



ANALYSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISCIPLINE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL IN TWEEFONTEIN-D: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Discipline is one of the key factors that a learner needs to reach optimal potential, and to achieve positive academic results. It is unfortunate that many learners lack discipline which in turn affects their habits, for example, some learners absent themselves from school, some prefer bunking classes to play outside, some lack a culture of reading, and all these behaviours result in poor academic performance. Although discipline has long been investigated as a key factor that influences learners' academic outcomes in secondary schools, little is found about discipline in primary schools, especially in the Foundation Phase. To obtain more insight into the dilemma of discipline, the main research question therefore asks, 'To what level does discipline affect learner academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D?' This study analyses discipline and its impact on academic performance in primary schools, specifically in Foundation Phase, providing insight into challenges and possible solutions. Furthermore, the study aimed to determine the extent to which indiscipline influences learner academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D. For this qualitative study, the researcher collected data through individual interviews, a literature study, observations, and a semi-structured focus group using open-ended questions. This study used purposive sampling, where three educators teaching Foundation Phase in a rural context, were selected to study their experiences regarding discipline and its impact on academic performance. Findings included that the relationship that exists between discipline and academic performance, is that discipline has an influence on academic achievements. Regarding the level of indiscipline in schools, and the influence of context and community, public primary schools experience acts of indiscipline more often than disciplined acts. Significantly, educators find disciplinary methods suggested by government, to be ineffective and this impacts negatively on learning. Various strategies, useful for all stakeholders in education, but specifically educators, are suggested to curb indiscipline in the specific context. Schools must learn to focus on instilling discipline in learners at an early age to ensure academic excellence of their learners across all grades.

Keywords – Discipline, Indiscipline, Academic performance, Disciplinary measures, Foundation Phase.

CHAPTER 1

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This study investigated the relationship between discipline and academic performance, particularly in primary school, focusing in the foundation phase. This study is underpinned on the experiences of the researcher in the five years of teaching. The researcher observed that learners' discipline has an influence in academic performance of learners. Thus, leading to the study of the relationship between discipline and academic performance of learners in the foundation phase.

The observation of the researcher led to the theory that the instilling of discipline to learners from the foundation phase could result to learners' attaining positive academic results throughout their schooling years.

In loco parentis is a recognised principle that is set to guide educators in keeping classrooms harmonious and productive, therefore educators as guardians of learners are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the discipline of learners. The roles of educators include facilitating learning, and creating a positive and supportive classroom environment. According to Weinstein, Husmana and Dierking., (2016, pp. 293-318) the support of the educator and the classroom climate impact learners' motivation and engagement towards learning in a significant manner. This therefore means that lack of discipline is a force acting against successful executions of these roles and learner progress in class. A word used to describe lack of discipline is indiscipline. Oxford Languages (2021) defines indiscipline as the lack of self-control or obedience, which result in disruptive or disorderly behaviour. Omote, et al., (2015) defines indiscipline as any deed that is in violation of the set rules in a society or organisation. In learners, acts of indiscipline can be displayed in various ways such as gangsterism, vandalising of school property, stealing, disobedience, cultism, immoral behaviour, lateness, and so forth (Bouffard, et al., 2018; Ali, et al., 2014). The learners in the school that is the subject of this study, express indiscipline in the areas of stealing, disobedience to educators and other learners, bullying and late coming.

Oyewumi and Oladimeji (2021) in their study reveal that indiscipline can affect individuals, groups, and organisational performance, resulting in high failure rate, and unsuccessful teaching and learning. Mohammed, et al., (2019) supports the above mentioned arguments by stating that indiscipline can also lead to tension, conflict, and a negative environment in schools. Indiscipline in primary schools manifest in learners not getting along with other learners and learners not getting along with educators; thus creating tension among learners themselves and among learners and educators (Graziano & Raulston, 2019). Discipline in the context of schools refers to learners' behaving in a manner that conforms to the predetermined school rules and regulations (Ali, et al., 2014). However, in reality discipline means more than observing rules and regulations, it extends to the learners' ability to distinguish between what is right and wrong (Gitome , et al., 2013).

There are various studies examining the relationship between discipline and learners' academic performance. These studies focus mainly on three aspects namely, learners' self-discipline, teachers' discipline strategies and classroom management, as well as academic self-regulation by the student. A study by Hui Geng and Han Wei (2023) which examined self-discipline as a concept and its relationship with academic achievement revealed that self-discipline assured more positive academic outcomes than high IQ levels. This finding means that learners with self-control are more likely to attain positive academic results.

Another relevant study is, a study by Mehrak and Matemeh, (2015) which explored the role of discipline strategies and classroom management by educators, revealed that improved academic results are closely related to effective classroom management skills, which means that a classroom that is well-disciplined can influence academic performance positively.

Lastly, a study by Galla, et al., (2014) investigated the relationship between learner achievement and academic self-regulation. The academic self-regulation refers to the learners' skill to plan, set goals, and constantly monitor their learning. This research revealed that learners that possess academic self-regulation abilities perform better academically.

The relationship between discipline and learner academic performance is a complex subject, but as revealed by the above-mentioned studies, there is a positive relationship existing between the two concepts. Insufficient information has been provided about the existing relationship between discipline and learner academic performance in foundation phase, the existing relationship between indiscipline and learner academic performance, and how to address this predicament. In analysing the relationship between discipline and academic performance in the foundational phase, the researcher aimed to fill the gaps mentioned above in this study.

The following section outlines the problem statement, research questions, aims and objectives of the study, theoretical framework, preliminary literature review, proposed methodology and ethical considerations.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Discipline in the context of education refers to the structures and systems set in place to create a conducive learning environment within learning institutions (Charles, 2015). Discipline involves creating and enforcing rules, consequences and expectations placed to ensure positive behaviour from students (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016). Conversely, academic performance refers to the quantifiable achievements and outcomes of learners as they pursue knowledge and skills (Rana, 2017). Academic performance comprise of numerous aspects such as attendance, participation in class, test scores, and the overall grades that demonstrate knowledge and competency in all subjects (Rana, 2017).

Discipline is one of the key factors that a learner needs in order to be educated, and to achieve positive academic results (Weli & Nnaa, 2020). The premise of this study is due to the observation that many learners lack discipline, which in turn affects their habits, for example, some learners absent themselves from school, some prefer bunking classes to play outside, some lack the culture of reading, and all these behaviours result in poor academic performance. The observation resulted to the study of the relationship between discipline and learners' academic performance in a public rural primary school located in Tweefontein-D in the Province of Mpumalanga.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The number of cases and complaints received from educators prompted the following questions:

❖ **Primary research question:**

- To what level does indiscipline affect learner academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D?

❖ **Secondary research questions:**

- How do educators in this school experience learners' discipline?
- How effective are the government approved legal methods for managing discipline?
- What causes learner indiscipline in this school?
- How do the schools disciplinary measures relate with the school's academic performance?

❖ **Aim of this study:**

The South African constitutional right in basic education enforces legal obligations and responsibilities that ensure learners' well-being within the school premises (Dwidvedi & Kumar, 2023). A learner's indiscipline could adversely affect his/her academic results. This study aims to determine the extent to which discipline influences learner academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D.

❖ **Objectives of this study:**

The objective of this study is to inspect and explore the relationship between discipline and learners' academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D. Specifically focusing on the following:

- Investigate how educators in this school experience learners' discipline.
- Investigate the effectiveness of the legal methods for managing discipline approved by the government.
- Exploring the causality of indiscipline in the classroom and the school at large.
- Investigate how the schools disciplinary measures relate with the school's academic performance.

1.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (BEHAVIOURISM)

In their nature, theories are written to predict, understand, and explain phenomena, and in many instances, they are written to extend and challenge what is already known through set limits of binding assumptions (Allen, 2017). A theoretical framework is the structure holding or supporting a theory of a study, introducing and describing the theory, explaining why the research problem is being studied (Swanson, 2013). A theoretical framework comprises of notions accompanied by their definitions and references to relevant academic literature and existing theory used for that particular study (Ravitch & Matthew, 2017). Furthermore, it must show an understanding of concepts and theories relating to the topic of the study. A theoretical framework may not be readily found in literature but, it calls for a researcher to do course reading of research studies, specifically looking at analytical models and theories that are relevant to the study (Brownell & Kloser, 2015). Behaviourism is one of the significant theoretical frameworks existing in the education field. It highlights the significance of observable behaviours as indicators of learning and postulates that these behaviours in their nature can be fashioned and modified using various techniques and mechanisms for reinforcement (Skinner, 1953). This theoretical framework has played an essential role in the development of learning and teaching strategies, predominantly in the field of instructional design (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

The use of negative and positive reinforcement to eradicate undesired behaviours and encourage the desired ones is one of the key principles of behaviourism (Skinner, 1953). According to Ormrod (2015), this principle is implemented worldwide in schools, where educators use punishment and rewards for the motivation of learners and to promote learning. Furthermore, instructional design models are influenced by, behaviourism, i.e. behaviourist model of instruction (Dick & Carey, 1990). This model stresses the importance of setting clear systematic instructions, learning objectives, and assessment designed to assess the achievability of learning outcomes (Dick & Carey, 1990). The framework of the study is based on behaviourism as a theoretical framework, this framework influences instructional design models, as well as teaching and learning strategies. Discipline requires instilling, which therefore makes this theoretical framework more suitable for this study.

1.5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is conducted to obtain second hand information from other studies based on the same topic in order to find the research gap among the studies. Documents is the term used to refer to written records. McMillan (2023) asserts that documents offering first-hand information achieved through interviews or observations are referred to as direct experience and they are regarded as primary sources. Documents on topics relating to what is being studied are collected to attain second hand information, these documents are regarded as secondary sources for they are only used to gain additional information on the phenomena that is being studied (Abari & Akinyemi, 2023). These documents comprise of research articles, files, newspaper articles, books, photographs, letters, newsletters, minutes, and diaries. Audio recordings, films, and videos are also used and are referred to as non-print materials (Schurink, 1998, p. 284; Abari & Akinyemi, 2023, p. 263).

To attain knowledge and understanding of researchers who conducted studies based on topics relating to this study, documents such as newspapers, books, thesis, articles, and letters were, collected and studied. Audio recordings, films, and videos relating to the topic of this study were also useful in attaining additional information. Data from all these sources was collected and integrated to form the foundation supporting this study. The main aim was to explore the literature relating to the research question, that is; “to what extent does discipline affect learners’ academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D”, the focus was on finding answers to the following questions:

- How do educators in this school experience learners’ discipline?
- How effective are the government approved legal methods for managing discipline?
- What causes learner indiscipline in this school?
- How do the school's disciplinary measures relate with the school's academic performance?

The following subheadings best provide answers to the above-mentioned questions:

1.5.1. Educators’ discipline experiences

It is very difficult to measure the level of indiscipline in schools, as it varies from school to school, depending on various factors such as the environment of the school, cultural context, and learner population. Nonetheless, there are quite a lot of studies providing researchers with insights into the nature of indiscipline and its prevalence in schools. Davis and Wilson (2022) conducted a qualitative study where educators raised concerns regarding the levels of indiscipline and its external factors towards learners. They mentioned factors that greatly contribute towards increased acts of indiscipline in schools such as, exposure to trauma or violence, family dynamics, and socio-economic challenges. A study by Johnson and Brown (2020) revealed that acts of indiscipline in schools often manifest in forms of aggressive behaviour and bullying, about 30% of learners acknowledged participating in bullying behaviours, whilst 20% of learners testified on suffering from bullying. Smith, (2019) conducted a national survey in which about 65% of educators attested to experiencing disruptive behaviours in classrooms such as learner disrespect towards educators and peers, noncompliance towards school rules, and learners talking out of turn. These studies provide a glimpse of the nature and level of indiscipline experienced by educators in schools. However, it is significant to note that manifestations of indiscipline and its prevalence differs from school to school due to regions and settings.

South African educators also face difficulties in keeping discipline in classrooms or at their schools some of the difficulties differ from those faced by the global community due to the socio-economic factors that are the result of apartheid, high rate of crime and violence, and cultural beliefs that differ from those of the outside world. A study by Nkosi and Mncube (2020) supports this statement by revealing problems such as community violence, socio-economic factors, and lack of parental involvement as the key factors of indiscipline in South African schools. Educators who participated in a survey by Van Wyk (2019) stated the need of schools to have a positive school culture driven by strong leadership that sets behaviour expectations, that are clear and consequences and are constant in dealing with misbehaviour. This, therefore, proves that indiscipline is a problem in schools and needs to be eradicated.

1.5.2. The effectiveness of the government's legal methods for managing discipline.

Disciplinary methods are the tactics employed by an institution to deal with misconduct, facilitate personal growth, maintain order, and promote discipline within the institution (Smith, 2018; Johnson & Thomas, 2020). The government proposed issuing out verbal and written warnings, expulsion, suspension, time-outs, mentoring and counselling, and detentions (Goosen, 2023).

A verbal warning requires the educator to communicate with learners about their acts of indiscipline and the consequences that follow, this method is effective when addressing minor misconducts and is not an effective tool to address serious acts of misconduct (Waasdorp, et al., 2022). Written warnings outline the learners' acts of misconduct, consequences, and expectations as a sign of improvement (Williams & Heinemann, 2011). This method is effective, although its effectiveness entirely depends on the willingness of the learner to change. Expulsion is a severe disciplinary measure that a school can take, this method serves as the last resolution in dealing with serious cases of misconduct by removing the learner from the school premises permanently (Cornell, Gregory, Huang, 2013). This method is effective when dealing with a violent or dangerous learner. This method is not for learners who have displayed minor acts of misconduct. Suspension relates to a learner removed from school temporarily as a means of dealing with repeated or serious acts of indiscipline (Segalo, 2022). This method is effective although it deprives the learners a chance to learn, they miss out of school activities and learning during the period of the suspension. Time-out is another method of removing a learner from other learners placing them in a designated corner where the learner gets an opportunity to regain self-control, also providing the learner with an opportunity to reflect on their actions (Quetsch, et al., 2015). This method is effective in foundation phase and does not work on older learners.

All these proposed methods are effective, although they have limitations, each one's effectiveness is determined by the learners' age, determination to be disciplined, socio-economic status of the community, and cultural background of the learners and of the community. This could be the reason that indiscipline is still a subject of concern for educators.

1.5.3. Causes of learner indiscipline

It is very important that we acknowledge the fact that the causes of learner indiscipline are complex and differ between schools and individuals. Learner indiscipline in schools; can be influenced by various factors arising from internal or external factors. Common causes of learner indiscipline are lack of parental involvement, peer pressure and social influences, poor classroom management, lack of engagement and motivation, negative educator-learner relationship, socio-economic and cultural factors, and emotional and psychological factors.

- Lack of parental involvement happens when parents fail to engage actively in their children's education, provide discipline and proper guidance to benefit their performance in school, their involvement can greatly contribute to learner discipline (Smith , 2018).
- Peer pressure and social influence manifests themselves when the acts of indiscipline of a learner are driven by the desire of fitting in a certain social group or influenced by peers (Johnson, et al., 2020).
- Poor classroom management can lead to learner indiscipline; this includes not providing learners with clear and concise rules and regulations, and discipline strategies that are inconsistent (Jones, 2019).
- Learners who lack the zeal to engage or participate during lessons are most likely to display acts of indiscipline. These acts sometimes are, perpetrated by lack of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).
- When the relationship between a learner and an educator is negative or strained, the learner is most likely going to exhibit acts of indiscipline (Gallagher & Zhang, 2021).
- Cultural differences and Socio-economic gaps can contribute to learner indiscipline and may have an impact on the learners' behaviour (Briggs, et al., 2016).
- Learners with emotional problems such as low self-esteem, anxiety, or stress, may show signs of indiscipline in order to seek attention or use such behaviours as a coping mechanism (Huang & Russo, 2018).

