

The Views and Experiences of Service Providers in Facilitating a Positive Behaviour Support Programme for At-Risk Youth in Cape Town Schools: The Case of the Tenderden Place of Safety.

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ABSTRACT

Challenging learner behaviour is one of the critical issues facing the South African education system. Problem behaviours such as bullying, substance abuse, school violence, and gangsterism often result in the expulsion or suspension of a learner as a disciplinary measure. However, these punitive approaches can be counterproductive, as they may expose learners to a range of antisocial behaviours, including involvement in criminal activities, putting them at further risk.

Many scholars, both local and international, have criticised punitive disciplinary mechanisms and zero-tolerance policies often adopted by schools, arguing that they contribute to what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline. Restorative justice approaches to school discipline are emerging as a widely supported alternative to such measures, as they align well with PBS models. These approaches provide a holistic understanding of problem behaviour by considering the influences of school, family, and community, rather than isolating the problem.

The aim of this study was to explore the views and experiences of service providers in facilitating a PBS model, a restorative approach, for learners with challenging behaviour who are at risk of suspension or expulsion. A qualitative approach and exploratory design were employed, allowing participants to share first-hand experiences relevant to the area of investigation. Purposive sampling was used to select ten participants, who were invited to share their views and experiences in facilitating a PBS programme for learners in schools around Cape Town.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, and the data were analysed thematically using NVivo software. The findings revealed a strong need for restorative justice approaches to school discipline in South Africa. Participants highlighted that traditional punitive and exclusionary measures, which often rely on suspending or expelling learners, predispose children to further antisocial behaviour.

The Circle of Courage model, a positive youth development framework based on the pillars of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity, was identified as one of the restorative justice approaches that can support positive behaviour in school settings.

The findings revealed that the manifestation of problem behaviour within a learner is often influenced by several contributory factors, including gang influence, dysfunctional family structures, substance abuse, corporal punishment, and negative peer influence. Bullying,

cyberbullying, and the use of dangerous weapons were also found to significantly impact incidents of school violence.

To address the growing problem of challenging learner behaviour in schools, the study recommends that school management across educational settings adopt restorative justice practices in their discipline programmes. Additionally, the study advocates for fully resourced schools with the full-time services of professionals such as psychologists, social workers, learning support facilitators, and occupational therapists. This approach aims to address challenging behaviour through a more ecosystemic perspective.

The study also recommends smaller classrooms to better manage the often-uneven teacher-learner ratio, which is believed to exacerbate problem behaviour. Furthermore, there should be improvements in the training curriculum for teachers at the university level. This curriculum should incorporate the basic tenets of restorative justice practices in school discipline, as well as effective behaviour management techniques that consider the school, family, and community of the learner.

Lastly, the study suggests that various entities and individuals might find these recommendations useful. These include behaviour analysts, therapists, psychologists, social workers, juvenile correctional centres, probation officers, policymakers, basic education departments, and both administrators and teachers.

Keywords: Challenging learner behaviour, suspension and expulsion, punitive and exclusionary disciplinary methods, at-risk behaviour, restorative justice practices as alternative discipline, the PBS model.

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DECLARATION

I confirm that I have read and understood the rules for submitting the MPhil in Criminology, Law and Society dissertations, including the length and plagiarism regulations. I acknowledge that this dissertation complies with the university's rules.

Signature: 

Date: 28 June 2024

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

One of the critical issues facing the South African education system is the problem of challenging learner behaviour¹ in public schools. The prevalence of challenging learner behaviour is a global phenomenon with a negative impact on learning and teaching (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). The manifestation of challenging learner behaviour includes conduct such as bullying, substance abuse, truancy, school violence, learner-to-teacher violence, and gangsterism (Masilo & Matlakala, 2023; Moosa, 2020). A recently widely circulated mobile phone video depicted a physical fight between a teacher and a learner at Glenvista High School in Johannesburg, with the two exchanging fists (Sibiya, 2024).

The perpetuation of violence by pupils at the abovementioned school has been a major disciplinary issue recently, with incidents such as fights between learners, attacks on teachers and staff, bullying, and gang violence. This example from Glenvista High School provides some context for the broader problem of challenging learner behaviour in schools, though it is not in and of itself the focus of this study. Many schools in South Africa face the same problem of challenging learner behaviour or learner behavioural problems (Nhambura, 2020; Venter & Jeffries, 2020; Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012; Ngidi & Kaye, 2022).

Given the escalating problem of challenging learner behaviour in schools, Maphosa and Mammen (2011, p. 76) argue that school management often resorts to zero-tolerance policies² to deal with problem behaviours. Suspension or expulsion from school are more prevalent

¹ Challenging learner behaviour can be generally defined as "any repeated pattern of behaviour that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in positive interactions with peers or adults" (Michail 2011, p. 157). Children displaying challenging behaviours in schools are more susceptible to various negative outcomes, such as poor academic performance, involvement in delinquent activities, increased likelihood of dropping out, affiliation with gangs, and eventual adult incarceration Michail 2011, p. 157).

² Zero-tolerance policies are out-of-school policies. These policies automatically punish learners and mandate suspension or expulsion for certain offences, often without consideration of the circumstances that led to the misconduct (Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015:98).

mechanisms used to confront such problem behaviour issues. However, in an instance where suspension or expulsion prevails the question of fairness in these processes cannot be overlooked in a way that prejudices the learner who has been found to have contravened school regulations.

During the recent meeting of the Parliament Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, the question of fairness in the suspension or expulsion of learners with disciplinary problems was discussed. This discussion was part of the deliberations on the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA Bill) (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2024). The committee outlined in this meeting that there is a need to differentiate between serious forms of misconduct and less serious forms in clause 9 of the proposed bill, which concerns the suspension and expulsion of learners. Physical assaults, harassment, drug or alcohol possession, bullying, theft, possession of dangerous weapons, distribution of pornographic material, and sexual misconduct were identified by the committee as serious forms of misconduct that may warrant an expulsion of a learner. This is because these misconducts are part of the Schedule 1 offences as contained in the Criminal Procedure Act (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2024).

The implication of the above deliberations by the members of the Parliamentary Committee is that these serious forms of misconduct are punishable by law. As such, they channel learners with problem behaviours directly into the criminal justice system, including courts and juvenile correctional facilities. Therefore, when learners are suspended or expelled from school due to behavioural problems, they are more likely to engage in serious antisocial behaviour. This is due to risk factors such as gang violence, poverty, negative peer influence, substance abuse, and dysfunctional family structures (Magidi et al., 2016; De Wet, 2016; McGloin & Thomas, 2019; Lumadi, 2019; Siegel, 2016; Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2020).

Therefore, this study argues that it is crucial to differentiate between types of learner misconduct based on severity to disrupt the pathway of learners into contact with the criminal justice system. Some behaviours, such as late coming, truancy, or vandalism, may not necessarily warrant a total expulsion from school, as this may inadvertently lead to the possible

initiation of more pronounced antisocial behaviour. This phenomenon is referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline³.

The literature on the school-to-prison pipeline indicates that there is a strong causal relationship between zero-tolerance policies (i.e. suspension or expulsion) and an increased risk of children becoming involved in the criminal justice system (Ally et al., 2021; Morgan, 2021; Mallet, 2016; Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014).

Zero-tolerance policies have not adequately addressed the complex problem of challenging learner behaviour in schools. As a result, restorative justice (RJ) practices are increasingly recognised as an alternative disciplinary approach in schools, both locally and internationally (Brandt et al., 2014; Cage et al., 2018; Reyneke, 2011). Restorative justice, a term that is widely used in the criminal justice system, is a justice element that is anchored on the pillars of accountability and reparations for the harm caused. It provides an opportunity for those harmed and those responsible for the harm to express and address their needs following a law-violating behaviour (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007, p. 12). In criminal justice jargon, this means that not only is the victim of a law violation afforded an opportunity for redress, but the perpetrator is also given a chance to repair the harm caused and make amends. Therefore, the same principle of restorative justice can be applied to disciplining learners through restorative discipline. This is opposed to the zero-tolerance policies of suspension or expulsion, which may encourage further involvement in antisocial behaviour.

I argue that schools should adopt a restorative justice approach to discipline. Research from local and international scholars has shown that this approach decreases office discipline referrals (ODRs)⁴, improves academic performance, and reduces disciplinary exclusions (Brandt et al., 2014, p. 229; Cage et al., 2018, p. 149).

1.2 Rationale and context of the study

³ The school-to-prison pipeline refers to policies and practices that push learners out of school and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems (Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015:98).

⁴ Office discipline referrals (ODRs) commonly refer to a process used by school teams to identify learners who need some form of behavioural intervention (National Centre on Intensive Intervention, 2020).

Challenging learner behaviour, as depicted in the preceding paragraphs, is a serious disciplinary problem that hinders effective learning and teaching. Factors such as school violence, bullying, substance abuse, and gangsterism contribute to this problem. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) has released alarming statistics revealing that approximately 246 million children worldwide, across primary and secondary school levels, experience violence and other forms of problem behaviours within and around school premises (South African Council for Educators, 2021). Moreover, about one-third of learners aged 13 to 15 reports being bullied in school, with a similar proportion admitting their involvement in physical violence (South African Council for Educators, 2021).

While SACE has provided a global overview of school violence against the backdrop of the overarching problem of challenging learner behaviour, Hendricks (2018, p. 76) points out that the presence of guns and other dangerous weapons is prevalent in South African schools. These statistics prove schools' lack of proper and effective behaviour management techniques, which often resort to zero-tolerance policies such as suspension and expulsion to address challenging learner behaviour. Given the challenges associated with zero-tolerance policies, there is a growing urgency to adopt restorative justice practices in school discipline (Quin, 2019, p. 8; Owen et al., 2015, p. 3; Marais & Meier, 2010, pp. 41-42; Varnham, 2005, p. 88).

The Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)⁵ model is one restorative justice approach used to support behaviour change in children with problem behaviours. Unlike traditional zero-tolerance policies, the PBS model focuses on the underlying root causes of challenging learner behaviour rather than mere punishment and exclusion (Owen et al., 2015, p. 13; Moodley, 2016; Luiselli et al., 2005; Keen, 2008; Brandt et al., 2014; MacDonald & McGill, 2013; Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012).

South African literature lacks focus on applying the PBS model in schools to address challenging learner behaviour, and research in this area is notably lacking. However, the Positive Behaviour Intervention and Resource Centre (PBIRC), a pilot project recently initiated by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), resembles the restorative justice practice element in addressing challenging learner behaviour. This study is based on the PBIRC pilot

⁵ MacDonald and McGill (2013, p. 18) describe the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) model as an approach that applies educational and systemic change strategies to improve quality of life and reduce problematic behaviour.

project, which aims to provide positive behaviour support to learners who exhibit behavioural problems and are on the verge of expulsion.

The facilitators of positive behavioural support at PBIRC include psychologists, educators, learning support facilitators, social workers, and occupational therapists. The pilot project currently targets schools in the Cape Town metropole areas, which have been identified as hotspots for incidents of challenging learner behaviour. Because the pilot project is still in its early stages, the participants are referred to as service providers in this study.

1.3 Research questions and aims

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What restorative justice practices do the service providers at the Positive Behaviour Support Intervention and Resource Centre (PBIRC) (formerly Tenterden Place of Safety⁶) use to address challenging learner behaviour for at-risk youth in Cape Town schools as an alternative disciplinary approach?
2. What are the views and experiences of the service providers at the Positive Behaviour Support Intervention and Resource Centre (PBIRC) regarding the factors that contribute to the occurrence of challenging learner behaviour in schools?
3. Is the suspension or expulsion of a learner from school due to challenging learner behaviour a contributing factor to the early onset of delinquent behaviour (or a direct school-to-prison pipeline)?"

Initially, this study aimed to examine the diversion of young people from the formal criminal justice system, with the Ottery Youth Care Centre identified as the reformatory for young individuals in conflict with the law. The Ottery Youth Care Centre closed at the end of June 2022. Most of its staff, experienced in working with children with behavioural problems, have moved to the Tenterden Place of Safety. This is why the Tenterden name is used in the title of this study; the research proposal and ethical clearance were obtained under that name.

⁶ The Tenterden Place of Safety, a now-closed facility in Wynberg, Cape Town, was previously used as a Place of Safety for abused and vulnerable young boys and girls under the Department of Social Development. It has now been transformed into the Positive Behaviour Intervention and Resource Centre (PBIRC) with a new focus on behavioural support under the Western Cape Education Department (Western Cape Government, 2023).

1.4 The significance of the study and its contribution

This study focuses on the impact of school disciplinary measures on at-risk youth (s)⁷ (i.e. the learners), specifically policies such as suspension and expulsion. It explores the use of restorative justice and the PBS model as alternatives to punitive discipline. The study aims to challenge traditional discipline by questioning the effectiveness of conventional zero-tolerance policies, suggesting that these measures may exacerbate antisocial behaviour in at-risk learners. This challenges the prevailing assumption that such punitive measures deter negative behaviour and opens up the conversation on their potential long-term harm. The study argues for restorative justice, which focuses on repairing harm, accountability, and fostering positive relationships, as an alternative to punitive discipline. This approach is significant because it aims to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, where exclusionary school discipline disproportionately affects marginalised learners, potentially leading them into the criminal justice system.

1.5 Structure of the dissertation

In this study, there are five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study, including the rationale, context, research questions, and aims. The purpose is to explore the potential for using a restorative justice approach as an alternative to traditional school discipline in South Africa. The study will utilise a qualitative research approach to examine the PBS model.

Chapter Two discusses the literature on restorative justice approaches to school discipline, specifically focusing on the PBS model. This literature review examines local and international debates regarding using restorative approaches as alternatives to punitive disciplinary measures and zero-tolerance policies. These punitive measures often disadvantage learners by leading to suspensions or expulsions, effectively pushing them out of the school system.

Chapter Three outlines the qualitative research approach and analytical methods used in the study. It includes details on the interview of ten service providers from PBIRC in Wynberg,

⁷ The term 'at-risk youth' is defined and applied across diverse disciplines, including education, psychology, medicine, social work, economics, and criminology. In school settings, McWhirter et al. (2013, p. 7) describe the term as young individuals who are at a higher risk of dropping out of school.

Cape Town. The chapter also discusses the sampling procedure, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and study limitations.

Chapter Four discusses the key research findings based on the interviews with the ten service providers of PBIRC. The research findings are presented under six thematic headings, supported by participant quotes.

Chapter Five concludes the discussion of key research findings and provides recommendations for addressing challenging learner behaviour through the adoption of a restorative justice approach, with a focus on the PBS model.

As mentioned above, the next chapter will explore the literature on restorative justice approaches to school disciplinary measures in line with the application of the PBS model.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was outlined that the prevalence of challenging learner behaviour is a worldwide problem that schools face daily. The nature and extent of the problem of challenging learner behaviour has been extensively researched by scholars such as Serame et al. (2020), Arbarkaka and Omachoko (2020), Nhambura (2020), Dwarika (2019, 2020), Chitiyo and May (2018), Brandt et al. (2014), and Wienen et al. (2019), among many others.

In South Africa, there is a substantial amount of literature pertaining to the problem of challenging learner behaviour in schools (Michail, 2021; Saunderson & Oswald, 2009; De Wet, 2021; Hendricks, 2018; Kourkoutas & Woulhuter, 2013). For example, scholars such as Ngidi and Kaye (2022, p. 1) maintain that bullying, stabbings, sexual assaults, and even murder are some of the incidents synonymous with challenging learner behaviour in South African school settings. Consequently, school safety has been severely compromised, with learners bringing weapons and other dangerous items to school (Nunan & Ntombela, 2019, p. 1129). Despite all these studies on challenging learner behaviour in schools, where suspension and expulsion are common responses to tackling serious misconduct, there is a paucity of research on restorative justice practices as an alternative discipline.

On the other hand, much of the South African research on challenging learner behaviour has been undertaken only in public school settings. Consequently, these studies may lack representativity of the larger population of schools in South Africa, which includes both public and private institutions.

This limited focus might create a perception that private school learners do not exhibit behavioural problems. Only a few studies on challenging learner behaviour in private schools have focused on Christian private schools⁸ rather than general private schools (Greese & Seaman, 2017; Mostert et al., 2015).

⁸ A Christian school is a type of school that is founded upon the Scriptures (the written Word of God).

In a study by Greese and Seaman (2017, p. 1), the focus was on exploring the at-risk behaviour of learners in a South African private Christian secondary school. The study revealed notable percentages of learners engaging in alcohol consumption (10.2%), smoking cigarettes (3.4%), and using recreational drugs (5.2%). These numbers were lower compared to learners in secular (government or public) schools. The lower percentages were predominantly attributed to the Christian education values of the learners, making them less likely to engage in at-risk behaviour.

I, therefore, argue that these lower percentages of challenging learner behaviours at this school may result from the Christian teachings, such as the prohibition of smoking and alcohol consumption. This contrasts with the mere suggestion that learners who attend private schools generally behave better than those in regular public schools, where problem behaviour is more prevalent. As depicted in the preceding chapter, challenging learner behaviour is one of the constant problems affecting schools. This issue particularly impacts learning and teaching and is hindered by many factors, such as school violence, among others previously mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. To understand the problem of challenging learner behaviour in schools and the importance of using a restorative justice approach to discipline, I will examine the relevant literature. This examination will include both international and South African studies that discuss the relevance of restorative justice as an alternative to traditional school discipline methods.

2.2 The problem of school violence

Despite several initiatives to improve school safety in South African schools, such as the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) endorsed by the Minister of Basic Education, Ms Angie Motshekga, in April 2015, violence continues to plague schools in South Africa (Makota & Leoschut, 2016, p. 19). These initiatives that came with the adoption of the NSSF included deploying police to schools and linking schools to local police stations. However, these extreme school safety mechanisms have also not been effective in addressing the problem of school violence and challenging learner behaviour. Instead, the measures implemented such as the deployment of the police to schools create a perception of an unsafe learning environment. Moreover, this conveys a negative message to learners, suggesting that violence could occur at any moment due to the excessive security measures (Lingis, 2022). In addition to deploying police officers and linking schools to police stations, other mechanisms, such as surveillance

cameras and metal detectors, have been used to address school violence and other safety measure issues. However, these methods mimic the same zero-tolerance policies that policymakers that intend to away with in the first place (Lingis, 2022).

