenging behaviour in the classroom. The study's conclusions make it clear that teachers believe they require additional training in order to handle the behavioural issues they see in the classroom. It is imperative that teachers receive support in an inclusive environment. Teachers' perspectives regarding enrolling learners with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools are either neutral or hostile, according to research by Adewumi and Mosito (2019:6), since they believe they are unable to accommodate learners with behavioural problems. Teachers believe that attending workshops on inclusive education does not equip them with the necessary resources to successfully address the academic needs of learners who display problematic behaviours.

4.3.3 Strategies to mediate behavioural challenges in the primary school classroom.

The teachers in this study reported using a range of instructional strategies to enhance learner behaviour. Ndhlovu (2023:11) defines "behaviour" as any human action, irrespective of its effectiveness, morality, productivity, or inefficiency. Conversely, "misbehaviour" refers to any action that is inappropriate for the setting or situation in which it occurs, whether intentional or due to

ignorance of expectations. The results of this study indicated that dealing with learners who have behavioural issues in the classroom presents significant challenges for teachers.

Different delivery and assessment methods are required to meet the needs of every student in the teaching and learning environment. Teachers must establish a zone of proximal development (ZPD) for learners. According to Goncu (1999:26), Vygotsky argues that social interactions between a child and an experienced adult are co-constructed on the interpersonal plane, where developmental behaviour first appears. The child may eventually internalise on an intrapersonal level what they have achieved with others. It is imperative to consider that all learners possess the ability to recognise and value diversity. CAPS provides guidance on educational concerns and tactics, aiding teachers, subject advisors, principals, and school governing body members in handling learner diversity by implementing an inclusive curriculum. Teachers are responsible for addressing diversity in the curriculum application process, ensuring that the behavioural and academic needs of learners from various backgrounds are met in the classroom. This can be achieved with the support of teachers who monitor their own behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs.

The study's results suggest that teachers require more training to mediate behavioural difficulties as they are currently not well-equipped to handle them when they arise. To witness the results of their mediation efforts, teachers must continue to grow in terms of effective classroom management. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2005:67), teachers need to be innovative and knowledgeable about teaching methods to address the needs of every learner. Teachers should apply a variety of instructional strategies to promote collaborative learning in small groups or pairs, not paired according to skill levels. Peer support is very beneficial to a child in the ZPD, according to Vygotsky (1978). Learners who struggle with behavioural challenges are given the tools and techniques to handle problems by peers demonstrating positive behaviour and emotional stability. Vygotsky's further theory (1978) suggests that the teaching fraternity can work together, as its members are not on the same level. Teachers can share their expertise and empower others through professional training programmes, helping them move out of their zones of proximal development.

Bhroin and King (2020:42) assert that professional learning strategies building on the expertise of seasoned teachers can assist other teachers in developing fresh perspectives, gaining a deeper comprehension of their subject matter, and independently resolving issues in their settings. Attending regular workshops offered by the District-Based Support Team (DBST) is one method to interact with knowledgeable individuals. Apart from encouraging inclusive practices through an effective School-Based Support Team (SBST), the DBST should consistently assist schools with

policy changes and implementation. The study's participants lamented the lack of assistance from SBST and DBST at their respective schools. The responses indicated that the DBST is slow to act when called upon, while SBST members lack the skills needed to address troublesome behaviour.

Interviews revealed teachers' frustration in dealing with learners who had behavioural problems while trying to conduct classes with minimal disruptions. They claimed that managing learners with behavioural concerns diverted their focus from lesson delivery to problem-solving. Disruptive behaviour in the classroom has been a major concern for most teachers. Until 1994, the main form of punishment for misbehaviour was corporal punishment. However, since the 1994 legislation (RSA, 1996, s12 (1)) outlawed physical punishment, teachers have been less empowered to maintain discipline, resulting in increased disciplinary issues and behavioural problems. The Department of Education (DoE, 2001) states that to minimise barriers to learning, learners should be treated with human dignity and have more rights than obligations. According to Goodman (2020:2), some proponents of physical punishment argue that its elimination has led to learners' growing disdain for authority, weakening teachers' authority.

The School Management Team (SMT), with staff support, is responsible for developing the school code of conduct; teachers are responsible for enforcing it in their classrooms. According to Bennet (2020:7), teachers should involve learners in all stages of creating the classroom management plan or rules. Five clear rules should suffice to prevent students from feeling overwhelmed by restrictions. After conferring with the school governing body, the code of conduct needs to be adopted to ensure parents are aware of it. In accordance with SASA Section 8 (RSA, 1996b), parents, teachers, and learners must be involved in developing a code of conduct. Teachers must administer and enforce the code of conduct to ensure proper behaviour in the classroom. Teachers should use the code of conduct to emphasise responsibility, set definite limits, impart self-discipline, and foster empathy among learners. This implies that teachers have an obligation to maintain fair classroom rules aligned with school policies.

