



## Causes of learners' misbehaviours at primary schools in the Makonde district, Zimbabwe: A stakeholders' concerns

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**Abstract**—Misbehaviours are one of the major problems rampant in primary schools and hinder the learners' academic performance. Hence, it is a concern for all stakeholders. This study explores the causes of learners' misbehaviours at primary schools in Makonde district, Zimbabwe. It also intended to determine factors that influence the learners' misbehaviours. It adopted a qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm. A descriptive survey research design was also employed. Two head teachers, ten teachers, and twenty learners were selected from two primary schools as participants in this study. Data was collected from questionnaires, observation, and document analysis. The results showed that learners' misbehaviours could be caused due to poor parenting, peer pressure, mass media influence, permissive school environments, drug abuse, home background, and the social environments where learners live. The results revealed that learners' misbehaviours lead to poor academic performance, as learners who misbehaved always perform badly academically. This study recommended a collaborative effort between teachers and parents to curb misbehaviours. It further suggests using guidance and counselling in schools to reduce the rate of misbehaviours amongst primary school learners. It is recommended that further studies be conducted on the same topic but from a broader perspective.

**Keywords:** Misbehaviours, stakeholders' concerns, Parenting styles, Academic performance

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### I. INTRODUCTION

SCHOOL discipline is an international framework and a core indicator of school effectiveness hence misbehaviour has become the most common challenge faced by many schools all over the world. The research was necessitated by the concern to know the actual causes of misbehaviour at the primary level and how they affect the learner's academic performance.

Maphosa (2011) asserted that the issue of learners' indiscipline had taken centre stage internationally and nationally for a long time. Kagema and Kagoiya (2018) posit that, in the United Kingdom, for example, there are many cases of classroom disorders. A lesson depends on many factors to reach an acceptable level of success, and discipline takes the lead. In a classroom, discipline is a prerequisite if meaningful learning is to take place. It is on this premise that the study was carried out.

Research in the United States by Mike Ford (2013) on Wisconsin learners found that from 2010 to 2011, more than 48,000 learners were suspended. The disruptive behaviours leading to these suspensions are detrimental to teachers, school cultures, and learners' learning. This implies that many causes lead to student misbehaviour, which can lead to punitive measures being taken against the perpetrators, leading to their academic suffering due to missed class time and being ostracized. The Colorado State University Extension Service suggested that whenever life changes occur, bad behaviours or negative behaviours may be portrayed by learners. For example, changes including a new born in the family, starting or enrolling in a new school, death of a family member, and divorce may result in learners portraying negative behaviours Charles and Senter (2008). According to research by Ward

(2014), in the United States of America, all learners exhibit bad behaviours from time to time due to the stress they encounter in daily life. Concurring with Ward, Inky (2014) also states that when one child is always out of control or often exhibits aggressive behaviours, such as biting, kicking, or temper tantrums, he or she may have a behaviour problem. Inky further argued that bad behaviours could also be shown through verbal confrontations such as bad language or back-talking. Belle (2017) also posits that when learners fail to verbalize their emotions or fears of the unknown, it may cause them to make poor choices. Learners may become loud, aggressive, defiant, or non-compliant. Because of this concern, a study was conducted to discover the causes of misbehaviours among primary school learners in Zimbabwe.

According to research studies in Kenya, as cited in Kagema and Kagoiya (2018), one of the most contentious issues in school discipline is using corporal punishment to enforce discipline. In the Kenyan context, Legal Notice 40/1972, contained in the Education Act Cap 2011 (revised 1980), authorized the use of the cane, albeit with specific guidelines for its application. Unfortunately, some teachers failed to adhere to these guidelines. This use of corporal punishment sometimes has resulted in serious injuries to learners and, in several cases, even death. Such consequences resulted in pressure from non-governmental organizations and international agencies to ban corporal punishment in Kenyan schools. They argue that it is against provisions in international instruments on child protection to which the Kenyan Government is a signatory (MOEST, 2005). Corporal punishment has been linked to increased school vandalism and higher misconduct rates. In fact, for some learners, corporal punishment can create negative attitudes, reinforce the behaviours intended to be punished, and lead to increased discipline problems (Kagema & Kagoiya, 2018). In addition, research findings by Kagema and Kagoiya (2018) on examining factors

contributing to indiscipline in primary schools in Nyeri central Sub-Country, Kenya, identified different causes of indiscipline in schools. Among the causes of indiscipline are permissive home environments, poverty, lack of expertise in professional management, and learners themselves, which are sources of indiscipline. Against this background, the researcher was digging deeper into the causes of misbehaviours among primary school learners in Zimbabwe.

