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Optimising school management strategies: Empowering school management teams through revision of the learners' code of conduct for effective discipline management

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In the study reported on I investigated how empowering school management teams through a revised learners' code of conduct can improve school discipline management. Using a quantitative research methodology with an exploratory design, data were gathered from 127 respondents across 50 selected schools in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo province, South Africa. School management teams and teachers completed surveys focused on managing learner discipline. Data were collected through a closed-ended Likert scale questionnaire. The collected data were analysed using an IBM SPSS 26 statistical program. Grounded in social learning theory, I aimed at repositioning a learners' code of conduct to enhance discipline management. The effectiveness and enforceability of a code by the school management teams while assessing their legal compliance competencies were specifically analysed. The findings reveal that school management teams often lack effective strategies and interventions to tackle learner discipline challenges. I emphasise that it is crucial for South African researchers to continue making meaningful contributions to the teaching profession, despite its current instabilities. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on school management strategies and provides valuable insights for optimising discipline management practices in schools.

Keywords: discipline management; empowerment; learners' code of conduct; optimisation; school management strategies

Introduction

School discipline plays a crucial role in creating favourable teaching and learning environments and measures, which may be used to disseminate effective learner management, teaching, and learning guidelines in schools (Sprague & Walker, 2021). Learner discipline is when learners control themselves and ultimately learn self-discipline. For example, schools may introduce programmes that incorporate character education. This implies that schools should implement programmes focusing on values such as integrity, responsibility, and empathy.

Learner discipline is the responsibility of the school management team (SMT), although learners are responsible for their behaviour. Indiscipline among learners has become a global challenge in education systems (Ali, Dada, Isaika & Salmon, 2014; Simbayi, Zuma, Zungu, Moyo, Marinda, Jooste, Mabaso, Ramlagan, North, Van Zyl, Mohlabane, Dietrich, Naidoo & The SABSSM V Team, 2019). Productive teaching and learning are highly affected by a lack of learner discipline, as contact time is reduced because of attending to the management of learner behaviour and attitudes (Salifu & Agbenyega, 2012).

In developed nations, school indiscipline is still endemic. A study conducted in the United States of America by the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) reflects that during the 2017–2018 school year, 962,300 aggressive and 476,100 non-aggressive behaviours took place in public schools (Diliberti, Jackson, Correa & Padgett, 2019). The report highlights that 66% of the reported fights occurred without weapons, 3% were reported as weapon attacks, and 3,600 cases were related to explosive devices and firearms. Additionally, bullying contributed to 6% of the indiscipline in secondary schools and 9% at primary schools (Diliberti et al., 2019).

Discipline challenges have affected schools and SMTs both locally and internationally (Simuforosa & Rosemary, 2014). Studies indicate a significant rise in indiscipline in African schools. In the most alarming cases, learners have harmed each other on school premises, and some incidents have tragically resulted in fatalities. Learner misconduct negatively impacts academic performance, making it challenging to implement effective teaching and learning practices in a disorderly school environment (Tlhapi, 2015).

Learner Behaviour Manifestation

Lukman and Hamadi (2014) report severe learner disciplinary challenges in schools, including incidents of classroom and vehicle arson, attacks and assaults on educators, principals, and fellow learners with knives. Ntuli (2012) notes that disciplinary challenges are similar in all schools, however, the concentration of problems varies considerably among schools. Mwamwenda (2004) opines that learners' disciplinary challenges originate from different sources, such as the personalities of the learners, the schools, educators, and parents. In other instances, some arise due to the society in which the learner is brought up.

Masingi (2017) notes complications that arise due to learner indiscipline. These challenges are not unique to one source, as various sources contribute to learners' indiscipline. For instance, classroom management is based on the idea that learners misbehave due to an unmet need for social belonging, thus, their behaviour is goal-oriented. According to Dreikurs (2015), learners may act out to gain attention, assert power, seek revenge, or avoid failure. However, it is the teacher's responsibility to identify these motivations and address them with

logical consequences rather than punishment. He emphasises a democratic approach in the classroom, where teachers foster mutual respect and encourage responsibility and co-operation, thereby guiding learners toward self-discipline and positive behaviour (Dreikurs, 2015). This approach shifts the focus from controlling behaviour to understanding its reasons and promoting a sense of belonging and participation in the classroom environment. Learners' disciplinary problems directly impact teaching and learning in the classroom. Botha and Zwane (2021) and Nhambura (2020) posit that SMTs have limited strategies to effectively prevent or manage incidents of learner behaviour. Given the significance of addressing this issue, these studies highlight the need for more effective approaches.

According to Manamela (2021), responsible SMTs depend on the learner code of conduct and the school safety policy to manage learner discipline. Similarly, Hanslo (2020) discovered that many instances of misconduct remain unpunished when enforcing sanctions under the learners' code of conduct, primarily due to inadequate structures. This disparity between policy and implementation considerably hinders efforts to address learner-on-teacher violence.