In the case of South African schools, the above-mentioned factors do cause learner indiscipline in schools, but there are additional factors such as:

- Lack of strong disciplinary policies set to eradicate indiscipline in schools (Modiba & Monyokolo, 2018).
- Acts of indiscipline coursed by inadequate resources to run the school (Fleisch, 2008).
- Indiscipline caused by language barriers because of the diverse language backgrounds in South Africa, resulting in communication difficulties between educators and learners (Alexander, et al., 2018).
- Crime and violence that is problematic within South African communities ending up spilling into schools within the communities (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996).

There are many other causes of indiscipline in schools, and each one must be understood and have disciplinary measures best suited to eradicate it.

1.5.4. Relationship between academic performance and discipline

There is a positive relationship between discipline and academic performance described by numerous studies; these studies clearly highlight the impact of discipline towards learners' academic performance. A study by Rimm-Kaufman et al., (2014) support this statement by indicating that enhanced learner academic performance is attained when the classroom has a climate that is supportive and positive. Furthermore, learners with high self-discipline tend to attain test scores that are high and achieve positive academic results (Vazsonyi, et al., 2022; Vazsonyi, et al., 2017) . This positive correlation between academic performance and discipline is also visible in the South African schools. Mthethwa-Sommers & Shumba (2017) conducted a study that aimed at investigating the relationship between academic performance and discipline among Grade 9 learners in South Africa, their findings stated that self-disciplined learners produce exceptional academic results, perform better in assessment and obtain higher grades. Although, the study by Mthethwa-Sommers and Shumba, (2017) was conducted in a secondary school, it is possible that a similar study in the primary school would have produced similar results. Furthermore, Modiba (2019) added that South African schools that employ disciplinary strategies that are effective and uphold a climate that is positive towards discipline tend

to have positive learner academic performances. Mathebula and Modiba (2020) support the above-mentioned statement by stating that schools need to in-still discipline in learners to achieve academic success, specifically in rural schools that are resource constrained.

The reviewed literature on the topic of discipline and its impact on learners' performance relates to older learners. Very limited literature was found on the same topic in foundation phase learner performance. It is envisaged that this study on discipline and learner performance in foundation phase will be able to add on the scanty existing literature on this topic

METHODOLOGY

1.6. Research Design

This study employed the phenomenological research design. This is a research design used in humanism in order to try to understand human beings fully (Moller, 1995, p. 183). The research design of this study is underpinned by Moller's (1995) theory of retrogressive method that facilitates and attempts to understand human feeling, thoughts, experiences from events, cultural values, situations, and how they respond to situations challenging them directly. Furthermore, phenomenological research design is a qualitative design. The use of the phenomenological research design in this study is to gain understanding and describe how participants experience events. The study by Moller (1995) is used by most researchers due to its ability to get into the heads of participants in an attempt to try to learn and understand how they perceive the world. This study was therefore underpinned on Moller (1995) phenomena by investigating the phenomena of learner's experience, focusing on how they experience it and the meaning they give to that experience. The research focused on selected participants, but paid close attention to their individual experiences. This therefore made phenomenology suitable for this study.

1.6.1. Sampling

This study used purposive sampling. The researcher sampled individuals possessing the characteristics fitting what is being studied (McCombes, 2023, p. 207). Three educators

teaching in the foundation phase; were selected as a sample, the criterion used for their selection was their experiences regarding discipline and how it has affected their learners' academic performance. Three educators were identified as participants for the study. According to Onwuegbuzie (2016) three participants are sufficient in a phenomenological research study.

1.6.2. Data Collection

The collection of data was through individual interviews, literature study, observations, and a semi-structured focus group using open-ended questions. The interviews and focus group meeting took place at a rural primary school located in Tweefontein-D. It was highly expected that participants' responses will remit different results and views, thus the researcher was aware that the analysis of data could be somehow challenging in some parts of the study process.

1.6.3. Quality Criteria

Trustworthiness is a term referring to the quantity of similarities that exist between realities relating to the world and all descriptions used to describe what happens in the world (Ilhan, 2021). Ngulube (2015) states that trustworthiness can also refer to the value of truth contained in a study. Furthermore, he proposed concepts that a researcher needs to adhere to, when establishing trustworthiness which are, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. It can therefore be concluded that trustworthiness is an aspect that needs constant monitoring when conducting a study (Stahl & King, 2020). To ensure trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability, the monitoring of this study employed the study by (Ngulube, 2015).

1.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When conducting a study, participants are regarded as the essential part of a study. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggested four guidelines to ensure ethical considerations towards participants when conducting a study. The guidelines are accuracy, avoidance of deception, respect and consideration of privacy, and informed consent of participants. Suggestion: In order to facilitate the participants informed decisions making on their participation in the study, they need to be given the full information on the research and

interviews (Bhandari, 2024). Hence, full information concerning the study was, provided to participants in this study, also ensuring openness and not hiding any information of importance. All details in the consent letters served as a sign of assurance of their voluntary participation towards the benefit of the study. Furthermore, the necessary ethical clearance was sought from, the University of Mpumalanga's ethics committee, followed by the Mpumalanga Department of Education, and the principal of the school where the study was conducted.

1.8. CONCLUSION

Based on the existing studies, it is clear that discipline is a problem with no perfect solutions or recommendations to eliminate it for good from South African schools (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2023, p. 34). Indiscipline is a great concern for many educators, for it makes teaching and learning difficult, thus possibly impacting negatively on learner performance. There are suggestions proposed by researchers around the world on how to deal with indiscipline, but some are not effective in some settings due to the nature and state of the area, the community, and the upbringing of the children in those communities. Thus, there is room for more suggestions, more especially in rural areas, and which is where the strength of this study lies.

1.9. OUTLINE OF PROPOSED STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

Chapter 2: Literature review and Theoretical framework

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Data presentation and Analysis

Chapter 5: Discussion of findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 discussed the problem statement, research questions, aims and objectives of the study, theoretical framework, preliminary literature review, proposed methodology, and ethical considerations. Chapter 2 delves deeper into existing literature to uncover the relationship between discipline and academic performance.

This chapter furthermore provides the theoretical framework of this study in a detailed format. Regarding the theoretical framework, the researcher discussed the origins of the chosen framework, the epistemology, and the objectives of this theoretical framework. In relation to the literature review, the researcher discussed some of the experiences of other educators globally, as well as in South Africa concerning discipline. In addition, the efficacy of the proposed disciplinary methods, and the relationship between discipline and learner performance was investigated.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories in their nature are, written to predict, understand, and explain phenomena. In many instances, theories are, written in order to extend and to challenge what is already known through set limits of binding assumptions (Allen, 2017). Due to constant changes over a period of time, theories need to be extended or challenge with new studies as a foundation. Swanson (2013) supports by stating that a theoretical framework is the structure holding or supporting a theory of a study. It introduces and describes the theory by explaining why the research problem is studied. This done by exploring notions accompanied by their definitions and the use of existing theory to form references to relevant academic literature in order to give the study a base (Ravitch & Matthew, 2017). This is done to show an understanding of concepts and theories relating to the topic of the study.

The three main learning theories are behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism (Harasim, 2017). These theories each offer a distinct perspective on how learning occurs

and each has a unique implication for teaching and instructional design. Behaviourism disregards mental activities, and focuses on observable behaviours (Skinner, 1953). The focus in this study is on shaping and reinforcing behaviour to encourage repetition of good behaviour. Furthermore, in this theory, learning is a change in behaviour that results from stimulus response associations. These stimuli, are often reinforced by punishment or rewards (Skinner, 1953). The second theory, which is cognitivism, accentuates the role of mental processes when studying how people learn when exposed to some environments (Piaget, 1970). The focus here is on how the mind receives, organises, stores, and retrieves information. Furthermore, this theory asserts that learning involves constructing knowledge actively through the process of assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 1970). The third theory is constructivism, which postulates that learners construct their own knowledge and understanding of the world through experiences and reflecting on those experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory posits that learning is an active process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. Furthermore, the importance of cultural context and social interaction in cognitive development is emphasised (Vygotsky, 1978). The researcher chose behaviourism because in the selected school, behaviour was observed and the methods employed by educators to modify it, leading learners towards acquiring knowledge and attaining positive academic outcomes. Furthermore, the behaviourist theory is appropriate for this study because it states that the desired behaviour mushrooms when it is rewarded, and the undesired behaviour punished.

To find a theoretical framework, calls for a researcher to do a thorough literature search of research studies, to specifically look at analytical models and theories that are relevant to the study (Brownell & Kloser, 2015). After intensive reading of literature, the researcher decided that the behaviourist theory meets all the requirements as a theoretical framework to guide this study.

This theory is best suited to guide this study because it focuses on observable behaviours and how they can be shaped through reinforcement, punishment, and environmental control. Since discipline involves maintaining consistent behavioural patterns that contribute to academic success, the behaviourist principles provide a structured

framework for understanding and modifying learner behaviour. By employing reinforcement strategies, immediate feedback, and behavioural interventions, educators can promote disciplined behaviours that enhance learning outcomes. Additionally, behaviourism emphasises data-driven decision-making which allows for measurable analysis of how discipline impacts academic performance, making it an ideal theoretical foundation for this study.

2.2.1. THE ORIGIN OF BEHAVIOURIST THEORY

Thorndike (1898) introduced the concept of law and effect, which states that, any behaviour that has a progressive outcome is more likely to be repeated and any behaviour that has an undesirable outcome is less likely to be repeated. This notion therefore suggests that the origin of behaviourism dates back to the study of Edward L. Thorndike who was an educational psychologist. As the years went by, a perspective of a psychologist, John B. Watson (1913) made propositions that the study of psychology should solely focus on behaviours that are observable, became the groundwork for the behaviourist approach in the field of education. Watson (1913) stated that, observable behaviours be accurately studied and measured. Researchers in the education field later applied behaviourism through techniques like the operant conditioning and behaviour modification. For example, the operant conditioning developed by Skinner B.F. (1954) which proposed the use of punishments and rewards to control and shape behaviour within an educational setting.

A systematic theory developed by Hull (1943) known as, Hull's Drive Reduction Theory, expanded behaviourism by outlining the role of drives or physiological needs to motivate behaviour within a designated setting. His argument was that learning takes place when these drives are, reduced through reinforcements (Hull, 1943). In the case of discipline in relation to academic performance, undesirable behaviour will be eradicated and desired behaviour encouraged. Furthermore, Bandura (1977) expanded behaviourism by including observational learning by introducing the concept of Social Learning Theory. The argument in his theory is that people learn certain behaviours from other people through observations, where reinforcement serves as the key aspect in this process (Bandura, 1977). Lastly, Bruner (1961) through his theory of constructivism emphasised

the significance of scaffolding and reinforcement to shape behaviour. He argued that learning is a process where learners actively develop their understanding of the environment and social relationships around them through interactions (Bruner, 1961).

These theorists gave foundation to the origin of the behaviourism theory in education through the outlining of the basic principles such as consequences and reinforcement, to the multifaceted ideas relating to observational and social learning. They share the same ideas. The researcher of this study agrees with the ideas shared by these theorists, because they are crucial when studying the relationship between discipline and academic performance.

2.2.2. THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF BEHAVIOURISM

The epistemology of behaviourism is, centered on the belief that behaviours that are observable are, essential elements into understanding and shaping learning in the classroom (Smith & Brown, 2018). Watson's behaviourism, and Skinner's operant conditioning, and behaviourism in the classroom, form the epistemology of behaviourism. These are briefly described below;

2.2.2.1. Watson's Behaviourism

Watson's behaviourism states that learning comes as a result of, stimulus-response associations, where stimuli triggers associated actions that later result in behaviour automaticity (Smith, 2010). When analysing the relationship between discipline and academic performance, Watson's behaviourism is key in identifying the relationship between discipline and academic performance.

2.2.2.2. Skinner's Operant Conditioning

Skinner's operant conditioning argues that behaviour is fashioned through punishment and reinforcement, where good behaviour results in attaining rewards, and misbehaviour resulting in punishment (Jones, 2015). When analysing the relationship between discipline and academic performance, rewarding good behaviour and punishing bad behaviour helps in testing out proposed or derived strategies set in place to try and, attain a positive correlation between discipline and academic performance.

2.2.2.3. Behaviourism in the Classroom

Behaviourism influences classroom practices, where educators use techniques such as behaviour modifications and positive reinforcement to shape the behaviour of learners (Smith & Brown, 2018). Although Johnson (2012) argues that behaviourism neglects the cognitive aspects such as critical thinking and problem solving by oversimplifying the process of learning. For the purpose of this study, modifying and reinforcing behaviour is key in studying the relationship between discipline and academic performance.

These theories share the same belief, which purports that the modification of behaviour can be only through physical interactions. Constant correction and rewarding of good behaviour will automatically lead to good behaviour from learners. Although these theories do not reveal the relationship between discipline and academic performance, they show potential of usefulness in revealing the relationship between the two through constant modification of behaviour.

2.2.3. OBJECTIVES OF BEHAVIOURISM

Behaviourism is a psychological theory that has greatly influenced the education field. The objectives of behaviourism in education are fixated in understanding and reinforcing human behaviour through measurable and observable processes (Smith & Brown, 2018). Figure 1 below illustrates the objectives of Behaviourism

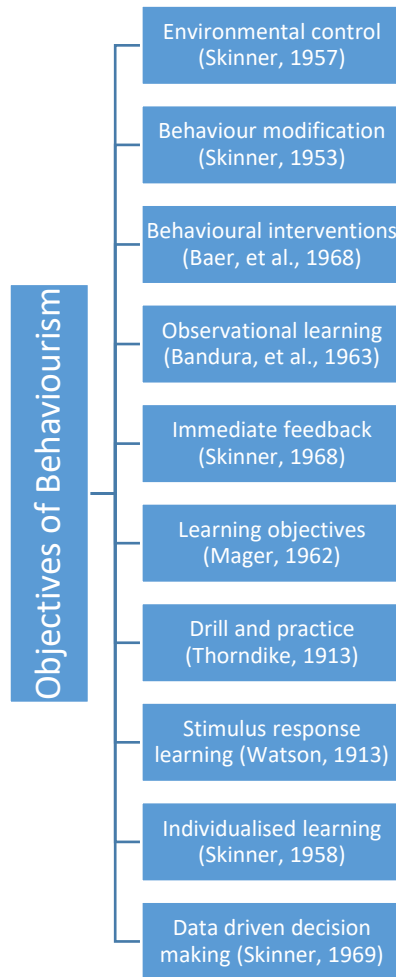


FIGURE 1: OBJECTIVES OF BEHAVIOURISM

Objectives of behaviourism provided by several researchers are, discussed below:

2.2.3.1. **Environmental Control**

The role of the environment is emphasised in behaviourism as an important element in shaping behaviour, where the positive learning environment created by educators minimises misbehaviour and supports the desired behaviour (Skinner, 1957). A positive learning environment is an environment that comprises of various factors that contribute to learners' classroom engagement and their overall well-being (Brown & Jones, 2019). The focus is on the classroom atmosphere, the relationship between learners and educators, supportive resources, and innovative teaching strategies (Johnson, 2020). On the other hand, a negative learning environment refers to an environment that has unclear expectations, an ineffective relationship between learners and educators, limited

resources, and bullying (Barker, 2016). The above-mentioned statements, confirm the conclusion that, school or classroom environment can influence behaviour positively or negatively, which can later determine the outcomes of learner performance.

Creating a controlled and structured environment is vital when fostering both discipline and academic performance. An environment with clear and reinforced expectations for behaviour supports better academic performance. Furthermore, this environment minimises distractions and promotes an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

2.2.3.2. Behaviour Modification

According to Skinner (1953) behaviourism is aimed at shaping and modifying the behaviour of learners through the use of punishment and reinforcement. This objective stresses the significance of eradicating undesirable behaviours through consequences and the use of positive reinforcement to encourage good behaviour. For instance, when a learner waits for their turn to speak without interrupting during a class discussion, the educator provides immediate positive reinforcement such as verbal praise. When a learner engages in disruptive behaviour, the educator implements a brief time-out as a form of punishment. When enforcing behaviour modification, educators need to apply evidence-based strategies to enhance the overall classroom experience and address challenging behaviours (Hendricks & Peterson, 2019). Evidence-based strategies refer to interventions and teaching methods supported by empirical research that demonstrates their effectiveness in improving academic performance. (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017; Anderson & Shattuck, 2012) . Furthermore, behaviour modification requires continuous monitoring and adjustments (Cooper, et al., 2021) . For example, using tokens to reward good behaviour if this strategy fails the educator will look for another one until the learner exhibits the desired behaviour. This is done to, regularly assess the effectiveness of interventions allowing educators to make necessary modifications based on the learners' responses.