From a research study carried out in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2013), disruptive behaviours are a great problem, and teachers have sentiments on behavioural problems of learners in the management of classrooms. In some classrooms where unruly behaviours occur frequently, students are less engaged academically. They have less time spent on school work, so the classrooms are low in achievement tests. The research also found that misbehaviours are not merely naughty behaviours of learners but go beyond the normal, routine disturbance in the classroom. In some cases, a single learner disturbs the whole classroom so much that neither the learner who created the disruption nor the other learners sitting beside him or her can learn. In support of the above findings, Ford (2013), after interviewing disruptive learners, indicated that their behaviours were generally tied to disliking the teacher's instructional style, personality, or subject being taught. It is for this cause that the researcher was finding out more about the causes of misbehaviours at the primary school level in Zimbabwe.

According to Marais (2010) in Belle (2017), disruptive behaviours continued to be the most consistently discussed problem in South African schools. Misbehaving learners and disciplinary problems are a disproportionate and intractable part of every teachers' teaching experience. From a South African-based research study by Vusumuzi and Shumba, both teachers and learners appear justified in fearing for their safety with the consequences that the learning process is stymied by the need to deal with unruly behaviours and to prevent serious episodes of aggression and violence.

This study has noted that misbehaviours in schools are being blamed on the parents for failing to give proper upbringing to their children. According to Madziyire (2010), nowadays, parents ignore their duties towards the proper upbringing of their children, and little time is spent with these children, resulting in the moral laxity that the learners exhibit. Ndakwa (2013) posited that if parents are largely unavailable, the children usually turn to their peer group for emotional support and often turn to the group that supports them, even if the group is involved in illegal or negative activities and for some young people the need for affiliation or closeness is often greater than the need to do the right thing. Kagema and Kagoiya (2018) also posit that permissive home environments contribute to learner misbehaviours. If parents spend little time at home, children may seek unsuitable social experiences elsewhere that devastate their lives. In Zimbabwe, for example, many parents have migrated to neighbouring countries or overseas, leaving their children under the guardianship of relatives or children to take care of themselves, thus creating permissive environments for acts of misconduct. A research study by Gutuza and Mapolisa (2015) in Zimbabwe suggested that early signs of a learners' bad behaviours often appear at home, especially if the learner has siblings they interact with regularly. However, many parents do not see the signs themselves, often due to not knowing what to look for or dismissing the matter as an untrained child who needs a school routine to get in shape. Therefore, it is against this background that the researcher looked into child-rearing practices impacting children's behaviours.

The researcher has also noted a drastic change in learners' behaviours [negatively] since the abolition of corporal punishment by the law in Zimbabwe. The ruling by Justice Muremba outlawing corporal punishment on learners suppressed the previously permitted law on corporal punishment by the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act. It raised a storm among the Zimbabwean populace, with those in the children's rights applauding the ruling. At the same time, the general public and some other sectors bemoaned the outright law as

unsuitable for the Zimbabwean context. The main reason proffered in the public outcry was that the ban promoted misbehaviours among learners. At the same time, those in authority had nothing to use in disciplining learners under their control (The Sunday Mail, 30 August 2015). Chikowore (2014) also agreed that, since the abolition of corporal punishment, there had not been effective ways of dealing with misbehaviours. For this reason, the researcher has decided to dig deeper into the issue of abolishing corporal punishment as a contributing factor to misbehaviours in schools.

