

# Exploring Alternative Disciplinary Measures To Manage Discipline In South African Primary Schools

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## Abstract

Primary schools in South Africa still struggle with discipline. Also, traditional discipline methods frequently fall short in addressing the underlying causes of ill-discipline and fail to provide a supportive learning environment. The study explores disciplinary measures currently used to manage ill-discipline in South African primary schools while fostering learners' academic performance, emotional growth, and general well-being. Since corporal punishment was abolished in South African schools, ill-discipline in schools has reached alarming heights despite guidelines for managing it. Many teachers still believe that corporal punishment is the only effective form of maintaining discipline in their classrooms. The question addressed is: "What disciplinary measures do schools apply to lessen ill-discipline?" A qualitative approach and a case study design were adopted for this study. Twelve participants were selected from 3 primary schools through a purposeful sampling approach. Data gathered through document review and interviews was analysed thematically. The study found that alternatives to corporal punishment were unproductive in managing ill-discipline and recommended schools to employ practical and feasible disciplinary measures. The findings offered teachers and policymakers practical suggestions to improve discipline measures and create a supportive learning environment.

Key words: learner discipline, ill-discipline, primary schools, disciplinary measures.

## INTRODUCTION

Disciplinary measures are actions taken by organisations, such as schools, to deal with improper conduct and activities,

discourage bad behaviour, promote responsibility, and uphold moral standards (Motseke, 2020). There is an increasing societal expectation that schools should offer socially acceptable, practical, and effective measures to ensure secure environments with low levels of inappropriate behaviour (Sibanda & Mpfu, 2017). On the other hand, it is unlawful for schools to use corporal punishment or other punitive procedures to deal with ill-disciplined learners, so instead, they should implement positive disciplinary procedures (Zondo & Mncube, 2022). Globally, school stakeholders put forth a lot of effort to ensure that the learning environment is orderly and secure for teachers and learners (Bishop, Craven, Galer, Wilson & Duggins-Clay, 2022; Cho, Mansfield & Claughton, 2020; Mabaso, 2019).

Ill-discipline is a nagging problem worldwide. A significant obstacle that South African teachers face, comparable to those faced by teachers globally, is the difficulty in finding the best disciplinary measure to handle learner discipline. School stakeholders have implemented various disciplinary measures in the past to help reduce ill-discipline, yet they still struggle to find the best solution to this issue (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010).

Secondary schools in South Africa are not the only places where difficulties with discipline arise; problems involving discipline worsen in primary schools as well (Gcelu, Padayachee & Ede, 2021). Prior to the emergence of democracy, South African schools relied heavily on corporal punishment. This was thought to be the most effective disciplinary measure for managing ill-discipline. However, with the dawn of democracy, when corporal punishment was outlawed at schools, schools gradually became danger zones for learners and teachers because of the lack of training or experience needed to deal with extreme kinds of ill-discipline (Ukala, 2018).

Numerous studies have examined the impact of learner discipline on effective learning and its management (du Plessis, 2021; LiCalsi, Osher, & Bailey, 2021; Lumadi, 2020; Mahlangu, Chirwa, Machisa, Sikweyiya, Shai & Jewkes, 2021; Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). This has led to countless studies that aimed in finding the best disciplinary measures. Frias-Armentia, Rodríguez-Macías, Corral-Verdugo, Caso-Niebla, and García-Arizmendi (2018) have shown that Mexican schools use restorative programs (RP) to address ill-discipline extensively while taking into account the demands of offenders, teachers, targets, and school authorities. Research by Prasetyarini, Hikmat, and Thoyibi (2021) revealed that Indonesian schools used corrective, strict, and preventive disciplinary approaches to lower misbehaviour, whereas a study by Padayachee and Gcelu (2022) found that collaboration was key to discipline management in South African schools.