Involving the parents of learners is one of the best ways to improve disruptive behaviour or promote appropriate behaviour in primary school classrooms. Parents' involvement begins with maintaining good behaviour at home, assisting learners with behavioural challenges. Vygotskian theory, cited by Kozulin (2003:17), states that a child's higher mental processes cannot develop without mediating agents in their interactions with their environment. Vygotsky focused on the symbolic instruments children appropriated within sociocultural activities, with formal education being the most important. According to a study by du Plessis (2015, mentioned in Ndhlovu, 2023:53), learners whose families are involved in their development within and outside school are more likely to achieve academically

and are less likely to engage in antisocial behaviour. Therefore, school communities must ensure active parental involvement in their children's education, foster a welcoming school environment for parents, and remove any barriers to their involvement. This implies that to maintain discipline in schools, teachers need to work constantly with parents and instruct them on maintaining discipline at home.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The focus of this chapter was on themes and sub-themes that emerged as findings from in-depth interviews, observations and focus group discussions with teachers and departmental heads. Several themes emerged, and the research showed that teachers' opinions of the mediation of behavioural issues that all four schools faced were similar. These perceptions influenced the standard of teaching and learning as well as the advancement of inclusive education. The participants identified the factors that contributed to the development of behavioural challenges in the Inter-Sen Phase classrooms as well as the strategies they made in their attempts to mediate those behavioural challenges. Based on information gathered from the research sites, a discussion of the study's findings was made. The summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study are covered in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers in Moretele, in the Bojanala District of the Northwest Province, saw the mediation of behavioural difficulties in mainstream primary school classrooms. In addition to examining how teachers felt about learners who had behavioural issues and what factors contributed to the development of behavioural challenges, the study set out to identify strategies that teachers might use to mediate behavioural challenges in primary school classrooms. Qualitative data were collected with reference to the study questions, and the results were categorised into three main themes that were analysed considering Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and pertinent information that emerged from the literature review.

In essence, this last chapter will serve as a summary of the earlier ones. The following were the study's objectives:

- to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding learners with behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms,
- to explore factors that contribute to the development of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms, and
- to establish the strategies that teachers can apply in mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms.

Chapter 4 covered a discussion and summary of the findings. A qualitative technique was employed within the interpretivist paradigm to evaluate the responses of teachers to observations, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews about the study's topic. The current chapter presents summaries of the theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology, the study's limitations and how those limitations were overcome. The summary, conclusion, and recommendations were presented after a review of the study findings in relation to the research questions.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which integrates individual, social, and cultural influences on a child's cognitive development and interactions in school settings. According to the study's findings, the majority of teachers in the ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classrooms interpreted behavioural problems as any disruptive activity that caused them great concern. Learners with behavioural problems in mainstream schools did not receive the necessary attention and assistance in the classroom. This indicates that teachers in the Inter-Sen Phase classrooms are not familiar with the concept of behavioural difficulties, likely due to inadequate or poor training. Teachers' negative attitudes towards mediating behavioural challenges could hinder the development of suitable solutions and ultimately affect the learners' capacity to fulfil their academic potential.

Through efficient classroom management, teachers must implement inclusive practices to enhance the development of positive behaviours, active involvement, and inclusion for such learners. Teachers need to recognise changes in their learners as they approach the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and understand their role as learning mediators. Prominent or knowledgeable individuals, such as peers, adults, or teachers who are more competent than the child, can provide the necessary support. According to sociocultural theory, the role of the significant or knowledgeable other is to assist and support the child until developmental changes make further aid unnecessary. Since all children possess some level of knowledge from birth, teachers must recognise their duty to support learners, regardless of any disabilities or behavioural issues.

A strict setting that does not support learners' developmental stages is often the root cause of behavioural difficulties. To develop holistically, learners with behavioural challenges require support and supervision in the classroom. The results of this study demonstrated that teachers in mainstream primary schools in South Africa still find it difficult to establish such environments due to various social, educational, and peer influences, overcrowded classrooms, absentee parents, and inadequate training.

The social settings in which children grow can influence their development either positively or negatively. Working with learners who exhibit problematic behaviours requires teachers who can follow inclusion principles and differentiate instruction. Learners with behavioural issues should be encouraged to progress or develop in their areas of probable improvement, even if they may not be as demanding. All learners can learn; some simply require the assistance and guidance of teachers to acquire a range of skills that they would not be able to acquire on their own. Individual learners can acquire new skills within their zones of proximal development. This would be possible only if

teachers were fully cognisant of the ZPD phases in which their learners were operating and provided suitable scaffolding.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The driving force behind this study was the need to investigate how teachers in ordinary primary school classrooms view mediating behavioural challenges. The literature highlights the crucial role teachers play in implementing educational policies. One of the most impactful actions they can take is changing their attitudes and perceptions about inclusion. Inclusive programmes are only as successful as their ability to transform negative attitudes and perceptions (Nunan and Ntombela, 2018; Wilkinson, 2019; Al-Shammari, Faulkner, and Forlin, 2019; Rappaport and Minahan, 2020). When behavioural issues arise in the classroom, teachers who view them negatively typically take a reactive stance. A deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions of behavioural issues may enable them to intervene appropriately and create a welcoming instructional environment (UNESCO, 1994; DoE, 2001; Ainscow, 2020).

Negative early experiences have an impact on a learner's behaviour. According to (Rappaport and Minahan, 2020; Mathebula, 2021; Perrotta and Fabiano, 2021; Nazareth, Kvalsvig, Mellins, Desmond, Kauchali, and Davidson, 2021), teachers' actions have a big impact on learners' behaviour in the classroom, especially for those who have behavioural issues. Misbehaviour is regarded as a symptom since a learner would act appropriately if they could. It is defined as the set of acts and responses that make up an individual's interactions with other people and their surroundings. A better understanding of the phenomena under investigation will assist in addressing the research questions, thereby enabling teachers to mediate behavioural challenges in the grade 7 classrooms.

Additional research indicates that teachers often cite a lack of experience as a barrier to implementing inclusion in regular classroom settings (Mathebula, 2021; Lepheana, 2022; Maine, 2022; Yeboah, Charamba, and Akola, 2023). Their self-assessments of their abilities in classroom management can provide insight into how to engage and support learners who struggle with behaviour. The successful implementation of inclusive strategies and the mediation of behavioural challenges require collaboration among stakeholders—teachers, department officials, principals, parents, and learners—in a supportive environment (Bates, 2019; Morufu, 2020; Rumjaun and Narod, 2020). Relationships between learners, parents, teachers, and the entire school community must be reciprocal (Paseka and Schwab, 2020; Mestry and Khumalo, 2021; Patnaik, Sharma, and Subban, 2022).

