



# **Considering an ethics of care in managing disciplinary problems at four Cape Town schools.**

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## **DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

Poor discipline is a perennial problem in most South African schools. On the one hand, there are several factors, both internal and external, that influence and affect the conduct of learners. On the other hand, schools are under continuous pressure to respond to and manage new types of disciplinary problems. Regular playground disagreements or truancy are accompanied by more worrying acts of violence and cyberbullying. Despite a plethora of post-apartheid policies, directed at managing classrooms through democratic practices, principals, teachers, and school governing body continue to struggle to maintain disciplined teaching and learning environments.

Since corporal punishment has been abolished, teachers and principals have struggled to develop long-term solutions to manage discipline effectively. Despite disciplinary policies that have been introduced to assist schools with poor disciplinary problems, teachers and principals have their own methods of managing discipline, and these tend to be short-term alternatives. It has been found that the policies recommended by the Western Cape Education Department and the Department of Basic Education have the potential to assist with disciplinary problems. However, teachers and principals lack the consistency in implementing these policies. Therefore, ethics of care has been introduced as a new approach to managing discipline so teachers and principals can eliminate general disciplinary problems.

This study examines how four schools in the Western Cape – two high schools and two primary schools manage and respond to learner disciplinary problems. This study sought insights into the types of disciplinary problems typically experienced at these four schools, how teachers and principals responded to and managed disciplinary problems, school-based policies on managing discipline, and how these are being implemented. This is done by adopting a qualitative and phenomenological paradigm. In an effort to look at alternative practices to those currently employed, in the four schools, I drew on Noddings' (2005) espousal of an ethic of care.

Noddings (2005) opines that caring is an encounter between two human beings. However, we cannot suggest that caring will accomplish everything that must be done in education, but it is a step in the right direction. An ethics of care requires teachers and principals to first listen attentively to learners, and trust will be established as time passes. In this way, learners will start to accept what teachers and principals try to teach. Thereafter, as teachers and principals engage actively with learners about their needs and experiences, they will gain important

information about the learners and better understand why certain learners tend to misbehave (Noddings, 2005).

The findings suggest that teachers at high and primary schools experience some form of poor discipline, and teachers try to devise different strategies to manage them, as the lack of discipline in schools impacts teaching and learning tremendously. Furthermore, the findings revealed that poor learner discipline worsens in high school. This could be due to several problems that they may be experiencing at home or in the community. Specifically, gangsterism and substance abuse which is later discussed in the literature review.

The study argues for an ethic of care as a new approach to managing poor discipline as it is clear that teachers are slowly becoming demotivated to teach effectively, and current strategies and approaches are not bringing about the changes, conducive to a functional schooling environment.

**Keywords:** Learner discipline; schools; disciplinary policies; ethics of care; South Africa

## OPSOMMING

Swak dissipline is 'n volgehoue probleem in die meeste Suid-Afrikaanse skole. Aan die eenkant is daar verskeie faktore, beide intern en ekstern, wat die bedrag van leerders beïnvloed. Aan die anderkant is skole deurlopend onder druk om op nuwe soorte dissiplinêre probleme te reageer en hulle te bestuur. Gereelde meningsverskille op speelgrond en stokkiesdraai gaan gepaard met meer kommerwekkende dade van geweld kuberafknouery. Ondanks 'n magdom postapartheidsbeleide wat gerig is op klaskamer bestuur deur demokratiese praktyke, sukkel skoolhoofde, onderwysers, en beheerliggame steeds om gedissiplineerde onderrig- en leeromgewings te handhaaf.

Sedert lyfstraf afgeskaf is, sukkel onderwysers en skoolhoofde om langtermynoplossings te ontwikkel om dissipline doeltreffend te bestuur. Ten spyte van dissiplinêre beleide wat ingestel is om skole met swak dissiplineprobleme by te staan, het onderwysers en skoolhoofde hul eie metodes om dissipline te bestuur, en dit is geneig om korttermynalternatiewe te wees. Daar is bevind dat die beleide wat deur die Wes-Kaapse Onderwysdepartement en die Departement van Basiese Onderwys aanbeveel word, die potensiaal het om met dissiplinêre te help. Onderwysers en skoolhoofde is egter nie konsekwent in hul implementering van hierdie beleide nie. Daarom is omgee-etiek ingestel as 'n nuwe benadering tot die bestuur van dissipline sodat onderwysers en skoolhoofde algemene dissiplinêre probleme kan uitskakel.

Hierdie studie ondersoek hoe vier skole in die Weskaap- twee hoërskole en twee laerskole leerders se dissiplinêre probleme bestuur en daarop reageer. Hierdie studie het insig gesoek in die tipe dissiplinêre probleme wat tipies by hierdie vier skole ervaar word, hoe onderwysers en skoolhoofde op dissiplineerde probleme gereageer het, skoolgebaseerde beleide oor die bestuur van dissipline en hoe dit geïmplementeer word. Dit is gedoen deur 'n kwalitatiewe en fenomenologiese paradigma. In 'n poging om na alternatiewe praktyke te kyk vir diegene wat tans in die vier skole werkzaam is, het ek geleun op Noddings (2005) se aanbeveling van 'n omgee-etiek.

Noddings (2005) is van mening dat omgee 'n ontmoeting is tussen twee mense is. Ons kan egter nie voorstel dat omgee alles sal bereik wat in die onderwys gedoen moet word nie, maar dit is 'n stap in die regte rigting. 'n Omgee-etiek vereis dat onderwysers en skoolhoofde eers aandagtig na leerder te luister, wat dan met verloop van tyd tot vertrouwe lei. Op hierdie manier sal leerders begin aanvaar wat onderwysers en skoolhoofde hulle prober leer. Daarna, terwyl onderwysers en skoolhoofde aktief met leerders in gesprek tree oor hul behoeftes en ervarings,



sal hulle belangrike inligting oor die leerders inwin en beter verstaan waarom sekere leerders geneig is tot wangedrag (Noddings, 2005).

Die bevindinge dui daarop dat onderwysers by hoërs- en laerskole een of ander vorm van swak dissipline ervaar. Onderwysers probeer dus verskillende strategieë bedink om dit te bestuur, aangesien die gebrek aan dissipline in skole onderrig en leer geweldig beïnvloed. Verder het die bevindinge aan die lig gebring dat swak leerderdissipline vererger in die hoërskool. Dit kan wees as gevolg van verskeie probleme wat hulle tuis of in die gemeenskap ervaar. Spesifiek, gangsterisme en dwelmmisbruik wat later in die literatuuroorsig bespreek word.

Die studie argumenteer vir 'n omgee-etiek as 'n nuwe benadering tot die bestuur van swak dissipline, aangesien dit duidelik is dat onderwysers stadigaan gedemotiveerd raak om effektief te onderrig. Dit is ook duidelik dat huidige strategieë en benaderings nie die veranderinge teweeg bring wat bevorderlik is vir 'n funksionele skoolomgewing nie.

**Trefwoorde:** leerderdissipline; skole; gedissiplinêre beleide; omgee-etiek; Suid-Afrika

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ATCP – Alternatives to corporal punishment

CAPS – Curriculum assessment policy statement

CCTV – closed circuit television

DBE – Department of Basic Education

DoE – Department of Education

FET – Further Education and Training

OBE – Outcomes-based education

NSSF – National school safety framework

RCL – representative council for learners

SACE – South African Council for Educators

SASA – South African Schools Act

SGB – school governing body

SMT – school management team

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States

WCED – Western Cape Education Department

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## **CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The issue of poor discipline among learners is not a new phenomenon in South African schools. This is a problem that most teachers will experience first-hand when stepping into the teaching profession. This has been a huge concern for years as teachers and school managers grapple to find ways to manage school discipline. Consequently, since corporal punishment has been abolished, managing poor discipline has become an enormous challenge for many educators and principals in South African schools.

The South African school system is characterised by several inequalities that are still rife among many schools (Christie, 2008). According to Christie (2008), patterns of inequality in education have remained the same despite the extensive policy changes and dedication to equalise schooling in democratic South Africa. While many historically advantaged schools have retained their well-resourced facilities and have been privileged enough to offer classes with low learner-teacher ratios, disadvantaged schools persist with large, unmanageable classes (Marais, 2016). Inequalities in South African schools do not only affect teaching and learning but also contribute to poor discipline. Internal factors such as infrastructure, learner-teacher ratios, shortage of teachers and the undersupply of resources creates huge problems for teaching and learning.

The Centre for education policy development (2017) states that a lack of resources and infrastructure aggravates a lack of classroom discipline. Unfortunately, it is the case that many South African schools identify with having overcrowded classrooms, due to a lack of infrastructure and a shortage of teaching staff (Marais 2016). These issues hold serious implications and challenges as larger classes are more prone to high noise levels, fighting and walking around without permission. As a result, very little time is being spent on teaching and more on attempting to control learners (Imtiaz 2014).

External factors play a huge role in how learners choose to behave at school. The way learners conduct themselves may reflect the problems happening at home or in their communities. Many times, the home environment is not conducive to the educational or social growth of the child. For example, high levels of poverty and employment can have an effect on whether learners

attend school regularly, or whether they are adequately prepared for schooling and learning. In turn, the support of the parents during this crucial time in the child's life is of utmost importance. However, parents are frequently absent in many households for several reasons, such as working far away or being required to sleep in households as domestic workers. This means that children are often left unattended or older children are expected to take care of younger siblings. These circumstances, state Letsoala, Maoto & Chuene (2018), often lead to dysfunctional home environments, which adversely affect learners at school. In addition to dysfunctional home environments, schools are also affected by the community and social environments of their learners. As Hendricks (2018) explains, schools cannot function in isolation from the effects, unemployment, and exposure to gangsterism and violence.

Unsurprisingly, children who live in dysfunctional homes and violence-infested communities struggle to see how they can succeed through education. Many times, the only reason they attend school is to receive the two meals per day provided through the feeding schemes (South African Market Insights, 2019). Although the study focuses on disadvantaged schools, it is important to note that poor discipline is not limited to these schools only. As Davids and Waghid (2016) note, historically advantaged or more affluent schools are not immune to the challenges of poor learner discipline. Disciplinary problems and challenges cut across socio-economic contexts, and manifest in different ways.

South Africa's transition to a democracy ushered in several new post-apartheid education policies and reform measures. In efforts to move as far away from the country's unequal, unjust and authoritarian past, key changes include the introduction of a new outcomes-based curriculum, the desegregation of schools, and to the interest of this study – the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools.

In terms of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b:10):

- No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner.
- any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault.

In replacing corporal punishment, the National Department of Basic Education has made policies and strategies available to manage the conduct of learners. These policies include 'Alternatives to corporal punishment' (DoBE, 2000); 'Signposts for safe schools' (South African Police Services and the Department of Education, 2002); 'Code for Professional

Ethics' (South African Council for Educators 2002) and Western Cape Education Department's safe school project (WCED 2003).

Not much is known about how teachers and school managers interpret and implement these disciplinary procedures at schools, or whether they find these policies useful. We do, however, know that disciplinary problems continue to present serious challenges at schools (Davids & Waghid, 2016) – as is abundantly evident in daily news reports. This study, therefore, is interested in how teachers and principals respond to and manage disciplinary problems whether current disciplinary processes are effective; and whether it might be worthwhile to consider an alternative approach, namely, an ethics of care.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Poor discipline among learners in South African schools is a major problem. The issue does not only affect teachers and whether they are able to teach without disruption, but also those learners, who are prevented from learning due to the actions of their peers.

The problem of poor learner discipline at schools comes down to the fact that it affects valuable teaching and learning that could have taken place. Although the teacher intends to complete the syllabus within a certain time, it often becomes impossible because time must also be set aside to deal with disciplinary matters. Poor learner discipline adds to the stress of managing big classes and affects teacher morale, resulting in high absenteeism among teachers or even teachers leaving the profession (Alhija, 2015; Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Jacobs & Richardson, 2016). Since corporal punishment has been abolished, teachers typically feel defenceless as they struggle to find alternatives to discipline learners. Little is known about what teachers do in practise, how they respond, manage, and implement disciplinary procedures. Even less is known about the possibilities of looking at disciplinary processes and procedures which are not punitive, but instead, seek to pay renewed attention to why learners misbehave in the first place and how teachers might respond better by adopting an ethics of care.

## **1.3 RATIONALE/MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

I am a new teacher, and I have taught at a private school in a disadvantaged community and at a public school that serves children from disadvantaged communities. The problems that I have encountered are very similar: high learner-teacher ratios exceeding 50 learners in a classroom; a shortage of classrooms available to accommodate all classes; a lack of resources which leads to three or four learners sharing a single textbook and insufficient writing books for learner,



because they have not been delivered yet. During my short career span, I have witnessed several teachers leaving the profession due to losing their morale, and unfortunately, I have followed the same path. One feels unsettled when entering these unruly classrooms as learners lack of discipline changes each day, and there are no proper strategies in place to help manage it effectively.

My interest in this study sparked when I realised that as teachers, we continuously take time out of our busy schedules to attend workshops and training programmes, offered by the education department. We spend our time taking notes on how to manage poor discipline in our classrooms. But these programmes do not take efficient account of the contextual factors which influence our teaching and our learners' behaviour. The programmes also do not consider the high teacher-learner ratios at historically disadvantaged schools, or the lack of parental involvement and support. Hence, despite attending workshops and training programmes, we continue to struggle with the same issues of poor learner discipline. Many teachers believe that poor learner conduct persists because of the abolishment of corporal punishment. In fact, some continue to use it, with the knowledge of principals and parents. They believe that corporal punishment is the only language which unruly learners understand. But we know that corporal punishment is a form of violence and should have no place in schools or in the lives of children. Hence, the interest of this study.

## **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives of this study were:

- To explore some of the disciplinary problems that schools typically encounter
- To understand how teachers respond to and manage discipline in their classrooms
- To establish whether alternatives to corporal punishment policies are implemented and are of benefit to the schools, and
- To consider how care ethics might assist schools in responding to disciplinary problems.

## **1.5 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS**

The main research question is:

How might an ethics of care influence the management of disciplinary problems in four Cape Town schools?

The main research question is supported by the following sub-research questions:

- What kinds of disciplinary problems do schools typically encounter?
- How do teachers respond to and manage learners with disciplinary problems? What school-based policies are in place?
- How are the alternatives to corporal punishment implemented, and are these policies of benefit to the schools?
- How would the use of an ethics of care assist teachers and principals with disciplinary problems?

## **1.6 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

The community in which the research takes place is culturally diverse. Delft was established in 1989 for ‘coloured’ and ‘black’ people in the Western Cape with low or no income (Waggie, 2008). According to Waggie (2008), what is important to note in this area is that many people earn a living through informal businesses, such as selling vegetables on the street, and many residents are unemployed. The education levels of the population in this area are shocking. According to the South African Census (2001), a mere 52% of the population finished secondary school, and only 1.2% had some form of higher education.

According to Waggie (2008), the area of Delft has eight primary and four high schools. However, these statistics have increased over the years. At the time of conducting this research, Delft has seventeen primary schools and ten high schools. Many of the children who reside in this community attend the schools in Delft, as it makes travelling easy and less expensive as they can walk to schools. Statistics show that most children go to school on foot or public transport, and very few travel by car with their parents (Waggie, 2008).

The community of Delft has several organisations that help deliver social and health services. These include Arts and crafts clubs, a wellness centre, and the Delft community centre. The area of Delft has several recreational services and facilities, such as sports grounds, peace parks, a library, and a public swimming pool. (Waggie, 2008).

This study included two primary and two high schools in Delft, Cape Town. I have chosen both primary and high schools for my research to understand what disciplinary problems they typically encounter at each level, and to distinguish whether their response to managing disciplinary problems are different or the same. Issues such as unemployment, gangsterism, broken families, child abuse, slum housing, and illiteracy is cause for concern and is deemed

serious factors in this community (Waggie, 2008). The efforts to reduce poverty and crime in Delft is a huge problem as poor educational levels, under resourced schools, low-income distribution, and low skills base are circumstances that this community is known for. Findings reveal that most households live in low-cost houses where the quality, size, and location is problematic and impacts the livelihood of the residents dramatically (Waggie, 2008).

## **1.7 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

The selected participants were teachers, the school principal, and a school governing body (SGB) parent member. The reason why these participants have been chosen is because they play an essential role in managing discipline. Teachers play the biggest role in managing discipline within the classroom. The school principal is responsible for maintaining discipline in the school environment and to ensure that the day-to-day activities run smoothly. The SGB is responsible for all school-based policies, except the curriculum. This includes the learner code of conduct and disciplinary processes and procedures. As Mestry and Khumalo (2012) point out, the SGB must ensure that the correct procedures are put in place should measures be taken against ill-disciplined learners.

The purposive sampling technique was used, which is the deliberate choice of participants due to the person's qualities (Etikan, 2016). The following criteria were considered when constituting the sample.

- Length of service: The study will include both novice (1-3 years) and experienced teachers (more than 10 years)
- Gender: The study included a cross-section of gender identities and SGB members: parent representatives.

At the primary schools, two teachers from the foundation phase (grades R-3), two teachers from the intermediate phase (grades 4-7), the principal and one SGB member per school were interviewed. At the high schools, two senior phase teachers (Grades 8 & 9), two FET phase teachers (grades 10-12), the principal and one SGB member per school were included. In total, the research sample consisted of four principals, four SGB members and 16 teachers (8 primary and 8 high school). The sample range- of the foundation to the FET phase gave a broad picture of the types of discipline procedures and processes typically encountered and practised at these primary and high schools.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This study took the form of a qualitative research design. Durrheim (2006) states that qualitative researchers collect primary data in written and spoken form and analyse it through thematic analysis.

The paradigm that was used is phenomenology. According to Qutoshi (2018), a phenomenology study is a form of qualitative research that looks very closely at phenomena to explore the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who lived it. According to Lester (1999), this approach is based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and emphasises the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. Phenomenology is powerful for understanding experiences and gaining insights into people's motivations and actions (Lester 1999). This paradigm aims to shed light on poor discipline in South African schools and how the phenomenon of poor learner discipline is managed by teachers, principals, and members of the SGB.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODS**

The study relied on a combination of interviews, observations and the analysis of school-based disciplinary policies. Structured interviews were conducted with four parent SGB members, the four principals and sixteen teachers. Structured interviews can be defined as being fully controlled by the interviewer, giving the interviewee little space to be flexible (Stuckey, 2013). This type of interview expects short and straight forward answers from the interviewees. Adhabi and Anozzi (2017) clarify that the sequence of the questions must be adhered to, and the researcher should not suggest an answer on behalf of the interviewee.

