

## Stakeholders' Perceptions of their Roles in Enhancing Discipline in Rural Community Schools

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**Abstract:** *This paper summarises the perceptions of stakeholders' roles in enhancing discipline in rural community schools. A mixed research design (qualitative and quantitative) was used in the study. The population was stratified into three- State, Local Government Areas and Rural Communities within the Local Government Areas. A multi-stage stratified random sample of 432 stakeholders was drawn from*

*the six rural communities of Arochukwu and Ohafia Local Governments in Abia State, Nigeria. Semi-structured questionnaires were administered to the stakeholders while structured questions were used for the Focus Group Discussions. The results showed that the stakeholders are in agreement that disciplinary measures are devised to promote and maintain a well-disciplined school environment, quality and equity education (mean = 3.95±0.05); but disagree that the School Board and Parent Teachers' Associations take initiatives in the formulation of school regulations (2.64±0.06). While management and implementation of discipline jointly significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) predicts access to quality and equity Basic Education, the teacher discipline and environment factors are negatively correlated with access to quality and equity in Basic Education. The study recommends partnership between the parents, teachers, school, and the community in addressing issues of the learners' indiscipline in schools. An introduction of modified corporal punishment appropriate to the learners' age and disposition can be implemented to salvage the learners and improve their academic performances.*

**Keywords:** Discipline, stakeholders, perceptions, rural community, Schools.

### Introduction

Stakeholders, namely, parents, teachers, students/learners, community leaders, school supervisors, businessmen and women, in the surveyed rural communities all agree that teachers devote a lot of effort and time in the management and discipline interventions in the schools. However, there are a lot of unanswered questions regarding the reasons learners misbehave in schools leading to their being suspended or expelled and how these affect the quality and equity in Basic Education, particularly in rural communities. The perceptions of stakeholders about school discipline practices and assessment of their role in enhancing implementations of discipline in schools can be of tremendous use in providing answers to questions on access to quality and equity in Basic Education in rural community schools (Machumu and Killugwe, 2013)

Discipline is a necessity for successful teaching and learning in schools and a subject of concern to teachers, parents and schools (Eshetu, 2014). Gitome, Katola and Nyabwari (2013) emphasised that wherever discipline is adjudged to be good, there will be improved academic performance. Discipline, therefore, is vital for students' academic performance (Njoroge & Nyabuto, 2014) and is essential for effective school management and the accomplishment of the goal of school (Nakpodi, 2010). Omote, Thinguri and Moenga (2015) defined indiscipline (lack of discipline) as any action considered to be wrong and not generally accepted as proper in a setup or society, while for Ali, Dada, Isiaka, and Salmon. (2014),

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indiscipline among learners is perceived to include any of the following forms of misbehaviour: disobedience, destruction of school property, poor attitude to learning, immoral behaviour, drug abuse, stealing, lateness, truancy, dirtiness, being quarrelsome, use of abusive or foul languages, rudeness and cultism.

Indiscipline, in the form of bullying, absenteeism, disregard to school authorities and the appalling poor academic performance of students in schools, is very rampant in schools. Yet, teachers, who are expected to engage in discipline management in schools, concentrate more of their efforts on how they and their families can survive (Machumu and Killugwe, 2013). The effect of this is that many rural schools learners, who completed primary education, do not know how to read and write and proceed to secondary education with just a minimum pass grade. For effective learning to take place, it is very important that a safe, secure and positive environment is created (Joubert & Squelch, 2005). The Department of Education (2008) asserts that 'the school is committed to providing an environment for the delivery of quality teaching and learning by promoting the rights and safety of all learners, educators and parents'. The stakeholders can play an important role in ensuring that there is a sound discipline in the schools (Joubert & Bray, 2007).

Maintenance of discipline in schools and at home instils valuable skills and cultural morals in the learners. Disciplined schools attract more learners because everyone believes that a disciplined school produces quality learners. When the overall learning environment is conducive for all learners, such school will be on high demand. Discipline is most needed in schools because disrespect for teacher and school authority is rampant amongst the learners and as a result quality education becomes jeopardised (Fafunwa, 2004; Universal Basic Education Commission -UBEC, 2004; UNICEF, 2006).