Though countless disciplinary measures have been employed since the abolishment of corporal punishment, ill-discipline problems in schools still continues. Notwithstanding schools' exceptional efforts to develop innovative measures that promote healthy behaviour, they nevertheless face instances of problematic behaviour, including assault, violence, vandalism, alcohol and drug misuse, bullying, and among many other things (Sibanda & Mpofu, 2017).

Given the prevalence of discipline cases, the previous disciplinary measures implemented by schools were ineffective in helping them manage ill-behaviour (Gcelu, padayachee & Ede, 2021). It appears that the main obstacle is finding practical and feasible disciplinary measures that would assist schools in effectively managing ill-discipline.

Consequently, there is an increased risk in schools for both teachers and learners (Ukala, 2018). To handle this problem effectively, schools need to develop disciplinary measures that could assist them in handling this massive task. Mopani East District, just like other districts in Limpopo Province, South Africa, consists of primary schools, the majority of which struggle to manage ill-discipline effectively, failing to provide quality teaching and learning. The purpose of the study is to examine the efficacy of existing disciplinary measures, and offer all-encompassing alternatives to enhance school discipline. Hence, this background serves as the foundation for this study

### **Literature Review**

Literature reveals that school stakeholders are faced with a dual responsibility, that is, addressing learner discipline and upholding the rights of learners as stipulated in the Constitution of South Africa (Foncha, Kepe, & Abongdia, 2014). Despite that, they frequently face challenges in their attempt to identify sensible solutions for discipline-related problems. It may be possible to reduce ill-discipline cases in schools through the findings of this study and develop constructive measures for handling them. This might contribute to making schools safe, pleasant, and secure places where effective teaching and learning can take place. Therefore, the literature review aids in the identification of some obstacles that may hinder the application of appropriate disciplinary measures that can help sustain a positive learning atmosphere by curbing disruptive behaviour in primary school learners.

### **Obstacles to applying effective disciplinary measures**

Studies have shown a number of distinct obstacles that have a detrimental impact on schools' use of constructive disciplinary measures (Sibanda & Mpofu, 2017). This includes countless

major factors such as immoral conduct by teachers and parents, teachers' inadequate knowledge in handling ill-disciplined practices among learners, and continuous usage of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure.

### **Immoral conduct by teachers and parents**

Society expects parents and teachers to set an example of excellent conduct for those around them, including the learners. In order to maintain uniformity in learner behaviour, parents must work in collaboration with schools to enforce the norms or code of conduct that guide behaviour among learners (Bodo, 2020). Brooks, (2023). points out that parents don't spend enough time nurturing and teaching their children values, politeness, and kindness towards the belongings of others and other people. It appears that the absence of parental supervision leads to an ineffective use of constructive disciplinary measures in schools, which makes it difficult for teachers to deal with these learners. Obadire, (2024). also noted that parents who act violently and aggressively against school personnel have a negative impact on the behaviour of learners. Additionally, interference by overly protective parents could cause a breakdown in communication between the parents and the school management, giving the impression that offenders could do as they wish.

Also, teachers' destructive psychological abuse of learners, such as sarcasm, mocking, jeering, the use of disparaging words, mental abuse, providing them with negative role models, and systematically establishing bias and prejudice in learners, also leads to a lack of discipline (Mareš, 2018). Sibanda and Mpofu (2017) also noted that learners have accused teachers of being frequently intoxicated or of dressing in a way that interfered with their ability to concentrate, which in turn encouraged irresponsible behaviour. It appears that the handling of

ill-discipline is negatively impacted by this undesirable behaviour. Nonetheless, a strong parent-teacher relationship may help teachers manage ill-discipline and enhance academic performance (Mabaso, 2019). School stakeholders' apparent immoral behaviour could be linked to their lack of knowledge on how to handle of ill-discipline cases.