According to Kawulich (2015), observation is used in the social sciences to collect data about people, processes, and cultures. This form of data collection helped with documenting and gaining more insights into what happens daily in the educational setting – how learners conduct themselves and how teachers respond to problematic behaviour. The plan was to observe learner punctuality regarding arriving at school and class, learner conduct during break times, and whether learners are in class when they are supposed to be. Observations were limited to the school domain and not the classroom, as it was likely that learners would not conduct themselves as they typically would in my presence. The intention was to observe learners' access to school and the classroom from a distance to limit any disturbances my presence may cause.

In terms of policy, in line with SACE, schools are required to have a code of conduct for the learners and policies guiding disciplinary processes and procedures. Having policies at schools and institutions ensures that the correct action is administered consistently to any learner who misbehaves or contravenes rules. Disciplinary policies are established to guard children's rights and ensure they are protected and, most importantly, dealt with fairly. Apart from the school code of conduct, schools should also be in possession of policies such as attendance policy, bullying policy, cell phone policy, dress code policy, and search and seizure policy. In addition to the awareness of the alternatives to corporal punishment, I am interested in whether schools have school-based policies in place, and how they are implemented.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Gregory (2003), ethics is closely linked to morals and involves embracing moral issues when working closely with other human beings. This means that we must consider the human rights of the people involved in the study and be aware that the permission and consent of the participants are of utmost importance. Therefore, in terms of ethical clearance, the four schools that formed part of the study were approached, and the principal and the chairperson of the SGB were asked for their consent to conduct research at their school. Once consent from each school was received, I applied for approval from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). After that I applied for formal ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University to start the research process. During the research process, consideration and care were exercised to protect the four schools' anonymity and the participants' confidentiality

## **1.10 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

This study covers six chapters to be demarcated as follows:

**Chapter one** provides the background and rationale of the study, the research problem, objectives, main and sub-research questions as well as a description of the research context and participants, and the research methodology, and ethical considerations.

**Chapter two** focuses on the discipline management in schools across South Africa and other parts of the world. It provides an in-depth review of the existing literature on school-based discipline and covers several sections that help readers understand the concept of discipline in different contexts. The chapter also discusses the factors that contribute to poor discipline in schools, the impact of inequalities in South Africa on learners, global approaches to managing

discipline, relevant policies and laws, and the role of school governing bodies in maintaining high standards of discipline.

**Chapter three** outlines the research design (qualitative study), the paradigm (phenomenology), and the research methods explored to investigate how schools manage discipline in four Cape Town public schools. The school context will be described with a specific focus on the socio-economic factors that the schools experience and other factors such as high learner-teacher ratios, extra-mural activities, school facilities, and parental involvement. This chapter includes a discussion on the research participants and how they were chosen, the credibility and the validity of the collected data, and ethical clearance.

**Chapter four** presents the research findings derived from a detailed study conducted in four schools in Cape Town, focusing on the management and response to disciplinary problems. The findings are organised into key themes.

**Chapter five** analyses the data presented in Chapter 4, using the same themes by comparing and contrasting existing literature on poor discipline in South African public schools as discussed in Chapter 2, through a phenomenological lens as discussed in Chapter 3.

**Chapter six** provides a summary of main findings, implications for schools and policy and offered, as well as recommendations for further studies.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the discipline management in schools across South Africa and other parts of the world. It provides an in-depth review of the existing literature on school-based discipline and covers several sections that help readers understand the concept of discipline in different contexts. The chapter also discusses the factors that contribute to poor discipline in schools, the impact of inequalities in South Africa on learners, global approaches to managing discipline, relevant policies and laws, and the role of school governing bodies in maintaining high standards of discipline.

### **2.2 CONCEPTIONS OF DISCIPLINE**

Apart from the context of schools, the term discipline is also recognised in other contexts. According to (Wouters (2018), when one behaves with discipline, one follows instructions and obeys authority to a high standard. Thus, it can be said that discipline is commonly present where a distinct chain of authority exists (Wouters 2018). These contexts generally exist in the church and the military. Adams (2000) stated that in the military, instantaneous obedience to commands and precision of movement in response to signals are essential. Another form of discipline is academic discipline, which Krishnan (2009) defines as those who have been disciplined by their discipline. This means how an individual portrays him/herself reflects the knowledge they possess.

The concept of discipline can be taken back to the early seventeenth century when the ideal figure of a soldier was seen to be the exact definition of the word discipline. According to Foucault (1975), a soldier could be recognised from afar as he portrayed signs of discipline, and how he manifested himself by showing great strength and courage. His bodily movements and attitude towards citizens were of respect and honour. Soldiers, display discipline by holding their heads up high, standing upright, and looking at whoever they encounter straight in the eye when being addressed. These are the habits they are taught and acquire in the force.

Foucault (1975) also suggested that discipline requires enclosure. Drawing on Bentham's architecture of the panopticon, Foucault (1977) introduced the idea of panopticism as a form of surveillance in prisons through which authorities observe inmates' behaviour. It requires a space that is diverse in characters, closed in upon itself, and where there is a lack of variety but has an abundance of repetition and routines in place. While Foucault (1977) had in mind prisons

when he wrote about panopticism, it is easy to see the correlation with school buildings in South Africa and elsewhere. Schools are often constructed so learners are contained around a quad, allowing for easy observation or surveillance by the principals and teachers.

According to Adams (2000), discipline can be described as individuals conducting themselves in a certain manner to suit the ideas and standards of a master, leader, or teacher. Over the years in schools, the concept of discipline has been associated with “school violence”, “school crime”, “culture of youth violence”, and “systematic violence” (Adams, 2000).

Bagley (1914) explains that the term discipline is more closely related to “disciple”. Rossouw (2003), confers, referring to the term discipline as “disciple” or “fellowship”. A disciple is someone that learns all the teaching of someone else. Thus, we can say that since disciple is a term derived from the word discipline, it means that in the context of schools, it is the responsibility of the teachers to provide learners with the skills necessary to act as an effective disciple of God (Fowler, Van Brummelen & Van Dyk 1993). Teachers at school must guide learners to be disciplined by being disciplined themselves. They must portray values that they expect to see from learners because in essence teachers should be role models and learners should look up to them. Hence, being disciplined means that one is a follower of good behaviour. It is important to note and understand that children are human beings developing towards maturity. It is natural for a child to behave in ways that might not be suitable in certain contexts because they are still learning to understand the ways of the world.

Termitayo, Nayaya, and Lukman (2013) defined discipline as the limitations on an individual or group. According to Termitayo et al. (2013), in society and all contexts thereof, and procedures force one to practice restraint and to be disciplined accordingly. For example, in school, learners cannot behave in any way they choose. Some rules and regulations should be followed as school discipline is important for daily proceedings to run smoothly. It is considered the responsibility of the learners to ensure that they behave according to the rules of the school, just as they would act according to the rules of the church. Joseph (2010) posits that self-discipline is when an individual can accept rules and regulations that are put in place for guidance and willingly acts in accordance. In turn, Termitayo et al. (2013), maintained that discipline aims ensure that all individuals are well-adjusted, happy, and can contribute effectively to society.

In schools, discipline is also associated with the concept of *loco parentis* – “Teachers are expected to act in the place of the parent” (Nolte, 1980; Segalo & Rumbuda. 2018). Implicit in



this understanding is that teachers and schools are entrusted with the well-being of learners, which includes the authority to ensure that learners behave and conduct themselves per societal and social norms. The thinking is that schools fulfil regulating roles so that all learners adhere to a shared code of conduct, thereby preparing them for societal and social functions. In all public schools in South Africa, learners are required to wear uniforms. Here, again, the idea is that if all learners are dressed in the same way, they will also act in the same way. For this reason, contravention of uniform rules is viewed as a disciplinary offence.

## **2.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING POOR DISCIPLINE**

### **2.3.1 PARENTAL AND FAMILIAL INFLUENCE**

Poor learner discipline in schools is a problem that teachers and principals constantly face. It is an issue that affects both teachers and learners, as teachers become stressed, and learners miss out on valuable teaching and learning time (Makhasane & Chikoko, 2016; Mthanti & Mncube, 2014). It is important to note that the poor discipline that is being experienced in schools do not occur for no reason. Disciplinary problems emanate from several sources. They may be within the school, the parents, the teachers, and even society (Mwamwenda, 1989). One of the most influential factors that contribute to learners' misbehaving at school is family-related factors (Sibanda, 2021).

Learners observe parents displaying violent behaviour in their homes and the community and they tend to replicate this type of misconduct at school (Rayment, 2006). In this way, destructive or violent behaviour is seen as a norm, rather than an exception. According to Marais and Meier (2010), adults in the household should be role models to minors (children). Once a child is exposed to violence and poor display of values, they bring these experiences with them to school.

According to Kiprop and Chepkilot (2011), there is a relationship between family disciplinary practices and children's problematic behaviours at school. Ali et al. (2012), contend that education begins at home, where parents practice acceptable behavioural patterns at an early age as it becomes very difficult to change later. Children who grow up in low socio-economic surroundings where the household is overcrowded and sustainable income scarce tend to alienate themselves from school (Ali et al., 2012). Similarly, Jensen (2009) contends that learners who experience emotional and social challenges at home may display behaviour that can be seen as acting out during the school day. This could be because they cannot properly

express their feelings about their home situation. Mckenzie (2019) holds that these learners may have poor impulse control and tend to get impatient easily. Learners experience a wide range of difficulties outside of school, and this largely affects how they adjust in school. This allows for them to become emotionally and socially unbalanced and drives them to develop other unhealthy behaviours (Anyamene et al., 2019).

To Mckenzie (2019) a lack of parental support and involvement plays a key role in learners' behaviour and attitude in the classroom. When parents are disinterested in teacher-parent meetings or extra-curricular programmes, learners' motivation to achieve or actively participate in school life decreases. Their behaviour might also be aggravated by the fact that they know their parents will not necessarily respond to a teachers' request to come to school to discuss any poor behaviour (Mckenzie 2019). According to Pretorius (2020), poverty and inequality negatively affects education. He argues that learners who are poverty stricken tend to be aggressive and have less interest in learning. Thus, such learners often show their frustration by bullying and assaulting others. At times, as Jensen (2009) observes, it is not parental disinterest which is the problem, but rather poverty and circumstances, which prevents parents from actively participating in their children's education. Jensen (2009) highlights that children raised in poverty may not have been taught basic values such as being polite or gracious, and as a result, they lack certain social skills and abilities, which are often interpreted as unacceptable or problematic behaviour. Additionally, learners tend not to do homework or complete tasks because they believe they are inadequate. Research supports the notion that families are responsible for unwanted behaviours occurring at school (Porter, 2007; Edwards, 2007 & Dagh & Baysel, 2010). With this understanding in mind, it becomes important to note that when a learner misbehaves, the educator must try to identify the causes to understand where it comes from (Obadire & Sinthunule, 2021).

Wolhuter and Oosthuizen (2003) maintain that a lack of parental involvement in the lives of children in South Africa affects them tremendously and is a huge cause for concern when it comes to disciplinary problems at school. When parents are not involved in the academic and social lives of the learners, they seek love and attention from unsuitable experiences, which leads to poor discipline and can cause devastating consequences (Ndamani, 2008), such as learners getting involved in drugs, alcohol, and gang activities. Ndamani (2008) states that parents often perceive their role as secondary or external to that of the school, and that the school should be the primary source of disciplining their children. Landsberg and Nel (2005) maintain that there is a gap between the two parties (parents and the school), and because

parents do not react effectively towards disciplinary problems arising at school, the problem will unfortunately persist.

Both teachers and parents greatly influence the education of learners. Even though the knowledge that the child receives has to be proven by themselves, parents and teachers play a crucial role in shaping the child's education. Recent studies show that parents must put in more effort in educating their children at home as well (Cox 2019, Menheere & Hogge, 2010). This has made a parent-teacher relationship more important than ever before. Both parties being involved in educating the child matters for the achievement, motivation, and well-being of the child in school. Parental involvement can play a significant role in determining the learners' success and it is the factor affecting learner achievement the most (Munje & Mncube, 2018).

Schools must consider the socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions when considering parental involvement for some learners. South Africa has one of the most unequal societies in the world, and therefore, no child or household can be the same. It is unfair to expect the same results from all learners and parents. For instance, poverty-stricken areas often rely on social grants, and generating income for such families is more important than participating in education responsibilities. These parents put educating their children in the hands of the teacher alone. The situation is even more severe in townships, argue Luxomo and Motala (2012), as parents have low literacy levels, and reading in the household is not a tradition everybody follows. They lack the necessary resources to do so, and parents are so preoccupied with surviving that there is no time to be involved or help improve their children's academic skills or behavioural problems.

### **2.3.2 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE**

Kiprop (2012) posits that poor discipline cannot be separated from society, as society plays a role in shaping the behaviour of individuals living within it. Dasar (2019) supports this view and argues that a disciplined society fosters disciplined individuals. Sarumi and Okoji (2010) report that in Nigerian society, for example, numerous cases of indiscipline affect learners in schools, including substance abuse, broken homes, and society with moral decay, all of which can be seen as the main causes of indiscipline. Sarumi and Okoji (2010) cites a case where a teacher accepted gifts from learners in exchange for passing grades. As teachers have a significant influence on students, such actions can lead learners to believe that bribery is acceptable for success. This can result in a cycle where learners expect to bribe their way through life.

Similarly, Macmus (2009) notes that a lack of discipline from parents, teachers, and school administrators can contribute to delinquent behaviour among students. To Madziyine (2010), when parents or teachers act inappropriately, like fighting, stealing, or swearing in front of students, they set a negative example and send the wrong message. This can lead to indiscipline in society as students may follow these bad examples. Homes are certainly not the only places where learners are exposed to questionable and potentially damaging behaviour. Children often take their cues from community and political leaders.

According to Stewart (2004), for example, community leaders and heroes in Australia set poor examples for school-going children to emulate. These leaders engage in unethical activities and abuse codes of practice, providing negative examples of humanity. Furthermore, learners are often exposed to politicians and church leaders who display unethical behaviour. Children tend to follow the examples these role models set, even when wrong. As a result, some learners may view the behaviour exhibited by leaders in the country as the correct way to behave, leading them to adopt these behaviours as normative (Stewart, 2004).

When learners live in areas and communities where they are exposed to gang-related activities, conflicts, and other forms of violence they often take these practices into their schools. And, since poverty is associated with unemployment, children seek their means of survival. This may be through selling alcohol and drugs, and it may be that they get involved in gangs where they are offered money in exchange for protection (Benjamin, 2011). Consequently, this type of violent behaviour finds its way into schools. Considering that school is where they spend most of their time, it is undeniable that learners would create this opportunity to engage in these illegalities.

According to De Wet (2003), other factors that create possibilities for disruptive behaviour in South African schools include poor housing and medical services, the availability of firearms, poor police patrol, and unemployment. Children who feel rejected at home usually seek a sense of belonging elsewhere by getting involved in gangs in the community (Edwards, 2000). The value attached to being part of a gang, is that it shows you love and care in the way they do, and it makes them feel like they would do anything in return to show their appreciation. However, this has major implications for how they portray themselves at school because of what they do outside in the community. In schools, learners tend to be easily influenced by peer pressure as a way of fitting into a certain crowd. When they recognise that other learners

and teachers do not easily recognise their presence, they misbehave to be seen and meet their peers' expectations to be accepted (Gwala, 1991).

Johnson, Riis, and Noble (2016) contend that children living in poverty, coming from unsafe communities, unemployment, parental issues that affect them internally, and overcrowded households among other things, create all sorts of stressors and eventually result in poor academic performance and poor discipline. According to Jensen (2009) and Pretorius (2020), these learners are often absent from school, and struggle to focus on simple tasks in the classroom. When this happens, they disrupt the rest of the class, interfering with teaching and learning.

Bayat, Rena, and Louw (2016) posit that poor learners often perform worse academically in South African schools. This may be because of the poor quality of education that they receive compared to their wealthier peers (Spaull, 2011). Bayat et al. (2016) suggested that the difference between the poor learners and their wealthier peers may be factors such as socio-economic status, availability of resources, teacher quality, and even parental education. However, poverty and other factors like ethnicity greatly influence educational attainment (Bayat et al., 2016). According to Lee and Madyun (2009), learners growing up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are more likely to replicate the social factors of that community because it is considered a norm, and learners have minimal role models in that community to look up to do better in life. Lee and Madyun (2009) report that these learners tend to lag behind crime and poverty compared to peers in advantaged neighbourhoods. Due to South Africa's wide variety of complex development issues, learners' welfare is adversely affected as they are unable to reach their full potential because of various socio-economic concerns (Pretorius 2020).

### **2.3.3 SCHOOL INFLUENCE**

Stone and Han (2005) maintain that violence occurring in schools is an indicator of a bad school environment. This could also mean that the more school rules are broke, the more it will affect learners' behaviour and academic performance. According to Cotton (1996), the school climate refers to school size, class sizes, teacher characteristics, and school concentration when handling psychological problems. When a school has a positive school climate, it indicates that violence, bullying, and other forms of misconduct do not generally occur (Kostantina & Piliotis-Dimitris, 2010).

According to Harber (2004), schools in Canada failed to protect students from various factors that negatively impacted their academic performance and discipline. These include name-calling, racial hostility, and slurs. Harber (2004) points out that students in Canada were often subjected to low teacher expectations, which is supported by other studies. Bullying and sexual harassment are common occurrences in American schools, and teachers tend to overlook the violence that students face regularly (Harber, 2004). However, Harber (2004) believed teachers are more aware of these issues than students think.

To De Wet (2003), that poor discipline can be attributed to the school climate in South African schools. This includes factors such as inadequate role models, teachers' lack of professionalism, overcrowded classrooms, and the schools' physical appearance. This issue is confirmed by Oosthuizen and Van Staden (2007). A negative school climate, where the school is untidy, covered in graffiti, and unhygienic, makes it easier for conflicts to arise (Wolhuter, Lemmer & De Wet, 2007). De Wet (2003) points out that the infrastructure of schools in South Africa plays a significant role in learner frustration and violence. Violence can occur easily in large, overcrowded urban schools because learners have limited space to move around on school grounds.

According to West and Meier (2020), overcrowded classrooms indicate poor infrastructure, or it could be a sign of the school being understaffed. Overcrowded classrooms have neurobiological effects on learners, such as stress, hypertension, cognitive decline, and psychological problems (West & Meier, 2020). Thompson and Haskins (2014) believed that chaos and unpredictability in close environments such as overcrowded classrooms can cause stress. Continuous stress can cause the learner to avoid that specific class or teacher, meaning that the learner is bunking. It can also lead to aggression toward the subject or other learners in class leading to fights breaking out (West & Meier, 2020). Overcrowded classrooms are characterised by high noise levels and overstimulation, directly influencing learners' behaviour (West & Meier, 2020).

The poor appearance of a school itself also plays a role in demotivating learners to display themselves in a disciplined manner. If the school does not care about maintaining its building, learners may feel there is no reason for them to care about their appearance or to wear the correct school uniform daily (Marais & Meier, 2010).