Literature also suggests a correlation between family situations and the greater learner population and the number of incidences of challenging behaviour in the classroom (Mafumbate and Mkhatjwa, 2020; Ngoma, 2020; Jacob, 2022). Teachers have an obligation to support and ensure that learners exhibit proper conduct in the teaching and learning environment through constructive interactions (Clasquin-Johnson, 2018; Grant, 2019; Naicker, 2021). Overcrowding in mainstream classrooms is another significant issue that concerns teachers and can contribute to behavioural challenges (DoE, 2001; du Plessis and Letshwene, 2020). To encourage and accommodate learner diversity and ensure the smooth implementation of inclusive education, teachers should strive to create a welcoming environment (Lebopa, 2018; Miller, 2020; Sarkar and Kundu, 2021).

The Department of Education (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2006; SACE gazette, 2018; Dwarika, 2019; Gagnon, Sylvester, and Marsh, 2021; Mahlangu et al., 2021) suggests that teacher preparation programmes in South Africa should be an ongoing process to prepare teachers and improve their skills and knowledge. This will help them meet the demands of inclusive practices and strategies to successfully promote the inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges without resorting to corporal punishment.

5.4 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.4.1 Population and Sampling

The purposive sample for this study consisted of twelve individuals from four mainstream primary schools in the Northwest province's Bojanala District. Participants included departmental heads (DHs) and teachers of grade 7 learners who had some background knowledge in inclusive education. Because purposive sampling is simple to apply and ensures a high participation rate, the researcher concluded that it was the best sampling strategy for this particular study. It also provides the researcher with access to participant groups that are pertinent to the study's topic and can provide rich data.

5.4.2 Research approach and design

The researcher in this study employed a qualitative methodology to assess and investigate primary school teachers' perceptions regarding behavioural issues, the factors that lead to the emergence of challenging behaviours, and the strategies to be used when such challenges arise. This method focused on understanding the experiences and perceptions that people use to create their reality. This viewpoint, known as interpretivism, is based on personal opinions, perceptions, and beliefs and seeks to explain behaviour by drawing on individuals' own experiences. The case study research

design, utilised in this qualitative study, was the most effective technique for obtaining information and drawing trustworthy conclusions from the research questions about teachers' perceptions of mediating behavioural challenges in mainstream primary school classrooms. This approach was deemed most appropriate for this study due to its emphasis on ideas, events, and actual experiences of people.

A thorough understanding of interpersonal relationships and the interpretation of those processes are central to the case study research design. Instead of emphasising the researcher's opinions, the participants' experiences are described, allowing the researcher to gain new perspectives on the study's topic by detailing actual events. Comprehensive data was gathered through in-depth, face-to-face focus group interviews and non-participant observations. This data collection method was used to investigate factors influencing the development of behavioural challenges, discover strategies for teachers to mitigate disruptive behaviour, and explore participants' perceptions in mediating these challenges. During in-depth interviews, participants often feel more at ease and less hesitant to disclose information than when speaking with peers or colleagues.

Interview data was gathered, recorded, and verified for the study using the non-participant observation method. This approach allowed the researcher to collect extensive data on participant behaviours and interactions with learners in the classroom. Human events, behaviours, attitudes, and emotions are greatly influenced by the environment in which they occur. By utilising unexpected sources of information as they surfaced, the researcher was able to construct a comprehensive and cohesive picture of how specific individuals use their time to help learners with behavioural issues. The researcher believed that, given his presence might affect participants' behaviours and responses, it was crucial to allow teachers to mediate and support learners with behavioural challenges in their natural learning environments, thereby avoiding any undue influence on participants' responses.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The relatively modest sample size of the study presented limitations. In the Bojanala District of the Northwest Province, four conventional primary schools in Moretele provided a sample of twelve (12) teachers who were purposefully selected. As a result, the sample may not accurately represent all primary school teachers in the Bojanala District. Due to the small sample size, it is therefore impossible to generalise the study's findings.

Additionally, teachers in the chosen primary schools were not particularly eager to participate in the study; they were absorbed in their everyday schedules. They believed that participating would

disrupt regular teaching and learning, leading to significant backlogs in the classroom activities outlined in their Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs).

5.6 Overcoming limitations of the study

The results from the sample group can be utilised to gather thorough information from participants' viewpoints on the same issue and can serve as the basis for the comparability of larger research in other schools. The small sample size and the possibility that data collection from all the schools in the Bojanala District may not be feasible were noted by the researcher. The researcher was determined not to tamper with the standard operating processes of teaching and learning in schools in general. As a result, a deal was reached with the administrators of the schools to enable teachers to participate in focus groups and in-depth interviews in their free time as well as before and after regular school hours.

5.7 RECAP OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS IN ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three key research questions, which will be discussed in the part that follows, were the focus of the study.

5.7.1 The first research sub-question: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?

Teachers shared a range of perspectives about what they perceived as behavioural issues in their classrooms. For example, they cited learners who interrupt others, scream, swear, make noise, talk out of turn, or simply refuse to obey instructions. They all agreed that having a better understanding of behavioural issues would enable them to support and help learners experiencing these challenges in the classroom and to make appropriate interventions. Teachers in mainstream classrooms reported difficulty in teaching learners with behavioural issues due to a lack of training on the subject, leaving them unsure of how to address these challenges effectively.