### **School stakeholders' inadequate knowledge in handling ill-disciplined practices**

Research reveals that schools offer restricted chances for school stakeholders to grow as professionals and to be equipped to handle discipline issues with alternatives to physical punishment (ATCP) (Mabaso, 2019). The study by Nhlapho (2018) also revealed that the Department of Education (DoE) did not provide teachers with adequate

support for handling issues related to learner discipline, which frequently pose challenges for them in managing the varied social, psychological, and behavioural demands of their learners. Instead, school stakeholders were simply forced to follow the ATCP policy without any official training or direction and with no follow-up by the department to ensure successful implementation (Mabaso,2019). School stakeholders who are not given enough in-service training to effectively deal with ill-discipline grow frustrated by this and may resort to using unlawful methods of disciplining learners (Obadire & Sinthumule (2021).

### **Corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure**

Prior to 1994, South African teachers used a variety of disciplinary measures to maintain discipline among learners. This involved raking up papers, leaning against the wall, and a host of other things, including corporal punishment. Kubeka (2018) explains corporal punishment as a form of discipline employed by teachers in schools, mostly to change misbehaving learners by causing them physical harm. Corporal punishment is also explained as any kind of discipline in which the use of physical force is intended to inflict some level of pain or suffering (Mashau, Mutshaeni, & Kone, 2015). In this study, corporal punishment refers to physically harming learners as a form of correcting them for a transgression or offense committed. This comprises, among other things, but is not restricted to flogging, beatings, branding, spanking and the use of stocks. Before the advent of democracy, corporal punishment was a common practice in South African schools. However, after 1994, laws prohibiting corporal punishment in schools were passed in South Africa, leading to the adoption of a new Constitution. Though the South African Schools Act states that all learners enrolled in a school are subject to the school's code of conduct and that schools have the right to reprimand learners who violate this code of conduct in order to instil in them appropriate behaviour, Section 10 of the same Act does, however, prohibit the administration of corporal punishment to learners (South Africa, 1996a). This made schools to experience high volume of ill-disciplinary cases and continued application of corporal punishment notwithstanding the availability of alternatives of corporal punishment as listed in the document titled "Alternatives to corporal punishment: A guide for educators" (Kubeka, 2018). Also, teachers who still resort to corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure, makes it hard for schools to employ practical and feasible disciplinary measures that would assist in managing ill-discipline effectively. This suggests that teachers may not have studied the alternatives to corporal punishment or received any training on the implementation of these alternatives, which could be the reason for the rising number of ill-discipline cases.

This may yield either positive or negative effects of the disciplinary measures on learner performance.

### **Effects of Disciplinary Measures on Learner behaviour**

According to studies, the majority of schools struggle to cope with ill-disciplined learners, which hinders effective teaching and learning because they still apply punitive disciplinary measures like corporal punishment (Zondo, Mncube, & Emmanuel, 2023). Researchers have demonstrated that disciplinary measures that are punitive in nature, including expulsion or suspension, may have unfavourable outcomes and can influence learners' behaviour and cause them to become resentful, hostile, violent, or revengeful towards their teachers (Lacoe, & Steinberg, 2019). Lopes and Oliveira (2017) add that punitive disciplinary measures only lead to worse behaviours and produce no long-term, beneficial effects, which makes it even harder for teachers to handle ill-disciplined learners. Literature revealed that harsh discipline encourages aggressive and violent behaviour in schools because it undermines learners' academic performance and instead targets their dignity and self-worth, causing them anguish and grief (Mahlangu, et al., 2021; Semali and Vumilia, 2016). In a similar vein, DBE (2018) also concurs that using corporal punishment encourages learners to engage in aggressive behaviour.

This suggests punitive disciplinary measures are perceived as detrimental rather than effective tools for managing ill behaviour in schools because learners perceive them as cold, brutal, and merciless. Moreover, learners exhibit appropriate behaviour in a rewarding setting wherein they understand the disciplinary issue at hand rather than being afraid of punishment for misbehaviour. Consequently, new constructive and efficient disciplinary strategies are needed to help schools efficiently manage ill-discipline without endangering the physical or mental well-being of the offenders. Notwithstanding these potential barriers, the sampled schools developed their own disciplinary measures that helped them deal with ill-discipline in an efficient manner. This study was consequently necessary because it sought to address the question, "What kind of disciplinary measures do schools apply to lessen ill- discipline?"