Harber (2004) notes that in South Africa, dysfunctional schools experience high levels of violence; schools fail to operate at the most basic level; therefore, they contribute to violence

tremendously. This means that they allow violence to take place because they cannot provide the routine, support, and security necessary for young people to develop and grow. As opposed to this, even the schools that do function at the basic level, fail to address risk factors of violence, and they fail to provide learners with tools for resilience.

## **2.4 POOR LEARNERS DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS: GLOBAL GLANCE**

Indiscipline has been a major problem in schools for many years, according to Obadire and Sinthumule (2021). This issue is a cause for concern as it affects valuable teaching time and demotivates teachers to the point where they no longer want to remain in the profession (Belle, 2007 in Obadire, 2021). Simuforasa and Rosmary (2014) state that indiscipline is a problem that is recognised both nationally and internationally. Thlapi (2015) suggests that although the severity of incidents varies among schools, ranging from less serious to more severe forms of misconduct, it still requires serious attention. Disciplining learners is a considerable challenge for teachers and school principals, as they have to do so without violating the learners' rights. With the abolition of corporal punishment, teachers and principals seem to be struggling to maintain discipline in many schools (Obadire 2021). According to the Department of Education (2000), disciplining means guiding and helping learners to understand what is right and what is expected of them in schools and society. Learners can often be disrespectful, leading to disruptions during lessons that teachers have taken time to prepare. Additionally, they may use derogatory language at school and in its vicinity. Such poor behaviour can harm their academic achievements and may cause stress for teachers who struggle to complete the syllabus on time. According to Ntuli (2012), disciplinary issues exist in almost all schools, with varying severity.

Bisetty (2001) and Maphosa and Mammen (2011) share that, many reports of classroom indiscipline have been made in the United Kingdom. It has been reported that learners are generally noisy, rowdy, and disrespectful towards teachers. Wright and Keetly (2003, in Maphosa & Mammen 2011) state that this form of indiscipline has, unfortunately, led to a drop in educational standards for UK schools. In UK schools, indiscipline includes drug abuse, gangsterism, and shootings. However, most schools worldwide have adopted a zero-tolerance policy to indiscipline indicating that no form of indiscipline will be tolerated in any form (Thernstrom, 1991, in Maphosa & Mammen, 2011). Studies indicate that there are common cases of rape, sexual battery, robberies, physical attacks, and vandalism in American schools.

In turn, Maphosa and Mammen (2011) claim that indiscipline in Kenyan schools has reached unmanageable levels, resulting in regular destruction of property, violence, and substance abuse.

For Stewart (2004), the problem of maintaining discipline in Australian schools is a significant concern as it directly results in the resignation of teachers. He argues that teachers experience high stress levels due to the lack of discipline in schools, and consequently, they tend to leave the profession within three to four years of teaching. In addition, Stewart (2004) contends that teacher burnout is associated with such undisciplined environments as teachers spend much of their time dealing with disciplinary issues instead of focusing on teaching. This is particularly alarming since novice teachers, in their first year of teaching are seriously considering changing careers due to this issue.

In Nigerian schools, indiscipline typically involves stealing, truancy, lawlessness, disobedience, vandalism, examination malpractices, drug abuse, absenteeism, etc. (Obe & Nigwo, 1996; Adeniyi, 2008). Okiemute (2011) suggested that in Nigeria, the culture is to give utmost respect to elders, follow the rules with complete obedience, and adhere to societal norms. This culture has been passed down from generation to generation, as noted by Fowers (2008). However, teachers in Nigerian schools might face challenges when the societal norms contradict the school rules, which can cause culture shock among the students (Reyes, 2006; Day-Vines & Day-Harrison, 2005). Teachers in Nigerian schools believe that the increase in learners' misconduct is because school regulations are not based on cultural strategies for disciplining learners. Nigerian teachers also claim that they are not protected and authorised to be involved in disciplinary processes, which leaves them feeling helpless when they encounter discipline challenges within the classroom. Okiemute (2011) pointed out that teachers need to be empowered and given the necessary authority to handle disciplinary issues effectively.

According to Amale (2007) and Aja (2010), teachers in Nigerian schools have lost all respect for learners due to their disrespect towards teachers. Teachers are unable to handle certain situations involving indiscipline in schools. Both authors argue that children are the future of any nation and, therefore, crucial for the continuity of society. However, the problem of indiscipline has worsened, and it is now a major concern for teachers, policymakers, and the public.

In Australian schools, misbehaviour is defined as learners who are not paying attention in class, disrespecting other learners and teachers, not following school rules, and wearing inappropriate



clothing and jewellery (Stewart, 2004). Although bullying and violence are not considered significant issues, they are increasing in schools. According to Stewart (2004), the Federal Minister for Education is most concerned about the large number of graduate teachers who want to leave the profession within three to four years of teaching due to a lack of discipline among learners, leading to high levels of teacher stress. Stewart (2004) clarifies that, schools in Australia face the challenge of managing a rapidly changing youth culture that differs greatly from the work ethic culture in schools. Learners come to school with values that differ from those of their teachers. Stewart (2004) provides an example of teachers passionate about teaching and learning who often find it difficult to deal with students who get easily bored in the classroom. This leads to behavioural problems that are presented by students in the classroom and other school settings.

Gregory et al. (2010) contends that there is a similar concern in the United States and Europe, where violence, disciplinary infractions, and loss of school authority are on the rise and are becoming more and more evident in schools. According to the school survey on crime and safety (SSOCS) in the United States (US), various disciplinary problems occur at least once a week. This survey was conducted between 2019 and 2020. One of the most frequent forms of poor discipline in these schools was cyberbullying. Since the dawn of social media, it has been used in schools to harm other learners who form part of that specific school (Treurnich, 2014). This form of abuse can cause the victim/victims to succumb to stress-related issues and can lead to self-harm.

## **2.5 POOR LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

In South Africa, the impact of past inequalities on academic performance and behaviour in schools remains significant. According to a 2017 report by UNICEF, irregular attendance, teacher absenteeism, teenage pregnancy, and violence are major contributors to students' disrupted school careers. Nortjie (2017) suggests that these challenges arise from constant curriculum changes, lack of motivation from the community and families, and inadequate infrastructure and resources. The situation is particularly dire in rural schools where there is a shortage of teachers, poor infrastructure, and limited access to social services, as indicated by Agbor (2012).

In South Africa, there are many forms of violence in schools that are reported regularly. According to Harber and Mncube (2012), incidents such as bullying, taunting, ridicule, belittling, intimidation, and abusive and derogatory language are some common forms of

misbehaviour in South African schools. In addition to sexual, ethnic, and racial harassment, Harber and Mncube (2012) report that physical violence including vandalism, assaults, shooting, gang rape, stabbings, and corporal punishment takes place regularly in schools. Disruptive classroom behaviour is one of the most common forms of poor discipline, and it disrupts teaching and learning in schools every day (Harber & Mncube 2012).

According to Shaikhmag and Naidoo (2021), principals in the Northwest of South Africa point out that bullying, assault, and fighting are the most common types of misconduct in schools. In addition to this, Padayachee and Gcelu (2022) share those various problems, such as bullying, gangsterism, and violent crimes like murder, affect teachers and learners and make them feel unsafe. To Khumalo (2023), extreme incidents of violence in South African schools include weapon carrying, murder, homicide, and other extreme dehumanising behaviour. Khumalo (2023) stresses the scourge of alarming acts of violence being recognised in different media platforms (television, radio, newspapers, and social media) day in and day out. Daniel (2018) believes that violence in schools is a huge concern and poses great risks and dangers for both teachers and learners. It is unfortunate that what used to be typical playground bullying and tiffs, has now transformed and been replaced by drug use, drug dealing, stabbings, sexual assault, and gang-related activities on school property (Burton Leoschut 2013 in Khumalo, 2023).

In the Mthatha district in the Eastern Cape, reports Ngcukana (2009), indiscipline included alcohol abuse, both within the school and outside during excursions. In another incident in Mthatha, a learner disregarded the teachers' request to remove his hat in class. The learner took revenge by burning the teachers' car (Ngcukana & Booie, 2008). According to Joubert and Serakwane (2009), learners do not cooperate with teachers, and in return, they portray violent and aggressive behaviour, such as smoking and carrying dangerous weapons in schools.

In another incident, a teacher was beaten unconscious after confiscating a cell phone during an examination. Mgijima (2014) reports that in 2012, at a school in Kwazulu-Natal, a learner fatally stabbed another learner; at a school in New castle, a principal assaulted a teacher in front of several learners and other members of the staff; in Mpumalanga, a teacher used corporal punishment on a learner, causing the learner to be paralysed; and in Gauteng a learner killed another learner with a samurai sword and injured another three learners.

It is thus clear that in South Africa, violence in schools has been on the rise. Several incidents have been reported where the lives of learners and teachers were at risk or even lost. The South

African News (2018) reported that a learner allegedly stabbed a 24-year-old novice teacher to death in the Northwest. In Eldorado Park, Johannesburg, a 15-year-old learner was arrested for pointing a gun and threatening to shoot his teacher (News24 2018). Sobuwa (2022) reported that in the Free State, a Grade 11 learner was stabbed to death in an alleged gang-related feud. The reporter states that four learners died by the hands of other learners at the same school before that incident. In September 2022 at a high school in Gauteng, a Grade 11 learner was stabbed to death by another learner at that school (Sobuwa, 2022). In 2022 at a high school in Kwa-Zulu Natal a Grade 10 learner was also stabbed to death by a fellow learner (Sobuwa, 2022). This list of violence in South African schools clearly shows the level of poor discipline that learners portray in schools and exactly what type of danger teachers and principals find themselves in daily.

## **2.6 MANAGING SCHOOL-BASED DISCIPLINE: A GLOBAL GLANCE**

All schools across the world respond to poor discipline in very different ways. According to Kupchik and Green (2014), American schools are more focused on tightening security, and harsh rules are applied to manage discipline. Schools generally rely on their zero-tolerance policy, which mainly means to remove or eliminate disruptive learners to secure a safer environment for other learners (Ewing 2000). Kupchik, Green, and Mowen (2015) report that the zero-tolerance policy was initially used in the mid-1980s by the Drug Enforcement Agency to investigate and capture perpetrators of illegal shipping containers. Since the late 1980s, the US has increased its connections with formal justice agencies to increase harsh punishment practices in schools (Kupchik 2010). This, state Skiba et al. (2006), have led to higher suspension rates and arrests. In turn, more invasive methods, such as higher security measures, which include metal detectors and police officers on school property, among others, have been adopted to control student misbehaviour in the US (Kupchik & Monahan, 2006). In American schools, these measures are seen as crucial for the protection of learners as well as staff members (American Psychologist, 2008).

In the United Kingdom, according to Kupchik and Green (2014), the introduction of the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994 requires all public schools to exclude learners for no less than one year should they be found with a gun on school property. Schools in the UK later included other weapons in this policy such as knives and brass knuckles (Dunbar & Villaruel 2004). Insley (2001) state that destruction of property, defiance of school authority, possession of

over-the-counter pain relievers, and classroom disruption were also added to this policy. Compared to the US, schools in England rely on policies that address student needs, limit punishment, and restore teacher authority. Kupchik and Green (2014) believe that these policies are habitual to maximise restoration and to minimise the exclusion of students as the main aim of managing discipline in their schools, unlike in the US where suspension rates are high which is a major consequence and can lead to these learners being left behind. The UK Education Department (2011) argues that exclusions for disrupted learner behaviour and violence do not solve the problem of poor discipline in classrooms and schools.

Fabelo (2011) reports that in the US, learners who are constantly in a position of suspension and arrest may be at risk of dropping out of school, or even worse, being involved in criminal activities. Arum and Velez (2012) hold that although school rules should be firm punitive punishments for children may have negative consequences. Despite this, restorative justice in the United Kingdom aims to use a 'no blame' to learner offenders and focuses on getting the learner back into the school system (Kupchik & Green 2014). According to Kupchik and Green (2014), UK schools make use of circle time, peer mediation, and restorative conferencing intervention methods. Schools prefer to stay clear of making learners feel excluded from schooling. Kupchik and Green (2014) state that in the UK, schools focus on preventing bad behaviour through conflict resolution education and more informal interventions.

According to the UK Department of Education (2012), all schools, including special needs schools, are advised on best practices that can be used to avoid and manage poor discipline in schools. These include guidelines for teachers and administrators, practising staying calm when placed with misbehaving learners, and using consistent and fair punishment among other things (Department of Education 2012). Schools try to reduce behavioural issues by focusing on the needs of learners, empowering teachers with the necessary skills to manage discipline, and limiting punishment (specifically not using exclusion). Taylor (2010) asserts that, UK schools have also begun to explore the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) to monitor learners' behaviour for their safety and well-being. Since exploring CCTV, Chadderton (2018) explains, a study was conducted in 2010 regarding school surveillance systems. The study suggests that students feel that using CCTV does not always ensure security. Some students felt a sense of fear, especially among disadvantaged young people.

Pane (2010) suggests that teachers in China use time-outs, office referrals, suspension, and expulsion to manage behaviours. However, these methods are rarely used because the Chinese

believe it is not the child who is the problem, but merely the teacher who has proven incompetent (Ning, 2018). According to Ning (2018), all schools in China forbid using physical punishment to manage poor discipline. Sun (2015) elaborates that, Chinese teachers believe in creating a classroom atmosphere that prevents poor behaviour and, very importantly, correcting it when it occurs. Sun (2015) also states that serious warning methods are quite popular in China. Chen and Frensch (2008) believed that teachers and learners generally work together to set goals for academic achievements, self-discipline, and norms to prevent aggressive school behaviours.

According to Stewart (2004), Australian schools are relatively safe however, they present behavioural problems associated with learners not paying attention in class, breach of school regulations, and bullying. Schools in Australia manage poor discipline similarly to other schools worldwide, using punitive measures like suspension or expulsion in the worst case-scenario (Stewart, 2004). They also control learners' behaviour by using detention, which has some restrictions and can only be applied during recess or after school. Although most schools will have detention over the weekend to reveal to parents that their child has misbehaved in school, there will be consequences for their actions (Stewart, 2004).

## **2.7 MANGING SCHOOL-BASED DISCIPLINE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **2.7.1 DURING APARTHEID**

Generally, corporal punishment is understood as a disciplining method where a supervising adult inflicts pain upon a child when unacceptable forms of behaviour are portrayed (Maree, 1999, 68; Andero & Stewart, 1996, 90). Naong (2007) shares that in corporal punishment, the teacher would use canes, paddles, yardsticks, belts, or any other object to hit various parts of the learners' body. The Society of Adolescent Medicine (2003) confirms that corporal punishment includes "hitting, slapping, spanking, pinching, shaking, shoving, or choking. Other forms of corporal punishment included painful body postures, excessive exercise drills, or prevention of going to the bathroom during school hours" (p.358) Humiliating children also played a huge role in corporal punishment and included in this are verbal abuse, ridicule, and isolation to make others laugh at your expense and make you feel embarrassed.

Before 1996, in South Africa, corporal punishment was typically used to keep order in the classroom and was relied on to ensure school discipline. It was an integral part of schooling in South Africa, which was well documented over the years (Motseke, 2020). According to

Morrell (2001), the introduction of apartheid and Bantu education was considered highly authoritarian. School principals and teachers had the right to inflict bodily pain or harm on a learner to discipline them. They had complete power to disrespect a learners' human dignity and bodily integrity. The authoritarian nature of the apartheid era, state Veriara and Power (2017), was engrained into South Africa's school system, and it reflected an environment of violence, hence why learners were fearful of misbehaving in schools.

Hiscox (1995) explain that corporal punishment was mainly used in "white" single-sex boys' schools and in generous amounts in other schools. Corporal punishment was, however, limited in single-sex girls' schools. In 1958, the introduction of Bantu education exposed "black" children to school beatings. However, says Morrell (2001), while "white" girls were spared beatings, "black" girls were not exempted from it. Studies indicate that corporal punishment in South African schools was administered equally to boys and girls. In English-speaking schools, it was commonly used on boys (Morrell, 2001). Afrikaner schools, in particular were extremely tough on all their learners and did not spare the rod on anyone (Holdstock, 1990). Kubeka (1994) reports that, according to teachers', discipline could not be maintained without corporal punishment as other methods required too much time that teachers did not have.

According to Newell (1972), the topic of corporal punishment was highly debated in the 1970s and 1980s among American psychologists. They believed corporal punishment negatively impacted the learners' emotions, self-esteem and academic performance. Psychologists argued that respect between teachers and learners was not possible if corporal punishment were to be maintained (Newell, 1972). However, teachers insisted discipline could not be maintained without it (Morrell, 2001). According to Morrell (2001), many teachers believed that when corporal punishment is administered justly, and for love, it is seen as necessary and right. Gilbert and Gilbert (2017) stated that in Australian schools, corporal punishment was acceptable for the right reason and if a learner was warned before administering corporal punishment. Deacon, Morrell, and Prinsloo (1999) found that many teachers did not believe corporal punishment was unpleasant or undesirable. They believed that not all beatings should be seen as corporal punishment. However, some teachers did not condone a variety of physical punishments such as malicious and cruel beatings, throwing learners with books or chalk, pulling hair, or pulling ears, and pinching, as this was highly unacceptable (Morrell, 2001).

As South Africa transitioned into a democracy in 1994, the enactment and establishment of human rights brought about the ending of corporal punishment, as South Africa's law court

saw it as a violation of a person's human rights. Banning corporal punishment in 1996 was a significant step towards creating a more respectful environment that values human dignity and bodily integrity, as noted by Veriara and Power (2017). As South Africa moved away from this system and towards a culture of human rights, the education system also changed. Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was introduced, encouraging participative learning forms. Morrel (2001) states that even after the abolishment of corporal punishment in 1997, newspapers still reported the use of it in schools, and some cases even resulted in hospitalisation.

Veriara and Power (2017) discovered that even though corporal punishment has been banned for many years in schools, there is still evidence that it is being used. This is because teachers lack support for the ban; they also do not know what alternative forms of discipline to use to replace corporal punishment. As a result, teachers feel disempowered by the ban because they have not been adequately trained about alternatives to corporal punishment. According to Chisholm (2007), alternatives to corporal punishment (ATCP) can be defined as disciplinary strategies that allow effective communication, respect, and positive exchanges among teachers and learners. Chisholm (2007) clarifies that the policy recommends disciplinary measures such as verbal warnings, detention, demerits, community work, and small physical tasks.

However, the introduction of ATCP in 2000 showed that indiscipline in schools continued to grow (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010). Mtsweni (2008), as well as Marais and Meier (2010) report that teachers have been further stressed out and demotivated due to the banning of corporal punishment. According to Moyo, Khewu, and Bayaga (2014), corporal punishment has been on the rise since the publication of the ATCP policy. Senosi (2006) in Moyo, Khewu and Bayaga (2014) maintain that the recommended measures were questionable. According to Wilson (2002) and Moyo, Khewu, and Bayaga (2014), teachers in South Africa expressed displeasure by stating that the ATCP is ineffective, inadequate, and a waste of time.

