

Integrated Management Approach In Tackling Learner Indiscipline In The Post-Corporalpunishment Era

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The research literature worldwide has gained traction on the argument that learner discipline is one of the bases of effective teaching and learning. Therefore, if learners are well disciplined there is a high possibility for educators to provide best education in schools. The objective of this study was to delve into the perceptions of the educators on the influence of integrated management approach to curb learner indiscipline in the post-corporal punishment era. Through qualitative research methods involving interviews and document analysis, this study gathered insights from purposively selected participants, including teachers (4), SMT members who are also parents (2), and student leaders (2). Thematic analysis was conducted on the data and findings were categorised based on the emerging themes. The outcomes of this research shed light on several critical integrated management technique employed by educators to reduce learner indiscipline in the post-corporal punishment period. This includes Parental Involvement as a Cornerstone of Discipline, Code of Conduct as a Formal Tool for Discipline and Partnerships with NGOs, Government Departments and traditional community leaders. Considering these findings, it is imperative to strengthen parent-school partnerships through structured engagements, liaison roles, and the integration of home-based challenges into learner support plans with professional assistance. Schools should reinforce the Code of Conduct by involving stakeholders in regular reviews, ensuring accessible versions for parents and learners, and training educators to implement it consistently with a focus on restorative practices. Enhanced collaboration between School Management Teams, Governing Bodies.

Key words: Integrated Management Approach, Indiscipline, Corporal Punishment, Disciplinary Problems, Misconduct

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Introduction

Educators are considered in the South African educational environment as not only knowledge facilitators, but also as crucial actors in maintaining school discipline. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) considers teachers as professionals who are ethically and legally required to maintain classroom order. According to the Code of Professional Ethics, educators must demonstrate self-discipline to properly manage learner conduct. Krivokapic (2018) emphasises the importance of educators serving as role models, noting that learners frequently adopt behaviours through imitation. Morgenroth et al. (2015) back up this claim, defining role models as people whose lifestyles and attitudes are admirable. They go on to suggest that exceptional educators' lasting impact is determined not just by the knowledge they convey, but also by the ethical and principled lives they live. Educators are required to reflect principles that influence students to develop positive moral and behavioral traits.

According to Padayachee et al. (2022), educators who engage in unprofessional behavior have a detrimental impact on the disciplinary climate in the classroom. Their behavior frequently undermines efforts to promote order and accountability in students. As a result, educators should actively educate students by providing moral guidance and warning against undesirable behavior. This role entails more than just classroom management; it also includes creating a positive learning environment in which courteous and responsible behavior is encouraged. According to del Valle (2022), the educator's ability to exert constructive control is fundamental to their ability to affect learner

behavior. However, as Metz (2023) points out, such control is meaningless without valid power. As a result, educators have a fundamental responsibility to repair and sustain a culture of teaching and learning, especially in settings where this culture has been eroded by disciplinary problems. Discipline-related difficulties impede schools' ability to achieve their strategic vision, purpose, and academic objectives. The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, specifically Section 8(1), recognises the importance of classroom discipline for the uninterrupted delivery of education. Furthermore, Section 7(5) of the same Act, through the Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners, clearly delegates educators with the obligation of maintaining discipline. These legislative frameworks emphasise educators' roles in ensuring a stable and productive learning environment. This study critically explores the experiences of educators in the King Cetshwayo District of KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, who have used an integrated management approach to reduce learner indiscipline following the removal of corporal punishment. The primary goal is to identify gaps in disciplinary enforcement and analyse the efficacy of integrated solutions for strengthening school discipline. All stakeholders in the school community should actively participate and collaborate to implement an integrated management approach. This comprises educators, students, parents, and School Governing Bodies. The method is consistent with democratic values, emphasizing collaborative accountability, shared decision-making, and the cultivation of a healthy school culture. In instance, involving learners in disciplinary institutions such as the SGB guarantees that discipline is co-constructed through participatory processes rather being imposed from outside. Despite the theoretical advantages of this strategy, the study recognises the actual problems that educators encounter. These may include insufficient training, poor institutional assistance, and socioeconomic factors that exacerbate disciplinary concerns. As a result, the study investigates these limits with the goal of developing contextually relevant ways to improve the application of integrated disciplinary procedures.

Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned in two interrelated theoretical frameworks: Durrant's (2010) Whole-School Discipline Model and the Adlerian-Dreikurs Positive Discipline Model. These frameworks jointly offer a comprehensive lens for exploring how educators can adopt an integrated management approach to address learner indiscipline in a post-corporal punishment educational context.

The Adlerian-Dreikurs model offers a child-centred, democratic, and respectful discipline approach, underscoring the importance of developing learners' social responsibility and intrinsic motivation. This theoretical stance directly informs the objective of this study, which seeks to understand how teachers can manage discipline through integrated, non-punitive strategies. In alignment with this model, effective discipline is not imposed through fear or punishment but cultivated through mutual respect, consistency, and shared values within the classroom. Educators are encouraged to use proactive strategies, such as involving learners in norm-setting, fostering belonging, and teaching problem-solving skills. These practices contribute to a classroom culture in which behavioural standards are both taught and internalised.

Dreikurs' emphasis on teaching life skills such as cooperation, accountability, and emotional regulation aligns well with the South African Department of Basic Education's constructive discipline policies. In this model, discipline is not viewed as control, but rather as an educational process, wherein both behaviour and social competencies are addressed through reflective dialogue, support, and structured consequences. This supports the premise that educators, by adopting a skills-based approach rooted in dignity and structure, can effectively manage discipline without resorting to punitive measures.

Durrant's Whole-School Discipline Model expands the focus from the individual classroom to the entire school ecosystem, promoting a shared, school-wide vision for discipline that is informed by democratic principles and children's rights. Within this model, all stakeholders including educators, school leaders, parents, and learners play a role in creating a coherent disciplinary culture. This approach is particularly significant in the South African context, where systemic challenges such as overcrowding, socio-economic inequalities, and residual authoritarian practices continue to hinder effective classroom management. The model also encourages schools to adopt a collaborative leadership style and to embed positive discipline strategies into their core practices, policies, and values. It proposes that whole-school discipline is most effective when supported by clear institutional frameworks, ongoing professional development, and community engagement.

However, the practical application of these models in South African schools reveals critical tensions. Many educators, particularly those shaped by apartheid-era authoritarian schooling, may struggle to adopt these democratic and rights-based models. Sen's (1999) concept of 'unfreedom' is useful in understanding this reality: although formal bans on corporal punishment exist, teachers often lack the training, autonomy, and systemic support required to fully implement alternative discipline strategies. Furthermore, infrastructure deficits, large class sizes, and socio-economic pressures frequently undermine consistent application of these principles. In such contexts, efforts to adopt an integrated approach may be seen as idealistic unless accompanied by targeted support, ongoing mentorship, and transformational school leadership. Therefore, an integrated management approach, grounded in the Adlerian and Durrant models, equips educators to promote respectful, inclusive, and rights-based discipline practices. It encourages a shift from reactive punishment to proactive, educational strategies that build learners' internal discipline and social competence. Nonetheless, to ensure success in the South African context, this approach must be implemented within a

supportive systemic environment one that addresses both teacher readiness and school-wide coherence and is attuned to the complex social realities learners and educators face.

Research Question

How can educators employ integrated management approach to curb learner indiscipline in the post-corporal punishment era?

Literature review

The abolition of corporal punishment in South African schools has prompted the implementation of more constructive, collaborative, and professionally grounded methods to manage learner discipline. The integrated management method is being widely regarded as a suitable paradigm for dealing with school discipline issues. It highlights that important stakeholders, such as educators, parents, and school authorities, share responsibility for creating a disciplined and conducive learning environment. According to Zondo and Mncube (2024), parents must assume main responsibility for instilling good discipline in their children; nevertheless, educators, as key personalities in the educational environment, play an equally important role. The school cannot function without disciplinary action. Educators' behavior has a huge impact on how discipline is maintained, especially when pupils spend a significant amount of time under their supervision. According to Frenzel et al. (2021), educators frequently underestimate the impact that their actions and instructional methods have on students' sense of belonging and subsequent behavior. Disengaged educators and a lack of classroom management skills contribute to student misconduct (Aliya & Siddiqui, 2018; Belle, 2018).