### **Theoretical framework**

This study is underpinned by Curwin and Mendler's (1988) "Discipline with Dignity" three-dimensional theory and Rudolf Dreikurs's (1972) positive discipline theory (Zondo, Mncube, & Emmanuel, 2023). The fundamental principle of the Curwin and Mendler's (1988) theory is that everyone (learners

included) should be treated with dignity. This theory highlights the idea that measures for disciplining learners should be designed to maximise their sense of hope and dignity. It further states that it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that learners behave accordingly to avoid resistance and the desire to revenge (Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler, 2018). The three dimensions of the Curwin and Mendler's (1988) "Discipline with Dignity theory are: prevention, action and resolution. First, the prevention dimension calls for school stakeholders (principals, departmental heads who served in the disciplinary committees, and class teachers) from the three selected primary schools to develop disciplinary measures that would prevent disciplinary issues to occur. Second, the action dimension pertains to the measures that school stakeholders can implement in the event that disciplinary issues persist despite all preventive measures being implemented. These measures may be implemented to proactively avert disciplinary issues and manage the tension that comes with maintaining order in the classroom. The action dimension also entails maintaining simple records and developing measures to prevent little issues from escalating into serious problems. Third, the resolution dimension suggests that school stakeholders create plans to deal with the more severe out-of-control learners and the persistent rulebreakers.

Corroborating Curwin and Mendler's (1988), is the Rudolf Dreikurs's positive discipline theory. The primary tenet of Dreikurs' theory is that everyone wants to fit in. In fact, according to Dreikurs, the ill-disciplined behaviour that learners display in class (or at school) stems from their failure to fit in or belong. The theory will therefore assist school stakeholders in realising that the desires that learners possess within themselves, such as wanting to belong, lead to particular behaviours that they display outside of themselves, implying that the actions originate from within (Zondo & Mncube, 2022). The two theories hold greater significance as they can assist school stakeholders to develop non-punitive disciplinary measures that may accommodate all learners and assist them to handle ill-disciplined learners in a positive way thus promoting their professional growth.

### **Methodology**

The researchers employed a qualitative research methodology in an attempt to address the research question, "What kind of disciplinary measures do schools apply to lessen ill-discipline?" This approach was found relevant because it enabled researchers to explore the perceptions, beliefs and real-life experiences of stakeholders on the disciplinary measures deemed helpful in managing ill-discipline in primary schools. Thus, this study is centred around the interpretative paradigm

and seeks to explore the disciplinary measures that primary schools use to effectively handle ill-discipline. Qualitative approach assisted in understanding the phenomena in their real-world settings (Bongweni & Tyilo, 2019; Busetto, Wick, & Gumbinger, 2020).

### **Design**

Researchers were able to explore extensive information regarding stakeholders' opinions of the disciplinary measures used by schools to lessen ill-discipline through an exploratory case study design (Olawale, Chinagozi, & Joe, 2023). By presenting case studies this study promotes a paradigm shift towards inclusive and beneficial discipline approaches, with an intention to establish learning settings that are safer, more encouraging, and more productive for all learners

This design was justified on the basis that it allowed the use of a range of data-gathering methods to guarantee the trustworthiness of the data.