## **2.7.2 MANAGING SCHOOL-BASED DISCIPLINE IN DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA**

Disciplinary problems are a major concern and one of the main issues affecting schools in South Africa. Poor discipline not only affects the daily operations of a school but also plays a huge role in teacher demotivation. Thlapi (2015) states that there is a lack of discipline in schools, and it does affect the academic performance of learners as well as annual teacher turnover. In addition, recent studies suggest that overcrowded classrooms further impede the implementation of positive discipline and creates a challenging environment for teachers to

maintain order (Elkadi & Sharaf 2023). The effectiveness of teaching and learning is at risk as teachers are constantly interrupted by poor discipline in the classroom and the school. This happens because large classes tend to be unruly and rebellious due to learners being seated very close to one another allowing for no personal space which creates room for unwanted behaviour (Zondo, 2022).

According to Morrell (2001) because there are so many policies protecting the rights of learners, teachers and principals face an enormous number of challenges when managing disciplinary issues. Since abolishing corporal punishment, schools have been struggling to develop new solutions for disciplining learners while trying to manage the daily responsibility of running the school effectively. Adding to the complexity of managing discipline in South African schools is that teachers trained before the prohibition of corporal punishment, continue to believe that it is associated with learners being well disciplined. And although Motseke (2020) is correct that teachers may require ample training to change their perspectives and ideologies, this might still not be enough. As evident in numerous newspapers reports as well as complaints lodged by SACE, corporal punishment is rife in South African schools, and is also administered by newly qualified teachers and appointed principals.

Where efforts have been made to move away from corporal punishment, some teachers have resorted to several measures, such as yelling in anger, sarcasm, and swearing (Gorea et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 2005). These methods of managing discipline contribute to high levels of frustration and aggression among teachers and tend to be ineffective. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) found that the lack of discipline among learners in South African schools largely impacts the morale and competence of teachers, and as a result, they no longer teach with enthusiasm. In the past, behaviour theorists based their research on schools and classrooms and, since then, found that the environment has changed drastically. Padayachee and Gcelu (2022) are of the opinion that South African schools have no viable strategy to resolve indiscipline. This is because the limitations enforced by current legislation on children's rights, argue Segalo and Rambuda (2018), allow for feelings of helplessness among teachers as they simply do not know what to do anymore.

According to Elba (2012), alternative measures to managing discipline can be highly effective in South African schools. These could include detention programmes, denial of privileges, isolation, exclusion, and simply ignoring the learner. However, we must consider that our schools are placed in disadvantaged communities and do not have the necessary facilities to



implement these measures because they are already characterised by a lack of privileges (Kinsler, 2011; Van der Merwe et al., 2015).

Since most schools are unable to implement many of these forms of managing discipline, it has become increasingly unattractive to them, thus corporal punishment seems to be the only effective method of dealing with an issue at the specific moment it occurs. However, various policies, such as the South African Constitution, the National Education Policy Act (1996), and the South African Schools Act (1996) prohibit schools from using this technique to manage discipline.

The Department of Basic Education (2000) has therefore issued the “Alternatives to corporal punishment” policy which provides schools with non-violent methods of managing learners’ behaviour in schools as a whole. The policy recommends techniques such as having class rules where learners provide their input. It makes it more difficult for them to break the rules they set up. The policy helps teachers explore the idea of having meaningful relationships with learners, working consistently in the classroom, and providing stimulating content to the learner. Above all else, to maintain discipline teachers must always be well-prepared with their lessons (Department of Basic Education, 2000).

This specific policy that DoBE (2000) has established may take some time to fully implement. However, it does make provision for schools to produce well-rounded, well-disciplined young adults at the end of their school careers.

## **2.8 POLICIES AND LAWS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The dawn of 1994 brought about new changes as South Africa adopted a new democratic constitution that promised the right to dignity, equality, freedom, and security for all citizens. This meant that corporal punishment had to be outlawed as it went against everything that democracy stands for (DoE, 2000).

As such, various laws and policies have been enacted in South Africa to protect the rights of children in schools:

- The South African Constitution (1996:8) states “Everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane, or degrading way”.
- The National Education Policy Act (1996:6) states: “No person shall administer corporal punishment or subject a student to psychological or physical abuse at any educational institution”.

- According to the South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996:10) states: (1) “no person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner; (2) Any person who contravenes subsection 1 is guilty of an offence and liable of conviction to a sentence which could impose for assault”.
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also commits to ensuring that disciplined children shall be treated with humanity and dignity (Department of Education, 2000).

According to Davids (2016), since corporal punishment has been prohibited, the Department of Education has provided additional strategies to manage poor learner discipline. These include “Alternatives to corporal punishment” (DoBE, 2000), focussing on a more positive approach to managing discipline. This document contains different levels of disciplinary measures to be taken in South African schools. It provides schools with guidelines to alternatives for corporal punishment so that schools can minimise disciplinary problems. It includes things such as the teacher leading by example, being realistic, not shouting or threatening a learner and working towards restorative justice.

In turn, the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) was designed to guide the Department of Education and schools toward achieving safe, healthy, and violence-free learning environments (WCED Education Safety Management Safe Schools 2017).

Other policies and strategies include “Signposts for Safer Schools” (South African Police Services and the Department of Education 2000), the WCED’s Safe Schools Project (WCED, 2003); the “Walking Bus Project” has also been established, where parents and volunteers from the community walk groups of children to school and back home in the afternoon, to improve safety.

According to Joubert (2004), schools are obligated to implement the code of conduct, as designed by the SGB. The rules and consequences are clearly stated in this document and can be used as proof when a learner commits an offence. Learners and parents are obligated to read and sign the code of conduct at the start of each year to show their commitment and dedication to complying with the school rules.

## **2.9 THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY AND SCHOOL-BASED DISCIPLINE**

According to the South African Schools Act (no.84 of 1996), all public schools in South Africa must conduct elections to form SGBs (Motimele, Ramadiro & Vally, 2005).

The SASA (DoE, 1996) maintains that the SGB is established for the school's governance, thus ensuring there is control over the daily proceedings of the school. To ensure that this happens, the responsibility lies in creating, evaluating, and supervising policies that will guide school community members (Ramadiro & Salim, 2005).

The SASA (no.84 of 1996) provides SGBs of all public schools with the necessary guidelines on how to function correctly. As stated in section 20 of the SASA (no.84 of 1996), the SGB must act in schools' best interest specifically to ensure that all learners are provided with a quality education. The role and function of SGB are to maintain an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning to take place, hence they are instructed by the SASA (no.84 of 1996) to adopt a constitution, develop a mission statement of the school, adopt a code of conduct in addition to many other things which is inclusive of supporting the staff in the performance of their professional functions.

Members of the SGB, as specified in the SASA are democratically elected and constitute the principal and parents of learners at the specific school. Non-teaching staff members, educators, and learners in the senior phase of a school. Motimele et al. (2005) confirmed that the principal cannot randomly select learners. Instead, they should be voted for and elected by fellow school learners. This is seen as vital to cultivating schools as democratic sites, in which learners are encouraged to actively participate and contribute.

According to Joubert (2007), the (SGB) plays a huge role in establishing and maintaining school discipline. Section 8 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (no.84 of 1996) states that the SGB of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for learners. This document contains disciplinary rules for learners and is of utmost importance for maintaining school discipline. Disciplinary processes are implemented to ensure that each person involved in a transgression is treated fairly because the code of conduct reflects the principles of the South African Constitution (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). Importantly, the rules should be enforced and not only brought about when the learner transgresses. This should not be a hidden policy but should be regularly expressed to the learners, teachers and parents. However, for this to happen, contends Bray (2005) the school's governance must consist of members who are well-informed about the legalities of a code of conduct.

In terms of the SASA (DoE, 1996), the SGB can be considered as the schools' government. Their primary responsibility is to set policies and rules to govern the school and to make sure that their policies are implemented effectively. They are also responsible for decision-making regarding the admissions process, language policy, and religious policies. Motimele et al. (2005) clarify that the function of the SGB is to ensure that the school grounds are well looked after. They must determine the extra-mural curriculum and subject choices of the school. The SGB must ensure that resources are available at the school. According to Motimele et al. (2005), the SGB must ensure that services such as water, electricity, and rubbish removal are paid. However, the government will be held responsible if this is not within their means.

Mestry and Khumalo (2012) elaborate that both section 8 and section 20 of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) "makes it compulsory for all school governing bodies to develop a code of conduct for learners as it is mandatory for ensuring quality learning processes" (p.99). What is included in the code of conduct should reflect rules, regulations, and processes that will be followed should there be a need to discipline a learner (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). This will ensure that all learners are treated fairly and justly as highlighted in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). Nitsch, Baetz and Hughes (2005: 387) argue that the effectiveness of the code of conduct essentially lies in its enforcement. Therefore, Mestry and Khumalo (2012) maintain that although the purpose of the school governing body is to adopt the code of conduct and merely to delegate the day-to-day enforcement of the code of conduct, it is the responsibility of the disciplinary committee of the school (a subcommittee within the SGB) to ensure that the code of conduct is implemented and enforced consistently to the functionality of the school.

While the SGBs must design a code of conduct for learners, the principal and the SMT are required to constitute a disciplinary committee to oversee and manage poor discipline. The WCED (2007) states that the Constitution of South Africa should draw up a school code of conduct as it is the Constitution that sets out the values and rights of the citizens of the country. The school code of conduct entails what type of behaviour is acceptable, and the schools' reaction should misbehaviour occur. The code of conduct guides learners on how to behave at school and prepares them for the future, thus, developing their moral behaviour to act as responsible citizens of South Africa.

According to Ige (2019), the role of the disciplinary committee is to handle severe cases of indiscipline in schools. Their main aim is to execute disciplinary procedures on learners who

find themselves in a position of portraying behaviour contrary to the schools' regulations (Ige 2019). Ige (2019) affirmed that the disciplinary committee is responsible for involving the learner representative council and including other staff members to come up with measures that will help learners of the school avoid misbehaviour to create a shared understanding with the rest of the school.

Although the research aims to address indiscipline in four Cape Town schools by suggesting an ethics of care to assist teachers and principals with poor learner discipline, a clear gap still exists, and more research must be done on short term methods of dealing with a vast number of challenges that learners bring to school daily. The gap that I intend on closing is unfortunately a long-term solution but one that can be highly effective when done consistently. Thus, eliminating the use of punitive measures and implementing care ethics which will show learners that the school shows genuine interest in the well-being and future of their learners. For some learners, this might present a turning point in how they conduct themselves, that is, they might feel less inclined to be disruptive or disrespectful when faced with an ethics of care.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Discipline has its roots in the biblical concept of "disciple" or "fellowship", which means to follow (Rossouw, 2003). It is important to understand that children are human beings who are still in the process of developing and maturing. Although children may misbehave, our responsibility as adults is to guide them toward the right behaviour. Rossouw (2003) posits that education is about enabling children to become disciples. This means that if teachers and principals expect students to behave in a certain way, they must provide a framework for doing so. In the context of this study, the framework is to create democratic classrooms and school environments.

According to Davids (2018), the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) requires teachers to educate learners towards concepts of democratic citizenship education. These concepts include values and ethics such as respect, trust, inclusion, fairness, belonging and care. For learners to understand and acquire the skills to behave as democratic citizens, the teacher must be able to teach it through practical demonstrations, enactments, and engagements (Davids, 2018). By doing this, teachers would be demonstrating the principles of South Africa's Constitution in the classroom. Cultivating citizenship education in schools is important because it teaches learners to act justly, shape their own opinions and have a voice, whether in school or in society (Davids, 2018). It helps young people to resolve conflict without

the use of violence and to respect democracy and justice. It helps them to deal with life's challenges and to make positive contributions (Waghid & Davids, 2013). For this study, I would like to single out care ethics as a core democratic principle in cultivating more socially just and harmonious class settings and schools.

Tronto (2005) explains that care ethics or an ethics of care is shaped by the four ethical dimensions: attentiveness; responsibility; competence; and responsiveness. Regardless of the unequal relationship between the teacher and the learner, explains Noddings (2010) it is possible for both parties to contribute to the cultivation of caring. In their role as attentive, competent and responsive, and responsible teachers, they must be able to discern between the assumed needs of learners – often driven by the curriculum – and the expressed needs – which will only become apparent when the learner is listened to by the teacher, that is, when the learner feels cared-for (Noddings, 2012).

According to Noddings (2005) the simplest way to describe care is a connection or encounter between two human beings. Unfortunately, it is not enough for a teacher to claim that they care for a learner. The learner must recognise that they are being cared for and think of the teacher as caring towards them (Noddings, 2010). In other words, learners need to feel, and experience being cared for. However, as has been discussed earlier in the chapter, many factors contribute to poor learner discipline, which might hinder a teachers' capacity to show care. It could be, says Noddings (2010), that the class sizes are too big, perhaps teachers need more time apart from class time to interact and develop care towards students, or maybe the students' interest require more attention from the school).

Noddings (2010) asserts that establishing care ethics in schools will not answer all problems; it will not accomplish everything that must be done in education. However, it is a start and will lay the foundation for further pedagogical activity (Noddings, 2010). Students will accept what teachers are trying to teach when they realise, they can trust the teacher. When teachers choose to listen to students, they will gain an on-going relationship of care and trust (Noddings, 2010).

Another reason why care ethics is important and helps manage discipline is that when there is dialogue between teachers and students, they can learn about the working habits and interests of the students. In this way teachers can gain important information and ideas on planning lessons according to individuals' needs (Noddings, 2010). Noddings (1999) continues that teachers will become inspired to increase their competence when they realise how much more than a standard curriculum is needed to interest many students. By caring and listening to our

students we will notice that their interests are varied, and school topics often do not form part of it. However, as teachers, we should try to incorporate their interests into lessons so they can have meaning. This intrigues them and helps them to remember things said in the lessons more easily.

According to Noddings (2010) each participant plays an important role in a caring relationship. The carer (teacher) must be attentive to the expressed needs of learners, which necessarily depends on teachers knowing their learners and their circumstances. However, this does not mean that the teacher will always approve of the learners wants and needs, but that they consider it and respond accordingly. When students feel cared-for, explains Noddings (2010) they will either respond verbally or the teacher will be able to see in their actions and behaviour that they received the care that the teacher intended to give.

Care ethics, as a means of managing discipline is compelling, as it allows the teacher to discover the bigger problem and why the learner behaves the way he/she does. It also allows the learner to express to the teacher that there are indeed problems that he/she is experiencing. Here, it becomes important that teachers try to contain their frustration when learners misbehave in the classroom and try to imagine the home environment in which the child comes from every day. Perhaps they do not get the care and love they deserve from parents/guardians, and they find this at school by seeking attention in various ways. Noddings (2012) contends that when teachers are morally inclined and take the time to discuss social and moral issues in the classroom, they will create a climate of care and trust, and learners will then want to do the right thing and behave correctly.

According to Davids (2016), listening to disruptive learners instead of punishing them could help reduce school violence and ill-discipline. However, this may require teachers to take on additional responsibilities besides teaching, and some teachers may not know how to further assist the child after listening to their stories. Despite this, Davids (2016) argues that by listening to learners, teachers and principals are willing to participate in their stories, conveying that they are democratic citizens with strong ethical values. This means that teachers not only instruct learners on how to behave, but also show them how to behave in a certain way.

In sum, as argued by Tronto (2005) and Noddings (2012), care ethics is important for the cultivation of healthy social co-existence, because the overall well-being of the individual is taken into account. Caring for learners, explains Noddings (2012: 773), “is understood as a moral consequence of ethical behaviour” – that is, the capacity to be moved by the affective

conditions of learners. To Noddings (2012), care ethics do not expect teachers to sacrifice themselves; instead, caring is both self-serving and other serving. When teachers demonstrate care by listening and attending to the needs of learners, they cultivate a climate of care and trust, so that learners would want to do the right thing.

## **2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter focused on the dominant literature on learner indiscipline and highlighted that misbehaviour by learners is a significant challenge that teachers and principals face daily. It negatively impacts curriculum delivery and teachers' motivation also takes a hit. Learners exhibit poor discipline through a range of violent behaviours that disrupt the functioning of the school. The chapter also considered various responses to and management of poor learner discipline in various contexts – revealing not only different strategies, but also that schools continue to struggle despite a range of disciplinary measures. This was followed by a focused look at the South African context. The democratisation of schooling has included the prohibition of corporal punishment and the introduction of alternative strategies and school-based policies. However, poor learner discipline and violence in schools persist, raising serious questions and the need for different perspectives and options on how to manage learner discipline. This led to the introduction of the theoretical framework of this study, namely, an ethics of care. The following chapter provides an extensive overview of the research design and methodology.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the research design (qualitative study), the paradigm (phenomenology), and the research methods explored to investigate how schools manage discipline in four Cape Town public schools. The school context will be described with a specific focus on the socio-economic factors that the schools experience and other factors such as high learner-teacher ratios, extra-mural activities, school facilities, and parental involvement. This chapter includes a discussion on the research participants and how they were chosen, the credibility and the validity of the collected data, and ethical clearance.

A reminder to the readers, the following main and sub-research questions were used to guide the study:

Main research question and sub-questions:

How might an ethics of care influence the management of disciplinary problems in four Cape Town schools?

- What kinds of disciplinary problems do schools typically encounter?
- How do schools respond to and manage learners with disciplinary problems? What school-based policies are in place?
- How are the alternatives to corporal punishment implemented, and are these policies of benefit to the schools?
- How would the use of an ethics of care at schools assist teachers and principals with disciplinary problems?

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Schurink (2009) states that a research design is a researcher's plan for executing a particular study from identifying the topic to interpreting the results. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006), a research design is a strategic plan that serves as a bridge between the research questions and the implementation of the research. A research design can be compared to designing a building. Adequate plans must be in place, or the house will not be built effectively (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This study used a qualitative research design as it allowed for acquiring the different views from participants regarding how discipline is managed in public schools.

Creswell (2017) clarifies that there is a clear distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research makes use of words rather than numbers. It explores and understands how individuals or groups see a social or human problem (adapted from Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2017), quantitative research can be described as testing theories by examining the relationship among variables. The variables are typically measured using instruments so that data can be analysed using statistics. Ugwe and Val (2023) explain that qualitative research is a method of understanding ideas, opinions, and experiences of the phenomena in its natural environment from the people who have direct experiences. To Terre Blanche et al. (2006), the qualitative research design allows the researcher to study selected issues in depth as they try to understand the information from the data. The main goal of qualitative data collection is eventually to gather data for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis means locating, recognising, and interpreting themes and patterns from the collected data (Ugwe & Val, 2023). Importantly, when designing and executing a qualitative study, it should be treated as a process whereby the steps taken by the researcher are based on their assumptions of how the research question could be answered truthfully (Schurink, 2009).