The presence of guns and other dangerous weapons among learners on school premises is a stark reality in many South African schools (Hendricks, 2018, p. 76). It can be deduced that incidents of school violence are influenced by these factors, which ultimately lead to behavioural problems in learners. Various researchers have identified the problem of school violence as one of the key challenges teachers face because it severely affects process of learning and teaching (Motseke, 2020; Nene, 2013; Nthebe, 2006). Therefore, the concerns around the problem of school violence provide sufficient evidence that effective behavioural management techniques, such as restorative justice, are lacking in South African schools. Restorative justice practices in school discipline ensure that challenging learner behaviour is addressed using an ecosystemic approach. This approach considers the well-being of learners and aims to identify underlying factors influencing problem behaviour.

2.3 The problem with zero-tolerance policies to address challenging learner behaviour

The constant problem of challenging learner behaviour often triggers schools to respond with suspension or expulsion of a learner from school. Therefore, reliance on such zero-tolerance policies is inevitable in South African schools, which lack restorative justice practices as an alternative discipline for problem behaviour. As mentioned above, this reliance indicates that schools lack proper behavioural management techniques. For example, despite its abolition, some schools in South Africa still exercise corporal punishment as a form of discipline (Nunan & Ntombela, 2019, p. 1130; Sekhwama, 2019, p. 2).

However, ambivalent views exist in the South African discourse on the abolition of corporal punishment in schools. Some teachers still perceive its use as an effective behaviour management mechanism. According to Nunan and Ntombela (2019, p. 1130), some teachers who still hold on to the use of corporal punishment believe that its abolition means that their hands are tied when it comes to instilling discipline. As a result, they feel demotivated and hopeless. Conversely, opponents of corporal punishment argue that it fails to deter challenging learner behaviour and does not foster a sense of responsibility in children (Western Cape Government, 2000). The same critique applies to zero-tolerance policies (i.e. suspension or expulsion) which reflect current disciplinary practices in South African schools. Therefore, it

is important to explore alternative disciplinary practices, such as the restorative justice approach. This approach gives learners with behavioural problems a second chance to correct their behaviour in a positive and nonjudgmental manner.

2.4 The application of restorative justice practices as an alternative discipline

While the importance of applying restorative justice as an alternative discipline is well-documented, Gonzalez (2012, p. 303) concedes that not all researchers or policymakers will approach this disciplinary mechanism in the same way. He mentions that some schools may adopt restorative justice to address high suspension and expulsion rates. Other schools may require it to address school safety issues (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 303). Such a perspective demonstrates that the rationale behind applying restorative justice practices school discipline is multifaceted and can be tailored to various contexts of challenging learner behaviour.

In his study, Gonzalez (2012) reiterates the importance of 'keeping kids in schools' to illustrate the connection between restorative justice, punitive discipline, and the school-to-prison pipeline. Gonzalez argues that incorporating restorative justice practices is crucial for disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline. Michail (2012, p. 156) expands on the justification for retaining learners who exhibit behavioural problems within the school system, noting that they are already at risk of academic failure, delinquency, and dropping out. He further mentions that removing these learners from school increases their chances of involvement in gang activities and incarceration.

This indicates that punitive and exclusionary school disciplinary practices are intentionally pushing children out of the school system and into the criminal justice system. Consequently, children who leave the school system face disadvantages compared to their peers in accessing educational opportunities, which may lead to criminal behaviour as a means of survival in adulthood.

2.5 The relationship between challenging learner behaviour, zero-tolerance policies and the school-to-prison pipeline

As depicted in Chapter One, several scholars have established a direct link between challenging learner behaviour, zero tolerance policies, and the school-to-prison pipeline (Ally et al., 2021; Morgan, 2021; Mallet, 2016; Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014). The school-to-prison pipeline is a theoretical concept used by researchers and policymakers. It describes the association between exclusionary school discipline practices and the increased likelihood of an expelled learner or child having contact with the criminal justice system if they are removed from school as punishment for problematic behaviour (Skiba et al., 2014, p. 546).

Despite other less punitive disciplinary measures that schools can explore, such as detention—suspension or expulsion, are increasingly used to respond to challenging learner behaviour. However, this exclusionary discipline approach encourages the initiation of other law-violating behaviours outside of school (Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015, p. 98). In my view, this reflects the South African situation, especially in low-income areas or townships. In these areas, children are exposed to crime, unemployment, and inequality. With diminished opportunities to complete their education, they are likely to turn to crime to survive hardships.

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 allows School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to suspend or expel learners for serious misconduct as a disciplinary measure. However, this legislative law is detrimental to learners, as this study aims to argue. For instance, Mallet (2016, p. 15) warns that once children and adolescents have initial contact with the criminal justice system, it becomes difficult for them to escape its grasp. They may be socialised into more pronounced criminal attitudes. Consequently, the SGBs may not be appreciative of this eventuality from happening in their decision to expel a learner from school for misconduct even though the law permits them to do so.

The claim that once children get into contact with the criminal justice system, it will be difficult for them to detach themselves from the system entirely is firmly supported by the Social Learning Theory. According to the Social Learning Theory, human behaviour is informed by the social interactions observed and learned or copied through intimate contact with other individuals (Siegel, 2016, p. 563). This means that learning can occur through observation, imitation, and modelling. In a scenario where an adolescent is placed in a juvenile centre, they may adopt some of the behaviours and attitudes for further law-violating behaviour. Gang

affiliation tattoos and culture are some of the behaviours that can be modelled. In this regard, I argue that restorative justice practices should be considered an alternative to disciplining learners. These practices provide an opportunity for behavioural change and eliminate the need to remove learners from school.

2.6 The continued use of corporal punishment by teachers as a disciplinary measure

In 2000, shortly after the abolition of corporal punishment in South African schools, the then Minister of Education, Mr. Kader Asmal (now the Department of Basic Education), introduced the Alternatives to Corporal Punishment (ATCP). The introduction of the ATCP sought to eliminate harsh and punitive approaches to addressing the problem of challenging learner behaviour (Moyo et al., 2014, p. 2). Although challenging learner behaviour continued to grow even after the introduction of these alternatives to corporal punishment, the government's action was still a step in the right direction. This is especially true now with the emergence of a restorative justice approach to school discipline.

However, some teachers' insistence on the use of corporal punishment, even its abolition, is attributed to stubborn resistance from those who believe it is the only effective way to address challenging learner behaviour (Moyo et al., 2014, p. 2). On the other hand, others believe that when ATCPs were introduced to replace corporal punishment, the government downplayed the seriousness of challenging learner behaviour in schools and the associated problems that comes with it (Moyo et al., 2014, p. 3). For instance, suspensions and expulsions are prevalent in schools in the Western Cape province (Moyo et al., 2014, p. 1). This statement is important because this study aims to explore the views and experiences of service providers facilitating positive behaviour support for learners on the verge of expulsion from Cape Town schools. Therefore, those who argue that the government did not take the issue of challenging learner behaviour seriously when devising the ATCPs, which ultimately criminalised corporal punishment in schools, may also argue another point. They may also contend that the prevalence of learner expulsions in the Western Cape province is due to teachers having lost their grip on instilling discipline.

However, the prevalence of challenging learner behaviour is not only pronounced in the Western Cape province; KwaZulu Natal and the Eastern Cape provinces also experience incidents of challenging learner behaviour in the form of school violence (Moyo et al., 2014, p. 1). While the use of the ATCP is closer to the principles inherent in the restorative justice

approach—whereby positive reinforcement of good behaviour and academic achievement are encouraged—they nonetheless fall short of addressing negatively challenging learner behaviour. Hence, exploring the restorative justice approaches to school discipline is crucial. They offer a wide-ranging behavioural intervention from a multidisciplinary perspective to determine the underlying root causes of problem behaviour. Therefore, the following sections will explore the literature on the PBS model as a restorative justice approach in more detail by examining both the South African and international literature.

2.7 Exploring global perspectives: The positive behaviour support (PBS) model in international literature

2.7.1 Historical development of the PBS model

The history of the PBS model dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, when it was developed to address challenging learner behaviour (Wienen et al., 2018, p. 233). Thus, it is not a new concept as far as learner behaviour management is concerned. For example, Brandt et al. (2014, p. 229) mention that the United States Department of Education began experimenting with the PBS model as early as 1987, allocating funds for research and training on its potential use to reduce challenging learner behaviour and delinquency among youth. Due to extensive government support, the PBS model has become a highly sought-after approach in the USA for managing challenging learner behaviour. Many schools in the USA have been fully equipped to adopt and integrate the PBS model into their disciplinary practices, using it as a blueprint for addressing challenging learner behaviour (Brandt et al., 2014, p. 229).

Nonetheless, both South African and international scholars widely agree that challenging learner behaviour is a stumbling block to the learning and teaching environment (Marais & Meier, 2010; Nunan & Ntombela, 2019; Jacob, 2022; Armstrong, 2018; Moriconi & Belanger, 2015). Furthermore, various scholars agree that suspending and expelling learners due to behavioural problems creates a situation that exposes them to potential criminal behaviour (Skiba et al., 2014; Mallet, 2016; Schiff, 2018; Ally et al., 2021). However, a number of factors also contribute to the prevalence of challenging learner behaviour in schools. The presence of these contributing factors tells us that challenging learner behaviour does not occur in isolation.

2.7.2 Insufficient training for teachers

One reason for the manifestation of challenging learner behaviour in schools is the lack of sufficient training for teachers before they enter the profession. For example, Moriconi and Belanger (2015, p. 6) report that teachers in England and Canada face challenges with behavioural and classroom management techniques. As a result, instead of focusing on delivering the curriculum, they spend much of their time managing problem behaviours in the classroom (Moriconi & Belanger, 2015, p. 6). According to Awang et al. (2022, p. 1), these challenges stem from the fact that many teacher training curricula do not adequately equip teachers with the necessary skills to manage challenging learner behaviour effectively. The use of swear words and belittling attitudes by teachers to shame and reprimand learners who are unruly and disruptive in class is one example.

In a study conducted in some schools in California, USA, Keen (2018, p. 1) also concluded that challenging learner behaviour results from poor classroom management techniques by teachers. Similarly, research on challenging learner behaviour in South Africa highlights the same issue. Insufficient training in behaviour management techniques has led to high teacher stress levels, causing many to leave the profession (Saunderson & Oswald, 2009, p. 143).

However, amidst concerns about insufficient teacher training and its link to ineffective discipline in schools, there are counterarguments to this narrative. Some scholars argue that the shortcomings in maintaining discipline can be attributed to more than just training. They believe teachers should assume a secondary parental role in their interactions with learners (Sudhakar, 2017; Blasco, 2002). While teachers assuming a secondary parental role can be seen as an effective way to address challenging learner behaviours, some scholars, such as Wilkinson (2019), disagree. They cite examples from countries such as New Zealand, where teachers feel unsupported, frustrated, and uncertain about handling challenging learner behaviour. Hence to address this behavioural management gap Keen (2018) supports the use of the PBS model which is rooted in restorative justice.

2.7.3 Outcomes and effectiveness of the PBS model

In their 2014 research, Brandt et al. examined the measures used to assess the outcomes of the PBS model in various educational settings in the USA as an alternative to address challenging learner behaviours. They found that the PBS model led to a decrease in incidents of problem behaviour or office discipline referrals (ODRs) and improved academic performance among learners (Brandt et al., 2014, p. 229). Additionally, with implementation in over 23,000 schools

in the USA and other countries worldwide, the PBS model has played a pivotal role in preventing challenging learner behaviour and effectively reducing suspension and expulsion rates (Cage et al., 2018, p. 149).

The importance of the PBS model as an alternative discipline cannot be overstated, as it is crucial in disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline. For instance, Luiselli et al. (2005, p. 183) maintain that early behavioural problems in schoolchildren indicate later maladjustment, and the PBS model can be applied as a behavioural management technique to prevent this. However, some scholars, such as Petras et al. (2004, p. 919), disagree that early problem behaviour necessarily indicates later antisocial behaviour in children. They identify groups such as "desisters" (those who do not engage in future antisocial behaviour), "persisters" (those who continue to engage in future antisocial behaviour), and "late starters" (those who engage in moderate levels of antisocial behaviour in early childhood but continue in adulthood) (Petras et al., 2004, p. 919). Despite these distinctions, I believe that the PBS model intervention is warranted for all vulnerable groups of children with problem behaviours.

To support this, Farrington (2005, p. 178) compiled a list of major early risk factors for antisocial behaviour, including impulsiveness, low intelligence and school achievement, poor parental supervision, child physical abuse, punitive or erratic parental supervision, lack of parental love and affection, parental conflict, disrupted families, antisocial parents, large family size, low family income, antisocial peers, high delinquency-rate schools, and high-crime neighbourhoods. As a result, challenging learner behaviour and the development of later antisocial behaviour are often seen in light of these major risk factors.

2.7.4 Bullying prevention and the PBS model

It is important to note that most of the literature on restorative justice as an alternative discipline emanate from the USA, and research from an African perspective is notably lacking. Therefore, while there is an overemphasis on drawing from the literature in the USA regarding the application of the PBS model, it does not imply a total disregard for the African perspective on learner discipline. The emphasis on this literature stems from the fact that the application of the PBS model or restorative justice approaches to school discipline is primarily rooted in the USA, with limited literature available on these approaches from an African perspective. The PBS model has been applied to various bullying prevention programmes in the USA. To illustrate, Pugh and Chitiyo (2012, p. 49) researched the problem of bullying in American

schools. They found that only the PBS model successfully reduced bullying incidents among the many bullying prevention programmes. Therefore, the PBS model is an effective behavioural management technique for addressing challenging learner behaviour.

Not only has the PBS model been applied in the USA, but other successful bullying prevention projects that share similarities with the PBS model have also been implemented in various countries. These include the Bergen Project, the KiVA Programme (developed and implemented in Finland), and the Preparation, Education, Action, Coping, and Evaluation (PEACE) Pack (which has seen success in countries such as Australia and Japan). For instance, the Bergen Project focuses on the environment and behaviour rather than solely on the bully (Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012, p. 49). Similarly, the KiVa programme adopts a holistic whole-school approach, viewing bullying through the lens of social relationships among aggressive children and the roles of all parties involved in bullying behaviours (Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012, p. 49; KiVa, 2024).

The application of the PBS model as a behaviour management strategy has also been successful in New Zealand. According to Savage et al. (2011, p. 29), the number of behaviour-related referrals in schools across New Zealand decreased from 425 cases in 2004 to 162 cases in 2007. More importantly, participants who were involved in implementing the PBS model in this region observed reduced disciplinary actions, reduced need for specialised interventions, and increased teacher satisfaction (Savage et al., 2011, p. 31).

2.8 Reviewing the positive behaviour support (PBS) model: An examination of South African literature

While it has been demonstrated that the PBS model is widely applied in countries such as the USA, Australia, Finland, Canada, and New Zealand, research on its application is lacking in the African context. This lack of application is evident in South Africa, where the PBS model as an alternative restorative justice discipline is still a relatively new and unique concept. Only a few South African scholars have explored the use of the PBS model, albeit with a limited psychological focus—specifically applied behaviour analysis (Dwarika, 2019; Dwarika, 2020; Moodley, 2016; Moodley et al., 2018; Kourkoutas & Woulhuter, 2013; Gagnon et al., 2021).

Concerns about the insufficient training of teachers in effective behaviour management techniques, as raised in international literature, are also found in South African studies relating

to the PBS model. In an attempt to evaluate the potential effectiveness of the PBS model in South Africa, Dwarika (2020) conducted a study in the Limpopo province focusing on the training of foundation phase teachers. Positive outcomes emerged from this study, indicating the need to apply the PBS model in South African schools to address challenging learner behaviour. One recommendation from this study was the demand for behaviour support strategies, such as the PBS model, as behavioural challenges contribute to learner exclusions in schools (Dwarika, 2020, p.192).

Other researchers in South Africa who have studied the PBS model also recommended rigorous training of teachers based on the PBS model. The basis for such training rests on the belief that it will help teachers understand the factors that shape and contribute to challenging learner behaviour (Marais & Meier, 2010). These scholars supported their recommendation with evidence that learners who exhibit behavioural problems are influenced by their environment, which either encourages or discourages positive behaviour. This finding aligns with Social Learning Theory, which suggests that individuals observe and learn specific behaviours from others (Moutloutse et al., 2022).

Although this study does not focus on the inadequate training of teachers in behaviour management techniques, providing background information on this issue is essential. Understanding the complex interplay of challenging learner behaviour is crucial because schools act as socialisation agents for children. The lack of adequate teacher training in behaviour management skills is an important concern when addressing challenging learner behaviour (van der Merwe, 2016, p. 87). Kourkoutas and Woulhuter (2013, p. 1) also argue that teacher training should be rigorous and designed to equip teachers to manage learner behavioural problems in a less punitive and exclusionary way. The following subheadings will explore areas where the PBS model has been applied in South Africa to understand the root causes of challenging learner behaviour.

2.8.1 Parental involvement and challenging learner behaviour

One of the key socialisation agents for children's growth and development is parental involvement. Several scholars argue that there is a causal relationship between parental involvement and the occurrence of challenging learner behaviour (Lumadi, 2019; Mogashoa & Mboweni, 2017; Serakwane & Herman, 2021; Woulhuter & van der Walt, 2020). According to Lumadi (2019, p.1), the family structure plays a crucial role in a child's upbringing.

Therefore, parental involvement is integral to socialisation, as it influences the child's well-being and development into adulthood.

Segalo and Rambuda (2018, p.4) reinforce this viewpoint by contending that parental involvement shapes the child's behaviour and character, determining their interactions in various social contexts. While the family structure and parental involvement are vital to a child's upbringing and socialisation, Wolhuter and van der Merwe (2020, p.5) caution that other factors, such as family stressors, poverty, and lack of shelter, may also contribute to behavioural problems in children.