Behaviour modification is central to both academic performance and discipline. By applying punishment and reinforcement, educators can influence learner behaviour. This ensures that learners exhibit disciplined behaviours that promote academic success. This

objective highlight how controlling learner's behaviour through behaviourist techniques can improve focus and effort in academic tasks, potentially enhancing performance.

2.2.3.3. Behavioural Interventions

Principles of behaviour analysis can be used to apply interventions in the classroom when addressing behavioural issues (Baer, et al., 1968) . Behavioural interventions are an objective of behaviourism which seeks to improve learners in order to attain a learning environment that is conducive. For example, educators can implement a token system. In this system, learners earn tokens for their positive behaviour such as completing assignments on time, showing kindness to peers, or participating in class discussions (Miller & Johnson, 2020). Tokens can be exchanged for privileges or rewards, providing learners with a tangible incentive for their positive behaviour. Furthermore, behavioural interventions can shape and modify behaviour to promote positive learning outcomes and enhance learning experiences for learners (van Rensburg, et al., 2024).

Behavioural interventions are directly linked to improving learner discipline, which in turn enhances academic excellences. When learners struggle with behaviour issues that disrupt learning, applying behavioural interventions helps learners regain focus. This therefore leads to better academic outcomes.

2.2.3.4. Observational Learning

According to Bandura (1963) behaviourism acknowledges the role of observational learning. Observational learning is an objective of behaviourism that fosters social learning by encouraging learners to learn through observing and imitating good behaviour in the classroom. For example, in a classic study, Bandura (1963) demonstrated observational learning by exposing children to aggressive behaviour. As a result, the children imitated the observed aggression, highlighting the influence of modelling on behaviour acquisition (Bandura, et al., 1963) . In a classroom situation, the educator may applaud and award good behaviour until all learners develop a desire to imitate that behaviour. A study by Williams et al., (2021) supports this theory by revealing that learners who learn through observing their peers show significant improvements in their academic performance compared to those relying on traditional methods.

Observational learning links with discipline and academic performance by encouraging learners to model the disciplined behaviours of their peers or educators. When learners observe others who demonstrate both strong discipline and academic success, they are more likely to replicate these behaviours.

2.2.3.5. Immediate Feedback

Behaviourism emphasises giving learners immediate feedback to help them improve their behaviour (Skinner, 1968). Opportune feedback is a facet of an immediate feedback, which encourages giving learners' feedback or critique whilst the act is still fresh in their memory (Black & William, 2022). This concept accentuates the importance of context and timing by awarding feedback to ensure that it is effective to the recipients. Furthermore, opportune feedback helps learners note their acts of misbehaviour and understand the consequences of their behaviour, leading them into adjusting their behaviour accordingly. For instance, when a learner raises a hand before talking and, waits for his or her turn to speak during class discussions, the educator then praises the good behaviour displayed by the learner.

Providing immediate feedback is essential for both discipline and academic performance. Immediate reinforcement of disciplined behaviours, such as completing assignments, can foster an environment conducive to academic achievements. Feedback allows learners to adjust their behaviour, which directly impacts their performance.

2.2.3.6. Learning Objectives

Behaviourism encourages the use of learning objectives that are clear and measurable (Mager, 1962). Learning objectives are specific, and their outcomes are measurable as clear instruction given to them (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2021). Furthermore, these objectives assist educators to determine what learners should learn and how they are going to assess the progress of these learners. For example, educators assigning readings to learners to complete within a set period of time, result in learners demonstrating improved reading comprehension (Gagne, et al., 1992).

Setting clear and measurable learning objective is vital in both maintaining discipline and assessing academic performance. Establishing specific academic expectations and

behavioural goals helps learners understand what is expected of them, both behavioural and academically. Learning objectives that are well-defined can improve performance by guiding learners toward focused academic effort and positive behaviour.

2.2.3.7. Drill and Practice

Behaviourist methods emphasises the use of repetitive practices in reinforcing behaviour and learning, (Thorndike, 1913). Drill and practice is an objective aimed at ensuring that learners acquire the necessary knowledge and skills through constant practice. It involves repetitive activities and exercises that will reinforce learning (Skinner, 1958). For instance, giving learners writing activities on daily basis to drill grammar rules, which will lead to improved writing proficiency (Harnish & Bridges, 2011). According to Laleye and Ogunboyede (2023) repeated practice significantly enhances skill acquisition and retention. This method relies on the principles of repetition and reinforcement to shape behaviour.

Repetitive practice is a fundamental skill needed to improve both behaviour and performance. Through behaviourist techniques, such as this objective, helps learners to reinforce disciplined study habits and also to improve their mastery of academic material. Thus, leading to better academic achievements.

2.2.3.8. Stimulus Response Learning

Stimulus response learning is the focus of behaviourism to acquire knowledge and skills through stimulus-response associations (Watson, 1913). Its objective includes constructing a structured environment in order to stimulate desired behaviours that are triggered by specific stimuli. For example, the educator introducing a distinct sound, such as ringing a bell, to give a signal when the time is up to complete an activity. Over time, through repeated pairings of stimulus with the response, learners learning to associate the stimulus with ending an activity. Stimulus-response relationship forms the base for behaviour and learning. Meaning that repetitive exposure to stimuli enhances learning (Dr. Maged, 2023).

Stimulus-response model is linked to the development of discipline behaviours. For example, when learners receive positive reinforcement for displaying disciplined

behaviours, such as completing tasks on time, they are more likely to repeat these behaviours. The consistent engagement in productive behaviours can lead to improved academic outcomes.

2.2.3.9. Individualised Learning

Behaviourism emphasises the need for educators to tailor instructions based on the individual needs and abilities of learners (Skinner, 1958). The focus is on tailoring educational experiences of each learner, to meet the specific needs and abilities of each learner (Jorly, 2023; Schunk, 2020). Furthermore, the aim of this objective is to adjust learning outcomes by optimising the methods of teaching to cater for all learners according to their pace and progress. For instance, the educator providing various learning materials and activities to accommodate different learning styles and levels of learners. Some learners may need to work on advanced reading materials, while others work on additional practice for the given activity.

Tailoring behavioural strategies and academic interventions to individual learners is important for both discipline and academic performance. If a learner struggles with maintaining discipline, individualized behavioural interventions can help address specific issues in the learner's behaviour. Allowing the learner to focus better on their academic work, in turn improving their performance.

2.2.3.10. Data Driven Decision Making

For educators to be able to adjust strategies as needed and make informed instructional decisions, behaviourism instructs them to collect and analyse data relating to learners' performance (Skinner, 1969). This objective relies on raw data collected from learners' progress on assessments to devise instructional instructions to modify their behaviour. The data collected from the daily activities, weekly tests results, and end of term results. Furthermore, data can be used to, inform instructional decisions, and help educators to identify interventions that are effective, also allow them to adjust their teaching strategies based on each learner's respond (Prenger & Schildkamp, 2018).

The objectives of behaviourism are best suited in fulfilling the objectives of this study, because its focus is on producing positive learning outcomes by tailoring behaviour of learners within the school, in the classroom, and individualised behaviour.

Analysing data on learner behaviour and academic performance is crucial for understanding the relationship between discipline and academic success. By tracking learners' behaviours and correlating them with academic outcomes, educators can identify patterns and adjust strategies to improve both discipline and performance.

2.3. RELATED LITERATURE

This section aims to provide deeper insight of topics relating to the research questions of this study. These topics were required to help uncover the answers to the research questions of this study. Presenting related literature in subsections with headings derived from the research questions.

2.3.1. EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

Discipline in Schools

Discipline is a term derived from a French word *disciple*, which the French derived from a Latin word *disciplina* meaning teaching, instruction, and obedience (Venter & van Niekerk, 2004). When an educator disciplines learners, the main aim should be to encourage cooperation, self-discipline, safety of other learners, compliance, and to give support (Agesa, 2015; Mashaba, et al., 2024). Discipline is a method used to eliminate the undesired behaviour and promote the desired behaviour, promote achieving competence, self-control, and self-direction (Khewu, 2017). According to Kavula (2014), discipline is, applied externally and it is entirely up to the person receiving it to choose to internalise it or not. Furthermore, it is an important trait needed in one's life to live serenely within a community without the need for monitoring or compelled into being a law-abiding citizen.

Looking at discipline in the context of education, most educators relate discipline with punishment missing its true intentions by making it physical (Porteus, et al., 2016). Discipline in its true form is a complex concept that can be applicable in a number of

situations. For example, self-discipline that is fully depending on one's effort and determination; discipline as a field of study where one is versatile to learn and mature; discipline in a form of respect; and discipline as a form of respect and responsibility. Serame (2018) states that discipline is a tool used to assist learners attain self-control and develop progressive thinking skills. This therefore means that the aim of discipline is to assist learners develop a behaviour that is socially acceptable and learn to do things right (Friaes, et al., 2023). Furthermore, beyond discipline developing self-control and the sense of responsibility to learners, as it supports their emotional and mental health (Ijaz, et al., 2024). It should therefore not be through force or threats that a person obeys rules. When one is disciplined; following and obeying set rules becomes spontaneous. The term discipline in this study refer to respect, responsibility, and self-discipline.

The level of discipline in schools varies significantly due to various factors such as the cultural context, policies, and the efficacy of the disciplinary measures of the school. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of learners and educators, the school must create and maintain a conducive learning environment by employing various disciplinary strategies. A study by Fink, et al. (2017) reveals that disciplinary measures in schools not only promote a positive school environment, but they also foster academic success. Furthermore, to improve the overall school environment and learners' behaviour, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2018) suggested the implementation of proactive interventions such as mentoring programs and counseling.

In American schools, one key aspect of discipline is the prevalence of zero tolerance policies (Skiba, et al., 2011) . These policies aim to create a safe school environment through the implementation of strict consequences to address certain behaviours. Although these policies seem to be effective, they are criticised by many researchers for their role in driving learners from school to prison (Skiba, et al., 2011). They required schools to press criminal charges against learners who possess drugs and weapons within the school premises. Furthermore, a comprehensive study by Skiba, et al. (2011) highlighted the disproportionate exclusionary implementation of disciplinary practices on minority learners as far as these policies are concerned, leaving African American male learners to suffer the strict consequences. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA),

signed into law in 2015 suggests and encourages the use of practices that have been proven through research, that these practices can address behavioural issues and promote a positive school environment proactively (U.S. Department of Education., 2015).

In revealing the state of discipline in South African schools, a study by Mapotse, et al., (2017) highlighted issues such as corporal punishment and the need for alternative disciplinary measures which are more effective. In addressing the ongoing practices of corporal punishment in some South African schools despite its prohibition, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) calls for increased efforts for educators to implement disciplinary methods aligning with the human rights principles (Grobbelaar & Jones, 2020). Restorative justice practices in South African schools have been highly emphasised in recent years. These are approaches to discipline, focused on restoring relationships, repairing harm, and creating a supportive school environment (Watchel, 2016). Research by Ntinda and Okeke-Uzodike (2018) explored the potential of restorative justice as an alternative disciplinary method. The study suggested that restorative justice practices is able to address disciplinary issues and keep a positive relationship between learners and educators.

From the above-mentioned data from the two countries studies, it can therefore be concluded that, indiscipline is still a problem in many school that have limited strategies to completely eradicate indiscipline in those schools. This therefore rises a need for strategies that can successfully eliminate acts of indiscipline in schools. Fink, et al. (2017) supports the argument, stating that disciplinary measures in schools are, meant to promote a positive school environment and foster academic success. However, it is important to note that overly punitive disciplinary measures can worsen behavioural issues, which can in turn lead to negative academic performance. In support, Mendez, et al., (2019) states that a holistic disciplinary approach that emphasises social-emotional learning and prioritises restorative practices supports positive behaviour in learners and fosters positive academic achievements

Learner Discipline

Globally research has proven that learner discipline in the school environment can influence that school positively or negatively. Learner discipline is the action of employing and enforcing rules and regulations, and other instructions required by a school to run smoothly and achieve its goals successfully (Omote, et al., 2015). This concept is in fact defining the process of stimulating learners to adopt a code of conduct through an agreement that binds both educators and learners with involvement of parents as secondary clients. Conversely, discipline is considered as, the foundation of those who impose it and those who accept it. There are therefore standards set in schools that educators, learners, non-teaching staff, and administrators need to follow for teaching and learning to take place successfully (Saa`da , 2021) . Discipline is the tool used to deal with the immoral behaviours of the human nature. Therefore, it can be said that discipline is an important factor for both educators and learners to deal with crucial actions, decreasing bad behavior and encouraging good behavior (Fawcett, 2013). Dawo and Simatwa (2016) assert that, for learners to attain positive results academically, they need to allow themselves to align with the positive side of discipline.

2.3.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF LEGAL METHODS APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Punishment in Primary Schools

There are quite a number of strategies suggested by researchers in terms of serving punishment, such as scolding, giving warning, and removal of privileges. These penances are applied on, learners who do not respect the set rules and regulations of the school or classroom (Innocent & Andala, 2021). However, many schools do not serve penances fairly, they take drastic measures such as expulsion or severe dismissal of learners; at times these penances are underserved and undeserving for misconducts that are incriminating (Obadire & Sinthumelo, 2021).

Learners have a tendency of feeling that they own the school and they feel powerful to do whatever they like, even doing wrong things to others. Punishment is a tool devised to show learners who is in control and it is used as an outcome for disruptive behavior. According to Innocent & Andala (2021), if punishment is regularly used as an outcome of misconduct, in a long run learners' turn to agree with these outcomes without resentment.

Which is why it is important for educators to explain to learners the reason why they are serving them with punishment. Disruptive learners are an issue and part of the reasons for poor academic performance in schools (Njoroge & Nyabuto, 2014). In the instance of disruptive behavior, a cognitive approach might be of help in dealing with this issue (Innocent & Andala, 2021).

There are no disciplinary techniques or procedures set specifically for specific countries, but there are general disciplinary techniques widely used across the globe. The most common is verbal warning, where the educator gives verbal warning to the learner for the acts of misconduct and lets the learner know what would happen should, the same misconduct be repeated. Other educators prefer to give offending learners time-out where learners are temporarily removed from the classroom for a brief period of time. Some schools still administer corporal punishment, despite it been abolished. Detention is a form of punishment where learners spend time at school after regular school hours. Suspension is a form of punishment that involves removing a learner from the school temporarily due to a more serious offense. Expulsion is a severe type of punishment that permanently removes a learner from the school due to a more serious offense deserving of this decision.

Corporal Punishment in Schools

Corporal punishment refers to the act of inflicting physical pain to an individual, children in particular, as means of correcting acts of misbehaviour (Jones & Brown, 2020; Davis, et al., 2018). These actions involve slapping, spanking, or any other form of punishment intended to inflict physical pain to address undesirable behaviour (Smith, 2019). The government of South Africa later abolished corporal punishment in schools for it went against human rights (Brown , et al., 2018). This initiative involved schools adopting alternative methods of discipline, which are none violent, and promote emotional and social development (Anderson, 2020). The shift is based on research that highlights the negative effects of physical punishment on learners (Brown, et al., 2018).

The historical roots of corporal punishment in America can be traced back to the early legal codes such as the Code of Hammurabi (circa 1754 BCE), which authorised physical punishment for certain offenses (Harrington, 2005). Over time, corporal punishment was

used as, a disciplinary practice in the educational sector influenced by the societal norms of the time (Smith, 2010). As the perspectives of the society shifted, criticism against corporal punishment grew. The work of organisations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and studies such as that of Miller (1959) titled “The Case Against Corporal Punishment”, contributed into shifting peoples’ attitude towards corporal punishment (Reitman & Folloman, 1972; Miller, 1959). America has now amended its educational policies and enacted legislations that prohibit the use of corporal punishment in schools (Johnson & Brown, 2020).