### **3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006), research paradigms are systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. Paradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for the research and commit the researcher to particular data collection methods, observation, and interpretation (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Terre Blanche et al. (2006) continue that ontology refers to the nature of reality to be studied and what can be known about it. Epistemology is the relationship between the researcher and what can be known. Moreover, the methodology can be described as how the researcher goes about studying whatever they believe can be known.

I have chosen phenomenology as my research paradigm for this study, as it aims to comprehend and characterise a phenomenon's fundamental elements (Ugwe & Eze, 2023). This paradigm is used to understand how individuals perceive their experiences. Furthermore, the phenomenological paradigm is characterised by understanding groups' experiences and feelings. The researcher, Ugwe and Eze (2023), should put aside their preconceptions to be present in the moment, and the researcher must provide an unbiased account of the lived experiences before considering how well they fit with the phenomenon's pre-existing theories.

Moreover, says Lester (1999) a phenomenological research approach is designed to illuminate a specific phenomenon or concern that actors are experiencing in a certain situation. This approach is generally used to gather information and personal perceptions through methods such as interviews, discussions, and observations. The researcher is expected to present findings from the participants perspectives (Lester, 1999). According to Lester (1999), this approach is thus used to study the experiences from the perspectives of certain individuals. Phenomenology aims to understand personal feelings and opinions, gains insights into peoples' motivations and actions, and put aside worldly assumptions and conventional wisdom to focus on the information received from individual's lived experiences (Lester, 1999).

The phenomenological paradigm was thus best suited for my study as it allowed me to have face-to-face discussions with teachers, principals, and SGB parent members and gain insights into their experiences of poor learner discipline, and how they felt when they tried to manage it – thereby providing the study with rich data.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

According to MacDonald and Headlam (1993), research methods are tools used to collect data for a study. I employed three research methods for this study: structured interviews, observations, and policy analysis. I believe the methods I chose helped me further to understand the types of disciplinary problems that typically exist in primary and high schools, and how the school manages them.

#### **3.4.1 STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

Structured interviews were conducted with the four SGB members (one per school), the four principals, and sixteen teachers. Structured interviews, says Stuckey (2013), can be defined as being fully controlled by the interviewer, giving the interviewee little space to be flexible (Stuckey 2013). This type of interview expects short and straightforward answers from the interviewee. The sequence of the questions must be adhered to, and the researcher should not suggest an answer on behalf of the interviewee (Adhabi & Anози, 2017).

For the study, I decided to do structured interviews because they consist of the same questions in the same order for each participant, and in this way, the responses will be aggregated, and comparisons will be easier to make. Another reason for choosing structured interviews was, that since they consist of closed questions, potential errors will be limited (Rashidi, Begum,

Mokhtar & Pereira, 2014). This method was best suited because it helped me only get the most valuable responses for my particular study.

### **3.4.2 OBSERVATIONS**

According to Kawulich (2012), observation is used in the social sciences to collect data about people, processes, and cultures. Observations are valuable because one can monitor peoples' behaviours as they occur and also see the reactions of individuals as they happen. According to Baker (2006), observation as a method of data collection is valuable because it permits the researcher to observe people in their environment thus making it easier for the researcher to understand things from the perspective of those being studied. Baker (2006) also contends that observation requires the researcher to spend a considerable amount of time in the field and adopt various roles, in essence, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of those being studied. According to Kawulich (2012), this particular method has advantages and disadvantages for researchers.

Kawulich (2012) asserts that the advantages are that the researcher has access to a social setting that may not be visible to the public, which means that there are certain activities that the public does not generally see. DeMunck and Sobo (1998, in Kawulich, 2012) suggest that one disadvantage of observation is that the researcher may find what is observed to be hindered. However, this form of collecting data helped me document and gain insights into what happens daily in the educational setting – how learners conduct themselves and how teachers respond to problematic behaviour. I observed learner punctuality regarding arriving at school and class, learner conduct during break times, and whether learners were in class when they were supposed to be. This gave me a clear understanding of whether or not learners abide by the code of conduct set out for them on how to conduct themselves at school. My observations were limited to the school domain and not the classroom, as it was likely that learners would not conduct themselves as they typically would in my presence. However, I observed learners' access to school and classrooms from a distance to limit any disturbances my presence may cause.

### **3.4.3 POLICY ANALYSIS**

Policy analysis, also known as document analysis states Bowen (2009), is the process of reviewing and evaluating documents in qualitative research. It is a method that requires data to be examined and interpreted to gain understanding and to develop empirical knowledge

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008). According to Denzin (2017), this form of data collection is often used together with other qualitative methods as a means of triangulation. Eisner (1991) contends that triangulation provides the researcher with evidence that produces credibility. In policy analysis, the researcher is expected to draw on multiple sources of evidence or information that seek to confirm or support a theory (Bowen, 2009).

In terms of policy, in line with SACE, schools are required to have a code of conduct for the learners and policies guiding disciplinary processes and procedures. The purpose of having policies at schools and any institution is to ensure that the correct form of action is administered consistently to any learner who chooses to misbehave or contravenes any rules. Disciplinary policies are established to guard children's rights and ensure they are protected and, most importantly, dealt with fairly. In this study, I analysed the school's codes of conduct because this policy comprises everything that the learners have to abide by to behave accordingly. I analysed whether there are different levels of offences and their relation to disciplinary action. I made sure to question either the principal or an SGB member on whether they think their policies are effective if they have an active disciplinary committee, and what the level of involvement is of the SGB regarding disciplinary issues at school.

### **3.4 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

I selected two primary and two high schools in the Western Cape, South Africa, for this study. All four of these schools are located in Delft, Cape Town. The community in which the research took place is culturally diverse. Delft was established in 1989 for coloured and black people in the Western Cape with low or no income (Waggie, 2008). According to Waggie (2008), what is important to note in this area is that many people earn a living through informal businesses, such as selling vegetables on the street, and many residents are unemployed. The education levels of the population in this area are shocking. According to the South African Census (2001), a mere 52% of the population finished secondary school, and 1.2% had some form of higher education. This could be one of the reasons many of the children who reside in this community attend the schools in Delft, as it makes travelling by foot easier and inexpensive.

Statistics show that most children go to school on foot or by public transport, and very few travel with their parents by car (Waggie, 2008). The community of Delft has several organisations that help deliver social and health services. These include arts and crafts clubs, a wellness centre, and the Delft community centre. The area of Delft has several recreational services and facilities, such as sports grounds, peace parks, a library, and a public swimming

pool. (Waggie, 2008). Issues such as unemployment, gangsterism, broken families, child abuse, slum housing, and illiteracy are causes for concern and are deemed serious factors in this community (Waggie, 2008). The efforts to reduce poverty and crime in Delft are a huge problem as poor educational levels, under-resourced schools, low-income distribution, and low skill base are circumstances that this community is known for. Findings reveal that most households live in low-cost houses where the quality, size, and location are problematic and impact the livelihood of the residents dramatically (Waggie, 2008).

I decided to do research in both primary and high schools because I want to identify the similarities and differences that participants experience. Specifically, I wanted to see whether high and primary schools encounter different disciplinary problems. I also wanted to know whether poor learner discipline is managed differently at high and primary schools. The four schools were chosen based on geographical proximity. I used Google to find schools in that area and contacted each school to find out if they were willing to participate in my study. The schools that agreed are the ones that now form part of my study.

The primary and high schools are all quintile four, no-fee paying schools. According to Collingridge (2018), quintiles can be described as codes assigned to schools, suggesting that they form part of a certain category due to unemployment rates, income rates, and illiteracy within the area where the school is located. The Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding (DoE, 2006) states that one of five groups into which all South African public ordinary schools are placed, and where the grouping is according to the poverty of the community around the schools. Quintile one is the poorest quintile, two is the second poorest quintile, etcetera. Each national quintile encompasses one-fifth of the learners enrolled in public ordinary schools (The Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding 2006: 27). In South Africa, funding in public schools is a huge concern as it often affects quality education (Mestry & Bisschoff, 2009) According to Mestry and Bisschoff (2009), this meant that provincial departments had to rank schools into one of five quintiles with one representing the poorest schools and five representing the more affluent schools. Poverty scores are calculated based on the unemployment rate and the level of education of the community where the school is located (Mestry & Bisschoff, 2009).

As explained by Van Dyk and White (2019), no fee-paying schools do not charge school fees. They elaborate that the quintile ranking of a school enables the school to obtain the no-fee paying status. However, a fee-charging school can apply to the Provincial Department of

Education to be declared as a no-fee school. This explains why many quintile four schools have a no-fee status. Veriava (2007) highlights the inaccuracy of the quintile ranking system of many poor schools. Van Dyk and White (2019) conclude that poverty indicators do not accurately capture the poverty levels of the learners themselves, but rather focus on the community in which the school is located. With that being said, many learners do not live in the school community, and travel long distances to get to school. Some may even come from poorer communities, thus putting them in a position where their real financial status is not considered when the poverty score is calculated (Van Dyk & White, 2019).

The four schools have similar socio-economic factors and challenges in the community that have a huge impact on how learners behave at school. Common to the four schools and their respective learner communities, are poverty, high unemployment rates among parents and community members, with very few learners pursuing tertiary studies due to financial constraints. Learners are generally exposed to many challenges in the community, which many times filter into the school for example activities such as gangsterism, the abuse of alcohol and drugs, gender-based violence, and exposure to weapons. Unfortunately, learners seldom have good role models and often emulate bad behaviour at school. As a result, whatever plagues the community outside the school are brought into the school by learners – whether this involves truancy, theft, or drug-abuse and gang-related activities. As a result, instead of being allowed to focus teaching and learning, principals and teachers devote much of their time to managing poor learner discipline.

All of the four schools have extra-mural activities such as soccer, netball, rugby and athletics and compete with local schools in the community. Schools also have the necessary facilities for daily functioning, such as classrooms, school hall, computer labs (although mostly for teachers), and playgrounds for break times, which is one of the reasons it is classified as quintile four schools. The fact that many learners walk to school shows that they live in the surrounding areas. I also observed many schoolchildren from other schools in the community walking to school as I was travelling to and from my chosen schools. The schools that were selected have functioning SGBs, which was evident from the availability of the selected members and the information given by members who took part in the interviews.

**School A** is a public primary school. It has a total population of 970 learners and 22 teachers. The learner-teacher ratio is 45:1.

**School B** is a public primary school. It has a total population of 1490 learners and 53 teachers. The learner-teacher ratio is 30:1.

**School C** is a fairly new public high school. It specialises in technical education. The school has a total population of 609 learners and 25 teachers, making its learner-teacher ratio approximately 25:1.

**School D** is a public high school. It has a total population of 1365 learners and 38 teachers, and its learner-teacher ratio is 40:1.

### **3.5 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

I used purposive sampling technique when selecting the participants for my study. According to Etikan (2016), this technique is a deliberate selection of specific participants because of their qualities.

According to Patton (2014), purposive sampling is used in qualitative research to get the most relevant and useful information for a study. It involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Purposive sampling was ideal because novice and experienced teachers, along with principals and SGB members, represent critical stakeholders directly involved in managing discipline, which is critical to this study's investigation of how disciplinary issues manifest across different educational roles and experience levels.

The following criteria were considered when constituting the sample of teacher participants.

- The length of service: the study will include novice (one- three years) and experienced teachers (more than ten years). I decided to include both novice and experienced teachers because I wanted to get a broader understanding of whether both groups experience the same type of disciplinary issues and to distinguish if having experience in the education field has benefits for managing discipline more effectively.
- Gender: the study included male and female identities as my research is not subjected to any particular gender. However, the literature indicates that male and female teachers manage discipline differently and that male and female teachers encounter different disciplinary problems. According to Ahmed, Ambreen, and Hussain (2018), studies on the differences between classroom management and gender reveal that there is indeed a difference between managing to teach and managing behaviours in favour of males.



Ahmed et al. (2018) stated that male teachers’ classroom management approaches tend to be more intrusive than females’ approaches.

- My study also includes parent SGB members.
- For primary schools: two teachers in the foundation phase (Grades R-3), and two teachers in the intermediate phase (Grades 4-7).
- For high schools: two teachers in the senior phase (Grades 8-9), and two teachers in the FET phase (Grades 10-12).

The above-mentioned criteria were used for the selection of participants. I worked closely with the principals of each school and guided them in the selection process of participants to eliminate potential biases. The participants have been selected because they represent novice and experienced teachers in different primary and high school phases. The SGB participants of each school were parent representatives, and they were included in the interviews to gain insight from parents’ perspectives.

My reasons for including the principal and SGB are as follows: The school principal is responsible for maintaining discipline in the school environment and ensuring that the day-to-day activities run smoothly. The SGB is responsible for the design of the learner code of conduct as well as disciplinary processes and procedures; they must ensure that the correct procedures are put in place should measures be taken against ill-disciplined learners (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012) and are also required to deal with major learner misconduct, which might lead to the suspension of learners. The research sample already included teacher representatives. Hence, my decision to include parent representatives from the SGB, as opposed to teacher representatives.

***Table 3.1: Demographics of participants***

**SCHOOL A**

| <b>CODE</b>  | <b>No. of years as a teacher</b> | <b>No. of years at school</b> | <b>ROLE</b>       |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>AP</b>    | <b>20 years</b>                  | <b>14 years</b>               | <b>Principal</b>  |
| <b>A-SGB</b> | <b>10 years</b>                  | <b>7 years</b>                | <b>SGB member</b> |
| <b>AT1</b>   | <b>22 years</b>                  | <b>11 years</b>               | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>AT2</b>   | <b>24 years</b>                  | <b>17 years</b>               | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>AT3</b>   | <b>1-2 years</b>                 | <b>1-2 years</b>              | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>AT4</b>   | <b>32 years</b>                  | <b>20 years</b>               | <b>Teacher</b>    |

## SCHOOL B

| <b>CODES</b> | <b>No. of years as a teacher</b> | <b>No. of years at school</b> | <b>ROLE</b>       |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>BP</b>    | <b>28 years</b>                  | <b>15 years</b>               | <b>Principal</b>  |
| <b>B-SGB</b> | <b>4 years</b>                   | <b>6 years</b>                | <b>SGB member</b> |
| <b>BT1</b>   | <b>37 years</b>                  | <b>3 years</b>                | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>BT2</b>   | <b>31 years</b>                  | <b>25 years</b>               | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>BT3</b>   | <b>7 years</b>                   | <b>2 years</b>                | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>BT4</b>   | <b>10 years</b>                  | <b>10 years</b>               | <b>Teacher</b>    |

## SCHOOL C

| <b>CODES</b> | <b>No. of years as a teacher</b> | <b>No. of years at school</b> | <b>ROLE</b>       |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>CP</b>    | <b>30 years</b>                  | <b>4 years</b>                | <b>Principal</b>  |
| <b>C-SGB</b> | <b>10 years</b>                  | <b>10 years</b>               | <b>SGB member</b> |
| <b>CT1</b>   | <b>30 years</b>                  | <b>9 years</b>                | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>CT2</b>   | <b>10 years</b>                  | <b>7 years</b>                | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>CT3</b>   | <b>3 years</b>                   | <b>3 months</b>               | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>CT4</b>   | <b>3 years</b>                   | <b>3 years</b>                | <b>Teacher</b>    |

## SCHOOL D

| <b>CODES</b> | <b>No. of years as a teacher</b> | <b>No. of years at school</b> | <b>ROLE</b>       |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>DP</b>    | <b>16 years</b>                  | <b>3 months</b>               | <b>Principal</b>  |
| <b>D-SGB</b> | <b>8 years</b>                   | <b>8 years</b>                | <b>SGB member</b> |
| <b>DT1</b>   | <b>8 years</b>                   | <b>8 years</b>                | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>DT2</b>   | <b>1 year and 8 months</b>       | <b>1 year and 9 months</b>    | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>DT3</b>   | <b>7 years</b>                   | <b>7 years</b>                | <b>Teacher</b>    |
| <b>DT4</b>   | <b>35 years</b>                  | <b>12 years</b>               | <b>Teacher</b>    |

### 3.6 CREDIBILITY AND VALIDITY OF DATA

According to Streubert, Speziale and Carpenter (2003), credibility is presented when research participants acknowledge that the research findings are their own experiences and that the research that has been presented is the truth of how the participants have experienced the phenomenon. Member checking's is one method I used to ensure that data collection was

correct. This is a crucial technique for establishing credibility because the participant is the main person who can verify whether the information is accurate. I tested the data from individuals from whom data was collected during the interview process.

According to Waterman (2013), validity in qualitative research involves the tools, processes, and data. Finfgeld-Connett (2010) stated that the choice of methodology must detect the findings in the appropriate context for it to be valid. With this in mind, I used more than one method of collecting data to ensure that the study presented is valid.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Burgess (2005), all researchers should consider ethics, and be aware of the possible risks when conducting research with humans on an everyday basis. Gregory (2003) supported this statement by arguing that ethics is closely linked to morals and involves embracing moral issues when working with humans.

The ethical considerations involved several steps. Firstly, I contacted each of the four principals via email and phone and explained my research. After sending them formal letters of invitation, which were also shared with their respective SGB's, the four principals agreed to participate in the study. Secondly, I sought the permission of the WCED. Once this was granted, I sought ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University.

I provided each principal with proof of ethical clearance to conduct research at their schools. The principals were then allowed to select candidates best suited to my criteria to participate in my interviews. Each participant was given a consent form which they had to sign. The consent form confirmed their voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time.

The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were assured before commencing the interviews. The identities of all participants and schools are protected in this study using codes. Once the interviews were completed, participants had the opportunity to verify the information given to me. The data was then stored on my password-protected laptop.

### **3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an understanding of the research design, the methodology, paradigm as well as, the research methods, the context in which the study took place, as well as the participant sample. The way data was collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The chapter concluded by considering the credibility and

validity of the study, and the ethical considerations needed to proceed with my research. In the next chapter, I turn my attention to presenting the research findings.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings derived from a detailed study conducted in four schools in Cape Town, focusing on the management and response to disciplinary problems. The findings are organised into key themes: the strategies employed by teachers to manage disciplinary problems, the nature of the disciplinary problems encountered, the effectiveness of school-based policies, and the potential role of an ethics of care in addressing these challenges. The findings arise from interviews with the four principals, 16 teachers, four SGB parent members.

Following the main and sub-research questions, the findings are presented in the following themes:

- Types of disciplinary problems
- Managing disciplinary problems at schools
- School-based policies
- Using an ethics of care to manage disciplinary problems.

### 4.2 TYPES OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

It was quite evident from the data that teachers faced many challenges regarding poor learner discipline in schools. In many cases, the disciplinary problems learners portrayed in school emanated from what they experienced in their homes or the community. Thus, it can be argued that many schools in this particular community where the study took place face similar challenges because, as the data collection process unfolded, it became clear that the types of disciplinary problems at primary and high schools were quite similar. Schools A and B were primary schools. Participant A-SGB mentioned: *“Learners are not disciplined at all”*, while Participant AT1 confidently stated, *“I do not face any disciplinary problems”*.