Classroom Management

Classroom management encompasses the strategies employed to organise classroom activities and reduce behavioural issues and disruptions. This includes physical arrangements, instructional methods, and other elements designed to optimise time and foster a conducive, productive environment that enhances teaching and learning (Lumadi, 2019). Given teachers' significant influence on learner learning, Stronge, Ward and Grant (2011) explored the characteristics of an effective teacher. They concluded that classroom management, personal attributes, and the teacher-learner relationship are the most impactful factors in learner success. Effective classroom management plays a vital role in achieving positive learner outcomes. Wubbels (2011) also reviewed classroom management research and found that successful teachers prioritise learning over maintaining complete silence. These teachers establish clear procedures early in the school year without overwhelming learners and consistently model appropriate behaviour, addressing issues before they escalate (Wubbels, 2011).

Classrooms play an essential role in shaping learners' social skills, and the strategy for changing learner behaviour involves implementing classroom discipline programmes for behavioural support. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011) are of the view that effective classroom management involves implementing systematic approaches and programmes with clear

goals that actively involve learners in skills development over extended periods. Therefore, classroom teachers must support the positive development of social skills in their learners outside a formal teaching programme.

Roles of School Management Teams

SMTs play a critical role in successfully managing learner discipline in school, and they act as the primary agents of change. SMTs wield the authority and influence that can be used to create a positive school environment that supports teachers in enforcing discipline management strategies (Serfontein, Wolhuter & Naidoo, 2022). Smith and Johnson (2023) state that the SMT is responsible for developing and implementing policies that govern various aspects of the school operation, including academic standards, learner disciplinary procedures, and safety protocols. Martinez and Johnson (2023) provide insights into effective discipline management strategies, the role of school leadership in promoting school climate, and strategies for creating a positive school culture. These leverage the authority and influence of SMTs in supporting teachers in enforcing learner discipline management strategies.

A code of conduct is a form of subordinate legislation and should reflect the democratic principles of the Constitution of the Republic of South-Africa, 1996 (hereafter the Constitution), by supporting the values of human dignity, equality, and freedom (Maluleke, 2023). Section 8 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 states that a code of conduct must contain provisions of due process, which safeguard the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996a). SMTs play an important role in a school's ability to improve, administer, and maintain learner conduct. It is essential for SGBs to review the code of conduct annually, as they possess collective experience in its daily administration.

The Constitution includes a Bill of Rights stipulating that schools are the custodians of children's fundamental basic rights. As such, schools should be safeguarded against becoming enablers of violating children's basic rights by promoting them as safe and conducive atmospheres (RSA, 1996b). Section 8(1) of the SASA, No. 84 of 1996 states that schools are to implement school disciplinary committees and design and implement learners' codes of conduct with the direct consultation of school stakeholders, the learners' parents and educators (RSA, 1996a). Despite having democratic processes in place, some South African schools are still facing serious learner indiscipline, such as drug addiction, shootings, stabbings of educators and learners, rock throwing, gangsterism, bullying, and sexual and physical abuse (Veriava,

Thom & Hodgson, 2017; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017).

Problem Statement

The persistent challenge of learner indiscipline in South African schools underscores the urgent need to optimise school management strategies by revising the learners' code of conduct. Recent data from Mongale (2021), indicates that 45% of SMTs identify disciplinary issues as the primary obstacle to effective school management, with incidents such as physical altercations, persistent truancy, and verbal abuse increasingly reported. Additionally, a survey conducted (Makhathini, Adam & Akpa-Inyang, 2024) reveals that 55% of SMTs feel inadequately equipped to address these issues due to outdated and ineffective learners' code of conduct/disciplinary policies. These statistics highlight the critical need to revise the learners' code of conduct to empower SMTs with the tools needed for effective discipline management and foster a safer and more productive educational environment.

The study was guided by the following research question:

- What role can the school management team play in repositioning learner conduct through managing the learner discipline approach in their school?

Aim of the Study

The aims with this study were to analyse the effectiveness of the learners' code of conduct in relation to its enforceability by the SMT and to assess the SMT's competencies in legal compliance.

Research Objectives

- To examine the current state of learner discipline management in secondary schools and identify areas for improvement in the existing learners' code of conduct.
- To explore social learning theory and its applicability in a learners' code of conduct.
- To determine the effects of classroom management techniques used in South African schools.
- To assess the effectiveness of SMTs in promoting a positive school climate.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. This theoretical framework informs how the insights from the theory can be applied to update a learners' code of conduct. A code of conduct that promotes a culture of respect, responsibility, and accountability among learners can be improved by SMTs through implementing support and shaping desired behaviour. The social learning theory contributes to the discussion by providing insights into how school changes, such as revising the code of conduct, can empower SMTs and improve discipline management within

educational settings.

Methodology

Research Design

An exploratory research design was adopted for this study. The research design was adopted as it is ideal for exploring challenges regarding learner indiscipline to address the problem and answering the research questions. Exploratory research aims to explain how revising a learners' code of conduct empowers SMTs to effectively manage disciplinary issues.

