

**The management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo
province**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

M. Ed. Education Management, Law and Policy

in the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Supervisor: Dr Diatleng Sebidi (SD)

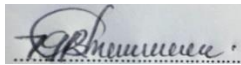
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

In order to qualify for the degree of Magister Educationis (Education) at the University of Pretoria, I, Rembuluwani Israel Tshimilandou (Student number: 18215506), hereby declare that the M.Ed. dissertation titled “The management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province” is my original work. It has never been submitted to another higher education institution before. A complete list of references is provided for each source that was cited or used in this research.

Signed at the University of Pretoria on this 14 day of December 2023.

Signature:



ETHICS STATEMENT

The study complied with the aforementioned ethical guidelines. In Chapter 3 section 3.6 these ethical considerations are further discussed in depth.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my supervisor, family and colleagues. Thank you very much for the on-going support and motivation. If it were not for your motivation and support, I would have not successfully completed the study. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my gratitude to the Vhembe East district, Mvudi circuit, and the Limpopo Department of Education for permitting me to conduct a study at their secondary schools.

I would also like to thank principals and teachers of the five secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit for finding time in your busy schedule to take part in the interviews for this study. Your participation assisted in making sure that the study is successful.

To my supervisor Dr. Diatleng Sebidi (SD), thank you for leadership, guidance and motivation. Your knowledge, supervision and diligence motivated me to work as hard as possible in order to succeed in this journey.

Prof. Maitumeleng Nthontho, thank you very much for all your recommendations, and constructive comments that motivated me to finalise this study. Your true support helped to understand and value the creativity of research.

Thank you very much Dr. Siphilali P.D my mentor and Mr Njiva M my fellow master's student. Your guidance and support really assisted me to succeed.

To my wife Fulefhelo Lucia Masutha and daughter Rofuna Tshimiladou, thank you for showing love and support during this demanding time of the research process.

My deepest appreciation to my late parents Nkhangweni Evelinah Tshimilandou and Ntsieni Alpheus Tshimilandou for helping me to realise my potential. I dedicate this study to both of you. May you continue to rest in peace.

Lastly, I thank God for giving me the wisdom, health and power to make it through complications I had to deal with during the process of this study.

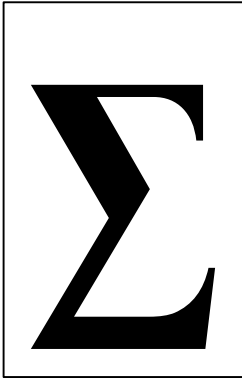
ABSTRACT

This study explored the management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. Teaching and learning primarily depends on a disciplined and respectful environment for learning. Ill-discipline in education systems worldwide has been pronounced a hindrance in schools to achievement education objectives. Using the Skinner Behaviour of Organism theoretical framework, this study adopted a qualitative approach within the interpretivist approach. Using a case study design, five principals and five teachers from secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of Vhembe district in Limpopo were purposively selected. Data was collected using face-to-face semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic data analysis steps advocated by Braun and Clarke where the data was familiarised, initial codes generated, potential themes reviewed, themes defined and the report for the study was written. Ethical considerations and trustworthiness were observed when the study was conducted. The study's findings revealed that ill-discipline continue to ruin teaching and learning in many South African schools. The findings of the study assign this challenge to drug abuse and engagement in cliques' activities, over-protection of learners by their parents, too many rights provided to learners by South African legislation, limited authority provided to schools to manage discipline and overcrowding in the classrooms. This study recommends that teachers and principals educate parents on school disciplinary policies and procedures, promote school discipline at community events, and involve parents in the discipline of their own children. In order to prevent disciplinary incidents in the classrooms, this study also advises the Department of Basic Education to ensure that teachers respect time on task and instructing the students.

Keywords: Behaviour of organism theory; discipline; ill-discipline; principal; teacher; secondary school

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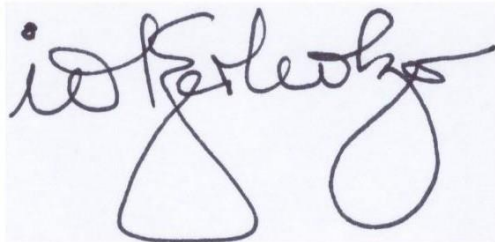
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have completed the language editing of the thesis **The management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province** by Rembuluwani Israel Tshimilandou submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree M. Ed. Education Management, Law and Policy in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria

Yours faithfully



Isobet Oberholzer

30 November 2023

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
ACRWC	The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
BELA	Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CAT	Convention Against Torture
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FET	Further Education Training
HOD	Head of Department
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
LRC	Learner Representative Committee
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
OBE	Outcome Based Education
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UN	United Nations

List of figures

Figure 3.1: Thematic data analysis, Braun and Clark.....	53
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List of Tables

Table 4.1: Biographical information of the participants	59
Table 4.2: Explanation of the participants' qualifications.....	60
Table 4.3: Research questions, themes and sub-themes.....	62

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration of originality	i
Ethics clearance certificate	ii
Ethics statement	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract	vi
Certificate of editing	vii
List of abbreviations	viii
List of figures	ix
List of tables	x
Table of contents	xi
CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT	4
1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY	5
1.4 PURPOSE AND AIMS OF THE STUDY	6
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	7
1.6 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW	7
1.6.1 Introduction.....	7
1.6.2 Managing discipline in school.....	7
1.6.3 Legislation regarding discipline in schools.....	8
1.6.4 The importance of discipline schools.....	8
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL ISSUES	9
1.7.1 Research paradigm	9
1.7.2 Research approach	10
1.7.3 Research design	10
1.7.4 Research site and sampling	11
1.7.5 Data collection techniques.....	11

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	12
1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	12
1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	13
1.10.1 The field of study	14
1.10.2 The area of study	14
1.11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	14
1.11.1 Methodological limitations.....	14
1.12 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS	14
1.12.1 Management	14
1.12.2 Learner.....	15
1.12.2 Teacher.....	15
1.12.4 Discipline	15
1.12.5 Classroom	15
1.13 BREAKDOWN OF CHAPTERS.....	15
1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	17
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	19
2.1 INTRODUCTION	19
2.2 LEARNER DISCIPLINE	20
2.3 TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE.....	23
2.4 CHALLENGES OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE	28
2.5 WAYS OF IMPROVING LEARNER DISCIPLINE	31
2.5.1 Teacher-learner relationships.....	31
2.5.2 Principal-learner relationships	32
2.5.3 Legislation and policy implementation	33
2.5.4 Mutual respect.....	34
2.5.5 Parental involvement.....	34
2.5.6 Motivation and reward	35
2.5.7 Counselling.....	36

2.6 MAINTENANCE OF ORDER AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS.....	36
2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	39
2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	42
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	44
3.1 INTRODUCTION	44
3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	44
3.2.1 Research paradigm	45
3.2.2 Research approach	46
3.2.3 Research design	47
3.2.4 Research site and sampling	49
3.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES	50
3.3.1 Face-to-face semi-structured interview.....	51
3.4 DATA ANALYSIS	52
3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRANSFERABILITY OF THE STUDY.....	54
3.5.1 Triangulation.....	55
3.5.2 Member checking.....	55
3.5.3 Audit trail	55
3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	56
3.6.1 Requesting ethical clearance	56
3.6.2 Gaining access.....	56
3.6.3 Getting informed consent	57
3.6.4 Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality	57
3.6.5 The right to withdraw from the interviews	57
3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY	58
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	59
4.1 INTRODUCTION	59
4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS	59

4.2.1 Biographical information of the principals	60
4.2.2 Biographical information of the teachers	61
4.3 DATA PRESENTATION.....	61
4.4 DATA ANALYSIS.....	62
4.5 DATA ANALYSIS FROM INTERVIEWS	63
4.5.1 Theme 1: Management of learner discipline.....	63
4.5.1.1 Learner discipline in the classrooms.....	63
4.5.1.2 Sub-themes 2: Managing learner discipline in the classroom.....	65
4.5.1.3 Sub-themes 3: Mutual respect and relationships.....	66
4.5.2. Theme 2: Challenges of learner discipline in schools.....	68
4.5.2.1 Sub-themes 1: Poor academic performance	68
4.5.2.2 Sub-themes 2: Learners behaviour at school.....	70
4.5.2.3 Sub-themes 3: Loss of focus to academic engagements	72
4.5.3 Theme 3: Maintenance of lawful discipline in schools	73
4.5.3.1 Sub-themes 1: Parental involvement.....	73
4.5.3.2 Sub-themes 2: Effective teaching and learning	75
4.5.4 Theme 4: Effects of discipline on academic performance.....	77
4.5.4.1 Delay of teaching and learning.....	77
4.5.4.2 Degradation of school image.....	79
4.5.4.3 Conflicts between teachers and parents	80
4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	82
CHAPTER 5: OVERVIEW, SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATION AND	
CONCLUSION.....	82
5.1 INTRODUCTION	83
5.2 REFLECTION ON THE JOURNEY OF THE STUDY.....	83
5.3 OVERVIEW	84
5.4 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS.....	85

5.4.1 Findings with regard to secondary research question 1: <i>What are the experiences of principals and teachers regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?</i>	86
5.4.2 Findings with regard to secondary research question 2: <i>What are the challenges regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?</i>	87
5.4.3 Findings with regard to secondary research question 3: <i>How can principals and teachers maintain lawful learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?</i>	89
5.4.4 Findings with regard to secondary question 4: <i>How is learner discipline affecting academic performance at secondary schools in Limpopo province?</i>	91
5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY	92
5.5.1 Recommendations with regard to research question 1: <i>What are the experiences of principals and teachers regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?</i>	93
5.5.2 Recommendation with regard to secondary research question 2: <i>What are the challenges regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?</i>	94
5.5.3 Recommendation with regard to secondary research question 3: <i>How can Principals and teachers maintain lawful learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?</i>	95
5.5.4 Recommendations in relation to secondary research question 4: <i>How is learner discipline affecting academic performance at secondary schools in Limpopo province?</i>	96
5.6 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE STUDIES.....	97
5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS	98
5.8 CONCLUSION	99
5.9 REFERENCES	100
5.10 APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Permission to conduct research from the Limpopo DOE.....	121

Appendix B: Request for permission form the SGB to conduct research.....	122
Appendix C: Request for permission from the principal to conduct research	124
Appendix D: Letter of informed consent for principals and teachers.....	126
Appendix E: Interview schedule for principals and teachers.....	128

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I provided the introduction and background of the study on the teachers' experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. Supervision of student behaviour at secondary schools in the province of Limpopo. I also give a summary of the laws that support discipline in schools followed by a discussion on how discipline should be handled in secondary schools in the province of. The problem statement, the rationale for the study, the primary research question and any supporting questions, the methodology, ethical issues, the contributions, and the study's limitations were mentioned before the chapter's conclusion.

Learner ill-discipline has been on the increase in education worldwide (Masingi, 2017; Losen, Hodson, Keith II, Morrison, & Belway, 2015). Successful teaching and learning occur when teaching and learning objectives are achieved successfully without impediments created by ill-discipline (Masingi, 2017). The inability to achieve teaching and learning objectives consequently lead to learners' inability to understand the taught content (Seman, Yusoff & Embong, 2017). The inability of learners to understand the content taught leads to learners' inability to answer questions successfully during assessment and consequently affect learners' academic performance. As a result, poor learner discipline hinders progress in education. Learners' lack of discipline has the potential to affect learners' academic achievement, because curriculum goals cannot be realised in an unmanageable classroom.

According to scholars, discipline in South African schools is a barrier to both teaching and learning (Masingi, 2017; Mohapi, 2014). A structured and respectful environment for teachers and students is essential for effective teaching and learning. Learners are expected to respect teachers as much as teachers should respect learners. Maintaining order and respect at school allows for uninterrupted teaching and learning, which is advantageous for both teachers and students. While students are able to understand and master the content taught, teachers are successful in achieving their teaching and learning objectives.

Asghar (2017) identified that learner ill-discipline may account for classroom disorder, learners disrespecting teachers and defying instructions, abusive comments by learners to teachers, and learners arguing amongst each other in classroom during the lesson. These identified activities make teaching and learning impossible for teachers and learners. It is unlikely that the learning objectives can be achieved should any of the identified activities occur during teaching and learning. The inability of teachers to achieve learning objectives leads to learners' inability to answer questions successfully during assessment and consequently lead to poor academic performance (Seman, Yusoff & Embong, 2017).

The causes of poor learner discipline range from learners' attitude to the inability of school leadership to exercise its power and authority at the school level as suggested by Jinot (2018). Jinot further believes that poor learner discipline originates from family related issues, the attitude of learners and teachers and the mode of school management. Bolatito (2021) affirms that learner ill-discipline has been a disturbing factor in teaching and learning internationally and nationally. In Kenya Simba, Agak and Kabuka (2016) found that there is a link between learner discipline and academic attainment.

The situation in Kenya is similar to situation in Tanzania where parents and teachers believe that poor learner discipline affects effective teaching and learning as mentioned by Semali and Vumilia (2016). Masingi (2017) affirms that learner ill-discipline affects learner academic performance. Learner ill-discipline is a predicament to education in South Africa as mentioned by Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020). Lack of parental involvement is one of the factors contributing to learner ill-discipline in Limpopo province, which is a problem particularly in secondary schools (Masingi, 2017).

In order to effectively manage learner discipline, the school governing body is required by The South African Schools Act No. 84 of (1996b) to enforce learner discipline through the school's code of conduct. However, Mathebula and Runhare (2021) found that most members of the school's disciplinary committee lacked adequate knowledge and understanding of the school code of conduct, which is why there is poor student discipline in schools in the Limpopo province. In addition to the school disciplinary committee members' ignorance regarding the school code of conduct, Masingi (2017)

reports that in the province of Limpopo, a crowded environment encourages learners to behave badly. This is especially true given that Masingi (2017) found that the Limpopo Department of Education struggles with a lack of school infrastructure.

The use of corporal punishment as a method of enforcing school discipline is prohibited by section 10(1) of the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b). In addition, section 10(2) makes it abundantly clear that anyone who violates section 10(1) of this legislation is guilty of an offense and subject to punishment that could include an assault sentence upon conviction. Everyone in South Africa has the right to an education under Section 29(a) and (b) of the constitution (RSA, 1996a). This suggests that no child should be denied an education because of how they act in class. The constitutional right to an education and the use of corporal punishment being prohibited, leave teachers with few other options for managing discipline in schools. Expelling disruptive learners from the classroom is not an acceptable method for managing student discipline because it denies students their constitutional right to an education (RSA, 1996b). Additionally, teachers are not permitted to use corporal punishment to enforce discipline because this is against the South African Schools Act No. 84 of (1996b), which forbids it.

To control discipline in schools, the school governing body is required by section 20(d) of the South African Schools Act to customise and adopt the school code of conduct. However, Mathebula and Runhare (2021) found that the school code of conduct may not effectively help schools manage learner discipline because it was discovered that the majority of members of the disciplinary committee are unaware of how to put the code of conduct into practice to manage learner discipline. Its ineffectiveness is attributed to the lack of parental and student input in the creation of the school code of conduct, the lack of revisions to the code, and the absence of workshops to instruct new members of the disciplinary committee on how to use the code to manage learner discipline (Mathebula & Runhare, 2021). Due to this, learner discipline still interferes with effective teaching and learning in the absence of a legal system to manage learner discipline.

According to Simuforosa and Rosemary (2014) the inability to address learner discipline may see a rise in societal problems since a higher number of uneducated citizens may lead to increased societal challenges. Societal challenges may include incidences of crime, prevalence of pregnancy, drug abuse and bullying in

schools (Simuforosa & Rosemary, 2014). However, learner discipline can be well managed at schools when the school code of conduct is drafted in collaboration with the community, learners and parents (Masingi, 2017; Foncha et al., 2017).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the nine provinces in South Africa that has the most difficulty with educational management is Limpopo. In terms of learner performance, this province had been struggling near the bottom of the provincial rankings. For the past five years, its grade 12 students' performance has consistently lagged behind the average national matric pass rate. According to Department of Basic Education, National Senior Certificate Examinations report (2016/17/18/19/20), Limpopo province obtained a 62.5% pass rate in 2016 and ranked 8, In 2017 the province obtained a 65.6% pass rate and ranked 8, in 2018 it obtained a 69.4% pass rate and ranked 9, In 2019 it obtained a 73.2% pass rate and ranked 9 and lastly in 2020 it obtained a 68.2% pass rate and ranked 7.

Though these results might be assigned to poor management of schools and the curriculum, learners' ill-discipline in the province remains a predicament that many secondary schools are unable to remedy (Masingi, 2017). While the province continues to perform poorly as revealed by National Senior Certificate Examination (NSC) results (2016/17/18/19/20), learner ill-discipline continues to affect teaching and learning in many schools of Limpopo province (Masingi, 2017. Mathebula & Runhare, 2021).

Studies must be conducted in the province in an effort to address learner ill-discipline in secondary schools due to the presence of the problem in Limpopo's secondary schools. The study conducted by Masingi (2017) revealed many causes of learner ill-discipline although its focus was only on grade 9 learners. Learner ill-discipline affects all the schools and is experienced by everyone at schools in all the grades. The study by Mathebula and Runhare (2021) concentrated on the understanding and application of the school code of conduct in classrooms. Therefore, in order to enhance academic performance and discover new methods of managing discipline, more research is required that focuses on addressing learner discipline for the entire school. Therefore,

the purpose of this study was to explore principals and teachers' experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province.

According to Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020) the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996b), which established the guidelines that "no person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner," has contributed to the difficulty of learner discipline in South African schools. Applying corporal punishment is regarded as a criminal offense or a civil offense under section 10(1) of the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b). The passing of this legislation has left schools without an alternative means of enforcing discipline (Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler 2018). However, some academics, like Mohapi (2014), contend that the use of strict discipline strategies for students may result in subpar academic performance and higher levels of stubbornness.

Globally, student indiscipline has been rising in the classroom. When learning objectives are successfully met, teaching and learning are successful. The inability to achieve teaching and learning objectives consequently lead to learners' inability to understand the taught content (Seman, Yusoff & Embong, 2017). The inability of learners to understand the content taught leads to learners' inability to answer questions successfully during assessments and consequently affects learners' academic performance. As a result, learners' ill-discipline hinders progress in education. Learners' ill-discipline has the potential to affect their academic achievement, primarily because lessons cannot be carried out successfully in an unmanageable classroom.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

During my time as a learner at both a primary and secondary schooling, teachers as well as parents used corporal punishment to enforce discipline. Due to the use of corporal punishment, learners were railed in their good behaviours. Both teachers and parents were respected to a point where these happened either at school or elsewhere outside the school premises. Learners would either run for a hiding when they realised that they were misbehaving or mend their behaviour. Therefore, learners did not have space and a chance for misbehaviour, be it at school or at home.

I am currently an experienced teacher and I am encountering learner ill-discipline every day at my workplace. As a member of the School Management Team (SMT), I attend learners' disciplinary hearings more often and I have witnessed situations where parents tend to defend their children when they have contravened the school's disciplinary code of conduct. The ability of teachers to exercise their authority in the classroom and at school is compromised by this situation. In order to finish the task at hand, teachers consequently change their emphasis from developing learners emotionally and academically to dealing with their misbehaviour. Sadly, this has an impact on the academic achievement of learners.

Losen et al. (2015) assert that in the United States of America many learners are suspended from school due to indiscipline. Furthermore, Losen et al. (2015) assert that learners have lost many school days due to "exclusionary discipline". The existence of learner ill-discipline in America indicates that learner discipline is a challenge that is widely experienced. In Mauritius, secondary schools experience a huge challenge with learner indiscipline as indicated by Jinot (2018). Due to the elevated levels of learner indiscipline in secondary schools in Mauritius, a study was conducted to determine the root causes of this problem. Without going into great detail, the study concentrated on learner discipline rather than its impact on academic performance.

Studies conducted focused mainly on the causes of learner's discipline and the general ways in which learner discipline can be managed. There is inadequate literature in South Africa that suggests specific accommodative and effective ways to manage indiscipline in schools in order to enhance learner academic attainment; hence this study intended to explore principals and teachers' experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province.

1.4 PURPOSE AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

Simba et al. (2016) recommend that for learner academic performance to improve, learner ill-discipline has to be addressed and this is what this study intends to accomplish. Given the ongoing difficulties caused by ill-discipline in many South African secondary schools, the purpose of this study was to explore principals and teachers' experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary research questions

- How do principals and teachers manage learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province?

Secondary research questions

- What are the experiences of principals and teachers regarding management of learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?
- What are the challenges regarding the management of learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?
- How can principals and teachers maintain order learner discipline in secondary schools in Limpopo province?
- How is learner discipline affecting academic performance at secondary schools in Limpopo province?

1.6 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

1.6.1 Introduction

In this section, I concentrate on the concept of management of discipline at secondary schools, laws and policies regulating discipline as well as the importance of discipline in promoting the academic achievement in schools.