I believe, the difference between these teachers’ answers may be due to their years in teaching. This study showed that more experienced teachers were better at navigating disciplinary problems and developing strategies to prevent them before they occurred, rather than just managing them after they happened. At school A, participant AP stated that bullying was a major problem. However, using pencils as weapons had now changed to knives. Participant AP was particularly concerned that too much time was wasted on disciplinary problems in the

classroom when it could be spent on the curriculum. This was due to teachers spending large amounts of time trying to get learners' attention, having them keep quiet and settle down, and getting them to participate and cooperate during lessons.

According to Participant A-SGB: "Children are smoking, throwing stones, and doing gang-related activities." Participant AT2 opined that she did not experience disciplinary problems. However, she stated: "*I will face one or two learners fighting, but not big fights*". She explained that the learners saw these things at home and felt it was okay to do them at school. At school B, Participants BP and B-SGB confirmed that smoking and the use of drugs were becoming a major concern in primary schools. The principal at school B responded distressed, saying that learners were walking around smoking and there were many of them. Participant BP says that there are many types of problems. "Children are not doing their homework, they are challenging authority, constantly walking around". The teacher takes 20 minutes to get learners to settle down before starting a lesson. Participant B-SGB said: "Learners are violent, they abuse and disrespect teachers, absenteeism and bunking of learners, they are not doing their work, and there is sexual abuse of learners between each other".

At schools C and D, both high schools, the most common disciplinary problem among learners was drug abuse. Teachers at these two schools agreed that learners smoking and using drugs (specifically marijuana) were a huge concern. Based on the data collected, it is evident that drug use often begins at a young age, with primary school teachers recognising that learners were smoking and using drugs. If not addressed effectively and immediately, this cycle of drug abuse could continue and create more problems in high school.

Participant DT3 expressed their concern, stating that "the issue of drugs is the main problem in school." At school C, the principal acknowledged that drug abuse and alcohol abuse are a huge concern and filter into the school as learners see this at home and in the community. He said: "Even when you call the parents you can smell it on them too". Participant C-SGB stated: "Late coming and learners who try to smoke in school is a problem, but we quickly took control of it". The principal at school D expressed that the use of drugs was a huge challenge because learners brought it into the school in the form of muffins, so it became difficult to manage. Learners continuously smoked in and around the school premises and tended to buy drugs over the school fence during break times. What was most problematic about this type of disciplinary problem was the fact that using drugs influenced the way learners behaved in the classroom.

Participant D-SGB concurred by saying: “Drugs and substance abuse, and gangsterism is a concern.”

Participants CT1, DP, and DT2 agreed that late coming was a persistent problem and caused major disruptions as school was already in session when learners arrived. From the data collected, teachers and principals were also most concerned about learners’ disrespect towards teachers. Participant DT1 highlighted: “*Learners have an attitude, and they backchat.*” Another problem was that learners were disruptive because they did not bring their books and stationery to school, making them troublesome in the classroom. Participant CT3 believes that “learners have their days, and it’s important to keep them busy”. Sometimes, learners found excuses to avoid working in class. In such cases, the teacher needs to develop innovative ways to keep the learner engaged, as This helps avoid any problems that may arise due to the learner not being occupied.

Teachers experience various types of disciplinary problems at school, which often disrupt the proceedings of a normal school day. This takes away valuable teaching and learning time, as teachers have to stop what they are doing to manage a problem that arises. Both primary and high schools tended to deal with similar problems, which may be due to factors such as familial issues, community problems, or social problems that influence learners to misbehave at school.

### **4.3 MANAGING DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS AT SCHOOLS**

During the data collection process, teachers were asked how they responded to various disciplinary problems they experienced within the classroom. It was evident that all teachers rely on the strategies that work best for them. The findings suggest that primary school teachers depend on implementing mutual respect and teaching learners’ general morals and values daily to eliminate indiscipline within the classroom to have learners remember it for the future.

Participant BT1 quotes an example of what he tells learners daily. “*I’ll speak to you and listen to you, and you listen to me.*” Participant BT2 explains how she implemented lifelong morals and gives an example of what a learner did recently. The learner approached her and said: “*I picked this up, but it is not mine.*” Participant AT3 explained that her method of managing poor discipline is to give learners time out, or extra work as punishment.

Teachers at school A were also very eager to call parents to assist them with disciplinary problems and communicate that their child was creating problems at school. This was explained by participant AT2, who stated “*I will call the parents*”. Unfortunately, this method does not

work for all parents, as some parents may not be invested in their children's behavioural problems at school. There was a vast difference between community involvement and parental support in primary and high schools. It seemed that the community was actively involved in supporting the school when it came to fundraising functions, ensuring the safety of learners by either having law enforcement on school property or security at their main gates, the walking bus project where community members assist learners in getting to school safely, and also parents volunteering at schools feeding schemes.

However, participant DP stated that there was minimal academic support from parents. Participant CP agreed stating: *"We don't have their full 100% due to circumstances beyond our control."* At the primary school, participant AT3 believed that parents were not involved and participant BT2 said: *"Yes, parents are involved, but not a lot."* Participant AP stated that disciplinary problems usually started when learners reached Grade 6. *"Sometimes they see themselves as gangsters, and then we have to find ways to deal with the"*.

When disciplinary problems arose during exam season, the school allowed the learners to write the exam in the staffroom with their parents present. Participant A-SGB stated: *"Learners are disciplined according to the school code of conduct"*. Participant BP believed that many learners at their school had behavioural and attitude problems. *"The biggest concern is those who do not want to do their work"*. He said: *"The community is the biggest challenge because whatever we implement is being disregarded by the community"*. Participant B-SGB believed that school B responds to disciplinary problems by calling parents and having police, and law enforcement on school property.

Participants generally had more strategies implemented to manage discipline at the two high schools as soon as it occurred. Participant CP mentioned many reasons learners misbehave, and many problems emanate from the community and the home environment. He empathized with learners a lot because many things were happening outside of schools that teachers were unaware of such as, *"Child abuse, or the mother being abused in the household, or single-parent household"*. He showed major concern for these issues and stated: *"We can only assist with psychologists"*.

Participant C-SGB stated that learners might cry out for help when misbehaving. *"In this case, we have social workers on board"*. Participant DP stated that serious issues were immediately taken to the SGB. At this particular school (school D), they dealt with disciplinary issues that have been taken to the SGB every week where they discussed what learners have done and



where they decided on sanctions. This happened every Thursday. Minor disciplinary problems were dealt with by giving learners intervention forms.

School D also had a system of using disciplinary booklets, where learners who misbehaved repeatedly were given a yellow book, which each teacher for each subject had to sign stating whether the learner was in class and whether he/she worked in that particular period. This is filled in daily. If the learner failed to complete this booklet in full, a red booklet would be issued. Once a red booklet is issued, the learner is at risk of appearing before the SGB and facing suspension. Participant DP stated: “We believe in restorative justice”. He believed in restoring discipline instead of punishing learners. However, they had to show remorse by writing letters of apology and reading them to the school during assembly, for example.

According to Participant D-SGB, learners were warned before appearing before the disciplinary committee. “Learners are regularly talked to during monthly assemblies”. Participants DT1 and DT4 agreed that using the code of conduct to guide teachers on what to do when a problem arises was a good idea. DT1 stated “*It depends on the level of transgression*”, while DT4 explained that “*the code of conduct guides the school*”. At school D, giving learners intervention forms is quite popular among teachers. Although it might create more administration for teachers, it is an investment and a strategy that seems to work well. Parents will receive a letter stating what the transgression was and when the meeting with learner, teacher, parent, and disciplinary committee will occur. Participant DT2 said she was fond of putting learners out of the classroom during lessons should they continue to be disruptive. This way they felt excluded from class activities and tended to misbehave less due to fear of exclusion. Participant CT1 relied on keeping learners in during break times, which is quite serious for learners because they would miss out on the feeding scheme. These methods seemed more prevalent in schools C and D. Participant CT4 explained that learners still responded to a particular method of managing poor discipline because talking was simply insufficient. Participant CT4 was not very clear in mentioning what exactly this method is due to him being recorded.

### **4.3.1 OBSERVATIONS**

I observed a few notable practices at all four participating schools, such as the school values being pasted on school building walls to remind and motivate learners to act and behave a certain way. Teachers were mostly punctual at all schools; however, learners were not very punctual. Learners would still be walking to school when the bell rang. This was mainly

observed at the high schools. At both primary schools, learners were mostly on school property when the school bell rang. At primary schools, the learners were also more interested in being on time to get their morning porridge from the feeding scheme, whereas, at the high schools, much fewer learners came to school on time for breakfast, but they would queue in long lines at lunchtime. At school C, the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) – represents the learners and is responsible for promoting a positive culture within the school, encouraging other learners to participate in creating a functioning school, discussing learner frustrations and fears, and coming up with solutions. They participate in SGB activities, and act as ambassadors and leaders of the school.

I observed the RCL members patrolling at the main gate for latecomers in the morning and keeping a record of those who made it a habit of coming late for school. At school D, I observed the principal (participant DP) reminding teachers that all learners have the right to education no matter how they have transgressed. At school D, they are very strict on absenteeism. Teachers must fill in a control form daily to determine the number of learners present and absent. When a learner is chronically absent, they will follow up with phone calls and messages to parents and keep a record of this. I observed a discussion on random police searches that should have occurred, but unfortunately, I was not there to observe that myself.

The findings of this section suggest that all teachers have their preferred methods for managing poor discipline in the classroom, which is essential for learners to receive a quality education. Disciplinary problems at high schools occur quite often compared to primary schools. The process of managing it is also quite different as high schools use intervention forms and disciplinary booklets (yellow and red booklets) which will eventually result in disciplinary hearings depending on the seriousness. They also depend on social workers and disciplinary policies to guide them. Where schools depend on social workers, the following process is in place. Each school has one social worker assigned to them by the WCED (Western Cape Education Department), with whom they work upon request. Generally, a committee deals with learners who need to see the social workers. This committee is called the district-based Support Team (DBST). A committee member will complete a DBE 120 (Department of Basic Education 120) form and refer the learner to the social worker.

Example of DBE 120 FORM:

## DBE 120

### REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FROM THE DISTRICT-BASED SUPPORT TEAM (DBST), BY SBST

- ☒ To be completed by the SBST only when requesting support from the DBST
- ☒ Copies of Learner Profile, SNA1 and 2 and all other relevant supporting documents must be submitted.

Provide reasons and motivation why support is needed from the DBST:

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State what support is needed from the DBST:

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|                                                  |           |                   |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Initials and surname of SBST Coordinator (print) | Signature | Date:             |
|                                                  |           | 20... / ... / ... |

| PARENT/LEGAL CAREGIVER SUPPORTS REQUEST FOR DBST ASSISTANCE |           | Yes               | No |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|----|
| Comment:                                                    |           |                   |    |
|                                                             |           |                   |    |
| Initials and surname of parent/legal caregiver (print)      | Signature | Date:             |    |
|                                                             |           | 20... / ... / ... |    |

| PRINCIPAL'S PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT ON REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FROM DBST |     |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Request supported                                                   | Yes | No |
| Reason for decision and recommendation                              |     |    |

|                                           |           |                   |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
|                                           |           |                   |
| Initials and surname of principal (print) | Signature | Date:             |
|                                           |           | 20... / ... / ... |

\*Attach this form in front of the SNA 1 and 2 booklets when submitting to the DBST

After the learner has been referred, the parent/guardian must consent for the child to interact with the social worker. Once all the paperwork is completed, the social worker will make an appointment to see the learner at school. An initial assessment will be done, and the social worker will decide if counselling is necessary. If so, counselling will take place once a week on school property. If the initial assessment has been done and the social worker feels that it is best for the learner to see a psychologist depending on the issue, then the social worker will refer the learner and arrange an appointment with a psychologist.

At primary schools, learners seem to have ample chances to improve their behaviour as teachers would constantly remind them of what is right and wrong before punishing them. This was true for certain participants; however other participants used methods of giving extra work as punishment. The responses provided by the participants in this study varied significantly, indicating that each participant managed poor discipline differently based on the degree of transgression.

#### **4.4 SCHOOL-BASED POLICIES**

As previously stated in Chapter 2, Section 8 (1) ‘Subject to any applicable provincial law, a governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents, and educators of the school’. The SGB is responsible for ensuring that the code of conduct is aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment dedicated to providing quality education. The SGB must ensure that the code of conduct contains provisions to safeguard the interests of the learners, and any other party involved in a disciplinary proceeding (SASA no 84 of, 1996). The SGB is responsible for appointing a disciplinary committee, which should focus on fair hearings and make sure that minutes of disciplinary hearings are made. The SGB, explains Ramadiro and Salim (2005), is specifically selected to create, evaluate, and supervise policies to guide members that form part of the school.

All public schools in South Africa should have an SGB and have been mandated by the SASA (no 84 of 1996) to adopt a code of conduct together with other important policies to ensure that all schools maintain an environment conducive to teaching and learning. The objectives of a code of conduct should be made clear, and it is important to note that no learner at any public school is exempt from complying with the school code of conduct.

The following question was posed to all participants who participated in the study: “What type of school-based policies are in place, and do they help to reduce disciplinary problems at school.?” All participants confirmed that their school had a code of conduct and could provide evidence. In addition to the code of conduct, each school had disciplinary policies that categorised learner transgressions. Depending on the level of transgressions, certain steps are taken to deal with and manage them. While teachers generally deal with minor transgressions, more serious disciplinary problems are directed to the disciplinary committee, which then gathers evidence of the misconduct, and then the learner and all the parties involved will appear before the SGB to decide on what sanctions will be given to the learner. Every teacher is responsible for discipline of the entire school and not only in their classrooms. They have the full authority to correct learners’ behaviour whenever necessary. These corrective measures must correspond with an appropriate offence. As stated above, all offences are graded according to the nature and degree of seriousness of which grade 1 or level 1 are minor offences, and grade 4 offences are the most serious offences.

The grade of an offence will determine the procedure to be followed, and all cases are expected to be dealt with in this manner. A Grade 1 offence will be a written warning followed by a final written warning, then a disciplinary hearing. A Grade 2 offence is a final written warning followed by a disciplinary hearing, then a tribunal hearing. Grade 3 offences constitute a disciplinary hearing or a tribunal hearing (depending on the severity of the particular offence). Grade 4 offences are immediately reported to the South African Police Services (SAPS) and a tribunal hearing. The difference between a tribunal and a disciplinary hearing is that a tribunal hearing consists of members of the disciplinary committee, the learners involved, the parents, and an external party, such as a lawyer, to defend the learner. A disciplinary hearing only consists of members of the disciplinary committee, the learners involved, and the parents.

A staff member or the RCL will deal with all Grade 1 offences. A record must be kept, and disciplinary measures must be taken. Where there is a reoccurrence of a grade 1 offence, the matter must be referred to the grade head responsible for all administrative duties in that

particular grade and the record of offences. The grade head will then issue a written warning to the learner, and he/she will keep all relevant documentation on record. Grade 2 offences will immediately be referred to the grade head, a final written warning will be issued, and disciplinary action will be taken. If the offence reoccurs, the parents will be advised in writing that an internal hearing will occur. This must be done well in advance to allow parents to arrange an off day from work, for example. Furthermore, the disciplinary committee will refer the matter to a tribunal hearing if the learner transgresses again after all this is done. The parent will again be informed well in advance. All documentation will be kept on record, and disciplinary measures will be imposed.

Grade 3 offences are immediately reported to the grade head, who then refers the matter to the disciplinary committee, who will determine whether a tribunal or hearing will take place. The parents will be informed well before the designated date that a hearing will convene. All grade 4 offences are immediately reported to the grade head who will then refer the matter to the School Principal who will immediately file a report with SAPS and convene a tribunal hearing. The parents will be informed immediately and be advised in writing when the hearing will convene.

I was particularly interested in the SGB-parent representative's responses to this question because they were essential members who were not on school property every day and did not experience the misbehaviour of learners themselves, so it was interesting to see whether they were confident that the policies do help to improve or manage poor discipline. Participant C-SGB was a representative at a high school and was quite confident in saying, "*The policy is very strict where discipline is concerned. The no-tolerance policy helps to keep our house in order*". Participant C-SGB referred to the code of conduct as a no-tolerance policy, suggesting that whatever the policy states, will happen. There was no other way around it. Participant D-SGB, at another high school, confirmed that they had a school code of conduct, admission and language policies.

At the primary school level, participant A-SGB clearly stated: "*Code of conduct is in place to help reduce disciplinary problems*". Participant B-SGB concluded: "*We work from the disciplinary policy, and we have an SBMT (school-based management team) that is active*". It was quite evident from the responses that all schools complied with the SASA (no 84 of, 1996), mainly because they were able to provide particular policies that helped manage discipline and

because their SGB members were more than willing to speak to me on this specific aspect, which meant that they are well aware of their duties and responsibilities as SGB members.

However, responses seemed inconsistent regarding whether school policies were effective enough to reduce disciplinary problems. AT1 contended that the policies helped a lot with reducing disciplinary problems, which were confirmed by her colleague, who stated: “We are being led by the code of conduct”. Participant BT3 believed that it would be much easier if all teachers were consistent in reducing disciplinary problems. BT4 was concerned and said that she didn’t think the policies helped to improve disciplinary problems. The reason for this was that learners get suspended but come back to school with the same attitude. Participant CT2 exclaimed that there was a lack of consistency with every child and every incident; therefore, he believed policies were ineffective in reducing disciplinary problems. Participant CT3 mentioned that policies were explained to learners and parents at the beginning of the year, and they were expected to sign the code of conduct, making it easier to reflect when learners transgress, saying: “Yes, I think it does help”. DT4 opined: “If we are consistent with it, it will actually help”. The main problem with the effectiveness of policies and reducing disciplinary problems seems to be the inconsistent nature of teachers’ ability to adhere to the policy implement it with all learners in all situations.

Certain participants believed that not all teachers consistently implemented the code of conduct. The code of conduct guides the school when transgressions occur, as stated by participant AT1. This means there should be no issue when teachers and principals do find that learners are breaking the rules because the code of conduct clearly states what should happen in certain circumstances. The problem is that teachers do not take the time to read the code of conduct or to consult it when learners transgress. The inconsistency occurs when teachers and principals only adhere to and implement the policy when learners transgress on higher grades (grades 2-4). They do not use the code of conduct and are inconsistent with it in minor cases such as late coming, incorrect school uniforms, or bunking, which is the basis of creating a well-disciplined school. Therefore, certain participants felt that the code of conduct was only used for certain learners, in certain cases.