Bezuidenhout (2013, p.76) expands on these contributory factors, citing lack of parental supervision, family violence, low socio-economic status, and family violence as antecedents of behavioural problems. Research shows that a lack of parental involvement, support, and interest in a child's education exacerbates behavioural problems (Serakwane & Herman, 2021, p.83). Furthermore, Serakwane and Herman (2021, p.83) note that some parents ignore grievances from teachers about their children's behavioural problems and do not attend meetings called by school management. When applying the PBS model, a parent's reluctance to address their child's behavioural issues may provide insight into the reasons behind the child's behaviour.

I therefore argue that that PBS model will not function well amidst parental resistance and non-involvement in their children's behavioural issues. According to the PBS model, family dynamics and the child's societal background are crucial aspects of behavioural intervention. Marais and Meier (2010, p.43) maintain that all parties, including parents or guardians, must be involved to understand the factors influencing and shaping the child's life.

Since challenging learner behaviour is often correlated with a lack of parental involvement or supervision, it is pivotal to explore research around restorative justice practices as an alternative discipline. These practices can address challenging learner behaviour without using exclusionary discipline or zero-tolerance policies, which may exacerbate behavioural problems due to the social ills such as crime, unemployment, and poverty that many South African communities face.

2.8.2 Dysfunctional family structures and challenging learner behaviour

In addition to factors negatively impacting the occurrence of challenging learner behaviour, such as the lack of parental involvement in a child's life, Shoemaker (2009, p. 141) contends that majority of young people found in correctional centres or prisons are twice as likely to come from broken families compared to their counterparts without clashes with the law. Siegel and Welsh (2011, p. 169) attribute this higher probability of children getting into conflict with the law to dysfunctional family structures, where there is a lack of adequate parental support. Parental support acts as a protective factor that may discourage children from getting into trouble with the law.

This inference aligns with the aims and objectives of this study, which seeks to explore the importance of the PBS model as a necessary tool for preventing the school-to-prison pipeline. However, there remains a significant gap in South African literature that has yet to explore the value of the PBS model in-depth, especially concerning managing challenging behaviour. Despite limited efforts in this domain, there is a notable appreciation among South African scholars for the effectiveness of the PBS model in addressing challenging learner behaviour (Moodley, 2016, p. 17).

2.8.3 Crime, violence and its influence on challenging learner behaviour

According to Hargovan (2013, p. 25), most children in South Africa face various risk factors that increase their susceptibility to engaging in antisocial behaviour in later life. Crime and violence are significant factors that may motivate children to become involved in such behaviour. Early exposure to crime and violence, whether at home, school or in the community, is a potential predictor of future antisocial behaviour (Hargovan, 2013, p. 25).

In a study on early misbehaviour in at-risk male children undergoing intervention at child and youth care centres, Broich et al. (2018, p. 25) concluded that many young people worldwide are exposed to various environmental push and pull factors. Some of these factors become triggers for antisocial behaviour. This situation is particularly true in South Africa, which ranks fifth highest globally in crime, with children often involved as both perpetrators and victims (Broich et al., 2018, p. 88). To illustrate, a child's bullying behaviour at school may have been influenced by the use of violence in the home by adults, parents, or guardians, and the child may see this behaviour as normal and a conflict resolution mechanism. Therefore, these are the types of pull and push factors that Broich et al. may be referring to in their analysis of the early presence of misbehaviour in at-risk male children.

Furthermore, Holtzhausen and Campbell (2021) conducted a study involving 413 young adults in the Western Cape province to investigate the link between adverse childhood experiences and antisocial behaviour. Their findings revealed that adverse childhood experiences, such as child maltreatment, abuse, and neglect, were strong indicators of deviant behaviour (Holtzhausen & Campbell, 2021, p. 24). The research also highlighted that many children live in environments characterised by violence at home, school, and during travel. Holtzhausen and Campbell (2021, p. 26) noted that young people from townships in Cape Town are at a higher risk of engaging in violent behaviour as they transition from late childhood to early adolescence. Gang violence deeply affects many neighbourhoods in Cape Town, influencing behavioural among learners (Magidi et al., 2016; Chetty, 2015; De Wet, 2015; De Wet, 2016; Geldenhuys, 2020). This influence extends beyond the school environment, with gang-related crimes and illegal activities infiltrating school settings (Geldenhuys, 2020, p. 20; Chetty, 2015, p. 59).

For example, in Hanover Park, gang presence is so widespread that graffiti displaying gang signs and names, such as Young Americans, Mongrels, Sexy Boys, Hard Livings, and the Laughing Boys, can be seen on school walls, bus stops, and community halls (Magidi et al., 2016, p. 72). Chetty (2015, p. 59) points out that schools have become fertile grounds for criminal behaviour, with gangs exploiting vulnerable schoolchildren for their illegal activities. Geldenhuys (2020, p. 20) also notes that rival gangs in the Nyanga township, such as the Vatos Locos and the Vuras, recruit members as young as 12 from local schools. While gang violence is particularly pronounced in the Western Cape, especially in the Cape Flats, it is not confined to this region alone. Various youth gang formations, such as the Varados, Fast Guns, Spaldings, and Vultures, operate in Westbury township in Johannesburg. In contrast, the Destroyers and G Section gangs are in Wentworth, Durban. In Bloemfontein, the Maromas and the BTKs are present, and in Port Elizabeth, the Preston Shaw Boys and Dust Lives operate (Geldenhuys, 2020, p. 18).

The prevalence of violence in Western Cape schools often garners chilling media headlines, with reports of teachers living in constant fear of gang violence. Schools are described as gang-infested, with teenage gangs clashing both in and out of school, terrorising their classmates (De Wet, 2015, p. 55). In such an environment, the expulsion or suspension of a learner due to problem behaviour may inadvertently create opportunities for early antisocial or criminal behaviour. Therefore, this study's exploration of restorative justice practices in school discipline is critical in bridging this research gap.

Chetty (2015, p. 62) criticises the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) for a perceived lack of urgency in addressing challenging learner behaviour in the Western Cape province. He cites factors such as crime, substance abuse, and gang violence rampant in schools across the Cape Flats. Chetty contends that these authorities should have taken proactive steps to develop, implement, and evaluate school-based interventions to reduce the prevalence of challenging learner behaviour in the province.

Furthermore, Chetty (2015, p. 62) criticises the WCED, which considers itself one of the most successful departments in the country, for its insufficient commitment to schools in the Cape Flats. As the custodian of public education, Chetty believes that the WCED should have taken active measures and developed strategies to tackle the problem of challenging learner behaviour amid the abovementioned factors. Moreover, the issue of challenging learner behaviour in the Western Cape province is crucial to this study, as it explores the situation in Cape Town schools and the potential of restorative justice practices as an alternative discipline.

2.8.4 The significance of the PBS model in South Africa

The preceding paragraphs have highlighted the value and relevance of the PBS model within the South African context. Many local scholars have contributed to understanding this restorative justice approach to school discipline. For example, Gagnon et al. (2021, p. 1) explain that the PBS model in South Africa aligns with the Department of Basic Education's proposed Alternatives to Corporal Punishment (ATCP). The ATCP was introduced because corporal punishment not only increases the risk of more serious abuse (Breen et al., 2015, p. 131) but also teaches learners that violence can resolve matters (Moyo et al., 2014, p. 10). As mentioned, the ATCP relied more on positive reinforcement, which narrowly focused on rewarding good behaviour while neglecting the manifestation of problem behaviour. While positive behaviour can be reinforced by awarding praise to learners whenever they do well or perform well in a particular task, I argue that not all learners may behave in the same way. Some are bound to have behavioural issues stemming from the pull and push factors mentioned above. Therefore, individual attention for behavioural attention purposes can be sought via the PBS model to determine the underlying root causes.

Maphosa and Mammen (2011, p. 154) acknowledge that serious cases of challenging learner behaviour may warrant suspension or expulsion. However, they caution that such exclusionary

practices can do more harm than good. These practices can place expelled or suspended students on a trajectory towards the school-to-prison pipeline by leaving them with ample idle time. With this claim, Maphosa and Mammen (2011) must not be seen as condoning challenging learner behaviour. The possession of a dangerous object or harmful substances by a learner within school premises should not automatically result in expulsion. Other disciplinary measures, such as the PBS model rooted in restorative justice, should be exhausted first. In this model, learners undergo a holistic behavioural intervention for a certain period until they are reintegrated back into the mainstream school. It is then that expulsion can be explored as a measure of last resort when they have undergone behavioural intervention but fail to change their behaviour.

Nonetheless, challenging learner behaviour is a major issue for the WCED. For example, fatal gang violence at an undisclosed Western Cape school in 2020 resulted in the expulsion of 14 learners for violating the school's code of conduct and endangering the lives of other learners at the school (Independent Online, 2020). Additionally, 132 learners in the Western Cape were recommended for expulsion, with 41 cases involving violent behaviour and assault (Independent Online, 2020). These statistics prompted Gagnon et al. (2020) to research the problem of challenging learner behaviour further. They recommended aligning schools with the PBS model to reduce exclusions and approach the issue of challenging learner behaviour holistically. However, this does not mean that behavioural problems on its own should be ignored. There still needs to be a discussion of how the problem behaviour affected others. For instance, the intentional taking of another person's life may warrant both expulsion and involvement with the criminal justice system. Therefore, the recommendation to expel the 14 learners mentioned above, within the context of restorative justice school discipline, should consider the nature and extent of the injuries sustained and whether reparations can be made between the parties involved.

2.8.5 The applicability of the pbs model in South Africa

In terms of the practical application of the PBS model in South Africa, Dwarika (2019) and other local scholars have explored this area of restorative justice as an alternative discipline. For example, Dwarika's qualitative study involved a total of eleven focus groups, which included 144 fourth-year in-service training teachers from Limpopo province. In addition to research methodology, the study included four classroom observations and interviews with the

same cohort of teachers. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the PBS model and determine some of the challenges that may arise from its application in South African schools.

According to Dwarika (2019, p. 1), the participants were receptive to the PBS model and gained valuable insights into its context in behaviour management, which requires a more ecosystemic approach to dealing with challenging learner behaviour. The rationale for an ecosystemic approach to addressing challenging learner behaviour is based on evidence that learners exist in environments with substance abuse, gangsterism, violence, and other factors, both at home and school.

Moreover, Dwarika's study has shown the scientific evidence of the PBS model in schools, particularly in areas of behaviour management where teachers seem to lack effective strategies for addressing challenging learner behaviour. The importance of Dwarika's research highlights the need for the PBS model in South African schools. This need is supported by various scholars who have conducted studies in this domain of restorative justice as an alternative to exclusionary school practices (Moodley, 2016; Moodley et al., 2018; Gagnon et al., 2021; Kourkoutas & Woulhuter, 2013).

Dwarika's research also confirms that one South African university has recognised the intrinsic value of the PBS model by introducing a module called Inclusive Education (IE) as part of their teacher training curriculum, which places a strong focus on restorative justice principles (Dwarika, 2019, p. 1). The inclusion of restorative justice approach in teacher training curricula by universities is a step in the right direction for addressing challenging learner behaviours. This approach deviates from punitive and exclusionary school disciplinary practices, which often contribute to a cycle of law-violating behaviour by adolescents. By placing them at the periphery of school attainment, these practices lead learners to see criminal behaviour as a means to achieving their goals and aspirations.

2.9 The alignment of the pbs model with education policy and inclusive education (IE)

The practice of excluding learners from school due to challenging behaviour is no longer supported in education policy, as outlined in White Paper 6 on Education. This policy promotes the inclusion of all learners in mainstream education, including those with behavioural issues or disabilities. Dwarika (2019, p. 1) notes that the PBS model aligns well with the Screening, Identification, and Assessment (SIAS) practice of the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

SIAS requires educators to use an inclusive education policy framework to support all learners, including those with disruptive behaviour. The PBS model offers a comprehensive approach that considers the learner's environment, specific behaviour issues, and the context of intervention (Dwarika, 2019, p. 1).

The reasoning for the inclusivity of a learner in the mainstream education system is based on a thorough analysis of the SIAS policy, which recognises that challenging behaviour or learning difficulties may be associated with conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). In his research, Phillips (2022, p. 38) explores the influence of exposure to school-based criminogenic risk factors in a sample of youth detainees in the Northern Cape province. He supports the statement that academic challenges are the driving force or enabling factors of challenging learner behaviours. Exclusionary practices, such as suspending a learner from school, further detach and inhibit learners from their academic progress. This may lead them into a vicious cycle of repeated failure, limiting their chances of obtaining critical skills and adopting prosocial behaviours.

Weeks (2008, p. 123) suggests that challenging learner behaviour is often a cry for help from young people stemming from unmet emotional needs. Reyneke (2015, p. 58) supports this by presenting evidence that most children in South Africa come from broken families, lacking parental love and affection. This absence of care drives them to seek fulfilment outside their homes to meet their basic human needs. However, not all children in such households exhibit antisocial tendencies, so a blanket approach cannot explain the correlation.

Reyneke (2015, p. 58) reveals that in 2011, only 34% of children lived with both parents, while 23% lived with neither parent. This is troubling, especially considering that many of these children grow up in communities plagued by crime, violence, and deprivation of basic needs such as food and shelter. Bezuidenhout (2013, p. 76) supports the notion that children raised in single-parent households, marked by fractured family bonds and the absence of a father figure, are at a higher risk of engaging in antisocial or criminal behaviour due to a lack of supervision, among other factors. Similarly, research in the Tanzanian capital of Dar es Salaam has shown a strong correlation between children growing up in dysfunctional families and their involvement in antisocial behaviours (Bezuidenhout, 2013, p. 76).

2.10 Theoretical and conceptual framework

In this study, two criminological theories, the Social Learning Theory and the Labelling Theory, will be used to analyse the problem of challenging learner behaviour in schools.

2.10.1 The Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory, primarily formulated by Albert Bandura, is a behavioural theory. One of its fundamental principles is reciprocal determinism, which suggests that individuals can acquire new behaviours by observing and imitating others (Nelson et al., 2016, p. 23). Reciprocal determinism describes a dynamic interplay where internal personal attributes, behavioural patterns, and environmental influences mutually impact each other bidirectionally, facilitating learning through modelling or observational learning.

Behaviours such as gang involvement, negative peer influence, bullying, and aggression, for instance, may not always be innate but can stem from observing others. These observations become internalised as guiding information for future actions (Nelson et al., 2016, p. 24). According to Allan (2017, p. 10), aggressive behaviour is acquired through primary processes such as imitation, observation, and modelling. Allan argues that a child might imitate and model a parent's behaviour who consistently reacts angrily to new situations, leading the child to adopt these behaviours as their own. This example vividly illustrates how reciprocal determinism can shape our behaviours and actions. Akers (2017, p. 65) illustrates how peer influence exerts ongoing and forceful pressure on many young people to experiment with drugs, engage in sexual activities, commit delinquent acts, and participate in other undesirable behaviours.

2.10.2 The Labelling Theory

The theory of deviance, known as labelling theory or social reaction theory, suggests that individuals become deviant because of the labels imposed on them. This process leads to the stigmatisation of youth and encourages them to internalise this negative identity (Siegel & Welsh, 2011, p. 156). According to this perspective, a young person may be labelled delinquent not necessarily because of any actual wrongdoing but because others perceive their actions as deviant or immoral (Siegel & Welsh, 2011, p. 156).

Conversely, Piquero (2016, p. 275) argues that the stigmatising label attached to criminals profoundly affects how others interact with them, often overshadowing any other roles or positions the individual may hold in society. As Bourke (2009, p. 172) asserts, the repercussions of such labelling are significant. Once an individual is branded as "bad" by society, there is an expectation that this label will lead to further criminal behaviour, perpetuating a cycle of offending.

2.11 Chapter summary

Guided by the research question aims and objectives, this study's literature review provided an in-depth overview of the problem of challenging learner behaviour in schools, contextualising the nature and extent of this issue globally. One of the underlying themes that emerged was school management's use of punitive and exclusionary practices or zero-tolerance policies to address behavioural problems.

However, further exploration of the literature pointed out that such punitive and exclusionary practices are counterproductive. These measures contribute to the creation of a school-to-prison pipeline, where expelled learners are more likely to come into conflict with the law. This is because they are afforded ample time to idle and face diminished opportunities for success, making criminal behaviour and gang involvement more appealing to them.

Various scholars have argued for adopting restorative justice practices to replace exclusionary forms of discipline. The logic for adopting restorative justice practices is based on the idea that many external factors influence challenging learner behaviour. Therefore, there should be a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of problem behaviour, giving learners a second chance to amend their behaviour and take full responsibility, anchored in the principle of restorative justice.

The pioneering PBS model is often highlighted for addressing challenging learner behaviours without using exclusionary discipline approaches. The next chapter will detail the research methodology, including data collection and analysis, sampling procedures, and information related to the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of this study's research design and methods. It includes the sampling technique, recruitment process, data collection, ethical considerations, data analysis, and study limitations.

It is important to reiterate in this chapter that this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What restorative justice practices do the service providers at the Positive Behaviour Support Intervention and Resource Centre (PBIRC) use to address the problem of challenging learner behaviour for at-risk youth in Cape Town schools as an alternative discipline?
2. What are the views and experiences of the service providers at PBIRC regarding the factors that contribute to the occurrence of challenging learner behaviour in schools?
3. Is the suspension of a learner from school a contributing factor to the early onset of delinquent behaviour (or a direct school-to-prison pipeline)?

As discussed in Chapter Two, a particular school in the Western Cape (where this study is located) expelled 14 learners following a fatal gang fight involving violence and assault (Independent Online, 2020). Although the WCED did not disclose the name of the school, the head of the provincial education in this region, Mr Brian Schreuder, attributed the incident to a fierce gang rivalry where dangerous weapons were brought onto the school premises (Independent Online, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to answer the above-mentioned research questions against the backdrop of learner expulsions in Cape Town schools. The literature review in Chapter Two indicated that the use of punitive and exclusionary practices to discipline learners who exhibit behavioural problems is a common practice adopted by schools worldwide. However, these practices do not necessarily solve the problem behaviour other than creating a school-to-prison pipeline for those expelled of which this study argues.