Furthermore, learners notice and even mimic educators' poor behavior, perpetuating an indiscipline classroom atmosphere (Lumadi, 2020). When instructors relinquish responsibility for monitoring learner behavior, they leave a vacuum that is frequently filled with resistance and misconduct (Zondo & Mncube, 2024). For an integrated approach to be effective, educators should actively collaborate with School Management Teams (SMTs) and follow the ethical standards outlined in the South African Council for Educators Act 31 of 2000 (SACE, 2000), which requires professionalism and integrity in the teaching profession. Professionalism remains a critical component of effective learner discipline. According to Marianne et al. (2014), learners' esteem is improved by educators who maintain professionalism while despising those who behave rudely. According to Şahin (2021), learners typically react aggressively to educators' caustic and rude communication. Thompson (2009) and Segalo et al. (2018) agree that disciplinary tactics that humiliate or degrade learners generate resentment and can lead to more rebellion. Constructive punishment must therefore be both polite and purposeful, emphasizing the educator's function as a mentor rather than an authoritarian figure. In this situation, classroom management becomes critical to discipline. According to Alenka (2023), classroom management attempts to establish a conducive learning environment by optimizing learning time, motivating engagement, and promoting self-regulation. However, many educators fail to create such an environment due to a lack of preparation, ineffective planning, and poor engagement techniques (Masedi et al., 2023).

Educators' failure to recognise students' different emotional and behavioral needs frequently results in a "one-size-fits-all" teaching style that alienates both struggling and high-achieving students (Mares, 2018). Ngwokabueni (2015) goes on to say that bad discipline is frequently caused by educator-related variables such as absenteeism, overcrowded classrooms, poor teaching techniques, and inadequate school administration. Professional development remains an important solution to closing these gaps. According to Guskey (2002), professional development programs improve educator quality and promote efficient discipline management. Tabe (2023) agrees, stating that school-level variables such as staff capabilities are critical for fostering academic performance and disciplined cultures. Educators who are well-trained and continually develop their professional skills are more likely to promote favourable disciplinary climates. Lesson planning and preparation are just as crucial. According to Shaikhmag and Naidoo (2021), poor preparation and a lack of commitment are important drivers to learner misbehaviour. While inflexible and punitive classroom environments can lead to misconduct (Strauss, 2006), so does a failure to fulfil learners' needs and interests (Thompson, 2009; Zondo & Mncube, 2024). Educators should use integrative methods to genuinely engage learners, both cognitively and emotionally. Learner participation in the rule-making process is an integral component of the integrated management method. According to Zondo and Mncube (2022), incorporating learners in developing classroom rules promotes reciprocal accountability. Unrealistic expectations and inconsistent rule implementation by educators can create impressions of unfairness and partiality, worsening indiscipline (Strauss, 2006; Thompson, 2009).

Franco et al. (2023) warn that educators under personal stress may react disproportionately to small transgressions, exacerbating classroom conflict. In addition, Cowen and Strunk (2014) and Broer et al. (2023) criticize the emphasis of personal gain and administrative or political interests over classroom management. This shift in focus reduces educators' sense of responsibility in dealing with learner behavior. Masondo (2014) claims that the political connotations of South Africa's post-1994 educational landscape have contributed to a lack of learner discipline. Political disagreements among school staff can also lead to internal strife, undermining efforts to preserve order. Communication methods, such as voice tone and volume, are subtle but effective disciplinary measures. Pillay and Bianca (2020) state that an authoritative but calm tone is more beneficial than shouting, which frequently results in

noisy and inattentive classrooms. Educator training programs should include courses on classroom communication and behavioral psychology to help educators manage discipline. Furthermore, Khanyile and Mpuangnan (2024) contend that educators frequently ignore the significance of learner voice and agency, viewing learners as passive recipients rather than co-creators of the learning environment. This objectification undermines attempts to foster a respected and regulated school environment. According to Narain (2015), many instructors are underprepared to address the complexities of learner behavior, limiting their ability to adopt integrated disciplinary measures. Finally, the School Governing Body (SGB) is responsible for implementing and enforcing a strong Code of Conduct. This document should be prepared collectively and used as a reference point for discipline management throughout the school.

