

## Attribution to Classroom Disruptive Behavior: Insights from Secondary Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

Disruptive behavior in the classroom is a significant concern for teachers in schools across the globe. Extensive research has conclusively shown that effectively managing disruptive behavior in the classroom is a crucial factor that enhances the quality of instruction. The successful management of disruptive behavior in the classroom is influenced by various factors, including the causal attribution that a teacher assigns to the behavior. This study explored teachers' perspectives on the factors contributing to disruptive behavior in the classroom. The study employed an interpretive paradigm and a qualitative approach with a case study research design. Data was generated via semi-structured interviews with six members of the School Management Team and a focus group interview with seven teachers from four purposively chosen Quintiles Three secondary schools. The findings showed that teachers attribute classroom disruptions to the characteristics and attributes of learners, contextual elements within schools, and external factors. The study concludes that these factors should be considered when developing classroom behavior strategies.

### KEYWORDS

Attribution; behavior; classroom; disruptive; school; teachers.

## INTRODUCTION

Classroom Disruption Behavior (CDB) is a prevalent issue teachers consistently encounter worldwide. According to Wangdi and Namgyel (2022), CDB refers to disruptive behavior in the classroom that hinders both learning and teachers' instructions. CDB encompasses a range of behaviors, such as hostility, name-calling, mocking, taunting, physical violence, intimidation, and humiliation of others (Majani, 2020).

Of the things found from a study conducted by the Office of the Auditor General, Western Australia (OAGWA, 2014), in Australia, 39% of teachers and administrators spent 20% of their time, or one day a week, on behavior problems with their students (OAGWA, 2014). Following a study conducted in over 3000 schools, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) in the United Kingdom (UK) concluded that disruptive behavior in schools is a notable issue (OFSTED, 2014). The OFSTED (2014) also emphasized that 1 in 12 secondary teachers reported a loss of over 10 minutes of instructional time every hour due to behavioral concerns.

In the African context, Madakara (2020) noted that the Tanzanian government implemented several measures to manage the behavior of learners in schools; this included enhancing guidance and counselling services and employing specialists to handle disciplinary matters. Notwithstanding these efforts, learners' disruptive behavior incidents remain problematic (Madakara, 2020). According to Ngwokabuenui (2015), learners in secondary schools in Cameroon exhibit a high degree of contempt towards many individuals, such as their parents, teachers, school administration, and even themselves. In Nigeria, Odebode (2020) states that it has been customary for learners to engage in various forms of disruptive conduct, such as theft, physical altercations, and disturbances that disturb the tranquillity of the school and the community.

The problem of CDB in South African schools is quite similar to that in other countries (Marumo & Zulu, 2019). Although the implementation of several measures since corporal punishment was banned by the Constitutional Court in 1997, including Alternative to Physical Punishment (ATCP) approaches (Marumo & Zulu, 2019; Moyo et al., 2014), the National Schools Safety Framework (NSSF) along with specialised training programmes for principal, School Governing Body (SGB) members and school safety officers (Masekela et al., 2024), incidents involving classroom defiant behaviors are still reported. Various media outlets have been displaying news items such as disruptions and conflicts. The recent incident at Glenvista High School involving male teachers and male learners in the classroom (Mokoena, 2024) highlights the widespread occurrences of CDB in schools nationwide.

Behavior can be seen as communication dependent on different personal motives. The fact that behavior exhibited is due to these motivations makes it difficult to interpret them so (Wolhuter & van der Walt, 2020). Some learners may display disruptive behavior because of age, which could stem from selfishness, seeking attention or curiosity, as noted by Etonge (2014). In all these aspects, teachers must determine if this behavior is within lightness or

moderate or poses a significant danger to other students in the class setting. Sprinson and Berrick (2010) indicate that students' classroom behavior reflects their cognitive framework, defining their identity. As explained, when learners feel out of place at school, they might act disorderly, so tutors send them away from class. Similarly, some learners can manifest such conduct when avoiding learning stimuli or certain activities inside classrooms (Sciaraffa et al., 2018).