### **Sampling**

This study was conducted in three rural primary schools in the Mopani East District, Limpopo province, South Africa. In qualitative research, the researcher uses the appropriate sampling method in order to achieve rigor and credibility (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young & Walker, 2020). Pertinent, high-information-rich cases were selected using a purposeful sampling strategy to increase the study's rigor and trustworthiness of the data as well as its findings (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019). A sample of about 12 participants formed part of the study. This included a principal, a departmental head who served in the disciplinary committee, a member of the school governing body (SGB), and a class teacher from each the three selected primary schools in one of the districts of Limpopo Province. Participants from school X were identified as PX (Principal), DHX (departmental head) and TX (class teacher). Participants from school Y were identified as PY, DHY and TY. Lastly, participants from school Z were identified as PZ, DHZ and TZ. Criteria like the participants' functional role and experience were used to help us focus on a specific research location (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019). For example. Principals were selected on the basis that they are accounting officers in the schoolyard and they are held responsible for whatever occurrence occur during or after contact time with learners. DHs were sampled on the basis that they are part of the school management team (SMT) and that they served on the disciplinary committee of the school. Also, that they are also policy implementers. Class teachers were engaged mainly because they spend most of the time with learners, either during teaching and learning in class or at the playgrounds during extra-mural activities. They are the ones who keep records of incidents in the incident registers. The

SGBs were sampled mainly because they are liable for adopting the Code of Conduct for learners (Mathebula & Runhare, 2021). These participants were selected because they were pertinent data holders and deal with instances of ill-discipline on a daily basis.

### **Data collection method**

Data were gathered using document review and semi-structured interviews to supplement each other and as a triangulation strategy to support the findings. The researchers opted to use semi-structured interviews as the main data collection procedure because it allowed room for probing more from the participants. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed and was used for each individual interview session with different categories of participants. These categories included, principals, DHs serving in the disciplinary committees of the school, class teachers and school governing body members from the three chosen schools. Prior the interview session, permission to use a voice recorder was sought from participants. A notebook was also utilised to strengthen the recordings.

Semi-structured interviews assisted in modifying some parts of the prepared questions during the interview process when found necessary (Alamri, 2019). Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to elaborate more on the disciplinary measures that they applied to manage ill-discipline in their own schools. Researchers had more opportunity to delve deeper and interact with participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

One of the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants at various times and locations. A face-to-face interview is a procedure for gathering data in which one participant is interviewed one at a time, with the researcher asking questions and capturing their responses (Muthanna, 2019). The researcher opted to use participants who could speak English fluently; thus, interviews were conducted in English. The participants' opinions were captured on audio, written down, and then thematically analysed. Textual data were also collected from documents like incidents registers and minutes of disciplinary committee meetings. This provided a deeper awareness of the various incidents that occurred and how they were handled.

### **Data analysis**

Through the use of the data analysis process, researchers can gather relevant information to answer the research questions and the purpose of the study (Gcelu, Padayachee & Ede, 2021). Data was well arranged for accuracy and to simplify its analysis. Data was thematically analysed. To hasten the process of data analysis, data were transcribed and re-read several times. This

assisted in understanding the information shared with participants during the interview process and to get its meaning. Segments of data were coded, which assisted in putting related data into categories and led to the generation of themes. Themes were reviewed, named, and defined (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Data from documents were also subjected to thematic analysis. To confirm coherence, the themes and categories found throughout the data analysis process were verified with pertinent literature.

### **Ethics**

We followed all ethical guidelines when we submitted our applications for ethical clearance to the University of Limpopo, the DoE Limpopo province, Rakwadu 1 circuit office, and the principals of the three primary schools. The sampled schools were contacted in advance to

obtain written permission, and all essential appointments were scheduled so that the research would not impede teaching and learning activities. The participants were informed about ethical issues including privacy, informed consent, voluntary participation, and protection from harm. The observance of ethical issues helped to minimize potential threats, like intimidation through lawsuits (Strunk & Locke, 2019). Research ethics were followed throughout the entire study.

### **Results**

This study sought to explore the disciplinary measures used by stakeholders (principals, DHs, class teachers and SGBs) to address the challenges of managing ill-discipline in schools. The data gathered allowed for the development of the main theme which was summarised as: "Disciplinary measures devised to lessen ill-discipline". To understand the theme clearly, the following sub-themes were developed: abandonment of punitive disciplinary measures; engaging parents of transgressors; engaging learners in establishing rapport; establishing an engaging, entertaining, and stimulating teaching and learning environment; encouraging extra-curricular activities and, putting time-out techniques into practice. To support the findings, Curwin and Mendler's (1988) three-dimensional theory and Rudolf Dreikurs's (1972) positive discipline theory served as lenses for this study.