Strikingly, none of the participants mentioned using the ‘Alternatives to Corporal Punishment’ (Department of Basic Education 2000) policy to manage discipline effectively. However, it was clear that there was an awareness of the policy, especially because participants did not provide any information about making use of corporal punishment, so this does suggest that they were

aware and mindful that the practice is illegal and that there were other methods of disciplining learners (of which they do provide). I believe that certain participants subconsciously use of some of the guidelines in the 'Alternatives to Corporal punishment' (Department of Basic Education, 2000) policy because, as previously stated, I observed classroom rules in many primary school classrooms while interviewing participants. The policy suggests that creating classroom rules with learners is a great way to hold learners accountable for their actions because the rules are visible in their classrooms. Participant DP also clearly stated that school D believed in restorative justice, and the policy suggests that this technique is a viable way to repair any harm caused, and SGB members had successfully used it by seeking alternative punishments in the school system. Another hint of participants' awareness of the 'Alternatives to Corporal Punishment' (Department of Basic Education, 2000) policy was that participants BT1 and BT2 implement morals and values, and this is closely linked to the policy suggesting that being respectful is a way to manage discipline rather than making use of corporal punishment.

The findings suggest that all four schools had a code of conduct established by the SGB to ensure that the daily proceedings of the school run smoothly, and they could provide these policies. All of the policies that were analysed showed different levels of offences and sanctions for those offences. However, the findings also indicate that consistent use of this policy by all staff members can help reduce disciplinary problems. And, if not followed consistently by all staff members, managing discipline at schools can become tedious.

#### **4.5 USING AN ETHICS OF CARE TO MANAGE DISCIPLINE**

South African schools, particularly those schools located in historically disadvantaged communities, continue to be seen as communities with unprecedented levels of violence (Davids, 2016). As in the case of the four schools participating in this study, many participants spoke about what the learners saw in the community and how they implemented those types of behaviour in schools. Moreover, with the types of disciplinary problems that teachers and principals experience today, and the high learner numbers in schools, it becomes more and more difficult to manage or prevent poor discipline. While the Department of Education provides policies and strategies to make schools safer places of learning, it seems that an alternative way is necessary to prevent poor discipline from happening before it even starts.

In my opinion, punitive measures of managing discipline do not change the behaviour of the learner. Teachers continuously struggle with the same learners using the same techniques as a



short-term solution so that they can complete their curriculum on time. They use techniques such as excluding those who are misbehaving to continue with the lesson. The negative behaviour of some learners' compromises and undermines teaching and learning. Hence, the capacity of the teacher to teach also becomes affected. The teacher will no longer teach with the same enthusiasm as he/she intended to teach, which is a problem because in return the learners will become disinterested in the lesson. Discipline in South African schools is a phenomenon that continues to spiral out of control, and a lot of this problem has to do with the dysfunctional homes that learners come from, and the community that influences them negatively. Policies such as 'Alternatives to Corporal punishment' (DoBE, 2000), and school-based policies like the school code of conduct and other disciplinary policies, although short-term solutions, unfortunately have not altered school discipline conditions.

Since traditional punitive solutions of disciplining learners seem to be ineffective, I have suggested ethics of care as a current disciplinary practice to manage disciplinary problems in schools and as an approach to influence and mould a caring and compassionate citizen for the future.

It is important to note that care ethics is not as simple as showing that teachers and principals care about learners. It involves a process of listening, attentiveness, and responsiveness. My argument for using care ethics to prevent poor discipline is that most teachers and principals do not know the background of misbehaving learners. Moreover, while showing that you care for learners might help to a certain extent, teachers and principals must take the time to speak to learners and listen to what they have to say. Listening to the stories of what they must go through outside school premises can help them better understand where the behaviour originates from. This way, they will better understand how they can assist the learner. Care ethics as an alternative measure can evolve relationships between teachers, principals, and learners as well as the conduct of learners.

The findings for this theme suggest that South African schools located in disadvantaged communities still struggle to manage poor discipline effectively. This may be due to external factors that learners experience outside of school and then act out at school because they get an opportunity to do so. Many teachers and principals still use ineffective punitive disciplinary measures because they are short-term solutions. Furthermore, because disruptive behaviour from certain individuals can create chaos in classrooms meant for effective teaching and learning, alternative measures must be put in place to safeguard the future of all learners.

Therefore, care ethics has been suggested as an alternative measure so that teachers can listen, understand where the problem comes from, and try to assist. In this way, disruptive learners will quickly understand that teachers and principals are at school and placed in this position to better the learners' future.

## **4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I presented the findings from interviews conducted at the four schools in Cape Town, focusing on how disciplinary problems are managed and the challenges teachers face. The findings revealed a variety of disciplinary issues, ranging from minor disruptions to more serious concerns like drug abuse and violence. These problems often stem from external influences, including family and community environments significantly impacting learner behaviour.

Teachers employ several strategies to manage discipline, such as fostering mutual respect, engaging with parents, and adhering to school-based disciplinary policies. However, the findings revealed an inconsistency in applying these policies, with some teachers and schools enforcing them more strictly than others. This inconsistency can complicate efforts to maintain a standard approach to discipline, affecting the overall school environment. This data also suggests that while punitive measures are commonly used, they often fail to address the underlying issues, indicating a need for more compassionate and holistic disciplinary measures.

Overall, the chapter emphasises the complex nature of managing discipline in schools, particularly in disadvantaged communities where socioeconomic and environmental factors heavily influence learner behaviour. It calls for more consistent enforcement of school policies. This study lays the groundwork for further investigation into effective disciplinary practices and their practical implementation in various educational settings.

## **CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will analyse the data presented in Chapter 4, using the same themes by comparing and contrasting existing literature on poor discipline in South African public schools as discussed in Chapter 2, through a phenomenological lens as discussed in Chapter 3. Pathak (2017) stated that a phenomenological analysis is based on a discussion and reflection of direct perceptions and experiences of the research phenomenon. The following findings were presented in Chapter 4, and the lived experiences of the participants are analysed under these points:

- Types of disciplinary problems
- Managing disciplinary problems at schools
- School-based policies
- Using an ethics of care to manage discipline

### **5.3 TYPES OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS**

Learner misconduct in South African schools has reached an alarming level, making it difficult to find a viable solution. As a researcher, I was interested in exploring this topic further. According to Sekhanyane (2018), learners' behaviour worsens daily, compromising the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, learners' academic performance deteriorates, and teachers' morale is affected significantly (Padayachee & Gcelu, 2022).

This study sheds light on the different types of disciplinary issues that teachers and principals face in South African schools. Based on the data presented, it is evident that schools in this community deal with similar disciplinary problems. The four schools have reported various disciplinary problems, including bullying, gangsterism, and drug use on school property. These issues were observed in both primary and high schools, indicating that learners face similar challenges throughout their schooling. Learners' behavioural issues are not limited to high schools only. When transitioning from primary school to high school, learners tend to carry forward their experiences and patterns of behaviour. This suggests that learners may enter high school with a background of poor behaviour, which then continues and escalates into high school (Maphosa & Mammen, 2011).

The findings on types of disciplinary problems that schools experience suggest that bullying is a major concern. This type of misbehaviour is quite common in existing literature, as Mncube and Harber (2012) and Padayachee and Gcelu (2022) noted. They determined that bullying in schools creates unsafe environments for learners and teachers.

Participant AP was very concerned about how weapons have evolved in schools. This is reminiscent of Foucault's (1977) panopticism, where learners must be observed constantly as if they are in prison, which is how the architecture of schools is built in South Africa. Learners must be treated as prisoners under constant surveillance, whether in the classroom or during break times. The sad reality is that learners come to school with weapons as stated by Khumalo (2023), and at any given moment when they are not being supervised violence might occur. With this in mind, we must consider the society that learners are introduced to at an early age, especially, considering the disadvantaged community they are growing up in. Benjamin (2011) argues that learners are being exposed to violence and gang-related activities in the community, and this type of behaviour filters through into the school. Many teachers are well aware of the community that they work in and are very disturbed by the way that learners behave themselves because it is a clear indication of what is experienced outside of school.

Mncube and Harber (2012) highlight that disruptive classroom behaviour is one of the most common forms of poor discipline in schools. Participants in this study seem as if they have had enough and are fed up with how disrespectful and disruptive learners are in the classroom. The way that teachers feel about this specific type of misbehaviour is quite alarming because they spend hours preparing for lessons and trying to keep up with the curriculum, and it is all wasted time because when they get to the classroom, they first have to spend most of the period disciplining learners. It is safe to say that the way teachers respond shows their lack of motivation for this profession. They are tired of learners continuously not doing their homework, or regularly bunking. It creates problems for the teacher because they are essentially being held accountable for the learner.

More commonly, many participants touched on the issue of learners smoking on school property. This is closely related to what Khumalo (2023) found about playgrounds now being transformed into learners using drugs and drug dealings. This seems very difficult because nothing can be done if evidence is not found on learners, which upsets teachers the most. The mere fact that they are aware that learners are smoking but there is nothing they can do about

it unless the learner is found in the act. Hence, school D is very strict on random police searches to eliminate this problem. Teachers and principals feel very strongly about the fact that smoking opens doors for other types of behavioural problems to take place in the classroom and influences the way they learn.

### **5.3 MANAGING DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS AT SCHOOLS.**

The study gained insights into teachers, principals, and SGB member's direct lived experiences and their challenges with poor learners' discipline at four schools in Cape Town.

As discussed in Chapter 3, phenomenology is generally used to gather information and personal perceptions through interviews, and other similar forms of collecting data (Lester, 1999). It aims to understand personal feelings or opinions and gain insights into people's motivations and actions. Because a phenomenological approach was used, participants could convey their true feelings and thoughts on managing poor discipline in schools by considering their current situation and not predetermined ideologies. The teachers, principals, and SGB members could provide their personal feelings when questioned without being clouded by assumptions associated with other schools. Many participants appreciated the opportunity to speak on this phenomenon because they are frustrated that disciplinary problems take up more time than teaching. The demotivation that are felt towards the profession could be heard in their tone of voice, and many times, they went off topic and over time, which was a clear indication that they needed to express how they were feeling regarding teaching as a profession in this generation.

Participants clearly understood the question of how they generally respond to disciplinary problems because they were keen to answer and were more than willing to share how they have responded, whether good or bad because they have just run out of options and were tired of considering new ways of dealing with poorly behaved learners.

The data revealed that participants relied on many techniques to manage discipline in their classrooms and the school. These techniques or strategies typically included relying on classroom rules, the schools code of conduct, sending learners to detention, or excluding them from the class when they are disruptive. These findings correlate with the existing literature and practices, employed by teachers in different contexts (Elba, 2012).

Learners are disciplined according to the school code of conduct, which each school possesses and could provide evidence of. However, it seems that the code of conduct is mostly used in very serious misconduct cases where learners have to appear before the SGB because it is certainly not used in level one offences that have to do with dress code, incomplete homework, bunking, punctuality, etcetera. This is perhaps why teachers felt that the policy was not used consistently and fairly in all cases. As stated in Chapter 2, all schools must have a code of conduct as stipulated in section 8 of SASA (no 84 of, 1996). The findings suggest that participants believed this policy helped guide the school. Although, it is an effective strategy, participant DT4, who had been teaching for 34 years, felt hopeless that the code of conduct could work to improve discipline unless all teachers are consistently use it.

That said, what stood out was that participant DP indicated that he believes in restorative justice, and he seemed very passionate when saying this. The techniques stated above to manage poor discipline correlate with the “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment” (Department of Education, 2000) policy discussed in Chapter 2 and provide similar methods for managing behavioural problems without corporal punishment.

With this in mind, some methods presented in Chapter 4 are against the law, even though a policy with guidelines exists. These include removing learners from the classroom, which is done out of anger and frustration because the teacher does not know what to do anymore so it seems effective at the time. Participant CT4 mentioned a method that works, but it was not disclosed. He stated that it is the only thing that works immediately, which is done out of frustration.

Teachers’ experiences and perceptions of how they manage poor discipline have a lot to do with the fact that they are frustrated that learners are becoming more and more disrespectful and that there is no simple solution to managing poor discipline. They tend to manage each situation differently depending on the disciplinary problem they experience at that particular moment. Hence, the literature highlights that teachers resort to several measures to manage discipline (Gorea et al., 2011). However, this contributes to high levels of irritation among teachers. When teachers experience the same problems daily, they tend to stay absent more often due to stress, which impacts their workload when they eventually return to school.

Despite this, teachers and principals also realise that good discipline begins at home, and they are under the impression that although this may be true, large percentage of learners do not experience parental support and attention at home. Therefore, they cannot behave according to an educational institution's standards. McKenzie (2019) states that disinterested parents increase poor learner behaviour at school. Due to this problem, teachers feel that it is not always easy to contact the parents when learners misbehave because not all parents will show up for their children at school. This is unfortunate because teachers and principals believe that when parents are involved in their children's lives, they will be more disciplined in the absence of the parents.

#### **5.4 SCHOOL-BASED POLICIES**

As established earlier, the code of conduct as required by the South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996) is essential for maintaining discipline and guiding behaviour in schools. Developed by the school governing body, it reflects constitutional principles and outlines expectations for learners and consequences for their misconduct, thus involving all members of the school community in upholding these standards.

With that being said, the issue I picked up is the inconsistency in responses to the question of whether the code of conduct and other disciplinary policies assist with disciplinary problems at school. Certain participants believe that it does help to manage poor discipline, and others felt that policies do not help to manage poor disciplinary problems. The literature suggests that for policies to be well-known by all school members, they should be well-informed about the legalities of that policy (Bray, 2005). This means the entire school community should familiarise themselves with disciplinary policies to know how to react if a learner misbehaves. However, this is not the case, as participants expressed with confidence that not all teachers consistently use the code of conduct to help maintain discipline. Transgressions and sanctions are clearly stated in the disciplinary policies, but certain members feel that it is not their duty to address poor discipline according to these policies, so they rather find alternative ways to deal with the problem. Many participants responded to having disciplinary policies in a very unconcerned manner. They know these policies should be on school property somewhere, but they haven't seen them in a very long time. Fortunately, all the principals could provide me with their policies, which are attached in Chapter 4 as evidence.

Regrettably, and more concerning, none of the participants mentioned using the “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment (DoE, 1996) policy. However, some participants knew that the policy exists and tried to implement some of the alternatives through how they manage discipline and what I have observed at these four schools.

Teachers’ perceptions and experiences are influenced by what they encounter daily. The lack of support for one another as colleagues in the workplace plays a huge role in why certain teachers come to school to do what is expected and nothing further. They seem to have no hope for the future because trying to implement discipline is time-consuming and hopeless, apart from the time they are already lacked to complete the curriculum.

## **5.5 USING AN ETHICS OF CARE TO MANAGE DISCIPLINE**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the theoretical framework for this study is an ethics of care, as espoused by theorists such as Noddings (2005) who argues whether caring for learners or creating an environment where learners feel cared for will assist teachers and principals with minimising disciplinary problems. The term care ethics can be described as is a core democratic principle that will assist in cultivating classroom settings that are socially just and harmonious.

The simplest way to describe care ethics is an encounter or connection between two human beings. According to Davids (2018), teachers have to demonstrate this particular democratic principle so that learners understand it and behave in the same way in return. It is important to remember that caring is a solution that cannot be accomplished quickly (Noddings, 2010). However, the most important thing is to start showing care toward learners and build that foundation of trust with learners through listening and showing compassion towards them. By listening, teachers can establish whether there are any underlying issues that learners are facing such as problems at home, in the community, or even in the school itself that make learners behave a certain way.

The focus of care ethics must be considered in terms of the four ethical dimensions as espoused by Tronto (2005): attentiveness; responsibility; competence; and responsiveness. When teachers and principals incorporate care ethics for the maintenance of good discipline, it is important that they take the necessary steps to ensure that it is done correctly. Using care ethics in the classroom and in the school as a whole requires from teachers and principals to listen to the stories that learners convey to them. Listening attentively will provide teachers with the necessary information they require to recognise the needs of the learner. Realising the needs of



learners will enable teachers to make an informed decision on determining how to respond to the learner, keeping in mind that the teacher might not always know how to respond, but in their response, they will maintain the caring relation (Noddings, 2012). Once the teacher responds, the needs of the learner will be met with the necessary expertise that the teacher has responded with. Thereafter, the cared-for, who is the learner will respond to the care that was received (Ikechukwu and Ndubisi, 2023).

Central to this study is using care ethics as a new consideration in managing disciplinary problems in schools, but also so that poor discipline can be minimised by preventing it before it occurs instead of managing it, which is the problem that schools are currently facing. Hence, a new approach is necessary because, despite all the disciplinary policies and measures that schools have, they are still battling disciplinary problems. However, for this approach to be realistic, teachers and principals must put in the effort. In doing so, they must consider that a learning environment where learners feel safe to take risks regarding their academics, requires for teachers and principals to practice an ethics of care (Charney et al. 2002). Once schools are willing to accept this different approach, they will no longer have to default to quick-fix control measures to gain the cooperation of learners. (Bondy et al. 2007). They will then be able to experience classrooms that is less disruptive and easier to control.

For this harmonious setting to occur, schools must show that they care, not only for the learners but for the future of the learner. By doing this, they have an opportunity to change learners' perspectives of where they envision themselves in the future and how many other possibilities there are in the world other than being stuck in one's current difficult circumstances. Teachers and principals can change lives, and it can be done through intentionally showing care towards learners at school.

## **5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter analysed the data that was presented in Chapter 4. The discussion was framed around teachers, principals, and parent SGB members' perceptions and experiences of managing poor discipline in schools. And comparisons were made to the existing literature discussed in Chapter 2.

Emerging themes were highlighted, and the findings revealed that disciplinary problems might emanate from the community and the home environment. Furthermore, teachers and principals tend to manage disciplinary problems with short-term solutions. Even though all schools have

disciplinary policies and procedures that might assist with managing poor discipline and could provide evidence, they lack consistency in using them effectively. This chapter concludes by considering a different approach – an ethics of care - to managing poor discipline so that it could be prevented from the onset.

## **CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 5 analysed and discussed the collected data, while Chapter 6 examined the implications for schools and policy and offered recommendations for further studies. This study is aimed at investigating how schools manage disciplinary problems at public schools. The research question that guided this study was:

- How do teachers manage and respond to disciplinary problems at four schools in Cape Town?
- What kinds of disciplinary problems do schools typically encounter?
- How might an ethics of care assist teachers and principals with school disciplinary problems?

This study originated from personal experience as I recently graduated with my bachelor's in education degree and started teaching at the high school level, where I realised that no amount of tertiary education could have possibly prepared me for the disciplinary problems that we, as teachers, experience daily.

Initially, I started this study as one-sided as I wanted to insert my feelings and perspectives into the study. As time passed, I realised that there are notable challenges, as discussed in the literature review, that learners experience which cause them to behave poorly. However, with all the duties teachers and principals have, it is indeed difficult to pay attention to every learner's circumstance, even though this might help eliminate or eradicate problems that might arise from the beginning. Unfortunately, it is only when a learner misbehaves that it becomes clear that there might be other factors influencing their behaviour.