Participants

Purposive and convenience sampling were employed in the study. The sample comprised 127 respondents from 50 schools in the Vhembe district with a response rate of 85%. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants directly involved in school management and discipline, ensuring that they could provide valuable insights into the learners' code of conduct. Additionally, convenience sampling was used to include schools that were readily accessible for participation. SMTs and teachers completed the surveys on repositioning the learners' code of conduct through managing learner discipline. The age distribution of the respondents was as follows: 15% were 25 to 35 years, 45% were 36 to 46 years, 25% were 47 to 57 years, and 15% were 58 years of age or older. In terms of work experience, 20% of respondents had worked with school-aged learners for 5 to 10 years, 40% had 11 to 20 years of experience, 25% had 21 to 30 years of experience, and 15% had more than 31 years of experience. Most respondents (65%) held a bachelor's degree in education, 10% master's degrees, and 25% held diplomas in education.

Data Collection

A closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire was used to collect data. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the research instrument. The research instrument had a coefficient value of .97 – a very good result, as a research instrument with a coefficient value of .70 is deemed good.

Ethics Approval

The study was exempted from review by the College of Education (CEDU) Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa, as this type of research involving human subjects waives the need for informed consent.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using the International Business Machines Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) 26 statistical programme. The statistical analyses used were the correlation analysis, the chi-square analysis, and the analysis of variance analysis (ANOVA).

Results

Table 1 presents the Pearson correlation analysis in the form of a correlation matrix. The results of the analysis are detailed below:

- A very strong positive correlation exists between learner performance and learner discipline $r(127) = .95, p < .01$. The H_0 is rejected as there is a relationship between learner performance and learner discipline.
- A very strong positive correlation exists between learner behaviour and learner performance $r(127) = .97, p < .01$. The H_0 is rejected as there is a relationship between learner behaviour and learner performance.
- A very strong positive correlation exists between learner discipline and learner behaviour manifestation $r(127) = .98, p < .01$. The H_0 is rejected as there is a relationship between learner discipline and learner behaviour manifestation.
- A very strong positive correlation exists between classroom management and learner performance $r(127) = .98, p < .01$. The H_0 is rejected as there is a relationship between classroom management and learner performance.
- A very strong positive correlation exists between the SMT and classroom management $r(127) = .97, p < .01$. The H_0 is rejected as there is a relationship between the SMT and classroom management.

Correlation Matrix

Table 1 Correlation matrix

	Learner performance	Learner discipline	Learner behaviour management	Classroom management	School management team
Learner performance					
Pearson correlation	1	.945	.965	.981	.971
Significant (Sig.) (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
<i>N</i>	127	127	127	127	127
Learner discipline					
Pearson correlation	.945	1	.983	.974	.971
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
<i>N</i>	127	127	127	127	127
Learner behaviour management					
Pearson correlation	.965	.983	1	.974	.982
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
<i>N</i>	127	127	127	127	127
Classroom management					
Pearson correlation	.981	.974	.974	1	.933
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
<i>N</i>	127	127	127	127	127
School management team					
Pearson correlation	.971	.971	.974	.933	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
<i>N</i>	127	127	127	127	127

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Objective 1: Learner Performance

A small percentage of respondents (5%) strongly agreed that learners' performance was good, even in the absence of discipline. Additionally, 5% agreed, 10% were undecided, 60% disagreed, and 20%

strongly disagreed. The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that a positive relationship exists between learners' performance and their discipline. The results are displayed in Figure 1 below.