1.6.2 Managing discipline in schools

Egunlusi (2020) defines ill-discipline as disruptive behaviour in a classroom brought on by learners that affect other learners' fundamental rights to feel safe, to be treated with respect, and to learn. Positive discipline, which Ebrahim (2017:1) defines as "teaching acceptable behaviours and unlearning maladaptive behaviours with support, guidance, and direction in managing behaviour," is the opposite of ill-discipline. According to Ebrahim, discipline is about "setting limits, clarifying roles, responsibilities, and mutual expectations and creating a predictable, orderly, and stable life, but not punitive." According to Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) learner discipline form the basis for effective teaching and learning in and outside the classrooms because when discipline in a school is poor, provision of quality education

is impeded. As a result, it is essential to develop effective strategies to curb learner discipline at school in order to maintain order, learner discipline, and higher level of teaching and learning successfully. (Bechuke & Debeila, 2012).

1.6.3 Legislation regarding discipline in schools

South Africa has laws and policies that encourage learner discipline in classrooms and forbid abuse there. Everyone has the right to freedom and security, which include the right to be free from all forms of violence, to not be tortured, and to not be punished, as stated in section 12(1) of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996a). The abuse and maltreatment of humans is prohibited by section 28(1)(d) (RSA, 1996a). Sections 10(1) and 10(2) of the South African Schools Act make it abundantly clear that no abuse of any kind may be inflicted on students in schools, and anyone who violates this rule is guilty of a criminal offense (RSA, 1996b). According to section 7(1) of the Children's Act of 2005, teachers in their capacity as parents have the responsibility to provide emotional and intellectual needs of a child.

The National Education Policy Act of 1996 requires the South African Minister of Education to create policies to guarantee that there is a culture of discipline in the classrooms (NEPA, 1996c). The goal is to prevent any educational institution from using corporal punishment as a form of discipline or abusing students in any way—physically, emotionally, mentally, or sexually. In summation, discipline in educational settings finds an expression in the provisions regarding the aims of education and children's rights to protection from harm as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC); The South African Constitution; Children's Act (no. 38 of 2005); African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT); Prevention of Combatting and Torture of Persons Act (Act, No 13 of 2013) and The National School Safety Framework of 2016.

1.6.4 The importance of discipline in schools

Due to the fact that many students exhibit behaviours that are inconsistent with disciplinary standards, it is important to reinforce the value of discipline in schools (Hartini, 2018). Therefore, Subi and Wakhudin (2021) regard discipline as the

foundation of discipline in any education institution that makes sure that teaching and learning happens in a violent free environment that allows all the learners to achieve their learning desires without any impediments. Ansori, Sutaryono and Dewi (2019) declare that values such as discipline and responsibility have connection with the students' behaviour that links with the students' academic achievement.

According to Khatun, Ballia and Siddiqui (2018:87)

... discipline impacts the learning process by creating a stress-free environment for apportioning time to various activities, improves planning through observing and maintaining a set daily routine, moulds learner character and enhances their motivation, enables the setting of good examples and positively contributes to better grades.

However, Simba et al., (2016) regard discipline as an important element of human behaviour and declare that without it, an institution may not succeed in achieving its goals. Therefore, "the value of disciplined character is very important for humans so that other good character values emerge' (Subi & Wakhudin, 2021:71).

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL ISSUES

This study aimed to explore principals and teachers' experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. In order to gather various viewpoints from principals and teachers, a qualitative research approach was used to better understand how student discipline is managed in secondary schools in the province of Limpopo. Principals and teachers exchanged ideas on how to manage student behaviour in a way that is advantageous to both them and the students.

1.7.1 Research paradigm

The management of learner discipline in schools was investigated using an interpretive paradigm (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Since people and groups interact with their social environments and create their own realities, an interpretive framework was used to better understand human behaviour and institutions such as schools. The choice of paradigm for this study was also influenced by the belief that the studied phenomenon was interlinked with my values to influence the enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). "A paradigm is a set of beliefs that deals with ultimate or first

principles” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, scholars like Creswell (2014) opted to use the term “worldview,” which refers to “a fundamental set of beliefs that guide action,” rather than “paradigm.”

According to Maree et al. (2016) studies are based on existing theories. Existing theories form a foundation that a new study is based on. This helped in planning the study in line with existing theories in the field of study. Maree et al. (2016) claim that an epistemological paradigm assists in providing clarity regarding the interpretation of the findings of the study. The paradigm made it easier for me to comprehend the study's findings. The interpretive theoretical paradigm was reflected in the epistemological claim for this study.

According to Creswell, (2014) interpretivists suggest that knowledge can be found through interacting with different people and different situations in the world, knowledge can also be acquired through daily life situations. The adoption of the interpretive framework enabled me to acquire relevant information through interaction with teachers. Principals and teachers were relevant to this study since they interact with learners on a daily basis.

Interpretivist such as Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) suggest that “the social world cannot be explained by a single reality or truth, but a set of realities or truths which are historical, local, specific and non-generalisable”. This was advantageous to the study since multiple realities were accommodated and provided me with the advantage to explore several factors that relate to learner’s ill-discipline in relation to academic performance.

1.7.2 Research approach

Given the choice of the interpretive paradigm of the study, I regarded the qualitative research approach as the most relevant to be used for this study. Yin (2011) defines qualitative research as a study of “experiential life of people”. In this study, I was able to express my opinions from the depth of the human experience by using a qualitative approach. Additionally, the ability to irradiate a better understanding into the in-depth rich lives of people in the world in which they live was a factor in my decision to use a qualitative approach for this study (Da Costa, Hall and Spear, 2016). I was also able

to examine data that can be generalised regardless of context by using a qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

1.7.3 Research design

Because interpretivists have a close relationship with qualitative techniques like case studies and ethnography, using a case study would be the most appropriate approach in this investigation (Willis, 2007:90). The case study was pertinent because it allowed me to establish a connection with the participants and hear them share their experiences regarding how discipline is handled in secondary schools in the province of Limpopo (Maree et al., 2016). When I selected a specific manifestation of the phenomenon to comprehend a unique issue that develops from routine practice in a social context, case study studies were pluralistic (Creswell, 2014). As a result, using a case study allowed me to gain new insight into the issue, the nature of the social and personal interactions that take place between participants and their environments (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

1.7.4 Research site and sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study to choose the participants and schools. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgmental sampling, is a non-random sample that employs a variety of techniques to track down every member of a highly specialised and challenging-to-reach population (Neuman, 2014). Based on the results of their grade 12 end-of-year examinations, five secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of the Vhembe East district in the province of Limpopo were chosen for this study. I chose the participants based on the fact that they had at least three years of secondary school teaching experience. Based on the aforementioned criteria, one principal and one teacher were chosen from each of the five secondary schools.

1.7.5 Data collection techniques

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to collect data on the management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province, specifically at secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of Vhembe East district. Interviews are regarded by Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020) as “an exchange with an informal character, a conversation with a goal.” Busetto et al. 2020 further declare that:

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews are characterised by open-ended questions and the use of an interview guide in which the broad areas of interest, sometimes including sub-questions, are defined.

The interviews with the principals and teachers generated rich insights into narratives, experiences, attitudes and feelings of their life experiences regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Assuming an interviewer's role helped me to gain insight into challenges relating to learner discipline experienced by principals and teachers on a daily basis outside and inside their classrooms (Creswell, 2014).

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Yin (2011) asserts that ethical considerations have to do with understanding the rights of other people and to protect their dignity. This suggests that morality refers to the constraints and decisions that individuals can make when seeking the truth.

While truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even in the extreme case when respect for human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature (Cohen, 2000:56).

In addition, Arifin (2018) asserts that it is vital that all studies must protect human rights through the use of relevant ethical principles. Arifin further states that consideration of ethics is important during all stages of a qualitative research study in order to maintain the balance between the risks and benefits of the study. To adhere to the ethical issues, I ensured that the following ethical principles were followed. I applied for ethical clearance, and permission to conduct research at the earmarked institutions (Creswell, 2014). I also wrote letters to the SGBs and the participants of earmarked secondary schools for permission to conduct research. I also issued letters of informed consent to the participants requesting their participation and also inform them about the research procedures as well as the ethical considerations the study would observe (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021).

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The successes or failures of the maintenance of learner discipline in schools do not only depend on the enforcement of discipline by teachers who are leaders in a school setting, but also on the strategies employed by schools to make sure learners are

disciplined (Sibanda, 2018). The findings of this study would be significant for school regarding how discipline should be maintained in order to ensure quality academic performance. This study would also provide school principals, school management teams and teachers with alternative measures to curb ill-discipline in their schools. This study could also assist the Department of Basic Education, the Provincial Departments of Education, districts and circuits in terms of how to align their policies on school learner discipline to ensure good learner performance.

1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Delimitations are in essence the limitations consciously set by the authors themselves. They are concerned with the definitions that the researchers decide to set as the boundaries or limits of their work so that the study's aims and objectives do not become impossible to achieve (Theofanidis & Fountouki, (2018).

The delimitations of this study are concerned with the field of study and area of the study.

1.10.1 The field of study

The field of study is education management law and policy studies. This study focuses on principals and teachers' experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. The disciplinary experiences in rural secondary schools of Limpopo province and are unfavourable to teaching and learning towards achieving good educational performance. Most secondary schools in affluent urban areas and township are experiencing similar problems. Therefore, the findings recorded by this study can be useful to other areas as well.

1.10.2 The area of study

This study was conducted in Limpopo province. Limpopo is South Africa's second-poorest province, with most its population living in under-resourced rural areas (Mears & Blaauw (2010). Most of these schools in this province are public schools. This study confined itself to poor secondary schools categorised under quintile 1-3 in terms of the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (Department of Basic Education. 2011-12).

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations of a study are potential weaknesses that I sometimes cannot control. Some of the limitations can be connected with the chosen research design, funding constraints, or other factors (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). For this study, limitations are methodologically inclined.

1.11.1 Methodological limitations

The study adopted a qualitative research approach, as a result the findings of the study cannot be generalised as the study was conducted on a small scale of a specific location and limited to a small number of participants (Maree, et al., 2016). However, the use of multiple data collection techniques assisted in generalising the findings. SGBs are the governance structures in South African schools in terms of section 16(1) of the South African Schools and the custodians of the schools' code of conduct in terms of section 20(d) (RSA, 1996b). Leaving out their experiences regarding managing discipline in their schools disadvantaged the findings of the study. However, the review of literature assisted me to make sense of how discipline is managed in schools and to excavate the challenges that teachers are experiencing with the management of discipline in their schools.

1.12 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The concepts below are those that form the basis of this study. These concepts are used throughout the study to connect the discussions on the management of learner discipline in Limpopo province, specifically the secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of the Vhembe East district.

1.12.1 Management

Management is the use of human resources efficiently in education with an objective of achieving academic excellence (Van Deventer, 2000). In this study, management is guiding the institution toward effective instructional practices. It considers every aspect of the school's policies, personnel and material resources, programs, activities, and equipment and integrates them to be efficient and effective. In simple words it means to preside over the matters of the school.

1.12.2 Learner

According to the South African Schools Act (1996b) a learner is an “individual who receives education during the process of teaching and learning”. In this study, the term "learner" refers to a person who is getting education as part of the teaching and learning process. The study views the learner as the primary beneficiary of education.

1.12.3 Teacher

According to the South African Schools Act (1996b) a teacher, as is an individual who carries out professional educating responsibility to people at school. This study refers to a teacher as an individual who is trusted with the duty to educate learners in a school setting.

1.12.4 Discipline

Discipline is a set of guidelines, sanctions, and behavioural techniques that can be used to control children's behaviour and maintain order in classrooms. The practice of teaching people to follow rules and codes of behaviour and strictly enforcing adherence to them is another definition of discipline (Masingi, 2017).

1.12.5 Classroom

A classroom is defined as a “learning space in which both children and adults learn”. All types of educational institutions have classrooms. Classrooms can be found at institutions of basic education and higher learning such as primary/secondary school and universities, including colleges. Classrooms are also found at training institutions such as business places and religious organisations. The classrooms offer learners a place where lessons can be conducted without interruptions by internal and external factors (Masingi, 2017).

1.13 BREAK-DOWN OF CHAPTERS

The study was divided into the five chapters listed below.

Chapter 1

Introduction and background

Chapter 1 provides the introduction and background of the study on the principals and teachers' experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. An overview on what legislation advocated for discipline in schools is outlined in this chapter. The causes of indiscipline in different schools in Limpopo province as well as how discipline should be managed are unpacked and the problem statement, the justification for the study, the primary research question, additional questions, the aims and objectives, the methodology, all ethical issues, the importance and the possible limitations are described.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review and the views of various authors regarding the management of learner discipline in schools. The international, regional and South African claims on the management of learner discipline in schools are discussed. It is in this chapter that typical examples in countries of the world that experienced challenges and successes in the management of learners' discipline such as United States of America, Mauritius, Indonesia, Kenya and Tanzania are explored and compared with the discipline management experiences encountered by schools in South Africa particularly in Limpopo province. Theoretical foundations, the lenses this study used to guide, unfold, and locate viewpoints regarding the management of learner discipline in secondary schools in the province of Limpopo are also a focus of this chapter. The chapter's conclusion is given at the end.

Chapter 3

A methodology framework is offered in chapter 3. The data collection paradigm, research approach, and research design used in this study, as well as the data collection techniques, are discussed. This is followed by a description of the study's research location and participant sample and the rationale behind the selection of a particular method or methods, as well as the steps taken to gain access to the research site and the participants are outlined. There is a conclusion to the chapter's discussions.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents, clarifies, and examines data gathered using the same methods employed during participant interviews. The reports produced by the secondary school teachers in the province of Limpopo using various data collection tools regarding the administration of discipline are provided. In order to gain a thorough understanding of the research question, each participant is presented with a thorough explanation and analysis. The chapter's conclusion is offered to bring the discussions to a close.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of this dissertation summarises, examines, and reports discussions of the results from secondary research questions on the administration of student discipline in secondary schools in the province of Limpopo. It also offers suggestions for effective management of student discipline in secondary schools in the province of Limpopo. Closing remarks and the study's conclusion, as well as a list of suggestions for future research are also included.

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The achievement of good learner performance in the classroom depends on discipline. Every school needs to have a disciplinary plan in place to help prevent disruptive behaviour in the classroom. However, it is worth mentioning that the availability of the policy alone cannot ensure that learners are disciplined. This policy as agreed upon by the parents needs to be actioned in a way that it does not create loopholes for learners to engage in the acts of misbehaviour. It is incumbent upon the principal in his capacity as a school manager to be at the forefront of ensuring that discipline prevails within the school setting by involving other SMT members, teachers and school governing through allocation of responsibilities in the sections of operation to assist in maintaining school discipline. Inability of stakeholders to act as a collective in combating ill-discipline may lead to poor academic or learner performance.

Chapter 1 of my study which was on the principals and teachers' experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province included an introduction and historical context. I gave an overview on what legislation advocated for discipline in schools. I unpacked how discipline should be managed in secondary schools of Limpopo province. The problem statement, the justification for the study,

the primary and secondary research questions, the methodology, ethical concerns, the contributions, and the study's limitations were all also covered. In the chapter after, I analysed the body of research and the framework that served as this study's direction.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore principals and teachers experiences when managing of discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. The phenomenon being studied, the reasons for the investigation, and the methods used were described in the previous chapter. This chapter provides the literature review and the views of various authors in the discipline field regarding how discipline for students should be handled in schools. The management of student discipline in schools is discussed, including claims made on an international, regional, and South African level. It is in this chapter that typical examples in countries of the world that experienced challenges and successes in the management of learners' discipline such as United States America, Mauritius, Indonesia, Kenya and Tanzania are explored and compared with the discipline management experiences encountered by schools in South Africa particularly in Limpopo province. It also focuses on the theoretical underpinnings and lenses that this study used to direct, unfold, and locate perspectives on how to manage student discipline in secondary schools in the province of Limpopo. The chapter's conclusion is given at the end.

The goal of this study's literature review is to contextualise the research study, ascertain what prior scholars have written on the subject, find pertinent material that could advance the study, serve as a standard against which the findings can be compared and contrasted, and identify models and theories that are pertinent to the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This opinion is accentuated by Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole, (2013) who assert that literature reviews are used to acquaint researchers with the most recent findings in their field and in related fields. The literature also helps to pinpoint knowledge gaps and flaws in earlier research. Yu Xiao and Watson (2019) further assert that a literature review also assists to establish the foundations of academic enquiry which is what this study intends to achieve with

this exercise. Therefore, building a research on and in relation to its existing knowledge serves as the foundation of all academic research activities, regardless of the discipline (Snyder, 2019).

2.2 LEARNER DISCIPLINE

“Discipline is an important component of human behaviour and without it an organisation cannot function well towards the achievement of its goals” (Simba et al., 2016). When someone is disciplined, they stop doing the wrong things and start doing the right things (Amstutz 2015). In order to improve effective teaching and learning, maintaining discipline is one of the responsibilities of managers and leaders in educational institutions. (Belle, 2016).

As the key to successfully upholding school discipline, school administrators and leaders need to be familiar with the concepts and theories relating to discipline (Belle, 2016). According to Jinot (2018), this is significant because proper execution of school discipline assists learners to behave better. Simba et al., (2016) assert that when students behave well in a classroom setting, teaching and learning become effective because they take place uninterrupted. They contend further that in order to meet teaching and learning goals, student behaviour is the only factor that influences academic performance. However, Njoroge and Nyabuto (2014) assert that failure to achieve teaching and learning objectives owing to poor discipline may affect learner academic performance negatively. Therefore, where there is good discipline, it is assumed that there will be an improved academic performance (Tlhapi, 2015). Consequently, this implies that discipline is a vital tool to promote students’ academic performance.

In order to manage learner discipline and hopefully improve learner academic performance, schools apply the expulsion policy more than other means of managing discipline in an attempt to address learner discipline in schools (Curran, 2019). However, the expulsion policy is sensitive and may contradict section 29(1) of the South African Constitution which grants all citizens the right to education (RSA, 1996a). However, Curran (2019) reveals that adherence to no tolerance to learner ill-discipline is rare as opposed to the application of the expulsion policy in schools. The creation and application of laws/policies to manage learner discipline indicate that learner discipline is vital to the success of education, thus education is not viable

without discipline (Cohen, 2022). The success and quality of education is dependent on a well-controlled environment governed by laws and policies that shall be followed by the education community. It is important for the community to encourage the success of education since its downfall may lead to instability in the community due to unaddressed challenges such as crime caused by uneducated and unemployed people (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Schools continue to implement various techniques of managing learner ill-discipline in order to ensure success in education. Suspension, exclusion and detention are some of techniques used by schools as a way of managing learner indiscipline (Valdebenito, Eisner, Farrington, Ttofi & Sutherland, 2018).

Although suspension is criticised by education experts and school officials, suspension remains the most widely used means of managing discipline in schools (Wettach & Owen 2015). They further suggest that schools should improve school safety and enhance school academic achievement as the alternative means of managing learner discipline in schools as opposed to suspension. This is because suspension is associated with dropout and lower academic achievement (Cholewa, Hull, Babcock & Smith, 2018). A suspended learner misses an opportunity to continue learning due to an offence that could be corrected on site and allow the learner to continue with studies. Suspended learners may not head straight home, which may also lead to the possibility of drug and alcohol abuse thereby leading to dropping out of school. Discouraging a bad behaviour and allowing a learner to continue with daily studies may be beneficial to learner academic achievement as opposed to suspension which may lead to poor academic performance (Mokwena, Mokwena, Van der Heever & Mokgatle, 2020).

Improvement in school safety might lead to the possibility of successful management of learner discipline and improved academic performance as outlined by Wettach and Owen (2015).

Kutsyuruba, Klinger, and Hussain (2015) consider school safety as important to the success of learners. School climate, safety and well-being are important to learner achievement and the management of discipline (Kutsyuruba, Klinger, & Hussain, 2015). It is unlikely that school academic achievement will improve in an environment that lacks discipline as supported by Njoroge and Nyabuto (2014). This is because

successful teaching and learning occur in a discipline environment as mentioned by Seman, Yusoff and Embong (2017). Therefore, it is important to address the surrounding and infrastructure issue at schools in order to manage learner indiscipline. Successful teaching and learning lead to improved school academic achievement. This indicates that discipline is paramount to education and school academic achievement. Therefore, it is important to consider factors that encourage learner indiscipline, and once identified; those factors should be addressed in order to address the main challenge of learner indiscipline.

Since there has been student disobedience in education for a long time, different methods of managing discipline have evolved over time. For instance, in the past, teachers used corporal punishment to manage discipline (Nakpodia, 2010). Nowadays corporal punishment is prohibited by law. Managing discipline has indeed changed over the years and requires continuous revision in order to remain effective and relevant. The persistent debate around disciplinary issues indicates that discipline remains a major challenge in educational management (Nakpodia, 2010).