The role of stakeholders in ensuring that children imbibe discipline from home and in schools cannot be overemphasised. Good performance of schools and learners is very much linked to the participation of all stakeholders (parents, teachers, learners, Parent Teachers Associations, government departments, community, learners and the private sector) in education (Machumu & Killugwe, 2013). Thus, building a mutual relationship among the stakeholders in education will vehemently improve the quality of education. There are a number of factors or problems that hinder learners from receiving a good standard of education such as the lack of parental participation in the education of their children and the functioning of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) which can be described as weak. Parents do not have access to familiarise themselves with the school curriculum or be involved in the activities of the schools. The teachers are not aware of how to effectively involve parents in the academic performance of the learners (Stelmack, n.d). There is always a tendency for affluent parents to be involved in school more often and in positive ways, whereas economically distressed parents have limited contact with schools, and usually in situations dealing with students' achievement or behaviour. Parents who are less educated and have low-income often adopt some survival strategies. They either focus on their family or sometimes may not have enough time to engage in home-school work that could be helpful in improving the child's schooling.

Parental involvement in the upbringing of the child covers a wide range of actions such as parenting style, parental expectations and aspirations, home rules

and parental supervision, parents' attitudes towards children activities, helping with homework, visiting the school to talk to teachers, bearing financial cost of education and beliefs regarding their child's education (Levand, 2011; Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013). Researches (Epstein et al., 1997; Tan & Goldberg, 2009; Khajehpour & Ghazvini, 2011) have shown that the involvement of parents' in activities such as learning activities at home, effective communication between teachers and parents, have a positive relationship with a number of positive children's outcomes. They largely determine personality development and academic achievement of children (Khajehpour, 2011; Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013).

### **Theory and research context of this study**

This study is informed by some theories. For instance, the social cognitive theory suggests that learners absorb messages about appropriate behaviours and socially accepted goals by observing and talking with important people in their lives (Bandura, 1977). Based on this assumption, parents, communities, teachers, and school managements have the potential to model positive attitudes and behaviours of their children toward the school. Fan and Chen (2001), Houtenville and Conway (2008) and Jeynes (2007) found out that parental and community involvements contribute to the academic success of their children, including discipline. The Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence explain the need for partnership relationship between school and home. According to Epstein (1995), there are three major recognisable contexts, namely, the family, the school, and the community in which learners learn and grow. In this model, the schools, families and communities can perform several activities either separately or jointly in order to influence children's academic achievement and development, including imbining discipline in the learners.

The model shows different spheres of influence in the life of a child, at the community, school or with the family. There are times when the child is influenced by joint forces (the school and community) in civil activities, or within school and family and under the influence of community and family. One could also visualise a situation when the child is under the influences of the three forces where the community and parents are involved. These multiple sources of influence help the child to acquire acceptable skills and behaviour, become knowledgeable and well informed in both school and life aspects (Kimaro and Machumu, 2015; Epstein, 1986). Although studies such as Rusby et al. (2011) have mostly used observational data on behavioural climate and supporting school context data in drawing conclusions, they have neglected surveys of stakeholders and their perceptions of school discipline, in order to draw sufficient insight into discipline in the rural schools (Nelson, 2002). The perception of the stakeholders and assessment of their different roles in enhancing access to quality and equity in Basic Education is not very clear, but is very important and forms the crux of this paper.

### **Research Questions**

This study, which employs mixed-method research design, will answer the following research questions:

1. What are the views of the stakeholders about discipline practices in rural community schools?

2. How do their perceptions of discipline and socio-demographic characteristics affect access to quality and equity in Basic Education?

### **Methodology**

The study used the mixed-method research design and the multi-stage stratified sampling to extract information from a sample of 432 stakeholders from six rural communities in Arochukwu and Ohafia Local Governments of Abia state, Nigeria. Both methods are used simultaneously to complement each other (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009; Denzin, 2009) in order to get a reliable result. The Creative Research Systems (2012), a sample size calculator, gave a statistically acceptable sample size of 516 for the population of Abia State, Nigeria, at 95% confidence interval and a margin of error of 5%. Abia state was purposively selected because of its peculiarity in having backward rural communities. At the second stage, two Local Government Areas, Arochukwu and Ohafia were randomly selected from the 17 Local Government Areas in the state. At the third stage, a random selection of six rural communities, two from Ohafia and four from Arochukwu Local Government areas was done. The sample size of 516 stakeholders was equally allocated to the six rural communities (Table 1). The snowball sampling technique (Vogt, 1999) was used in identifying stakeholders in the selected rural communities because of non-availability of sampling frames for this population. However, only 432 stakeholders responded to the survey (Table 1), giving a response rate of 84%. This is very much higher than Arber (2001) who recommended an achievable and acceptable rate of approximately 75% for interviews and 65% for self-completion postal questionnaires (Kelley et al., 2003).