#### **Disciplinary measures conceived to lessen ill-discipline**

Our research question focused on the diverse disciplinary measures that the sampled schools employed to manage ill-discipline effectively. We found that the participants perceived the alternatives to corporal punishment given by the Department of Education were viewed as ineffective. For

example, the principal of School Y (PY) had this to say, "I think the reason we find it difficult to successfully manage ill-discipline is that some of the alternatives to corporal punishment put forth are fruitless".

DHY of School Y added: "Since most learners don't care about the alternatives to corporal punishment, such as suspension, and instead enjoy the consequences, this is perceived as fruitless".

To respond to the research question, "What kind of disciplinary measures do schools apply to lessen ill-discipline? Participants outlined the non-punitive disciplinary measures they have implemented, hoping that other schools could benefit as well. The following sub-themes emerged, as shown below:

### **Theme 1: Abandonment of punitive disciplinary measures**

A few participants expressed their dislike of severe disciplinary methods such as corporal punishment, arguing that they just cause suffering and promote misbehaviour rather than helping learners succeed academically. Research has shown that harsh disciplinary actions, such as corporal punishment, only serve to reinforce violence in schools, which harms learners' achievement (Semali & Vumilia, 2016; Zondo, Mncube, & Emmanuel, 2023). Participant DHY stated with despair:

"One thing I've discovered when learners are subjected to punitive disciplinary measures is that learners who are consistently beaten, pinched, or subjected to other forms of discipline never cease their disruptive behaviour; instead, they become irrationally angry and lose concentration in class, which negatively impacts their performance". This finding makes it clear that schools' stakeholders opposed the use of corporal punishment and supported the implementation of disciplinary procedures that they believed to be doable and practical.

### **Theme 2: Engaging the parents of transgressors**

Based on the data, it was established that engaging the parents of offenders in matters pertaining to their children's disciplinary concerns was beneficial because these parents have a major influence on the behaviour of their children. Research has shown that a learner's behaviour is influenced by their near or closer family (Obadire, 2024). Marcucci (2020) affirmed that parental involvement was essential for maintaining discipline and guaranteeing the smooth operation of the school. Participants emphasized that they use a range of strategies to make sure the message is received well. They could give them a call, write them a letter, or even send them a WhatsApp message. Principal of School Z (PZ) said:

" Normally, when we deal with offenders, we invite their parents in various ways to come and discuss the disciplinary issues. Learners dislike having their parents informed of everything they do at school. Also, they do not want to be teased by their peers. That alone is enough for us. This is because offenders believe that it would be embarrassing for their parents to be aware of their lack of discipline at school".

Using the aforementioned quote as support, one may argue that getting parents more involved in the disciplinary issues that concern their children was found beneficial in managing ill-discipline because learners do not want their parents to know that they behave inappropriately in school. Engaging learners in matters that affect their discipline was also found necessary.

### **Theme:3 Engaging learners in establishing rapport**

Data revealed that engaging learners in matters that affect them was an efficient strategy for dealing with ill-discipline. When teachers establish such a relationship by actively engaging learners, learners are more likely to accept school rules and believe that attending school is beneficial to them in the long term. The findings indicate that learners are more motivated to act appropriately and thoughtfully, as well as to be receptive, when teachers establish a good rapport with them, particularly when creating classroom rules. TY detailed:

"Usually, I don't draw the rules for the class by myself. I ask learners to assist me in doing this, and I ensure that anyone who, err, does anything that is against the rules faces the consequences outlined in the regulations. These consequences apply if you misbehave and commit a specific infraction that is against the classroom management rules or class rules. Therefore, learners are aware that there is a rule that they should follow if they make a mistake, for example, when I teach and they make noise without paying attention to me". According to what the participants said, learner participation is crucial when developing classroom rules since it increases the likelihood that they will follow the guidelines. The findings are corroborated by Myers, Simonsen, and Sugai (2020), who contend that improved academic and behavioural performance among learners has been linked to active learners' engagement in the classroom and good teacher-learner relationships, especially in designing classroom rules.