3.2 Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to understand social reality through individuals' written or spoken words and observable behaviour. Qualitative research design prioritises understanding phenomena from insiders' perspectives (Taylor et al., 2016; Lapan et al., 2012; Leavy, 2014). According to Yin (2011, p. 3), this approach enables researchers to explore the contextual richness of individuals' everyday experiences. Methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, and content analysis facilitate a more profound comprehension of participants' insights (Hennik et al., 2020, p. 12).

Given this study's research aims and objectives, the qualitative research approach was deemed the most appropriate as it provided a means of gaining an in depth understanding of the problem of challenging learner behaviour from the views and experiences of service providers. Moreover, this study explores the value of the PBS model in addressing learner behavioural problems within the context of restorative justice practices in school discipline. This area is relatively underexplored within the South African context. Therefore, this study aims to fill this qualitative research gap through an exploratory research approach. According to Elman et al. (2020, p. 2), exploratory research aims to uncover novel insights about a particular research topic. In this instance, Stevens et al. (2013, p. 53) argue that exploratory research is similar to police detective work, as it involves searching for clues to reveal what has happened or is currently taking place. Because of this, it is impossible to know in advance if something new will emerge during an exploratory investigation (Elman et al. 2020, p. 17). This description of exploratory research conforms to the aims of this study. It seeks to understand the problem of challenging learner behaviour from the perspectives of service providers within the framework of a PBS model. The comparison to detective work also highlights the effort to uncover ongoing issues related to the PBS model as it pertains to dealing with the problem of challenging behaviour in schools, especially in the South African context.

While Chapters One and Two document the use of the PBS model as a tool to address challenging learner behaviour in first-world nations such as the USA and other European and Asian countries, its application and value in South Africa is relatively new. The argument for using an exploratory research approach in this study is supported by Elman et al. (2020), who maintain that the purpose of exploratory research is to unravel new perspectives on a phenomenon.

3.3 Research site

The research site for this study is the Positive Behaviour Support Intervention and Resource Centre (PBIRC) in Wynberg, Cape Town. As previously indicated in Chapter One, the PBIRC is a pilot project under the WCED aimed at providing positive behavioural support for learners on the verge of expulsion from school due to behavioural problems. This programme offers them an opportunity for full rehabilitation, helping them evade expulsion by undergoing holistic behavioural intervention for three to six months. Once their behaviour improves, they are reintegrated into the mainstream school system.

Both boys and girls are eligible for intervention, addressing a range of issues, including substance abuse, gang involvement, bullying, truancy, and violence. Currently, PBIRC supports 57 schools across four educational districts in Cape Town: Metro South, Metro North, Metro East, and Metro Central. Some of the schools include AE Janari Primary School in Bonteheuwel, Andile Primary School in Nyanga, Athwood Primary School in Hanover Park, AZ Berman High School in Mitchell's Plain, JC Meiring High School in Goodwood, Silverstream Primary School in Manenberg, and Intshinga Primary School in Gugulethu.

The inclusion of these schools in the programme is motivated by the high violent crime rates in their areas, influenced by drug abuse, gangsterism, and crime. For instance, gang activity on the Cape Flats—including places such as Manenberg, Hanover Park, Mitchell's Plain, and Lavender Hill—is primarily centred on the illegal drug trade. Much of the violence, particularly murders, stems from conflicts over drug territories (Van der Linde, 2022, p. 75). Similarly, Nyanga township, often referred to as the murder capital of South Africa, has one of the highest violent crime rates in the country, with a record of 71 murders since 2007 (Edelstein et al., 2020, p. 2).

The PBIRC programme as a restorative justice alternative to discipline is justified by the need to prevent the expulsion of learners struggling with discipline issues, recognising that their environments are often not conducive to their growth and development due to pervasive social ills. If left with ample time to loiter, these learners may be tempted into criminal activities and gang involvement, leading to conflicts with the law. However, this study does not suggest that only learners with behavioural problems fall prey to antisocial behaviour; even well-behaved children can succumb to negative peer pressure. Nonetheless, expulsion at a vulnerable age can provide a pathway to prison due to their naivety and susceptibility to negative influences.

3.4 Sampling and recruitment

3.4.1 Sampling

Sampling is the process by which researchers select participants or sampling units from the eligible members of the population (Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016, p. 327; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 26). Martinez-Mesa et al. (2016, p. 327) advise that establishing a sampling plan from the outset is crucial to avoid bias. The grounds for selecting a sampling plan is that it is not feasible to conduct research covering all members of a population. Therefore, sampling is important as it allows researchers to make claims about the generalisability of findings to the broader population (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 26).

Two main sampling methods can be identified: probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016, pp. 327-328). Probability sampling, also known as random sampling, includes simple, systematic, stratified, cluster, and complex methods (Kothari, 2004, pp. 15-16). On the other hand, non-probability sampling methods include convenience, quota, snowball, and purposive sampling techniques (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 27). For the purpose of this study, I will expand on some of these sampling procedures as they pertain to the study's aims and objectives.

This study used a purposive sampling technique to identify and select participants who satisfied the study's aims and objectives (Obilor, 2023, p. 4). Purposive sampling is a widely used technique in qualitative research that allows for the identification of information-rich cases, enabling the most effective use of limited resources (Palinkas, et al., 2015, p. 3). According to Palinkas et al. (2015, p. 3), this technique involves intentionally selecting participants based on their knowledge about or experience with a phenomenon of interest under investigation. Therefore, the study included participants with sufficient knowledge and experience in facilitating positive behaviour support services for children with behavioural issues. While the PBIRC facility had general staff and professional members such as nurses, kitchen workers, and computer laboratory operators, their participation would not have made an impactful difference because they lacked the required expertise in working with the behavioural intervention of the learners relevant to the pilot project and the study's aims and objectives. Ethical considerations also prevented inviting the learners directly for participation, as they are minors and could not provide in-depth responses to the study's questions. Although inviting school principals and teachers was considered, they were left out because they were not well

acquainted with the restorative justice principles of school discipline or the framing of the PBS model.

Research practices allow for discretion in sample selection. For example, purposive sampling relies on the researcher's judgment (Obilor, 2023, pp. 1-3). This technique is best suited for research topics centred around a particular skill set, certain attributes, and specific perspectives. Therefore, the selection of PBIRC service providers was based on the participant's knowledge, experience, and expertise in behavioural intervention. The study included ten participants with different areas of expertise, varying experience, and gender differences, as outlined in Figures One and Two below.

Figure One below illustrates the number of years participants have worked in the child and youth care sectors before providing their services in the PBS model. The participants' years range from ten to thirty. This illustration of years shows that most participants had previously worked in child and youth care centres and reformatories that are now defunct. As such, some participants migrated to the WCED after the closure of the abovementioned facilities.

Figure 1: Number of years participants have worked in the child and youth care sector.

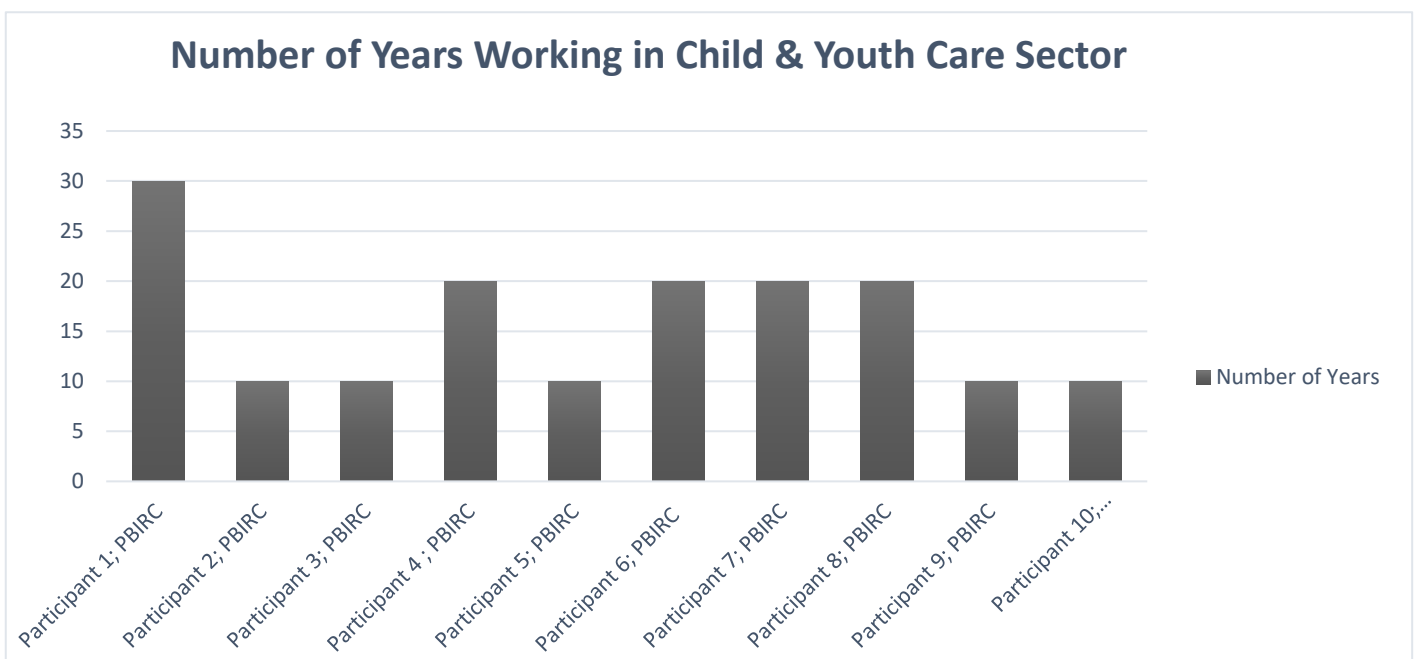
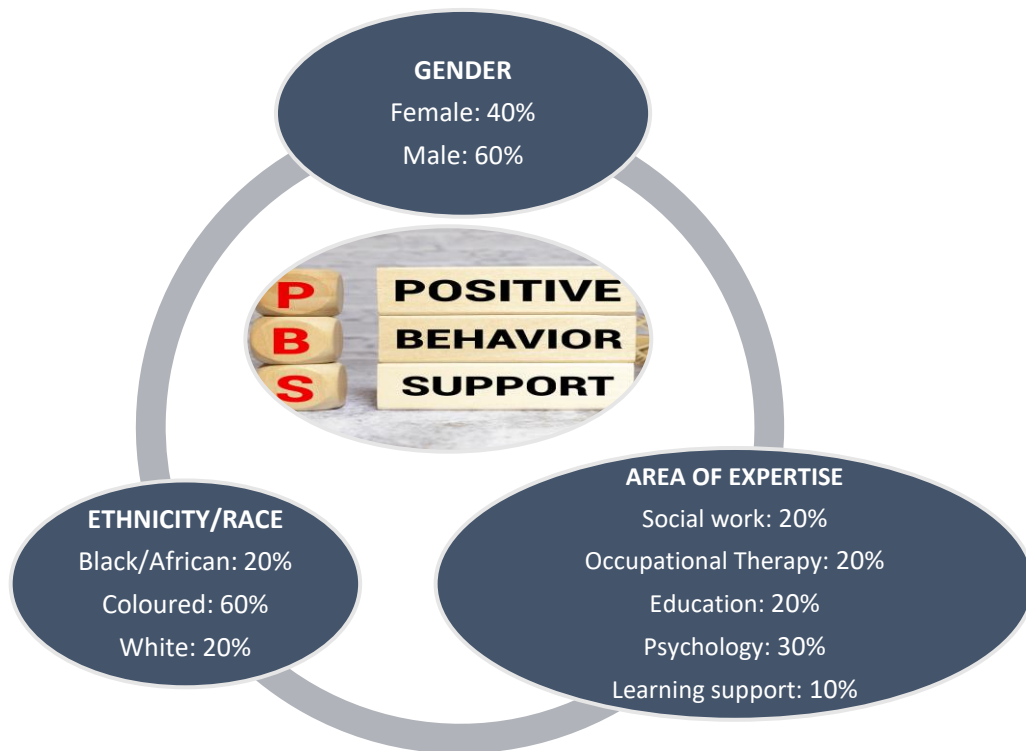


Figure Two below illustrates the demographic breakdown of participants involved in the PBS model, specifically regarding efforts to address challenging learner behaviour. This breakdown includes gender, race and areas of expertise or profession.

Figure 2: Demographic breakdown of participants in the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Programme



3.4.2 Recruitment

Recruitment was an integral part of this study. The process began with a formal meeting with the stakeholders of the now-closed Ottery Youth and Education Centre⁹ on 6 April 2022. The meeting included myself, another fellow student with similar research interests, my two lecturers, the head of the Ottery Youth and Education Centre, and two board members. Initially, the study focused on the diversion of children in conflict with the law, for which the Ottery Youth Care and Education Centre provided accommodation, care, protection, and skills development under the directive of the courts and the Department of Social Development (DSD).

⁹ The Ottery Youth and Education Centre in Ottery, Cape Town, is a former reformatory and place of safety that used to accommodate learners in conflict with the law and those in need of care and protection.

In a subsequent meeting with the stakeholders, we were directed to a new facility in Wynberg, Cape Town, known as the Tenterden Place of Safety (briefly discussed in Chapter One under the footnote). The shift from Ottery Youth Care and Education Centre to Tenterden Place of Safety was due to a new government approach. The national and provincial governments were phasing out reformatories that housed children in conflict with the law. The new focus of the WCED aimed to provide positive behavioural support for learners exhibiting problem behaviour, addressing root causes rather than waiting for delinquent behaviour to occur.

One of the stakeholders explained that the government wanted to phase out youth care centres such as Ottery Youth and Education Centre because they resembled mini prisons with little effect on behaviour change. Most of the Ottery Youth and Education Centre staff migrated to Tenterden, now known as the Positive Behaviour Support and Intervention Centre (PBIRC). These changes required me to realign my study's aims and objectives to match the new focus of the PBIRC.

Gatekeepers were crucial in this study, helping to facilitate entry to the PBIRC facility for interviews. They ensured that I gained access to the facility and introduced myself to potential participants. Although access was granted by both the gatekeepers and the WCED Research Ethics Clearance (see Appendix E), this did not guarantee automatic interviews. Participants had to agree voluntarily, as coercion would be unethical. I scheduled appointments for interviews, but some were not honoured, leading to delays in data collection. This also affected the data analysis timeline due to the expiration and renewal of the WCED ethical clearance. The WCED Research Ethics Clearance certificate was accompanied by the University of Cape Town Faculty of Law Research Ethics Committee (REC) clearance (see Appendix D).

3.5 Data collection

Data collection in this study involved approaching participants individually to invite them and determine a convenient time and date for the interview. This approach allowed participants enough time to attend to other work commitments while ensuring they could make time for the interview. However, in some cases, participants had unplanned meetings that required rescheduling the interview.

Once an appropriate date and time were secured, participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions (see Appendix A). A semi-structured

interview is a verbal exchange in which an interviewer tries to gather information from the participant by asking questions (Clifford et al., 2016, p. 143). Although a list of predetermined questions was prepared for this study, as shown in Appendix A, the semi-structured questions unfolded conversationally, allowing participants to explore critical issues. Therefore, the study used a combination of closed and open-ended questions, often followed by probing questions. Open-ended questions were used as follow-up probing questions to understand the participants' responses better. According to Edward and Holland (2013), open-ended questions allow for a better flow of conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee.

For instance, when a participant was asked why school principals and the School Governing Body (SGB) are not given the authority to send ill-behaved learners directly to the PBIRC facility, he explained that such an approach would lead to an influx of learners. The centre lacks enough personnel to handle large numbers, making it necessary to conduct a rigorous process before sending a learner to PBIRC for behavioural intervention.

Before the interviews, all participants were provided with a detailed explanation of the study (study information sheet) (see Appendix B and an informed consent form (see Appendix C). This form thoroughly explained the interview process and assured participants that their involvement was voluntary. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, even after the interview, and that their data would be destroyed if they chose to withdraw. Each interview lasted approximately forty to sixty minutes to accommodate participants' busy schedules. Transcriptions of the interviews were also completed on the same day as the interview.

All participants were comfortable being interviewed in English, and the interviews were recorded using an audio recording device (i.e., mobile phone), as agreed upon in the consent forms. A laptop served as a backup recording device in case of mobile battery depletion. All interviews were conducted in a private area, such as the participant's office, to maintain confidentiality.

Moreover, I had to accompany some of the participants who were responsible for the therapeutic aspects of the learners in order to observe their daily activities. This was part of an effort to better understand the PBS model being offered. I conducted observations during field trips to Muizenberg Beach and Houtbay, where learners with behavioural problems were taking surfing lessons as part of their therapy and to develop specific skills inherent in the PBIRC philosophy.

I used qualitative research methods such as field notes and participant observation to thoroughly observe and document the interactions between the participants and the learners. This included noting small gestures and the overall mood during the field trips. Field notes and participant observation go hand in hand. While some critics argue that field notes are only understandable to their author, they are crucial for recording daily activities, special events, and a chronological diary of events, both in the field and before entering the field (Mulhall, 2003, p. 311).

In this study, field notes and participant observation made it possible to determine whether participants' actions aligned with what they claimed to do. The field notes provided a rich source of data. They were transcribed into observation protocols and incorporated into the overall data analysis process using NVivo. This software allows for the inclusion of field notes as part of the coding process.

For example, under Theme One, which explored restorative justice practices to address challenging learner behaviour as part of the broader PBS model, participants stressed the importance of 'having a strong connection' with the learner. They also emphasised capacity building and positive thinking. This was evident through participant observation and field note-taking during field trips to surfing activities.

3.6 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify and interpret patterns or themes within the collected data. In qualitative research, thematic analysis involves searching for recurring ideas or themes in a data set (Jason & Glenwick, 2006, p. 33). A fundamental assumption of this qualitative data analysis approach is that reality is socially constructed; individuals attribute meaning to specific phenomena through interactions with those around them in context-specific settings (Jason & Glenwick, 2006, p. 33). This data analysis approach was chosen because there may be various ways in which participants explain and interpret their views and experiences of facilitating a positive behaviour support programme aimed at learners who present with challenging behaviour. The thematic process involved a detailed interpretation of the interview transcriptions by creating a coding framework that identified specific themes. All ten transcripts were crucial in developing this data analysis process, utilising the qualitative analysis software NVivo. NVivo is an effective tool because it replicates qualitative data

handling through features such as highlighting, note-taking, and connecting insights (Jackson and Bazeley 2019, p. 4).