**Table 1:** *Distribution of the sample size of the population*

State	Population	Local Government Area {LGA}	Rural Communities	Proposed Sample Size	Achieved sample size
Abia	3,256,600	Arochukwu	Okpo	86	102
			Umuzomgbo	86	79
			Achara	86	73
			Umuchiakuma	86	59
		Ohafia	Elu Ohafia	86	68
			Ebem Ohafia	86	51
Total				516	432

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data were collected using questionnaire administered to the sampled stakeholders. The trained research assistants administered the questionnaire on the respondents after explaining the purpose of the research to them; informing them that participation was not compulsory, and explaining to them that information obtained was confidential and anonymity was ensured by not having their names on the questionnaire. Those who accepted to participate signed a consent form before the interview. In addition, one Focal Group Discussion (FGD) was held in each of the rural communities, with a total of 57 participants (Table 2). The collected quantitative data were analysed using descriptive (percentages,

means and correlations) and inferential statistics (multinomial logistic regression analysis, Chi-square and t-tests). The qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha with a reliability coefficient of 0.90.

**Table 2: Distribution of Participants in the FGD by Rural Communities**

Participants	Rural Communities						Total
	Umuzomgbo	Achara	Okpo	Umuchiakuma	Elu Ohafia	Ebem Ohafia	
Teachers	2	1	2	2	2	2	11
Supervisor of schools	0	1	1	0	1	1	4
Community Leaders	1	2	2	2	1	1	9
Parents	3	4	5	4	4	5	25
Learners	2	1	2	1	1	1	8
Total	8	9	12	9	9	10	57

### **Ethical Review and Limitations**

The study was approved by the Abia State Ministry of Education Institutional Research Review Board before being administered on the stakeholders. The study relied on the perceptions of stakeholders. A limitation of this study is that participants are most likely to have been embarrassed to admit their lack of knowledge about specifics regarding school discipline practices and their children's attitudes in school and at home. In addition, teachers and supervisor of schools might assume they could be perceived as personal failures by acknowledging that discipline problems existed in their classrooms or schools. These factors may have influenced responses and therefore skewed the results of this study. However, the study relied mostly on the excellent designs and the administration of the study, which have been responsible for reliable results.

### **Data presentation and Analysis**

The participants were asked to rate their perceptions of discipline in the rural community schools as an instrument to enhance access to quality and equity in Basic Education in the rural communities based on some 14 discipline suggested items on a five-point Likert scale: 1= Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3= Don't know; 4=Agree; and 5= Strongly Agree, The responses shown in Table 3 represent the mean ratings and the standard deviation of the mean (standard error). The overall mean rating was 3.56.

**Table 3: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Discipline in the Rural Community Schools**

Perceptions of discipline by stakeholders	N	Mean	Std. Error
All learners have a copy of the school regulations.	424	2.12	0.05
The School Board takes the initiative in the formulation of school regulations.	425	2.64	0.06
The content of the school regulations is discussed and explained to the learners.	425	2.99	0.06
Disciplinary measures are devised to promote and maintain a well-disciplined school environment, equity and quality education.	426	3.95	0.05
Parents take responsibility for the discipline of their children.	424	3.71	0.05
Teachers manage their classrooms well.	425	3.16	0.06
Teachers treat all learners equally.	420	3.35	0.06
The discipline relies on constructive, corrective, right based and positive, educative practices.	424	4.06	0.04
Teachers are able to maintain order and harmony in the school.	423	3.78	0.05
Educators are able to model appropriate behaviour to the learners.	322	3.52	0.08
In maintaining discipline in schools, teachers understand that each child is simultaneously unique and different.	428	3.85	0.04
Good teaching and learning is the core business of a school and cannot take place in the absence of good discipline.	428	4.17	0.04
Poor parental discipline and monitoring have been responsible for the occurrence and persistence of conduct problems in schools.	428	4.20	0.04
Teachers discuss with the class a set of rules or even ask for a suggestion of rules to enhance learning in class.	428	3.82	0.04