Methodology

A diverse group of stakeholders, including teachers, school principals, and parents within the King Cetshwayo District of KwaZulu-Natal Province were the focus of this study, which utilized a qualitative methodology. Specifically, the study targeted the Secondary schools' teachers, Senior Management Teams (SMTs), and Representative Council for Learners (RCLs). The study included eight participants in total. The group consisted of four members from the educators, two parents who are part of the SMT, and two learner leaders. The participants were selected with a purposive sampling technique to gather the perspectives of the representative council. The focus was on managing learner indiscipline in multiple deprived contexts, as outlined by Henning et al. (2004). The researchers used semi-structured interviews to collect data, which followed the framework suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2010). The interviews were conducted using a set of predetermined questions, with room for further questioning to delve into the participants' reasoning and obtain additional clarifications. Permission was sought from the school administration before the data collection process commenced. The semi-structured interviews were conducted across three sessions, each spanning around 45 minutes. The participants provided their consent for their responses to be recorded during the sessions, which were later transcribed into a notebook. To analyse the data, a thematic approach was utilized, following the guidelines by de Vos et al. (2011), which involved the identification and classification of significant themes based on their characteristics. To simplify the analysis process, distinct codes were allocated to all eight participants. These codes functioned as unique identifiers during the entire analysis process. Their use made it easier to categorize and present the data in accordance with the themes that emerged.

Results

The findings and discussion describe the integrated management technique employed by educators to reduce learner indiscipline in the post-corporal punishment period. Five sub-themes emerged from this broad theme, including parental involvement as a cornerstone of discipline, the Code of Conduct as a Formal Tool for Discipline, active collaboration between SGB and SMT and the use of detention, suspension, and offence slips, teacher-learner relationships for behavioral change, regular meetings and open communication, partnerships with NGOs and government departments, and the involvement of traditional community leaders.

Parental Involvement as a Cornerstone of Discipline

Despite widespread understanding of the critical role that parental engagement plays in learner behavior management, many educators from participating schools observed a persistent and severe divergence between schools and families when it comes to discipline management. Teachers expressed concern about some parents' inconsistent, hesitant, and often hostile behavior, which hinders school-based disciplinary measures. As one teacher from School A explained, *"If a learner has misbehaved several times, we keep a record... then we phone the parent... If the learner does not change, we will contact the parent again. The parent will communicate with the classroom teacher, the principal, and the social worker."* (#T1, School A). This remark exemplifies a reactive and rising method in which repeated learner misconduct needs many parental interactions, which may extend to include other professional actors like social workers. While such guidelines seek to foster a collaborative response, their efficacy is restricted by varied levels of parental engagement.

Teachers in School D, on the other hand, reported a decline in trust and communication between parents and educators. One teacher stated: *"Some parents dislike teachers... When the teacher chastised the child, there was disagreement. The parent refused to attend and later wrote bad reviews about the school and teacher."* (T1, School D). This scenario illustrates the broader degradation of mutual respect and productive conversation, which are required for successful home-school collaborations. Parents' hostile replies not only demoralize educators, but also send contradicting behavioral messages to students, who may exploit this turmoil to evade accountability. It also emphasizes the legal-cultural contradiction in post-apartheid educational systems, where community distrust of institutional authority might still exist. According to other findings from School C, pupil misbehaviour is frequently an indication of larger familial issues. A member of the SGB commented: *"We tell the child to bring the parent... We want to get to the child's problem because it might emanate from home."* (SGB and School C). This method demonstrates an understanding of the socio-emotional and environmental causes of indiscipline, particularly in cases when students have experienced neglect, trauma, or inconsistent parenting. The absence of a stable family environment frequently impairs students' emotional control and behavioral development, demanding a comprehensive and empathic disciplinary technique.