In an attempt to address learner indiscipline, schools in Kenya developed individual means of managing learner discipline per school as opposed to common means of managing learner discipline (Kiprop, 2012). Unique means of managing learner discipline is relevant since school infrastructure, geographical location and environment differ from school to school. Schools situated in rural and township areas might experience other types of learner ill-discipline as compared to schools in urban areas. Learner ill-discipline in urban areas might include drug abuse whereas learner ill-discipline in township schools might include the presence of firearms at school. In rural areas, learner ill-discipline might include absenteeism, the presence of knives at school and not adhering to the school dress code (Rossouw, 2003). Therefore, the development of school policies to manage learner ill-discipline should accommodate unique challenges experienced by the specific school based on the school environment.

School geographical location, environment and school safety play a role in school discipline as mentioned by Wettach and Owen (2015). While the Department of Basic Education addresses the school infrastructure challenge, the community should ensure that learners respect the school code of conduct. The efforts made by schools

to develop various lawful techniques to manage learner ill-discipline indicate that learner ill-discipline is a huge challenge not only for education but for the community as a whole. Learner ill-discipline has been identified by different scholars such as Simba et al., (2016), as having the potential to halt progress in education if it is not properly addressed. This is why Simba et al., (2016) recommend improvement of learner discipline in order to improve learner academic performance.

As part of the literature review for this study, the next section provides a discussion regarding principals and teachers experiences when managing discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province, the challenges of learner discipline experienced by teachers and principals, ways of improving learner discipline and the maintenance of lawful discipline in secondary schools.

2.3 TEACHERS' MANAGING LEARNER DISCIPLINE

In the United States of America, the number of learners who are suspended in relation to school discipline keeps on rising, with more learners losing school days due to “exclusionary discipline” (Losen et al., 2015). Although Curwin et al. (2018) discourage removing a learner from school due to indiscipline, since dropped out pupils end up being a problem to the society, Losen et al. (2015) found out that there are more learners who are suspended in secondary schools than in elementary schools due to indiscipline. Losen et al. (2015) emphasise that the nation will not be able to address performance issues before ill-discipline issues are addressed. This means that discipline is a milestone to the success of learners. Education prepares and builds leaders for the future. Failure to produce disciplined future leaders might result in instability in the communities in future. Learner discipline in education is as mandatory as reading and writing. This suggests that learner discipline has a place in the foundation of education.

The foundation of education should talk of effective means to deal with ill-discipline while not depriving learners of their constitutional right to education. Learners should enjoy their right to education while not depriving other learners of their right to education. The laws and policies that govern education may not be successful if ill-discipline is not addressed (Losen et al., 2015). This is in line with Schleicher (2018) who recommends a change in school culture, the school system, curriculum design

principles, and teacher culture and assessment techniques to fit the ever-changing world. A change in the educational system will ensure success in education and an improvement in communities' standard of living in the volatile world of political instability, pandemics, inequality and gender-based violence. A change in school setting might see an improvement in learner ill-discipline in schools and consequently improved community development.

Losen et al. (2015) believe that education is the root of community development, which is why it is important to address educational issues in order for laws and policies to be successfully implemented in education. Losen et al. (2015) found that there are many learners who are expelled from schools as a means of addressing learner discipline. Schools expel learners as their last strategy to dealing with learner discipline; however, expelling a child from school is depriving such a learner of the constitutional right to basic education as stated by section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution of South Africa.

Learner expulsion is an infringement of learners' rights to basic education and indicates that there is a lack of effective ways of dealing with ill-discipline in schools. The expulsion of a learner could be an aggressive attempt to include parents in learner discipline; parents might intervene quickly to find ways to address the challenges identified. Masturi (2018) posits that parents in Indonesia are very responsive to the issues relating to teaching and learning. This means that parents are eager to see children succeed in education; a further indication that if consulted, parents can assist in the fight against learner ill-discipline.

In Kenya learner discipline is a challenge to teaching and learning as stated by Simba et al., (2016). Simba et al. contend that there is a connection between student behaviour and academic achievement. Although the study by Simba et al. (2016) directed its focus on primary schools, schools' disciplinary challenges experienced in Kenya are the same as in South African schools. However, Simba et al. (2016) have not suggested specific strategies that may be used to manage learner discipline successfully. In Tanzania, teachers are concerned about the effectiveness of teaching and learning which is hindered by learner ill-discipline as mentioned by Semali (2016). Semali further suggests that learners' study in groups in order to address learner discipline. However, studying in groups is one of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) model strategies to improve the quality of education which was

introduced in South Africa and phased out due to its inability to improve the quality of education and academic performance (Botha, 2002). Furthermore, going forward studying in groups may not be applicable as it does not comply with the Covid-19 regulation of maintaining a safe social distance.

Learner discipline is a worldwide challenge (Masingi, 2017; Losen et al., 2015). However, the United Kingdom is dominated by minor forms of learner discipline. Major forms of learner misbehaviour are exceedingly rare in the United Kingdom (Talbot, 2017). The United Kingdom is a relevant example in the management of learner discipline since minor forms of discipline are dominant. The dominance of minor learner discipline may be linked to positive reinforcement rather than punishment, proactive rather than reactive and team work rather than decisions flowing from the management level to teachers. The successful management of discipline in the United Kingdom may be related to teachers being the main managers of classrooms (Oxley & Holden, 2021).

Furthermore, learner discipline is influenced by environment and infrastructure (Wettach & Owen, 2015). Minimal presence of major forms of learner ill-discipline in the United Kingdom might be because of the improved school infrastructure and environment since the United Kingdom is a developed country. The improved infrastructure might include technological advancement that makes it impossible to bring prohibited items such as firearm, knives and drugs to school.

Maphosa and Shumba (2010) believe that the increased cases of learner ill-discipline in South Africa indicate to the inability of teachers to develop an alternative means of managing learner discipline following the prohibition of corporal punishment in South African schools. The alternative means of discipline are viewed by teachers as time consuming and ineffective. Furthermore, teachers feel disempowered by their ability to manage learner discipline due to the laws that empower children.

The South African education community had experienced situations where teachers became the victims of bullying that stems from learner ill-discipline. On 24 January 2022, The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) reported that a grade 7 learner from a primary school outside Thohoyandou in Limpopo province was expelled by parents after it was alleged that the learner bullied pupils and teachers (Makungo,

2022). This clearly indicates that learners are not well disciplined and teachers have neither the power nor the means of maintaining discipline at schools.

The SABC further points out that teachers had to work at the circuit office for the full day in fear of the presence of an ill-disciplined learner at school. The failure of teachers to report to their workstation led to an inability to teach the content set out for the day. The inability to achieve curriculum goals and coverage consequently lead to learners' inability to answer questions successfully during assessment and thereby leading to poor academic performance. If teachers had alternative, effective means of maintaining learner discipline, this situation would have not escalated to the point of a school shutdown.

According to Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) it is impossible for the school to produce quality education if learners are not well discipline. This indicates that learner discipline is the foundation for effective teaching and learning. Gorbunovs, Kapenieks and Cakula (2016) identified self-discipline on daily routine as an important indicator of success in education. This was true especially during the Covid-19 pandemic where learners attended classes on a rotational basis. Therefore, a learner who lacks self-discipline may not succeed in the world faced with many challenges including learner indiscipline. A learner who requires extra attention may also not succeed due to limited time for teaching and a higher rate of ill-discipline at school.

According to the majority of teachers who participated in a study conducted by Naong in South Africa to determine how the elimination of corporal punishment affected teacher morale, Naong (2007) acknowledges that student misbehaviour has increased in South African schools since the practice was outlawed. Naong (2007) further posits that the inability of teachers to manage learner discipline in South Africa has affected teachers in a way that they no longer enjoy their teaching profession. The loss of teachers' interest in their daily duties may result in teachers being unable to produce good academic results. Poor school academic achievement stems from poor learner academic performance which may be caused by learner indiscipline.

According to Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020) children's rights limit the power of teachers to manage discipline successfully as learners have legal rights on their side. Segalo & Rambuda (2018) and Lumadi (2019) argue that the lack of parental involvement in children's educational matters, and the lack of respect, morals, and

values fuel learner ill-discipline in South African schools. Lumadi (2019) further states that the engagement of parents in children's academic matters has a strong positive impact in improving learner's academic achievement.

Nunan (2018) adds that lack of parental involvement encourages learner misbehaviour since some parents of the perpetrators are unapologetic and defensive in respect of their children's misbehaviour. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) further reveal that in South Africa, teachers previously managed learner discipline and taught morals and values successfully through operating *in loco parentis* at schools. However, children's rights limit the full operation of *in loco parentis* as revealed by Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020). The continuous challenge of learner ill-discipline in South Africa schools indicates the severity of the challenge.

The severity of learners' misbehaviour in South African classrooms may have an impact on students' academic performance because it may be impossible for teaching and learning to occur effectively in an uncontrolled setting. In order for teaching and learning to take place, the school environment must be secure for both teachers and learners at all times. However, South African schools lack safe environments. On 28 October 2021 News24's reported the death of a grade 10 pupil who was stabbed by another pupil at school in Intabazwe near Harrismith in the Free State province (Mthethwa). The Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga (2022) alluded to this incident as an act that derails the objectives of education in most South African schools.

In an attempt to address learner ill-discipline in South African schools, school management teams are expected to adopt a code of conduct in order to manage learner discipline (Du Plessis, 2021). The adoption of a code of conducted may be a successful means of managing learner discipline if the drafting of the code of conduct involves learners, teachers and parents and the community as recommended by Curwin, Mendler and Mendler (2018). The inclusion of the society in a fight against learner discipline will contribute to the eradication of violence at schools.

Gcelu, Padayachee and Makhasane (2020) state that despite the efforts by school administrators and teachers to eradicate learner indiscipline, the continuation of learner ill-discipline in South African schools causes distraction in education. The

distraction to fruitful education caused by learner misbehaviour may have a negative effect on learner academic performance and school achievement in South Africa.

Nunan (2018) supports the effort to improve student discipline in South African schools because effective management of student ill-behaviour is essential for effective teaching and learning as well as to raise student academic performance. Nunan goes on to say that the problem of persistent student misbehaviour in South African schools is a source of academic and social anxiety because a lack of student discipline may be a factor in students' subpar academic performance.

Other attempts to address learner discipline in South Africa has resulted in some teachers having to apply illegal means of managing learner discipline after failing to manage learner discipline through the application of legal means of managing discipline such as talking politely and the involvement of parents and the principal (Motseke, 2020). This reveals that it is unlikely that a learner who fails to listen to parents might listen to teachers through talking politely. As a result, discipline should start at home so that it becomes easy for teachers to maintain it at school.

Failure to address learner discipline successfully indicates that some stakeholders are not playing their role in the fight against learner ill-discipline in South Africa. The battle to fight learner ill-discipline is left to teachers only as stated by Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler (2018), which is why Mathebula and Runhare (2021) recommend training of teachers, school management teams, and school governing bodies on administering the school code of conduct and in the application of legal means of managing learner discipline successfully. However, Motseke (2020) argues that the legal means of managing learner discipline are ineffective. This indicates that there is a need for more intervention in order to address learner ill-discipline successfully in South African schools.

2.4 CHALLENGES OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

The existence of learner ill-discipline is a challenge to teaching and learning in foreign nations (Losen et al., 2015). Learners' ill-discipline is not an isolated issue; it is experienced globally. In Africa, teachers and parents of primary schools in Kenya are concerned about the effect that learner ill-discipline has on the academic performance of learners as described by Simba et al. (2016).

Academic performance and learner discipline go hand in hand, which is why learner discipline should be addressed as it has the potential to halt progress in education (Simba et al., 2016). For learners to perform well academically, learner ill-discipline needs to be addressed. Furthermore, academic excellence cannot be achieved for as long as learner ill-discipline remains unaddressed. It is therefore important to include learner discipline in the development of education law and policies in order to achieve academic excellence (Losen et al., 2015).

Simba et al. (2016) recommend that for learner academic performance to improve, learner discipline has to be addressed. However, the study remains general and does not suggest how learner ill-discipline can be addressed in order to improve academic performance. Furthermore, the study was limited to public schools. However, learner discipline is a challenge experienced by independent and public schools. Secondary schools in Mauritius are institutions of education that experience elevated levels of learner ill-discipline (Jinot 2018). Jinot further claims that learner ill-discipline can be caused by how parents raise their children and the attitude towards teachers during teaching and learning.

Wolhuter & Van der Walt (2020) acknowledges that in South Africa learners' ill-discipline is experienced in many schools, hence it becomes a challenge to teaching and learning. In addition, Simuforosa and Rosemary (2014) assert that learner ill-discipline leads to the production of unmannered members of the community who eventually become a problem to the society. Lwandile (2021) reported that a pupil was stabbed to death by another pupil at school in a secondary school in Limpopo province. This indicates to the failure of the community to produce mannered citizens. One of the objectives of education is to prepare learners to be able to make rational decisions and address societal problems. Failure to educate children due to learner ill-discipline and other challenges may lead to an increase in societal problems such crime.

Foncha et al. (2017) believe that learner ill-discipline can only be managed when the community is consulted during the formulation of school policies to manage discipline. Including parents in the formulation of school disciplinary policies could have a positive impact when developing an effective school code of conduct since parents are able to deal with an individual learner as opposed to teachers who have to manage and enforce discipline to many learners. The family is the foundation of the society where

children's upbringing starts from birth (Lumadi, 2019). This suggests that parents should be involved and take an active role in the upbringing of children in order to deal with learner ill-discipline.

Jinot (2017) reveals that learner ill-discipline is starting to impede academic progress. Although authorities in Mauritius are attempting to address the problem, the suggested solutions are ineffective (Jinot, 2017). Jinot (2017) suggests a change in the education system in order to address learner ill-discipline. However, it is not clear which part of the education system requires reform as policies and school codes of conduct to manage learner discipline and improve academic achievement are in place. Zuze and Juan (2020) blame the quality of leadership and management style on the failure to address learner indiscipline. In order to raise academic achievement, Zuze and Juan (2020) suggest creating policies to improve the standard of school leadership and management.

According to Sibanda (2018) teaching learners social skills is effective in managing learner misbehaviour; however, the progress to managing learner discipline through teaching learners' social skills is halted by the negative attitudes of parents and teachers towards social skills lessons. This indicates to and confirms the importance of parental involvement by playing an active role in addressing learner discipline. Parents need the support of teachers as much as teachers need the support of parents in fighting learner ill-discipline.

In order to instill a positive attitude towards social skill lessons, Sibanda (2018) recommends the further training of stakeholders with negative attitude towards social skills lessons. However, the views and reasoning behind the negative attitude towards social skills lesson are not revealed. Stakeholders with negative attitudes may fear the teaching of improper content to learners, which, in a long run, may affect learners' educational progress due to challenges stemming from misinterpreted social skills lessons such as teenage pregnancy and drug abuse leading to poor academic achievement (Cook & Cameron, 2020).

Although academic achievement might be a sign of success in managing learner discipline, Curran (2019) maintains that the success of strategies to combat learner ill-discipline lacks systematic evidence of success. This indicates that the success in

management of learner discipline is halted by many challenges that need to be addressed. Learner discipline remains a concern to the education community (Claver, Martinez-Aranda, Conejero & Gil-Arias, 2020).

2.5 WAYS OF IMPROVING LEARNER DISCIPLINE

South Africa is a state with elevated levels of violence in schools and teachers find themselves at the helm of dealing with the petrifying and relentless danger of gangsterism, attacks on teachers and drug abuse due to lack of discipline. (Khuzwayo, 2021). All the behavioural acts compromise learning and teaching as well as good learner performance.

According to Herpatiwi and Tohir (2022:426) discipline is:

A position of tendency, a mental attitude to obey the rules, order and at the same time control and adjust to the rules that come from outside, even those that curb and show awareness of responsibility for duties and obligations.

Learner indiscipline has been a challenge that secondary schools in South Africa has been facing for many years (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). However, principals and teachers are at the forefront of maintaining discipline in schools. These stakeholders are mandated by the Department of Basic Education through the existing legislation and policies such as the South African Schools Act to ensure that learners are disciplined in schools in order to achieve positive educational outcomes.

2.5.1 Teacher-learner relationships

According to Curwin et al. (2018) teachers are the sole advocates of learners' discipline. According to Wubbels et al. (2014:364) the teacher-student relationship "is the generalised interpersonal meaning students and teachers attach to their interactions with each other." The management of discipline in public secondary schools appears to be predicated on the authoritative relationships between teachers and learners (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). School discipline assists learners to behave in a respectful and acceptable manner (Jinot, 2018).

Prewett, Bergin, & Huang (2019) reveal that teacher mental wellness has a strong effect on shaping the teacher-learner relationship. Woudstra, Janse van Rensburg,

Visser & Jordaan (2018) add that teachers experience the worst side of learner discipline at school. Furthermore, Woudstra et al. reveal that the majority of teachers are mostly exposed to verbal bullying by learners whereas cyber bullying is the least experienced type of teacher bullying. Victimisation of teachers by learners leads to teachers experiencing mental challenges. Mental effectiveness of teachers is paramount for the ability of teachers to perform their teaching duties successfully which in turn benefit learners academically.

Therefore, it is beneficial for the teachers and learners to maintain a good academic relationship for successful advancement of education. A sour teacher-learner relationship may lead to teachers experiencing negative emotions, low morale and the feeling of disempowerment (Woudstra et al., 2018). Prewett et al. suggest a strong social-emotional support as the key in building a positive teacher-learner relationship.

Mabunda and Mulovhedzi (2020) suggest that teachers should maintain a good relationship with learners in order for learners to behave well and study comfortably towards attaining the learning objectives. This implies that positive teacher-learner relationships may serve as a base for a strong relation with learner motivation and learning (Claessens, Van Tartwijk, Van der Want et al., 2017).

2.5.2 Principal-learner relationships

According to Cunningham (2020) “A true leader has to have a genuine open-door policy so that his people are not afraid to approach him for any reason.” Rohmah (2021) regard school principals as managers of the schools. Principals are regarded as accounting officers of schools by the Department of Basic Education. As a result, principals are expected to exercise the open-door-policy. Norman et al. (2020) define an open-door policy as a communication strategy which allows stakeholders to visit the office of the managers without fear.

Porter (2020) finds learner behaviour management as a complicated milestone in the teaching fraternity. Porter emphasises being proactive in order to address learner discipline successfully. Learner discipline is mostly experienced by teachers who are with learners in classrooms most of the time. For the sake of progress some issues are dealt with immediately in the classroom. However, some situations are complex and require referring to the principal for further intervention. Although Mestry (2017)

found that principals these days are responsible for many aspects of the school as a whole, teachers rely on principals to address learner discipline. For this reason, principals as school managers should maintain an open-door policy in order to address school issues before extreme escalation. According to Hollingsworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager & Winn (2018) the open-door policy shall enhance the working relationship between stakeholders. Therefore, the open-door policy strengthens the relationship between learners and the principal, teachers and the principals. In this way learner discipline is managed through maintaining a positive working relationship. Hollingsworth et al. further suggest that a positive working environment can be achieved by engaging in purposeful communication.

2.5.3 Legislation and policy implementation

Internationally in an attempt to address school discipline successfully some schools outsourced the services of school resource officers. The benefits include reduced suspensions, reduced arrests for weapons and other school disciplinary issues. However, these services failed because of “the lack of policies regulating roles and responsibilities” (Ryan, Katsiyannis, Counts & Shelnut, 2018). In classrooms, teachers are forced to maintain order during teaching and learning. However, this is not always possible especially in a situation where learners disrespect the teacher. After the outlawing of corporal punishment, teachers are left without any legal means of handling student behaviour in the classrooms. In order to manage learners discipline in classrooms legally and effectively, teachers must be provided with the necessary tools (Gershoff, 2017).

According to Mathebula and Runhare (2021) the Department of Basic Education needs to develop relevant policies to assist teachers in managing learner discipline. Jinot (2018) suggests that the Ministry of Education in Mauritius should take learner discipline into consideration, shift the authority to formulate school disciplinary policies to school principals who should be permitted to include parents and learners in drafting school policies that should address learner discipline and performance (Losen et al., 2015; Simba et al., 2016). This implies that school policies inclusive of the school code of conduct should be formulated in an accommodative manner that allows positive interaction between learners and teachers (Jinot, 2018).

In addition to policy development, the proper implementation of developed policies should be monitored. It is also important to include the community members in the formulation of school disciplinary policies since learner discipline is influenced by the community (Ngwokabuenui, 2015). Monitoring the implementation of developed policies will ensure that policies are effective in maintaining discipline in school and eradicate situations where the disciplinary committee is unable to utilise the policies available to manage learner discipline (Mathebula and Runhare, 2021). However, there is inadequate research that suggests effective school rules that can be used to address learner ill-discipline and consequently improve learner academic performance in schools.

2.5.4 Mutual respect

The way teachers present themselves to learners connects with how they behave towards a teacher. It is therefore important that there should be a mutual respect between teachers and learners (Mabunda & Mulovhedzi, 2020).

2.5.5 Parental involvement

The primary aim of involving parents in education is to enhance academic excellence whereas the secondary aim of parental involvement is the management of learner behaviour to ensure a learner is developed holistically (Topping & Wolfendale, 2017). Lara and Saracostti (2019) state that parental involvement improves learner academic performance, where the findings reveal that learners with low parental involvement are poorly performing whereas those with high parent involvement are performing well. This is supported by Muller and Kerbow (2018) who believe that learners' success in school is greatly dependent on family background.