According to Paulson et al. (2022), teachers must change the internal working model about themselves to alter learners' self-perceptions by creating a classroom environment characterized by a sense of belonging and acceptance for all children. Forsberg et al. (2021) also suggest that learners engage in disruption to get attention. In their immaturity, they may seek other's attention external to them to intervene on their behalf. Nonetheless, some learners may still be unable to seek help due to immaturity and, hence, engage in disruptive behaviors. Besides, Paulson et al. (2022) stress that children exhibit disruptive behavior to attract others' attention and control over the immediate environment.

Secondary education is a significant learning stage in students' education journey as it marks the shift from basic knowledge acquisition to specialization. However, scholars have realized that complexities within adolescent development, such as peer pressure (Bates & Trujillo, 2021; Schlebusch et al., 2022) combined with external societal factors like socioeconomic status (SES) (Lazaratou et al., 2017; Muna, 2020; Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021), lack of parental care (Rachel et al., 2022; Wolhuter & van der Walt, 2020), environment (Mafumbate & Mkhathjwa, 2020), substance abuse (Hunter & Morrell, 2021; Mamabolo, 2020; South African Depression and Anxiety Group [SADAG], 2022) contributed further towards exhibition of these disruptive behaviors within these learning spaces.

Other scholars have attributed learners' learning barriers (Bolingier et al., 2020), insufficient resources (Tshatshu, 2016) limited extra-curricular activities (Makhasane & Majong, 2023; Naidoo, 2021), teachers lack preparation (Forsberg et al., 2021; Thilagaratnam & Yamat, 2021), Teachers' leniency in enforcing the learners' code of conduct (Khanyile & Mpuangan, (2023), learners who are progressed (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021), overcrowding in schools (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020; Mahlangu et al., 2021; Wangdi & Namgyel, 2022; Mamaile & Omodan, 2023) to incidences of classroom disruptive behavior.

The effects of such disruptive behaviors can be immediate and long-term, affecting the overall learning environment and the teacher's well-being. Kanmani and Sujathamalini (2022) attest that teachers who teach learners exhibiting disruptive behaviors have heightened levels of pressure, aggravation, fatigue, emotional challenges, and burnout. Majani (2020) contends that certain prospective teachers express reluctance to pursue a career in teaching due to concerns regarding managing disruptive behavior in the classroom. Others already in the field opt to resign due to such behavior (Stanforth & Rose, 2020).

To successfully manage CDB, it is essential to comprehend the cause attribution that teachers ascribe to CDB since it substantially impacts teachers' choice of strategies for managing

student behavior (Thompson, 2021). Hence, a thorough understanding of the attribution process may provide valuable insights for developing successful teaching strategies and adopting efficient classroom management practices. This article explored the causal attribution that secondary teachers attach to disruptive behavior in the Motheo District, Free State classroom.

The following question guided the paper: What are secondary teachers' views on factors that cause disruptive behavior in the classroom?

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study was based on the attribution theory, which seeks to determine if teachers assign disruptive classroom behavior to external situations, factors such as cultural influences, social roles, and internal aspects such as individual disposition and traits (Jove, 2020). Attribution theory is a branch of social psychology developed by Heider, Kelley and Weiner to investigate cognitive processes involved in assigning reasons to events or behaviors (Spilka et al., 1985). Humans are naturally compelled to make casual attributions to understand events or behaviors they encounter. Attribution theory argues that people seek to understand their environment better to predict its future occurrences through analysis of causes for behavior within themselves and others (Tompson, 2021). Thus, from this point of view, it is assumed that teachers clarify their views about disruptive behavior in classrooms by assigning them underlying causes that can be said to form causal attributions (Spilka et al., 1985). The theory is relevant because it raises questions about whether or not educators believe that the origins of actions can be changed and whether or not they have any control over such conduct (Tompson, 2021).

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Qualitative Research Approach**

In this study, a qualitative method of inquiry was premised on the fact that the best way to comprehend reality involves analyzing how people see their environment and situations (Creswell, 2020). This study aimed to understand the topic of classroom disruptive behavior as viewed by high school teachers in terms of scientific investigation (Leedy & Ormrod 2020). Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2020), thus involves researchers examining and apprehending the meaning of individuals or groups within a given social context. The study collected detailed descriptive data on a specific occurrence in the participant's setting, intending to produce knowledge that applies to the study objectives (Merriam & Grenier 2019)

#### **Multiple Case Studies of Four Schools**

The study employed a multiple case study design. Case studies are rigorous investigations that thoroughly examine occurrences (Tracy, 2020). Numerous cases of four secondary schools in the Motheo District of the Free State province were purposefully selected to investigate the

phenomenon of CDB by selecting participants from various research contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### Selection of Participants

Three School Management Team (SMT) members from two secondary schools, namely School A and School B, participated in the semi-structured interviews (SSIs). Seven teachers, four from School C and three from School D, participated in focus group discussions (FGDs). All the sampled schools are classified as quintile three schools.