When requested to evaluate their perceptions of discipline in the rural community schools, the stakeholders' responses, displayed in Table 3, show that they agree that disciplinary measures are devised to promote and maintain a well-disciplined school environment, quality and equity education (mean = 3.95±0.05); Discipline relies on constructive, corrective, right based and positive educative practices (mean = 4.06±0.04); Good teaching and learning is the core business of a school and cannot take place in the absence of good discipline (mean = 4.17±0.04); and that poor parental discipline and monitoring have been responsible for the occurrence and persistence of conduct problems in schools (mean = 4.20±0.04). They, however, disagree that all learners have copies of the school regulations (mean = 2.12±0.05); the School Board takes the initiative in the formulation of school regulations and that the content of the school regulations is discussed and explained to the learners (mean = 2.64±0.06).

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out on the data structure, which reduced the 14 variable items to four constructs (latent variables) which were identified as Teacher factor, Environmental factor, Management factor and Impact factor of discipline.

**The Teacher Discipline factor** is heavily weighted on teachers treat all learners equally (0.864); Educators are able to model appropriate behaviour to the learners (0.853); Teachers manage their classrooms well (0.853), and Teachers are able to

maintain order and harmony in the school (0.729). The factor accounts for 28.7% of the total variation.

*The environment factor* is heavily loaded on good teaching and learning as the core business of a school and cannot take place in the absence of good discipline (0.835); Poor parental discipline and monitoring have been responsible for the occurrence and persistence of conduct problems in schools (0.79); In maintaining discipline in schools, teachers understand that each child is simultaneously unique and different (0.671) and Teachers discuss with the class a set of rules or even ask for a suggestion of rules to enhance learning in class (0.669). This factor accounts for 17.9% of the total variation.

*The management factor* is heavily loaded on the School Board take the initiative in the formulation of school regulations (0.853); All learners have a copy of the school regulations (0.839); The content of the school regulations is discussed and explained to the learners (0.805). The factor accounts for 16.4% of the total variation.

*The implementation of discipline factor* is heavily loaded on disciplinary measures are devised to promote and maintain a well-disciplined school environment, equity and quality education (0.843); Discipline relies on constructive, corrective, right based and positive educative practices (0.75) and Parents take responsibility for the discipline of their children (0.615). This factor accounts for 7.84% of the total variation. The figures in brackets represent the correlation between the defined variable and the latent factor.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was calculated as 0.8, which explains that the data lend themselves satisfactorily to the application of EFA and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reveals that the correlation matrix is significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) different from identity matrix showing that there is a correlation between the variables making the application of factor analysis adequate.

To determine whether the stakeholders' perceptions of discipline in the rural community schools affect access to quality and equity in Basic Education, the following null ( $H_0$ ) and alternative ( $H_1$ ) hypotheses:  $H_0$ : Discipline in school does not affect access to quality and equity in Basic Education in rural communities in Abia State;  $H_1$ : Discipline in school significantly affects the access to quality and equity Basic Education in the rural communities in Abia State were formulated and tested by fitting a multinomial logistic regression model to the data with the four constructs as independent variables and 'Have you access to quality and equity in Basic education' (responses 1= Yes, 2= No and 3= Don't know) as a dependent variable. The significance of the model and individual factors were tested using the Likelihood Ratio Test statistic, which is distributed as chi-square (Table 4).

**Table 4: Test of the adequacy of the multinomial logistic regression model**

Model Fitting Information					
Model	Model Fitting Criteria		Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood		Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept only	561.3				
Final	470.8		90.532	8	0.000

Table 4 shows that the Multinomial Logistic Regression model is a good fit to the data meaning that the four factors, teacher discipline, environment, management and implementation of discipline jointly significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) predict access to quality and equity in Basic Education. The individual contribution of the factors (constructs) was analysed and tested using the Likelihood Ratio Test and results shown in Table 5. The correlation between the individual factors and the dependent variable, access to quality and equity in Basic Education are calculated and shown in the last column of Table 4.