These findings are strongly consistent with the work of Rimm-Kaufman and Sawyer (2004), who contend that good collaboration between families and schools improves not just student behavior but also academic outcomes. When parents and educators share expectations, communicate consistently, and collaborate to meet learner needs, the likelihood of long-term behavioral improvement increases. According to Joubert (2010), the most major barriers to effecting behavioral change in schools continue to be a lack of consistent parental discipline and inadequate home structures. Without reinforcement of school ideals at home, teachers' discipline tactics frequently lack the continuity and authority required to create long-term results.

Code of Conduct as a Formal Tool for Discipline

The adoption and implementation of a Code of Conduct demonstrated a collaborative, school-wide approach to punishment in all participating schools. This agreement, co-created by important stakeholders such as educators, parents, students, and School Governing Bodies (SGBs), was widely regarded as the cornerstone of disciplinary governance. Participants from diverse school positions described it as a living guide that shapes reactions to student misbehavior in a consistent, transparent, and democratic manner.

As one Head of Department at School A noted, *"Everything is provided in the Code of Conduct... We operate from the position of being informed of the resolution by parents, teachers, and learners."* (HOD, School A). This reaction emphasizes the collaborative culture that guided the code's development, confirming its function as a collectively owned framework rather than a top-down edict. Its credibility stems from inclusive consultation methods that encourage stakeholder buy-in and shared accountability for preserving school values. An SGB member went on to explain the practical value of the Code of Conduct in disciplinary decision-making: *"We follow the Code of Conduct... it shows the consequence for wrongdoing. A student may be suspended for two weeks; when they return, they have changed."* (SGB, school A).

This statement explains how the code is used as both a preventive and remedial tool. While suspension is one of the more severe repercussions mentioned, the overall goal remains transformative rather than punishing, with the goal of reintegrating learners who have improved their behavioral awareness. The described behavioral modifications following disciplinary action highlight the potential usefulness of organized, transparent policies, particularly when learners understand the reasoning behind the penalties and are supported during re-entry. These approaches are consistent with the study of Beckman and Prinsloo (2009), who emphasize the need of democratic and inclusive decisions in school government. Their work promotes disciplinary frameworks that are not only lawful but also represent justice, equality, and children's fundamental rights. In this way, a well-developed Code of Conduct is more than just a rulebook; it is also a tool for moral and civic education, with discipline framed within greater values of fairness, respect, and social accountability. Importantly, this method is consistent with post-apartheid educational reforms that strive to remove authoritarian legacies and foster participatory decision-making in schools.

Schools build a culture of discourse and democratic involvement by incorporating students and parents in the Code of Conduct creation process, which is critical for long-term behavioral change and community trust. Nonetheless, the successful application of the Code of Conduct is dependent on several enabling variables, including educator consistency, learner comprehension, and parental involvement. In situations when these factors are lacking owing to capacity constraints, resistance, or miscommunication, the code may be applied unevenly, potentially eroding its legitimacy. As a result, while the adoption of a collaboratively designed Code of Conduct is a hopeful step toward rights-based punishment, further efforts are required to ensure its accessibility, cultural relevance, and consistent enforcement. Educator training, parent and learner introduction events, and frequent code reviews can all help to strengthen the code's role in establishing ethical and accountable educational settings.

Active Collaboration Between SGB and SMT and use of Detention, Suspension, and Offence Slips

In many under-resourced schools, School Management Teams (SMTs) and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are taking an increasingly aggressive role in maintaining discipline, frequently going far beyond their statutory responsibilities. This enhanced responsibility is especially visible in places where systemic constraints limit instructors' abilities to regulate learner behavior on their own. One Head of Department from School D emphasized the commitment and active participation of SGB members in supporting school functions:

"We are fortunate to have working SGB members... they are always there for the school... they even accompany learners on trips to maintain discipline." (HOD, School D). This remark exemplifies a culture of shared responsibility in which discipline is considered as a collaborative requirement encompassing school administrators, parents, and community stakeholders, rather than just the teacher's burden. Such involvement is not only symbolic, but also functionally important, especially in locations where social fragmentation and community suspicion of teachers are prominent. One SGB member from School B stated, *"I assist at the school gate during registration... the community may disrespect teachers, so I need to be there as a community representative."* (SGB and School B). This protective, intermediary role reflects an intergenerational social contract in which community people work as co-guardians of school norms and promote school-community cooperation. In School C, this mentality was carried further, with community members specifically invited to support internal disciplinary mechanisms. *"We even request nearby community members to assist in school discipline... the school is a community institution."* (SGB and School C). These stories support Mbokazi's (2014) claim that collective, grassroots involvement can considerably improve school resilience and institutional capability. Such informal networks, especially in circumstances typified by poverty,

overcrowding, and limited formal resources, provide as crucial buffers against the erosion of school discipline and ideals. Participants reported using systematic, nonviolent disciplinary measures such as detention, brief suspension, and the issuance of offence slips. These technologies enabled a systematic and trackable approach to resolving wrongdoing while adhering to the ideals of dignity and proportionality.

For instance: *"It is only detention that we are using at the moment."* (Principal, School C) *"We suspend a child... not to expel them, but to scare them so they think about their future...they return changed."* (SGB, School D). *"The offence slip is signed by the learner... once there are three offences, the case goes to the disciplinary committee."* (HOD, School D). These comments demonstrate an evolving disciplinary paradigm in which accountability is maintained through well-defined processes rather than corporal punishment. The organized use of offence slips and committees is an attempt to institutionalize discipline through predictable and transparent processes, presenting learners with both repercussions and chances for reflection. While such measures can dissuade wrongdoing, participants expressed concern about depending entirely on punitive methods. Punishments, without additional restorative measures such as guided reflection, counselling, and learner-parent-teacher dialogues, were widely agreed to give only short-term behavioral compliance. In this case, disciplinary success was determined not by fear-induced submission, but by the learner's ability to internalize standards and re-engage constructively with the school community. Thus, the disciplinary environment witnessed in these schools is a hybrid model that combines official nonviolent methods with community-driven support and restorative justice ideas. This is consistent with broader educational changes that emphasize child-centered, rights-based punishment and the need of social capital in maintaining school order, particularly in situations where material resources are low.

Teacher-Learner Relationships for Behavioural Change and regular meetings

Teachers at participating schools consistently emphasized the need of courteous, private involvement with students as a more successful disciplinary method than public punishment. Constructive communication was viewed as promoting behavioral change while maintaining the learner's dignity and self-esteem. As one teacher from School C explained, *"I pull the student away and talk to him... reprimanding them in front of others doesn't work because he tries to seem tough. But in private, he transforms."* (#T2, School C). Similarly, a teacher from School A emphasized the significance of emotional regulation in conflict situations: *"You don't cure violence with violence. You must remain calm while preserving the learner's dignity."* (T1, School A). These approaches emphasize a restorative ethos in classroom management that values empathy, discretion, and emotional intelligence. Instead of considering discipline as punishment, teachers argued for dialogue-based solutions that sustain relational trust and improve the learner's ability to reflect. This is consistent with Kruger and van Schalkwyk's (1997) argument that consistent, respectful, and approachable teacher behaviour develops cooperation, trust, and a positive school climate. The essential idea is that learners are more responsive to behavioral correction when they feel valued and supported, as opposed to humiliated or alienated.

Along with respectful teacher-learner interactions, survey participants underlined the need of holding regular multi-stakeholder meetings including teachers, School Management Teams (SMTs), School Governing Bodies (SGBs), and parents. These sessions were considered as important instruments for encouraging shared responsibility and consistent disciplinary processes. A Deputy Principal from School B emphasised the importance of internal coordination: *"We need to be on the same page... if we have a problem, we sit down as SMT and analyse it."* (Deputy Principal of School B). In School A, including students in these forums expanded the culture of accountability: *"We host monthly SGB meetings... learners, teachers, and parents are present. We assign students to chastise their peers."* SGB, School A