Parental involvement in education, according to Calzada, Huang, Hernandez, Soriano et al. (2015), is a significant predictor of student achievement. It is unlikely that a learner whose parents are actively involved in education may misbehave and get away with it all the time at home and at school (Simuforosa & Rosemary, 2014). This implies that the more parents are engaged the less likely a learner is to continuously misbehave at school. However, Simuforosa and Rosemary continue to mention that when parents leave the discipline fight to teachers alone, this leads to teachers being frustrated by learners' misbehaviour, hence they seek alternative ways to punish

learners who misbehave and reward learners who behave appropriately (Simuforosa & Rosemary, 2014).

In order to maintain discipline lawfully, Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) suggest that parents should be the teachers of morals and values to learners. Parents are the foundation and a major influence on grooming learners' behaviour (Khatun, Ballia & Siddiqui, 2018). Therefore, collaboration between teachers and parents can make it easy to deal with learner indiscipline. This implies that through teacher-parent collaboration teachers would be dealing with learners who already have good morals and values from home. Teachers would therefore add few mandatory school rules to learners to complete the process. However, due to HIV/AIDS and the Covid-19 pandemic not all learners have elders to teach them morals and values. This indicates that teachers should be capable to go an extra mile of being a social and educational parent in order to manage learner discipline. This is why Jinot (2018) maintains that stakeholders like parents and the school community have an upper hand in influencing the behaviour of learners towards achieving in teaching and learning. This is mainly because teachers cannot succeed on their own. Lumadi (2020) adds that it is important that parents should be involved when dealing with the discipline of their own children in schools.

2.5.6 Motivation and reward

According to Jennings, Kober, Rentner & Usher (2012:2):

Higher motivation to learn and behave well in school has been linked not only to better academic performance, but to greater conceptual understanding, satisfaction with school, self-esteem, social adjustment, and school completion rates.

Simuforosa and Rosemary (2014) recommend that good behaviour should be rewarded while bad behaviour is followed by punishment in order to manage classroom discipline. Praise and reward systems as part of motivating learners have their roots in behaviourist psychology which supports and encourages good discipline in schools (Yahaya, 2021). When learners are motivated or rewarded, it reflects the teacher views about conformity and the ability of a learner which ultimately affect their motivation to behave properly and to learn (Sidin, 2021). This implies that "a high

level of work discipline is likely influenced by high levels of work motivation, and high motivation may also arise due to high discipline” (Afandi, Zulela & Neolaka, 2021:508). Curwin et al. (2018) argue that the system of reward by teachers creates winners in learners. A rewarded learner may continue to behave accordingly. However, a learner who is punished for contravening the school rules may not change the bad behaviour if such a learner has not pleaded guilty to the offence. Furthermore, Curwin et al. (2018) discourage removing a learner from school due to ill-discipline, since drop-out pupils end up being a problem to the society. Commending and awarding best performance and behaviour motivate learners to work harder knowing that excellent work pays (Usher et al., 2012). Best performance requires learners to be fully disciplined as outlined by Kgothatso Mpaka, one of the 2021 top achievers in Mpumalanga province when she was sharing some of the strategies to success (Khoza, 2022). This indicates that discipline is mandatory for one to succeed in education.

2.5.7 Counselling

According to Asghar (2016) the use of counseling and guidance in order to curb learner ill-discipline in secondary schools is of utmost importance. Teachers must involve the community and the learners’ parents to assist in maintaining discipline in a school. Teachers should encourage parents to be involved when drafting school rules in order to ensure that parents understand the disciplinary rules and the consequences of contravening such rules (Foncha et al., 2017). Wettach & Owen (2015) encourage teachers to conduct peer counseling, mediation, detention and academic interventions as a means of maintaining learner discipline in schools. Although some of these strategies, such as detention, are time consuming, they are the legal means of maintaining learner discipline in schools. However, it is not clear which academic interventions teachers use to maintain learner discipline. While teachers are to ensure that learners are aware of school rules, Masingi (2017) suggests that parents should ensure that each learner adheres to school rules regardless of family social status.

2.6 MAINTENANCE OF ORDER AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The learner’s disciplinary problems during teaching and learning have led to the need for many studies to be conducted on this matter in an attempt to address the

challenges faced by schools all over the world. Studies have different recommendations based on the location and type of learner discipline experienced. Curwin et al. (2018) recommend the involvement of learners in classroom development to motivate them to learn. This statement is supported by Jinot (2018) who recommends that the power to maintain positive learner discipline in secondary schools should be devolved from the Ministry of Education to school principals. The Ministry of Education plays its part by encouraging learners to focus on their academic achievement. In 2022 the South African Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, congratulated top achievers of the Class of 2021 on their outstanding performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. She referred to learners as the country's future leaders. One of the pupils even received a vehicle as a way of recognising academic excellence (Khoza, *SowetanLive*, 2022). The efforts of the ministries and departments of education show support to learners to enhance academic performance through motivation. However, learner ill-discipline remains a challenge to successful teaching and learning.

The motivation from the ministries and departments of education is once a year. During the year learners need continuous motivation from all stakeholders in order to stay focused and disciplined. Without continuous motivation some learners lose focus and begin to misbehave during teaching and learning. In order to keep the motivation flowing and ensuring learners remain focused and disciplined, school principals should be allowed and encouraged to develop a school-based disciplinary plan which should address individual disciplinary problem. Masingi (2017) contends that although school rules may be available, it is important that they should be implemented in the manner that they enhance discipline.

The South Africa Schools Act no. 84 of (1996) allows the school governing body to play a role in ensuring that discipline is managed lawfully in schools. However, a problem mentioned by Mathebula and Runhare (2021) is that school disciplinary committee members have limited knowledge of implementing school disciplinary policies. This indicates that the ministries and departments of education have given schools power to manage learner discipline lawfully; but it is the school management team that is unable to execute the mandate fruitfully. In this regard, Mathebula and

Runhare (2021) suggest workshops to educate school management team on how to utilise policy to maintain learner discipline.

In Tanzania teachers and parents believe that effective teaching and learning is possible only when learners behave positively as mentioned by Semali (2016). Semali further suggests that in order to avoid learner ill-discipline during teaching and learning, learners may study in small groups. This means that a class had a limited number of learners that teachers can teach and manage discipline successfully. However, this requires the availability of a number of teachers to be assigned to a limited number of study groups in order to manage discipline and the progress of learning. This also requires more teaching space in order for the various groups to focus effectively on given tasks. According to Masingi (2017), in South Africa this recommendation would only be effective if there is a reduction in the teacher-learner ratio in order to have more teachers at one school.

In South Africa, the factors influencing maintenance of positive learner discipline particularly in Limpopo province include overcrowding in classrooms, the lack of parental involvement, and the lack of learners' involvement in the formulation of school rules (Masingi, 2017). Maintaining lawful discipline depends on the size of the classroom (Masingi, 2017). Overcrowding may make it impossible to maintain discipline in schools.

Overcrowding has been cited by Masingi (2017) as one of the main causes of learner misbehaviour. According to Awda (2020) overcrowding has a negative effect on learners' academic achievement. Matsepe, Maluleke and Cross (2019) found that teachers find it hard to stimulate learners' interest in learning, and to encourage positive and creative thinking in an overcrowded classroom. This indicates that in order to manage learner discipline successfully, school manager need to manage the school infrastructure, school surrounding and environment. It is unlikely that a school without fences, gates, classroom doors and windows could house well-disciplined learners. Parents should be aware of the school environment of their learners and play a positive role to improve the school surrounding and environment.

Parents are aware that overcrowding is a challenge to successful teaching and learning which is why parents chose a school based on the availability of resources that address overcrowding (Marais, 2016). According to Buthelezi (2021)

overcrowding leads to disruptive behaviour by learners in the classroom. Maintaining lawful discipline is hindered by many factors associated with classroom overcrowding. Policy on discipline only without attention to school infrastructure and resources may not successfully address learner ill-discipline in secondary schools. Also, overcrowding does not comply with Covid-19 regulations.

Maintenance of positive learner discipline requires the consideration of many aspects. Although the first thing that comes to the teachers' mind would be to apply corporal punishments in order to maintain discipline, teachers need to practice lawful discipline (Marais, 2016). Parents should always be involved in their children's school affairs in order to assist teachers in managing learner discipline (Uzoehina, Oguegbu, Akachukwu & Nwasor, 2015).

Cetin and Taskin (2016) found that public schools in rural areas are dominated by parents who are less willing to be engaged in their children's educational matters as opposed to private schools in urban areas where parents are more willing and active in their children's educational matters. Cetin & Taskin further state that the main objective of formal education is to improve the quality of education offered to the community. Therefore, community involvement is important to ensure the objectives of education are achieved.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several authors define theory differently. According to Sha (2018) theory is regarded as an elucidation about how things work. However, Wimmer and Dominick (2014:12) see theory as "a set of connected propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relationships among concepts." A theory can also be referred to as "an interrelated set of definitions, axioms, and propositions... called the 'axiomatic' form of theory" (Wimmer & Dominick 2014:8). Thomas (2017:232) defines theory as a "description of a phenomenon and the interactions of its variables that are used to attempt to explain or predict." According to Heale & Noble (2019) a theory is an "explanation of a concept or an abstract idea of a phenomenon." The existing theories that are used for the study are therefore included in the theoretical framework for this study, along with their definitions and references to pertinent scholarly literature (Imenda, 2014:186).

According to Grant and Osanlo (2016) a theoretical framework is one of the most essential aspects in research. The theoretical framework has a close relationship with the topic of the study and the research questions (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018). This statement is supported by Lederman & Lederman (2015) who outline that the lack of theoretical framework is the main reason some articles cannot be published since authors fail to justify their research efforts by theory.

A theoretical framework, in the opinion of Grant and Osanloo (2016) and Heale and Noble (2019), acts as the study's general guide. The identified issue, the study's purpose, and its significance are informed by the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework outlines how the study matches to the existing theory and research. It offers a foundation for the methodology, selected data analysis, and reviewed literature (Heale & Noble, 2019). This indicates that a theoretical framework is paramount for each study, which is why this study adopted the behaviour of organism model developed by Skinner in 1938.

Skinner (2019) defines behaviour as “what an organism is doing or what is observed by another organism to be doing”. Behaviour therefore has a connection to an organism’s operation, which has a connection to acting upon the outside world. A further definition of behaviour is the “movement of an organism within a framework established by the organism itself.”

In the light of the theoretical framework adopted for this study, Simuforosa and Rosemary (2014) believe that in order to manage discipline, a bad behaviour should be followed by punishment while a good behaviour is to be rewarded. This implies that a learner who does not adhere to school rules and classroom rules would be punished in order to force such learner to adhere to rules and regulations. On the other side, a learner who is well-behaved will be rewarded for behaving well as a way to encourage such a learner to continue to behave well. This mode ensures that learners learn to differentiate between the good and the bad.

This study adopted the behaviour of organism model developed by Skinner in 1938 to explore principals and teachers experiences management experience of learners’ discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. According to Skinner (1938) the law of conditioning indicates that “if the occurrence of an operant is followed by

presentation of a reinforcing stimulus, the strength is increased”. Whereas the law of extinction states that “if the occurrence of an operant already strengthened through conditioning is not followed by the reinforcing stimulus, the strength is decreased”. In order to manage learner ill-discipline in schools, learner ill-discipline can be discouraged while good discipline can be encouraged or appreciated. A discouraged behaviours probability of re-occurrence is decreased while an encouraged behaviours probability of re-occurrence is increased.

The behavioural psychologist Skinner encourages rewarding good behaviour and discourages bad behaviour through punishment in order to manage discipline. However, Curwin et al. (2018) argue that the system of reward and punishment creates winners and losers which do not bring out the best in all learners. Curwin et al. further assert that punishment and humiliation as a means of discipline lead to more anger and less compliance.

Skinner (1938) emphasises that bad behaviour followed by punishment repeatedly reduces the possibility of such undesired behaviour to re-occur in future. This means that the more bad behaviour is discouraged by punishment the less the chances of such behaviour to occur again in future. In a long run, a learner has learnt to behave accordingly. Although Skinner (1938) supports discouraging bad behaviour through punishment, he does not support corporal punishment.

This study explored the principals’ and teachers’ management experience of learners’ discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province aiming at understanding how principals and teachers manage learner discipline, identifying the challenges regarding learner discipline, establishing how principals and teachers maintain lawful learner discipline and examining how learner discipline affects academic performance at secondary schools. The behaviour of organism model presents modes that are effective in dealing with behaviour. The behaviour of organism mode of managing behaviour suggests a solution to manage bad behaviour which in the case of this study is ill-discipline. The behaviour of organism model further suggests the means of encouraging good behaviour through reward, which provides motivation for continuous good behaviour.

This study advocates for maintaining good behaviour and effectively managing bad behaviour of which the behaviour of organism model suggests solution through the

classical and operant conditioning. The classical and operant conditioning of the behaviour of organism model talks of reward for good behaviour and discouragement of bad behaviour in order to maintain and manage behaviour. This theory talks directly with this study as it suggests solutions and alternatives to the challenge of learner ill-discipline which hinders learners' academic excellence.

The behaviour of organism model suggests practical measures of managing behaviour. This model was useful for the study because it provides a pathway which the study followed to successfully achieve its objectives. The purpose was to explore the principals' and teachers' management experience of learners' discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province since ill-discipline was assumed to be having a negative effect on learners' academic performance.

This theory's mode of managing behaviour does not deprive learners of their right to education as dictated by section 29 of the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996a). The researcher used this theory as guidance to answer the research questions and casting questions that assisted the study in achieving its objectives through gathering relevant data that addressed the research questions. This theory was also used as the foundation of the study which provided the study with a clear base for the construction of the research questions.

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

A community dominated by uneducated civilians may not be able to address societal challenges such as children discipline, unemployment and crime and the prevalence of diseases. Therefore, learner discipline is important for the community to be educated and be able to address societal problems. The continuous challenge of learner discipline indicates that is not a problem that can be resolved by only one stakeholder, i.e., teachers. The school, community and government should all play an active role in combating learner ill-discipline in order to ensure that education produces well-mannered future leaders capable of addressing world challenges such as inequality, poverty, crime, unemployment, gender-based violence and political instability.

In chapter 2, I deliberated on the literature review. I also divulged what different authors in the area of discipline assert on the management of learner discipline in schools. The

international, regional and South African claims on the management of learner discipline in schools were discussed. It is in this chapter that typical examples in countries of the world that experienced challenges and successes in the management of learners' discipline such as the United States of America, Mauritius, Indonesia, Kenya and Tanzania were explored and compared with the discipline management experiences encountered by schools in South Africa, more precisely in Limpopo province. In this chapter, I also concentrated on theoretical backgrounds, the lenses this study adopted to guide, unfold and locate viewpoints regarding the principals' and teachers' management experience of learners' discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. In the next chapter the methodological underpinnings of this study are presented.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored the principals' and teachers' management experience of learners' discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. In the previous chapter, I reviewed relevant literature and presented the framework through which I viewed the phenomenon under investigation. In the current chapter, I discuss the design and methodology adopted for this study. The suitability of a qualitative research approach and the interpretive paradigm adopted for the study are also unfolded in this chapter. Furthermore, I provide the discussion of data collection techniques, data analysis methods adopted and ethical considerations for the study. A conclusion is provided at the end of all the discussions.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is seen by Sileyew (2019) as the path through which researchers need to conduct their research. Sileyew further indicates that methodology reflects the path through which researchers formulate their research problem and objectives and present their results from data obtained during the process of the study. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2003) refer to the methodology as an assortment of approaches used in educational research to collect data and as a foundation for interpretation, explanation and prediction. Methodology is postulated by

Rajesekar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi (2006) to be the researcher's general approach in conducting the research project.

In agreement with Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2003) and Rajesekar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi (2006), Kivunja & Kuyini (2017) pronounce methodology as the reasoning and flowing of the systematic processes followed in conducting a research project to gain knowledge about a research problem which includes assumptions made, limitations encountered and how they were mitigated or minimised. In any scientific research the choice of methodology is directed by larger theoretical assumptions the researcher brings to the study and the nature of the research problem to be addressed (Creswell, 2014). The main objective of choosing the research methodology is to assist the researcher to collect data. In this study, the data collected assisted the researcher to generate theory regarding the management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo Province.

3.2.1 Research paradigm

According to Kuhn and Quandt (1962) the word paradigm refers to a philosophical way of thinking. The word has its etymology in Greek where it means pattern. Klein and Myers (1999) declare that the word paradigm comes from the Greek *paradeiknyai*, meaning to show side by side and is a pattern or example of something. The word implies the ideas of a mental picture or pattern of thought (Walsham, 1995). However, the term paradigm is used to describe a researcher's 'worldview' (Creswell, 2014). This worldview is the perspective, or thinking, or school of thought, or set of shared beliefs, which informs the meaning or interpretation of research data (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, Perez & Prado, 2003).

A research paradigm inherently reflects the researcher's beliefs about the world that is inhabited. It constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, interprets and acts within that world (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011; Mertens, 2010). A paradigm includes theories, traditions, approaches, models, body of research and methodologies and it could be seen as a model of observing and understanding (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2001). According to Maree (2012) studies are based on existing theories. Existing theories form a foundation that a new study is based on. This helps the researcher to plan the study accordingly in

line with existing theories in the field of study.

The research paradigm consists of ontology, epistemology, methodology (axiology) and methods (Aliyu, Singhry, Adamu & Abubakar, 2015). The choice of the research paradigm depends on the researcher's perceptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and what is the basic belief about what can be known (epistemology) as well as how can the researcher go about finding out what they believe can be known (methodology or axiology) (Guba & Lincoln (1994). This study is anchored in the interpretive paradigm because I believed that principals and teachers are people who can share their reality of managing learner discipline in secondary schools in Limpopo province.

Maree (2012) declares that an epistemological paradigm assists in providing clarity regarding the interpretation of the findings of the study. Epistemology is the basis of knowledge, in nature and forms, how it can be acquired and how it can be communicated to other human beings. It is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would be knower and what can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The epistemological claim for the current study is reflected the interpretive theoretical paradigm. Interpretivists such as Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that knowledge can be found through interacting with different people and different situations in the world, knowledge can also be acquired through daily life situations. Interpretivists also argue that the social world cannot be explained by a single reality or truth, but a set of realities or truths which are historical, local, specific and non-generalisable (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The choice of an interpretive theoretical paradigm for the study is advantageous because multiple realities would be accommodated and provide me with the advantage to explore a range of factors that relate to learner's discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province (Cuthbertson, Robb & Blair, 2020).

Having adopted the interpretive framework for the study, information regarding the management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province was acquired through interaction with principals and teachers since they interact with learners on a daily basis.

3.2.2 Research approach

According to Chetty (2016) the research approach is a plan and procedure that consists of the steps of broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation founded on the nature of the research problem being addressed. However, Tenny, Brannan, Brannan and Sharts-Hopko (2020) assert that a qualitative research approach explores and gives in-depth understanding into world challenges achieved through the collection of individual experiences, perceptions and behaviour. The main focus of a qualitative research approach is on the root cause of a problem and not on the quantity and to which extent (Mohajan, 2018). A qualitative research approach achieves its objectives through open-ended questions; in this way it is easier to explain processes and patterns of human behaviour (Hatch, 2002).

Although a qualitative research approach concentrates on smaller size and is viewed as time consuming, a qualitative research approach provides deeper insights into designing and administration (Alase, 2017). Qualitative research understands individual feelings and perceptions (Rahman, 2017). The findings of a qualitative research approach are non-generalisable; however qualitative research has the advantage of capturing the context and identifying the motives and has the ability to explore the relationship between parties (Weil, 2017).

Through the use of a qualitative research approach the collected data shows great diversity. Although counts and measures are not included in qualitative research data, different forms of communications such as written, audio and visual are included in qualitative research data (McDonald, Schoenebeck & Forte, 2019). Text is commonly used in qualitative data because it is easy to analyse as opposed to audio and video which first require transformation into text before data can be analysed (Parameswaran, Ozawa-Kirk & Latendresse, 2020). Therefore, qualitative research was the most accurate research approach I used when dealing with textual data for this study (Gibbs, 2018).

With reference to the focus and paradigm of the study, a qualitative research approach was preferred, because I wanted to involve the discovery that is described as an effective unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the development and level of detail from high involvement in the actual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using this approach rich data on the management of learner discipline at secondary schools of Limpopo province was collected. A qualitative research

approach was advantageous to the study since it allowed me to limit the number of participants and locations to direct the focus of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). A qualitative study approach was further advantageous to the study because it assisted me to acquire information regarding the management of discipline in secondary schools (Cohen, et al., 2018).

3.2.3 Research design

A research design is a plan for meticulous data collection and data utilisation to obtain the desired information for proper testing of the hypothesis (Burns & Grove, 2005). Sileyew (2019) defines a research design as the path which researchers need to conduct their study. This path indicates the how researchers derives at a problem and the main objectives of the study and present the findings from the collected data during the course of the study. Furthermore, the research design provides the framework of the study.