According to previous research, the school environment is also pinpointed as contributing to student misbehaviours. Human Rights Commission (2006) found out that a culture of school-based violence increasingly undermined the environment and climate necessary for effective teaching and learning. This is becoming a matter of national concern. Ndakwa (2013) posits that there are learners who influence others to cause chaos, and this happens when learners meet other learners with different behaviours that negatively influence others. Belle (2017) argued that effective discipline is needed in schools for good academic achievement because when there is effective discipline in the school and the classroom, effective teaching and learning take place. Against this background, the researcher discovered more about the causes of misbehaviours at the primary school level in Zimbabwe, psychological theories, and how they affect learners' academic performance.

It seems that misbehaviours have become rampant in most primary schools in Zimbabwe. These unruly behaviours include bullying, stealing, truancy, absenteeism, attention deficit, laziness in school work, and lack of respect for school authorities.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Causes of misbehaviours at the primary school

Child-rearing practices have some effects on children's behaviours. Parents, the children's immediate socialisation agents, greatly influence behavioural modification. As propounded by Baumrind, there are four types of parenting: authoritarian, authoritative, neglectful, and permissive, and each produces different personalities in children. According to Arifin et al. (2018), the family is a lesson personality builder and behaviours of a person since childhood and greatly influences one's behaviours, attitudes, and thoughts into adulthood. This implies that children mimic what they see happening within their families, as the family is the first socialization agent for the children. The lack of parenting skills and family management also contribute to the moral problems of students. The difficulty faced by the students is usually the continuation effect of the problems that arise during childhood (Arifin et al., 2018). That is if the parents in the home are permissive and do not care about the actions of their children at home, for example, not being respectful to others or talking back to elders. A lot more, they will also carry such types of behaviours to school, thereby hindering the learning process due to moral laxity.

The lack of effective communication and affection in the family also plays an essential role in forming a student's personality (Arifin et al., 2018). Adegboyega et al. (2017) add that the attachment theory explains that parental attachment affects the student's behaviours; when the parents and the child develop negative relationships, and the educators and the child develop unhealthy relationships, the child manifests a lack of positive behaviours. Therefore, proper communication channels are very important in the family, especially when moulding the behaviours of the young ones. For example, the way of communication used by authoritarian parents moulds negative personalities among children as the style is too demanding and punitive to the extent that children may be frustrated and become rebellious and aggressive, especially towards other learners in the school.

Arifin et al. (2018) emphasize that negative personalities and problematic behaviours develop from failure in family ties. This entails that if there is disunity within the family or the type of parenting is neglectful, then children can also develop an attitude of not caring for

others as they do not receive enough love and care from their parents. Living in a neglectful family may lead learners to have negative relationships with others in the school, and children may turn to groups in which they feel accommodated even if the group is full of delinquent students. This increases the amount of learner misbehaviours in schools. The study by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (1993) proved that the highest contributor to deviancy and anti-social behaviour is that most problematic students have a background in a problematic family. Lack of parental love and care and the type of parenting given to the learners significantly influence their behaviours.

### III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the causes of learners' misbehaviours at primary schools in Zimbabwe.

### IV. METHODS

#### Research paradigm

This research adopted an interpretive research paradigm, emphasising the comprehension of knowledge pertinent to human and social sciences (Pham, 2018). This study gathered data through document analysis, observation, and questionnaires to better understand the phenomena under study. Interpretivist researchers strive to minimize bias and appreciate the varied perspectives surrounding events and individuals (Pham, 2018). This paradigm facilitates a multiplicity of viewpoints and a deeper insight into phenomena within social contexts. Additionally, primary data produced through interpretive studies may exhibit high validity, as the data collected in such inquiries is often perceived as reliable and sincere (Collins, 2010). Consequently, the valuable data obtained offered the researcher enhanced insights for subsequent actions. Nevertheless, interpretivism promotes a deep understanding of phenomena within their contextual intricacies rather than generalizing findings across different populations and settings; as a result, it frequently overlooks the validation of the reliability and applicability of research outcomes through rigorous scientific methods (Cohen et al., 2011).