My experience when visiting schools for data collection purposes, as well as my own experience being a novice teacher, is that all teachers experience disciplinary problems at some point in their teaching career. It has become somewhat easier for some who have been in the profession for a long time because they have figured out strategies that work for them over the years. However, it became clear that all participants used different methods to manage poor discipline among certain learners.

## 6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Alongside teaching the curriculum, managing disciplinary problems in schools has always become one of the core responsibilities of principals and teachers. Over the years, it has become more difficult to manage poor discipline because teachers lack effective classroom management skills, and many external factors influence learners to behave as they do, over which teachers and principals have no control. Coming up with new and improved strategies to manage poor discipline post-corporal punishment is stressful and time-consuming as the shift to a democratic South Africa included the prohibition of corporal punishment. Unfortunately, no one-size-fits-all method can be used for all individuals in every situation. Critical to the findings in this study is the fact that disciplinary policies are not used consistently in some schools as a method to help improve overall discipline in schools. It has become clear that teachers who were in the profession before the banning of corporal punishment, and even those who recently started their career, require a lot of training on managing disciplinary problems effectively, in addition to the strategies they are currently using.

The key findings can be summarised as follows:

- Poor discipline in South African schools is a huge concern because teachers and principals are struggling to come up with new ideas on how to manage discipline effectively after corporal punishment has been abolished. The result from this study indicates that all teachers use different methods of dealing with poor discipline when they arise. Some of these strategies align with the ‘Alternatives to Corporal Punishment’ policy that the Department of Basic Education has suggested to guide teachers in managing discipline. However, teachers feel that they have to develop short-term solutions to eliminate disciplinary problems to get through their curriculum. Furthermore, the study suggests that the code of conduct that the SGB creates should guide the school in developing environments conducive to teaching and learning. Having said that, teachers and principals feel that this policy can reduce disciplinary problems but only if all teachers and principals consistently use the policy.
- Teachers and principals have listed several disciplinary problems that they experience daily. Many of these are similar in both primary and high schools. The research suggests that learners tend to misbehave at school due to external factors such as experiences at home, in the community, and even in school, which cause them to behave in a particular way or to do certain things at school that are not allowed. There are concerns that poor

discipline is very difficult to manage in high schools because the learners come from primary schools where they behaved poorly, and in high school, they continue with these same practices.

- Regardless of policies, whether from the national Department of Basic Education, the Western Cape Education Department, or school-based, such as code of conduct for learners, all schools in this study experienced an array of disciplinary problems. These findings ranged from minor to very serious and, depending on the nature of the transgressions, had varying degrees of impact on teachers and their capacity to teach.
- The data suggests that implementing disciplinary policies can significantly improve discipline if all teachers and principals use policies consistently. This means that all cases, whether big or small, must be dealt with according to the sanctions stipulated in the code of conduct.
- In response to the daily disciplinary problems experienced in South Africa, I have considered an ethic of care as espoused by Noddings (2005). An ethics of care relies on adopting a different approach not only to how learners are disciplined, but how they are generally treated in the classroom. This approach requires teachers and principals to become more invested in the lives of the learners because research argues that learners experience many negative challenges outside of school, which influence how they behave. This means that teachers and principals must be attentive to the social realities of learners and be open to listening to learners and spend more time talking to them about their personal lives so that learners can see that they care, and in return, teachers can understand what they are going through and from where the problem emanates. By instilling an ethics of care, learners can experience what it means to be attended to, listened to, and be cared for. These are all valuable principles in preparing young people for what it means to be a democratic citizen.

### **6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS**

The study has revealed the following implications for schools that teachers and principals should consider. Although the primary objective of schools is to ensure that teaching and learning happen every day, it is unavoidable that poor discipline amongst learners can disrupt the teaching and learning programme. With this in mind, teachers and principals must realise that punitive disciplinary measures will not necessarily change the poor behaviour of some learners. There are two major concerns with punitive measures, such as corporal punishment. Firstly, it teaches learners that violence can be used as a disciplinary measure. This creates huge contradictions for schools when they condemn bullying or other types of violence. It cannot be that on the one hand schools dispense violence, and on the other hand punish learners who resort to violence.

Secondly, as reported by participants, the same learners commit the same transgressions despite punishment and disciplinary procedures. The conclusion can be drawn that punitive measures do not necessarily lead to changed behaviour in learners. It is important to be mindful that short-term disciplinary measures teachers and principals use take up the bulk of the time teachers have invested in planning. It also compromises those learners who come to school to learn and are willing to participate in lessons actively. Moreover, the learners who come to learn each day might feel neglected because the teacher spends ample time with those who do not want to learn and continue to disrupt the class. This can cause those learners to feel discouraged because they do not get the attention they deserve from the teacher, and they will eventually end up not participating.

Hence, schools must consider different methods and more democratic approaches such as the ethics of care that this study suggests. While caring and listening to learners may be important for the cultivation of democratic citizenship, it is important to note what the implications of using ethics of care might be. Teachers and principals might be resistant or unwilling to involve themselves in learners' personal lives because they might feel that they do not possess the necessary skills to respond to what the learners are telling them. They might not have sufficient time to attend to learners' stories during the academic day. Teachers and principals might be reluctant to use this strategy because they do not want learners to depend on them whenever they go through something. After all, it might become a burden to them as they too have their own personal problems to deal with, and it may be too much to take responsibility for others' problems because learners will feel that teachers and principals should offer help if they are

listening to their stories. Furthermore, an ethics of care does not assure teachers and principals that the learners will not repeat the same behavioural problems after listening to their stories.

## **6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

In any institution, policies play a crucial role in maintaining the values and standards of that particular institution. They also set expectations for all stakeholders and provide a framework for teachers and learners to follow, guiding their conduct within the institution's environment.

The code of conduct created by the School Governing Body (SGB) and other disciplinary policies play a crucial role in maintaining a positive learning environment. However, the study has revealed the following implications for policy. Disciplinary policies are created but not familiar to teachers and learners because they are often lengthy documents, and it is time-consuming to acquaint oneself with them. Therefore, many teachers and principals are not consistent with it because they are unaware of what the policy says to begin with. They tend to become 'hidden policies' and end up being stored in an office as they are often only created because it is a constitutional rule that each school must have these policies in place.

The implications for policies such as the 'Alternatives to corporal punishment' (DoBE, 2000) is that it could be a policy that has many measures that could work to manage discipline effectively, but schools do not take the time to attend or to create workshops to help teachers understand these policies and how they can implement it. Thus, it ends up being completely ignored. Disciplinary policies could be considered of no real value, or pointless if teachers and principals do not support each other or work together to attain a common goal which is: a well-rounded, disciplined school.

## **6.5 POTENTIAL SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTION**

This research has focussed on how schools manage disciplinary problems, focusing on introducing a new approach to managing poor discipline. The study was interested in whether policies that schools and the Department of Education have created to assist with reducing disciplinary problems at all. In addition, the research suggests why learners might be ill-disciplined at school and consider other factors such as the home environment, the community, and the school itself.

In recent years, little research has been done on effectively managing poor discipline in schools. This has led to a situation where it seems that all parties involved have exhausted their ideas.

More research must be conducted in this area to assist teachers in spending less time dealing with disciplinary issues and more time teaching the curriculum. This can reduce teachers' stress and lack of motivation, allowing them to come up with innovative ways of teaching topics that learners may find unimportant.

Stakeholders can use the study's finding to understand the increased difficulties involved in teaching and learning for teachers. Additionally, the research can help parents and guardians understand the types of disciplinary issues that learners tend to exhibit in schools and why it is challenging for teachers and principals to address them in the classroom effectively. This study makes a significant contribution in terms of helping teachers see that they, too, need to become the change in the classroom. Although the suggestion of implementing care ethics into schools seems like a long-term solution, learners can easily see when a teacher starts to show care, and in return their behaviour changes as well.

The purpose of this study is not to assume that demonstrating care toward students will automatically improve their situations at home or in the community. However, starting with small acts of kindness can encourage students to shift their mindset and recognise that their current circumstances are not the result. They can realise that there are people, such as teachers and other stakeholders, who are willing to assist them in overcoming their challenges and becoming better citizens of the country in the future.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

The findings are limited to the study's focus which is the experience of principals, teachers, and SGB members of how discipline is managed in four South African schools. Accordingly, my recommendations are limited to the study's focus.

- Future studies should focus more on whether schools use other policies created by the Department of Basic Education such as the 'Alternatives to Corporal Punishment' policy.
- Further studies should assess the effects on parents and guardians of learners who continuously misbehave.
- Further studies must investigate the impact on the learners who come to school to learn and who are well-behaved.
- Further studies consider the development of policy training programmes for principals and teachers to support good discipline implementation.



## **6.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided a summary of the whole study and the conclusions. Furthermore, based on the findings and conclusions, I believe that I have presented relevant recommendations on how teachers can be assisted in overcoming the challenges of managing poor learner disciplinary problems in South African schools.

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## Appendix A

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**You are invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information below which will explain the details of this research project.**

**Please feel free to contact the researchers about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are completely satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved.**

**Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to participate. In other words, you may choose to take part, or not. Saying no will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever.**

**You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part initially.**

**The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research at Stellenbosch University has approved this study (Project ID #26264]. We commit to conduct the study according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the South African Department of Health Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Studies (2015) and The Western Cape Education Department.**

**1.**

#### **WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS STUDY?**

**This research study is conducted by Jillian- Loren Thieras.**

**The researcher is from the department of policy studies at Stellenbosch University.**

2.

**WHY DO WE INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**

You have been deliberately included to participate because you play a huge role in managing disciplinary problems at school.

3.

**WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH PROJECT ABOUT?**

The project aims at investigating how principals and teachers manage disciplinary problems in South African public schools. I am interested in this study because since corporal punishment has been abolished, teachers and principals have been struggling to come up with alternative ways to manage discipline in the classroom and in schools in general. My study relies on a combination of interviews, observations, and the analysis of school-based disciplinary policies. Interviews will be held with one SGB member, one principal and four teachers at each of the four schools where research will take place. The observations method is used to collect data about people, processes, and cultures. This form of collecting data will help me to document and gain more insights into what happens daily in the educational setting – that is, how learners conduct themselves. I plan to observe the punctuality with regards to arriving at school and class; learner conduct themselves during break times; and whether learners are in class when they are supposed to be. My observations will be limited to the school domain and not the classroom as it is likely that learners will not conduct themselves as they typically would in my presence. However, I do intend on observing learners' access to school and their classrooms from a distance to limit any disturbances that my presence may cause.

4.

**WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will only be asked to participate in an interview.

5.

**ARE THERE ANY RISKS IN MY TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

There are no risks involved should the participant decide to take part in this study. The participant will remain anonymous, as well as the name of the school.

6.

**WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

You will not benefit from taking part in this study however your input will be highly appreciated.

7.

**WILL I BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY AND ARE THERE ANY COSTS INVOLVED?**

Participants will NOT be paid to take part in this study.

8.

**WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO MY INFORMATION?**

Any information you share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected.

**Data will be stored on my PC which is password protected and will be loaded onto google drive.**

**Participants will not be identified in the research report.**

**Data will not be shared with third party members.**

**Personal information will not be disclosed.**

**Participants will have the opportunity to review the information that they have given.**

**9.**

#### **HOW DO I MAKE CONTACT WITH THE RESEARCHERS?**

**If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Jillian- Loren Thieras at 19452292@sun.ac.za, and/or the study supervisor Nuraan Davids at nur@sun.ac.za**

**10.**

#### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

##### **DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT**

**As the participant, I declare that:**

•

**I have read this information and consent form, or it was read to me, and it is written in a language in which I am fluent and with which I am comfortable.**

•

**I have had a chance to ask questions and I am satisfied that all my questions have been answered**

•

**I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary, and I have not been pressurised to take part.**

•

**I may choose to leave the study at any time and nothing bad will come of it – I will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.**

•

**I agree that the interview with me can be [video-recorded / audio-recorded].**

**By signing below, I \_\_\_\_\_ (name of participant) agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Jillian- Loren Thieras.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant Date**

##### **DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER**

**As the researcher, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:**



**The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.**

**I did/did not use an interpreter. (If an interpreter is used then the interpreter must sign the declaration below.)**

---

**Signature of Principal Investigator Date**

---

**Signature of Interpreter (if applicable) Date**

## Appendix B



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UNIVERSITY

### CONFIRMATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

17 January 2023

Project number: 26264

Project Title: Considering an ethics of care in managing disciplinary problems at four Cape town schools

Dear Miss JL Thieras

**Identified supervisor(s) and/or co-investigator(s):**

Prof N Davids

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 29/11/2022 22:03 was reviewed and approved by the Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE).

Your research ethics approval is valid for the following period:

| Protocol approval date (Humanities) | Protocol expiration date (Humanities) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 27 October 2022                     | 26 October 2025                       |

## **INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.
2. Your approval is based on the information you provided in your online research ethics application form. If you are required to make amendments to or deviate from the proposal approved by the REC, please contact the REC: SBE office for advice:  
[applyethics@sun.ac.za](mailto:applyethics@sun.ac.za)
3. Always use this project ID number (26264) in all communications with the REC: SBE concerning your project.
4. Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, and monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process, where required.

## **RENEWAL OF RESEARCH BEYOND THE EXPIRATION DATE**

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the project approval period expires if renewal of ethics approval is required.

If you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE to close the active REC record for this project.

### **Project documents approved by the REC:**

| Document Type              | File Name                                      | Date       | Version |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Data collection tool       | Observation guidelines                         | 03/09/2022 |         |
| Data collection tool       | Interview Guide                                | 06/09/2022 |         |
| Data collection tool       | Observation guidelines                         | 23/09/2022 |         |
| Data collection tool       | Interview Guide                                | 23/09/2022 |         |
| Proof of permission        | Research approval letter_Jillian-Loren Thieras | 23/09/2022 | 1       |
| Proof of permission        | JILLIAN THIERAS RESEARCH                       | 28/09/2022 | 1       |
| Proof of permission        | Signed permission slip for Ms J Thieras        | 28/09/2022 | 1       |
| Proof of permission        | Signed permission slip for Ms J Thieras        | 28/09/2022 | 1       |
| Proof of permission        | doc00309420220926073515                        | 28/09/2022 | 1       |
| Proof of permission        | 20220928112224935                              | 28/09/2022 | 1       |
| Proof of permission        | Signed permission slip for Ms J Thieras        | 28/09/2022 | 1       |
| Proof of permission        | Signed permission slip for Ms J Thieras        | 28/09/2022 | 1       |
| Default                    | TEMPLATE FOR RESPONSE LETTER                   | 28/09/2022 | 1       |
| Research Protocol/Proposal | Jillian Thieras - (Research Proposal 2022)     | 01/11/2022 | 1       |
| Budget                     | Budget outline                                 | 01/11/2022 | 1       |
| Default                    | TEMPLATE FOR RESPONSE LETTER                   | 01/11/2022 | 2       |
| Informed Consent Form      | SU HUMANITIES Consent form template_Written    | 29/11/2022 | 1       |
| Default                    | TEMPLATE FOR RESPONSE LETTER                   | 29/11/2022 | 3       |

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at [applyethics@sun.ac.za](mailto:applyethics@sun.ac.za) Sincerely,

Mrs Clarissa Robertson ([cgraham@sun.ac.za](mailto:cgraham@sun.ac.za))

Secretariat: Social, Behavioral and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE)

*National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.  
The Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) 2015.  
Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external*

## Appendix C



### Directorate: Research

[meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za)

Tel: +27 021 467 2350

Fax: 086 590 2282

Private Bag x9114, Cape

Ms Jillian-Loren Thieras

**Dear Jillian-Loren Thieras,**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: CONSIDERING AN ETHICS OF CARE IN MANAGING DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS AT FOUR CAPE TOWN SCHOOLS.**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.

3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **23 September 2022 till 30 April 2023**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Mr M Kanzi at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education  
Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,  
Meshack Kanzi

**Directorate: Research  
DATE: 23 September 2022**



## Appendix D

EDUCATION Department Name | Education Policy Studies

18 August 2022

The Principal

**Masters Student: Ms Jillian Thieras**

This serves to confirm that Ms Jillian Thieras is registered as a full-time Masters student in the Department of Education Policy Studies, Faculty of Education.

Her proposed research title is:

**Considering an ethics of care in managing disciplinary problems at four Cape Town schools**

She would hereby like to request permission to conduct research at your school, which would involve conducting interviews with the principal, selected teachers, and SGB members.

Please be assured that confidentiality and anonymity of all research data are ensured through strict adherence to the criteria, as stipulated by the Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University.

Ms Thieras will be able to address any arising questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely

**Prof. Nuraan Davids**

---

Department name | Education Policy Studies

forward together  
sonke siya phambili  
saam vorentoe

+27 21 808 2409 | [nur@sun.ac.za](mailto:nur@sun.ac.za) | [www.sun.ac.za](http://www.sun.ac.za)

Private Bag X1 | Matieland 7602 | South Africa |

## **Appendix E**

### Interview Guide

Jillian- Loren Thieras

#### **Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been a SGB member?
2. How long have you been a SGB member at this school?
3. How would you describe the school and the community which it serves?
4. Does the school enjoy parental or community involvement and support?
5. What are the typical challenges in the community that you think influences learners at your school?
6. What kinds of disciplinary problems do you face at school?

7. How do you respond to these disciplinary problems?
8. What type of school- based policies are in place, and do they help reduce disciplinary problems at school?
9. What is your view on the use of care ethics to assist schools with disciplinary problems?

## Appendix F

Observation guidelines:  
Jillian-Loren Thieras

Observation will be done from a distance as learners will not conduct themselves in the same manner in my presence. Therefore, observation will not be done in the classroom but in the school domain.

The following will be observed:

1. The punctuality of the learners
2. Learners conduct during break times.
3. Whether learners are in class when they are supposed to be

This form of collecting data will help me to document and gain more insights into what happens daily in the educational setting – that is, how learners conduct themselves and how teachers respond to any problematic behaviour. I plan to observe learner punctuality with regards to arriving at school and class; learner conduct during break times, and whether learners are in class when they are supposed to be. My observations will be limited to the school domain and not the classroom as it is likely that learners will not conduct themselves as they typically would in my presence. However, I do intend on observing learners' access

to school and their classrooms from a distance to limit any disturbances that my presence may cause.

## APPENDIX G



### Language editing certificate

This serves as confirmation that I, Lize Vorster, performed the language editing and technical formatting of Jillian-Loren Thieras' thesis entitled: 'Considering an ethics of care in managing disciplinary problems at four Cape Town schools'.

Editing is done in track changes, and the student has final control over accepting or rejecting changes at their own discretion. Technical formatting entails standardising the text to the institution's technical requirements.



## APPENDIX H

### Turnitin Originality Report

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