This investigation is a case study on the management of learner discipline in secondary schools in Limpopo Province. Peel (2020) posits that the qualitative researcher scrutinises a real life, contemporary, bounded system, a “case” or a “phenomenon” as emerging in a natural and social life with the aim of presenting authentic interpretations that are sensitive to define social-historical context. Case study is defined as the study about individuals or a group of people. Furthermore, a case study is referring to an inquiry into real life context (Mfinanga, Mrosso & Bishibura, 2019). However, Zucker (2016) defines a case study as “a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest”. Case study provided me an opportunity to explore and understand complicated predicaments, to direct its focus on specific areas and to work with a limited number of participants (Zainal, 2007). According to Mfinanga et al. (2019) and Zucker (2016), the process of case study research design begins with the research problem followed by research questions, collection and analysis of data, data interpretation and research report.

Although case study focuses on specific areas with limited participants, one advantage of case study is that it possesses the flexibility that allows for collected data to be interpreted in different manners (Zainal, 2007). Therefore, a case study research design may require evidence from numeral data and human responses, thus

accommodating a qualitative and a quantitative research approach. Case study makes it easy to explain complicated real-life situations (Zainal, 2007). However, a case study research design may be affected by biased evidence that may influence the direction of the findings and conclusion (Mfinanga et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is not possible to generalise the findings of a case study due to its limited number of participants. Because a case study deals with human experiences and complicated situations, it produces too many documents which make it harder to manage data if it is not well organised (Zainal, 2007).

By using a case study design, I was able to collect detailed and in-depth data from principals and teachers in selected schools to participate in the study (Creswell, 2014). For the purpose of the study, this design was chosen as an option it contains different alternatives that were used to guarantee that the research purpose and viewpoints are illuminated and realised (Vosloo, 2014). Case study was used for the exploration of individuals, providing a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis, the characterisation of a case and the events as well as the description of the discovery process of the research itself (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark & Morales, 2007; Neuman, 2014).

3.2.4 Research site and sampling

Mills and Gay (2019) describe the research site as the location where research is conducted through the collection of data. Mills and Gay further identify common research sites as educational institutions, health care facilities and research institutes. Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbin (2015) explain a research sample as a selection of specific data sources from which data is gathered to address the research objectives. Ary, Jacobs, Irvine and Walker (2018) identified several types of research, e.g., field research, exploratory and mixed research. According to Ary et al. (2018) field research involves formal interviews, observation, self-analysis, life histories and analysis of documents.

Data collection depends on the type of research adopted. For this study, I adopted field research where data was collected through formal interviews. Sethuraman, Kerin and Cron (2005) reveal that although online data collection methods may be faster and less expensive, the response turnout is relatively low when compared to field data collection. They further indicate that field data collection may be a slow means of

collecting data but it ensures higher levels of response from participants and provides opportunity to stimulate the interest of participants as opposed to online data collection methods.

According to Chiromo (2009) purposive sampling is judgmental in nature and it is used for distinctive situations. Based on this assertion purposive sampling was regarded as appropriate for the study. With purposive sampling I was able to choose the case or cases to be included based on the judgement of their typicality. Five secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of Vhembe East district in Limpopo province were selected as research sites for the investigation of this study. The five selected secondary schools were offering all the subjects from grade 8 to grade 12. From the five identified secondary schools, two were consistently performing at a grade 12 pass rate of above 60% while the other three schools' grade 12 results were always below 50%.

Participants that were selected for this investigation were secondary school principals and teachers. Principals and teachers were selected based on their years of teaching experience. A requirement for selection was that both the principals and teachers should have had at least three years or more teaching experience in secondary schools. One principal and one teacher from each of the five secondary schools were selected based on the criteria as set above. The total number of participants was ten (10). No matter how small this sample size may appear, I was convinced that it was the correct sample size because the sample size depended on the purpose of the study, the nature of the population under scrutiny, and the style of the research I was conducting (Neuman, 2014). The sample size for this study adhered to the view of Miles & Huberman (1994) that a small sample size, would enable me to be provided with the appropriate data.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Wijaya, Setijadi, Mengko and Mengko (2014) refer to data collection as the process of gathering information in an orderly fashion. The main objectives of data collection are to address research questions, analyse and evaluate findings of the research. Prabha, and Kabadi (2016) view data collection as one of the main basic requirements for research (Neuman, 2014). Data collection is viewed as one the primary duties of the researcher. (Munyoro, 2018). Data collected during research process should be

detailed and reliable in order to ensure quality research (Yin, 2011).

According to Maree et al. (2016) data is known as bits and pieces of information that is available at various places. The information available is what addresses the questions of the study; the information available becomes particularly useful to the study once well-interpreted. The study required this information in order to achieve its objectives. As a result, the study adopted face-to-face semi-structured interviews as a strategy for collecting data.

3.3.1 Face-to-face semi-structured interview

Rahman (2017) refers to a face-to-face semi-structured interview as a qualitative data collection method where the researcher seeks information from participants through asking open-ended predetermined questions. During semi-structured interviews, I started the discussion process with a predetermined question and continued the discussion in a conversational mode of interview (Muzari, Shava, & Shonhiwa, 2022). In order to avoid the conversation to be out of planned content, I ensured that follow-up questions were entirely based on the content and participants' responses.

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the principals and teachers of the selected secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of the Vhembe East district in Limpopo province. I chose this technique for data collection based on the assumption that face-to-face semi-structured interview is a flexible mode of collecting data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021). This is mainly because during interview participants are allowed to express themselves freely and are at liberty to halt their participation at any time during the process and that questions probed during the interview are guided by the objectives of the study (Maree, 2012).

I made use of an interview schedule to address the relevant topics and to allow participants to respond on their own terms. The interview schedule guided the interview process leading to the development of relevant themes (Evans & Lewis, 2018).

During the interviews, I used a tape-recorder with the permission of the participants to record the interview proceedings (Flick, 2022). I also frequently took notes of significant data that spoke directly to the study (Creswell, 2014). This was done in order to gather in-depth data regarding teachers' experiences in respect of the topic

under research (Evans & Lewis, 2018). The interview was conducted at the participant's convenience. Some of the teachers refused to give of their time owing to the pressure to achieve curriculum coverage, especially in understaffed schools during Covid-19 pandemic. However, such participants were allowed to choose a time suitable for them to be interviewed.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Raskind, Shelton, Comeau, Cooper, Griffith and Kegler (2019) describe data analysis as the summary of the data collected during the research process. The process of data analysis includes interpretation of the information collected during field work. The interpretation of collected data is achieved through employing analytical and logical reasoning in order to develop connection and relevance of the data collected.

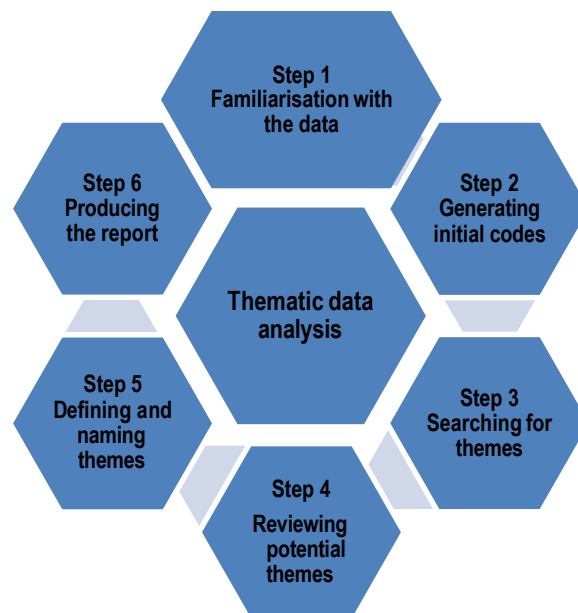
To analyse the data collected for the study, a thematic data analysis approach as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) was adopted. Thematic data analysis is a grounded theory and development of cultural models that requires more involvement and interpretation from the researcher (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011). Although thematic data analysis lacks reliability since most interpretation is directed at defining codes, I found to be the most relevant in understanding the challenging textual data of the study. Furthermore, thematic data analysis was found to have the ability to address different research questions and was used to analyse many types of qualitative data for the study.

Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2011) posit that the thematic data analysis process begins with the researcher familiarising himself/herself with the collected data. This part was done through repeatedly going through the collected data. Afterwards, the researcher needs to code the collected data which is done through identification and labelling of the relevant data. After I coded the collected data, the next step was the creation of themes which is completed through the description of the "implicit and explicit ideas with the data". The developed themes were represented by codes. The identified codes summarised the raw data for future interpretation. Themes were checked and reviewed in order to ensure that they were clear and relevant. Thereafter, each developed theme was given a name. Identified and named themes paved a path towards the generation of research report. The final stage was the writing of a research report where analytical conclusions were made based on themes (Guest, MacQueen,

& Namey, 2011).

The thematic data analysis approach was a method I used to for systematically identify, organise, and offer insight into patterns of meaning (themes) (Braun & Clarke 2006). Through focusing on meaning, this approach allowed me to perceive and to make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences of participants. When analysing data using this approach, I was guided by the following six-phases of the approach to thematic analysis as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). See figure 3.1 below:

Figure 3.1: Thematic data analysis: Braun and Clarke (2006).



- **Familiarisation with the data**

During this phase I immersed myself in the data by analytically and critically reading and re-reading the textual data drawn from the responses collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews, listening to audio-recordings, making notes of the data as reading continues, highlighting or underlining the portions of interest in order to make sense of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

- **Generating initial codes**

Codes are the building blocks of analysis. With coding I identified and provided labels for features that were potentially relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With coding I aimed to provide a pithy summary of portions of data or describe

the content of the data and also to identify meanings that lie beneath the semantic surface of data.

- **Searching for themes**

During this phase, I shifted from codes to generating themes. The aim of the shift was to capture important data in relation to the research question which represented patterns, responses or meaning with the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

- **Reviewing potential themes**

During this phase, I reviewed the themes in relation to the entire data. This involved one final re-read of all the data to determine whether themes meaningfully captured the entire dataset, or only an aspect thereof.

- **Defining and naming themes**

This phase involved a deep analytic work involved in thematic analysis, the crucial shaping up of analysis into its fine-grained detail. During this phase I selected extracts to present and setting out the narrative of each theme and chose what ideally made good data to quote and analyse.

- **Producing the report**

During this phase, I produced a report of the data. The purpose of the report aimed at providing a compelling ‘story’ about the data, based on the analysis conducted. In drafting a report, I made sure that themes were logically and meaningfully connected in order to narrate a coherent story generated from the data.

3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRANSFERABILITY OF THE STUDY

Qualitative data is credible when it is applicable, dependable and conformable (Creswell, 2014; Maree et al., 2016). Trustworthiness refers to the extent of reliance in the collected and presented data, interpretation of collected data and the methods used to collect and analyse data to guarantee quality of the study conducted (Connelly, 2016). Transferability is about transference of research findings from a specific situation or case to another. To ensure trustworthiness for this study, I adopted the following trustworthiness strategies such as triangulation, member checking and audit trail as advocated by Hardy and Bryman (2004).

3.5.1 Triangulation

Noble & Heale (2019) refers triangulation as the procedure that is applied in order to strengthen the credibility and validity of the study. Thurmond (2001) views triangulation as the use of more than one theoretical stance, research methodology, source of data, or data analysis technique in order to increase the credibility of the study. Furthermore, Denzin (2007) understands triangulation as the use of different research methodologies in the same study in order to test validity through a combination of information from different sources. The reliable and trusted outcome of the study may only be achieved through careful consideration of triangulation in the study (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021).

To ensure trustworthiness of the study, I used multiple data collections techniques such as literature review and the interviews to expose the corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2014). Information collected from the literature reviewed, face-to-face semi-structured interviews that were conducted at schools were used to endorse the trustworthiness of this study. Data collected was compared in order to identify the similarities to highlight the explicit points. These actions concur with the declaration made by Yin (2011) and Creswell (2014) that trustworthiness can be realised through the use of multiple sources or tools for data collection.

3.5.2 Member checking

The aim of engaging participants in member checking was solely to confirm the flaws that might have occurred during data interpretation and to effect modifications and adjustments were there were discrepancies. To engage members in member checks, I shared the information collected with the participants for conformability. The information shared for member checks included raw data such as audio tapes, transcriptions, field notes, results of analysis and theoretical notes (Creswell, 2014). This exercise assisted me to verify the final research report to be made accessible to the public (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011).

3.5.3 Audit trail

To ensure an audit trail of the study, I submitted hard copies of raw data from the field notes, transcripts, audio-tapes, results of analysis, theoretical notes and process notes

to my supervisor (Maree, et al., 2016). The reason behind this exercise was to ensure the safety and integrity of the data and to ensure its availability in case they were required for an audit trail by an external auditor to verify the conformability and credibility of the research process.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others to protect their dignity (Creswell, 2014). Being ethical refers to the limits and the choices people can make in search of truth (Yin, 2011). This implies that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even in the extreme case when the respect for human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature (Sebidi, 2019). In addition to this claim, Arifin (2018) asserts that it is vital to all the studies to protect human rights through the use of relevant ethical principles. Arifin further states that consideration of ethics is important in all stages of a qualitative research study in order to maintain a balance between the risks and benefits of the study.

According to Yin (2011) research is undertaken in a real-world setting, with people in their real-life roles. Requesting ethical clearance, gaining permission for access in schools, getting informed consent from participants to participate in the study, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality and notifying participants of their right to withdraw from the interviews were particularly important ethical issues that I considered when the study was undertaken.

3.6.1 Requesting ethical clearance

After the research proposal was successfully defended and approved, I applied for the ethical clearance certificate to conduct the study from the Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. After receiving the authorisation to conduct the study, I formulated letters to request permission to conduct research to all the institutions earmarked for this research as well as letters of informed consent for the participants earmarked to participate in the research.

3.6.2 Gaining access

The letters requesting permission to conduct the study were written and delivered to the Limpopo Department of Education and the principals of schools selected to participate in the study requesting authorisation to conduct research at their settings

(Creswell, 2014). The letters clearly explained the aims of the study, the ethical considerations that I would observe during the research. The registration letter indicating that I was a M.Ed. student at the University of Pretoria for the current academic year and the clearance certificate granting me the permission to conduct research issued by the Ethics Review Committee of the University of Pretoria were attached.

3.6.3 Getting informed consent

Ethical consent is about privacy and confidentiality when using information that someone else gathered (Creswell, 2012). I wrote letters of informed consent to all the participants and explained how they were going to be involved in the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). These letters included the set of ethical principles identified and advocated by Neuman (2006) as follows: -

3.6.4 Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality

Through the letters of informed consent delivered to the participants, I assured them that the information they would provide during the interviews would remain anonymous and confidential and that none of the information they provided would link them to the study either verbally or through writing (De Vos et al., 2011). To observe the ethical prescripts and standards of protecting participants' rights to confidentiality, I used pennames to ensure anonymity of the geographical site and the information provided and non-traceability of their responses in the research report (Babbie, 2011). To ensure confidentiality, the letters of informed consent also explained that the data collected would not be disclosed to any other party outside this academic enquiry (De Vos et al., 2011)

3.6.5 The right to withdraw from the interviews

The participants were guaranteed the right to withdraw from the interviews and the freedom to react if they consider them offensive, intrusive, misleading, biased, misguided, irritating, inconsiderate or impertinent (Cohen et al., 2007). Information contained in the letters of consent meant that the participants would have the right to choose whether to participate in the study or not. In the letters of informed consent disclosure was made to the participants regarding the risks associated with the study and their rights to withdraw if they felt vulnerable (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009).

The participants were also informed in their letters of consent that the tape recorder and the video camera would be used as per their agreement.

I found it important to divulge information to the participants pertaining to how data would be collected during the interviews, such as using the tape recorder and video recorder in order to get consent if the interview were to be audio-taped and video recorded. Consent from the participants was obtained by asking them to sign a form that indicated that they had understood its contents and how the research project would be conducted (Creswell, 2014).

4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to explore the principals' and teachers' management experience of learners' discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. In chapter 3, I revealed the design and methodology adopted for this study. The suitability of the qualitative research approach and the interpretive paradigm adopted for the study were also unfolded in this chapter. Furthermore, I provided a discussion of data collection techniques, the data analysis methods adopted and the ethical considerations of the study. A conclusion was provided at the end of all the discussions. In the next chapter, I present, analyse and interpret data in order for me to draw conclusions that help me to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the principals' and teachers' management experience of learners' discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. In the previous chapter, I discussed the design and methodology adopted for this study. In this chapter, I present, clarify and examine data collected following procedures that I used during the interviews with participants. The reports generated using different data collection tools from the secondary schools' principals and teachers in Limpopo province regarding the management of discipline are provided. A comprehensive explanation and examination of each participant are presented in the search for an in-depth understanding of the research question. A conclusion of the chapter is provided to conclude the discussions.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Data was collected from five secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of the Vhembe East education district in Limpopo province. Five principals and five teachers from five secondary schools participated in semi-structured interviews. To comply with the ethical obligations of the study, I kept the true identity of the participants and participating schools strictly confidential. I adhered to the confidentiality issues by using codes for all the participants and schools. I assigned letters of the alphabet (A-E) to schools, the codes PA1-PE5 for principals and TA1-TE5 for teachers in accordance with the sequence of their visitation during the data collection process. Similarly, coded participants were according to the order of their participation. Table 4.1 below presents the biographical information of the participants drawn from the secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of the Vhembe East education district in Limpopo province who were involved in the face-to face semi-structured interviews for the study and Table 4.2 provides an explanation of their qualifications.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of the participants

Participant codes	Qualifications of participants	Position in the school	Schools codes	Gender	Experience in teaching
PA1	B.Ed. (FET) B.Ed. (Hons)	Principal	School A	Male	11 years
TA1	B.Ed. (FET) B.Ed. (Hons)	Teacher	School A	Female	8 years
PB2	B.Ed. (FET) B.Ed. (Hons) Adv Dip (SLM)	Principal	School B	Male	13 years
TB2	STD ACE B.Ed. (Hons)	Teacher	School B	Male	30 years
PC3	STD B.A. B.Ed. (Hons)	Principal	School C	Male	28 years
TC3	B.Ed. (FET)	Teacher	School C	Male	6 years
PD4	B.Ed. (FET) B.Ed. (Hons)	Principal	School D	Female	20 years
TD4	STD B.A.	Teacher	School D	Male	21 years
PE5	B.Ed. (FET) B.Ed. (Hons) M.Ed.	Principal	School E	Female	17 years

TD5	B.Ed. (FET)	Teacher	School E	Male	6 years
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Table 4.2 Explanation of participants' qualifications

Participants' qualifications	Name of qualification
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
B.Ed. (FET)	Bachelor of Education (Further Education & Training)
B.Ed. (Hons)	Bachelor of Education Honours
M.Ed.	Master of Education
STD	Senior Teachers Diploma
Adv Dip (SLM)	Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management

4.2.1 Biographical information of the principals

All the principals of the schools that participated in this study are qualified to be the principal of a secondary school in the Further Education and Training (FET) band. Three principals are male and two principals are female. The years' experience in teaching among the male principals in secondary schools' range between 11 years and 28 years and the female principals have between 17 to 20 years of teaching experience. All of them have been trained as teachers and have attended institutions of higher learning with specialisation in education management. It is assumed that all of them are experienced to handle and deal with any school management challenge they may be exposed to.

4.2.2 Biographical information of the teachers

All teachers that participated in this study were also qualified to teach at secondary schools (FET band). Four were male teachers and only one was a female. The teaching experience of the male secondary school teachers ranged from 6 to 30 years. The female secondary school teacher has 8 years' experience. All teachers received teacher training from institutions of higher learning. It is assumed that they are able to handle and deal with any secondary school learners' behaviour in schools.

4.3 DATA PRESENTATION

The ten participants who participated in this study were purposively selected. The criteria that I used for schools to participate in this study was that the five secondary schools must offer subjects from grade 8 to grade 12, the grade 12 results of two schools must be above 60% over the past five years, and grade 12 results of the other three school must be below 50% over the past five years.

The participants were selected because they were qualified and experienced secondary school principals and teachers. All the interviews with participants were conducted after working hours as prescribed by the Limpopo Department of Education. I used the same interview schedule for the principals and the teachers and I used an audio recorder to capture the data from the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This was done with the consent of the participants.

Table 4.3. presents the themes and sub-themes of the categories of the data captured during the interviews with the principals and teachers. It presents how I aligned the research questions and interview questions during the data collection process with the principals and the teachers. Interview questions were guided by primary and secondary research questions.