#### Research approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach, an interpretive technique that seeks to describe, decode, translate, and understand the meaning of certain phenomena in the social world (Rahman, 2017). Qualitative research uses flexible language to provide intensive descriptive accounts of actions, experiences, feelings, and emotions (Yin, 2014). This approach enabled the researcher to explore issues that cannot be quantified, including attitudes, feelings, and behaviours, by observing events unfolding and gaining a deeper understanding through participant observation. Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses a wider range of epistemological viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques for understanding human experiences. The qualitative research approach produces a thick (detailed) description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences and interprets the meanings of their actions (Rahman, 2016). The interactive qualitative research design allows for thorough and appropriate analyses, allowing participants to determine what is consistent. This approach further enabled the researcher to look closely at people's words and actions by observing behaviours and studying written documents. However, some authorities have raised cons of using qualitative research, such as focusing more on meanings and experiences, a smaller sample size, and more complex data interpretation and analysis (Silverman, 2010; Rahman, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research is a long, hard road, with elusive data and stringent requirements for analysis (Rahman, 2016).

#### Research design

Research design encompasses a systematic framework of plans and methodologies employed in educational research to collect data for inference, interpretation, explanation, and prediction (Cohen, 2011). The

present study utilized a descriptive survey research design, emphasising the attributes of the population or phenomenon under investigation (Salaria, 2012). This design applies the scientific method to rigorously analyse and scrutinize source materials, interpret data, and formulate generalizations and predictions (Salaria, 2012). Such an approach allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' extensive experiences, intentions, beliefs, values, and the rationale behind their actions, facilitating a deeper understanding of their meanings (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Participants responded to open-ended questionnaires to investigate the underlying causes of misbehaviours among primary school learners. At the same time, the researcher also collected additional insights through participant observation and document analysis.

#### Participants

Yin (2014) characterised a population as individuals possessing specific traits pertinent to the researcher's inquiry. In this study, the population of interest comprised disruptive learners from two primary schools in the Makonde district and teachers from these institutions. These schools were selected based on proximity and ease of access, facilitating efficient movement between the two during data collection. The research focused on learners, teachers, and school administrators. Engaging both heads and teachers allowed for corroborative data collection regarding learner behaviours and their impact on academic performance while ensuring the participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

Chiromo (2012) describes a sample as a portion of the population chosen from the overall population size. Schutt (2010) explains that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method where the researcher deliberately selects participants pertinent to the research topic. This approach enabled the researcher to identify participants who could provide comprehensive and insightful information regarding the factors contributing to misbehaviours at the primary school level in the Makonde District. The selection of participants was based on their established expertise, ensuring that they would serve as valuable sources of information on the issues being investigated. Consequently, two school heads and ten teachers were chosen due to their familiarity with learner misbehaviours. Specifically, those responsible for discipline, guidance, and counselling were included in the sample. This strategy proved advantageous, as it allowed the researcher to engage knowledgeable individuals, thereby conserving time and resources compared to involving those lacking essential insights into misbehaviours. For the sake of clarity, the schools were designated as School A and School B, while the school heads were labelled as Head A and Head B. Teachers were identified as Teacher 1, 2, 3, and 4, and learners were referred to as Learner 1, 2, and 3.

#### Data collection instruments

##### Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a structured tool for collecting data, comprising a series of systematically arranged questions directed towards a population sample (Chiromo, 2012). In this study, all participants had the opportunity to complete open-ended questionnaires. The researcher opted for this format due to its capacity to maintain respondent anonymity, allowing individuals to share their insights without the risk of repercussions and without disclosing their identities, thus preserving confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2011). This approach enabled participants to articulate their thoughts freely and interpret their experiences from unique perspectives. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the data obtained from the questionnaires were corroborated through observations and document analysis.

##### Observations

Observation is a methodological approach researchers utilise to uphold objectivity in evaluating behaviours (Bennet, 2011). This technique enables researchers to scrutinize nonverbal cues, discern interactions, comprehend communication dynamics, and quantify the duration of activities (Gustafson, 2017). This study employed participant observation to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of

the phenomena under study, ensuring objectivity and accuracy (Ponto, 2015). The findings' validity was further bolstered by incorporating supplementary methods such as document analysis, questionnaires, and a theoretical framework. As a practitioner within the classroom environment, the researcher focused on the attitudes of disruptive learners and their impact on peers. Additionally, the researcher observed interactions in the classroom, gathering essential data that facilitated interpretation by integrating verbal and nonverbal behaviours.