The study aimed to understand the views and experiences of service providers in facilitating a positive support programme, particularly in response to challenging learner behaviour. I observed that some participants' responses were similar and organised them into various themes and sub-themes, as discussed in Chapter Four. When necessary, sub-themes were further elaborated upon to provide additional context.

Despite the thorough nature of this qualitative data analysis, Woolf and Silver (2018, p. 1) caution that researchers should not regard NVivo as merely an automatic analysis tool. While the software can provide detailed visual representations of primary data, researchers must still manually extract relevant themes from it. By interpreting these visual data presentations with NVivo, six key themes emerged, which served as the foundation for Chapters Four and Five.

Byrne (2022, p. 1399) states that codes are the building blocks that eventually form actual themes in the study. Therefore, the thematic analysis approach, illustrated in Figure Three, provides the basis for discussing and analysing participants' responses for clarity and understanding.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a crucial aspect of research, providing a framework for distinguishing between right and wrong, good and bad (Hammersley & Trainou, 2012, p. 16). Since this study involved human participants, it received approval from the University of Cape Town Faculty of Law Research Ethics Committee (REC) and the WCED Research Directorate. These ethical clearances were granted with specific conditions to ensure the researcher's accountability throughout the process. Miller et al. (2012, p. 14) affirm that ethics pertains to the morality of human conduct.

I needed to request a renewal of the ethical clearance from the WCED because the initial one had expired. The moral framework for this research aligns with the universally recognised Belmont Principles for conducting ethical research. These principles include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Cassell, 2000). According to the Belmont Report, research

involving human participants must be ethical, and participants must enter it freely (Childress et al., 2005, p. 7).

3.8 Respect for persons

The principle of respect for persons, also known as autonomy, requires researchers to acknowledge the following rights of participants: the right to be informed about the study, the right to decide whether to participate freely and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Orb et al., 2001, p. 95). In this research, participants were fully informed about the aims and objectives of the study through a detailed information sheet, allowing them to choose whether to participate freely. Therefore, participants were not coerced into participating in any way.

3.9 Beneficence

In this study, I also considered the ethical principle of beneficence. According to Pieper and Thomson (2016, p. 118), this principle involves respecting free will, ensuring that participation in the study is voluntary, and protecting participants from harm. To ensure participants were not harmed, I began the interview process by thoroughly explaining the research and providing an informed consent form with detailed information about the study. Participants indicated their permission to start the interview by signing the form and checking a yes or no box. By signing the form, participants agreed to participate. A critical aspect of this consent was that participants acknowledged the entire interview would be recorded.

Before signing the consent form, participants were assured their identities would remain anonymous, a concept known as anonymity in research. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used as guaranteed in the consent form. Participants were assigned codes such as 'Participant 1; PBIRC', 'Participant 2; PBIRC', 'Participant 3; PBIRC', etc. This was to ensure that their real identities cannot be traced or identified.

All data, including scanned consent forms, voice recordings, field notes, and interview transcripts, are securely stored in the cloud using Google Drive and on a physical, password-protected external hard drive. This setup ensures no third parties can access the data without express permission.

3.10 Justice

The principle of justice centres on fairness and equality (Orb et al., 2001, p. 95). To ensure that a study adheres to the fundamental principles of ethical research, Artal and Rubinfeld (2017, p. 110) outline the following criteria that should be met in the research process:

1. Treating participants fairly and equally.
2. Distributing benefits and risks or harms equitably (if any).
3. Selecting participants without bias.

Therefore, based on the aforementioned criteria relating to the principle of justice, the approach taken in this study ensured a fair selection of participants. Both male and female participants were included, thus promoting inclusivity. There were no risks or harms in this study, and the benefits to participants lie in their contribution to the production of knowledge.

3.11 Study limitations

The study has some limitations in terms of its research design and methodology. I used a sample size of ten PBIRC participants (referred to as service providers in this study). Although there was an opportunity to include more participants from outside the PBIRC facility as permitted ethically by the WCED ethical clearance certificate, I conducted ten interviews and believed that thematic saturation was achieved. Thematic saturation in qualitative data analysis is the point at which collecting new data will not lead to the discovery of more information concerning the research questions (Lowe et al., 2018, p. 191).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there needs to be more empirical research on using the PBS model in South African context, particularly regarding implementing restorative justice practices in school discipline. Currently, the PBIRC facility in Cape Town, which operates under the directive of the WCED, is the only institution piloting the programme in several schools across different districts in the metro area. Therefore, this sample was considered appropriate. It is also important to note that the pilot programme was in its start-up year when I undertook this study.

While larger samples do not necessarily guarantee deeper insights into the phenomena under investigation, collecting data from a wider range of sources—such as teachers and school

principals in this study—would have been crucial. This approach would have increased the plausibility and credibility of the findings.

Another limitation is that the study focuses solely on the views and experiences of the service providers at PBIRC regarding their facilitation of the positive behaviour support programme for learners with behavioural problems and the contributing factors to challenging learner behaviour. It would have been beneficial to also hear from the learners undergoing the same behavioural intervention regarding what led to their problem behaviours.

3.12 Chapter summary

Chapter Three details the methodology, encompassing research design, sampling, recruitment, data collection, ethical considerations, analysis, and limitations. The research design was crafted to align with the study's objectives, employing purposive sampling to select participants directly involved in the PBIRC programme. Ethical standards were rigorously adhered to during the recruitment process. Data collection predominantly involved semi-structured interviews, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives. Ethical considerations remained paramount, with approvals obtained and principles of respect, beneficence, and justice upheld throughout.

Data analysis entailed meticulous coding of data using NVivo software to discern themes and patterns, which subsequently guided the structure of ensuing chapters. However, limitations like the sample size and the focus on service providers' viewpoints at PBIRC may have failed to give the study a deeper understanding of real-world problems, which is often the case with exploratory studies. The following chapter discusses and interprets the research findings from the ten analysed interviews, highlighting the main themes and subthemes.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

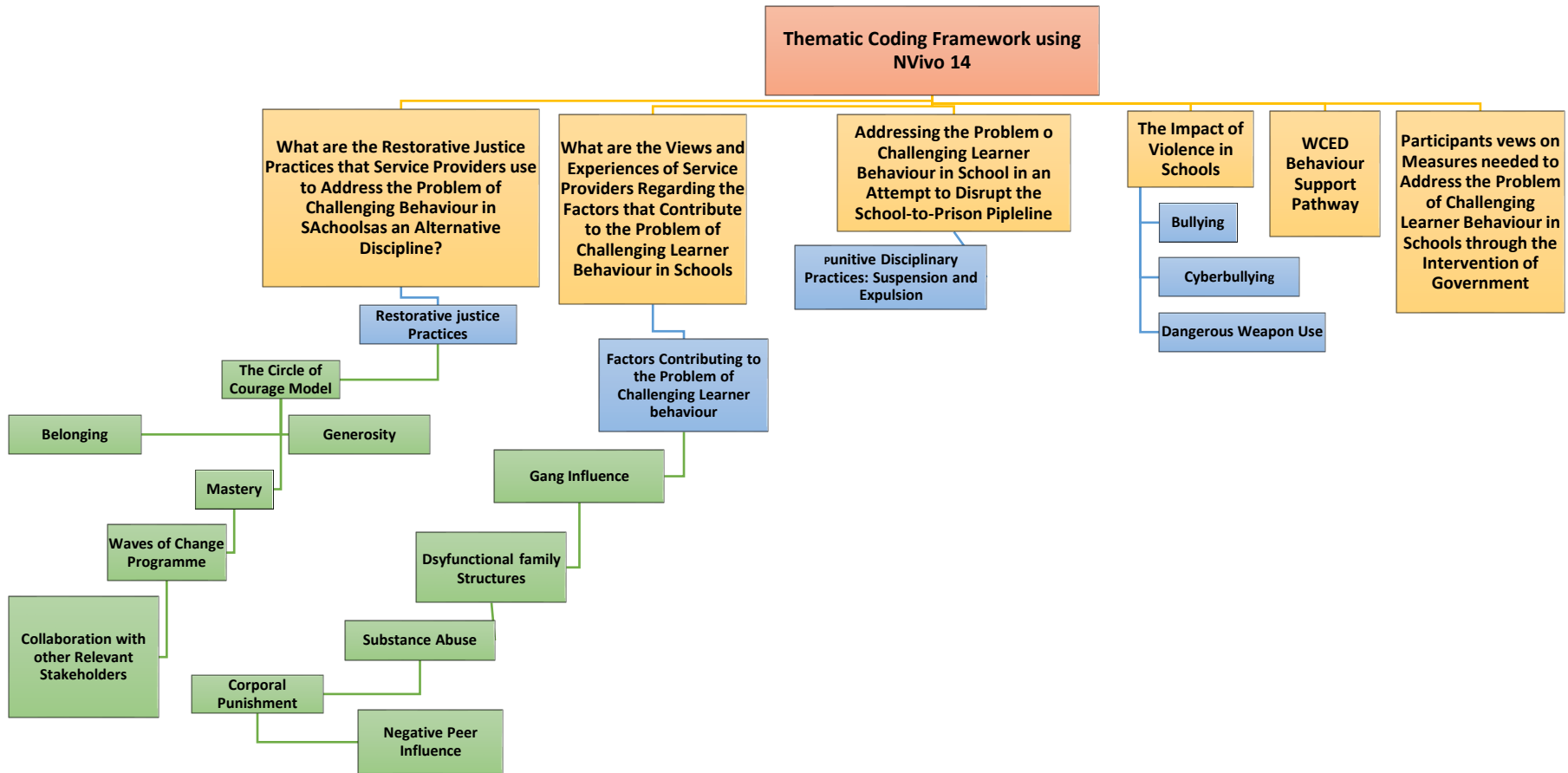
4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion and an account of the research findings from this study, which was based on a thorough data analysis process conducted with the aid of NVivo software. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the study involved ten participants who were interviewed about restorative justice practices in school discipline, specifically focusing on implementing the PBS model. The PBS model was extensively covered in Chapter Two, where its relevance to school discipline was discussed.

As a result of the data analysis using NVivo software, six themes emerged from the dataset. The thematic coding framework used to finalise these themes was aligned with the study's broad research questions and objectives, as depicted in Figure Three below. This process led to the identification of additional relevant main themes that emerged from the interviews.

The NVivo data analysis tool also identified how frequently each theme appeared in the analysed material. This facilitated the development of subthemes, categorised under each main theme, as illustrated in the accompanying visualisation. A brief explanation of the themes and subthemes is provided, along with participant illustrations in the form of direct quotes.

Figure 3: Thematic coding framework using NVivo 14



4.2 Theme 1: The application of restorative justice practices to address challenging learner behaviour in schools using the PBS model

4.2.1 The Circle of Courage Model

Participants were asked to describe the restorative justice approach they use to support learners referred by the WCED for intervention. All ten participants reported using the Circle of Courage model, a youth development framework commonly employed in educational settings to address behavioural issues, promote positive behaviour, and foster emotional resilience. The model is based on the understanding that youth are at risk for problem behaviours, with some more vulnerable than others (Reyneke, 2020, p. 146). The Circle of Courage model is grounded in restorative justice principles and is instrumental in preventing challenging learner behaviour (Oosthuizen, 2017; Reyneke, 2020; Brendtro et al., 2014; Faulkner, 2012).

Oosthuizen (2017, p. 38) defines "at-risk youth" as individuals who engage in negative behaviours such as substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour, delinquency, violence, school dropout, and suicide. Regarding delinquency and violence, Oosthuizen (2017, p. 40-41) notes that gang formation, primarily among youth, significantly contributes to high murder and attempted murder rates in the Western Cape. He also highlights the rising school dropout rates in the province, where only a third of the population over the age of 20 has a grade 12 qualification. Additionally, 48% of learners who start school do not reach matric, and only just over a third of those who complete matric qualify for university entrance.

These at-risk behaviours negatively impact youth, leading to antisocial behaviour. The Circle of Courage model, rooted in restorative justice, aims to create environments where children can thrive and develop. Punitive and exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion can hinder development, potentially leading to conflict with the law and contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline.

One participant, who has thirty years of experience as a behavioural practitioner, explained how the Circle of Courage model fits into the positive behaviour support interventions they facilitate at PBIRC.

Five years ago, the Western Cape Education Department took receipt of this place to initiate a programme which was aimed at essentially picking up learners

very early on to prevent an institutional intervention because these are children with high-risk behaviour in terms of their interactions at school. (Participant 1; PBIRC).

The explanation behind the early identification of learners with behavioural problems and the prevention of institutional intervention is strongly supported by Oosthuizen (2017, p. 38). Oosthuizen argues that traditional youth intervention methods, such as youth care and juvenile correctional centres, often focus on superficially correcting problem behaviour rather than addressing the root causes and contributing factors.

When asked to elaborate on the early identification of problem behaviour and the prevention of institutional intervention for learners with challenging behaviour, particularly those on the verge of expulsion, the participant explained:

Many learners we handle at PBIRC originate from socially disorganised communities afflicted by crime and substance abuse. The moment a decision is made to expel a learner from the school system, it sets them up for failure. They become involved in antisocial behaviour because they lack activities and a clear focus. Therefore, our primary task is to curtail that outcome. As a criminology student, you might be familiar with the concept of a school-to-prison pipeline. Here at PBIRC, we are actively working to disrupt that pipeline through our behaviour intervention programme (Participant 1; PBIRC).

Ally et al.'s (2021, p. 23) research supports the participant's statement. It found that punitive and exclusionary disciplinary practices in schools, though legally permissible, profoundly impact children. These practices may contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline. Ally et al. (2021, p. 24) reference the Gauteng High Court judgment in "S v LM and Others." This ruling decriminalised cannabis possession and use by minors. The case involved four schoolboys caught with a "dagga cookie"¹⁰ who tested positive for cannabis through a school-administered drug test. As a result, they were channelled from school into the criminal justice system.

This ruling sparked debate in South Africa about the need for restorative and preventative school discipline approaches. Ally et al. (2021, p. 2) argue that children's contact with the criminal justice system contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline. This argument is supported

¹⁰ In South Africa, people often use the term "dagga cookie" informally to describe a cookie or pastry that contains cannabis, which is also called marijuana or dagga in slang.

by various scholars mentioned in Chapters One and Two of this study, who expanded on the debate of the school-to-prison pipeline (Morgan, 2021; Mallet, 2016; Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015; Michail, 2011).

Moreover, Bougard (2018) studied the impact of incarceration on young juvenile offenders. He found that incarceration does not deter youth from law-violating behaviours. Instead, it exposes them to a cycle of criminal behaviour by interacting with other criminal associates in correctional facilities. Bougard (2018, p. 32) shares concerns with the WCED, criticising specialised centres (youth care centres) for failing to meet the needs of children with behavioural problems.

Currently, about 140,000 inmates aged 16 to 25 are housed in 17 juvenile correctional centres across South Africa (Department of Correctional Services, 2024). For example, the Durban Westville Youth Correctional Centre operates within the main Westville prison. This supports Bougard's assertion that young offenders may learn more criminal attitudes in contact with other criminal associates.

The high number of young people in juvenile correctional centres is concerning due to prison overcrowding. The case of the four schoolboys involved in cannabis possession contributes to this issue. A restorative and preventative approach to school discipline could prevent children from ending up in prison. Geldenhuys (2017, p. 16) notes that prison overcrowding is an "unofficial death sentence" because young offenders awaiting trial are exposed to hardened criminals who may initiate them into serious criminal activities.

The Western Cape has one of the most overcrowded prison populations in South Africa. The Pollsmoor Remand Detention Facility in Cape Town, designed for 1,423 inmates, currently holds 2,728, resulting in 92% overcrowding. The Beaufort West prison, a smaller facility, has an overcrowding rate of 119%, or 89 more inmates than its capacity (Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services, 2022).

No	Facility	Approved capacity	Number of inmates on the day of the inspection	Overcrowding percentage
1.	Worcester male	406	924	127%
2.	Beaufort West	75	164	119%
3.	George	563	1 128	100%
4.	Pollsmoor RDF	1 423	2 728	92%

Source: Adapted from the Annual Report 2021/2022 of the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services

In terms of the application the of the Circle of Courage model as a positive behavioural support technique to school discipline, another participant shared the following perspective:

Our approach at PBIRC revolves around not focusing on the mistakes children make but rather identifying the strengths within their entire support network. We aim to create a connection for each child, preventing them from reaching the expulsion or suspension committee. In cases where they do end up facing such committees, our emphasis shifts to supporting the schools and implementing more restorative approaches to school discipline. (Participant 2; PBIRC).

Restorative justice and preventative approaches to school discipline emerged as strong factors from the participants' responses. This aligns with various scholars in Chapters Two and Three, who support restorative justice as an alternative discipline (Gonzalez, 2016; Lodi, 2022; Morgan, 2021; O'Mahony & Doek, 2017; Otto, 2023; Reyneke, 2015; Schiff, 2018). Another participant with extensive experience in educational psychology expressed the following:

We are not merely addressing the symptoms; we are looking at the root causes of problematic behaviour. As a counsellor, I firmly believe that behaviour is a result of various underlying causes. These causes can be rooted within the individual or the environment. Therefore, behaviour exists along that continuum. (Participant 5; PBIRC).

More importantly, the Circle of Courage model comprises four quadrants—belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity—to nurture the development of children and the youth (Espiner & Guild, 2010; Garfat & Van Bockern, 2010). Participants stressed the interdependence of these components as an integral aspect of their work in achieving positive behavioural change.

4.2.2 Belonging

One participant made the following statement about this component:

The Circle of Courage is fundamentally a holistic approach. Our strategy focuses on what is broken in the child's life, particularly concerning the four quadrants (Participant 6; PBIRC).

Another participant suggested that:

When a child behaves the way they do, we believe that there is a missing link in the Circle of Courage. The child may be facing difficulties at school, in their home or community. (Participant 7; PBIRC).