Research in South Africa shows that during the apartheid era, educators used to resort to corporal punishment as the first option whenever a learner misbehaved or had committed certain misconduct or offence (Mtsweni, 2018). When South Africa became a democratic state, it prohibited all forms connected and related to corporal punishment for the country had become a state that promotes human rights, responsibilities, and values which in turn viewed corporal punishment as an infringement to human rights. The state, therefore, registered this law in the South African Schools Act 84 under section 10 (1996(a)).

On the other hand, educators complain about the decision of the state to ban corporal punishment. These educators believe that banishing corporal punishment was a huge mistake, the banishing negatively affected discipline and the conduct of learners in schools. Educators claim that corporal punishment used to be a quick and effective way of dealing with learner misconduct (Venter & van Niekerk, 2011). Some educators go to an extent of stating that corporal punishment kept teaching and learning going with no disruptions arising (Jones, et al., 2018). Furthermore, the abolishment of corporal punishment gave rise to an ungoverned and undisciplined generation of learner that is unteachable, resulting to a decline in the academic performance (Shaikhmag & Assan, 2014). Otu, et al. (2019), asserts that learner indiscipline is regarded as the major factor affecting learner academic performance, for the many disruptions during the process of teaching and learning are the result of the unruliness of learners. If learner misconduct continues at this rate, teaching and learning will cease to take place successfully, result

of which will be the negative impact in academic performance of learner's n (Dwidvedi & Kumar, 2023).

2.3.3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL RULES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

School Rules and Regulations

Dawo & Simatwa (2016) argue that, classroom rules and regulations stimulate secure working conditions and learning space. The rules and regulations must be strong and aligned to those of the government policies so that educators and the school will find themselves on the right side of the law. Most school rules and regulations are strong at a secondary school level, for secondary school learners, have grown enough to understand misconduct and the consequences of misconduct. Whereas primary school learners fully depend on the educators' will to enforce discipline, parental or guardian discipline (home discipline), and the discipline coming from the community.

Primary school learners have not yet grown to the level of distinguishing between what is right and wrong. It is the parents' responsibility to try to align home rules and regulations to those of the school, for that helps the learner not to feel oppressed or like they are in a foreign land when they have to adhere to the school rules and regulations (Saa`da , 2021). For one to fully understand behaviour, one ought to address all the angles of behaviour including, disrespect, misconduct, and/or noncompliance relating to the correlation between educators and parents working together for the benefit of the learner (Ehiane, 2014). Innocent and Andala (2021) argue that at some point the school along with parents and the community will be required to come up with strategies on how to align their rules and regulations to shape learners into become complying citisens. Alignment between school rules and community rules will also affect learners' attitude towards school rules and impact positively on learners' academic performance.

General school rules and regulations are found in schools across the globe and contain various categories that outline the behaviour expected from learners, educators, and the whole staff (Mubita, 2021). The broad categories of the code of conduct are illustrated in figure 2 below.



FIGURE 2: CODE OF CONDUCT CATEGORIES.

Rules pertaining to dress code for everyone in the school are to maintain a positive and focused learning environment. Policies regarding learners' attendance, lateness, and procedures to address unexcused and excused absences. Strict policies against discrimination, bullying, and harassment, outline consequences for these behaviours. Rules regarding the use of electronic devices such as tablets and smart phones are set in place to monitor the use of these devices during school hours. Safety regulations set in place to maintain a safe environment, also outlining the emergency procedures and drills. Rules and regulations regarding participation in clubs, sports, and other extracurricular activities are included. Lastly, policies against the possession, distribution, or the use of drugs and alcohol in the school premises have to be in place.

Authority of Educators

Authority is a term originating from a Latin word “*auctoritas*”, which has numerous meanings such as rules enforcer, commander, interpreter, counselor, and so on (Venkataramani, 2012). Therefore, authority translates into any person that is in a position of power to have every right to impose the set rules in a manner they see fit. This must be in the interest of the organisation and leads to the achievement of the set goals. Vukadinovi and Njegovan (2011) inform that authority has everything to do with command, expertise, and dignity. Furthermore, Venkataramani (2012) asserts that in an educator’s life authority forms part of leadership. In this case the educator plays the role of a director (directing learners’ lives), becomes an *in loco parentis* (plays a role of a parent), makes sure that learners are aware of the rules and regulations set in place for them and that they adhere to them. An educator furthermore, puts emphasis on rules as learners grow, which in turn shapes these learners to be responsible people.

Regular Attendance

Regular attendance is a critical factor that has a great impact on learners’ academic performance (Smith, 2018). According to Jones (2019) attending school on daily basis is connected with positive academic outcomes. Attending school on regular basis helps learners to develop comprehension, retention, and understanding of concepts leading to increased understanding of course material (Brown, 2017). Johnson (2020) adds by stating that regular attendance provides learners with an opportunity to actively participate in class discussions. Regular attendance in class enhances the learner’s critical thinking skills and creates an interactive learning environment (Johnson, 2020). Additionally, educators provide learners with valuable information during lessons which may not be in textbooks but crucial for assignments and examinations (Miller, 2016). Furthermore, regular attendance helps learners to develop a study routine, fostering a sense of commitment and responsibility towards academic success (Taylor, 2018). This further promotes discipline and time management skills in learners. Regular attendance also helps learners to build a supportive learning community made up of peers, which can be useful during collaborative learning, and also provide help when and where it is needed (Anderson, 2019)

Studies reveal that educators who attend classes at a regular basis tend to be role models to the learners they teach (Saa`da , 2021). Which therefore means that an educator who absents himself/herself from work on a regular basis cannot be able to reprimand learners who absent themselves from school. Besides the knowledge that an educator imparts to learners, learners copy and learn other things through observing the educator, such as respect (Innocent & Andala, 2021). It is also important that the school draw up rules and regulations that will monitor the attendance of learners. If learners fail to follow these rules and regulations, those actions should be regarded as misconduct/indiscipline. If attending school regularly for learners, impacts positively on learners' academic performance, absenteeism should therefore, be considered as a negative factor. Leaving schools with the responsibility of emphasising the importance of regular attendance and its impact on academic performance.

2.4. SUMMARY

This chapter offered the theoretical framework of this study in a detailed format. The researcher chose the behaviourist theory to guide this study. Its origin is epistemology and, the objectives discussed in full in the Chapter. It was discovered that the epistemology of behaviourism is centered around, the belief that behaviours that are observable are essential elements in understanding and shaping learning in learners (Smith & Brown, 2018). Course reading revealed that Watson's behaviourism, Skinner's operant conditioning, and behaviourism in the classroom, form the epistemology of behaviourism. Furthermore, ten objectives of behaviourism as provided by several researchers were, discussed. These objectives are environmental control, behaviour modification, behavioural interventions, observational learning, immediate feedback, learning objectives, drill and practice, stimulus response learning, individualised learning, and data driven, decision making.

Literature review revealed that indiscipline is a problem to many schools and there is limited existing strategies that can help completely eradicate it in schools. There is therefore a need for strategies that can eliminate acts of indiscipline in schools, also lead learners towards attaining positive academic outcomes. According to Fink, et al. (2017) disciplinary measures help promote a positive school environment and foster academic

success. Furthermore, discipline is the tool used to deal with the immoral behaviours of the human nature. Concluding that discipline is an important factor for both educators and learners in deal with crucial actions, decreasing bad behavior and encouraging good behavior (Fawcett, 2013). Literature further revealed that, there are some educators who prefer corporal punishment, over any other disciplinary measure.

CHAPTER 3

3.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2, focused on the theoretical framework and the literature relating to this study. In chapter 3, the researcher discusses the research methodology. Research methodology amongst others refers to the systematic process, techniques, tools, and strategies used to gather, analyse, and interpret data (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2014). It comprises of research design, sampling methods, and data analysis methods used in the study (Yin, 2018). This chapter makes use of the suggested standards for reporting qualitative research as posed by O'Brien, et al., (2014) in their Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) checklist. These standards include the research design, research characteristics and reflexivity, context, sampling strategy, ethical issues, data collection methods, units of study, data processing and analysis, as well as trustworthiness and credibility.

3.1.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The overall structure or plan developed to direct the systematic investigation of a research question or problem is, referred to as a research design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). It encompasses the procedures, methods, and strategies employed by a researcher to collect and analyse data to address the objectives of their research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The statement by Creswell and Creswell (2017) posits that the research design therefore determines the process of data collection, the analyses thereof and its interpretation shapes the direction and outcomes of the study.

A well-designed research study ensures credibility, reliability, and validity. Research design ensures this by providing a research approach e.g., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, techniques to sample, methods to collect data e.g., observations, interviews, surveys, and procedures to analyse data (Babbie, 2016; Fraenkel, et al., 2014). Furthermore, research design enables researchers to conduct their research rigorously and systematically by providing them with a clear roadmap.

There are three main types of research designs, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed designs (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A qualitative research design focuses on

collecting and analysing non-numerical data gathered from its natural setting to understand a phenomenon (Neuman, 2014). The research design employs methods such as the analysis of texts, observations and interviews to gain insight into individuals' perspectives and experiences when exploring complex social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This therefore means that a qualitative research design provides the researcher with an opportunity to experience and gain first-hand experience, access other researchers' experiences, also access the experiences of participants and the meaning qualitative research gives to researchers. Furthermore, qualitative research designs include phenomenology, ethnography, case studies, grounded theory, action research, etc (Bhandari, 2025).

Unlike the qualitative research design, which focuses on collecting and analysing non-numerical data to answer research questions and test hypothesis, quantitative research design focuses on numerical data (Neuman, 2014). Quantitative research emphasises on objective measurement and statistical analysis when drawing conclusions regarding a phenomenon. A quantitative research design employs methods that are descriptive, correlational, and experimental (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Furthermore, this research design encompasses experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, cross-sectional, and causal-comparative designs. This type of a research design focusses more on what numbers prove rather than focusing on the viewpoints of participants, the researcher and other researchers. When choosing a research design, the researcher has to know which research design will be suitable for their study, although in some studies the researcher is required to employ both research designs.

For this study, the researcher employed the qualitative research design to analyse the relationship between discipline and academic performance. Phenomenological research design is a branch of qualitative research design, which focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they attribute to those experiences (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). Rather than imposing preconceived theories or frameworks, this approach explores the structure or essence of the phenomena through the eyes of participants, exploring their perceptions and the interpretation of the phenomena. Furthermore, in phenomenological research, the collection of data involves observing

participants, employing open-ended questionnaires, or interviews to attain rich descriptions of the experiences of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Their research design corresponds with the theoretical framework of this study discussed in Chapter 2, which is the behaviourist theory, because this study, observes behaviour. For this study, the researcher employed the phenomenological research approach, to collect and interpret data through the eyes of participants.

Phenomenological research design was appropriate for this study because the researcher was able to perceive the world through the eyes of participants, and interpret the phenomena through the meaning they gave to their experiences. Emphasis was on the notion of individual experiences of participants pertaining the relationship between discipline and academic performance. The observations during the research, regarding the study of the phenomena in its' natural setting, also helped the researcher to explore the inner worlds of the participants during the interviews. These inner worlds in this study refer to as phenomenal spaces, where instant consciousness occurs and experiences are lived (Christensen, et al., 2011) .

3.1.2. RESEARCHER CHARACTERISTICS AND REFLEXIVITY

I, as the primary researcher including my background as an educator have deeply informed my approach to this study. My educational journey, including an Honors degree in Education Management, Laws, and Policies, and the several years of teaching experience, have equipped me with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge needed to undertake this research. The research I conducted during my Honors degree provided me with vigorous understanding of research methodologies and participant interactions. My background as a pastor has instilled in me a unique perspective on learning and adaptation, which I bring to this research. Furthermore, my personal values emphasises the importance of ethical research practices and empirical evidence, which guide my commitment to conduct a study that is both rigorous and respectful of participants.

Realising the conceivable impact of my characteristics on the research, I have engaged in continuous self-reflection to identify and address my prejudices. My belief in the effectiveness of behaviourist approaches may influence my expectations and

interpretations. To mitigate this, I constantly referred back to the subject of this study to make sure that I do not lose the purpose and direction of this study. I also documented my thoughts and biases throughout the research process. These practices helped me to remain aware of how my background and experiences might influence my interaction with participants and my analysis of the data. Furthermore, I regularly sought feedback from my peers and advisors to contest my assumptions and provide diverse perspectives. This collaboration helped to ensure that my study remains balanced and objective. My transparency about my biases and positionality helped me present a study that is both reflective and credible of rigorous academic process.

3.1.3. SAMPLING STRATEGY

Sampling is a selected subgroup of items or individuals from a larger group to make generalisations or inferences about that group (McCombes, 2023). Sampling is a very important aspect of the research design, which allows researchers to study a portion of the population and draw conclusions about the entire population. The application of sampling methods depends entirely on the availability of resources, characteristics of the population, and the research objectives (Babbie, 2016).

The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique for this study. In purposive sampling, the researcher samples individuals possessing the characteristics fitting what is being studied (McCombes, 2023). These individuals have to be relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling relies on the researcher's judgement and a specific criterion for inclusion, rather than a random selection (Palys & Atchison, 2018). The researcher sampled three educators teaching in the foundation phase, and studied them. An understanding of their experiences regarding, discipline and how it affects their learners' academic performance was attained.

For the benefit of the study, the researcher also employed convenience sampling. In convenience sampling, the selection of participants is, based on their easy access and proximity to the researcher (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This method involves choosing individuals who are readily available to participate in the study (Fraenkel, et al., 2014). The researcher conducted the research at the school where he teaches because participants were all easily accessible to the researcher and that benefited the study.

Both these sampling methods, purposive and convenience are non-probability methods, known for saving time (Marshall, 1996). The researcher saved a lot of time since these participants were easily accessible and they were willing to participate in the study. Three educators teaching in the foundation phase were selected as, a sample to be observed and studied for the benefit of the study. Three participants according to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2016) are, regarded as a suitable number for a phenomenological research study.

The three educators teaching in the foundation phase were selected and observed for the purpose of, gaining an understanding of their experiences pertaining discipline and its relationship with academic performance. These educators are post level (PL1) educators teaching in the foundation phase at a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D, in the province of Mpumalanga. The three participants met the criteria needed to participate in the study, they teach in the foundation phase, at the public primary school under study in this research. The biographical data of the participants is, presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

BIOGRAPHICAL TABLE OF PARTICIPANTS				
PARTICIPANT	GENDER	AGE GROUP	SUBJECTS AND GRADE TAUGHT	TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Teacher A	Female	55 - 60	<u>Grade 1</u> Mathematics Life Skills IsiNdebele (HL) English (FAL)	31 Years
Teacher B	Female	55 - 60	<u>Grade 2</u> Mathematics Life Skills IsiNdebele (HL) English (FAL)	21 Years
Teacher C	Female	55 -60	<u>Grade 3</u> Mathematics Life Skills IsiNdebele (HL)	31 Years

			English (FAL)	
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3.1.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

✓ **Informed Consent**

In ensuring ethical integrity of this study, all participants were, provided with comprehensive information about the research before consenting to participate. This information included the purpose, procedures, and benefit of the study also, the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Consent forms designed in a clear and understandable way and verbal explanations were, provided to ensure comprehension.

✓ **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Protecting the privacy of participants is most importance in this study. All collected data was stored and kept confidentially. Identifiable information was anonymised, and any publication of the research findings will ensure that individual participants cannot be identified. Access to the data was restricted to the research team only, and data deleted after the study was completed and the results published.

✓ **Potential Harm**

This study contained no activities that could harm educators and the learners who were, observed during contact time in class.

✓ **Integrity and Honesty**

This study adhered to the standards of academic integrity, and all findings reported with honesty and transparency. The study process documented in detail, to ensure reproducibility and verification by other researchers.