#### Document analysis

Document analysis represents a qualitative research approach that interprets various documents to derive meaning and insights related to a specific assessment topic. This method encompasses the examination of both printed and digital documents, which may include public records, official documentation, and ongoing records of an organization's operations (Administration Methods, 2010). In the context of this study, the researcher scrutinised social record books to gain a comprehensive understanding of the learners' backgrounds and social standings. Additionally, attendance registers were analysed to assess the frequency of learners' attendance. At the same time, the disciplinary record book (commonly referred to as the black book) was examined to identify prevalent types of misbehaviours in schools and the corresponding disciplinary actions implemented by school authorities. The decision to analyse these documents was justified by their ability to provide a stable foundation for the study, as document analysis inherently prevents researchers from modifying the information and encompasses a broad temporal scope, numerous events, and diverse settings (Yin, 2014). Despite the inherent limitations of document analysis, such as the possibility of missing information, intentional obstruction of access to documents, and biased selection, it offers significant advantages, including stability, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness, thereby establishing it as a valuable instrument for qualitative research (Yin, 2014).

#### Ethical considerations

The ethical dimensions of this research were of utmost importance, necessitating the protection of participants from potential harm and the acquisition of informed consent. Adhering to ethical guidelines mandates voluntary participation, which entails providing participants with comprehensive information regarding their rights, the study's objectives, methodologies, and associated risks and benefits (Tuckman and Monett, 2011). Participants were required to sign consent forms, emphasizing the necessity to make an informed choice regarding their involvement in the study. As noted by Khothari (2011), maintaining confidentiality is a fundamental ethical responsibility of the researcher, ensuring that the identities of participants and all related disclosures remain private. Consequently, confidentiality was upheld, and participants were reassured that the information gathered would be accessible solely to individuals directly engaged in the research. To further protect anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms and fictitious names were employed for both the participants and the educational institutions involved in the study.

Trustworthiness was a critical consideration in ensuring the quality of the study (Connelly, 2016). The researcher concentrated on four key dimensions to establish trustworthiness: confirmability, transferability, dependability, and credibility. Data collection methods enhanced credibility, including triangulation through observation, questionnaires, and document analysis. This multifaceted approach allowed for a comprehensive comparison and analysis of the ideas derived from the collected data (Yin, 2014). Confirmability pertains to the researcher's objectivity during the research process. In this study, confirmability was achieved by incorporating participants' perspectives and minimizing researcher bias through triangulation in data collection (Bryman, 2012). Dependability refers to the consistency of the findings over time (Bryman, 2012). To address this, the researcher provided a thorough account of the research design and its implementation, along with a clear explanation of the data collection methods employed,

thereby offering a detailed evaluation of the findings that could assist future researchers in conducting similar studies. Finally, to promote transferability, the researcher supplied comprehensive information regarding the participants' demographics, the total number of individuals involved, the data collection instruments utilized, and the organizations that participated in the research. This level of detail enables future researchers to evaluate the applicability of the findings in different contexts (Bryman, 2012).

#### Data collection procedure

The researcher got a testimonial letter from the Great Zimbabwe University and sought clearance from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to enter the field. The researcher visited the respective schools and administered the questionnaires to the students and the teachers. The researcher also made appointments with school heads to analyse different documents in the school, which helped her establish the types of misbehaviours that occur in primary school and the relationship between misbehaviours and academic performance.