The study defines behavioural difficulties as those behaviours that interfere with teachers' ability to teach and learners' ability to learn. Teachers have voiced their concerns that such behavioural issues negatively affect their capacity to teach effectively. Despite these disruptions, the survey revealed that teachers felt it was essential to integrate learners with problematic behaviours into regular classrooms. Teachers reported that, despite the challenges, integrating these learners fosters a sense of community and may help develop desirable classroom behaviours.

Participant interactions also indicated a need for professional development and inclusive education training to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge in assisting learners with behavioural issues in primary school classrooms. The inclusion of learners with behavioural issues brings a wide range of experiences and perspectives to the classroom. Both teachers and learners face challenges when these children are enrolled in mainstream schools, as they must adjust to different learning spaces, unique learning styles, varied assessment processes, and different forms of communication and engagement.

Inclusive education promotes the inclusion of all learners, regardless of their behavioural challenges, because it fosters acceptance of learner diversity and tolerance of others. Teachers need to change their attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of learners with behavioural difficulties. Embracing a more positive outlook on teaching and learning while rejecting outdated methods is crucial. Teachers should also receive substantial assistance and training. This support will reduce their frustration and help them view the promotion of inclusive education positively, enabling them to carry out their duties as classroom behaviour mediators more effectively.

5.7.2 The second research sub-question: What are the factors contributing to the development of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?

Participants in the research highlighted several factors that contribute to the development of behavioural challenges in the classroom, including overcrowding, lack of parental involvement, the influence of peer relationships, and social and family environments. Many teachers felt that teaching in overcrowded classrooms presented a serious challenge, as it was difficult for them to move around and provide individual attention to each learner. Teachers suggested that the department adhere to the 1:35 teacher-to-learner ratio to support their ability to give learners the individualised attention they need.

Further data from the study revealed that parental participation could be advantageous and reduce the occurrence of behavioural problems in the classroom. When there is a lack of parental involvement, the inclusive education project and teachers' efforts to integrate learners who display problematic behaviour suffer. In short, teachers believed that inclusive education was a better alternative to exclusion. However, they argued that parents' assistance at home and teachers' mediation techniques are essential to help learners with behavioural issues. It was emphasised that parents must support inclusive education because both teachers and learners rely on the help of district and school-based support teams. Without this vital support, inclusive education would remain a mere strategy on paper. It is also essential to alter the perceptions that parents, learners, and teachers have about inclusive education to address issues related to behavioural concerns. Clearly,

a child's home environment and family's socioeconomic status significantly impact the development of problem behaviours.

The dynamics between teachers and learners within the teaching and learning environment also contribute to the development of disruptive behaviours in the classroom. Participants in the study acknowledged the critical role that teachers play in guiding and influencing learners' behaviour. They also proposed that learners with behavioural problems could develop low self-esteem as adults, which could negatively affect their academic performance. Recognising the impact of peers on the formation of behavioural issues in primary school environments is crucial. Teachers have observed that learners often adopt disruptive and inappropriate behaviours to fit in and be accepted by their peers.

5.7.3 The third research sub-question: What strategies can teachers apply in mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms?

The findings of the study show that teachers believe they are not sufficiently prepared to work with learners who have a variety of behavioural issues in mainstream classroom settings. They lament that they do not have the necessary coping mechanisms to deal with difficult behaviour. It is the duty of teachers to implement behaviour management measures in the classroom. The study's findings indicate that although teachers have attempted a range of approaches, they still encounter challenges in managing behavioural issues. This highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding and development of the concept of behavioural problems. The participants revealed that to manage behaviour effectively in regular school settings, they need training in various coping mechanisms. Their lack of knowledge about inclusive education and its practices makes them ill-equipped to assist and accommodate these learners.

The study demonstrated that participants made a sincere effort to mediate and provide a welcoming learning atmosphere for all learners, including those displaying behavioural problems. Teachers employ a variety of strategies to deal with challenging behaviours in the classroom, despite insufficient training in inclusive education. These strategies include setting ground rules, assigning duties to difficult learners to help them learn appropriate behaviour, having one-on-one conversations with learners, rearranging the seating plan, and more. A code of conduct for the whole school community is necessary to ensure consistency and support for these efforts.

The study's findings also revealed that teachers did not receive much support from School Management Teams (SMTs) or School Governing Bodies (SGBs), other than contacting the parents of learners with behavioural issues. The research participants disclosed that their classrooms had

daily routines and norms that learners were expected to observe and obey. Effective classroom management was identified as a necessary intervention method to uphold order and manage learners' behaviour. One of the advantages of effective classroom management is that it mitigates behavioural issues by fostering a strong culture of teaching and learning.

Teachers emphasised that departmental policies WP6 and SIAS are intended to bring about significant changes in addressing inclusion across schools through the involvement of pertinent stakeholders working together. The results of the study underscored the value of such cooperation as a crucial component in mediating behavioural problems in primary school environments. Social workers, teachers, District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs), School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs), parents, pastors, and police officers can all play a critical role in addressing issues that learners bring into the classroom from the outside world. The study's findings demonstrate that a cooperative approach would create a supportive teaching and learning environment, helping learners with behavioural problems overcome their challenges.