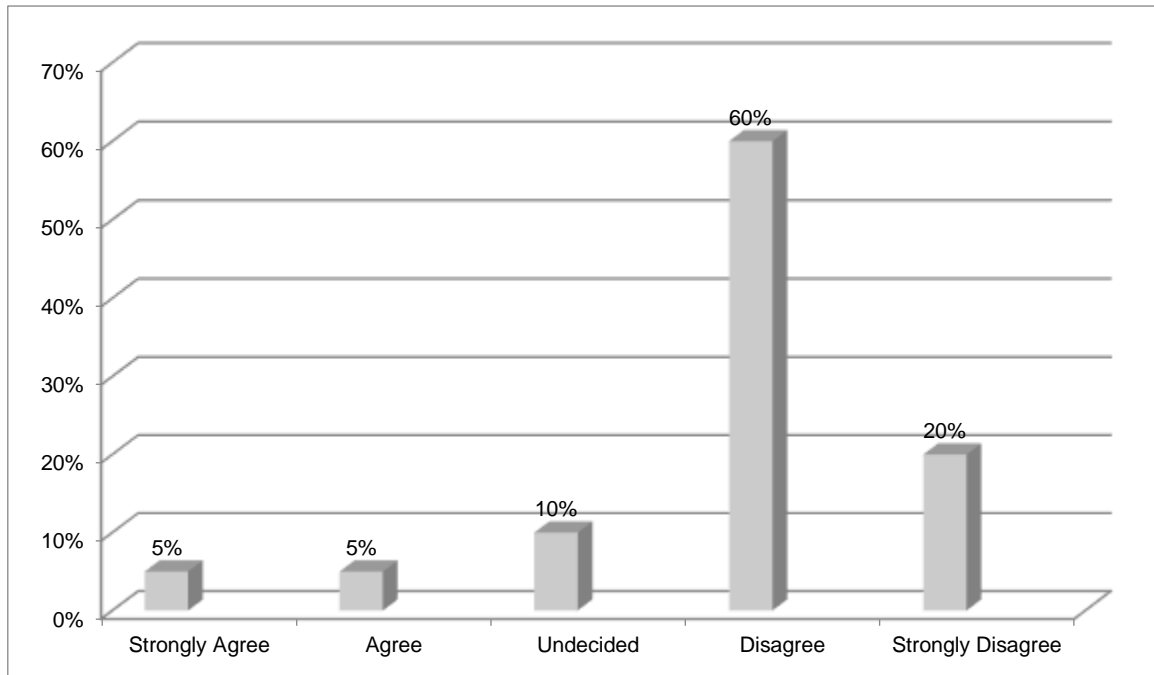


Figure 1 Learner performance

Table 2 Chi-square results

	Value	df	Sig
Learner performance	246.68	12	.000

The Chi-square results shown in Table 2 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners' performance, as it had an impact on the independent variable, learner performance, where $(12, N = 127) = 246.68, p < .01$. Since the p -value was $< .01$, the null hypothesis is

rejected as there is an implication that a positive relationship exists between learners' performance and their discipline. An updated code of conduct can serve as the cornerstone of creating a positive and supporting learning environment that fosters optimal performance from the learners.

Table 3 ANOVA results

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Learner performance	301.71	3:124	100.57	142.11	.000

The ANOVA results shown in Table 3 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners' performance, as it had an impact on the independent variable, learner performance, at the $p < .05$ level, where $(F(3, 124) = 142.11, p < .01)$. Therefore, this suggests that a relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables. The null hypothesis is rejected since the p -value was $< .01$, which indicates that learner discipline is crucial.

Objective 2: Learner Behaviour Manifestation

Learner behaviour manifestation is critical for identifying and remedying disciplinary challenges in learners. Ten percent of the respondents strongly agreed about the importance of identifying learner behaviour manifestation, while 80% agreed, 2% were undecided, 5% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed. The results are displayed in Figure 2 below.

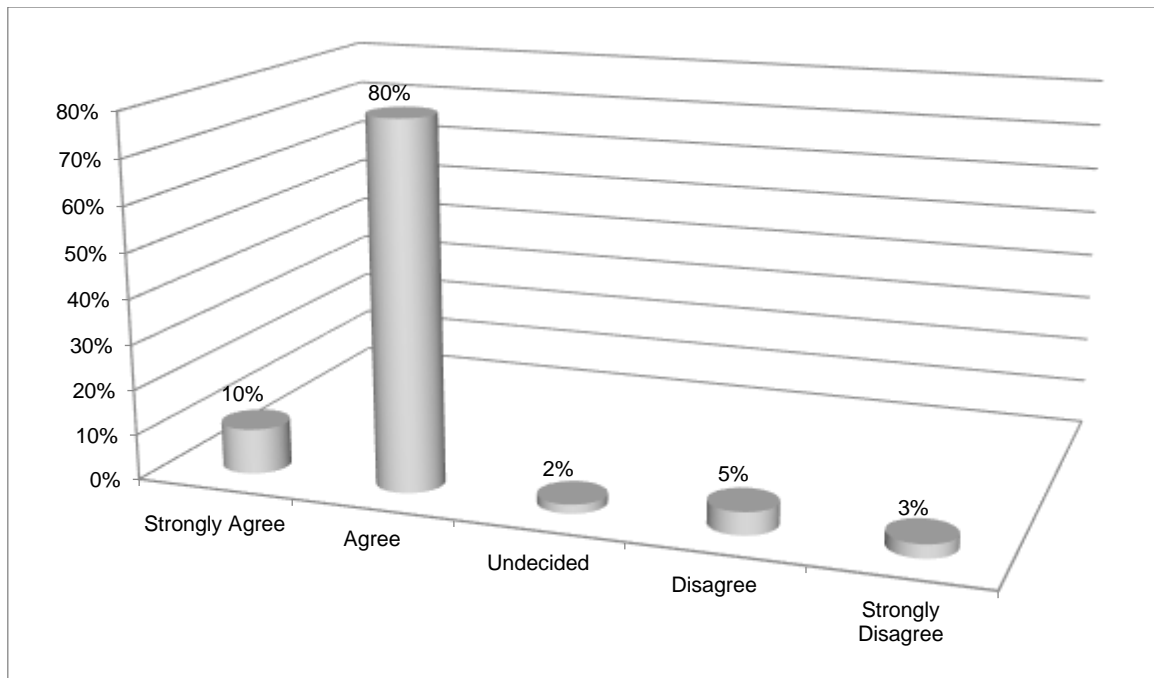


Figure 2 Learner behaviour manifestation

Table 4 Chi-square results

	Value	df	Sig
Learner behaviour manifestation	320.54	12	.000

The Chi-square results in Table 4 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners’ performance, as it had an impact on the independent variable, learner behaviour

manifestation, where $(12, N = 127) = 320.54, p < .01$. Since the p -value was $< .01$, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies a positive relationship between learners’ performance and their discipline.