However, all participants believed that socialisation agents such as the school, home, and environment are crucial for a child's growth and development, similar to what Maslow argues in his hierarchy of needs model, including the need for love and belonging. According to Noltemeyer et al. (2012), Maslow's theory suggests that academic performance is a self-esteem need for growth. School dropout and academic underperformance, often correlated with challenging behaviour, can result from unmet needs for love and belonging.

To address these unmet needs, Reyneke (2020, p. 157) proposes recommendations to help teachers foster a sense of belonging among learners who may lack love and affection at home. These include connecting with learners, using their names respectfully, greeting them at the door, complimenting them, showing appreciation, establishing predictable rules, and incorporating fun activities. Giving learners classroom responsibilities, such as cleaning, can also ensure they feel a sense of belonging.

Participants linked challenging learner behaviour to a lack of belonging and support at home. Dekovic (1999, p. 670) corroborates this, stating that adolescents are more likely to exhibit behavioural problems when they lack support and parental involvement.

4.2.3 Mastery

The participants discussed the importance of mastering skills and attributes within the Circle of Courage framework. Three participants related this concept to addressing the problem of challenging learner behaviour. However, I will only provide one quote because all participants shared similar views. They pointed out that difficulties in learning, such as reading and writing, can negatively impact a student's self-esteem and self-perception, especially compared to their academically successful peers. They also acknowledged that some challenging learner behaviour might stem from teacher-learner interactions. One participant expressed this by stating:

Some of the problematic behaviours we observe among certain learners stem from being labelled as "stupid" by either their teachers or fellow learners due to academic struggles, and this creates anger in them. (Participant 10; PBIRC).

The negative labels assigned to underperforming learners by teachers or peers can have a profound and lasting impact. This can lead to learners internalising these labels, resulting school dropout or engagement in bullying activities. Howard Becker's labelling theory suggests that negative labels from authority figures such as teachers are internalised, becoming self-fulfilling prophecies (Siegel, 2016, p. 227). This underscores the urgent need for a restorative justice approach to school discipline. Research by Phillips (2022, p. 38) affirms that labels such as "troublemaker" or "delinquent" can be internalised, causing maladaptive behaviour and limiting access to success. This situation may motivate learners to join deviant peer groups, increasing their chances of law-violating behaviour.

Other scholars argue that labels are an unavoidable part of life, as individuals tend to respond to other people's reactions, whether positive or negative (Brown et al., 2010, p. 321). Brown et al. (2010, p. 321) contend that contact with the criminal justice system forces individuals to re-evaluate their identity. This re-evaluation can be explained by social learning theory, which suggests individuals learn criminal behaviour through close relationships with criminal peers (Siegel, 2016, p. 228).

Participants emphasised the importance of inclusive education to prevent school dropouts and legal troubles. They stressed the need for behavioural and academic support to help learners reintegrate into mainstream schools and avoid the criminal justice system. Mastering skills such as reading and writing is crucial in this process. The PBIRC pilot programme aims to provide positive behavioural support to achieve these goals.

4.2.4 Generosity

The participants discussed the concept of generosity, which they see as closely linked to respect. They noted that behaviours such as disrupting lessons, teasing, bullying, harassment, isolation from group activities, greed, dishonesty, vandalism, and stealing could lead to problematic behaviours in many learners.

As far as the Circle of Courage model is concerned, a generous learner exhibits altruism, care, loyalty, empathy, and supportive behaviour (Reyneke, 2020, p. 148). A participant working as a learning support facilitator provided the following example centred on generosity:

One way I promote generosity among these learners is through gym exercises, and as you can see, our gym area is fully equipped with various exercise equipment. We have timers on certain equipment, like the treadmill, and when

your time is up, you allow others to use the machine and move on to the next. We even encourage learners who have been here for some time to teach newcomers how to use the equipment (Participant 8; PBIRC).

The participant believes using this technique with learners with behavioural issues is effective because it teaches empathy, caring, and respect for others, regardless of age. They mentioned that timers on specific gym equipment promote a culture of tolerance and adherence to rules. Everyone is expected to follow these rules, similar to classroom rules. These include being kind to others, showing respect, being patient, using polite language (saying please and thank you), and attentively following instructions.

4.3 Collaborating with other stakeholders to promote positive behaviour support

The participants discussed another vital aspect of their restorative discipline approach: collaborating with stakeholders dedicated to youth development. Nearly all participants stressed the importance of engaging various stakeholders to support positive behaviour in learners facing challenges. They believe youth development is a societal concern. Learners coexist in societies that often perceive them as troublesome, potentially threatening society in their adult lives. Several participants spoke about specific collaborative initiatives with stakeholders or partners to implement the components of the Circle of Courage model.

We have entered into a partnership with an NPO called Waves for Change, and we work hand in hand to offer support for our learners in terms of their rehabilitation (Participant 10; PBIRC).

4.3.1 Waves for change

Participants praised the Waves for Change programme for its positive impact on learners with challenging behaviour. They noted its alignment with their philosophical framework, particularly the Circle of Courage model. Based in Hout Bay and Muizenberg Beach, Cape Town, this programme focuses on improving children's well-being by teaching life skills and providing stress relief through surfing (Waves for Change, 2024). Despite being labelled as troublesome by their schools, learners benefit from social relationships, stress relief, and skill acquisition through surf therapy, as explained by one participant.

Similarly, Faulkner (2012, p. 19) notes the use of the Drumbeat programme by youth practitioners in Australia and New Zealand as a therapeutic approach. This programme employs

music therapy to address behavioural issues such as low self-esteem, substance abuse, and poor time management among at-risk youth. Faulkner (2012, p. 20) suggests that this form of therapy has shown promise in promoting behavioural change, particularly by raising awareness of the consequences of actions, especially for bullies. The children identified as "at-risk" or "troubled" in this study face various risk factors, including peer pressure, gang involvement, substance abuse, and dysfunctional families, which contribute to challenging behaviour in South African communities. Without early intervention, these risk factors can lead to more severe delinquent behaviour.

4.4 Theme 2: Factors contributing to challenging learner behaviour in schools

Participants were asked about the causes of challenging learner behaviour in schools in Cape Town, which is the focus of this study. They mentioned numerous factors they believed contributed to the problematic behaviour of school learners.

4.4.1 Gang influence

While youth gang formations exist in various parts of South Africa, Cape Town communities are particularly affected, with deeply entrenched gang activity leading to frequent incidents of violence reported in the media (Magidi et al., 2016, p. 70). For instance, a recent incident in Hanover Park resulted in the tragic death of a six-year-old boy caught in a crossfire between rival gangs (Independent Online, 2023). The presence of guns, gangs, and drugs on school premises poses enormous challenges. These issues affect teaching and learning, leading to learner expulsions in Western Cape schools (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2022).

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on the factors contributing to challenging learner behaviour in Cape Town schools. All ten interviewees identified gang influence as a leading cause, with one participant stating:

Gang involvement is a huge problem for these children. Just recently, we had to approach a gang leader of the Mongrels in Lavender Hill to plead with him to release a boy from the gang at the request of his grandmother. She wanted him out of the gang, back in school, and participating in our positive behaviour programme. (Participant 7; PBIRC).

Based on his experience as a psychologist in the youth care sector and his previous work in gang mediation, the participant shared a situation where a gang leader who used a young boy

as a hitman was requested by the boy's grandmother to release him from the gang. After many attempts, the gang leader finally agreed to release the boy from the gang. The participant stated that despite the intervention, the boy was killed a few months later. However, it is still uncertain whether his death was gang-related or not. In communities plagued by gang activity, Van der Westhuizen and Adams (2022, p. 3) maintain that there are factors that draw young people into gangs, such as peer pressure. Additionally, some youth join gangs seeking protection from victimisation by rival gangs.

According to Davids (2020, p. 2), there are over ten active gangs in Manenberg, an area plagued by gang control and violence. However, Thomas and Pascoe (2018, p. 1) argue that there are ten large gangs in Manenberg and approximately 40 smaller gangs operating in the area. These numbers are concerning because gang activities have infiltrated the schools in the area. Davids (2020, p. 2) also notes that young males are particularly vulnerable to gang violence, recruitment, and victimisation. For instance, Silverstream Primary School, located in the gang violence stronghold of Manenberg, is one of the schools identified by PBIRC where challenging learner behaviour is pervasive.

It is important to note that youth gang involvement in the Western Cape is complex and varied. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach cannot be applied to every youth. Venter and Jeffries (2020, p. 51) recognise that not all students will give in to the pressure of joining a specific gang, even if there is a strong gang presence in their neighbourhood. Some may resist due to their fear of gangs, while others may find it easy to join gangs because they identify with and idealise gang life.

4.4.2 Dysfunctional family structures

The participants stressed the importance of traditional nuclear family structures, where both parents (a mother and father) play active roles in their children's lives. They consider this family setup crucial for children's development and socialisation in society.

However, in South Africa, the nuclear family ideal is only accessible to some children due to socioeconomic factors and family dynamics. While Lumadi (2019, p. 1) acknowledges the value of parental involvement in a child's life, scholars such as Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2020, pp. 6-7) point out challenges that may affect this ideal. These include parenting styles and stressors such as relative deprivation and child-headed households (estimated at 85,000 in South Africa), which may potentially challenge traditional family structures. Parenting styles

vary markedly in terms of how children are raised. Authoritarian parents tend to control their children's behaviour based on strict religious beliefs. However, such strictness may not prevent children from misbehaving, especially if they are exposed to negative influences that glorify crime and violence. According to social learning theory, children learn behaviour by observing human interactions. Conversely, permissive parents are non-manipulative and affirming of their child's impulses and desires. Neglectful or uninvolved parenting, where parents show little concern for their children's affairs, may contribute to challenging behaviour in children (Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2020, p. 6).

Neglectful and uninvolved parenting in areas such as Khayelitsha has contributed to a youth gang culture, as found in the Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry. Youth gangs such as the Vuras, the Vatos, and the Russians remain active in Sites B and C, creating an environment conducive to delinquent behaviour among the children and the youth (Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry, 2014, p. 383).

Mr. Mahlutshana, principal of Chris Hani Senior Secondary School in Khayelitsha, reported to the Commission that fighting between rival gangs occurs on school grounds and in surrounding areas. Consequently, the school has created a 'mini-museum' displaying weapons confiscated from gang fights, including knives and other sharp instruments (Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry, 2014, pp. 383-384). This underscores concerns about gang activities infiltrating school environments and exacerbating challenging behaviour among learners. As such, one of the participants expressed the following about the problem of dysfunctional family structures and children and the youth falling prey to joining gang formations:

Our children lack positive role models both in their homes and in society. Most of them are raised by a single parent, lacking a male figure to guide and serve as their hero. Consequently, they are easily influenced into idolising individuals who engage in negative behaviours within society. (Participant 6; PBIRC).

4.4.3 Substance abuse

Substance abuse has been identified as another contributing to challenging behaviour among learners in schools. Many participants have confirmed that almost all learners in the positive behaviour support programme have been reported to be using substances. They explained that substance abuse has a profound impact on young people in the community, and it is so

widespread in Cape Town that some gang violence incidents are linked to territorial disputes related to the drug trade.

Furthermore, participants noted that these turf battles and drug transactions have spilt over into school premises, with drug lords exploiting young and vulnerable children by forcing them to sell drugs and subjecting them to intimidation if they refuse. For instance, a parliamentary committee that looked into the Western Cape Education Department's Annual report for 2021/2022 mentioned that the issue of substance abuse was of grave concern where "learners throw drugs in packets over the fence" (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2022). One participant expressed concern about the issue of substance abuse, stating:

We have a major problem of substance abuse in our communities, with children as young as 10 years old using drugs. (Participant 3; PBIRC).

The participant raised concerns about the widespread prevalence of substance abuse and its associated dangers for risky behaviours among the youth and adolescents in the Cape Town area. The participant drew attention to the severe impact that drug use, particularly crystal methamphetamine (commonly known as "tik")¹¹, can have on young people. The use of this substance negatively affects decision-making processes, which may lead young people to engage in various unsafe activities, such as risky sexual behaviours and criminal acts driven by the need to sustain their addiction.

Tik, a cheap, easily accessible, and easily manufacturable drug, is the drug of choice among users in Cape Town, including youth and adolescents (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2024). Therefore, going back to the preceding arguments of exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion covered heavily in Chapters One and Two of this study, the easy availability of a substance such as a tik or crystal amphetamine would inevitably entice learners who are out of the school system because they have more leisure time in which to associate with other anti-social peers where they are likely to experiment with drugs or alcohol. This is especially true for youths between 16 and 24 who dropped out of school, as Phillips (2022, p.

¹¹ "Tik" is a slang term commonly used in South Africa to describe crystal methamphetamine, a profoundly addictive stimulant drug. This substance is not only potent but also illegal, posing significant risks to both physical and mental well-being. Its use can result in addiction, impair cognitive functions, and contribute to a range of health problems.

38) concedes, are 63 times more likely to find themselves in conflict with the law than their counterparts who finish school.

4.4.4 Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment emerged as a factor contributing to challenging learner behaviour in schools. All ten participants discussed corporal punishment, reflecting a range of views similar to those of various scholars mentioned in Chapter Two. Some participants supported its use, while others opposed it. Despite its abolition in South Africa, some participants felt it should not have been abolished, believing it was effective in maintaining discipline. One participant said the following about using corporal punishment to maintain student discipline:

Since the banning of corporal punishment in our schools, teachers feel disempowered and this inadvertently places them in the back seat, making it seem like there is nothing they can do when learners misbehave. (Participant 7; PBIRC).

The participant expressed a conservative view supporting corporal punishment in schools. He argued that abolishing corporal punishment does not reflect the beliefs of African people, who value collectivist child-rearing practices. According to him, raising children is a societal responsibility, and teachers who interact with learners constantly are well-positioned to fulfil this role. Only two out of ten participants partly supported corporal punishment in addressing challenging student behaviour.

Another participant said the following about using corporal punishment to maintain student discipline:

What happened to putting religion first as one of our value systems? I grew up in a conservative Afrikaans home where "buig die boompie terwyl hy jonk is"¹² was emphasised. I mean, the same principle applies to the African saying that it takes a village to raise a child. (Participant 2; PBIRC).

¹² A direct Afrikaans translation of "bend the tree while it is young".

The participant underlined the importance of the concept of *ubuntu*¹³. He mentioned that since teachers spend considerable time with learners, they should be able to assume a parental role and discipline them as they would their own children. However, he noted that this task becomes challenging due to the ban on corporal punishment, which strips teachers of this authority.

Some scholars argue that African values are not fully integrated into modern education systems, and the philosophy of *ubuntu* still needs to be included in teaching curricula (Maphalala, 2017, p. 10237). *Ubuntu* embodies an African moral system that prioritises the community over the individual, fostering togetherness and collectivism (Odari, 2020, p. 56; Mwipikeni, 2018, p. 322; Ewuoso & Hall, 2019, p. 93).

4.4.5 Negative peer influence

Four participants explained that negative peer influence has a considerable impact on the manifestation of problem behaviour among learners at school. These participants asserted that smoking and substance abuse often begin within peer contexts due to the young and adolescent age of the students. They also indicated that smoking and substance abuse frequently lead to engaging in other risky behaviours, such as unprotected sex, alcohol consumption, and truancy, as well as delinquent activities such as shoplifting, theft, and vandalism.

McGloin and Thomas (2019, p. 241) mentions the unique role of peer influence as a critical causal process for delinquency. They point out that when it comes to delinquent behaviour and criminal outcomes, it is rare to encounter a delinquent who is not associated with or a member of a delinquent peer group. Even those who offend in isolation tend to be influenced by their delinquent peers. One of the participants shared the following perspective regarding peer relationships and the influence of learners in the context of problem behaviour:

Peer pressure plays a major role in contributing to the problem behaviours of young people in society. You must understand that our children are exposed to a lot of drugs and substance abuse in their day-to-day lives. (Participant 9; PBIRC).

¹³ The concept of *ubuntu* embodies an African moral system that prioritises the community over the individual in contemporary society, fostering togetherness and collectivism (Odari, 2020, p. 56; Mwipikeni, 2018, p. 322; Ewuoso & Hall, 2019, p. 93)

4.5 Theme 3: Addressing challenging learner behaviour in schools and the early onset of delinquent behaviour (creating a direct school-to-prison pipeline)

Participants were asked whether they believe challenging behaviour in learners can lead to more serious criminal behaviour. Many expressed concern that without interventions such as positive behaviour support programmes or the PBS model, problematic behaviour could escalate into delinquency. They specifically criticised punitive disciplinary actions taken by schools, such as expelling or suspending learners, in response to challenging behaviour.

4.5.1 Punitive disciplinary practices: suspension and expulsion

The participants acknowledged that schools face many issues, such as violence towards teachers and learners, bullying, truancy, and sexual harassment. They believe these issues negatively affect the learning and teaching environment and argue that interventions tailored to addressing specific behaviours, rather than punitive and exclusionary practices, are more effective in addressing problem behaviour. While the participants do not condone problematic behaviour from learners, they emphasise the school's crucial role in child development and socialisation, acting as a protective factor.

The participants also expressed concerns about the school-to-prison pipeline, questioning the practice of punitive and exclusionary practices or zero-tolerance policies through heavy reliance on the school code of conduct. They pointed out that the use of the school's code of conduct as a punishment tool, often supported by members of school governing bodies (SGB) lacking expertise in legal matters, may overlook the potential dangers faced by suspended or expelled learners. One participant, with extensive experience in reformatories and industrial schools that focused on the diversion and rehabilitation of young individuals in conflict with the law, offered insights into the school-to-prison pathway, sharing the following perspective:

*Certainly. Disruptive behaviour may lead to a more pronounced initiation of criminal conduct, posing potential harm to these children if not intercepted early. This is because they often begin exhibiting such behaviours at school, subsequently progressing to join gangs or associate with hooligans. They carry knives and drugs to school (**Participant 7; PBIRC**).*

Based on the participants' descriptions of the school-to-prison pipeline, a possible scenario involves a learner exhibiting challenging behaviour, such as being caught with substances such

as dagga or engaging in assault, leading to criminalisation and potential involvement in the criminal justice system. Ally et al. (2021, p. 26) argue that the school-to-prison pipeline can also manifest indirectly through punitive school disciplinary policies, resulting in suspension or placement in diversionary facilities for children in conflict with the law.