#### Data analysis

Data gathered were subjected to thematic analysis through graphs, tables, and narratives, organized according to the sequence of research questions to enhance the study's validity and generalizability (Turumen, 2013). The results were illustrated, and comparisons were made using percentages. Thematic analysis systematically identifies, categorizes, and elucidates significant patterns within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It is regarded as a fundamental method in qualitative research, equipping researchers with essential skills applicable to various qualitative analysis techniques (Nowell et al., 2017). This approach allowed the researcher to pinpoint the prevalent causes of misbehaviours as reported by participants, facilitating the development of themes based on these shared experiences. The primary themes that emerged during the coding process included parenting styles, a permissive school environment, insufficient preparedness, and peer pressure.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The causes of student misbehaviours can differ; Alstot and Alstot (2015 cited in Orejudo et al., 2020) reviewed the related factors. They not only point out students' characteristics (personal background, motivation, and family personal factors) and the classroom context (direct consequences of misbehaviours, classes not meaning anything, and boredom in class). Similar causes of misbehaviours emerged from the three data collection tools used. It was revealed that various causes in and out of the school could lead to learner misbehaviours in schools. From the data collected, heads of schools and teacher respondents pointed out that various causes perpetuate misbehaviours in schools, and the list includes parenting styles, cyberculture, family dynamics, home background, lack of supervision and preparedness, unattended classes, permissive school environments, socioeconomic status, peer pressure, and poor classroom management. The researcher also noted similar causes through document analysis and participant observations. Consistently, learner respondents also expressed that unattended classes, poor classroom management, and poverty are causes of misbehaviours in primary schools. To unpack these findings, the stated headings are discussed below:

#### Type of parenting

One of the primary causes of misbehaviours revealed in this study is the type of parenting primary school learners receive. All teacher respondents in this study agreed that parenting affects how children behave. Most teacher participants indicated that some parents are too permissive and have a lot of love and affection towards their children. They fail to notice, let alone correct, their children's misdeeds, hence the rise of misbehaviours in schools. One of the teacher participants mentioned this.

*"Most parents nowadays no longer have tough love for their kids. They give a nod to every demand of their kids and are even too protective of them, leading to moral laxity not just at home but even in schools"* (Teacher 1)

Within this strand, Chetty (2018) revealed that parents who are insecure and anxious often lavish affection and attention upon their children. They spoil the child with excessive gratification, affection, and attention most of the time, leading the child to be behaviourally maladjusted. The perception was that excessive love and pampering given to children at home could affect the child negatively as he/ she would be unable to differentiate right from wrong.

Besides permissive parenting, neglectful parenting was also cited as one of the major causes of misbehaviour among primary school learners. Most children are left under self-care, and parents are too busy for their children; they no longer have family time with their children, and their children's behaviours usually skip their eyes. Children who grow up under such type of parenting manifest unstable and eroded behaviours, and they will exhibit it even at school, hence increasing the rate of learner misbehaviours in schools. A literature review also indicates similar results by Munje and Mncube (2018), who lamented that parental laxity contributed to waywardness among learners, unruly behaviours, and poor responses in class.

#### **Family dynamics**

The study also revealed that learners from unstable home environments exhibit misbehaviours. That is, learners from dysfunctional and broken families have a high risk of being mischievous as they lack love, affection, and guidance from both parents. This is in concurrence with Mendler et al. (2008), who posit that most of the learners with disruptive behaviours come from troubled homes where there may be continuing erosion of the nurturing family structure, the absence of the fathers in the home, and drug abuse. Therefore, in such scenarios, the family's role in moulding the child's behavior will be compromised.

#### **Cyber culture**

Most teachers who responded to the questionnaire cited social media as one of the causes of learner misbehaviours. As the education system embraces digital tools and technologies, the teachers who participated in this study felt that social media exposes children to inappropriate content and behaviours. For example, learners usually emulate behaviours of social media influencers, such as substance abuse, recklessness, and violence, which are usually unhealthy and problematic. This entails that learners lack proper education on using digital tools responsibly, hence the rise of misbehaviour in schools.

#### **Peer pressure**

Some participants highlighted that certain factors within the school environment influence misbehaviours. The major in-school factor highlighted by most respondents in this research was peer pressure. During the research study, the current researcher also observed that every learner belonged to a certain group, thus, a learner's peer group determines how one behaves most of the time. For example, learners usually engage in group fights to protect their social groups and to gain recognition within their groups. Consistent with the researcher's observations, most teacher respondents also noted that the issue of mindlessly sticking around with negative peers is one of the primary social reasons causing learner misbehaviours. In the future, these young children will be forced to conform to the expectations of their peer groups to blend in, thereby increasing the rate of misbehaviours in schools. However, not all peer groups are a bad influence on one's personality Arifin et al. (2018) posit that peer influence is important for the development of children, especially the development of intellect, personality, emotion, and social interaction between peers will drive the intellectual development and its potential to an optimistic level.