5.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The manner in which teachers view mediating behavioural issues in ordinary primary schools is crucial because it allows learners who were previously excluded to be enrolled in these schools. This inclusion provides learners who struggle with behaviour issues the chance to reach their full academic potential and, as they mature, make valuable contributions to their communities. The study's conclusions demonstrated that teachers' preparation was insufficient, as they were unable to fully understand and handle behavioural challenges in the classroom. Teachers reported that, despite not receiving enough workshops, they continued to try using various intervention techniques to mediate behavioural issues. These techniques included creating classroom rules, assigning tasks to learners who struggle with behaviour, and rearranging seating to promote positive behaviour. Teachers lamented the lack of respect for authority since corporal punishment was outlawed, saying they had to resort to verbal discipline, detaining learners after school, and assigning additional activities to keep them occupied. The study also revealed that teachers received little to no assistance from SBSTs, SMTs, and SGBs in managing learners' disruptive actions.

Teachers' negative perceptions about placing learners with behavioural issues in mainstream classrooms could lead to secondary victimisation, as suggested by Vygotsky (1999). Conversely, positive perceptions of behavioural difficulties could result in the effective application of inclusive teaching methods in ordinary primary school classrooms. A child's sociocultural environment plays a crucial role in developing the social and psychological skills that affect their relationships with peers, parents, and teachers, as well as their overall development. This environment influences their

perspectives on appropriate conduct, education, and the acquisition of knowledge within their zones of proximal development (ZPD). For learners with a range of behavioural challenges to reach their full potential, they need the help and support of experienced individuals. As the main agents of change, teachers' attitudes and views need to shift for them to properly accommodate learners with behavioural issues. Participants recommended that learners receive explicit communication about a code of conduct and the consequences for misbehaving. Overall, the use of inclusive teaching approaches inspired teachers to mediate behavioural concerns in the classroom. They agreed that, to advance inclusive education, teachers needed training on inclusive education requirements and practices.

In summary, the study underscores the importance of teacher preparation and positive perceptions in effectively managing behavioural issues in mainstream primary schools. Teachers' willingness to employ a variety of strategies, despite inadequate training, highlights their commitment to fostering inclusive education. However, there is a clear need for greater support and professional development to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle behavioural challenges. This support is essential for creating a conducive learning environment where all learners can thrive.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The data from the previous chapter's presentation leads the researcher to make recommendations. The researcher in this study has been guided in formulating the following recommendations by taking into account the insights provided by study participants regarding their personal interpretations and knowledge of the central issue of the investigation.

- It is recommended that teachers engage in educational initiatives and programmes that enhance their knowledge in a diverse setting and foster a lifelong love of learning.
- Lowering the number of learners in the classroom will help with behavioural issues since it will be simpler for teachers to provide each learner individualised attention.
- In-depth training for department heads (DHs), teachers, and school principals should be given top priority by the DBE in order to provide them with the teaching techniques needed to work with learners who have behavioural challenges in primary school classrooms.
- In mainstream primary schools, behavioural difficulties should be resolved through collaboration between parents, teachers, principals, social workers, and other stakeholders.
- Regular training sessions or seminars on inclusive education strategies should be offered by the DBE, and teachers should receive enough support in handling behavioural issues that crop up in the classroom. To address the support needs of identified learners through appropriate interventions, teachers must get training on inclusive education (DBE, 2014).

- Assign leadership duties and responsibilities to learners who face behavioural challenges to motivate them to enhance their own behaviour as well as that of others. Possessing a leadership role could also motivate people to alter their own conduct.
- School Management Teams (SMTs), School-based Support Teams (SBSTs), and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) should support teachers with inclusion-related concerns that consider the diverse behaviours of learners because of their knowledge, skills, and competency.
- District support staff should be active in the professional development and coaching of teachers on successful classroom management by hosting seminars on capacity building to enhance effective teaching strategies in their classrooms.

5.10 Suggestions for further research

The current study only included twelve teachers from four mainstream primary schools in the Bojanala District of the Northwest Province's Moretele Sub-District. It is advised that more research be done to determine whether the findings can be applied to other mainstream classrooms and how teachers perceive mediating behavioural challenges in those settings. The ability of grade 7 teachers in mainstream primary schools in the Bojanala area to support learners with behavioural issues in the classroom is largely dependent on the application of qualitative research methodologies. To find out if the same circumstances exist in other South African provinces, comparative studies involving mainstream schools might be conducted. The results could then be compared to developments in other nations.

5.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter began with summaries of the previous chapters and concluded with an overview of the ways in which the research questions were addressed or answered by the study. The chapter also included an explanation of the study's resonance with the theoretical framework. Summaries of related literature, and research methodology relating to the research topic was given, as well as the limitations that emanated from the study and how those limitations were overcome. Finally, a recap of the study's findings in addressing the research questions, followed by the recommendations and conclusion of the study were presented.

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APPENDICES:

Refer here to your consecutively numbered appendices which contain the proof of registration, permission, consent, assent letters, interview schedule, questionnaire, observation checklist, etc.

Appendix number	Name of appendix	Attached YES or NO
1	Appendix A: PROOF OF REGISTRATION	Yes
2	Appendix B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM NWPG (NORTHWEST PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)	Yes
3	Appendix C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM CIRCUIT OFFICE (MORETELE LOCAL EDUCATION OFFICE/SUB-DISTRICT)	Yes
4	Appendix D: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPALS	Yes
5	Appendix E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (INFORMED CONSENT) FOR TEACHERS	Yes
6	Appendix F: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)	Yes
7	Appendix G: FOCUS GROUP CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	Yes
8	Appendix H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	Yes
9	Appendix I: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS	Yes
10	Appendix J: CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT	Yes
11	Appendix K: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	Yes
12	APPENDIX L: EDITING CERTIFICATE	Yes

APPENDIX A: PROOF OF REGISTRATION

1527 M1RST

 MOLEKOA M A MR
 P O BOX 340
 RADIUM
 0483

STUDENT NUMBER : 3309-214-1

 ENQUIRIES NAME : MR P POLKARD
 ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411

DATE : 2024-05-08

Dear Student

I wish to inform you that your registration has been accepted for the academic year indicated below. Kindly activate your Unisa mylife (<https://myunisa.ac.za/portal>) account for future communication purposes and access to research resources.