3.1.5. DATA COLLECTION

Data refers to the information, figures, or facts collected and analysed to make meaning or support the process in decision-making (Field, 2013). Data can take various forms, such as images, videos, audios, texts, or numeric formats, and it can be unstructured or

structured (Creswell, 2014). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016) data enables researchers to generate new knowledge, test hypotheses, and draw conclusions. This means data serves as a foundation for analysis and interpretation. Based on the definition of data provided above and the examples given, it can therefore be said that data represents the facets that the researcher needs to deeply think about regarding the phenomena and aspects, he or she wishes to explore. The data collected thereafter serves as evidence or supporting information during data analysis. Last, but not least, to ensure validity, reliability, and accuracy of the research findings, data needs to be managed and handled properly (Neuman, 2014).

The systematic process of collecting, organising, and recording of information from numerous sources to analyse and interpret is referred to as, data collection (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This means data collection is a very important step in research it allows researchers to collect relevant data to address their research objectives or questions. Furthermore, this step allows researchers to gain an understanding of the phenomenon they are studying (Neuman, 2014).

The process of collecting data involves numerous stages that are, to be followed by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). These stages include planning, designing instruments for data collection, selection of sources or participants, and the actual collection of data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). To ensure the quality and integrity of the data constant verification and validation need to be done throughout the stages (Creswell, 2014). The methods of collecting data vary based on the nature of the study (Neuman, 2014). They include analysis of literature, experiments, observations, interviews, and surveys (Neuman, 2014; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

For this study, data was collected using literature analysis, observations, and individual interviews using open-ended questions as discussed in Chapter 1. The researcher started by doing a literature analysis. Literature relating to this study was gathered and studied to gain fore understanding of the phenomena studied. The literature helped in setting the foundation for this study and gave the researcher an understanding of existing knowledge and the gaps not covered as far as the phenomena is concerned. Secondly, the researcher visited the classes of the participants to observe and gain firsthand experience

of their lives in the classroom. Behaviour is understandable and, meaningful only when observed in the perspective of the subject's life and, the lives of people around that particular person (Seidman, 2014). Without the background knowledge of the class experiences, it will be impossible to make meaning of the experiences of the participants. This made it easy for the researcher to understand the experiences of the subjects when they were responding to the interview questions.

Lastly, the researcher conducted individual interviews using open-ended questions to collect data. The researcher asked several questions relating to the phenomena under study. The responses of the participants were recorded by an audio recorder, and later transcribed to make meaning of what was said and how, it was said, to gain insight into the phenomena through the eyes of the subjects. The interviews were conversational and focused; they really helped the researcher to explore the topic. Furthermore, the interviews were used to access the participants' realities, perceptions, reactions, and opinions about possible solutions to the phenomena. To remember the responses of the participants, the researcher recorded the interviews with their permission. The data collected from the interviews is be presented as, direct quotations of the participants' feelings, experiences, opinions, and knowledge about the subject being studied.

3.1.6. DATA ANALYSIS AND PROCESSING METHOD

Data analysis refers to the process of extracting meaningful insights, patterns, and trends by carefully examining and interpreting data (Hair, et al., 2019; Grolemond & Wickham, 2016). Data analysis furthermore involves various methodologies and techniques used to make sense of the collected data, enabling informed decision making and problem solving (Fayyad, et al., 1996; Grolemond & Wickham, 2016). This means in order to understand the collected data, the researcher has to, carefully analyse the data. This study is a qualitative study, and data analysis in qualitative research involves systematic examination and interpretation of non-numerical data such as videos, images, and texts (Grolemond & Wickham, 2016).

This study employed the phenomenological data analysis. Phenomenological analysis is aimed at enabling the researcher make meaning of the lived experiences of participants, concerning the phenomena being studied and also be able to, describe them (Giorgi,

2009). For this study, the researcher engaged in, in-depth interviews and observations to attain the ability to describe and interpret the participants' subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings they give to them.

3.1.7. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

Trustworthiness and credibility are essential to ensure that the findings are valid and reliable in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). Trustworthiness refers to the thoroughness of the research process and the extent of which the findings can be trusted (Norman & James, 2020). It comprises of credibility, transferability, dependability, and reliability, which ensures that the research findings are reliable, consistent, and applicable in different contexts.

✓ Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence that can be place in the truth of the research findings (Nazar, et al., 2022) . This study, employed several techniques to enhance credibility. To develop trust and allow collection of in-depth data, the researcher had prolonged engagements with participants. Multiple data sources and methods to cross-validate findings, were use, to achieve triangulation. Findings were also, shared with participants for their feedback and verification.

✓ Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability to apply the research findings to other contexts or groups (Team Zorgle, 2023). This study ensured transferability by providing thick and detailed descriptions of the research context, processes, and participants. This gives readers the ability to be able to assess the applicability of the findings to their own scenery.

✓ Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data when placed under different conditions, even over time (Elo, et al., 2014). Every step of the research process was documented included data collection, analysis, and findings. Interviews recorded to help the researcher refer back to the interviews and confirm findings.

✓ **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to how respondents shape findings by the respondents and not the researchers' interests, motivations, or biases (Elo, et al., 2020). In this study, confirmability was ensured through reflexivity where the researcher consistently reflected on their assumptions, values, and biases. Data analysis table also helped in managing and analysing data.

Implementation of these methods helped in shaping the next Chapter of this study that is titled; Data Presentation and Analysis.

3.1.8. SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research methodology of this study. The researcher employed the qualitative research design to analyse the relationship between discipline and academic performance. Furthermore, phenomenology was chosen to further guide this study, as it is a branch of qualitative research design (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). Coarse reading revealed that phenomenological research design explores the perceptions and interpretations of participants regarding a phenomenon. Here the researcher views the phenomena through the eyes of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In phenomenological research, data collection involves interviews, employing open-ended questionnaires, or observation of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2016). Their research design corresponds with the theoretical framework of this study discussed in Chapter 2, which is the behaviourist theory, because this study, observes behaviour. For this study, the researcher employed the phenomenological research approach, to collect and interpret data through the eyes of participants.

Research characteristics and reflexivity, sampling strategy, ethical considerations, data collection methods, data analysis and processing methods, trustworthiness and credibility were discussed. The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique. Three educators teaching foundation phase at this school were sampled. In sampling these participants, the researcher also employed convenience sampling. All ethical considerations were followed, which included, informed consent, confidentiality, potential harm, integrity and honesty. For this study data was collected through literature analysis,

observations, and individual interviews. To analyse the data, the researcher employed phenomenological data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 focused on research methodology, where the research design, sampling methods, and data analysis methods were presented using, the SRQR as guidance (O'Brien, et al., 2014). The SRQR set sampling methods and research design were implemented, and data collected from the participants. In this Chapter, the researcher presents the observations made during the actual research, provide the outcomes of the interviews, and then conclude with the data analysis. The aim was to answer the research question and sub questions, using the methods mentioned before as indicated in table 2.

TABLE 2: SHOWING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question type	Question	Methodology
Primary research question	To what level does discipline affect learner academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D?	Interviews Observation Literature
Secondary research questions	How do educators in this school experience learners' discipline?	Interviews
	How effective are the legal methods approved by the government?	Interviews
	What causes learner indiscipline in this school?	Interviews
	How do the school's disciplinary measures align with the school's academic performance?	Interviews

4.2. PRESENTATION OF DATA

Data presentation refers to the presentation of information in a format that can be easily interpreted and understood by the audience (Harris, 2019). This process involves numerous tools and techniques used to organise, summarise, and communicate data effectively (Naeem, et al., 2023). This means data presentation is important in research to convey complex information to the audience and to, also facilitate understanding of patterns, trends, and insights within data sets. In a qualitative study, non-numerical data such as audio, visual, or textual information, which is gathered through focus groups, observations or interviews, is presented to the audience (Jowsey, et al., 2021).

In qualitative research, data is mostly presented as narrative summaries, where data is synthesised into a storyline conveying the perspectives, experiences, and meanings they give to them (Riessman, 2008). Another method is visual displays such as concept maps, matrices, or diagrams used to represent relationships and patterns identified in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lastly, is thematic analysis where recurring patterns or themes are identified within the data and then presented in a structured format that highlights key findings (Naeem, et al., 2023). Furthermore, to provide context and depth to the analysis, researchers may use excerpts or quotes from participants to illustrate these patterns or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All these methods are, used to present non-numerical data in different ways. This study used the thematic analysis and direct quotations from the interviews to present data. This is done to offer a rich, and detailed understanding of the participants' understanding.

4.2.1. OBSERVATIONS

Observation refers to the systematic collection and recording of events or phenomena as they occur naturally, without intervention or manipulation from the researcher (Johnson & Smith, 2019). These observations highly depends directly on sensory perceptions that serve as a fundamental method for gathering empirical evidence regarding a phenomenon under investigation (Thompson & Johnson, 2022). For this study, the researcher immersed himself in the natural setting of the study to gather rich, detailed insights of participants' experiences in the classroom. The observations took place in term four of the school terms. Each class was visited twice a day for two days, in the morning

when school starts, and in the afternoon during the free periods of the researcher. The purpose of the morning visits was to observe how learners behave in class in the morning, while the afternoon visits were to observe how the learners behave after the lunch break and playing outside. The researcher carefully documented nuances and complexities of the observed phenomena. The behaviours of learners' that have an effect on teaching and learning, which can also affect learners' academic performances, were written down by the researcher for later analysis. The observations are, discussed below per grade.

- **OBSERVATIONS MADE IN GRADE 1 CLASS**

The classroom under observation comprised of 46 learners, seated in pairs at desks arranged to face the front of the room. The teacher's desk was positioned at the back of the classroom, behind all the learners' desks. The researcher opted to sit alongside the teacher at the back, as this vantage point provided optimal visibility of the entire classroom. From this position, the researcher was able to observe all the learners and track their movements clearly. Additionally, this placement facilitated comprehensive observation of learner behaviour during lessons. However, as the learners were familiar with the researcher, their presence in the classroom was somewhat distracting. Following the observation sessions, the researcher engaged in discussions with the teacher to gather further insights regarding learners who exhibited disruptive behaviour.

During morning observations, it was noted that some learners continued to struggle with adapting to the school environment. The teacher indicated that the majority of learners had successfully adjusted to schooling due to their prior attendance in Grade R. However, those who had bypassed Grade R and directly entered Grade 1 encountered difficulties in adapting to the structured school environment. The reduction in playtime and the constraints on unrestricted movement may have contributed to their reluctance to attend school. This discomfort potentially manifested in behaviours that disrupted the teaching and learning process. The educator explained that these learners often spent a considerable portion of the school day crying, expressing a desire to return home, and causing disruptions in the classroom rather than engaging in learning activities. Furthermore, she observed that when comparing these learners to those who had

adapted well to schooling, the former group consistently demonstrated lower academic performance.

During a colouring activity on the second day of observations, certain learners exhibited difficulty in sharing classroom resources. Specifically, some learners were reluctant to share coloured pencils, despite explicit instructions to do so. This behaviour may have stemmed from being the only child at home or being accustomed to having personal access to all resources. The researcher further observed that these learners frequently engaged in disputes over classroom materials such as pencils and books, which impeded their ability to complete the assigned activity. The teacher noted that these learners often failed to complete their assigned work, thereby preventing them from achieving the lesson objectives. Additionally, it was observed that these learners frequently competed for the teacher's attention during lessons. While the teacher was presenting, learners persistently called out to her in an attempt to gain her attention. The teacher highlighted that such interruptions hindered her ability to complete the syllabus in a timely manner.

During afternoon observation sessions, it was evident that learners who had prior experience attending school demonstrated a stronger comprehension of lessons and tasks assigned to them, leading to positive academic outcomes. These learners were able to distinguish between playtime and instructional time, as evidenced by their active participation in lessons. Furthermore, they consistently completed their tasks within the allotted time. The teacher noted that these learners had developed a sense of independence, which facilitated the monitoring of their academic progress.

Lastly, the researcher observed instances of learner misconduct and lack of respect for the teacher. One notable incident involved a learner physically striking another learner. When the teacher intervened, the learner responded with defiance and engaged in verbal confrontation. Upon being instructed to cease arguing, the learner persisted and even threatened to report the teacher. The teacher disclosed that she had previously contacted the learner's parents to discuss their child's behaviour. Based on her assessment, she concluded that the learner exhibited a lack of discipline at home, which was reflected in their classroom conduct.

- **OBSERVATIONS MADE IN GRADE 2 CLASS**

The observed classroom consisted of 62 learners, seated in pairs at desks arranged to face the front of the room. Similar to the previously observed classroom, the teacher's desk was positioned at the back of the classroom. As in the previous setting, the researcher chose to sit at the back to maintain an unobstructed view of the entire classroom. Although these learners were familiar with the researcher, they demonstrated respect for his presence, and this did not lead to any disruptions. At the conclusion of each observation session, the researcher engaged with the teacher to gain further insights regarding the observations.

During morning observations, it was noted that learners in this classroom had outgrown certain behaviours commonly exhibited by Grade 1 learners, such as crying upon arrival at school. Unlike their younger counterparts, these learners no longer expressed distress upon separation from their parents. Most of the learners actively participated in classroom activities, completing the tasks assigned to them, while a few struggled to do so. During a lesson on counting forward and backward from 1 to 10, the majority of learners demonstrated active engagement. However, when required to complete an associated written activity, some learners took an excessive amount of time due to a lack of focus, engaging in play rather than concentrating on their work. Consequently, these learners required individualized attention from the teacher to ensure they understood and completed the task.

Additionally, the researcher observed a significant prevalence of bullying within this classroom. Certain learners spent considerable time intimidating their peers by taking their learning materials or physically confronting them when their requests to borrow items were denied. This disruptive behaviour detracted from their own learning, as these learners frequently failed to complete assigned activities on time. When the rest of the class progressed to new tasks, the disruptive learners remained behind, struggling to catch up.

During afternoon observation sessions, it was noted that some learners spent a substantial amount of time outside the classroom. These learners frequently requested permission to use the restroom, which significantly reduced their instructional and

assessment time. The teacher's lessons were repeatedly interrupted to escort these learners to the restroom, a pattern that persisted during assessments and classroom activities. When asked about the impact of these interruptions, the teacher indicated that they negatively affected the academic performance of the learners involved. When the researcher inquired about implementing scheduled restroom breaks to mitigate these interruptions, the teacher expressed concerns about potential repercussions for denying learners access to the restroom.

Furthermore, the researcher observed that some learners struggled to follow instructions. The teacher faced significant challenges in directing these learners to complete assigned tasks. One particular learner refused to sit down and engage in the day's activities, ultimately failing to complete the required work. The teacher disclosed that she had previously invited the learner's parents to the school to discuss his conduct, but they failed to attend the meeting. She further indicated that many parents do not respond to invitations for discussions regarding their children's behaviour. This apparent lack of parental involvement may suggest a broader disinterest in their children's academic progress and overall well-being. The absence of adequate parental support and supervision at home could contribute to disciplinary challenges within the school environment.

- **OBSERVATIONS MADE IN GRADE 3 CLASS**

This classroom comprised of 48 learners, seated in pairs at desks arranged to face the front. Similar to the previously observed classrooms, the teacher's desk was positioned at the back, allowing for clear visibility of the entire classroom. The researcher sat at the teacher's desk to obtain a comprehensive view of the classroom. As in the previous class, the presence of the researcher did not distract the learners. Additionally, the researcher engaged in discussions with the teacher after each observation session to gain further insights regarding observed behaviours.

During morning observations, it was noted that learners in this classroom had developed a fundamental understanding of school expectations. The teacher indicated that these learners attended school regularly and exhibited more developed discipline compared to Grade 1 and 2 learners. However, despite this progress, some learners continued to

display acts of indiscipline that disrupted teaching and learning. As in the Grade 2 class, instances of bullying were observed. One learner, in particular, was noted for causing disruptions by forcibly taking other learners' belongings. When confronted, this learner retaliated by threatening to report her peers to her mother. Over the two days of observation, this learner consistently completed her work late, delaying the progress of her classmates. According to the teacher, this behaviour was recurrent and negatively impacted not only the disruptive learner's academic performance but also that of her peers, who were frequently distracted by her actions.