#### **Lack of supervision and preparedness**

Lack of supervision and unpreparedness was also mentioned among the in-school factors that caused misbehaviours. Lack of supervision and unpreparedness on the part of teachers may lead to frustration among the learners, fuelling the chances of misbehaving within the school. These findings align with Maphosa and Mammen (2011), who assert that teachers also cause indiscipline in schools due to their unpreparedness and lack of commitment to their work. One of the

teacher participants pointed out that:

*"Idleness and lack of supervision during learning times usually lead learners to resort to bullying each other, fighting or even destroying school property as a way of seeking attention"* (Teacher 4).

The current findings also pointed out that a teacher's lack of preparedness can also trigger misbehaviours at school. Lochan (2010) argues that discipline crumbles when lessons are not interesting, causing boredom and disruptions such as truancy and talking during lessons without the teachers' permission.

#### **Poor classroom management**

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the classroom environment, and their relationship with learners can significantly impact learners' behaviours. According to Hattie (2009), a positive teacher-learner relationship, characterised by mutual respect and trust, can foster a supportive learning environment and reduce misbehaviours. On the contrary, the current research findings indicated that some teachers are too harsh towards learners and often use stringent autocratic controls such that learners will resort to truancy due to fear. Further, the study revealed that learners need love and nourishment from the teachers, but some teachers fail to act in loco-parentis, leading to learners disrespecting the teachers and their peers. These findings concur with Adegboyega et al. (2017); when the educators and the child develop unhealthy relationships, the child manifests a lack of positive behaviours. Thus, poor attachment between the teacher and the learner can cause misbehaviours.

#### **Socioeconomic factors**

Stealing and truancy were cited as common types of misbehaviours among primary school learners. Most participants indicated that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds might face additional challenges contributing to misbehaviour. Respondents mentioned poverty as contributing to misbehaviours such as stealing and truancy. One of the school heads mentioned that some of the learner's resort to stealing food from other learners due to hunger, whilst some resort to dodging lessons due to poverty as they will not have enough materials needed in the class. These results resonate with those by Chetty (2018), who found out that, behind every act of stealing by a learner, there is a cause or motive, and among the reasons for theft by learners are situations where a child steals because he is hungry, needs clothes, or because he needs money to impress his friends.

#### **Lack of parental involvement**

Although parents are expected to play a significant role in their children's education, it emerged from the questionnaires' responses that limited parental involvement in a learner's education causes misbehaviours in primary schools. Most teacher respondents from the questionnaires indicated that most parents no longer have time to visit their children's schools, nor do they bother to find out how their children behave when they are at school; therefore, this gap between the parents and the school can lead to misbehaviour among learners.

Furthermore, it was revealed that lack of parental involvement in learners' education makes it difficult for the school authorities to mould and shape children's behaviours alone, leading to poor academic performance for the learner and poor pass rates in schools. Similarly, in South Africa, educators argued that the inability of parents to cooperate despite attempts made by the schools forced them to send learners who misbehaved out of the classroom as a last resort (Holtman, Martin, & Mukuna, 2018; Munje & Mncube, 2018). This affects the learner and has devastating effects on the education system.

#### **Permissive school environment**

While misbehaviours can be associated with home background and parenting styles, 42% of the teachers noted that school management systems also contribute much to learner misbehaviour. The findings revealed that indiscipline among primary school learners is due to permissive school environments and large class sizes that do not permit teachers to take full control of every learner. This was in agreement with Gutuza and Mapolisa (2015), who also found the following school features that encourage students to misbehave: overcrowded

classrooms; too harsh discipline measures, student alienation the feeling of disempowerment from the principal to deal with indiscipline, lack of effective leadership from the principal; inadequate supervision; absence of the teaching of social, creative, communication and interpersonal skills; lack of student voice and choice in their learning; the feeling of rejection by students; lack of care from friends, educators and the principal; lack of extracurricular activities and sport activities; the banning or controversial use of corporal punishment; and absence of academic support for students with academic and behavioural problems. The researcher established a strong relationship between in-school factors and misbehaviours. However, most teachers and responsible authorities are trying to engage learners throughout the day to minimize misbehaviour among learners.