Table 5 ANOVA results

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Learner behaviour manifestation	262.78	3:124	87.59	298.42	.000

The ANOVA results in Table 5 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners’ performance, as it had an impact on the independent variable, learner behaviour manifestation, at the $p < .05$ level where $(F [3, 124] = 142.11, p < .01)$. Therefore, this suggests that a relationship exists between the dependent and independent variable. The null hypothesis is rejected since the p -value was $< .01$, which implies that the identification of the behaviour of learners is crucial as it helps address disciplinary issues for those with discipline problems.

Various factors contribute to learner indiscipline, and these issues can differ from one learner to another. Identifying the root causes of

indiscipline is crucial. Educators can effectively address these challenges by focusing on a learners’ behaviour and attitude. A thorough understanding of learner behaviour and attitudes enables educators to manage and control indiscipline (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Additionally, these disciplinary challenges directly impact both teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes.

Objective 3: Learner Discipline

Regarding the importance of learner discipline, 3% of respondents strongly disagreed, 5% disagreed, 5% were undecided, 70% agreed, and 17% strongly agreed that it was important. The results are displayed in Figure 3 below.

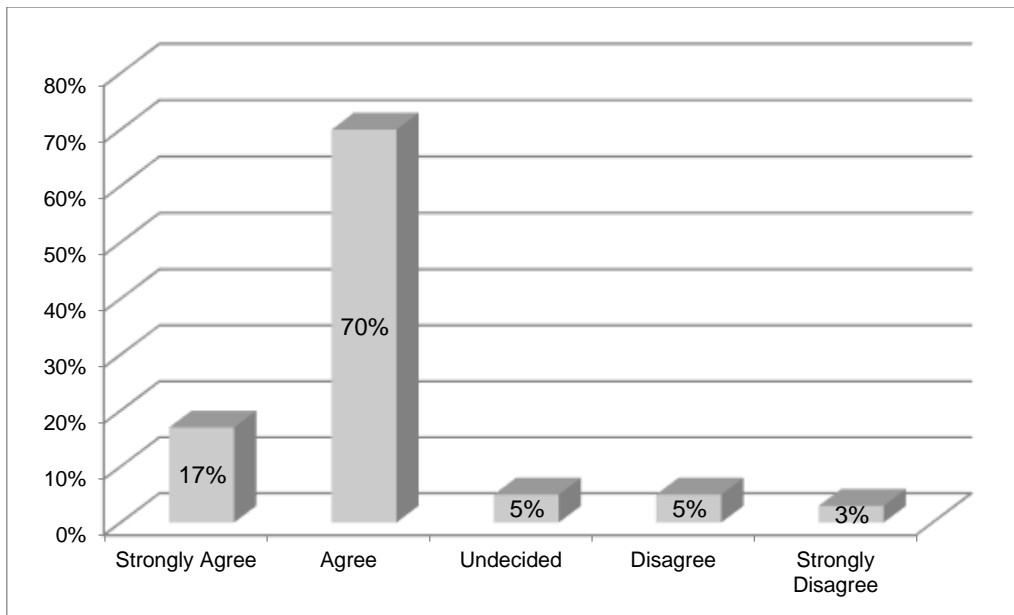


Figure 3 Learner discipline

Table 6 Chi-square results

	Value	df	Sig
Learner discipline	377.68	12	.000

The Chi-square results in Table 6 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners’ performance, as it had an impact on the

independent variable, learner discipline, where $X^2(12, N = 127) = 377.68, p < .01$. The null hypothesis is rejected as the p -value was $< .01$.

Table 7 ANOVA results

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Learner discipline	437.39	3:124	145.80	305.95	.000

The ANOVA results in Table 7 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners’ performance, as it had an impact on the independent variable, learner discipline, at the $p < .05$ level where $(F [3, 124] = 305.95, p < .01)$. Therefore, this suggests that a relationship exists between the dependent and independent variable. The null hypothesis is rejected as the p -value was $< .01$, implying that learner performance is

determined by their level of discipline.

Objective 4: Classroom Management

Classroom management contributes towards the discipline and performance of learners. Fifteen per cent of respondents strongly agreed, while 71% agreed, 4% were undecided, 7% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed that it contributes to learner discipline and performance. The results are displayed in Figure 4 below.