Implementing the Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding (ANSSSF) policy in 2006 brought forth a funding framework to promote fairness in public education provision. Schools are categorized into five quintiles, with quintile 1 being the most economically disadvantaged schools and quintile 5 representing the most prosperous ones (Mestry, 2020). Quintile 1-3 schools are in socioeconomically deprived areas, popularly called townships (Naidoo, 2021), that exhibit restricted availability of social services and elevated unemployment rates, leading to unmet fundamental needs in the community (Tshatshu, 2016). For these reasons, quintile three schools provide learners with stationery and meals while parents are responsible for other higher quintiles.

The original proposal aimed to sample four teachers from the two schools for the FGDs; however, the other school's D teacher was absent on the selected interview date. Thus, the study comprised a total of 13 participants.

**Table 1.**

#### *Profile of Participants*

Name	School	Position	Gender	Teaching experience	Highest qualification
Abert	A	DH	M	25	Master's degree
Betty	A	DH	M	22	Med
Corn	A	Deputy	M	10	BSC Hons (PGCE)
Dethny	B	DH	M	10	BEd Honours
Eerth	B	DH	F	27	BEd Honours
Frome	B	DH	F	30	BA
Gyan	C	Teacher	F	10	BEd
Hope	C	Teacher	F	15	BEd Honours
Inter	C	Teacher	M	16	ACE
Joke	C	Teacher	M	1	BEd
Kane	D	Teacher	M	3	BSC (PGCE)
Lamel	D	Teacher	M	3	BEd
Moon	D	Teacher	M	3	BEd

Upon obtaining authorization from the ethics review committee at the University of the Free State, the researcher proceeded to the research site and engaged in negotiations with the participants. However, before any discussions or conversations with the participants, I submitted a formal letter to the principals of the chosen schools, seeking their authorization to utilize their schools as research sites.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Inductive Content Analysis***

Inductive Content Analysis (ICA) is a qualitative research method that is used for analyzing text-based data, including written transcripts or documents that were either pre-existing or created specifically for the research project (Kyngäs et al., 2020; Vears & Gillam, 2022). The ICA method was used to read the data thoroughly, analyze the similarities and differences among the coded data, and organize, integrate, and develop categories, concepts, and themes based on the transcribed data. The reading was conducted multiple times, and themes were further refined and incorporated based on similarities and differences.

### ***Trustworthiness***

Researchers employ a mix of methodologies to increase the trustworthiness of their findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used. The researcher safely stored all project documents, which included the transcripts and audio recordings, in his laptop to confirm that they were available for reference where necessary, thus increasing the dependability of results (Creswell, 2020). After carrying out this research, member checks were performed to ensure compliance with research findings. This study gave a detailed description of the contextual site and participant profiles to improve the generalizability of these facts.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

The study obtained ethical approval from the University of Free State (UFS-HSD2022/1662/22) and the Department of Basic Education in the Free State. Every individual involved in the study willingly gave their consent, and every participant completed an informed consent form before participating in the research. Pseudonyms are used to safeguard participants' identities in this study.

## **FINDINGS**

The data revealed that disruptive conduct in the classroom may be ascribed to circumstances outside the school, variables inside the school, and the mutual influence of learners.