**Table 5: Likelihood Ratio Tests of individual constructs**

Effect	Likelihood Ratio Tests						
	Model Fitting Criteria		Likelihood Ratio Tests			Correlation between constructs and dependent variable	
	-2 Log Reduced	Likelihood of Model	Chi-Square	df	Sig.(p-value)	R	Sig.(p-value)
Intercept	487.2		16.40	2	0.000		
Teacher discipline	525.0		54.17	2	0.000	-0.256**	0.000
Environment	481.2		10.40	2	0.006	0.277**	0.000
Management	485.6		14.85	2	0.001	-0.110*	0.024
Implementation	491.9		21.08	2	0.000	0.157**	0.000

\*\* Correlation significant at 1%; \* Correlation Significant at 5%

Table 5 shows that each of the constructs (discipline factors) is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), meaning that each of them significantly affects access to quality and equity in Basic Education. The teacher discipline and management factors are significantly negatively correlated with access to quality and equity in Basic Education ( $p < 0.05$ ), while environment and implementation of discipline factors are significantly positively correlated with access to quality and equity in Basic Education.



The teacher discipline and management factor have an indirect effect on access to quality and equity in Basic Education. Thus when teachers' roles and management disciplinary roles are eroded, as it is in many schools today, access to quality and equity in education will be unattainable. Even when management ensures that learners have copies of school regulations or rules, discusses the content with learners, they lack the will power to enforce strict adherence to these rules. There are so much Government and parental interference in the governance of schools, thereby affecting discipline in schools and subsequently access to quality and equity in Basic Education.

When the school environment and implementation of discipline are good, many intelligent learners are produced, and more parents are attracted to the schools; Schools can set standards to be met before a learner is admitted to the schools. Quality teachers and qualified teachers are attracted to the schools, thereby enhancing quality education in the schools. Parents and guardians prepare and assist the learners in meeting the academic standards, and pass the necessary qualifying tests to secure places in such schools. Parents are prepared to pay what fees a well-disciplined school demands.

### Focus Group Discussions

When the question of stakeholders' perceptions of discipline in rural community schools was put at the FGD, the teachers blamed the parents for indiscipline among learners. For instance, a participant (an ex-headmaster from Umuzomgbo community) responded that *'some parents are careless; they neither allow their children to be disciplined by others nor do they apply discipline to their children themselves; some parents defend their children even when they know they are misbehaving in school or public places and this affects the children's performance'*. Another teacher from Okpo, community, exclaimed, *'we teachers are incapacitated when it comes to disciplining learners; we can't punish a learner for coming late to school; even in the class, the learner cannot be cautioned for noise-making or for not paying attention when the lesson is going on; we are careful about asking learners for an explanation on what they are doing in class instead of paying attention to the teacher'*.

A teacher from Achara community explained his ordeal in the hands of a parent when she learnt that I gave corporal punishment to her child for fighting with another learner in school. He said, *'I was almost arrested by the police but for the intervention of the headmaster'*. Another participant (a mother, a retired teacher from Ehem Ohafia community) said that *'corporal punishment should be avoided, but I don't know any other alternative modes of punishment that can be used'*. She indicated, *'corporal punishment do not work and are just a waste of time'*.

A parent (civil servant) who participated in the FGD expressed their discontentment as follows: He exclaimed that mothers should be admonished for they are the worst offenders in this regard. He said, *'As parents, we need to be strict in handling the affairs of our children'*. He reminded the group the Biblical saying, *'Spare the rod and spoil the child'*. Another civil servant from Elu Ohafia community did not mix his words when he indicted teachers saying, *'Teachers are also not disciplined; they abandon classes in pursuit of money from other sources; they are never there for the children. How can there be quality education when teachers enter into a sexual relationship with the learners they are expected to cater for?'*

The learners were not left out of the discussions as many of them also expressed their views as follows: An ex-learner from Okpo Community

expressed, 'teachers and management of schools should be empowered to discipline learners'. Another learner from Umuchiakuma community said, 'When I was in school, our teacher could not talk to me anyhow. I did whatever I wanted to do because the teacher was always sending me on an errand when I am supposed to be in class. This is indiscipline on the part of the teacher, but I discovered of late that I was punishing myself as I always performed poorly in my classwork. I wish I could turn the clock back'.