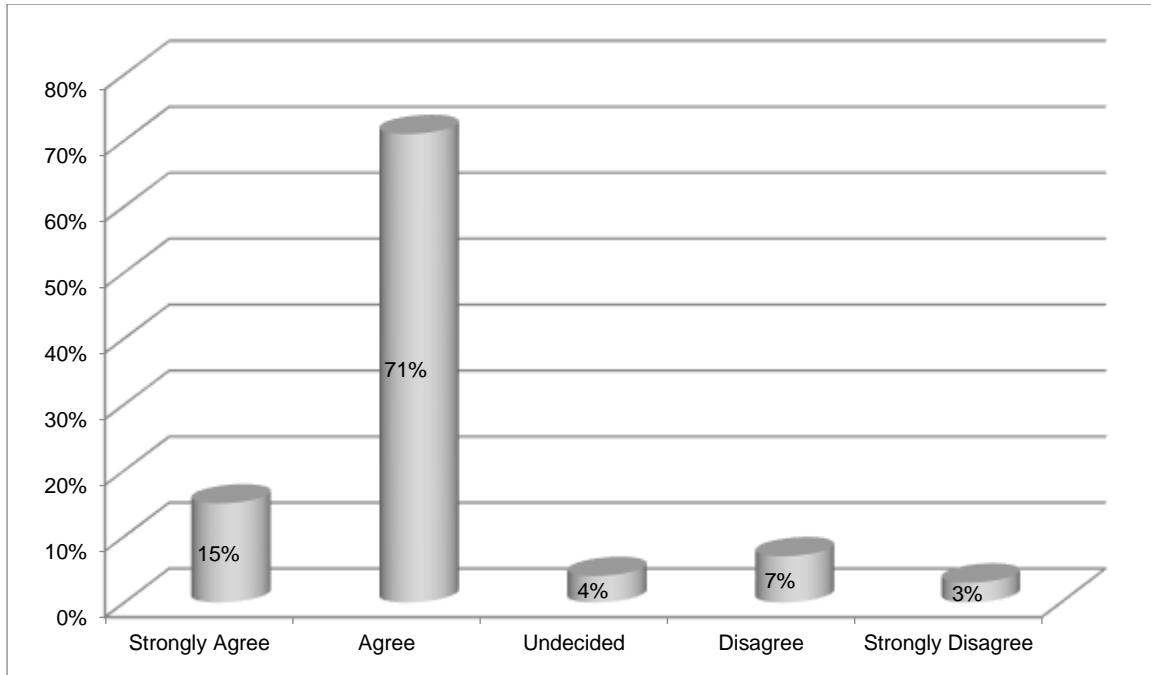


Figure 4 Classroom management

Table 8 Chi-Square results

	Value	df	Sig
Classroom management	380.20	12	.000

The Chi-square results in Table 8 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners’ performance, as it had an impact on the

independent variable, classroom management, where $X^2(12, N = 127) = 380.20, p < .01$. The null hypothesis is rejected as the p -value was $< .01$.

Table 9 ANOVA results

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Classroom management	424.74	3:124	141.58	259.28	.000

The ANOVA results in Table 9 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners’ performance, as it had an impact on the independent variable, classroom management, at the $p < .05$ level where $(F [3, 124] = 259.28, p < .01)$. Therefore, this suggests that a relationship exists between the dependent and independent variable. The null hypothesis is rejected as the p -value was $< .01$, implying that learners’ performance is determined by their level of discipline. Effective classroom management entails the implementation of approaches that necessitate the development of learner skills through clear and set objectives. Therefore, classroom teachers must support the positive development of social skills in their learners outside of a formal curriculum (Durlak et al., 2011).

Learners are more likely to follow behavioural standards when schools use effective techniques to manage discipline which reduce disturbances to the learning environment by increasing learner adherence to behavioural expectations. As a result, this may foster an environment favourable to increased academic success.

Objective 5: School Management Teams

SMTs have a significant role to play in the disciplinary issues affecting learners. Only 8% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, while 75% agreed, 2% were undecided, 6% disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed. The results are displayed in Figure 5 below.