#### Unattended classes

The researcher observed that some learners were left unattended at one of the schools under study for various reasons. The main reasons are teacher absenteeism and attendance of workshops by teachers. Learners are usually sent to the grounds in worst cases where a lot of fighting, bullying, and stealing from each other happens, thereby increasing the rate of misbehaviour in schools. Similarly, other questionnaire respondents pointed out that some teachers are poor managers of the teaching and learning processes as they intentionally leave learners unattended, creating an opportunity for learners to engage in fights and vandalism of school property. One of the learner participants decried that:

*"Our teacher is always out taking some cigarettes, leaving us without anything to do, so we end up singing and tapping tables to entertain ourselves"* (Learner 1).

In corroboration, another learner respondent pointed out that:

*"Our teacher is always absent, and we are usually combined with other classes, and we will be forced to sit on the floor. This is boring so some of us will usually go home before dismissal time"* (Learner 2).

These findings agree with Maphosa and Mammen (2011), who assert that teachers who are usually absent from school and often do not respond promptly to the bell, for example, during assembly, after lunch, and after the break, contribute to learner misbehaviour since learners are very good at coping with bad behaviour (Bandura, 1977). However, the researcher also observed that in some cases, unattended learners are divided among those present at grade level to minimize misbehaviour among learners, but this adds the workload to the teachers present and makes it difficult for them to manage extra-large class sizes henceforth, noisemaking becomes inevitable.

#### Home background

Home background and the surrounding environment have a bearing on how learners behave. It is the cultural and societal norms within one's environment that can condone or promote misbehaviour. Fifty percent (50%) of the teacher respondents noted that values such as respect, love, and obedience originate in the home. If learners are surrounded by bad models back home, this will influence the behaviour of learners when they come to school. Most participants further commented that some parents are bad models, especially regarding language use and how they behave in front of the kids; hence, children will imitate what they see and hear from their parents when they come to school. A case in point by one of the respondents was *'an apple does not fall far from its tree'*. This explains the issue of children modelling the characters and behaviours of those around them daily.

Thus, parenting, peer groups, and other social environments contribute to how one behaves; that is, using bad language, fighting, and being disrespectful may be because of bad role models. This is consistent with Bandura's Social learning theory, which states that there is a strong correlation between role models and how learners behave. That is, if significant others within the child's environment are not exemplifiers of good morals, the chances are high that the child will exhibit bad behaviour even at school.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Misbehaviours among primary school learners is a complex issue with multiple causes. The interplay of poor classroom management, unattended classes, lack of supervision and preparedness on the part of the educators, and permissive school environments contributes to misbehaviour. If teachers fail to control their classrooms, there will likely be chaos as learners lack discipline and guidance. According to research by Maphosa and Shumba (2010), the escalation of learner indiscipline in schools suggests teachers failed to institute adequate alternative disciplinary measures after abolishing corporal punishment in Zimbabwe. This reemphasizes the need to empower educators on school, family, and community partnerships (Epstein, 2018) to combine efforts to reinforce and mould good behaviour among learners both in and out of school. In addition, home-related factors such as parenting styles, lack of parental involvement in children's education, family dynamics, home background, and socioeconomic status also influence learners' behaviours. Considering that parents are important mediators between the school and the learners, with an undeniable impact on performance, schools ought to initiate strategies that are genuinely inclusive, welcoming, and encouraging (Msila, 2012; Van Loggenberg, 2013) so that parents can be active when it comes to children's behavioural modification. Furthermore, exposure to social media and negative peer influence can erode positive behaviours, thereby causing an increase in the rate of misbehaviours in primary schools. Therefore, school authorities and parents should join hands in educating learners on using digital tools properly and selecting friends in and out of school.

## VII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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