A parent at the FGD was so obsessed with the blame of indiscipline of the learners on them. She said, 'The reason why I will resist my child being punished by teachers is that some teachers overdo it. They do not consider the age of the learners. After all, many of the teachers' children are in the cities'. Another parent from Okpo community pleaded, 'Let the management of schools get us parents involved in the management of the schools. We will give the management ideas on how to discipline the children. We will also point out to them some of the ills we have observed about the teachers' attitudes to the learners'. Yet another parent from Elu Ohafia community said, 'The problem I have is that we parents do not have an avenue of discussing with the teachers and school management. The Parent-Teachers Association hardly calls for any meeting'.

A parent who participated from Achara community (a businessman) said, 'The reason I cannot send my children to this rural community school but prefer to send them to private schools is because of lack of discipline in the public schools. There is so much Government interference in the running of the community schools. Teachers do not teach well, and nobody queries them; learners are very loose, and nobody seems to care; even the community does not show much interest in the welfare of schools'. The parents tried to exonerate themselves from the blame by arguing as follows: 'No parent would watch his or her child come home with bruises because a wicked teacher has unleashed his/her anger on the small child and for whatever reasons'

### **Effect of Demographic Characteristics of Respondents on Discipline**

A linear regression model was fitted to the responses to determine how the demographic characteristics affect the dependent variable discipline. The overall mean for the dependent variable, discipline, was computed from the average scores on the four constructs derived from the exploratory factor analysis. The overall model fit is tested as shown in the ANOVA Table 6

**Table 6:** ANOVA Table- Discipline versus demographic variables

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	16.663	5	3.332	13.843	0.000
Residual	96.297	400	0.241		
Total	112.96	405			

Table 6 shows that gender of respondents, marital status, highest educational level of respondents, parental involvement and distance to school jointly significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) affects discipline in school. The presence of these demographic variables in the model explains 14.8% of the variation in the discipline ( $R^2 = 0.148$ ). The t-tests and correlation analysis to show how individual demographic characteristics affect the dependent variable are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7: Test of significance of the individual variables**

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients			Sig.(p-value)	Correlation btw discipline & independent variables (r)
	B	Std. Error	t		
(Constant)	3.385	0.29	11.687	0.000	
Gender of stakeholders	0.116	0.05	2.225	0.027	0.051
Highest Educational Level	0.019	0.02	0.975	0.330	0.107
Marital Status	0.074	0.05	1.63	0.104	0.096
Parental Involvement	-0.099	0.06	-1.597	0.111	-0.094
Distance from school to home	0.021	0.003	7.28	0.000	0.347

Table 7 shows that gender of stakeholders and distance from school to the home of learners are positively correlated with discipline ( $B > 0$ ,  $r > 0$ ) and significantly predicts discipline ( $p < 0.05$ ). The highest educational level of the stakeholder and marital status, although positively correlated with discipline ( $B > 0$ ,  $r > 0$ ) but are not significant predictors of discipline ( $p > 0.05$ ). Parental involvement is not a significant predictor of discipline and is negatively correlated with discipline. This means that when parental involvement in the affairs of their children is high, indiscipline is low; there is a tendency for them to support disciplinary measures applied in schools to call their learners to order. Things become worse when parents themselves are loose in taking care of the children. Any attempt by someone else to discipline the learner is usually rebuffed by them.

### Discussion of the results

The study set itself to answer the following research questions: (i) How do the stakeholders rate discipline (or indiscipline) of learners in rural community schools? (ii) How do their perceptions of discipline and socio-demographic characteristics affect access to quality and equity in Basic Education? This discussion will be aligned to the four constructs of discipline: the teacher discipline and management factors which are significantly negatively correlated with access to quality and equity in Basic Education ( $p < 0.05$ ), and the environment and implementation of discipline factors which have been shown to be significantly positively correlated with access to quality and equity in Basic Education.