### **Theme 4: Establishing an engaging, entertaining, and stimulating teaching and learning environment.**

The data uncovered suggested that teachers ought to make their classrooms visually appealing, enjoyable, and engaging. Watts (2020) supports this notion by stating that in order to spark the interest of learners and maintain focus,

teachers should create a visually appealing, fun, pleasant, and engaging classroom environment. DHX asserted that:

“Teachers must utilize games and colourful visual aids to make the lessons engaging. To engage learners, I will encourage teachers to include diverse printed resources in their classrooms. Additionally, I think that if I make sure the physical atmosphere of the classroom promotes a stress-free and comfortable learning environment—for instance, by hanging vibrant pictures—that will spark learners' interests and help them stay focused”.

TY confirmed the preceding assertion and stated the following:

“I will ensure that the materials I use in each lesson are eye-catching and colourful for learners. To better support the learner, I will ensure that I arrange the classroom furniture appropriately for maximum learner benefit”.

Drawing from the previously described comments, it is clear that making classrooms visually appealing is essential to drawing learners' attention and improving classroom management. This is because learners, especially those in primary school, are more drawn to vividly coloured wall-hung pictures. These enable them to concentrate.

### **Theme 5: Encouraging extra-curricular activities**

The data gathered indicates that learners who participate in sports and sporting activities can reach their full potential and develop proper behaviour. This will support learners' appropriate behaviour and attention span. Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) concur, pointing out that a dearth of extracurricular activities in schools could lead to disruptive behaviour among hyperactive learners. Participant PX had this to say:

“Sports are a unifying factor. Upon realizing that the majority of schools no longer play sports, I will make sure that our school offers learners the chance to participate in a variety of sports. Some learners are underperforming in the classroom; playing sports can help them discover their abilities”.

Data revealed that getting learners involved in different sports and sporting activities helps to control their lack of discipline. This suggests that when a lot of learners participate in sports, discipline problems will reduce, and schools will find it simpler to effectively manage ill-disciplined behaviour.

### **Theme 6: Putting time-out techniques into practice**

Data indicated that depriving learners of the chance to participate in activities encourages them to behave in an acceptable manner. Khasinah (2017) corroborates this finding, arguing that teachers ought to employ a mild form of

discipline, such as preventing learners from engaging in class activities without actually removing them from the class, asking learners to temporarily remove themselves from activities, or assigning them to time-out rooms for a short duration. Participant DHZ commented:

“Well, for example, learners are expected to participate in a drama right now, so I allow them to stay in class while watching their classmates perform. Though they might be good at acting out, they will not be given the opportunity to do so. This usually teaches them a lesson, and I find it effective”.

Based on the data provided, one could argue that since learners do not want to be excluded, preventing them from engaging in some enjoyable class activities has been demonstrated to be effective in managing disruptive behaviour; consequently, implementing this strategy is likely to promote acceptable behaviour.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to address the question: “What kind of disciplinary measures do schools apply to lessen ill-discipline? Overall, it was discovered that schools utilised disciplinary measures conceived to lessen ill-discipline. To make sense of this finding, other corroborating findings are explored.

The research findings indicate that schools employed disciplinary measures that have been proven effective in managing ill-disciplined behaviour without harming the dignity of the learners, unlike what corporal punishment (CP) did. This finding supports Curwin and Mendler’s (1988) theory, which highlights that everyone (learners included) should be treated with dignity. To achieve this, the theory highlights the idea that measures for disciplining learners should be designed to maximize their sense of hope and dignity.