Table 4.3: Research questions, themes and sub-themes

Main research question: How do teachers manage learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province?		
Research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
What are the experiences of teachers regarding discipline of learners in secondary schools?	Theme 1: Management of learner discipline	Sub-themes: 1 • Learner discipline in the classrooms Sub-themes: 2 • Managing learner discipline in the classrooms Sub-themes: 3 • Mutual respect and relationships
What are the challenges regarding discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo Province?	Theme 2: Challenges of learner discipline in schools	Sub-themes: 1 • Poor academic performance Sub-themes: 2 • Learners behaviour at school Sub-themes: 3 • Loss of focus and academic time

How can teachers maintain lawful discipline in schools?	Theme 3: Maintenance of lawful discipline in schools	Sub-themes: 1 • Parental involvement Sub-themes: 2 • Effective teaching and learning
How is learner discipline affecting academic performance of secondary schools?	Theme 4: Effects of discipline on academic performance	Sub-themes: 1 Delay in teaching and learning Sub-themes: 2 Degradation of school image Sub-themes: 3 Conflicts between teachers and parents

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

For the data analysis of this study on the management of learner discipline in secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit of the Vhembe East education district in Limpopo province, I interpreted the information collected during face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The purpose of engaging in the interpretation of the data was to develop connection and relevance by employing analytical and logical reasoning (Raskind et al., 2019).

When conducting analysis for this study I adopted thematic data analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). The use of thematic data analysis assisted me to address different research questions and to analyse several types of qualitative data for the study. The steps that I followed when analysing data include familiarising myself with the data by engaging in critical and analytical reading of the textual data collected through interviews; generating codes relevant to the research question and providing a summary of the data to identify meaning within the data in order to search for themes. Identified themes were therefore reviewed, defined and named for the production of research report. Below is the presentation of data analysis from the interviews conducted with both the principals and the teachers.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS FROM INTERVIEWS

4.5.1 Theme 1: Management of learner discipline

4.5.1.1 Learner discipline

When principals and teachers were asked about their experiences in managing

learner discipline in schools, this is how they responded:

Learner discipline in our classrooms is a nightmare for the teachers. Remember our classrooms are overcrowded. Learners fight with each other and some of them fight with us because they are adolescents.... (PB2)

We are sitting with a serious case here. One of these big boys has assaulted one of our lady teachers. Imagine, just refusing to clean the chalkboard when he was requested to do so... (PD4)

Generally, peer influence plays a role in the general discipline of learners in our classrooms. Some of the learners copy bad behaviour from others... (PA1)

Too many rights given to these learners are making them to be stubborn and disrespectful to the teachers, this is our daily experiences...(PC3)

When answering the same question, teachers lamented:

Learners are continuously behaving in a way that as an teacher you are not expecting them to behave during teaching and learning and it's a problem for myself and many other teachers. (TC3)

When you deal with learners one should anticipate such type of the behaviour, more especially in the learning classrooms, learners misbehave. (TC4)

Learners have been brought up differently. Some, well, do behave but the majority misbehave and cause chaos during the lessons. Actually, the good learners are influenced by the bad behaving ones. (TB2)

It is difficult to manage discipline during teaching and learning because some of the learners even disrespect the school principal. This situation is stressful. (TD3)

The South African Constitution (SA, 1996a), the National Laws (National Education Policy Act, 1996c; and the South African Schools Act, 1996b) provides a variety of rights of learners. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (1998), one of the core duties of teachers is “to engage in class teaching which will foster a purposeful progression in learning and which is consistent with learning areas and

programmes of subjects and grades as determined.” Narratives submitted by the participants indicate a general outcry of learners’ ill-discipline in secondary schools. The participants opined that learners have too many rights culminating in lack of respect for teachers and principals. PB2 and TD3 mentioned that discipline has become difficult to be maintained during lessons due to overcrowded classes. However, PA1 and TB2 mentioned peer influence as a cause of bad behaviour among learners in the classrooms. Learners in secondary schools have turned out to be stubborn, disrespectful and even assaulted teachers during the lessons. Based on these narratives, principals and teachers in secondary schools are faced with a serious task of learners’ discipline in the classrooms. This situation mentioned by principals and teachers’ compromises quality learning and teaching in secondary schools.

4.5.1.2 Sub-themes 2: Managing learner discipline

When participants were asked how they manage discipline in the classroom they responded as follows:

Our school has policies such as a disciplinary policy and a code of conduct that have been created to deal with ill-discipline in our school. Learners and parents know about these policies. Additionally, based on these policies I have requested all the teachers to devise classroom policies. (PB2)

Learners have parents and they must assist us to mend their children’s behaviour. When a child is troublesome and disturbs other learners in class and if the teachers cannot contain the situation, they report to me and I call the parents. (PA1)

It is true that some learners disturb and disrupt teachers and other learners during teaching and learning. I advise teachers to implement their classroom policies together with our disciplinary policy and the code of conduct to discipline the learner. (PC3)

Our policies are very clear with what the teachers should do when learners are causing trouble in the classrooms. Learners are either disciplined through detention, calling the parent or if a misconduct is serious may face a disciplinary hearing. (PE5)

In my case, although having minimal incidences of ill-discipline during my

classes, Life Orientation is a subject that is assisting me to instil moral values in the learners towards good behaviour. It is really assisting ...
(TC3)

Well, it is best to always have something in class to occupy the learners. So, in my case teaching the learners and engaging them in classroom activities minimise learners' disciplinary problems. I am also assisted by the classroom policy that dictates how the learners should behave during the lessons. (TB2)

I usually reprimand them and call them to order and if they don't listen, I refer the case to the principal. (TA1)

I first talk to the learner and if the learner is not adhering to my instructions then I take the learner to the HOD. The HOD then assists with the measures to correct the misconduct. (TE5)

Submissions made by participants revealed that schools are using different ways of managing discipline during the lessons. PB2, PC3, PE5 and TB2 mentioned that the best way of maintaining discipline is to use policies such as classroom policies, disciplinary policies and the school code of conduct. This view is supported by Mwilima (2021) who recommends the development of a set of rules and regulations for the school. Furthermore, the developed rules and regulations must be agreed upon by all stakeholders including learners in order to manage learner bad behaviour successfully. Another way of managing discipline mentioned by PB2, PA1 and PE5 is to involve parents in addressing the misconduct of learners. This is consistent with Jinot (2018) who suggests that the community and all stakeholders are responsible for learner discipline in secondary schools because they have different abilities and skills that are important for the education of a child.

It was also mentioned that learner discipline can be managed by making sure that learners always have some work to do in the classroom. Furthermore, learners can be taught moral values in order to minimise disciplinary problems in the classroom. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) mention that the lack of respect, morals and values indicate deteriorating teachers' rights to discipline learners at school. Learners require moral education, guidance and motivation as outlined by TC3 and TB2. It was also regarded as important by TA1 and TE5 that ill-discipline can be overpowered by

the power of word. This implies that when learners are ill-disciplined at school, the acts of bad behaviour signal the need to talk to learners in order to improve behaviour.

4.5.1.3 Sub-themes 3: Mutual respect and relationships

When participants were asked about the mutual respect that should exist between them and the learners and the kind of relationship that they should have with the learners as a way of managing discipline in their schools, this is what they said:

Well, schools are settings where adults and children co-exist, their relationship is the one that is guided by mutual respect. Normally learners respect teachers who respect them and thus they obey the rules that are set by the teachers. (PA1)

Teachers do not have to abuse the relationship they have with the learners. The respect they show to the learners will enable them to manage their behaviour because they will see them as their parents. (PB2)

Actually, teachers who treat learners as they treat their own children are respected and learners carry out instructions without questions. (PD4)

At this school, teachers are engaging learners in extramural activities. This is the best way to build relationship and earn respect from the learners. You know I have realised that these teachers are more respected and they do not struggle to control the learners because there is an element of mutual respect. (PE5)

In addition to what the principals mentioned, teachers reacted as follows:

I have a good relationship with the students, they respect me and carry out my instructions because I have time to listen to them much as they listen to me. (TA1)

Yeah, you know learners are funny, you smile with them they think you are their friend and they take advantage of you. We are relating in a respectful way but my authority remains. (TE5)

Students in our school choose to relate well with those teachers who are not strict in their approach. If you are confrontational that is where you will pick up fights. (TB2)

I work by the book; policies dictate the kind of relationship I should have with learners. However, the nature of adolescent learners is to be aggressive, but when you are calm in your approach they will return the favour. (TC3)

Submissions made by the participants suggest that mutual respect and healthy relationships between learners and teachers are the driving forces towards sustainable school discipline. This was also articulated by Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) who assert that positive interpersonal relationships enhance individuals' enthusiasm for learning. As PD4 indicated, it is important for teachers and learners to relate well and to have mutual respect. Learners' bad behaviour can be minimised when teachers treat learners like their own children. It is unlikely that learners will respect teachers as parents when teachers do not respect and view learners as children of their own. However, PA1 mentioned that learners relate well with teachers who respect them and carry out their instructions without questions.

Principals believe that it is important for teachers to always listen to learners' problems in order to win the trust which will translate into good relationships. Nevertheless, teachers need to be seen as parents of children. In line with the *in loco parentis*-principle, teachers need to provide reasonable care and guidance to learners. In this way teachers need to take responsibility for the psychological, physical well-being and emotional care of a learner (Mampane, 2018). This is qualified by Thompson (2018) who asserts that fundamental to the preservation of the common interests, spaces, and relationships that people share are mutually respectful relationships. Nevertheless, TC3 and TE5 narrated that it always best for teachers to apply policy to regulate and maintain authority in order to ensure continuous, respectful, and fruitful relationships between teachers and learners.

4.5.2. Theme 2: Challenges of learners' discipline in schools

4.5.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Poor academic performance

Although the Constitution grants all people equal rights and advises on responsibilities, learners are found not to know what is right and wrong. Principals and teachers narrated that one of the prominent hindrances that impede learners' academic performance at secondary schools is ill-discipline.

This has emerged many times in our school where learners who go against the school code of conduct frequently perform very badly in their summative and formative assessment. This is even true in respect of our grade 12 learners, you know all the learners who have been given a second change to register for this year's NSC examination, they are the ones who have been giving us problems with their behaviour. (PB2)

We are sitting where we are in terms of our general school academic performance because of learners who refuse to attend extra lessons. Some of the grade 12 learners misbehave because they are in the exit class. They disrespect teachers and do all these things that disrupt teaching and learning in the classrooms...(PE5)

Well, who can deny this? Learners are absent from school without even reporting their absence. Remember, when you are regularly absent from school, we are doing seven subjects and for that day you will miss content for seven subject and many more if it happens for several days in a row and this leads to deterioration in the academic performance of such learners. (PC3)

Yes, the learners' performance is not as it is supposed to be. Learners, boys and girls, are immersed in drug abuse, smoking dagga and so on. This practice continues when they are at school. From time to time, they are uncontrollable in class, they bunk classes and refuse to acknowledge the authority of their teachers. This is our daily experiences. (PD4)

In supporting the narratives submitted by the principals, teachers lamented the under-performance of their school due to ill-discipline.

It is true, for the past two years we have been experiencing under-performance among learners because of ill-disciplinary issues. We have tried get assistance from the parents, but you know, learners are learners. They keep on displaying disruptive behaviour. TD4)

The district [office] visited us at the beginning of this year to make sense of the root cause of our school's under-performance. Basically, the spare-the-

rod-and-spoil-the-child approach that has been introduced by the Department of Education is a contributory factor to the situation we are facing today. In reality we don't have authority over these learners that is why we cannot force them to behave in the way they should. (TA1)

Our performance across the grades have been greatly affected by poor discipline at school. Even when you explain to the learners that they should come to school regularly to avoid missing subject content that will be important in the examinations, some of them remain trapped in this bad practice. What can we do because some of the parents don't even care? (TB2)

Well, the situation of poor academic performance can only be avoided if the learners were not transgressing the stipulations in our code of conduct. Guess what? Some of them would even revel in ill-disciplinary acts and only regret them when they are underperforming. Having fights with teachers is the worst of all. How can you perform academically in the subject of an teacher who you dislike intensely? (TE5)

Participants submitted that the consequence of learner ill-discipline is poor academic performance. Obadire & Sinthumule (2021) assert that schools will not achieve academic success with undisciplined learners. PB2 and TE5 mentioned that the challenge of poor academic performance is learners' disrespect of the stipulations of the school code of conduct. In agreement, PE5, TB2, TA1, PD4 alluded to disrespect towards teachers which contributes to the poor academic performance in their schools. According to Slee (2020) the education agenda is dominated by issues of learner discipline. The domination of learner ill-discipline in education hinders the progress of education. However, participants blame the Department of Education's decisions to limit teachers' authority as a huge challenge that prevents schools from fully exercising authority to mend learners' behaviour to enhance their academic performances.

4.5.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Learners' behaviour at school

When participants were asked how they deal with learners' ill-behaviour at school, this is what they said:

Every time before schools re-open, we organise parents' meetings where we provide copies of and explain the school's code of conduct to them. The same meetings are held with the learners to explain to them the repercussions of bad behaviour at school. (PB2)

We have a code of conduct at school which assists us to deal with misbehaviour at school and in our classrooms. teachers also regularly alert the learners regarding the rules and regulations of good behaviour. (PE5)

Members of the SMT are at the forefront of ensuring good learner behaviour at school However, sometimes we fail in our endeavours because parents do not attend parents' meetings where learner behaviour and the code of ethics are communicated. (PD4)

I cannot honestly claim that we are winning the battle of learners' bad behaviour at school. Parents disrespecting you and the rules of the school in the presence of their children is a big challenge, because they learn from what their parents are doing and follow suit. (PA1)

Teachers mentioned several ways of ensuring that discipline in the school classrooms is maintained.

When some of the learners cause disruptions during the lesson, by choosing not to listen what I am saying, I instruct them to leave my class and wait for me outside so that I can attend to them after the class. (TA1).

When learners are problematic in their behaviour, I always report them to the HOD to address their awkward behaviour and continue to teach those learners who are ready to listen. (TC3)

We are lucky to have a principal who is hands-on regarding the behaviour of learners in our school. He always motivates learners to behave well during lessons. Although there is a small number of stubborn transgressors to crack, we always win their bad behaviour. (TD4).

Normally what we do to control bad behaviour of learners in this school is to show them the importance of behaving well during the lessons by always engaging them in miniature talks every time before we commence our lessons. (TA1)

What emerged from the narratives of the participants is that there are different ways of controlling learner behaviour in schools. PB2 and PE5 alluded that learner behaviour is dealt with by engaging parents and learners in meetings to explain the school code of conduct with regard to learner behaviour at school. When parents work closely with teachers, learner discipline can be managed successfully and consequently improve academic performance (Motseke, 2020). However, PD4 and PA1 indicated that their effort is impeded by parents who do not attend parents' meetings and those who disrespect teachers in the presence of their children. TC3, TD4 and TA1 also mentioned that in order to minimise learners' bad behaviour, teachers and the school management team (SMT) need to join hands to motivate learners to abandon their bad behaviour. TA1 mentioned illegal measures to deal with learner discipline. Refusing learners to attend classes due to their bad behaviour is against the law as it infringes upon learners' right to education. It is advisable to follow due processes when learners have transgressed as opposed to infringing upon their right to education as advocated by section 29 of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996a).

4.5.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Loss of focus regarding academic engagements

School discipline is important because it creates a conducive environment for teaching and learning. Learner ill-discipline halts progress in education and shifts the focus of learners from learning to focusing on destructive behaviour. When participants were asked about the elements causing loss of focus to academic engagements, this is what they had to say:

Absolutely! When learners are extremely immersed in misbehaving they lose touch with what they came to do at school. They are here to learn. You will find learners mocking and bullying one another forgetting that they must concentrate on their school work. (PB2)

Recently we had learners who have formed a gang and we fought it so hard to break it up. When they are at school they concentrate on their silly gang activities and forget to study. (PC3)

Well, is a common practice for learners to enjoy being at school. They roam around the school premises, sit in the toilets sharing unnecessary gossip instead of being in the class. (PE5)

In my experience, when learners are ordered to remain at school after school hours to be assisted regarding academic content they are struggling with, they prefer to engage in sport activities even when there are days allocated to sport. (PD4)

Teachers submitted that in their schools, learners are taking their tuition time for granted.

Learners are funny. You ask them to do homework but they don't do it and give a lot of reasons for not doing it. (TC3)

One reason for learners' loss of focus on their academic engagements is that cliques and the activities of their cliques consume much of their time. They fail to concentrate on what they have to do to improve their academic performance. (TB2)

In my class during the lessons, learners are always attempting to ask questions and force discussions that are not related to the lesson even when you don't allow it. I have been against this, but it persists. This is an indication that they want to destabilise teaching and learning. (TE5).

Academic engagement happens when students dive deep into learning activities, when they are mentally and emotionally absorbed by the study materials, and often when interacting with their teachers (Amerstorfer & Von Münster-Kistner, 2021). The submission made the participants suggest that learners in schools do not enjoy engaging with their teachers in respect of academic matters. Instead, they enjoy things that are not related to what they are supposed to learn and also enjoy staying outside their classroom as mentioned by TE5 and PE5. Learners are engaged in gangs, clique activities and truancy that compromise their learning as mentioned by PC3 and TB2. However, the common practices that make learners lose focus on their academic engagement are elements of misbehaviour such as taking a lot of time undermining other learners and displaying their ungratefulness. It is also common practice for learners as alluded by TC3 that learners do not do their homework. Instead, they provide reasons for not completing school work on time. In most cases, learners end up not completing the task. In essence this is an indication that learners do not value their school work.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Maintenance of order in schools

4.6.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Parental involvement

The involvement of parents is regarded as one way that principals and teachers can use to maintain discipline in secondary schools. When participants were asked how they maintain order in their schools, they had this to say:

Maintaining discipline in a school is a very complex exercise because learners misbehave in different ways every day when they are at school. Together with the parents we have tailored a code of conduct and disciplinary policy that assist to regulate learner behaviour. Sometimes we call experts who are parents in the community to coach learners regarding their conduct. (PA1)

Our school disciplinary policies regard parents as the best weapon to maintain learner discipline. Learners have two sets of behaviour. At home they display good behaviour because their parents are near but they behave differently when they are at school. (PE5)

Talking about something without taking any action may not yield any positive results. We deploy certain SGB members at community meetings to talk to parents about their contributions in ensuring good discipline at school and to participate in disciplining their own children. (PB2)

In our case lawful discipline is maintained by reminding parents from time to time during parents' meetings to warn learners against misbehaving at school, to encourage them to wear the uniform as per school prescriptions, and to regard teachers as their second parents. (PC3)

We value parents' involvement in our school and this is assisting us in our task. To ensure that discipline is uplifted, we invite influential parents to the school assembly sessions to speak to learners about good behaviour and the fruits of behaving well at school. (PD4)

Our school disciplinary policy and learners' code of conduct are clear on parental involvement. To get the learners' behaviour on track, we always invite parents to sessions with their children to talk about their behaviour and academic performance in class. This is helping us because where

learners are not doing well, they are jointly reprimanded by teachers and parents. (TA1)

Essentially, to ensure that learners behave. When they misbehave or fail to do their school work, I inform the parents about their conduct. In that way they mend the bad behaviour. (TE5)

Parents are involved in extra-mural activities of their children and even accompany us when we undertake school trips and excursions to assist us with the maintenance of order. (TC3)

When a learner has transgressed we tell him/her to bring his/her parent to school in order to assist us in solving the behavioural conduct of his/her child which may lead to disciplinary action. (TB2)

Submissions made by participants revealed that parents are involved in most cases where principals and teachers' attempt to maintain learner discipline. In order to stamp their disciplinary authority, schools involve parents through the use of the disciplinary policies and code of conduct as indicated by PA1, TA1 and PE5. This is because it is important as mentioned by PB2 and PC3 to maintain order in secondary schools to enhance academic performance. In an attempt to address learner discipline, school governing body (SGB) members involve parents in meetings where they discuss issues around learner discipline and ways of maintaining it. Furthermore, SGB members advocate for learner discipline during community meetings where parents are reminded about the importance of good learner conduct at school. TA1, TE5 and TB2 further alluded to the fact that parents are also invited to the school to engage in sessions with their children where they are informed about the behaviour and performance of their child. This implies that the spirit of parents and teachers working together may assist in maintaining order in schools. TC3 deemed it fit to involve parents in their children's extra-mural activities to maintain order. In the submission he indicated that during school trips and excursions, the visibility of parents is important since children behave well when they see their parents. The continuous efforts to suppress learners' bad behaviour indicate participants' commitment to manage learner discipline and the desire to see success in education.

4.5.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Effective teaching and learning

Lewis (2001) opines that punishing learners as a corrective measure for ill-discipline

appears to be an ineffective strategy in promoting responsible student behaviour. However, Rahimi and Karkami (2015) suggest that this strategy should be substituted by positive and cooperative discipline practices. It emerged from the submissions made by participants that the best way to maintain order in their schools is to engage learners in school work and for them to be committed. Furthermore, participants revealed that it is important for teachers to always be in their classes for the better part of their school day.