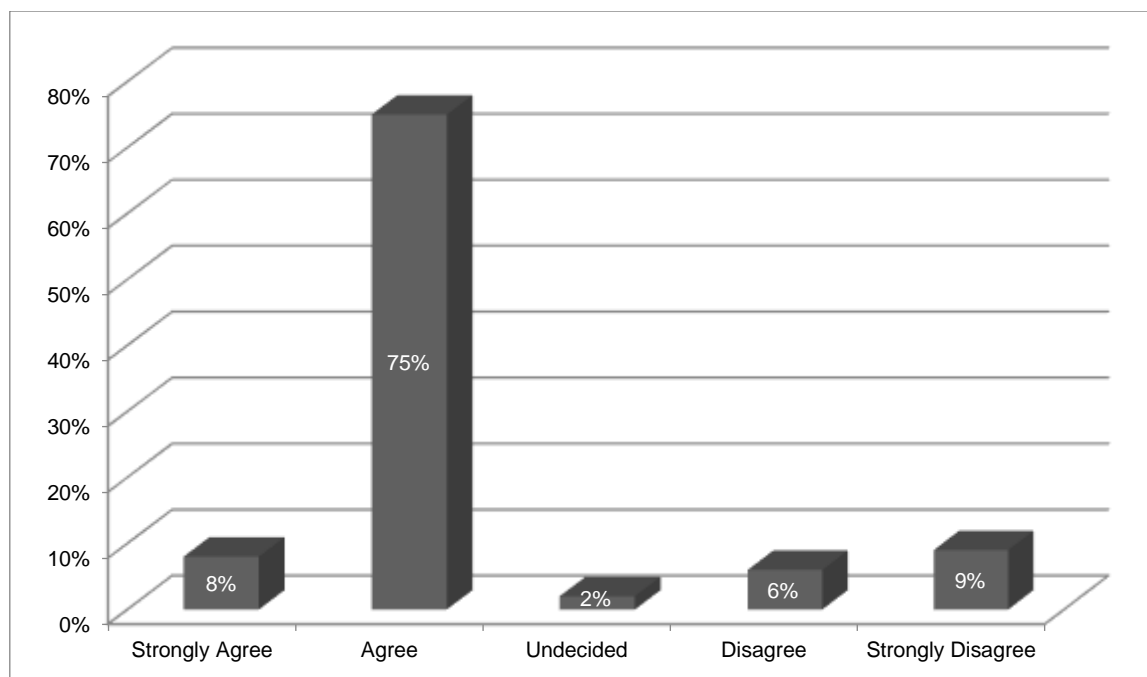


Figure 5 School management team

Table 10 Chi-square results

	Value	df	Sig
School management team	368.48	12	.000

The Chi-square results in Table 10 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners' performance, as it had an impact on the

independent variable, school management team, where $X^2(12, N = 127) = 368.48, p < .01$. The null hypothesis is rejected as the p -value was $< .01$.

Table 11 ANOVA results

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
School management team	369.02	3:124	123.01	474.13	.000

The ANOVA results in Table 11 indicate that the dependent variable, learner discipline, is critical for learners' performance, as it affects the independent variable, school management team, at the $p < .05$ level, with an F -value of ($F [3, 124] = 474.13, p < .01$). Therefore, this suggests that a relationship exists between the dependent and independent variable. The null hypothesis is rejected as the p -value was $< .01$, implying that learners' performance is determined by the level of their discipline.

Discussion

Reviewing the learners' code of conduct is crucial in enhancing discipline, directly impacting academic performance. A well-structured code of conduct fosters an environment conducive to learning by setting clear expectations and promoting responsible behaviour. In such an environment, teachers can focus on core educational activities, such as improving reading, writing, and problem-solving skills. By providing constant feedback through formal and informal assessment, teachers guide learners on areas for improvement, helping them

develop both academically and behaviourally. Using techniques like paired problem-solving encourages learners to engage critically and collaboratively, enhancing their thinking capacity and ability to solve problems. Ultimately, a disciplined classroom supported by a reviewed and enforced code of conduct provides a foundation for academic success, allowing learners to focus on their development with fewer behavioural distractions. In accordance with the SASA, learners are automatically included in the review process of the code of conduct. This participatory approach ensures that learners are aware of behavioural expectations and feel a sense of ownership over the rules governing their conduct. Involving learners in the review process promotes accountability and helps to cultivate a positive school culture where discipline is regarded as a shared responsibility. Through this collaborative process, schools foster a learning environment supporting both academic achievement and personal development. As proposed by Albert Bandura, the social learning theory provides a valuable lens for understanding the implications of involving learners in the review of the code of conduct. Bandura (1977)

posits that individuals learn behaviour through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within their social environment. When learners actively create and revise school rules, they are more likely to observe and internalise the behaviour that is to be promoted by a code of conduct. This engagement allows learners to better understand the reasons behind the rules, increasing their adherence and compliance. According to this theory, learners who contribute to rulemaking are more likely to follow the rules and model appropriate behaviour for their peers, thereby fostering a positive school environment.

Objective 2: Learner Behaviour Manifestation

It is critical to establish the root cause of learners' indiscipline. Focusing on learners' behaviour and attitude helps to solve challenges regarding learners' indiscipline; a proper understanding of learners' behaviours and attitudes assists teachers in effectively managing and controlling instances of indiscipline. Learners' disciplinary problems directly impact educators' teaching and learners' learning. Schools can build environments that support optimal learner performance and contribute to overall academic success by implementing evidence-based methods and prioritising their learners' well-being.