The teacher discipline ensures that educators are able to model appropriate behaviour to the learners and manage classrooms well, ensuring order and harmony, and every learner receives equitable instruction irrespective of their cultural backgrounds and using multiple modes of learning. When these multiple perspectives are integrated into instruction, the learners feel comfortable in their classroom environment, and learning is enhanced for all learners. This way, the teachers can counteract learners' expressed views during the FGD that they hate going to school because their teachers do not care about them or their school work. It is also important that parents and community discussion with the teachers about how to best support those learners who have diverse needs, so the teachers can provide training on culturally responsive teaching practices. Teachers should see themselves as role models to learners, and every learning and practice should

incorporate this perception as this will help them maintain order and harmony in the classroom. Situations, where teachers abandon their classes in pursuit of extra resources as indicated by participants of the FGD, do not lead to proper discipline. Educators ought to know the students by their names as this assures the learners that they are well known and accepted by the teachers (Krasnoff, 2016). The teacher should always be able to communicate with the learners their capabilities and high expectations for their achievement. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that discipline must be administered in a manner consistent both with the child's dignity and with the right to protection from all forms of violence, thus sustaining respect for the child in the educational environment. Because of this clause, there is so much freedom in the choices learners make today; they almost dictate what the teacher should tell them in class and how it should be said; they are not punished for coming to school late; the teacher cannot scold or caution a learner; otherwise, it would be regarded as an abuse (South African Council for Educators, 2020; p.13).

The school management discipline factor ensures that the School Boards take the initiative in the formulation of school regulations, which are discussed and explained to the learners. This exercise involves the participation of the teachers, school authority, parents and the community in ensuring training and discipline of learners. Unfortunately, the roles of these groups in enhancing access to quality and equity in Basic Education were assessed by the respondents in the survey and in the FGD as inadequate. Parents and rural communities should organise themselves and come up with appropriate ways to support teachers in implementing quality and equitable instructional practices. All parties should be involved in the supervision of what the teachers and learners are doing. The supervision system is a two-way relationship that includes classroom coaching and feedback from the parents, school authorities and the rural communities. There is a need for regular meetings between the teachers and parents. The parents and other community members, during the FGD, complained of being totally left out of what is happening in the rural schools. It is crucial that parents, learners, as well as rural communities, be brought to know of certain regulations that bind the learners to proper discipline in school such as the consequences of learners coming late to school; learners disrespecting their teachers; learners stealing school properties and making noise in class and the criteria and standards that will be used to evaluate learners' work, and provide learners with anonymous samples of prior student work to assist them to know the teachers' expectations (South African Council for Educators, 2020; p.13). Such information will help parents and communities become monitors of their children's activities and classwork.

The school boards and Parent Teachers association (PTA), made up of knowledgeable persons within each rural community are usually set up to assist and work closely with the Ministry of Education, the supervisors of schools, the principal and headmasters of schools to set clear goals and expectations for learners and staff. They help support positive school culture, accountability on all levels of leadership; make decisions based upon accurate and reliable school information, and share information regarding learners' needs. In conjunction with the Ministry of Education, the school boards set up school regulations and ensure that teachers communicate these rules to the learners. Unfortunately, the roles of

these boards in the rural community schools are shown to be inadequate in the study and explain the distancing of teachers from the parents and community, teachers abandoning their classes in pursuit of extra resources at the detriment of the learners' education and advancement of quality and equity in Basic Education in the rural communities. Parents are never informed of what is going on the school and why there is a lack of discipline in the rural community schools. These results are in agreement with Machumu and Killugwe (2013) who found out that stakeholders hold positive perceptions on discipline management as a means to improve students' academic performance. Goodwin (2010) indicated that school boards essentially operate at a distance from the learners in the classroom, yet their decisions and policies have a tremendous effect on student learning. The study by Mestry and Khumalo (2012) revealed that many rural school governors still lack the relevant knowledge and skills to design and enforce a learner code of conduct effectively. It is important that the Ministry of Education should ensure that school boards are reinstated where none exists, to fulfil important roles in helping community stakeholders better understand the needs and challenges in their community schools and the desired goals of quality and equity in Basic Education