Such collaborative techniques exhibit a distributed model of discipline management in which learners are empowered as co-regulators and governance structures serve as forums for dialogue, consensus-building, and reflective decision-making. This approach emphasizes the Department of Education's (2002) emphasis on ongoing discussion as essential to effective and democratic school government. Notably, these forums not only assure procedural consistency but also foster relational accountability, a system in which all actors are both responsible for and responsive to each other in the shared responsibility of preserving school discipline. Schools' relationship-based approach to learner involvement, as well as their collaborative governance structures, indicate a greater commitment to discipline as a collective, instructive process. This strategy goes beyond punitive measures to emphasize growth, inclusion, and long-term behavioral change.

Partnerships with NGOs, Government Departments and traditional community leaders

Several participating schools reported favourable effects via strategic relationships with NGOs, government departments, and conventional leadership structures, which helped to improve learner behaviour and promote holistic development. These external collaborations were viewed as not only augmenting school staff efforts, but also as addressing broader socio-cultural and psychological aspects of student misconduct. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Star for Life, for example, were praised for their capacity-building activities that aimed at both educators and learners. A principal at School D stated:

"Star for Life organizes workshops for teachers and students. It encourages ethical behavior and togetherness among employees." (The Principal of School D). A teacher at the same school echoed this, saying, *"We have peer educators*

trained by Star for Life, and we've seen behaviour improve as a result of these interventions." (# T2, School D). These courses provided forums for peer-led assistance, ethical dialogue, and personal growth, empowering students to self-regulate and make responsible choices. Furthermore, collaborations with government institutions such as the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA) and the South African Police Service (SAPS) introduced a preventative and instructional component to school discipline measures. A teacher clarified: *"We network with SANCA and SAPS... they teach learners about discipline and life success."* (#T1, School B). Collaborations like these connect schools with critical social services, allowing for therapies that target underlying problems like substance addiction, peer pressure, and socioeconomic instability rather than just behavioral symptoms. This approach is consistent with McLaughlin's (2000) argument that multi-sectoral alliances are essential in responding to youth's complex needs, particularly in underserved settings.

Importantly, several schools used traditional community leadership structures to address disciplinary issues in a culturally appropriate way. These cases exhibited respect for indigenous dispute resolution processes, which continue to have an impact on many rural and peri-urban populations. According to a School Governing Body member from School B, *"a boy disrespected the principal... the case ended up being dealt with in the traditional court."* (SGB and School B). In many cases, traditional courts provided restorative justice processes that reflected communal values and encouraged learner accountability in ways that were consistent with local cultural norms. These programs strengthened community-school interactions, emphasizing the belief that discipline is a shared communal obligation. These collaborations demonstrate the effectiveness of networked support networks to promote learner discipline. Schools were better prepared to adopt comprehensive, contextually relevant, and sustainable disciplinary procedures after involving civil society organizations, public service agencies, and traditional authorities. The success of these programs demonstrates the importance of intersectoral collaboration in improving school environments and fostering learner well-being.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the value of a harmonised and participatory strategy in addressing learners' misconduct within the post-corporal punishment educational landscape. One recurring insight was the decisive role that parental collaboration played in shaping school-based disciplinary responses. Where familial involvement was inconsistent or defensive, educators often found their efforts weakened, leading to diminished learner accountability. In contrast, cooperative relationships between home and school environments enhanced behavioural improvement. A prominent tool supporting discipline was the collaboratively established Code of Conduct, viewed not just as a policy document but as a collectively endorsed ethical framework. Participants described it as a living reference that guided responses to infractions and fostered a sense of procedural fairness. Additionally, the structured use of non-violent tools such as offence logs, detentions, and short suspensions helped standardise disciplinary practices across schools. These interventions were most impactful when embedded within a broader restorative framework that included personal reflection, counselling, and learner reintegration initiatives.