Effective disciplinary control measures promote a positive learning environment. These measures include clear communication of rules and expectations, consistent enforcement of consequences, and the active involvement of learners in developing and reviewing the school's code of conduct. Promoting a restorative justice approach is crucial, where learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and work towards positive behavioural changes. Regular teacher feedback and guidance, coupled with strategies such as peer mediation and positive reinforcement, also play critical roles in maintaining discipline. These control measures address misbehaviour and foster a culture of respect, accountability, and co-operation within the school community. Several measures can be implemented to safeguard learners' rights, including adherence to legal and ethical frameworks, establishing clear disciplinary policies, providing staff training, involving learners in decision-making, and ensuring effective monitoring and accountability.

An effective classroom management strategy involves the co-ordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders, including the school disciplinary committee (SDC), teachers, and learners. The SDC plays a critical role in handling behavioural issues by establishing and enforcing the school's code of conduct. They ensure that clear guidelines for discipline are communicated to learners and staff and that appropriate consequences follow when rules are broken. Teachers maintain daily discipline

by reinforcing classroom rules, using methods like positive reinforcement, verbal warnings, or time-outs to correct minor disruptions. Learners participate in the process by adhering to the established rules and engaging in peer-led initiatives, such as behaviour monitoring or conflict resolution sessions. In collaboration with teachers, the SDC conducts regular reviews of the code of conduct and discipline policies, ensuring that strategies like restorative practices, parental involvement, and counselling are incorporated to tackle underlying behavioural issues while promoting accountability and respect. This collaborative approach creates a consistent and supportive environment where discipline is managed effectively across all levels.

Implications for Practice

Revising a code of conduct to include more transparent and relevant guidelines will assist SMTs in enforcing discipline more effectively and consistently. This will promote a more positive and orderly learning environment, improving learners' behaviour and the overall school management. The revision allows for a more streamlined approach where discipline management is aligned with contemporary educational challenges, such as cyberbullying and social media misconduct, ensuring that SMTs remain responsive to evolving learner behaviour. Additionally, this optimisation encourages collaboration among all school staff, promoting consistency in enforcing rules and enhancing overall school governance. Moreover, involving learners in revising the code of conduct fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among the learner body. When learners are involved in developing rules and disciplinary measures, they are more likely to adhere to them, as they feel their opinions are reflected in the policies that govern their behaviour. This inclusive approach empowers SMTs in managing discipline and ensures that learners understand the rationale behind the rules. For instance, peer mediation programmes or learner councils that work closely with the SMT to discuss and implement aspects of the code can reinforce a culture of respect and responsibility. Thus, learner engagement reduces the likelihood of conflicts, as learners feel that they have a stake in the school's disciplinary structure.

From a practical point of view, the implications of this strategy extend beyond the school's immediate environment, influencing long-term learner behaviour and the broader community. Schools that adopt a participatory and transparent approach to discipline management will likely see fewer misconduct cases, as learners and staff work together to maintain a positive learning environment. Additionally, the empowerment of SMTs through a revised code of conduct enables them to model democratic leadership practices,

promoting respect, empathy, and fairness – values that learners carry into their communities. In this way, optimising school management strategies enhances discipline management and contributes to the holistic development of learners, preparing them to become responsible citizens. This involvement becomes an effective way to handle school discipline (Lumadi, 2019). In addition, individual educators must accept responsibility for acquiring the relevant skillset needed to effectively handle the demands of the profession. Finally, teacher developmental programmes must be developed to equip teachers with the necessary skills to manage learner discipline.

Conclusion

In conclusion, improving school management techniques and promoting effective discipline management hinge on empowering SMTs by revising the learners' code of conduct. Schools can establish a pleasant learning environment through the involvement of relevant stakeholders, the implementation of clear policies, the adoption of culturally appropriate practices, and the use of proactive preventive methods. Additional factors that support the successful implementation of a code of conduct include community involvement, ongoing monitoring, data-driven decision-making, collaborative leadership, and ongoing surveillance. This will enable SMTs to foster an inclusive, accountable, and respectful culture that supports learners' academic success and well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and literature review of this study, I put forward the following recommendations:

- Involve parents and community organisations in supporting positive behaviour and reinforcing the expectations outlined in the code of conduct.
 - Build partnerships with local stakeholders to offer support services for learners who might require them.
 - Set up regular feedback mechanisms to collect suggestions and manage issues as they escalate.
 - Ensure that the learners understand the updated code of conduct; it must be clear, concise, and simple.
 - Implement proactive strategies such as support, intervention, and support for positive behaviour and manage disciplinary challenges before they become uncontrollable.
 - Use data to find patterns in disciplinary incidents to assist in informing decisions about how to change the code of conduct.
 - Foster collaboration among SMTs, teachers, and staff to create a vision for the management of and implementation of the code of conduct.
 - Encourage open communication and teamwork to address challenges and celebrate successes.
 - Schools should optimise their management strategies, empower SMTs, and create a positive, supportive environment for effective discipline management and learner success.
- Research should provide detailed guidance on revising a learners' codes of conduct to align with discipline management practices, providing specific recommendations for policy implementation at school level.

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Notes

- i. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.
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