During afternoon observations, the researcher noted empty seats in the classroom. Upon inquiry, the teacher explained that truancy was a prevalent issue in this class, causing some learners to fall behind academically. The teacher suspected that many learners feigned illness to avoid attending school, and parents often believed them. One such learner, who claimed to be unwell, was sent to the principal's office to await parental pickup. However, when contacted, the parents disclosed that the child typically played outside upon returning home, reinforcing the suspicion that the learner was pretending to be ill to skip school. The parents further expressed concern, stating that this pattern occurred frequently. The teacher noted that absenteeism had significantly affected the academic performance of this learner, who was among those struggling with fundamental skills such as reading, writing, and numeracy.

Lastly, similar to observations in the Grade 2 class, the researcher noted that some learners frequently requested permission to use the restroom but remained outside for extended periods. Other learners later reported that those who had gone before them were playing outside rather than returning to class. When the teacher intervened by retrieving them, she stated that such learners often did not return unless escorted back to the classroom. She further explained that their absences disrupted the learning process, as she had to allocate additional time to reteach the missed material. This situation disadvantaged both the disruptive learners, who required further assistance, and the obedient learners, who were unable to progress with new material due to delays in the lesson plan. The increased workload placed additional strain on the teacher, further complicating classroom management and instructional pacing.

4.2.2. INTERVIEWS

Interviews are defined as conversations that are structured or semi-structured, taking place between interviewers and participants, conducted to collect information, opinions, and insights on a specific topic (Knott, et al., 2022). This is where researchers get to understand lived experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of participants (Seidman, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Based on these definitions, it means interviews provide the researcher with the opportunity to explore and understand behaviours, beliefs, experiences, and perspectives of individuals regarding a specific topic. In qualitative studies, interviews involve open-ended questions, which allow detailed responses from participants (Ruth, 2012; Morse, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018), concur by stating that interviews in a qualitative study are, used to explore complex phenomena, and uncover rich, contextualised data. Interviews with educators were at the office of the Departmental Head and were done two days after the class observations ended. The researcher recorded the interviews. The consent forms, which educators signed before the study commenced, informed them about the proceedings of the interviews. The interview prompts, and interview contents for this study are, presented below with responses from participants presented as direct quotes.

Research question: How do educators in this school experience learners' discipline?

This question dealt with two facets, namely learner discipline on the school premises, and learner discipline in the classroom.

➤ Experiences of educators regarding learner discipline in the school premises.

Literature of this study revealed that indiscipline is a problem that remains unsolved in schools. In a qualitative study by Davis and Wilson (2022), educators raised concerns regarding the levels of indiscipline and its external factors towards learners. They mentioned factors that greatly contribute towards increased acts of indiscipline in schools such as exposure to trauma or violence, family dynamics, and socio-economic challenges. Smith, (2019) conducted a national survey in which about 65% of educators attested to experiencing disruptive behaviours in classrooms such as learner disrespect towards educators and peers, noncompliance towards school rules, and learners talking

out of turn. Levels of discipline vary from school to school due to various factors such as the environment of the school, cultural context, and learner population. A study by Nkosi and Mncube (2020) revealed problems such as community violence, socio-economic factors, and lack of parental involvement as the key factors of indiscipline in South African schools. Participants of this study shared their experiences; regarding this problem and how it affects them and their colleagues. In line with the findings in the literature, the three educators at the school where the research took place gave the following input regarding learner discipline:

“Our learners are not disciplined. We struggle with late coming, absenteeism, fights, bullying, theft, and so on. These acts are tiring and draining. I often ask myself what happened to a generation of learners who are determined to learn. We call off fights more than we should be, and after we have done so, parents would come to the school accusing teachers of not doing their job to protect these learners. All I can say is that these learners would not behave like this, if they had home discipline.” (Teacher A).

According to Omote, et al., (2015) learner discipline is required for a school to run smoothly and achieve its goals successfully. What teacher-A said reveals that the learners’ in this school lacks discipline, which therefore means that the school is not running smoothly. Thus, the school struggles with late coming, absenteeism, bullying, etc. In a qualitative study conducted by Davis and Wilson (2022), states that educators mentioned facing high levels of acts of indiscipline in schools, which supports what teacher A is saying about having learners that are not disciplined.

“It is so hard to be a teacher these days. We constantly hear about news of teachers stabbed, shot, or beaten by learners in schools, which reveals the problem we are facing as a country. Our school is the worst in this area. Our learners are still young, but their actions show that the intermediate phase and senior phase teachers are going to have their hands full with these learners. I have seen intermediate phase learners bully foundation phase learners without even considering the age gap between them, and that on its

own reveals how we have our hands full in this school. Come to think of it we had a learner last year, come to school carrying a knife, threatening one of our colleagues with it and the learner was expelled. This reveals that due to lack of discipline, our schools have become less safe.” (Teacher B).

Teacher B reveals violence that is in schools. This violence seems to be between learners, and sometimes between a learner and an educator. Bullying seems to be a major factor in the issue of indiscipline. A study by Johnson and Brown (2020) revealed that acts of indiscipline in schools often manifest in forms of aggressive behaviour and bullying. In their study about 30% of learners acknowledged participating in bullying behaviours, whilst 20% of these learners testified on suffering from bullying. This possibly reveals one of the major causes of high failure rate in schools.

“We rarely experience discipline in this school. There are, learners who are very discipline but it is difficult to recognise them because we are so busy reprimanding and punishing those that are not. The little girls in the intermediate phase are, making advances to male teachers by asking them to become their boyfriends. When these educators report the matter to the parents, instead of reprimanding their children, they put the blame on these poor educators. Saying that these learners are making advances on them because they are no longer wear blazers and ties. The only way an educator can experience discipline in this school is to administer harsh punishment. The only problem is that discipline lasts for a short time and then learners go back to being unruly, disrespectful and uncooperative.” (Teacher C).

According to teacher C, these learners do not respect the teachers. The fact that when teachers report to parents, these parents put the blame on teachers possibly reveals lack of home discipline. In support, a study by Smith (2019) revealed that about 65% of educators in schools complain about learner disrespect towards educators and peers, noncompliance towards school rules, and learners talking out of turn. Teacher C further states that for a teacher to experience discipline, the teacher must administer harsh

punishment. This possibly reveals what Porteus, et al., (2016) said in their study, that educators relate discipline with punishment, missing its true intentions by making it physical. The main aim of discipline should be to encourage cooperation, self-discipline, safety of other learners, compliance, and to give support (Agesa, 2015; Mashaba, et al., 2024).

➤ **Experiences of educators regarding learner discipline in the classrooms.**

This question is linked to the previous question, this was done to, gain broader understanding of the educators' experiences outside and inside the classroom. As much as educators experience discipline or indiscipline in school in general, their experiences are, also tied to the classrooms. Discipline in the classroom does not mean punishment, but it relates to responsibility and respect needed for learner development. Khatun and Siddiqui (2018) states that discipline is a tool used to assist learners attain self-control and develop progressive thinking skills. Participants showed more concern when it relates to discipline in the classroom and they tried to communicate their experiences as best as they could. Below are the experiences of educators, regarding discipline in the classroom:

“On some days, we are able to conduct lessons successfully without any disruptive behavior. These are the days where we are able to reach our lesson objectives. The quietness and attention we get from the learners make it so easy to teach and easy for the learners to learn. The only problem is that we experience acts of indiscipline more than disciplined acts. This makes teaching hard and contributes highly on learner failure rate. I spend most of my time trying to bring the class into order than presenting a successful lesson. For example, constantly calling off learners who are fighting for learning resources instead of them cooperating and completing the activity at hand.” (Teacher A).

Experiences of Teacher A reveal that she experiences indiscipline more than discipline in her classroom. This may affect teaching and learning process, and reduce overall academic performance. According to Mamaile and Omodan (2023) indiscipline in the

classroom significantly hinders the instructional process, which leads to loss of valuable teaching time.

“It is hard to teach learners in class. We wake up every day longing for a productive and peaceful day, but we get the total opposite. Misbehaviour is spreading like wildfire in school and we educators are victims of these acts. It is true that our learners on their best days; become very cooperative. This allows teaching and learning to take place effectively. They become very attentive in class, no learner disrupts other learners, they sit quietly and speak only when told to do so and they ask questions when necessary. I for one wish they behaved like this a lot more than they misbehave, for the problem of poor academic performance faced by the country would be solved.”
(Teacher B).

Teacher B reveals that teachers long to have disciplined learners so that they can solve the problem of poor performance in our country. This therefore, reveals that the issue of indiscipline is not an issue only to teachers and schools but is an issue that affects the country itself. According to Simba, et al., (2016) learners' in indisciplined classrooms, tend to attain lower academic achievements. This is because these learners are less likely to engage in learning activities, which leads them to missing out on important educational content.

“Due to the fact that the learners I get in my class are learners who have been to school for a while now, makes it easier for me to deal with them and try to instill discipline in them. Although there is no such thing as entirely disciplined learner, I do not stop trying. Like my colleagues, I too face the same problems in class. My learners spend a lot of time outside than, they do in class and there is nothing I can do about it because my authority was stripped off years ago. A learner who spends too much time outside asked to go to the toilet 30 minutes after she asked to go outside to drink water. I denied her to go, and she had an accident. That accident created problems for me as a result it is

hard for me to control this problem. Acts of indiscipline are getting worse as the time goes with no strategies to deal with these acts.” (Teacher C).

According to teacher C, when learners have had few years in schooling, some traits of indiscipline diminish over time, yet still some are hard to get rid of. The teacher does not believe that there is such a thing as an entirely disciplined learner. This may possibly expose what Mijakoski, et al., (2022) revealed in their study. Mijakoski et al., (2022) stated that teachers that deal with indiscipline frequently experience burnout and job dissatisfaction after sometime, which can affect their teaching effectiveness.

Looking at the responses of participants to the two questions above, their responses reveal that their experiences of discipline are more on the negative side. They all experience acts of indiscipline more than discipline. They face difficulties in keeping discipline in their school. If a solution is not provided to this situation teachers might, experience burnout and dissatisfaction of their job. Furthermore, the responses of participants reveal that educators find it challenging to maintain control and deliver lessons effectively. This problem can result in reduction of quality instruction and learning outcomes (Semali & Vumilia, 2016).

Research question: How effective are, the legal methods approved by the government?

➤ **The effectiveness of the government's legally approved methods for maintaining discipline.**

Disciplinary methods are the tactics employed by an institution meant to deal with misconduct, facilitate personal growth, maintain order and promote discipline within the institution (Smith, 2018; Johnson & Thomas, 2020). The government proposed issuing out verbal and written warnings, expulsion, suspension, time-outs, mentoring and counselling, and detentions. All these proposed methods are effective but yet have limitations, each one's effectiveness, is determined by the learners age, determination to be disciplined, socio-economic status of the community, and cultural background of the

learners and of the community. Which is why indiscipline is still a subject of concern to educators. Participants of this study seemed to be helpless when it comes to legal methods approved by the government. Their responses aligned with the findings from the literature review. Their views and experiences are, presented below:

“The disciplinary methods that are approved by the government are not at all effective. Banning corporal punishment was a big mistake because now learners have nothing to fear. They misbehave knowing that the punishment they get is very mild. The government needs to bring back corporal punishment for the benefit of South Africa as a whole. Furthermore, I think the government is not considering educators at all, what they are dealing with in schools is uncontrollable and educators have their hands full. One time I had a learner who was busy disrupting the lesson in class and I took that learner to the naughty corner, only for that learner to cause more disruptions in that corner. This learner was busy making negative comments and saying funny things that disrupted the class. Right at this moment I felt helpless, for I did not know what to do anymore.” (Teacher A).

According to teacher A, the government approved disciplinary measures are not effective at all. This may be a result of lack of adequate training and resources needed to implement these measures effectively. According to Seopetsa (2020) this is a result of the government failing to involve the public when planning the policies, setting unrealistic goals, and not considering people’s values and cultural systems. Teacher A further touches the issue of corporal punishment, that the government made a mistake by burning it. According to Moyo, et al., (2014) corporal punishment was, eliminated to foster a supportive and safer school environment.

“These methods only curb misbehaviour for a short time they are not a permanent solution. Telling learners to stand on their feet or detaining them a punishment is really does not work. Worst of all it is as if these learners are used to these punishments and they have realise that they are not bad. In this area, detention has become an inadmissible punishment, because when

they detain these learners, they face attacks from parents. Parents say that they fear for the safety of their children having to walk the streets alone when other learners have long gone home. Leaving educators with less approved disciplinary measures.” (Teacher B).

According to teacher B, the disciplinary measures approved by the government solve the problem temporarily. The government’s vision was to totally eliminate indiscipline in school and create safe environment for both teachers and learners (Padayachee & Gcebu, 2022). Not reaching this goal may be an outcome of the government not involving the community, and school communities when deriving these policies (Seopetsa, 2020). According to Padayachee and Gcebu (2022) absence of disciplinary measures that are effective, encourages indisciplined learners to misbehave even more. Teacher B also revealed that parents fight them when they implement some strategies; this confirms that policies drafted by government have to involved teachers and parents. These are, urgently needed to deal with this problem.

“The methods approved by the government to discipline learners only work temporarily because the problem has deep roots at home. The only method that worked better than the ones we have now was corporal punishment, banned by government. This leaves us with useless strategies. I once had a learner in class who used to cause disruptions in my class and whenever I tried to discipline this learner, he would respond to me disrespectfully. After so many accounts and cases of misconduct, we tried to expel the learner. Little did we know that this will later, backfire on us. The community was mobilised by the parents of this learner to close down the school saying that if the school does not take this learner back, there will be no school at all. Their argument was that we are depriving this learner his right to education. What I realise is that, most of these methods work best in “model-c” schools located in the cities. Such methods do not work in rural areas.” (Teacher C).

Teacher C agrees with Teacher B that the effectiveness of the government approved disciplinary measures is only temporary. Teacher C seem to prefer corporal punishment; over these methods mentioned. Padayachee and Gcebu (2022) in their study also revealed that since the government abolished corporal punishment, acts of indiscipline have escalated in South African schools, to a point that there is no viable system in place to deal with such behaviours. Teacher C further revealed that these methods seem to work best in schools located in the cities. The government should ask such schools to share how they implement these strategies; this might help schools that are facing high levels of indiscipline.

The responses of participants to this question are on the negative, revealing the ineffectiveness of the government approved strategies. Their responses also reveal a cry out for strategies that can curb indiscipline in schools. Furthermore, their responses revealed that they associate discipline with punishment, which can contribute to these methods not working for them. Porteus, et al., (2016) in their study revealed that educators relate discipline with punishment, which contributes to the inability to eradicate indiscipline in schools. According to Innocent & Andala (2021) if, punishment is regularly used as an outcome of misconduct in a long run learners turn to agree with these outcomes without resentment. According to participants, the situation worsens the more they try to employ these methods. Moreover, educators tend to prefer corporal punishment to these new methods.

Research question: What causes learner indiscipline in this school?

➤ Causes of learner indiscipline.

Literature of this study revealed that there are many causes of indiscipline. They differ between schools and individuals due to various factors arising internally or externally. Some of the causes of indiscipline are:

- Lack of strong disciplinary policies set to eradicate indiscipline in schools (Modiba & Monyokolo, 2018).

- Indiscipline caused by language barriers because of the diverse language backgrounds in South Africa resulting in communication difficulties between educators and learners (Alexander, et al., 2018).
- Acts of indiscipline as, a result of inadequate resources to run the school (Fleisch, 2008).
- Crime and violence that is problematic within South African communities, ending up spilling into schools within the communities (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996).

Participants of this study shared what they think is the cause of indiscipline this based on their experiences. Below are their thoughts about what they think the cause of indiscipline is:

“I think the cause of indiscipline in this school is peer pressure. Our learners are at a stage where pleasing their friends is a priority. They misbehave to get approval from peers to be seen as, “cool” and to gain popularity within the school. The influence of peers drives indiscipline to greater heights every day in this school. Another thing that I think causes learner misconduct is the lack of interest in school. These children lack motivation in such a way that they only come to school to disrupt other learners and teachers.” (Teacher A).