DEGREE : MEd (INCLUSIVE EDUCATION) (98443)
 TITLE : Teacher perceptions and decision making towards behaviour challenges in the class room
 SUPERVISOR : Dr MK MALAHLALA (malahmk@unisa.ac.za)
 ACADEMIC YEAR : 2024
 TYPE: DISSERTATION
 SUBJECTS REGISTERED: DFIND95 MEd - Inclusive Education

A statement of account will be sent to you shortly.

You must re-register online and pay every academic year until such time that you can submit your dissertation/thesis for examination.

Students registering for the first time for a dissertation or thesis must complete a research proposal in their first year of study. Guidelines will be provided by your supervisor/contact person.

If you intend submitting your dissertation/thesis for examination you have to submit an Intention to submit form (available on the website www.unisa.ac.za) at least two months before the date of submission. If submission takes place after 15 November, but before the end of February of the following year, you do need not to re-register and pay registration fees for the next academic year. Should you submit after the end of January, you must formally reregister online and pay the full fees.

Please access the information with regard to your personal librarian on the following link:
<https://bit.ly/3hxNqVr>

Yours faithfully,

 Prof MM Sepota
 Acting Registrar

 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 B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM
NWED (NORTHWEST EDUCATION DEPARTMENT)**

College of Education

P. O. Box 392
Pretoria,
South Africa
0003
Date:

The Head of Department
Northwest Education Department
Private Bag x 2044
Mmabatho,
2735
Tel:

Re: Request for permission to conduct research in Bojanala District, Northwest Province's Inter-Sen Phase mainstream primary schools.

I, Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa, am doing research under supervision of Dr M.K Malahlela, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Inclusive Education, towards a M Ed in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Teachers' Perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms of Bojanala District, Northwest Province.

The aim of the study is to illuminate the perceptions of teachers regarding learners with behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms. Your school has been selected because it falls within the primary schools located in the Bojanala District, Northwest Province.

The study will entail in-depth interviews and focus group discussions that will collect detailed information to find out about the teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classrooms. Interviews will be conducted face to face in a place that is secure and free from disturbances. Each session will take approximately 45 minutes. They will take place in approximately four (4) weeks.

The benefits of this study for policy makers are that it will illuminate teachers' perceptions and views regarding inadequate training towards mediating behavioural challenges in their classrooms, how teachers can respond when behavioural challenges occur in their classrooms and how to improve their strategies to make them more inclusive.

There is a potential for medium risks associated with taking part in the study as sensitive information may be disclosed because the issue of behavioural challenges involves emotions. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail making available copies of a summary of the findings transcribed in a way that can be understood by a non-academic audience to all participants in the study. Should you require more information about anything, including the outcomes of the research, contact me at 0765871578 or email: molekoa53@gmail.com.

I thank you in advance and in anticipation of a positive response to my request to submit successfully to the University of South Africa.

Yours sincerely

_____ (signature)

Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa
(Inter-Sen Phase teacher)



**APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
FROM CIRCUIT OFFICE (NWED: MORETELE LOCAL EDUCATION
OFFICE/SUB-DISTRICT)**

College of Education
P. O. Box 392
Pretoria,
South Africa
0003

Date:
The Circuit Manager
Local Education Office/Sub-District
Private Bag x 365
Makapanstad,
0404

Tel:
Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct research in the Local Education Office/ Sub-District Inter-Sen Phase mainstream primary schools.

I, Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa, am doing research under supervision of Dr M.K Malahlela, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Inclusive Education, towards a M Ed in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Teachers' Perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms of Bojanala District, Northwest Province.

The aim of the study is to illuminate the perceptions of teachers regarding learners with behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms. Your school has been selected because it falls within the primary schools located in the Bojanala District, Northwest Province.

The study will entail in-depth interviews and focus group discussions that will collect detailed information to find out about the teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classrooms. Interviews will be conducted face to face in a place that is secure and free from disturbances. Each session will take approximately 45 minutes. They will take place in approximately four (4) weeks.

The benefits of this study for policy makers are that it will illuminate teachers' perceptions and views regarding inadequate training towards mediating behavioural challenges in their classrooms, how teachers can respond when behavioural challenges occur in their classrooms and how to improve their strategies to make them more inclusive.

There is a potential for medium risks associated with taking part in the study as sensitive information may be disclosed because the issue of behavioural challenges involves emotions. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail making available copies of a summary of the findings transcribed in a way that can be understood by a non- academic audience to all participants in the study. Should you require more information about anything, including the outcomes of the research, contact me at 0765871578 or email: molekoa53@gmail.com.

I thank you in advance and in anticipation of a positive response to my request to submit successfully to the University of South Africa.

Yours sincerely

_____ (signature)

Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa (Inter-Sen Phase teacher)



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

College of Education
P. O. Box 392
Pretoria,
South Africa
0003

Date:

The School Principal
Northwest Education Department
Moretele Local Education Office/Sub-District
Private Bag X 365
Makapanstad
0404

Tel:

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct research in Moretele Local Education Office/Sub-District primary schools.

Inter-Sen Phase mainstream primary schools.

I, Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa, am doing research under supervision of Dr M.K Malahlela, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Inclusive Education, towards a M Ed in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Teachers' Perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms of Bojanala District, Northwest Province. The aim of the study is to illuminate the perceptions of teachers regarding learners with behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms. Your school has been selected because it falls within the primary schools located in the Bojanala District, Northwest Province.