This is what participants said regarding effective teaching and learning:

In this school I have realised that because of our packed school timetable where learners engage with their teachers from the first to the last period, ill-disciplined learner conduct is minimal. (PA1)

The class-based system of teaching that our school has adopted is assisting in maintaining order. In the classes' learners are always with teachers even when it is their free period. This limits learners' latitude to engage in directionless interaction which may lead to misbehaviour. (PC3)

Yes, it really makes sense because an idle mind is a devil workshop. Providing learners with quality teaching and occupying them with school work limit their chances of teasing, transgressing and bullying one another. (PB2)

When teachers are always in their classes teaching learners and giving them work to do, they become focused on their school work and forget to perform acts of misbehaviour. (PD4)

Teachers also added:

Learners respect us and carry out our instructions if they realise that we are committed to our work. Our commitment limits learners from misbehaving in the classes. (TE5)

The most important tool I use is my presence in the classroom and continuous communication with learners about how they should behave in accordance with our school code of conduct and our classroom rules. This always keeps them alert to avoid any act of misbehaviour. (TB2)

Teaching, teaching and teaching these learners allow me to maintain order successfully. I think you are well aware that corporal punishment is a thing of the past. So, the best disciplinary measure to apply is to exhaust them with work. (PD4)

The best way is to give them work to do and to give timelines for submission and communicate the consequences of not submitting their work. I do this verbally and in writing, and their parents have been made aware of the penalties for transgression. (PA1)

4.5.4 Theme 4: Effects of discipline on academic performance

4.5.4.1 Delay of teaching and learning

Discipline is an important component of human behaviour and without it an organisation cannot function optimally towards the achievement of its goals (Simba, et al., 2016). Without any doubt learner ill-discipline disturbs teaching and learning (Sahito & Vaisanen, 2017). Regarding the delay of learning and teaching caused by ill-discipline in the classrooms, participants mentioned the following:

One teacher reported a case of this learner who always bangs her desk when he was teaching. The teacher had to drag the learner to the office because she never listened when she was reprimanded. A lot of time was wasted when we tried to explain and discourage her from continuing with such misbehaviour. (PB2)

Learners apply tricks when they want to delay teachers from teaching them. Some would raise their hands when the teacher is busy teaching and ask questions that are not relevant to what is being taught and some would repeatedly ask clarification of certain issues even when clarifications have been provided by the teachers. (PC3)

There is a tendency among learners in this school that when they don't want teachers to continue with their teaching, they fake having epileptic fits to cause confusion that will disturb the lesson. (PE5)

Throughout the day I receive reports from teachers about learners who are misbehaving during lessons. teachers have to leave their classes and come

to the office to report the incidents. This really prevents teachers to finish the work they have prepared to offer during that lesson. (PD4)

Teachers also submitted the following:

Yes, learners tease and disrespect each other during lessons. I therefore have to halt the lesson and attend to learners who are misbehaving in class. This wastes a lot of time that could have been profitably used for teaching. (TA1)

Learners intentionally disturb lessons in the classrooms either because they did not study the sections of the content that were given to them as homework or just causing chaos to stop the teacher from continuing with teaching. (TC3)

Some of the learners do come late to class and when they are outside the classrooms they cause disturbances that force me to halt my lesson and attend to them and this causes time deficit for my lesson. (TB2)

Delaying tactics performed by learners do not only disturb teachers only, even the learners are disturbed. Remember, time lost can never be regained. Well behaved learners who want to excel in their grade 12 examinations may end up missing certain content that can compromise their results. (TD4)

Participants narratives revealed that learners have tactics to delay teaching and learning in the classrooms. As mentioned by PB2 and PD4, there is a high number of ill-discipline incidences delaying teaching and learning that are reported by teachers to the principal. These incidences include repetitive posing of questions that are irrelevant to the lesson, coming late to class and causing chaos outside the classroom. Furthermore, teachers reported disrespecting and teasing one another and banging desks during the lessons. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) assert that these actions display a lack of respect among learners, not only for their teachers, but also for each other. TA1 and TC3 mentioned that when these learners misbehave, they have to stop their lessons and attend to the misbehaviour. TD4 further indicated that the time wasted while dealing with learners' behaviour displayed in classes do not only affect teachers, but also the learners. This is because they miss content that was supposed

to be covered for the day while addressing learners who are misbehaving. However, Sahito & Vaisanen (2017) regard time as an important aspect in the field of education especially for teachers. This is because teachers need to perform well to improve their performance and the academic achievement of learners.

4.5.4.2 Degradation of school image

Good discipline creates a good image of the school and prepares learners for the future (Mussa, 2015:2). When participants were asked how discipline can degrade the school's image, this is how they responded:

Well, learners in our school are not disciplined, they perform very poorly academically and this project a bad image for the school. Other schools and communities are undermining us and even avoid registering their children in our school. (PA1)

Although we are having fair learner enrolment in our school, I think we could do better if we tighten our school discipline. Learners are not interested to come and register with us because of our grade 12 performance outcomes and a few disciplinary incidences that are rumoured in the streets of our villages. (PB2)

The bad behaviour of our learners is impacting our school's academic results and staff turnover negatively because we are unable to attract good teachers to come and work with us. Well, it is true that a school that produces good results and its learners are known to be disciplined would be favoured by many teachers. (PE5)

In agreement with the submissions made by the principals, teachers mentioned:

Yes, our school is being looked down on by other schools because of poor grade 12 results that can be attributed to the poor discipline of learners. TC3

As a school we have not been able to get financial sponsorship from the business sector because we fail to meet their requirements which include among others, good performance, records of good learners' discipline and the assurance of safety in the school. (TD4)

We are known to be underperforming and we are being tossed from pillar to post by the district. The main cause, I think, emanates from learner discipline because history clearly indicates that ill-disciplined learners cannot perform academically. (TE5)

Submission made by the participants revealed that most secondary schools are struggling to maintain discipline. However, as mentioned by participants poor discipline impedes learners from performing well in their end of the year examinations. This subsequently decreases the school enrolment because no parent would register his/her child in a school that has a bad reputation of ill-disciplined learners. The other challenge that was articulated by participants was that because of the tarnished images of their schools they are unable to attract good teachers when they advertise vacant positions. This further diminishes sponsor confidence in the school and subsequently has a negative effect on applications for funding. Schools with a high level of learner misbehaviour are also looked down on by other schools because of an underperformance in grade 12 examinations that can be linked to learner ill-discipline.

4.5.4.3 Conflict between teachers and parents

When participants were asked about the conflict that occurs between them and parents when they involve parents to address their children's acts of ill-discipline that might affect learners' performance, this is how they responded:

Some of the parents are really unreasonable. When their children have been involved in misconduct and you write a letter to inform them about that, instead of joining hands with the teachers to find a common ground, they would shout at the teachers and cause drama on the school premise. This in itself embarrasses their children and causes emotional trauma that affects their academic performance. (PE5)

A case of smoking dagga in the school toilets was reported to my office. Their parents were called to correct them. Can I tell you what happened? One of the parents denied that her child was smoking dagga and accused me of being biased. This behaviour by the parents instil in a child a feeling that he is untouchable and this reflects negatively on his performance because he does not listen to anybody... (PB2)

When you send a learner home to go and put on the correct uniform, the parent would come and tell you that you do not have the right to order the child home to dress in the correct school uniform. Realising that his parent is protecting him, he starts to excel in misbehaving and underperforming in his school work. (PA1)

Parents protect their children when they have misbehaved and this caused conflict to the extent that we call the circuit manager to intervene. In that way our relationship is ruined and somehow affects the performance of a learner. (PD4)

Some of the parents keep their children from attending school to run family errands. Absenteeism affects learners' academic performance negatively. When you demand from the parent that the learners should come to school because they are missing lessons, the parent would be rude and remind you that it is not your child. (PC3)

Teachers lamented the conflicts that are caused by parents in their schools.

Parents need to understand that schools have rules that should be respected in order to ensure uniformity in terms of learner behaviour to achieve better academic results. It is unfortunate that the parent contests the school rules when they are presented to him and his child. (TE5)

We are not respected by some of the parents and the learners even though we are the conveyors of their children's academic excellence. We are always being accused that we don't involve them in the education of their children. When they don't attend meetings, they write us letters that are offensive. (TB2)

When there are conflicts between teachers and parents, the relationship between both parties become distorted. At some instances the effect is carried over to the learners and it affects their academic performance in schools. The narratives provided by participants' signalled misunderstanding between parents and teachers when learners have transgressed. This concurs with Lasater's view (2016) that parents and teachers want what is best for learners, but their observations of a particular child can

vary. Therefore, this leaves teachers and parents struggling to find synergies and grow positive parent-teacher relationship and partnerships when conflict arises. Instead of attending meetings and trying to solve learners' problems that would assist in enhancing their academic performance, parents would be in conflict with teachers. Furthermore, parents protect their own children even when they have done wrong. Some of the parents would go to an extent of calling teachers names, shout at them in front of the learners and even physically assault them. However, Laster (2017) further indicates that when parents and teachers disagree on educational partnerships and decisions relating to a child, these negative relationships are further complicating and compromising teaching and learning in a school.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I presented, clarified and examined data collected during the interviews with participants. I reported the generated data using different data collection tools from the secondary schools' principals and teachers regarding the management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. I also presented a comprehensive explanation and examination of each participant in order to gain in-depth understanding of the research question.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW, SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 5, I summarise, examine and report on the discussion of the findings regarding the secondary research questions on the management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. I also present and make recommendations for the successful management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. Furthermore, I outline the recommendations for further studies to be conducted and provide closing remarks and the conclusion of the study.

The primary research question of the study was:

- How do principals and teachers manage discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province?

Following the primary research question, secondary research questions were

generated to assist the researcher to address the primary research question:

- What are the experiences of principals and teachers regarding management of learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?
- What are the challenges regarding the management of learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?
- How can teachers maintain order in secondary schools in Limpopo province?
- How is learner discipline affecting academic performance at secondary schools in Limpopo province?

5.2 REFLECTING ON THE JOURNEY OF THE STUDY

My research journey started in 2021. The journey was structured according to phases. Phase one of my study journey was the development of a research proposal. Phase two of the journey required the presentation of the research proposal during what is best known as “The mock defence”. This is where I presented the completed research proposal and received constructive feedback.

In order to develop a sound research proposal, I consulted National and International literature. This exercise was done in order to acquire rich, meaningful literature to strengthen the introduction and background, literature review and the methodology of the study. It took me seven months to develop a well-structured research proposal. After seven months of writing, the research proposal was ready to be presented to the defence panel. The next phase was the actual presentation of my completed research proposal. The research proposal was presented and defended on 24 August 2021 through an online channel to the defence panel of the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies.

The proposal presentation during defence session was a success and the researcher was granted permission to apply for ethics clearance from the University of Pretoria in order to do the fieldwork. On 29 October 2021 the ethics application was approved. With the approval of the ethics committee from the University of Pretoria, the next phase was to apply for approval to conduct research at secondary schools from the Limpopo Department of Education. Several challenges such as examinations, Covid-19 protocols, administrative issues and the planned timing for the collection of data in secondary schools of Limpopo province delayed the approval of the application. Finally, the permission to conduct research in secondary schools in Limpopo province

was granted on 25 April 2022 by the Limpopo Department of Education.

Participants of the study were purposely selected; five secondary schools were sampled. One principal and one teacher per school participated in the study. After the permission was granted I was ready to collect data through semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers at secondary schools in Limpopo province. I began with the data collection journey in May 2022 and concluded in June 2022. After completing data collection, I did with analysis. The data analysis process was completed in September 2022. I started to craft chapter 4 which was finalised and submitted to the supervisor in December 2022.

5.3 OVERVIEW

The previous chapter of the study outlined diverse aspects on the management of learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province.

In chapter 1, I provided the introduction and background of the study on the management of learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province. I provided an overview of what legislation advocated for discipline in schools. I unpacked how discipline should be managed in secondary schools in Limpopo province. I also outlined the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the rationale, the main research question and secondary research questions, methodology, ethical considerations, contributions as well as the limitations of the study.

In chapter 2, I deliberated on the literature review. I also divulged what different authors in the area of discipline assert on the management of learner discipline in schools. The international, regional and South African claims on the management of learner discipline in schools were discussed. Challenges and successes in the management of learners' discipline in countries such as the United States of America, Mauritius, Indonesia, Kenya and Tanzania were explored and compared with the discipline management experiences encountered by schools in South Africa and more specifically in Limpopo province. In this chapter I also concentrated on theoretical backgrounds, the lenses this study adopted to guide, unfold and locate viewpoints regarding the management of learner discipline in secondary schools in Limpopo province.

In chapter 3, I revealed the design and methodology adopted for this study. The

suitability of a qualitative research approach and an interpretive paradigm adopted for the study were also unfolded in this chapter. Furthermore, I provided a discussion of data collection techniques, data analysis methods adopted and ethical considerations for the study. A conclusion was provided at the end of all the discussions.

In chapter 4, I presented, clarified and examined data collected following the procedures that I used during the interviews with participants. I reported the generated data using different data collection tools from the secondary schools' principals and teachers regarding the management of learner discipline in secondary schools in Limpopo province. I also presented a comprehensive explanation and examination of each participant in order to gain in-depth understanding of the research question.

5.4 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

In this section, I present the summary of the findings of the study based on the views of principals and teachers on the management of learner discipline in secondary schools in Limpopo province. Analysis of the participants' responses and data collected through semi-structured interviews were used to answer the main research questions of this study.

5.4.1 Findings with regard to secondary research question 1: *What are the experiences of teachers regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?*

The first discussion of the findings was based on how teachers manage learner discipline in secondary schools. The aim of asking this question was to understand the experiences of teachers regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province. Data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

Overcrowding in classes was indicated as the main cause of misbehaviour in many public schools in South Africa. Another factor that was highlighted during the interviews was that too many rights given to learners are impeding teachers to exercise disciplinary measures. The reviewed literature revealed that ill-discipline halts teaching and learning completely and turns the attention of behaving learners to focus on bad behaving learners (Kutame & Kapueja, 2019). It is for this reason that teachers find learner discipline stressful. The findings also revealed that learner misbehaviour wastes teaching and learning time, which consequently affect the

achievement of teaching and learning objectives. Incidences of learners' misbehaviour are referred to the principal's office by teachers who find it problematic and this situation translates into some of the learners disrespecting the principal when trying to reprimand them. The whole situation hinders progress in education and leads to failure of schools to realise good academic performance.

Finding 1: *Due to overcrowding in the classrooms and too many rights given to learners by legislation make learners misbehave in schools to the extent of disrespecting teachers and their principals. Their misbehaviour hinders schools progress in achieving curriculum objectives.*

Ahmad, Arshad & Qamar (2018) assert that overcrowded classrooms make assessment of learner's performance extremely difficult. Failure to conduct assessment of learners' performance may have an effect on the success of education. Furthermore, Ahmad, et al. revealed that classroom overcrowding makes it impossible for teachers to interact with learners. Limited teacher-learner interaction minimises the possibility of successful learning and reduces the ability of the teacher to manage the classroom successfully, leading to a rise in learner ill-discipline (Siddig & Alkhouday, 2018). Failure to conduct successful assessment coupled with partial interaction with learners by teachers may affect teachers' ability to achieve curriculum objectives and consequently affects learner academic performance. Learner ill-discipline affects learner academic performance as stated by Obadire & Sinthumule 2021. Foncha et al., 2017 assert that a relationship exists between learner discipline and academic performance as

5.4.2 Findings with regard to secondary research question 2: *What are the challenges regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?*

This discussion of the findings was based on the challenges regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo Province. The aim of asking this question was to identify the challenges regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province.

Literature reviewed revealed that learner ill-discipline is experienced globally (Losen et al., 2015). This concerns parents as they wish to see their children succeeding and achieving their educational goals (Simba et al., 2016). Literature has revealed that

there is a connection between academic performance and learner discipline (Simba et al., 2016). This means that the academic performance of a learner may be affected negatively by learner discipline. Interviews revealed that some of the learners do not write homework, bully other learners, absent and are always late and leave early at school.

Due to problems of stop and go kind of teaching caused by ill-discipline in the classrooms, teachers are forced to offer learner extra-lessons. However, interviews with the principals and teachers revealed that the majority of bad behaving learners do not attend these lessons. Interviews conducted found out that learners were engaged in cliques and gangs and drugs.

In order to remedy the situation, principals and teachers continuously called their parents to school for their assistance. However, some of the parents were contributing to the already out of hand situation by defending the children when they have transgressed the disciplinary code of conduct and this left the principal and teachers helpless and without authority over the learners in their schools. The unrecoverable time lost due to learner bad behaviour contributes negatively on learners' academic performance. This is why in some schools; teachers allow miniature talks every time before teaching commences. This is a strategy employed to try to avoid disturbance once teaching has commenced. At some situations, learners' attempts to disrupt the teaching progress intentionally by asking irrelevant questions that shifts learners focus to the relevant content. All these challenges put pressure of academic progress of the learners.

Finding 2: *Principals and teachers do not see themselves winning the battle of learner discipline because some of the learners are helped by their parents to continue their misbehaviour regardless of the effort to maintain discipline. Learners' ill-discipline is also exacerbated by some of the learners' affiliation in cliques, gangs and abuse of drugs.*

Respect and trust are important factors that form part of the foundation of teacher-learner relationship. Teachers are viewed differently by learners; some learners view teachers as parents and respect teachers as such. Learners who view teachers as problematic are found to have less respect for teachers (Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer & Kyndt, 2017). Lack of respect is one of the main causes of learner ill-discipline in

schools as asserted by Masingi, (2017). When learners are undisciplined the success of education is compromised (Obadire, 2022).

Literature revealed that discipline at the centre of teacher-learner relationships (Valente, Monteiro & Lourenco, 2019). Good relationships between teachers and learners are important to maintain a positive learning environment for both teachers and learners. Among other factors, learner discipline is found to be a challenging factor contributing to teacher job dissatisfaction (Toropova, Myrberg & Johansson, 2021). The challenges that teachers face in the classroom demoralise them in a way that they feel less powerful and in control of the classroom. Teachers find learner discipline to be the most challenging factor in a school environment (Motseke, 2020).

5.4.3 Findings with regard to secondary research question 3: *How can principals and teachers maintain order learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?*

The discussion of the findings was based on how teachers can maintain lawful learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province. The main aim of asking this question was to establish how principals and teachers maintain learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province.

Masingi 2017 suggests that managing learner discipline through the use of legislation and school rules which were developed in consultation with the parents and the learners as an effective strategy to minimise learner ill-discipline. Mathebula and Runhare (2021) assert that although a code of conduct is available at schools, not all members of the school disciplinary committee have knowledge of how to implement the school code of conduct. However, principals and teachers revealed that their schools had school code of conduct and have full knowledge and understanding of the school code of conduct. The school code of conduct was used to manage different aspects in the school including learner discipline. Upon failure to address the issue through the use of the school code of conduct, the principal refers the matter to the SGB. The SGB would further refer the matter to parents. The referral of the matter to the SGB may be because of the lack of adequate knowledge of the school code of conduct and in fear of infringing learners' constitutional rights. Once the matter was referred to parents, it was when it was expected to be completely resolved. This was the case because schools trusted the power of parents in dealing with learner

discipline and mainly because learners respected their own parents more than they respect teachers. It was revealed that learners respected their parents because they knew that they employ any kind of punishment for bad behaviour without resistance.

The interviews revealed that school governing body (SGB) members addressed the issue of learner discipline during community gatherings. In this way, learners were consistently reminded that the community has no room for bad behaviour. In some schools', community members were periodically invited to schools to motivate and address learners regarding disciplinary issues. Interviews revealed that consistent and continuous uninterrupted effective teaching and learning, continuous communication and tight timelines for the submission of tasks were strategies used by schools to maintain lawful learner discipline. Inviting stakeholders to address learners on issues of discipline is in line with Lara & Saracostti (2019), who assert that parental involvement is the key to learner's academic success.

Finding 3: *Principals and teachers use relevant legislation and the school code of conduct to maintain lawful discipline in their schools. Consistent teaching and learning, tight submission timelines, communication and SGB involvement in sorting out ill-disciplinary were also effective ways of maintaining lawful learner discipline.*

In an attempt to address learner ill-discipline, teachers employ legal and illegal techniques in the classroom, illegal techniques are a last resort to address learner discipline after legal means have failed to address the challenge. Legal means of addressing learner discipline include among many others talking politely with the learner and including the principal and parents (Motseke, 2020). However, Obadire 2022 asserts that in order to maintain orderly learner discipline all of the three stakeholders (school, parents and community) must play their roles successfully. In contrast, Seshoka 2022 asserts that principals and teachers feel less in control of learner discipline, since there are more legal rights protecting learners and less rights to teachers as victims of learner ill-discipline. The detachment of teacher's commitment to teaching is associated with poor learner academic performance (Altun, 2017).

High academic performance is associated with higher learner discipline, schools that are managing learner discipline successfully are using the school code of conduct and the involvement of relevant stakeholders (Mabaso, 2019). However, Mathebula and

Runhare (2021) reveal that some members of the school disciplinary committee are not conversant with the terms of the school code of conduct. The lack of knowledge among the members of the school disciplinary committee compromises justice when dealing with learner disciplinary cases. The lack of justice during disciplinary cases and lack of alternatives of corporal punishment may contribute to teachers using illegal means of maintaining learner discipline in schools. High performing schools keep learners busy with school work and extended teaching and learning time (Mabaso, 2019). However, Pyle and Danniels (2017) assert that learning and playing time should be balanced for a learner to be successfully developed intellectually.