Teacher A outlined peer pressure as a factor of indiscipline. She believes that these learners behave like this because they want to please their peers. Müller, et al., (2018) in their study asserted that learners who are subject to peer pressure, turn to conform to the behaviours and norms of the peer group. To most learners this done to seek acceptance and validation from their peers even when their behaviours are disruptive and against the school rules. Furthermore, teacher A revealed that another cause of indiscipline is learners lacking interest in school. According to Özerk (2020) the cause for learner’s lack of interest in school are boredom and disengagement. When learners experience this, they tend to replace their disengagement and boredom with disruptive behaviour.

“There are quite a number of things that can affect a child’s behaviour, for example, living in an abusive or toxic environment. Such environments perpetuate uncontrollable anger in children. Traumatic experiences make

such learners abusive towards peers and educators, which therefore means the background of a learner contributes to learner's behaviour. Another factor is lack of positive attitude and interest in education. These learners come to school because they are forced by their parents, they do not see the value of education in their lives. As a result, acts of indiscipline become the only thing driving them. Also, the lack of respect for people in general leads them to act in unacceptable ways toward teachers and sometimes, other children here at school.” (Teacher B).

Teacher B revealed that, living in a toxic or abusive environment can perpetrate indiscipline. Abuse can take many forms including psychological, emotional, and physical abuse. According to Ngwokabuenui (2015) an abusive environment can greatly contribute to indiscipline. Learners who experience abuse often suffer from low self-esteem, depression and anxiety, and these challenges can manifest as disruptive behaviours in the classroom (Radell, et al., 2021). The moment a learner goes through such experiences, that learner is likely to lose the ability to engage positively in school.

“Irresponsible parents. Irresponsible parents is one of the biggest factors of indiscipline that we face in our school. Parents refuse to take serious and necessary actions that will positively contribute to their children's education and lives in general. They do not teach their children about consequence of indiscipline, which always catch up with them in future. Bad parenting contributes highly to the acts of indiscipline from learners. Most parents want to be good parents by actually being bad. Lack of discipline at home, contributes highly to nonproductive and toxic teaching and learning environment in schools. The sooner parents realise this, the better chances we would have of eradicating indiscipline in schools.” (Teacher C).

Teacher C highlights bad parenting as one of the biggest factors of indiscipline in this school. The parents' failure to actively contribute to children's education seems to be a problem as highlighted by teacher C. Wolhuter and Van der Walt, (2020) in their study,

asserted that inconsistent discipline is one of the primary aspects of bad parenting. Children, who experience inconsistent and unpredictable consequences for their actions, often struggle to understand expectations and obey boundaries. This may lead to increased behavioural issues.

The responses of participants reveal that causes of indiscipline in schools are peer pressure, lack of interest in school, living in a toxic environment, and bad parenting. According to Adeleke and Odeyemi (2021) peer pressure breeds four things, namely risk taking, rejection of authority, disregard for academic responsibilities, and social identity crisis. Children under peer pressure may engage in risk taking behaviours such as substance abuse, theft, and other forms of misconduct. Secondly, they will show signs of rebelliousness towards teachers, administrators, and other authority figures. Lastly, they disregard academic responsibilities and prioritise social acceptance, which leads to social identity crisis where conforming to a group overrides individual judgement. There are many other causes of indiscipline in schools and, each one needs to be understood and have disciplinary measures best suited to eradicate it.

Research question: How do the school's disciplinary measures align to the school's academic performance?

➤ **Relationship between disciplinary measures and academic performance.**

Studies revealed that school rules have an impact on academic performance. The relationship can be positive or negative depending on the nature and effectiveness of those rules. Dawo & Simatwa (2016) stated that classroom rules and regulations stimulate secure working conditions and learning space. These rules and regulations if they are applied correctly, they produce positive academic outcomes. Furthermore, for primary schools, parental involvement is key because primary school learners have not yet grown to the level of distinguishing between what is right and wrong. It is the parents' responsibility to try and align home rules and regulations to those of the school (Saa`da , 2021). This helps the learner not to feel oppressed or feel like they are in a foreign land when they have to adhere to the school rules and regulations. Innocent and Andala (2021) stated that at some point the school together with parents and the community will be

required to come up with strategies on how to match their rules and regulations to shape learners into becoming complying citizens. This will also affect learners' attitude towards school rules and impact positively on learners' academic performance. Participants of this study shared light of how the school's disciplinary measures relate with the school's academic performance. Below are direct quotes of their responses.

“The approved disciplinary measures at our school are not effective, thus leading to poor performance. We have tried the naughty corner but learners who are, placed there turn to disrupt the class even further. Some of these disruptions at the naughty corner seem to be caused by the fact that, once we send one learner there, other learners misbehave intentional just to be sent to the corner. For them the naughty corner is like a free ticket to skip class activities. To answer your question, the ineffectiveness of our school's disciplinary measures impacts the school's academic performance negatively.” (Teacher A).

According to teacher A, the school uses the disciplinary measures approved by the government. Based on the responses the school did not come up with its ways to deal with misconduct. Teacher A refers back to the ineffectiveness of these methods as discussed in the second question. According to Padayachee and Gcebu (2022) since schools are educational institutions that are, aimed at fostering a learning environment that is both safe and conducive, it is then the schools' responsibility to come up with ways of dealing with indiscipline. This means schools also have the responsibility to solve this problem using technique that align with the policies.

“Our school's disciplinary measures have a negative impact on the academic performance. I think this is due to the lack of parental involvement. There are some disciplinary measures that we fail to employ due to, the fact that parents disagree with them, and as a result leading to a learner misbehaving even more, which leads to poor performance. If only parents would align home discipline with school discipline, the school's disciplinary measures would breed positive academic results.” (Teacher B).

According to teacher B, the school's disciplinary measures fail because of parents. Most parents do not agree with the disciplinary measures as a result leaving educators with less strategies to deal with indiscipline in the classroom and school in general. Parental involvement is crucial when disciplining learners, and to create a holistic environment. According to Utami (2022) research has constantly revealed that parental involvement in their children learning impacts learner behaviour and academic success positively. Thus, teacher A says if only parents would be involved in their children's education. Furthermore, teacher A seems to believe that if home disciplinary measures match those of the school only then can academic excellency would be attained. Utami (2022) supports by revealing that when parents and schools collaborate, they create an environment that is consistent in discipline, which in turn will spring forth the desired behave in students.

“Most of our disciplinary measures are not effective, which leads to increased acts of indiscipline resulting in poor academic performance. Disciplinary measures in schools should seek to create a holistic environment that supports academic excellence, but this is lacking in our school due to their ineffectiveness. One disciplinary measure that has potential of impacting academic performance positively is detention. During detention learners are expected to write their homework or study, and that improves their academic performance a bit. So, the relationship that exists between our disciplinary measures and academic performance is negative.” (Teacher C).

The response of teacher C aligns to that of teacher A. The school focuses on implementing the government approved disciplinary measure it seems to be not looking for other methods of dealing with this problem. The sooner schools realise and accept the fact that, it is the school's responsibility to create a safe and holistic environment for learners' the problem will not be solved. Padayachee and Gcebu (2022) in their study assert that schools have a legal obligation to take care of learners placed in their care, which includes safety and well-being of learners. This therefore means that if the government approved disciplinary measures do not work, schools have to come up with ways to create a holistic environment.

The responses of participants reveal that schools have placed the duty of eradicating indiscipline to the government, whereas it is the responsibility of both the school and the government. Meaning that, schools need to be reminded of their duties regarding the learners in their care. Furthermore, based on the responses of participants, the current disciplinary measures do not foster positive academic results. Disciplinary measures that will ensure positive academic excellence in primary schools, specifically in foundation phase, need to be established.

Research question: What are the chances of successfully eradicating acts of indiscipline?

➤ **Chances of successfully eradicating acts of indiscipline.**

According to literature, acts of indiscipline are a problem in schools because educators misunderstand discipline. Porteus, et al. (2016) revealed that most educators relate discipline with punishment leading to them missing its true intentions by making it physical. According to Khatun and Siddiqui (2018), discipline is a tool used to assist learners attain self-control and develop progressive thinking skills. This means instilling discipline in learners is our best chance at eradicating acts of indiscipline in schools. Up to so far, the experiences of the participants have revealed a problem with no solution to it. The research posed a follow up question to the participants as: ‘Do you think indiscipline can be totally eradicated in your school/’

The thoughts of the respondents are, presented below:

“I think it is too late to do anything now. We can only manage indiscipline by punishing these learners now and then. At this point I do not see a permanent solution to this problem unless we find a way to help the learners overcome the pressure and influence that comes from their peers and fellow learners.”
(Teacher A).

Teacher A seems, to think that indiscipline cannot be eradicated in schools. Her beliefs reveal that she thinks the only option is to punish these learners for their actions although that does not give results either. This takes us back to the issue of associating discipline

with punishment, that it is an error or mistake made by educators. A study conducted by Kumah, et al., (2023) revealed that, involving parents, learners, and all stakeholders in schools when producing a code of conduct, helps minimise misconduct in schools. Their study revealed that, there are ways of eradicating indiscipline in schools, and schools need to find those ways.

“I do not think we can deal with this problem permanently. The implementation of programs such as; teaching our learners about the importance of education and the consequences of being illiterate in this society might be an eye opener to these learners. Taking them to places where people who are actually facing those consequences are, places such as prisons and camps where homeless people live might help, as statistics show that the majority of them are not educated due to one reason or another.” (Teacher B).

Teacher B reveals positively engaging in programs that will show learners a glimpse of what their actions may lead them and the consequences they might face in future. For example, a learner that has no interest in school may not see consequences of those actions, but those consequences, might be experienced later in the learner’s life. Kumah, et al., (2023) in their study revealed benefits of involving police officers, social workers, etc., to motivate these learners, and at some point, help schools eradicate certain unwanted behaviours. Involving the community might work.

“We can never be completely free from indiscipline because children of this age do not know the difference between right and wrong but if their parents could step up and take their children’s education seriously, the level of indiscipline that we face would decrease incredibly and we would only deal with unintentional misbehaviour.” (Teacher C).

Teacher C in her response reveals that schools are failing to eradicate indiscipline because parents are not involved in the education of their children. Her response aligns with the study of Kumah, et al., (2023), and that of Padayachee and Gcebu (2022).

Responses of participants to this question reveal that participants do not believe that acts of indiscipline can be successfully eradicated in schools. Yet, on the other-hand, in their responses they share what they think can tip the balance of the scale to the winning side. The aim of discipline is to assist learners develop a behaviour that is socially acceptable and learners learn to do things right (Friaes, et al., 2023). Furthermore, discipline supports their emotional and mental health (Ijaz, et al., 2024). The responses from participants reveal that they too misunderstand discipline and its role. Thus, they do not think indiscipline can never be eradicated in schools.

Main research question: How do the school's' disciplinary measures relate with the schools' academic performance?

➤ **Relationship between discipline and learner academic performance.**

Studies reveal a positive relationship that exists between discipline and academic performance. A study by Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2014) revealed that enhanced learner academic performance, is attained when the classroom has a climate that is, supportive and positive. Furthermore, learners with high self-discipline tend to attain high-test scores and achieve positive academic results (Vazsonyi, et al., 2022; Vazsonyi, et al., 2017). Based on these studies, discipline is an important aspect of academic performance. Participants of this study seemed to have pondered the relationship of causality between discipline and academic performance. Their experiences revealed the relationship that exists between discipline and academic performance. Below are their responses based on their observations on how discipline affects learner performance in their school.

"I have come to the realisation that almost all of our top achievers are learners with a high level of discipline, and our lowest achievers are the ones with the lowest level of discipline. I have then concluded that discipline breeds learners that perform well academically through listening to their teachers, while indiscipline breeds learners who perform low academically because of their unruliness and uncooperativeness. Our school currently has only a few top achievers, most learners are below average. This shows how much the

school, is affected by the acts of indiscipline we face daily. So, in my opinion, discipline has great influence on academic performance.” (Teacher A).

According to teacher A, discipline has the power to influence academic performance. In her response she revealed that disciplined learners perform well academically and those who lack discipline perform poorly academically. Effective discipline is key when it comes to creating a conducive learning environment, which fosters positive academic outcomes (Simba, et al., 2016). This therefore, means discipline and academic performance have a positive relationship, and indiscipline has a negative relationship in academic performance.

“This school is faced with a lot of indiscipline, which is very destructive because as educators we often complain to each other about the difficulties of teaching a class that is so unfocused. It is almost impossible to conduct a lesson and achieve the objectives of that lesson. This causes very poor performance each and, every year to the point where we have started fearing that this is going to affect learners who are disciplined and performing well because, we spend so much time in class reprimanding undisciplined learners. I can therefore say that, discipline has the power to influence academic performance. My experience in class proved that.” (Teacher B).

The response of teacher B corresponds to that of teacher A. in agreement, teacher B responded by saying discipline has the power to influence academic performance positively, with indiscipline influencing academic performance negatively. A study by Njoroge and Nyabuto (2014) revealed that classrooms that have effective discipline are able to successfully maintain order, reduce disruptions, and allows teaching and learning to take place effectively. This therefore leads to positive academic outcomes.

“I think most teachers here will agree with me that discipline is one thing our schools lacks. Our learners are uncooperative and this is a major factor in their poor performance. We try different teaching methods to get them to

focus but we do that all in vain because the results are almost and always the same. I feel like with all the resources that we have, our school would be one of the best schools in this area if we had disciplined learners. Furthermore, most learners misbehave for a long time, facing consequences of their behaviour by failing. However, after years of having to repeat a class once or twice before progressing, they turn to realise that their behaviour is the cause of their failure and they change it. After changing their behaviour, their academic performance turn to be positive. For this reason, I think that discipline does have the power to influence academic performance positively or negatively.” (Teacher C).

Teacher C in agreement with teachers A and B says discipline has the power to influence academic performance. In her response, talks about learners coming to the realisation that their behaviour is negatively impacting their academic performance and achieving of positive results after change of behaviour. Learners exhibiting disruptive behaviours, mostly experience academic difficulties (Obed & Dr. Baptiste, 2024). Addressing behavioural issues, helps mitigate poor performance, and lead learners towards academic excellence.

Responses from participants reveal that disciplined learners attain positive academic results, while misbehaving learners attain negative academic results. According to Njoroge & Nyabuto (2014) disruptive learners are an issue and part of the reasons for poor academic performance in schools. Furthermore, learners with high self-discipline tend to attain high-test scores and achieve positive academic results (Vazsonyi, et al., 2022; Vazsonyi, et al., 2017).

4.2.3. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis refers to the process of examining, cleaning, transforming, and interpreting data to reveal relationships, patterns, trends, and meaningful insights (Haider & Verbeke, 2017). The findings are, therefore used to make informed decisions or draw conclusions (Grolemund & Wickham, 2016). Data analysis is an important component in research that allows researchers to extract valuable information from raw data (Hair, et al., 2019).

Various methodologies and techniques are, used to obtain insights, trends, and patterns within data sets. For this, study a data analysis table was, used to analyse the collected data.

The data analysis tables are used to, organise and present qualitative data such as field notes, interview transcripts, or other textual information (Smith & Jones, 2018). The table helps researchers to compare and categorise data systematically, identify themes or patterns, and then draw meaningful conclusions from this data (Brown, 2020). The researcher used a data analysis table to analyse data collected from the interviews. The colours highlight the words that answer the posed question. The table is, presented below.

TABLE 3: TABLE SHOWING DATA ANALYSIS

Colour codes for participants are: Participant A = Green, Participants B =blue and participant C = yellow.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS	CATEGORY	THEME
How do educators in this school experience learners' discipline?	"Our learners are not disciplined. We struggle with late coming, absenteeism, fights, bullying, theft, and so on. We call off fights more than we should be." (Teacher A) "I have seen intermediate phase learners bully foundation phase learners without even considering the age gap between them. Come to think of it, we had a learner last year who used to come with a knife at school, threatening one of colleagues with it and he was expelled." (Teacher B) "We rarely experience discipline in this school. The only way an educator can experience discipline in this school is to administer harsh punishment." (Teacher C)	Discipline in schools	Experiences of educators relating to discipline in school.