The environmental discipline factor, as a factor enhancing access to quality and equity in Basic Education, emphasises that good teaching and learning as the core business of a school cannot take place in the absence of good discipline and that poor parental discipline and monitoring of learners have been responsible for the occurrence and persistence of conduct problems in schools. The environment in which learning is conducted must give room to the co-existence of all the parties, namely: the teacher, learner and parents, and for the practice of appropriate discipline. The headteacher, for instance, must be able to control access to and use of the school compound, screen all visitors to the school, administer corporal punishment to learners who warrant such. Confidence needs to be built between the school headteacher and all relevant authorities, including parents, learners and teachers. The environment should facilitate review of disciplinary strategies on a regular basis, and discuss desirable/acceptable social and professional behaviours. Ill-discipline can destroy the possibility of a safe and orderly environment and thereby hamper the core purpose of the school, as learners learn and perform best in an orderly and safe environment (Hill and Hill, 1994: p. 16). Levin and Nalon (1991:p. 30) found out that the learners' safety, readiness to learn, future behaviour, as well the teaching and learning environment can be affected by disruptive behaviour in the classroom, such as bullying. The need for the maintenance of a good environment in the rural community schools and discipline for the welfare and safety of learners, educators and for the success of the educational process cannot be overemphasised.

The implementation of latent discipline factor is shown in this study to be significantly positively correlated with access to quality and equity in Basic Education. Thus, when teachers' and management disciplinary roles are eroded, as it is in the studied rural community schools today, access to quality and equity in education will be unattainable. It is important that forms of discipline implemented in the schools should be appropriate to the ages of the learners. There was consensus amongst the respondents in the FGD that the abolishment of corporal punishment has resulted in a collapse of discipline in schools. Some

argued vehemently against corporal punishment not only because of the age of the learners but rather because they felt that teachers would be abusing it. The unruly behaviour of learners have also been blamed on lack of parental involvement in the education of the learners (Mtsweni, 2008), a factor that has been shown in this study to be a significant predictor of discipline and negatively correlated with access to quality and equity in Basic Education. The parents have been seen to be at the forefront of the learners' education and discipline. The study by Nelson (2002) found out that parents, as the ones closest to child's daily school life, have a better understanding of what is acceptable and expected in a school with good order and discipline. Similarly, Simelane (2017) found that Educators mainly relied on parental support to deal with serious learner offences, but this strategy was largely inadequate because parents are hardly aware of disciplinary systems of the schools. It is imperative that the Ministry of Education should put in place structures in the rural community schools that will enhance parental participation in learners' education. Parents and educators have a duty to prepare the learners to perform excellently in the community as well as in the world of work.

Stakeholders' educational backgrounds affect the discipline of learners positively. When the stakeholders, most of who are parents, are highly educated, they are more interested in the welfare of the learners and learners have difficulty in deceiving them. The parents know what the learners need and can easily provide them. They are able to monitor the learners' activities inside and outside the home and providing coaching services for improving their learning in different subjects (Wakasrafiq et al., 2013). Cotton and Wikelund (1989) explained that when parents really get involved and monitor homework, encourage participation in extracurricular activities, and help children develop plans for their future, the children are more likely to respond, become more disciplined and do well in school.

The findings from this study show that the implementation of the Nigerian National Policy on Education (NNPE) (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004) in the rural communities is poor, hence the disheartening educational situation found in the rural communities. In the rural communities, learners are rude, lack skills and are not properly empowered with rudiments of life to survive in the future. The Government of Nigeria should allow punitive corporal measures of punishing learners with love and care. What is needed in rural communities is functional education. This education emphasises that products of the schools should be technologically sound, self-employable, self-reliant, have positive nation-building attitude, job performance, competency, life skills and lifelong education (Akubuilu, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

It is clear from the results of this study that all stakeholders perceive discipline as an essential ingredient for the smooth running of schools, although this has been unattainable in the rural community schools. All the parties blame each other for the indiscipline perpetrated by learners and the diminished quality and equity in Basic Education in the rural community schools. The teachers and schools are handicapped by Government Educational policies in implementing appropriate disciplinary measures on learners. Teachers are afraid of parents

taking them to court for disciplining their learners in school. The parents as well, although they are aware of the usefulness of bringing up a child who has appropriate behaviour they are weak in establishing a good environment that enables them in the home to deal with the learners. In line with the Epstein (1995), spheres of influence model, there is need for partnership between the family (represented by the parents), the school, and the community in addressing issues of the learners' indiscipline in schools. An introduction of modified corporal punishment appropriate to the learners' age and disposition can be implemented to salvage the learners and improve academic performance.

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