While limited scholarly attention explicitly links exclusionary disciplinary practices and criminal justice involvement in South Africa, some researchers recognise the value of a restorative justice approach in schools. This approach emphasises repairing the harm caused by conflict rather than relying solely on punitive measures such as suspension and expulsion, which may lead to recurring behaviour (Masita, 2008, p. 235; Mokomane, 2020, p. 7).

The participant advocated for innovative disciplinary measures in schools. She stressed the importance of providing opportunities for behavioural correction through restorative justice principles, which encourage making amends and reparations for transgressions. While restorative justice is recognised and critiqued in legal discourse, the participant supported its applicability in school disciplinary systems.

Reyneke (2011, p. 135) questions the effectiveness of punitive measures in maintaining discipline, using the example of a male learner suspended for sexually harassing a female teacher. He argues that suspension alone does not restore the teacher's dignity or sense of security. Restorative justice practices in schools, similar to their application in criminal justice, bring together the offender and the victim to address harm and find solutions. This process can lead to victim satisfaction and relationship restoration, as seen in cases where learners learn the consequences of their actions and teachers gain insight into the students' backgrounds (Reyneke, 2011, p. 148).

Serious problem behaviours such as rape or murder require serious attention. However, minor issues such as truancy, refusal to follow instructions, swearing, late coming and vandalism of school property can often be corrected via restorative justice approaches, such as the PBS model. Punitive measures for these minor behaviours may expose students to crime and potential involvement in the criminal justice system due to a lack of supervision.

4.6 Theme 4: The impact of violence in schools

The participants were also asked about the impact of violence on learning and teaching. Out of the ten participants, eight expressed their displeasure about the wide range of violence that has become a daily menace in schools. They shared their views on the following:

4.6.1 Bullying

I discussed with the participants the impact of violence in schools, mainly how it adversely affects the learning environment. Bullying emerged as a significant topic of discussion. Many participants highlighted bullying as a pervasive issue that affects many children, with severe physical and psychological consequences for the victims. They underlined that bullying is a global concern, not confined to schools in Cape Town (Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012; Moutloutse et al., 2022; Nyawo & Govender, 2022; UNICEF, 2024; Nyoni & Lidzhegu, 2021; Mokomane, 2020).

Participants also criticised the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for not doing enough to manage the problem of bullying in schools, which largely contributes to the occurrence of challenging learner behaviour. They expressed concerns about the impact on bullies and victims, posing a threat to effective teaching and learning. However, Mokomane (2020: p. 1) offers a glimmer of hope, pointing out that several countries are turning to restorative justice as a promising approach to tackling bullying.

Mokomane (2020: p. 6) advocates for restorative justice practices to address bullying behaviour. He argues that this approach is essential for resolving conflicts and addressing underlying issues rather than relying solely on punitive and exclusionary discipline practices such as expulsion.

A participant who works as a teacher at PBIRC shared insights on dealing with bullying behaviour in schools:

There is no plaster that we can just put over without addressing the problem of bullying in depth. The mere exercise of sending a learner for suspension or detention to write lines and so on does not do much to correct the behaviour of the learner because these are all methods that are still rooted in the past and have not had much success in addressing behavioural challenges in learners. (Participant 2; PBIRC).

The participant criticised how detention is implemented in South African schools as an alternative to corporal punishment. She observed that while detention aims to foster accountability among learners, it resembles solitary confinement in the prison system. According to Mayisela (2020, p. 2), detention has little behavioural change value because it

turns out to be repeatedly used on the same learner, meaning that they do not see it as a deterrent for not behaving well.

Echoing similar sentiments, the participant supports the idea of positive discipline instead of measures such as detention. Beyond South Africa, countries such as Uganda also advocate for a restorative justice approach to discipline. They no longer see value in using punitive and exclusionary practices for school discipline. The Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) outlines four principles for disciplinary responses: they should be relevant to the misbehaviour, proportional to the offence (conduct), focused on correcting behaviour without humiliating the learner, and aimed at rehabilitation and learning from mistakes rather than retribution (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2008).

4.6.2 Cyberbullying

According to Nyoni and Lidzhegu (2021, p. 55), cyberbullying differs significantly from traditional bullying. Unlike typical schoolyard bullying dynamics, cyberbullying allows perpetrators to rapidly spread harmful information to a wide audience using technology such as social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, and mobile phones (UNICEF, 2024).

However, only two participants in the study demonstrated an understanding of the severity and impact of cyberbullying. They highlighted its exacerbation due to the widespread availability of mobile phones among learners and the proliferation of social media platforms, where hurtful content can easily circulate. This circulation often causes profound suffering not only for the victim but also for their immediate family, friends, and relatives.

A teacher participant shared a tragic example from Limpopo, where a learner took their own life after being bullied at school. The bullying incident was recorded and shared across various social media platforms, intensifying the distress and humiliation experienced by the victim.

*Our schools are somewhat lax when it comes to addressing cyberbullying.
(Participant 3; PBIRC).*

4.6.3 Dangerous weapon use

Three participants provided valuable insights into the impact of violence in schools, highlighting that the use of weapons among learners poses the greatest danger, potentially leading to loss of life. In this study, two participants connected the presence of dangerous

weapons such as knives and guns to the infiltration of gang violence and its influence on school grounds. However, one participant expressed a contrasting view:

We know that learners sometimes carry lethal weapons to school, but it would be unreasonable and against the law to subject them to daily searches as if they were in prison even here at PBIRC. What we normally do is maybe once or twice a month, we collaborate with relevant stakeholders such as the Community Policing Forums (CPFs), the police, and other law enforcement bodies to conduct surprise searches at the schools where the learner are coming from. That is where we find and confiscate these weapons, which are mostly knives of many kinds. (Participant 5; PBIRC).

While surprise searches of learners do not occur at the PBIRC facility, this participant reflected on school violence, particularly the use of dangerous weapons by learners. She noted that PBIRC operates as a day facility rather than a residential one, with learners returning to their respective schools each afternoon after morning interventions to keep up with academic standards. She mentioned that this approach ensures that learners do not lose their connection with the regular school system, which may have been the case if they were accommodated full-time at PBIRC.

Moreover, the participant mentioned that their involvement in school searches at the schools attended by learners sent to them for behavioural intervention aims to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by both the schools and the learners. However, the participant raised concerns about searching for dangerous weapons by school authorities, noting that this alone does not solve the problem of challenging behaviour all at once. Instead, scholars such as Lingis (2022) have identified that excessive use of surveillance cameras, metal detectors, and police station linkages to schools can create an atmosphere of potential danger or unsafety for learners. Other scholars, such as Losen (2015, p. 44), liken such measures to creating prison-like conditions that may discomfort some learners and increase anxiety.

The participant found no direct correlation between learners possessing dangerous weapons and involvement in gang activities or challenging learner behaviour. The participant believed that challenging learner behaviour could stem from typical teenage rebellion, retaliation against harm, standing up to bullies, self-defence, or a desire to fit in with peers.

In contrast, De Wet (2016, p. 2) argues that school violence and gang activity are closely linked, particularly in the Cape Flats region. De Wet (2016, p. 5) elaborates that learners may join

gangs seeking protection after conflicts or desiring group support, and acquiring firearms can be relatively accessible in such environments. One participant supported De Wet's view on the causal relationship between school violence and gang involvement.

I think, for the most part, gang affiliation is just one of the issues. One of the biggest issues is gang affiliation and then violence and control of power over children to use them to peddle drugs and so on. (Participant 7; PBIRC).

4.7 Theme 5: WCED behaviour support pathway

Participants were asked to explain the WCED Behaviour Support Pathway and the criteria for learners to be enrolled in the PBIRC pilot programme for behavioural intervention. The School Governing Body (SGB) conducts disciplinary hearings to determine the appropriate action for learners based on their misconduct. The participants maintained that SGB decisions may not always align with the learner's best interests, especially when suspension or expulsion is considered. Participants expressed concerns that SGB decisions might be influenced more by emotions than a thorough decision-making process. This could potentially lead to punitive outcomes rather than restorative ones for the learner. Importantly, participants highlighted that the behavioural intervention offers three levels of support: low-level, moderate-level, and high-level.

The referral process is multi-tiered. It begins with the teacher in the classroom expressing concern about the behaviour or academic performance of a specific learner, or both. When the teacher believes they have taken all possible steps to address the behaviour or improve academic performance, they may refer the matter to the School-Based Support Team (SBST) for further guidance. (Participant 10; PBIRC).

According to the participant, the school-based support team is responsible for "determining the support needs of the school, teachers, and learners" (Participant 10; PBIRC). Another participant mentioned that:

The referral process for a learner progresses from the teacher level to school-based support teams, district-based support teams, and eventually to a high-level meeting for enrolment into this pilot project we are facilitating here. This meeting involves us and relevant WCED provincial stakeholders, where a decision is made regarding whether to place a learner or not. (Participant 6; PBIRC).

The WCED Behaviour Support Pathway in the newly launched PBIRC programme is rooted in the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) policy known as SIAS (Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Intervention), initiated by Minister Angie Motshekga in 2014. SIAS aims to improve access to quality education for vulnerable learners facing barriers such as family disruption, poverty, learning difficulties, and disabilities (Department of Basic Education (DoBE), 2014).

Central to the SIAS process is the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) form, which consists of SNA 1, 2, and 3 and plays a crucial role in comprehensive learner intervention (Department of Basic Education (DoBE), 2014). Participants detailed the SNA process, highlighting SNA 1's focus on identifying learner strengths and needs across various domains such as communication, learning, behaviour, and family dynamics. Teacher interventions at this stage mainly involve tailored curriculum support and teaching methods.

SNA 2 involves further assessment by teachers and the School-Based Support Team (SBST) to delve deeper into barriers and interventions. If additional support is required, it progresses to SNA 3, where the District-Based Support Team (DBST) provides guidelines and action plans based on SBST assessments.

The WCED Behaviour Support Pathway emphasises collaboration in addressing challenging learner behaviours and learning difficulties, including literacy skills. Parental involvement is integral throughout these intervention processes.

4.8 Theme 6: Participants' views on measures needed to address challenging learner behaviour in schools by the department of basic education

During the interview, participants shared their views on the measures the DBE needed to address challenging learner behaviour in schools effectively. Their insights were informed by their experience in youth and skills development and their involvement in the positive behaviour intervention and support pilot programme with learners exhibiting behavioural problems across the Cape Town metropole districts. They were also asked about any observed positive behavioural changes in learners who had undergone intervention at PBIRC.

When asked about government measures to reduce challenging learner behaviour in schools, one participant who is a teacher by profession stressed the importance of smaller classrooms and lower teacher-learner ratios in public schools.

...the workload of the teacher will be lighter. The teacher will be able to focus on the learners individually and then identify challenges the learner may be facing either in the classroom or home. (Participant 10; PBIRC).

While smaller classrooms are a potential solution for the Department of Basic Education to consider, implementing this change will likely take a while. The learner-educator ratio has been a longstanding issue in South Africa for two decades due to rapid enrolments. Studies such as that of Zenda (2020) have examined its impact on academic achievement rather than specifically focusing on learner behavioural problems. Nevertheless, the participant suggested smaller classrooms as a measure to address challenging learner behaviour in schools.

Another participant suggested that teacher training should be improved and go beyond just preparing teachers to meet curricular outcomes. She was quoted as saying the following:

We need to adopt a didactic approach that will allow teachers to develop skills for facilitating an atmosphere for trauma-sensitive classrooms (Participant 5; PBIRC).

The participant explained that negative traumas such as bullying and school violence impact learners differently. Teachers require skills to establish a conducive learning environment before learners even enter the classroom. Another participant criticised the exclusionary practices of suspension and expulsion for managing challenging behaviour, advocating for a restorative justice approach.

...the PBIRC approach is a promising mechanism in behaviour management issues. (Participant 8; PBIRC).

In explaining their answer, the participant also mentioned that within environments such as PBIRC, they could holistically assess learners' problematic behaviour in a relaxed and nonjudgmental manner. Additionally, other participants highlighted the disparities between public and private schools in their overall operations and how they handle challenging learner behaviour. In this context, one participant underlined that that:

We need fully resourced public schools. I am not talking about books and all that, but schools that have professionals such as social workers and psychologists on site to look into the behaviour and well-being of the learners. If I am not mistaken, this is something that some private schools have (Participant 4; PBIRC).

While this perspective suggests valuable considerations for adoption in public schools, Phillips (2022, p. 39) presents a contrasting view. He argues that public schools often face challenges such as staff shortages, limited access to educational resources, and inadequate infrastructure. In contrast, private schools generally boast well-equipped facilities, highly qualified educators, and superior academic and recreational amenities.

Phillips (2022, p. 39) contends that these disparities significantly influence the prevalence of challenging learner behaviour. Children attending under-resourced public schools may experience feelings of deprivation and worthlessness, which can contribute to antisocial conduct such as bullying, peer pressure, truancy, and dropout rates.

Chapter Two of this study also references researchers such as Greese & Seaman (2017) and Mostert et al. (2015), who highlight differences in behaviour management and school-based risk factors between public and private schools. For instance, a private Christian school with strict adherence to religious principles was found to have fewer incidents of alcohol consumption, smoking, and drug use among students compared to a typical public school.

However, it is essential to note that using this comparison alone cannot definitively conclude that private school students do not exhibit behavioural issues or face disciplinary actions such as suspension or expulsion. Challenging learner behaviour, including violence and aggression, may be influenced by their home environment and personal experiences.

4.9 Chapter summary

During interviews, participants discussed the framework of their positive behaviour support programme developed through their involvement in the WCED pilot project. They echoed concerns outlined in previous chapters about the ineffectiveness of punitive measures such as corporal punishment, suspension, and expulsion in addressing challenging learner behaviour. These measures often lead to a cycle of repeat offences, contributing to what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline. This pipeline exacerbates antisocial behaviour in adolescents removed from the school system.

Participants identified several factors contributing to challenging behaviour, including negative peer influence, truancy, substance abuse, dysfunctional family structures, and gang influence. Labelling Theory and Social Learning Theory supported these observations. They proposed the Circle of Courage model as an integral disciplinary alternative. This model focuses on the

elements of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity and aligns with restorative justice principles for school discipline.

Participants unanimously viewed traditional punitive measures as counterproductive, pushing children into socially disorganised communities filled with crime and violence. This situation is similar to a continuum from school to prison. They advocated for a restorative justice approach to disrupt this cycle. They stressed the importance of providing children with alternative opportunities to deter criminal behaviour and antisocial tendencies.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters stressed that punitive and exclusionary practices, such as suspending and expelling learners from school due to behavioural problems, are ineffective. Various familial and societal factors, such as crime, substance abuse, and gangsterism, place children at risk of further antisocial behaviours.

Cuellar and Markowitz (2015) found that zero-tolerance policies could potentially push learners to engage in criminal activities outside the school environment. They reached this conclusion using data from the juvenile justice system in the USA. They argued that punitive and exclusionary practices do not deter problem behaviour and are the primary reason for the alarming number of young people in juvenile correctional centres.

In the context of the South African criminal justice system, Bougard (2018, p. 33) raised serious concerns about the impact of incarcerating young offenders. He stated that they may face victimisation at the hands of adult inmates while in prison due to their vulnerable age. Various scholars have described zero-tolerance policies as a driving force behind the "school-to-prison pipeline." This punitive approach funnels suspended or expelled learners into contact with the law by engaging in antisocial activities such as crime (Morgan, 2021; Gonzalez, 2016; Lodi, 2022; Reyneke, 2015).

The overarching concern about punitive and exclusionary practices has led scholars and policymakers to rethink school discipline. This rethinking gave birth to new restorative and preventative approaches. Unlike punitive practices, restorative justice focuses on reparations. It offers learners with behavioural problems a second chance and an opportunity for positive change.

The PBS model emerged from this new approach and is widely used in countries such as the USA, Australia, and Canada. It has profoundly impacted addressing challenging learner behaviour in schools and reduced office discipline referrals (ODRs) (Savage et al., 2011; Cage et al., 2018; Wilkinson, 2019). Additionally, the PBS model has been instrumental in various bullying prevention programmes, as highlighted in Chapters One and Two.

However, very few South African scholars have explored restorative justice practices or the PBS model in school discipline (Dwarika, 2019; Moodley, 2016; Kourkoutas & Woulhuter, 2013; Gagnon et al., 2012). Despite limited examination, these scholars recommend the PBS model as an alternative to punitive methods. They believe that challenging learner behaviour stems from factors such as dysfunctional family structures, negative peer influence, and substance abuse. Therefore, this study's findings add to the growing body of literature seeking to fill this research gap.

In South Africa, much debate on challenging learner behaviour is attributed to banning corporal punishment. Following its abolition in 1996, some believed the government had lost its grip on instilling discipline. Proponents of corporal punishment argue that it is the only effective disciplinary mechanism. They claim the increase in behavioural problems is due to teachers being unable to maintain discipline without corporal punishment. This authority was stripped from them by law.

Supporters of corporal punishment also tie it to the African concept of ubuntu, believing that teachers must act as secondary parents because they are in constant interaction with learners at school. However, opponents argue that corporal punishment has adverse psychological and physiological effects. They believe it leads to truancy and the normalisation of violence. The abolition of corporal punishment led to the implementation of Alternatives to Corporal Punishment (ATCP). However, some teachers did not embrace ATCP, criticising it as ineffective.

Despite the introduction of ATCP, challenging learner behaviour continued to grow, hindering teaching and learning. Some scholars and participants in this study attribute the problem to the lack of resources in public schools, such as social workers and educational psychologists, compared to private schools. Participants mentioned that employing full-time social workers, psychologists, and career guidance practitioners might be costly but recommended it to reduce challenging behaviour.

Participants also discussed the Circle of Courage model as a technique for facilitating positive behavioural change. In the PBIRC pilot programme, participants mentioned they offer behavioural support to fifty learners identified with behavioural problems from fifty-seven schools in Cape Town. The learners receive intervention from Monday to Wednesday for three to nine months, depending on how they respond to the behavioural support programme.