5.4.4 Findings with regard to secondary question 4: *How is learner discipline affecting academic performance at secondary schools in Limpopo province?*

The discussion of the findings was based on how learner discipline affects academic performance at secondary schools in Limpopo province. The aim of asking this question was to examine how learner discipline affects academic performance at secondary schools in Limpopo province.

In view of the effect of learner discipline on academic performance, literature revealed that learner ill-discipline increases the number of unmannered members of the community, who in a long run may become a problem to the community (Simuforosa and Rosemary, 2014). Some learners are careless and destroy schools' property used for teaching and learning. Such behaviour and acts of intentionality imply that learners may run short of teaching and learning resources and this might affect their academic performance. Data from the literature and interviews revealed that academic performance can only be achieved once learner discipline is managed successfully (Simba et al., 2016). Learner ill-discipline may require teachers to leave their classes to address learner discipline issues with the principals in their offices. However, when teaching time is lost, the most affected are learners who have to write examinations at the end of the year. During the interviews principals and teachers revealed that late coming was also negatively affecting the management of discipline and learner performance.

Principals were highly concerned about their schools' image that was tarnished due to continuous poor performance that is fuelled by learner ill-discipline. It was revealed during the interviews that owing to their poor academic performance, their schools

were not attractive to potential learners and sponsors. Failure to attract more learners to register at the school meant a lower number of teachers allocated to the schools. Less teachers at schools burden them with many subjects to teach and their workload negatively affects quality teaching and learning. However, the lack of sponsorship meant that schools would not be able to afford teaching and learning resources that might enhance teaching and learning. Literature revealed that well sponsored schools might perform better academically because of the abundance of teaching and learning resources at their disposal.

Interviews with principals and teachers revealed conflict between them and the learners which creates a long-lasting hatred. At some point this sour teacher-learner relationship extends to a point where the learners exit the classroom when a specific teacher enters the classroom. It is unlikely that learners with such relationship with the teachers can perform well in the specific learning areas.

Finding 4: *Poor learner discipline creates conflict among teachers, learners and the parents, denies schools to access sponsorships, hampers the growth of the school in terms of learner enrolment, affect teaching and learning causing poor learner performance which tarnishes the image of the school.*

Learner ill-discipline is an international challenge that is widely experienced and hinders progress and learner academic performance (Masingi, 2017). Poor learner academic performance is a concern to teachers, parents and the community. There are many causes of poor learner academic performance, however learner discipline is at the foundation of successfully education (Matsebele, 2020). Mutual respect between teachers and learners may result in teachers being able to manage learner discipline and consequently improve learner academic performance (Makendano & Mahlangu, 2021). This is possible because instead of dealing with learner discipline, teachers will teach in time and be able to achieve academic objectives during each teaching period (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). More uninterrupted time dedicated to teaching and learning may lead to improved learner academic performance. A school with high learner academic performance is attractive to stakeholders. Parents prefer their children to attend schools with a higher performance rate. Less attractive schools are affected by many challenges including poor infrastructure (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm in order to explore the principals' and teachers' management experience of learners' discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. To acquire in-depth understanding of the management of learner discipline in secondary schools, the study adopted a case study research design. Through the use of a case study research design, the study revealed new information regarding the management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province.

Based on the findings that surfaced after analysis of collected data, various recommendations were made to ensure and enhance management of learner discipline in the secondary schools of Limpopo province. Recommendations made in this study are related to the knowledge in the field of management of learner discipline, parents, the policy makers which are the national Department of Basic Education, the provincial Department of Education, education districts, school principals and school governing bodies. Based on the recommendations of the study, it was deemed vital for future studies to be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the school code of conduct and its strategies in dealing with learner discipline in secondary schools.

5.5.1 Recommendations with regard to research question 1: *What are the experiences of principals and teachers regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?*

Teachers spend more time with learners in their classrooms. During this time, they are expected to manage all learners and direct their focus to the lesson. It is during this time that teachers experience the worst side of the learners' behaviour. This is when learners avoid paying attention to the teacher and do all they can to disrupt the progress of the lesson. Due to the lack of effective means to manage learners' behaviour, teachers are left marooned and stressed in the classroom. This situation victimises and demoralises the effective execution of their responsibilities.

The frontline of lessons is dominated by the teachers, the morale and well-being of teachers physically and mentally is important so that they can give their full attention to teaching and learning. Failure to deliver the lesson successfully has devastating consequences for learners and the school as a whole. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be equipped with skills that are effective in dealing with learner discipline.

This is further confirmed by Motseke 2020 who recommends training of teachers in strategies of maintaining learner discipline in secondary schools. Once teachers are equipped with skills to deal with learner discipline, learner academic performance may improve.

Recommendation 1: *The study recommends the tailoring of a development plan in the field of management of school discipline that would continuously be used to educate learners about the importance of good behaviour in school. This would enhance discipline in schools and promote collegiality among the relevant stakeholders.*

5.5.2 Recommendation with regard to secondary research question 2: *What are the challenges regarding learner discipline at secondary schools in Limpopo province?*

Principals and teachers are the immediate stakeholders affected by learner discipline at schools. As a result, the effects of learner discipline hits hard at principals and teachers who mostly have no tools to address learner discipline. When learners perform poorly due to bad behaviour, the principal blames teachers who in turn blame parents for failing to teach their children manners. This belief by teachers that the learner disciplinary challenges they face every day at school is the result of lack of proper parenting because some of the parents neglect their involvement in their children's educational matters.

Therefore, it is important to ensure that the gap between parents and teachers is minimised and eventually closed. Parents and teachers should work collaboratively to groom a disciplined child for the benefit of the community and the nation. The involvement of parents in learners' education as a whole should be a permanent continuous effort. Teachers and parents should maintain a continuous relationship of ensuring learners have respect and values. In each community gathering there should be an address on the issue of school discipline and the importance of education to the community.

Recommendation 2: *This study recommends that parents should be fully engaged in the education of their children through parents' meetings and engagements such as one-on-one sessions, involvement in learners sporting activities as well as participation in the committees formed at a school. This would allow perpetual*

interaction which would give rise to healthy relations and the reduction of learner ill-discipline.

In line with the above recommendation, Obadire 2022 recommends the engagement of parents in education. Once parents are hands on, learner ill-discipline can be minimised and learner academic performance can be improved.

5.5.3 Recommendation with regard to secondary research question 3: *How can principals and teachers maintain learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province?*

School codes of conduct and other school rules are developed by qualified and professional officials who understand how the school environment should function to ensure academic achievement. It is the responsibility of government officials and relevant school stakeholders to ensure that the school code of conduct is up to date and is able to address learner discipline. Having an effective school code of conduct is important in ensuring academic achievement. When ineffective rules are used to manage learner discipline, the results would always be devastating.

Therefore, effective rules should be developed and implemented in order to ensure successful and uninterrupted teaching and learning that ensure academic excellence. As a result, this study recommends that the policy makers develop school rules and effective strategies to manage learner discipline successfully. Government officials have successfully banned corporal punishment and amended the definition of corporal punishment in the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA). According to the BELA, corporal punishment means “a deliberate act against a child that inflicts pain or physical discomfort”. However, policy makers did not suggest effective strategies that teachers can use to manage learner discipline successfully.

Based on the findings of the study from the data collected through interviews, teachers are unable to manage learner discipline successfully due to the lack of effective strategies at their disposal to manage learner discipline.

Recommendation 3: *This study recommends to the Department of Basic Education to establish effective lawful strategies that principals and teachers can freely utilise without fear of contravening any act or infringing on the rights of learners. This would make all the learners understand the consequences of ill-discipline at school.*

In order to maintain learner discipline in Limpopo province, Masingi 2017 recommends that teachers should be supported in referring cases of learner discipline to the school management team (SMT). This is because the school management team is trusted to have the knowledge and understanding of the school code of conduct. Furthermore, the (SMT) is able to communicate with the parents and higher structures in education.

5.5.4 Recommendations in relation to secondary research question 4: *How is learner discipline affecting academic performance at secondary schools in Limpopo province?*

The reviewed literature, principals and teachers all acknowledged the existence of a connection between learner discipline and learner academic performance. Schools with a high number of undisciplined learners continue to underperform. No entity, stakeholder, learner, parent or government official would prefer to be associated with an underperforming school. Underperforming schools are anathema at all levels of the society. That is why it is important to address the issue of learner discipline which has been identified to contribute to poor learner academic performance.

The outcomes of poor learner discipline are general school underperformance because ill-discipline affects the whole managerial effort in a school. Principals and teachers are from time to time requested to account for poor academic results owing to the issues caused by ill-discipline. In the participating schools the relationships between parents and teachers, teachers and learners have been ruined by learners' ill-discipline. When the relationships between the stakeholders in a school are tarnished, the performance of all the stakeholders would be blurred. When addressing factors crippling learners' academic performance, every relevant stakeholder should be included in finding solutions. For example, the issue of learners late coming, bunking classes and absence for no reason, should be addressed with the support of the parents. The issue of alcohol and drug abuse should be addressed with the support of the South African Police Services. On the other side, teenage pregnancies and bullying should be addressed by social workers. All stakeholders should pledge to make positive contributions to ensure that each identified strategy is successfully implemented.

Recommendation 4: *The study further recommends to the national Department of Basic Education, districts and circuits to enforce the implementation of different*

policies prescribed by the Department of Basic Education. This would assist in addressing diverse disciplinary issues.

5.6 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The purpose of this study was to explore the principals' and teachers' management experience of learners' discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. This study was directed its focus on how learner discipline can be successfully managed in secondary schools in Limpopo province. The study was limited to the Mvudi circuit of Limpopo province in South Africa. Mvudi circuit is found in the Vhembe East education district. The Mvudi circuit serves 32 schools of which nine are secondary and 23 are primary schools.

The researcher collected data from five secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit. The secondary schools in the Mvudi circuit differ in terms of culture, values, resources, infrastructure, and geographical location. The culture and values and location where the child is being raised play a role in learners' behaviour. Although principals and teachers are managing learner discipline, the management does not contribute positively to learner academic performance.

The ineffectiveness of managing learner discipline through a school code of conduct is affected by the geographical locations of the schools. This is because no two schools can experience the same problem which might be resolved by the same solution. Therefore, this study recommends for more studies to be conducted regarding the influence the school context on the behaviour of learners in secondary schools.

It is also important to look at the nature of behaviour of learners at primary schools. Good learner discipline in primary schools may minimise learner ill-discipline in secondary schools. Once learners are well disciplined in primary schools, secondary schools would only need to maintain the discipline learners already possess. In this way, secondary schools would spend less time dealing with learner discipline and more time teaching, thereby improving academic performance of learners. Therefore, this study recommends that research should be conducted in relation to the influence of primary school discipline towards achieving sustainable discipline in secondary schools.

From the major findings and conclusions, I have crafted the following

recommendations to resolve the challenges identified by this study.

- Policy makers should stipulate in the South African Schools Act a clause that suggests what is permissible to teachers to do when faced with learner discipline during lessons.
- The Limpopo Department of Education should establish effective guidelines to assist schools in developing school codes of conduct of that address the nature of learner discipline experienced by schools.
- School stakeholders should play an active role in ensuring that learners are continuously educated on issues of discipline in schools.
- Parents should be fully and compulsorily engaged without compromise in the education of their children.
- The Limpopo Department of Education should ensure that teachers are equipped with knowledge to deal with extreme situations of learner discipline in the absence of the principal and the parents.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The objective of this study was to explore the principals' and teachers' management experience of learners' discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. The significant aspects of the study were discussed in Chapter 5. The findings of the study revealed the existence of a relationship between learner discipline and learner academic performance.

Based on the findings of the study, it is indisputable that principals and teachers are the relevant stakeholders entrusted with the responsibility for creating good healthy relationships with learners and the parents. To manage learner discipline effectively, parents and learners should be involved in the development of a school code of conduct to ensure good learner behaviour at school.

The Limpopo Department of Education should continuously conduct workshops to educate SGB members on the importance and correct implementation of the school code of conduct to manage learner discipline successfully in schools

5.8 CONCLUSION

In chapter 5, I summarised, examined and reported on the discussions of the findings from the secondary research questions on the management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. I also presented recommendations for the successful management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. Furthermore, I outlined the recommendations for further studies to be conducted and provide closing remarks and a conclusion of the study.

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Appendix A: Permission to conduct research from Limpopo Department of Education



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 2/2/2 Enq: Makola MC Tel No: 015 290 9448 E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Tshimilandou RI
P O Box 907
Fondwe
0969

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **"THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE."**
3. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the School concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
 - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
 - 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH : TSHIMILANDOU RI Page 1

Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
Tel:015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people

- 4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
- 5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes,

Mashaba KM
DDG: CORPORATE SERVICES

25/04/2022
Date

Appendix B: Request for permission from the SGB to conduct research



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

P.O. BOX 907
FONDWE
0969
22 October 2021

The School Governing Body chairperson

.....

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I Rembuluwani Israel Tshimilandou a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying for a Master of Education degree, hereby kindly apply for permission to conduct the study titled “The management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province” at your school. The purpose of this study is to understand the management of learner bad behaviour to learner academic performance and how learner discipline can be maintained lawfully and successfully to the benefit of both teachers and learners at secondary schools of Mvudi circuit in Vhembe East District of Limpopo province. Bearing in mind that you have the right to reject this application, I am hoping that you will accept my application. In an event that my application is successful, I would kindly request a signed letter permitting the study to be conducted at your school.

Five schools from Mvudi circuit of Vhembe East District in Limpopo province are purposively sampled. From five schools, one principal and one teacher from each sampled school is requested to participate in a face-to-face semi structured interview. Due to Covid-19 regulations each interview will be limited to 35 minutes per participant. Participants will be required to wear face mask, maintain social distance and observe all Covid-19 regulations during the interview process. Face-to-face semi structured interviews will be conducted with school principals and teachers in order to share experiences regarding management of learner discipline and dealing with learner discipline successfully during teaching and learning. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, participants will be interviewed separately. Participants will be required to observe all

Covid-19 regulations; above all, wearing a face mask, keeping a 2m social distance and a well-ventilated room will be mandatory for the interview process to commence.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will make use of pseudonyms. All participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time without any harm. Participants are also at liberty not to answer questions they are not comfortable with. In an event that a participant withdraws, data collected from that specific participant will be destroyed.

During the course of the study, I will assume the role of a Researcher; participants are welcome to share anything regarding the study with me as the Researcher. Participants are also welcome to share with me as the researcher should they experience challenges during the study. Participating in this study is voluntary; therefore, no participant will be remunerated or reimbursed for taking part in the study. However, principals and teachers may benefit knowledge of how to maintain learner discipline successfully and lawfully at schools

Member checking will be conducted in order to ensure that the correct data is collected and correctly interpreted. Participants will have access to data they have provided only. The supervisor of the study will have access to everything regarding the study including data collected from all participants. Please feel free to contact any of the stakeholders of the study listed below should you have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

Yours sincerely

Student: RI Tshimilandou
Signature: _____
Student number: 18215506
Mobile number: 072 601 8496
Email: rembu.israel@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Sebidi (SD)
Email address: sebidi.sd@up.ac.za
Signature: _____
Co-supervisor: Dr Nthontho M.
Signature: _____
Email: Maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za.

Appendix C: Request for permission from principals to conduct research



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

P.O.BOX 907
FONDWE
0969
22 October 2021

The principal

.....

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I Rembuluwani Israel Tshimilandou a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree, hereby kindly apply for permission to conduct the study titled “The management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province” at your school. The purpose of this study is to understand the contribution of learner bad behaviour to learner academic performance and how learner discipline can be maintained lawfully and successfully to the benefit of both teachers and learners at secondary schools of Mvudi circuit in Vhembe East District of Limpopo province. Bearing in mind that you have the right to reject this application, I am hoping that you will accept my application. In an event that my application is successful, I would kindly request a signed letter permitting the study to be conducted at your school.

Five schools from Mvudi circuit of Vhembe East District in Limpopo province are purposively sampled. From five schools, one principal and one teacher from each sampled school is requested to participate in a face-to-face semi structured interview. Due to Covid-19 regulations each interview will be limited to 35 minutes per participant. Participants will be required to wear face mask, maintain social distance and observe all Covid-19 regulations during the interview process.

Face-to-face semi structured interviews will be conducted with school principals and teachers in order to share experiences regarding management of learner discipline and dealing with learner discipline successfully during teaching and learning. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, participants will be interviewed separately. Participants will be required to observe all Covid-19 regulations; above all, wearing a face mask, keeping

a 2m social distance and a well-ventilated room will be mandatory for the interview process to commence.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will make use of pseudonyms. All participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time without any harm. Participants are also at liberty not to answer questions they are not comfortable with. In an event that a participant withdraws, data collected from that specific participant will be destroyed. During the course of the study, I will assume the role of a Researcher; participants are welcome to share anything regarding the study with me as the Researcher. Participating in this study is voluntary; therefore, no participant will be remunerated or reimbursed for taking part in the study. However, principals and teachers may benefit knowledge of how to maintain learner discipline successfully and lawfully at schools.

Member checking will be conducted in order to ensure that the correct data is collected and correctly interpreted. Participants will have access to data they have provided only. The supervisor of the study will have access to everything regarding the study including data collected from all participants. Please feel free to contact any of the stakeholders of the study listed below should you have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

Yours sincerely

Student: RI Tshimilandou

Signature: _____

Student number: 18215506

Mobile number: 072 601 8496

Email address: rembu.israel@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Sebidi SD

Signature: _____

Email address: sebidi.sd@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Dr Nthontho M

Signature: _____

Email address:

Appendix D: Letter of informed consent for principals and teachers



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

P.O.BOX 907
FONDWE
0969
22 October 2021

Mr/Mrs./Dr/Prof.....

Dear Sir/Madam

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I Rembuluwani Israel Tshimilandou a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree, hereby kindly apply for permission to include you as a participant in the study titled “The management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province” to be conducted at your school. The purpose of this study is to understand the contribution of learner bad behaviour to learner academic performance and how learner discipline can be maintained lawfully and successfully to the benefit of both teachers and learners at secondary schools of Mvudi circuit in Vhembe East District of Limpopo province.

I kindly invite you to take part in this study as a participant in the face-to-face semi structured interview process. Participation in the study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. You are required to adhere to covid-19 regulations at all times and most importantly wear a face mask and maintain social distance during the process of the interview. The interview will be held at the time and place that is suggested by the interviewee. The interview process will last for at least 30 minutes.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will make use of pseudonyms. This means your name will never be revealed anywhere in the study

Please note that all participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time without any harm. Participants are also at liberty not to answer questions they are

not comfortable with. In an event that a participant withdraws, data collected from that specific participant will be destroyed.

During the course of the study, I will assume the role of a researcher; participants are welcome to share anything regarding the study with me as the Researcher.

Participating in this study is voluntary; therefore, no participant will be remunerated or reimbursed for taking part in the study. However, principals and teachers may benefit knowledge of how to maintain learner discipline successfully and lawfully at schools.

Member checking will be conducted in order to ensure that the correct data is collected and correctly interpreted. Participants will have access to data they have provided only. The supervisor of the study will have access to everything regarding the study including data collected from all participants.

Bearing in mind that you have the right to reject this application, I am hoping that you will accept my application. In an event that my application is successful, I would kindly request you to sign the consent form in order to participate in the study.

Please feel free to contact any of the stakeholders of the study listed below should you have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

Yours sincerely

Student: RI Tshimilandou

Signature: _____

Student number: 18215506

Mobile number: 072 601 8496

Email address: rembu.israel@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Sebidi SD

Signature: _____

Email address: sebidi.sd@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Dr Nthontho M

Signature: _____

Email address:

Appendix E: Interview schedule for principals and teachers



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

School:		
Participant:		
Participant rank:		
Time:		
Date:		
Introduction: Good day. I Rembuluwani Israel Tshimilandou a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree. The topic of my study is “The management of learner discipline in secondary schools of Limpopo province. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. The interview will take 40 to 55 minutes and once again thank for offering your valuable time.		
No	Interview questions	Response
1.	Do you have disciplinary challenges in your school?	
2.	Do you think school discipline relates to school academic performance?	
3.	How can parents assist in addressing learner bad behaviour in your school?	
4.	What do you think can be an effective means of ensuring discipline in your school?	
5.	How is the academic performance of learners affected by learner’s bad behaviour?	
6.	Assuming that all learners adhere to school rules; do you think academic performance will improve?	
7.	Do you think teachers’ behaviour has a relationship with learner discipline in secondary schools?	
8.	How do you think human rights contribute to learner bad behaviour?	
9.	How can the community contribute to minimising bad behaviour in your school?	
10.	Do you think school code of conduct is effective in managing discipline in school?	
11.	Are means of maintaining discipline as per code of conduct used by the teachers effectively?	