The study will entail in-depth interviews and focus group discussions that will collect detailed information to find out about the teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classrooms. Interviews will be conducted face to face in a place that is secure and free from disturbances. Each session will take approximately 45 minutes. They will take place in approximately four (4) weeks.

The benefits of this study for policy makers are that it will illuminate teachers' perceptions and views regarding inadequate training towards mediating behavioural challenges in their classrooms, how teachers can respond when behavioural challenges occur in their classrooms and how to improve their strategies to make them more inclusive. There is a potential for medium risks associated with taking part in the study as sensitive information may be disclosed because the issue of behavioural challenges involves emotions. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail making available copies of a summary of the findings transcribed in a way that can be understood by a non-academic audience to all participants in the study. Should you require more information about anything, including the outcomes of the research, contact me at 0765871578 or email: molekoa53@gmail.com.

I thank you in advance and in anticipation of a positive response to my request to submit successfully to the University of South Africa.

Yours sincerely

_____ (signature)

Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa (Inter-Sen Phase teacher)

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (INFORMED CONSENT) FOR TEACHERS

Title: **Teachers' Perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms of Bojanala District, Northwest Province.**

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

Date: _____

I, **Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa**, am doing research under the supervision of **Dr M.K. Malahlela**, a **Senior Lecturer** in the Department of Inclusive Education, towards a M Ed degree in Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could assist the relevant stakeholders, such as School Management Teams (SMTs), teachers, learners, parents and caregivers in dealing efficiently with challenging behaviour prevailing amongst learners particularly in the classroom and at schools generally. The outcomes of the study might influence policy formulation by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with regards to the mediation of behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you are the most relevant person to provide information about teacher perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences towards mediating behavioural challenges in the classroom. The study involves the need to illuminate teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms, to explore teacher perceptions of the factors that influence the development of challenging behaviour and to offer recommendations on how teachers can respond when behavioural challenges occur in their primary school classrooms. You have been selected purposively and your contact details have been obtained through assistance from your school to take part in this study because of your knowledge and understanding of inclusive education in the Inter-Sen Phase. Teachers that will take part in this study will all be purposively selected, and they will be twelve (12) in number.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves in-depth, face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. Indicate what sort of questions will be asked or show the questions in this document. The interview session will take approximately forty (40) minutes. Participating in this research is voluntary, there is no obligation that enforces you to participate. If you decide to withdraw at any time, you are free to do so without giving a reason. From your participation you will not derive any monetary benefits. There will be no payment or incentives. Knowledge can be gained by other persons and the communities. You will be given access to the information you contributed and the summary of findings upon request. There are medium risks involved in your participation under this study, since the research topic involves sensitive information. There is no injury or physical harm that is anticipated in the research.

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

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could illuminate teachers' perceptions of behavioural challenges, explore their perceptions of the factors that influence the development of behavioural challenges and recommend how teachers can respond when behavioural challenges occur in their classrooms.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

The research project contains medium potential of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participant. Include any risk that may come from others identifying the person's participation in the research. If it happens that during the course of the research there are unexpected adverse events occurring during which there is a change in the research design, the researcher will inform the supervisor, adhere to the guidance of the supervisor, and wait for written approval from the university's ERC and the relevant unit ERC.

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

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research **OR** Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

The researcher will be responsible for transcribing and coding, which gives him all access to the data. All individuals taking part are expected to sign confidentiality agreements, which should be submitted to the Research Ethics Review Committee for consideration. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the researcher who will act as both the transcriber and coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Any confidential information given to the researcher by the participant will not be disclosed. Data collected from you will be used for research purposes on journal articles, research reports and conference proceedings. Your role and identity will not be mentioned in the report findings. The researcher will protect your identity by using pseudonyms rather than your real name and the name of your institution. Your name will not be written anywhere apart from the researchers' records. Your participation will be treated with extreme confidentiality.

The research involves semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, which will be tape recorded. Focus group discussions are a type of qualitative research approach where attitudes, opinions, or perceptions of a topic are examined through a free-flowing conversation between group members and the researcher. They are types of facilitated group conversations in which a researcher brings up topics or poses questions that prompt discussion among group participants. Questions will be open-ended to allow you to answer them while not using a one-word answer. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

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

The researcher will store hard copies of your responses in a locked cupboard where only the researcher will have access to the keys for future studies. Electronic information will be kept in a computer with a password that is protected by the researcher. After a period of five years, the researcher will permanently delete all the electronic information and destroy hard copies of the research findings. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

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

There will not be any payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise for participating in this study. No costs shall be incurred by the participant during the process of conducting this study. There are no incentives and contributions to be given to the participant.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Ethics Committee of the Senate Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Degrees Committee (SRIPDC), UNISA. A copy of approval can be obtained from the researcher if required.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa on 0765871578 or email molekoa53@gmail.com or website 33092141@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The findings are accessible for a period of 5 years.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa on 0765871578 or email molekoa53@gmail.com or website 33092141@mylife.unisa.ac.za.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr M.K. Malahlela on 012 481 2755, or her email at malahmk@unisa.ac.za.

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

Researcher's signature.

Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa



APPENDIX F: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the audio recordings from a semi-structured interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Name & Surname Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I _____ grant consent that the information I share during the focus group may be used by Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: Mashiga Ambrose Molekoa

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The following questions will be asked during in-depth interviews:

1.1 TEACHER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS MEDIATING BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

- 1.1.1 What do you perceive as behavioural challenges in the classroom? Explain and give examples.
- 1.1.2 What are your challenges of inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges in the classroom?
- 1.1.3 What is/are your perception(s) of the inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges in an ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classroom?
- 1.1.4 What are your positive and negative experiences of the inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges in an ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classroom?
- 1.1.5 Do you think teachers in mainstream clearly understand the concept of behavioural challenges?
- 1.1.6 How would you rate your knowledge and understanding of behavioural challenges in relation to your initial teacher training?
- 1.1.7 Do you feel you adequately/effectively teach learners with challenging behaviour? Explain, giving examples.

2.1 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

- 2.1.1 What are teachers' perceptions of factors that influence the development of behavioural challenges in their classrooms?
- 2.1.2 How much is learner behaviour affected by overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teacher training in your opinion?
- 2.1.3 Is your school providing you with adequate support to deal with learners with behavioural challenges? Explain.
- 2.1.4 What help do you receive from parents in dealing with learners with behavioural challenges?
- 2.1.5 How does teacher-learner, parent-learner and peer relationships influence learner behaviour?

3. HOW TEACHERS RESPOND WHEN BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES OCCUR IN THEIR PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

- 3.1.1 What strategies do you use to cater for learners with behavioural challenges in the classroom?
- 3.1.2 How do you deal with disruptive behaviour in the classroom?
- 3.1.3 What challenges do you encounter in relation to the mediation of behavioural challenges mainstream classrooms? Explain how you deal with those challenges.
- 3.1.4 How do you view the role of effective classroom management as an intervention strategy?
- 3.1.5 Do you think the involvement of relevant stakeholders can promote inclusive education and acceptance of behavioural challenges? Explain.

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

The following questions will be asked during focus group discussions:

1.1 TEACHER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS MEDIATING BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

- 1.1.1 What are behavioural challenges?
- 1.1.2 What are your challenges of inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges in the classroom?
- 1.1.3 What is/are your perception(s) of the inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges in an ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classroom?
- 1.1.4 What are your positive and negative experiences of the inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges in an ordinary Inter-Sen Phase classroom?
- 1.1.5 Do you think teachers in mainstream clearly understand the concept of behavioural challenges?
- 1.1.6 What are teacher perceptions, attitudes and views about inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges in mainstream schools?
- 1.1.7 What are the factors that influence the attitudes of teachers in the inclusion of learners with behavioural challenges?
- 1.1.8 How would you rate your knowledge and understanding of behavioural challenges in relation to your initial teacher training?
- 1.1.9 Do you feel you adequately/effectively teach learners with challenging behaviour? Explain, giving examples.

2.1 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

- 2.1.1 What are the teachers' perceptions of factors that influence the development of behavioural challenges in their classrooms?
- 2.1.2 How much is learner behaviour affected by overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teacher training in your opinion?
- 2.1.3 Is your school providing you with adequate support to deal with learners with behavioural challenges? Explain.
- 2.1.4 What help do you receive from parents in dealing with learners with behavioural challenges?
- 2.1.5 How does teacher-learner, parent-learner and peer relationships influence learner behaviour?
- 2.1.6 To what extent do you think inclusive education is affected by teachers who lack expertise to deal with learners with behavioural challenges?
- 2.1.7 Do you see the Department of Education active in the implementation of inclusive education? Explain giving reasons to your answer.

3. HOW TEACHERS RESPOND WHEN BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES OCCUR IN THEIR PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

- 3.1.1 What strategies do you use to cater for learners with behavioural challenges in the classroom?
- 3.1.2 How do you deal with disruptive behaviour in the classroom?
- 3.1.3 What challenges do you encounter in relation to the mediation of behavioural challenges mainstream classrooms? Explain how you deal with those challenges.
- 3.1.4 How do you view the role of effective classroom management as an intervention strategy?
- 3.1.5 Do you think the involvement of relevant stakeholders can promote inclusive education and acceptance of behavioural challenges? Explain.
- 3.1.6 How do you think inclusive education workshops will improve teachers' skills of teaching learners with behavioural challenges in mainstream classrooms?
- 3.1.7 Which things would you have to improve to improve inclusive education practices in your class?



APPENDIX J: CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

Confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement.

I, _____, the principal/Deputy/DH of _____ declare on the _____ of _____ 2023, that I will not disclose whether verbally or in writing any information which might lead to the identities of teachers who will be participating in the study titled Teachers' perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary classrooms of Bojanala District, Northwest Province, to any other party for any other purpose during or after the course of this study.

Signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Appendix K: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/11/08

Ref: **2023/11/08/33092141/45/AM**

Dear Mr MA Molekoa

Name: Mr MA Molekoa

Student No.:33092141

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2023/11/08 to 2026/11/08

Researcher(s): Name: Mr MA Molekoa
E-mail address: 33092141@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 076 587 1578

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr MK Malahlela
E-mail address: malahmk@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 481 2755

Title of research:

Teachers' Perceptions towards mediating behavioural challenges in the primary school classrooms of Bojanala District, Northwest Province.

Qualification: MEd Inclusive Education

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 2023/11/08 to 2026/11/08.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/11/08 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.



University of South Africa
Pretorius 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

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 **2026/11/08**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2023/11/08/33092141/45/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 Mpine Makoe
EXECUTIVE DEAN
 qakisme@unisa.ac.za



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 L: EDITING CERTIFICATE

EDITORIAL CERTIFICATE

This is to Certify that the Dissertation Titled
Teachers' Perceptions Towards Mediating Behavioural Challenges in
the Primary School Classrooms of Bojanala District, Northwest
Province.

by

MASHIGA AMBROSE MOLEKOA

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