Equally critical to behavioural change was the quality of interpersonal dynamics between educators and learners. Educators who employed discretion, empathy, and calm communication observed more meaningful engagement from learners compared to those who relied on public reprimands. Private dialogue, coupled with emotional awareness, appeared to enhance learners' willingness to take responsibility for their actions. Beyond internal practices, the study also highlighted the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships. Support from non-governmental organisations, public service entities, and traditional leadership figures offered supplementary resources and alternative disciplinary platforms, especially in resource-constrained schools. These collaborations helped to address socio-emotional and environmental causes of indiscipline, such as family instability, economic hardship, and substance misuse. Notably, the involvement of traditional courts offered culturally resonant restorative processes that were seen to reinforce behavioural expectations in communities. However, several constraints persisted, including underdeveloped parental engagement strategies, gaps in educator training, and systemic resource limitations. These findings point to the need for sustained institutional backing, continuous professional development, and context-sensitive disciplinary models that reflect both constitutional values and local realities in the South African school context.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations could be made.

Improve Parental Engagement and Support Systems.

Establish strong parent-teacher partnerships by implementing structured induction sessions, discipline awareness workshops, and well-defined channels of communication. Designate parent liaison officers within schools to enhance dialogue and reduce misunderstandings or antagonism between parents and educators. Additionally, integrate home-related challenges into learner support frameworks by involving social workers or counsellors, ensuring that the underlying causes of learner misconduct are addressed in a holistic and proactive manner.

Reinforce the role and consistent application of the Code of Conduct

The reinforcement of the code of conduct can be done by actively engaging all stakeholders, educators, learners, parents, and community representatives in its periodic review and revision to ensure contextual relevance and alignment with shared values. Distribute simplified, user-friendly versions of the Code to both learners and parents to enhance understanding, transparency, and ownership. Furthermore, equip educators through targeted training to

implement the Code fairly and uniformly, prioritizing restorative approaches that promote behavioural transformation over punitive measures.

Promote structured collaboration between School Management Teams (SMTs), School Governing Bodies (SGBs), and community stakeholders by institutionalising regular joint meetings that include SMTs, SGB members, and class representatives to review disciplinary trends and co-develop responsive interventions. Actively involve respected community figures such as elders, traditional leaders, or retired educators to reinforce discipline through culturally grounded and trusted methods. Additionally, develop clear community involvement protocols that support collaborative engagement while preserving the school's operational autonomy and professional integrity.

Enhance the use of non-violent, developmentally appropriate disciplinary strategies by complementing sanctions such as detention and suspension with structured follow-up counselling sessions, aimed at fostering reflection, personal accountability, and behavioural change. Implement systematic offence-tracking mechanisms to identify patterns of recurrent misconduct and enable timely, targeted interventions. Additionally, establish peer-led discipline initiatives that empower learners to model and reinforce positive behaviours, cultivating a culture of mutual respect and self-regulation within the school environment.

Leverage external partnerships and culturally rooted structures to strengthen learner discipline and support systems by collaborating with NGOs and relevant government departments to deliver emotional support services, life skills education, and awareness campaigns tailored to school needs. Formalize these collaborations through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with entities such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA), and traditional leadership councils to guide structured, respectful engagement with learners. Document and disseminate successful intervention stories to foster knowledge sharing, inform best practices, and encourage scalable implementation across other educational contexts

Conclusion

This study focused on educators' perceptions of the impact of the integrated management approach to curb learner indiscipline in the post-corporal punishment era. It was discovered that the elimination of corporal punishment resulted in an increased bottleneck for educators when exercising control over students. Furthermore, a lack of parental support for their children's education has created difficulties for teachers in disciplining students, and a negative impact on both teachers' and students' morale. Many parents struggle to remain involved in their children's education because they are working long hours just to make ends meet, which leaves them without the supervision and assistance they need. High rate of absenteeism, students may become alienated and disconnected from their education because of this connection, skipping class to make money or, in certain situations, moving into unstable living situations. Furthermore, a lot of educators lack the necessary training to deal with complicated disciplinary matters, which leaves them feeling overburdened and ill-equipped to provide kids with meaningful support. This lack of expertise may result in uneven methods of discipline and an inability to establish a stable and encouraging learning environment in schools.

Because of this, schools find it difficult to create a disciplined and encouraging learning atmosphere for their learners.

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