The findings additionally demonstrated that calling parents to the school was yet another disciplinary measure used by the three sampled schools to manage ill-discipline effectively. This approach was found to be successful, though some participants remarked that some parents were difficult to find despite the efforts taken to ensure that the message was received. This approach was crucial since it was discovered that a lack of parental involvement can lead to poor behaviour, particularly if parents act improperly or show disinterest when it comes to issues affecting their children's discipline. The finding is corroborated by Mnisi (2021), who contends that poorly behaved children are a result of parents who are unsupportive and are not involved in matters pertaining to the discipline of their children.

The results further showed that learners are more likely to get focused and behave responsibly in visually appealing, print-rich, fun, and engaging classroom environments. To support this finding, researchers attest that those teachers should create a welcoming, entertaining, and stimulating learning atmosphere in order to grab the attention of learners and keep them focused (Watts, 2020). To be considered engaging, classrooms should involve learners in all aspects of the learning process, including developing classroom rules.

Active learners' participation in the classroom and positive teacher-learner relationships, particularly when it comes to creating rules for the classroom, have been connected to improved academic and behavioural performance among learners (Myers, Simonsen, and Sugai, 2020). To foster a sense of ownership and to build strong relationships with teachers, learners are supposed to be actively involved in creating the rules for the class. This was deemed successful since it informed learners about the kinds of behaviour that the school does not allow and the repercussions of breaking the rules. This suggests that learners are learning while they establish the guidelines for the classroom, since this practice offers them the opportunity to comprehend proper behaviour in the real world. Learners should not only be engaged in classroom activities; they should also be accorded the opportunity to engage in extracurricular activities to discover their hidden potential.

The research has additionally shown that participation in extracurricular activities fosters learner discipline and maintains learner engagement, both of which facilitate schools' ability to address behavioural concerns. Consistent with this finding, Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) also observed that a lack of extracurricular activities in schools may only promote ill-disciplined behaviour among hyperactive learners rather than keeping them focused. This suggests that to reduce the likelihood that learners may participate in disruptive behaviours, they should be actively engaged in various activities at all times. However, sometimes, depending on the situation, to correct their ill-disciplined practices, learners may be deprived of the opportunity to engage in activities that they like most.

The study also found that depriving learners of privileges serves as a deterrent since it makes them aware that they would lose those rights if they continued to misbehave. Additionally, learners could be kept in time-out rooms, which makes them feel withdrawn rather than having the chance to engage in exciting activities. The study also revealed that experiences of withdrawal increase the likelihood that learners will behave responsibly. The idea behind removing ill-disciplined learners from their favourite activities is to give them the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour. Khasinah

(2017) corroborates the finding and suggests that stakeholders in schools should use mild sanctions, such as forbidding learners to participate in classroom activities for a while without removing them from the class, requesting learners to excuse themselves from participating in activities for a while, or temporarily placing them in time-out rooms.

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### **Declaration of interest statement**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests related to this paper.

### **Recommendations**

Parents, as members of the community, ought to participate in disciplinary matters concerning their children, with the goal of reducing unruly conduct and other risk factors that endanger the lives of learners.

Training and educating teachers about alternate forms of discipline may encourage the application of the disciplinary measures.

It is also recommended that the Department of Education provide teachers with extensive training and counselling to change their beliefs about punishment and discipline for learners.

Also, the Department of Education, through the Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture, should ensure that schools are provided with adequate sporting activities to offer the majority of learners the opportunity to participate

### **CONCLUSION**

The incidence of ill-discipline in South African schools is always increasing, creating a problem that seems insurmountable. Therefore, managing ill-discipline presents an enormous task that must be overcome. The results showed that there were actually no particular disciplinary measures that could be used only to reduce misconduct. As a result, several forms of

discipline were applied to address different forms of misbehaviour. However, abandonment of punitive disciplinary measures;

engaging parents of transgressors; engaging learners in establishing rapport; establishing an engaging, entertaining, and stimulating teaching and learning environment; encouraging extra-curricular activities and, putting time-out techniques into practice deemed beneficial to the schools that were sampled.

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