How do you then experience learner discipline in your classroom?	"The only problem is that we experience acts of indiscipline more than disciplined acts. This makes teaching hard and contributes highly on learner failure rate." (Teacher A) "It is hard to teach learners in class. Misbehaviour is spreading like wildfire in school and we educators are victims of these acts." (Teacher B) "My learners spend a lot of time outside than they do in class. Acts of indiscipline are getting worse as the time goes with no strategies to deal with these acts." (Teacher C"	Discipline in the classroom	Experiences of educators relating to discipline in the classroom.
What do you think causes learner indiscipline?	"I think the cause of indiscipline in this school is peer pressure. Another thing that I think causes learner misconduct is the lack of interest in school." (Teacher A) "There are quite a number of things that can affect a child's behaviour, for example, living in an abusive or toxic environment. Another factor is lack of positive attitude and interest in education. Also, the lack of respect for people in general." (Teacher B) "Irresponsible parents. Lack of discipline at home, contributes highly to non-productive and toxic teaching and learning environment in schools." (Teacher C)	Perpetrator of undesirable behaviour	Causes of learner indiscipline.

How does your schools' disciplinary measures relate with your schools' academic performance?	"The approved disciplinary measures at our school are not effective, thus leading to poor performance. To answer your question, the ineffectiveness of our schools' disciplinary measures impacts the schools' academic performance negatively." (Teacher A) "Our schools' disciplinary measures have a negative impact on the academic performance. There are some disciplinary measures that we fail to employ due to the fact that parents disagree with them, and as a result leading to a learner misbehaving even more, which leads to poor performance." (Teacher B) "Most of our disciplinary measures are not effective, which leads to increased acts of indiscipline resulting in poor academic performance. So, the relationship that exists between our disciplinary measures and academic performance is negative." (Teacher C)	Actions and outcomes	Effects of discipline on academic performance.
Do you think learner indiscipline can, be eradicated in this school?	"I think it is too late to do anything now. We can only manage it by punishing these learners now and then." (Teacher A) "I do not think we can deal with this problem permanently." (Teacher B) "We can never be completely free from indiscipline because children of this age do not know the	Removing the problem	Possibility of completely eradicating indiscipline.

	difference between right and wrong.” (Teacher C)		
How effective are the legal methods approved by the government to deal with indiscipline?	“The disciplinary methods that are approved by the government are not at all effective. Banning corporal punishment was a big mistake because now learners have nothing to fear.” (Teacher A) “These methods only curb misbehaviour for a short time they are not a permanent solution. Telling learners to stand on their feet or detaining them as punishment is really not working.” (Teacher B) “The methods approved by the government to discipline learners only work temporarily because the problem has deep roots at home. This leaves us with useless strategies. What I have realised is that, most of these methods work best in “model-c” schools located in the cities. Such methods do not work in rural areas.” (Teacher C)	Disciplinary methods	Effectiveness of disciplinary methods from the government.
How does discipline in this school relate with learner academic performance?	“I have then concluded that discipline breeds learners that perform well academically through listening to their teachers, while indiscipline breeds learners who perform low academically because of their unruliness and uncooperativeness.” (Teacher A) “It is almost impossible to conduct a lesson and achieve the objectives of that	Nature of causality	Relationship between discipline and academic performance.

	lesson. This causes very poor performance each and every year.” (Teacher B) “Our learners are uncooperative and this is a major factor in their poor performance.” (Teacher C)		
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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In chapter 4, the researcher presented the observations, outcomes of the interviews, and analysed the presented data. In this Chapter, the researcher is going to present the findings of this study, draw conclusions, and make recommendations.

5.1. FEASIBILITY REVIEW

The study was conducted for the purpose of investigating the relationship between discipline and learners' academic performance, specifically in the foundation phase. Results may show that discipline affects learners' academic performance negatively or positively depending on the set rules of the school, self-discipline of learners, home discipline, and community discipline. The results were evaluated following these criteria; constant checking of trustworthiness, dependability, confirmability and transferability. In conclusion, this study was conducted without any hitches nor funding, reasons being that the researcher is employed as an educator in this school.

5.2. EXPECTED RESEARCH OUTPUT

The results of the study were, expected to prove that discipline positively affects academic performance. The findings of the study exposed those negative academic outcomes caused by indiscipline, also leading to finding possible solutions to the problem. The knowledge acquired through this study is of value to all stakeholders in the education field. The outputs to document the outcomes of this study will be through the availability of the dissertation and an academic article upon completion of the study. The outcomes of the study have the potential to guide principals and teachers to obtain positive results when implementing the recommendations and therefore providing a solution to curb indiscipline in the foundation phase education context.

5.3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research findings refer to the results attained from a methodical study or investigation conducted to address a specific research question (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). These

findings represent insights, outcomes, and conclusions obtained from analysis and interpretation of the data that was gathered through the research process (Grolemund & Wickham, 2016; Babbie, 2016). Research findings include theoretical propositions, experimental outcomes, qualitative insights, statistical relationships, or empirical insights, depending on the nature of the study and the methods employed in it (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This means that research findings play a vital role in contributing to existing knowledge within a specific field. The findings of this study are, presented below in detail.

What causes learner indiscipline in foundation phase in this school?

The findings of this study highlighted several causes of learner indiscipline, including peer pressure, lack of interest in school, an abusive environment, lack of respect, parental irresponsibility, and a lack of home discipline. From a behaviourist perspective, these issues can be understood through the lens of environmental influences on behaviour (Skinner, 1953). According to behaviourism, behaviour is learned through interactions with the environment, meaning that if children are exposed to undisciplined or toxic surroundings, they are likely to adopt and reinforce negative behaviours.

Furthermore, participants expressed that parents need to play a more active role in curbing indiscipline. This aligns with Bandura's (1963) social learning theory, which is rooted in behaviourism and suggests that children learn behaviours through observation and imitation. If parents fail to model and reinforce disciplined behaviours at home, children may not develop self-regulation skills, leading to increased behavioural challenges in school. Additionally, the lack of reinforcement for positive behaviour at home and in school may contribute to learners losing interest in academics.

Another critical insight from the findings is that educators feel they have lost the ability to instil discipline due to non-functional disciplinary methods. This can be linked to Skinner's (1958) concept of reinforcement schedules, if disciplinary measures in schools are inconsistent or ineffective, learners may no longer associate misbehaviour with consequences, leading to worsening acts of indiscipline. The absence of immediate reinforcement or corrective feedback means that negative behaviours are not properly addressed, making it harder to modify them over time.

How do educators in foundation phase experience learners' discipline?

The findings of this study revealed that discipline is a key factor in the proper functioning of a school. When learners are disciplined, the school operates effectively, but when discipline is lacking, schools face challenges. Findings of this study revealed that educators in foundation phase experience acts such as late coming, absenteeism, fights, theft, and bullying, which disrupt teaching and learning. From a behaviourist perspective, these disciplinary issues can be understood in terms of reinforcement and punishment (Skinner, 1953). If inappropriate behaviours are not met with consistent consequences, they are likely to persist or worsen, as behaviourism suggests that behaviours are shaped by their consequences.

Findings of this study further revealed that educators in the foundation phase struggle to conduct lessons and achieve their objectives due to learner indiscipline. Behaviourism emphasizes the role of structured learning environments in shaping learner behaviour (Skinner, 1957). If learners are not consistently reinforced for positive behaviours such as paying attention, completing tasks, and following classroom rules, they may not develop the necessary discipline for effective learning. Thorndike's (1913) law of effect further supports this idea, suggesting that behaviours followed by positive outcomes are more likely to be repeated, while those followed by negative consequences should decrease. Something that appears to be lacking in this particular school.

Additionally, participants revealed difficulties to complete assessments of learning and assessments for learning due to disciplinary issues. These issues can be linked to Pavlov's classical conditioning (Breedlove, 2015). If learners associate school with negative experiences such as conflict, punishment, or an unstimulating environment, they may develop avoidant behaviours, leading to disengagement from learning activities. In contrast, if discipline were reinforced positively, learners would associate school with structure and success, increasing their motivation to participate.

How effective are the legal methods approved by the government to curb indiscipline?

Findings revealed that educators are struggling to implement effective disciplinary methods and are in search of strategies that can permanently address indiscipline in

schools. The legal methods approved by the South African government have been found to be largely ineffective, with some educators describing them as a temporary solution that only curbs misbehaviour for a short period without bringing about lasting behavioural change. This aligns with behaviourist principles, which emphasize that for discipline to be effective, reinforcement and punishment must be consistent, immediate, and meaningful (Skinner, 1953). If disciplinary methods do not result in observable and lasting behaviour change, it suggests that they may not be applying behaviourist strategies effectively.

Furthermore, findings indicated that these government-approved methods appear to be effective only in Model-C schools, whereas they fail in other schooling contexts. From a behaviourist perspective, this discrepancy can be explained by the influence of environmental reinforcement on behaviour (Skinner, 1957). If a school environment consistently reinforces discipline through structured routines, clear rules, and immediate consequences, learners are more likely to develop disciplined behaviours. However, if reinforcement is inconsistent or weak, the effectiveness of these methods diminishes.

Additionally, it was revealed that some educators still prefer corporal punishment and believe that banning it was a mistake. This preference suggests that some educators associate immediate punishment with effective behaviour control, a view that aligns with Thorndike's (1913) law of effect, which states that behaviours followed by unpleasant consequences are less likely to be repeated. However, modern behaviourist approaches advocate for positive reinforcement over punishment, as studies show that punishment alone may suppress behaviour temporarily rather than encourage long-term discipline (Skinner, 1968). The ineffectiveness of the legal methods suggests that schools may need to adopt structured behavioural interventions that reinforce positive behaviours through rewards and consequences while ensuring that disciplinary strategies are consistently applied to promote lasting behaviour change.

How do the schools' disciplinary measures relate with the schools' academic performance?

Findings of the study reveal that schools, in general, do not consider academic performance when they set disciplinary measures. The disciplinary measures set by the school align with the government proposed methods, but the school did not measure

these methods against its set academic performance expectations. Khewu (2017) supports by stating that discipline is a method used to eliminate the undesired behaviour and promote the desired behaviour, promote achieving competence, self-control, and self-direction. According to Porteus, et al., (2016) most schools relate discipline with punishment, missing its true intentions by making it physical. According to Khatun & Siddiqui (2018) discipline is a tool used to assist learners attain self-control and develop progressive thinking skills. This therefore means that discipline is an important element in academic performance. Based on the findings, it can therefore be concluded that the school considers discipline to be a form of punishment and as a result failed to set strong rules that will ensure ultimate cooperation from learners and parents. This is why the educators complain about learners' poor performance.

To what level does discipline affect learner academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D?

Findings revealed observable patterns in learner behaviour that highlight the relationship between discipline and academic performance. Participants observed that disciplined learners perform well academically, whereas learners who lack discipline tend to struggle. This aligns with behaviourist principles, which emphasize that learning is shaped by reinforcement and consequences (Skinner, 1953). If learners fail to engage in classroom activities due to indiscipline, they do not receive the necessary reinforcement for academic success, leading to poor performance. On the other hand, disciplined learners complete their tasks, receive positive reinforcement, and thus develop academic success habits.

Additionally, findings indicated that educators put in extra effort, frequently adjusting their teaching strategies to improve academic outcomes. However, despite their efforts, learner performance remains poor because the underlying issue is not the teaching methods, but rather learner behaviour. This supports Thorndike's (1913) law of effect, which states that behaviours followed by positive outcomes are likely to be repeated, while those followed by negative outcomes will decrease. If students engage in disruptive behaviours and do not experience effective disciplinary consequences, they are likely to continue behaving in ways that hinder their learning.

Observations further revealed that indiscipline burdens educators, making it difficult to teach effectively. Classroom disruptions such as absenteeism, fights over resources, and general misbehaviour prevent educators from successfully delivering lessons. This supports Skinner's (1957) reinforcement theory, which suggests that without structured reinforcement, behaviours that interfere with learning will persist. If there are no immediate and consistent disciplinary measures, learners may not develop the self-regulation necessary for academic success.

Finally, findings showed that disciplined learners complete their tasks on time and achieve high grades, whereas those who lack discipline fail to complete tasks and perform poorly. This reflects Bandura's (1963) social learning theory, which argues that behaviour is learned through observation and modelling. If learners observe a structured environment where discipline is rewarded, they are more likely to adopt productive academic behaviours. Conversely, if indiscipline goes unchecked, negative behaviours may spread, reinforcing poor academic habits.

5.4. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which discipline influences learner academic performance in a rural public primary school in Tweefontein-D. Regarding the level of indiscipline in schools, and the influence of context and community, public primary schools experience acts of indiscipline more than disciplined acts. Educators are concerned about this and are in serious need of strategies to deal with these acts. In a qualitative study by Davis and Wilson (2022), educators raised similar concerns regarding the levels of indiscipline and its external factors towards learners. Lack of parental involvement, was exposed as one of the factors contributing towards increased acts of indiscipline in schools. The community at large needs to work hand-in-hand with schools to, completely eradicate indiscipline in schools.

The alignment between discipline and academic achievements found, is that discipline has an influence on academic achievement. Disciplined learners turn to perform well academically, whilst learners who lack discipline perform poorly. Discipline promotes good behaviour, positive environment, and is key to positive academic performance. A

study by Khatun & Siddiqui (2018) supports this conclusion by stating that discipline is a tool used to assist learners attain self-control and develop progressive thinking skills. Furthermore, Fink, et al. (2017) reveal that disciplinary measures in schools not only promote a positive school environment, but they also foster academic success. It can therefore be concluded that when a school sets academic goals, it needs to also set solid disciplinary measures to ensure academic success. According to Modiba (2019) South African schools that employ disciplinary strategies that are effective and uphold a climate that is positive towards discipline, tend to have positive learner academic performances. A study by Mathebula and Modiba (2020) supports this conclusion by stating that schools need to instill discipline in learners to achieve academic success, specifically in rural schools that are resource constrained.

Lastly, the efficacy of government suggested disciplinary methods, which educators think and regard as ineffective. Educators prefer, corporal punishment rather than these methods, and they are on the cry for effective ones. Literature relating to this study, earlier revealed that some of the government approved methods deal with indiscipline temporarily, depend on the willingness of the learner to change, and some deprive learners the opportunity to learn. Educators are still on the search for effective strategies.

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Discipline within the school environment is crucial for fostering positive academic performance. Here are some ways that discipline can be utilized, in schools for this purpose:

- **Establishment of Clear Expectations:**

Schools can set clear behavioural and academic expectations for learners, which outline consequences for both negative and positive behaviours. According to Munna & Kalam (2021) establishing a structured environment helps learners to understand what is, expected of them and leads to improved academic performance.

- **Implementing Consistent Discipline Policies:**

Consistency in discipline policies promotes a positive school climate. It is the job of the school to ensure that disciplinary actions are, applied fairly and at a consistent level across all learners. This done to foster a sense of fairness and accountability, which in turn contributes to positive academic achievements (Sheras & Bradshaw, 2016).

➤ **Promotion of Positive Relationships:**

Schools can encourage positive collaboration, respect, and interactions among all members of the school community. Building positive relationships between teachers, learners, and staff creates a supportive learning environment (Wang, 2024). Positive relationships motivate learners to succeed academically and they promote a sense of belonging.

➤ **Encouragement of Parental Involvement:**

Schools can support learners' academic progress by actively involving parents in their children's education and behaviour management. This done through fostering of strong partnerships with parents through parent-teacher meetings, regular communication, and involvement of parent in school activities (Durišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

➤ **Providing Supportive Interventions:**

To address behavioural issues and academic challenges, schools need to implement supportive interventions. These interventions may include academic tutoring, behaviour management programs, and counseling services to help learners succeed. Targeted support can improve learner performance (Pierce, et al., 2024).

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