Despite the increase in challenging behaviour, participants highlighted that behavioural change requires a concerted effort. Children need support through parental involvement, love, and affection—which is crucial to their growth and development. Without these factors, they may fall prey to negative peer influence and gangsterism in order to fill this void. Participants also reflected on the negative labelling by teachers, which can become self-fulfilling prophecies for learners. They provided recommendations to address challenging learner behaviour.

This study determined that, indeed, there is a strong association between punitive and exclusionary school disciplinary practices and the creation of a school-to-prison pipeline. This study also established that the problem of challenging learner behaviour does not occur in isolation. The study identified and confirmed that there are pull and push factors that drive learners into engaging in behaviours that may lead to their expulsion from school. Most importantly, one of the participants was quoted as saying, "Our children lack positive role models in their homes and society". This participant touched on the lack of support structures, which have been shown to have a significant bearing on the growth and well-being of children, as has been evidenced in the literature. The participants stressed the critical role of a male figure or fatherly role in a child's life. However, the dysfunctional family structure often thwarts this ideal family unit, which the participant advocated as an essential element for guiding the socialisation and behaviour of the child. The lack of parental love and affection in the home often drives children to look outside the home, where they are likely to find themselves in the wrong places and in conflict with the law.

Moreover, all the participants mentioned gang involvement and negative peer influence as some of the contributory factors to the problem of challenging learner behaviours in schools. To illustrate, one of the participants elaborated on the issue of gang violence that is widespread within and around schools, such as the Lavender Hill area. This is where most learners with challenging behaviour come from and are referred for positive behavioural intervention by their schools. The problem of gang activity presents enormous challenges to the schools in Cape Town communities to such an extent that it was on top of the agenda in one of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee meetings on Basic Education (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2022). In a similar vein, the deliberations during the Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry into Policing led the principal of Chris Hani Senior Secondary School to confirm to the commission that rival gangs fight in the schoolyard and surrounding areas, posing a grave danger to the school (Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry, 2014, pp. 383-384). In this study, it was determined that the use of dangerous weapons such as knives and other sharp instruments exacerbates the

problem of challenging learner behaviour. Therefore, the participants believed early intervention of challenging learners is crucial to disrupting the early onset of antisocial behaviour. The literature on the restorative justice approach to school discipline also confirmed the early detection of antisocial behaviour in adolescents.

Since this study was exploratory, it offered new insights into restorative justice approaches to challenging learner behaviour in schools. Importantly, it highlighted the value of restorative justice approaches, especially using the PBS model as a form of positive discipline instead of suspension and expulsion. This study demonstrated the relevance of restorative justice as a behavioural technique that can be applied as an alternative school discipline in school settings.

At the start of Chapter One, the study aimed to answer the following research questions, which have been answered in the affirmative as well as confirmed by the literature:

1. What restorative justice practices do the service providers at the Positive Behaviour Support Intervention and Resource Centre (PBIRC) use to address the problem of challenging learner behaviour for at-risk youth in Cape Town schools as an alternative discipline?
2. What are the views and experiences of the service providers at PBIRC regarding the factors that contribute to the occurrence of challenging learner behaviour in schools?
3. Is the suspension of a learner from school a contributing factor to the early onset of delinquent behaviour (or a direct school-to-prison pipeline)?

The sample size of this study was limited in scope because the focus was the PBIRC pilot project, which included only the service providers from various professional expertise. More significant insights could have been offered by including the learners undergoing behavioural issues and the teachers and school principals of the schools where the learners with behavioural challenges are coming from.

5.2 Recommendations

In conclusion, the study proposes the following five recommendations, which aim to improve school learner discipline.

5.2.1 The use of restorative justice practices in school discipline

In this study, participants expressed concerns about the traditional use of punitive and exclusionary discipline practices in schools, arguing that these methods are counterproductive for addressing learner behaviour. They highlighted the social fragmentation present in the communities where learners live, such as Khayelitsha, Phillipi, Hanover Park, and Mitchell's Plain in Cape Town, which face significant challenges like crime, gangsterism, and substance abuse. Consequently, a zero-tolerance approach—such as expelling a learner for challenging behaviour—can lead to a cycle of antisocial behaviour. This may push these learners toward further trouble, including incarceration, due to the unstable environment surrounding them.

I believe that a radical shift toward restorative justice practices in school discipline, which considers challenging behaviour within the context of the school, family, and community, can assist the DBE in more effectively addressing learner indiscipline. This approach contrasts with the current practices of suspension or expulsion, which often alienate learners. School management, teachers and SGBs may find this restorative approach beneficial.

Although the literature acknowledges that restorative justice practices in school discipline are not firmly established within the South African education system, this study urges scholars in educational studies and those involved in legislative development to encourage further research and discussion on the topic. Adequate research and development in this area will help determine the applicability of restorative justice practices.

Additionally, this study recommends that other provincial education departments in South Africa adopt a disciplinary approach similar to the one currently implemented by the PBIRC in the Western Cape as a pilot project. This approach could address the issues of challenging learner behaviour, as learners in other provinces are likely to face similar challenges to those in Cape Town, Western Cape. Members of the Executive Committees (MECs) of provincial education departments may find this recommendation valuable.

5.2.2 Further research on the schools, teachers, principals, and the learners on which the PBIRC pilot project was based

While this study focused solely on one area where the restorative justice approach to school discipline is being implemented as a pilot project, a follow-up study could be beneficial. This study could include schools, teachers, principals, and learners involved in the pilot phase to gather their perspectives on the PBS programme and examine how they benefited from the intervention. Additionally, it would be valuable to assess whether there has been a noticeable

improvement in the behaviour of learners who participated in the programme. This comprehensive assessment could help determine the viability of restorative justice approaches to school discipline as an alternative to punitive and exclusionary methods.

5.2.3 Fully resourced schools

This study also supports the participants' recommendation for fully resourced public schools. Such schools should include professionals like psychologists, social workers, learning support facilitators, and occupational therapists onsite to address challenging learner behaviour through an ecosystemic approach. Although this may increase government spending, having these professionals at schools can provide essential behavioural intervention and support to learners, thereby preventing problem behaviour.

5.2.4 Smaller classrooms

This study also recommends smaller classrooms so that teachers can handle and respond to the manifestation of challenging learner behaviours. The uneven teacher-learner ratio also makes it difficult for teachers to maintain discipline in the classroom. Therefore, smaller classrooms can be an effective strategy for managing learner problem behaviour because the reduced class size will allow the teacher to give more individual attention to learners, which may cultivate a culture of better teacher-learner relationships. The participants weighed on the lack of individual attention a learner receives in the classroom, where examples of negative labelling afforded to underperforming learners are often assigned, which can further exacerbate their problem behaviour.

5.2.5 Improvement on the training curriculum of teachers

The prevailing assumption is that teachers are well-equipped and trained to handle the challenging aspects of learner indiscipline in the classroom. However, the increasing incidents of disruptive behaviour among learners are alarming. Learners often misbehave, and at times, their actions can pose a threat to others, especially when they bring substances or weapons that may be harmful to others at school. Many learners' outbursts are influenced by triggers related to their interactions with teachers, such as being yelled at or called unpleasant names due to certain behaviours.

Therefore, this study recommends improving teacher training curricula at the university level by including restorative justice practices as a method for managing school discipline. Effective behaviour management is crucial for teaching and learning, and adopting a restorative justice approach may prove beneficial. This approach considers the functioning and context of the learner, including their school environment, family dynamics, and community influences. This suggests that various factors may shape a learner's problem behaviour.

5.3 Conclusion

This study addressed the research questions and identified restorative justice practices as an integral aspect of tackling the problem of challenging learner behaviour. It has also highlighted the factors contributing to challenging learner behaviour. Additionally, the findings concur with the existing literature that punitive and exclusionary disciplinary practices, such as suspension and expulsion, contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Schedule



‘The views and experiences of service providers in facilitating a positive behaviour programme for at-risk youth at Cape Town schools: The Case of the Tenterden Place of Safety’

Keneilwe Golden Mathekga

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The participants are a broad set of service providers who assist the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) in implementing a positive behaviour support programme for at-risk youth in Cape Town Schools. They include social workers, educational psychologists, occupational therapists, learning support facilitators and educators. No names will be personally identified during the interview. Only codes will be assigned to identify participants. Interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes only. All personal information relating to the participants will be encrypted to safeguard their privacy.

No real names will be used during the interview process, only aliases. All interviews will be audio recorded, and all participants' personal information will be anonymised to protect their privacy. There will be semi-structured interviews with the following sections:

PART 1

Participants in the study will be required to express their perspectives and experiences regarding the issue of serious challenging behaviour among at-risk youth, and how this has impacted teaching and learning for students and educators in Cape Town schools. Their feedback will encompass their responses to implementing a programme aimed at promoting positive behaviour to assist the WCED in tackling this issue.

PART 2

1. What materials and methods do you use for positive behaviour support programmes?
2. What have you learned from working with learners who exhibit challenging learner behaviour in schools?
3. What impact do you think violent incidents have on the school?
4. What difficulties do you have as a facilitator of a programme to support positive behaviour among at-risk learners?
5. What kind of specialised training do you believe educators need to have to deal with the violence they experience in the classroom?

PART 3

1. What impression do you have of the current disciplinary system in addressing school violence based on your many years of experience as a facilitator of a positive behaviour support programme?
2. Do you think the education department needs to do more to address the problem of disruptive behaviour in schools?
3. What resources do you believe the education department needs to provide to address the issue of disruptive behaviour in schools?
4. In your work with learners who exhibit challenging learner behaviour, how much do you believe the issue of disruptive behaviour has an impact on classroom dynamics?
5. What factors do you believe contribute to aggressive behaviour among learners at school?
6. Do you think disruptive behaviour leads to more serious criminal behaviour for these at-risk youth?
7. Do you think your intervention with the positive behaviour support programme is making an impact in addressing challenging learner behaviour?

PART 4

1. Do you believe that these at-risk adolescents will engage in more serious criminal activity as a result of disruptive behaviour?
2. What would you advise the government to do differently in light of what you now know to address disruptive behaviour in schools?

Thank you so much for your time.

Appendix B: Study Information Sheet



‘The views and experiences of service providers in facilitating a positive behaviour programme for at-risk youth at Cape Town schools: The Case of the Tenterden Place of Safety’.

STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Golden Mathekgga, and I am a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT). I am currently working on my minor dissertation as a requirement for the MPhil in Criminology, Law, and Society programme. I will be conducting a research project titled "**The views and experiences of service providers in facilitating a positive behaviour programme for at-risk youth at Cape Town schools: The Case of the Tenterden Place of Safety.**" You are invited to participate in this study.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

I am undertaking this research to explore the views and experiences of service providers in facilitating a positive behaviour programme for at-risk youth at the Tenterden Place of Safety. The purpose of this study is to explore the application of restorative justice practices to school discipline and highlight the factors that contribute to challenging learner behaviour in schools.

WHY DO YOU WANT ME TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

I am inviting you to participate in the study because of your knowledge in facilitating a positive behaviour support programme for learners who exhibit challenging behaviour at Cape Town schools. I identified you through your department, and you consented. This study aims to interview ten participants, with the potential to increase this number to fifteen.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY?

You will only be interviewed by me. Your perspectives, experiences, and opinions regarding the facilitation of a positive behaviour support programme will be the main topics of the interview. The interviews will be conducted in a single session, lasting 40-60 minutes. A second interview session may be necessary as a follow-up clarity question should the need arise, and as such, another interview may be scheduled at your convenience. With your consent, I will record the interviews for quality of data and transcription purposes. During the interview, aliases will be used to safeguard your identity. This suggests that there will not be any identifying details that could identify you from the audio recording or the interview. Subject to your consent and availability, the interview duration may be extended if it is found that more information is required.

CAN I DISCONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY AFTER AGREEING TO DO SO?

You are not forced to consent; you are at liberty to decide whether to participate in this study. You are afforded an opportunity to leave the study at any time and are not required to provide reasons for doing so. If you decide not to continue participating in the study, all data will be securely stored at the University in line with university policies on ethics.

WHAT AM I BENEFITING FROM PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

The greatest benefit of this study are the contributions it offers to both the scientific community and society at large in terms of understanding a positive behaviour programme for at-risk youth and developing knowledge in the field of criminology. One advantage of taking part would be the chance to share your experience, which may help prevent the early outset of youth involvement in criminal behaviour.

DOES TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT HAVE ANY DISADVANTAGES FOR ME?

You have no danger of being harmed by this research study.

WILL THE RESEARCHER MAINTAIN THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF MY INFORMATION AND MY IDENTITY?

You have the right to remain anonymous and keep your information confidential. Nobody can identify you from your remarks or answers, and nobody else will know who you are because your name will not be recorded. Your responses will be provided using a made-up name, and you will be referred to in this way in the data. The only people who will have access to the transcripts of the interviews are my research supervisor and myself, and we will do all in our

power to keep the material private. Your identity will be kept confidential and anonymous to preserve your privacy and protection.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER MAKE SURE THE DATA IS SECURE?

The researcher will store hard copies of your responses in a digital safe for five years. All electronic data will be kept on a password-protected computer for future scholarly or research endeavours. All data will be anonymized and securely archived following UCT data storage policies.

DO I RECEIVE COMPENSATION OR ANY OTHER BENEFITS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The study is entirely voluntary, and there is no compensation of any kind, whether monetary or otherwise.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE RESEARCH'S FINDINGS AND RESULTS?

The results of the study will be made available to the public upon completion. If you would like to receive the final research findings, need further information, or wish to contact the researcher regarding any aspect of this study, please get in touch with Keneilwe Golden Mathekga at the following contact details: cell phone number 083 526 6718, Email address: MTHKEN015@myuct.ac.za, and for details of the supervisor, Professor Irvin Kinnes, please email irvin.kinnes@uct.ac.za. If you have any concerns about the way the research was conducted, you can contact (0)21 650 3080 or lamize.viljoen@uct.ac.za. Alternatively, you may write to the Law Faculty Ethics Committee Administrator at Room 6.29 Kramer Law Building, Law Faculty, UCT, Private Bag, Rondebosch 7701.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Yours Sincerely,

Golden Mathekga

Appendix C: Consent Form



‘The views and experiences of service providers in facilitating a positive behaviour programme for at-risk youth at Cape Town schools: The Case of the Tenterden Place of Safety’.

By:

Keneilwe Golden Mathekga

CONSENT FORM

I, the undersigned, confirm that:

1. I have read and understood the information provided in the research study information sheet dated. _____.	
2. I received information about the research study and a copy of the information sheet to keep. I was also given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
3. I willingly agree to take part in the research study.	
4. I understand I have the right to withdraw at any time without giving reasons. I will not be penalised or questioned for withdrawing.	
5. The procedures concerning confidentiality were clearly explained to me, including the use of names, codes, and pseudonyms.	

6. The use of the data for research, publication, sharing, and archiving has been clarified to me.	
7. I understand that the information I provided during my interview will be used in a master's dissertation, reports, publications, and other research outputs.	
8. I understand that other researchers affiliated with the Centre of Criminology may access this data only if they agree to maintain the data's confidentiality and abide by the terms I have outlined in this form.	
9. I am aware that the audio files and transcripts will be securely stored in a data repository for future use.	
10. I, along with the researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	

I,, confirm that the researcher who obtained my consent for participating in this research study has provided me with information about the nature, procedure, and potential benefits of my participation. I have been informed about the purpose of the study, what is expected of me, and have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I acknowledge that the findings of this study may be used in research reports, journal publications, or conference proceedings, but my participation will be kept confidential, unless otherwise specified. I also agree to the recording of the interviews.

Lastly, I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname	Participant Signature	Date

Researcher's Name & Surname	Researcher's Signature	Date

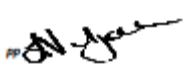
Appendix D: UCT Research Ethical Clearance



Faculty of Law: Research Ethics Committee

Private Bag X3 • Rondebosch • 7701 • South Africa
 Room 6.29 • Kramer Building • Middle Campus
 Tel: +27 021 650 3080 Fax: +27 021 650 5660
 E-mail: lamize.wiljoen@uct.ac.za Internet: www.law.uct.ac.za

Certificate of Approval for Ethical Clearance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/SUPERVISOR: IRVIN KINNES STUDENT: KENEILWE GOLDEN MATHEKGA [MTHKEN015] FACULTY: LAW DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC LAW	ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER: L00009NS-2022 ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 14-NOVEMBER-2022 APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 13-NOVEMBER-2023
PROJECT TITLE: The views and experiences of service providers in facilitating a positive behaviour programme for at-risk youth at Cape Town schools: The Case of the Tenterden Place of Safety PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: Masters research. The research aims to explore the views and experiences of service providers who comprise behaviour facilitators, social workers, educational psychologists, occupational therapists and learning support educators in facilitating a positive behaviour programme for at-risk youth at Cape Town schools.	
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Modifications To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a formal "Request for a Modification" to the REC Administrative Office. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol. Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You are responsible for submitting this by at least 2 months prior to the expiry date of clearance date issued. Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please formally notify the REC: Law as well as your supervisor where applicable.	
Certification This certifies that the University of Cape Town Law Faculty's Research Ethics Committee has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Cape Town Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.	
 Associate Professor Fatima Osman LAW REC: LEAD REVIEWER	

Certificate Issued On: 16/11/2022

Appendix E: WCED Research Ethical Clearance



Directorate: Research

meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za
Tel: +27 021 467 2350
Fax: 086 590 2282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20220713-4250

ENQUIRIES: Mr M Kanzi

Mr Keneilwe Mathekga
Room C
Flat 1
10 Selby Road, Mowbray
7700

Dear Keneilwe Mathekga,

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF SERVICE PROVIDERS IN FACILITATING A BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR AT-RISK YOUTH AT CAPE TOWN SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF THE TENTERDEN PLACE OF SAFETY.

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **13 July 2022 till 30 June 2023**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Mr M Kanzi at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

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

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,
Meshack Kanzi
Directorate: Research
DATE: 13 July 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Meshack Kanzi'.

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