### **Out-of-school factors**

The participants expressed that disruptive behavior in the classroom can be attributed to external variables beyond the school setting, including socioeconomic status, parental influence, home environmental conditions, and substance abuse. Betty (School A) shared the following viewpoints:

*If you sit down with the learner, you will find that the causes are mostly social. When you dig deeper and visit the child at home, you find that the child will never behave well under those circumstances – when you see the nature of the house and many problems. When you start asking, what is your name? Where do you stay? And where are your parents? Then, you start finding out that the child does not know where the mother is. He/she lives with the grandparents, and some stay alone. Then, immediately, you discover that he/she is staying alone; it tells you why the child is behaving like that.*

Corn (School A) alleged the following:

*We find a learner coming to school wearing torn shoes and other learners making fun of that learner. So, for this learner to stop other learners from laughing at him, he must act big, bully, and fight them back.*

Frome (School B) elaborated further by stating:

*It can be the environment where the learner lives. If they come from an aggressive environment where there are always fights, where vulgar language is being used, and maybe the parents are drinking, a noisy environment where there is a shebeen, people are drinking and using dagga, when the child arrives at school, he or she is likely to display the kind of behavior he or she sees at home and might also grow up imitating and using dagga.*

### **School Contextual Factors**

The data analyzed identified various factors that emanate from within the school and contribute as catalysts of disruptive classroom behavior, as specified below.

#### **Admission Policy**

One of the contextual elements related to schools that were identified in the data is the admission policy. The analysis indicated two potential ways in which the admission policy contributes to CDB: (i) the policy does not specify the age requirements for admission for learners into Grade 8 in secondary schools, leading to the admission of overaged learners, and (ii) the policy does not grant secondary schools the mandatory authority to request past-records of learners' learning difficulties from elementary schools to assess the type of support they may need. Consequently, as the participants alleged, the schools admit learners they have no past record of, which may lead to the admission of learners with severe learning disorders or barriers into the mainstream with limited support.

Abert (School A) shared as follows:

*Let's say in Grade 8, they should be 14, then you find that he is 16, and then in Grade 10, when he is supposed to be 16, he is 18. Such children tend to challenge the teachers, and sometimes they backchat or intimidate the teachers, so we experience these things in our school.*

Dethny (School B) Also shared:

*You will find that here is the learner from Grade 7 who is 18 years old; we must admit that learner without even questioning the age. The fact that he has a report promoting him to Grade 8 and from our feeder school, we do.*

Elaborating on how the admission policy contributes to CBD through the lack of past-records requirements during Grade 8 admissions, the participants' excerpts indicated as follows: Dethny (School B) also highlighted that:

*We admit learners based only on academic results and do not consider prior behavioral records. So, we will always have problems with behavior and learners who do not know how to study or read in Grade 12. You will be sitting in a class, and you will be having more than one type of learner. Remember, we are the mainstream. At the moment, we have a learner who is like that. He is clever, but you see that he is learning differently. Sometimes, he just stands up, makes a noise and goes outside. We should have picked up these things as early as Grade 8. So this contributes a lot.*

### **Progression Policy**

The progression policy is another component within the school setting identified from the data. To decrease the number of learners who leave school before completing their education, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) implemented a progression policy. This policy states that learners should not repeat the same grade level more than once during a particular phase of their education. The participants shared that this approach exacerbates the CDB phenomenon since learners know they will advance to the next academic level despite failing to meet the required standards. According to the participants' responses, when these learners go on to the following grade, they conceal their academic shortcomings by being disruptive in the classroom. Corn (School A) established as follows:

*Also, for progression, remember that if the learner fails Grade 7, even a learner in Grade 8 with nine level ones (1-29%) cannot fail, which contributes. Those are the issues we are struggling with, so the learners use this system against us to their advantage because they know it. These were the learners who were not doing their homework and coming late the whole year but telling themselves that I am going to pass. Others copied that behavior because they could see that in this school, we do as we please. As a result, every year, we have 200 Grade 8s and 100 of those learners are failing.*

Joke (School C) shared the following:

*Some learners become disruptive because they try to hide their academic limitations. They have never passed since primary school and have progressed up to where they are, so they cover their limitations by resorting to chaotic behavior.*

### **Inadequate textbook retrieval system**

The findings also indicated that schools lack an adequate textbook retrieval method, leading to a book shortage. Consequently, the lack of textbooks makes it difficult for effective learning to occur. This scarcity makes learners disruptive when teachers cannot improvise or make copies for their learners. Frome (School B) shared:



*Perhaps you would like learners to refer to some pages when teaching to get information in a certain topic, but there are no textbooks. It won't be easy because here we rely on a photocopy machine to make some copies for learners. But sometimes that machine is broken so you cannot make any copies, so sometimes teachers cannot improvise. If there are no textbooks and no copies, teachers will just go to class and not teach. That is when learners will start to make noise and become disruptive. The type of learners we have here, some of them do not return books they are given at the end of the year, and that causes a shortage of books the following year.*

### **Limited extra-curricular activities**

Another school-contextual factor identified by the participants was the lack of various extra-curricular activities for learners in schools. Data revealed that the schools are limited only to sporting codes such as football and netball. As a result, some learners who may be good at other sports are denied opportunities to shine and get that excellent motivation into the classroom. Betty (School A) stated that:

*We don't have the facilities for other sports. The only thing we have is soccer and netball. And for a school of 900 learners, do you all want them to play soccer and netball? So that means even those who are energetic use it in the classroom to disrupt. You understand? If you look at schools that are resourceful, how many sporting codes do they have there? Many of them. So, they accommodate all the learners, wa bona, [you see]. Even those who are not good in class can at least perform in one sporting activity and take that motivation to class rather than using the energy to disrupt classroom proceedings.*

### **Teacher and School Management**

The participants also revealed that the teachers influence the school-contextual factors in various ways, such as not preparing for class, lack of class management, and the School Management Team (SMT) not executing their monitoring core duties.

Hope (School C) shared the following:

*Sometimes, disruptive classroom behavior is caused by teachers, either by not giving learners activities or teaching in the classroom. So, learners take advantage by playing, which is another way to draw teachers' attention to teach. But if you teach and give them work, move around to check if the work is being done, they will stop the disruption. But if you do not engage them with work and teaching, they will continue with disruptions.*

Dethny (School B) highlighted the following:

*You see, our problem in our schools, we do have these plans, but you find that some are being done for compliance. I think the problem starts with us as management; we do not do our work, and when that happens, the educators just follow suit.*

Betty (School A) emphasized:

*I think the managers of the curriculum can also play a role. When the District Support Team Visit visits the school, you find that some teachers are behind with the curriculum but have been at school and have never been absent. So I am saying if somebody from*

*outside finds that your teacher in your department is behind with the work, it means you are not doing your work as the departmental head (DH). There are cases where many teachers have been found behind with the curriculum, and the DH is there, unfortunately, which means I did not do my work as the DH. Because the teacher cannot be behind in the presence of the DH, that shows that the teacher goes to class but does not teach.*

### **Overcrowded classrooms**

Lastly, the findings revealed that overcrowded school classrooms are another significant contributing factor to CDB.

Kane (School D) shared:

*If learners are too many in the class when you are busy with this one, the other ones have a lot of time, so they start disrupting because they have a lot of time while still waiting for you. So, it is challenging to control those kinds of classes.*

### **Learner factors**

The participants showed that some problems in the classroom could be directly linked to what learners do as they are allegedly influenced by peer pressure to not adhere to school rules and come late to school. Moon (School D) articulated:

*Another cause is peer pressure. Some of them are not like ke behavior ba hae (it is his/her behavior). He is trying to imitate other learners' behavior because he thinks ha a etsa jwalo o tla banahala a le cool [doing so, he may appear cool] or something.*

## **DISCUSSION**

The data revealed that participants attributed classroom disruptive behavior to factors outside, those within the school, and learners themselves. According to Lazaratou et al. (2017), socioeconomic status (SES) and disruptive behavior among learners are correlated. In the same way, the study's findings showed that the SES conditions prevalent in the learners' households have a discernible influence on their psychological welfare and overall behavioral patterns. As the participants alleged, learners who experience such circumstances often exhibit disruptive behavior at school as a means of self-defence against those who mock them due to their situation or when attempting to communicate their needs to their teachers for assistance.

In Greece, Lazaratou et al. (2017) found that learners who had encountered household food insecurity – characterized by anxiety or uncertainty regarding food, inadequate food quality, or insufficient food intake within the past four weeks or had experienced a reduction in their pocket money within the last six months – exhibited significantly higher scores on the aggression questionnaire in comparison to their peers who did not encounter such circumstances. Muna (2020) also found that learners' disruptive behavior in Brunei Darussalam is caused by socioeconomic factors within their families. In South Africa, Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) also found that ill-discipline in schools is influenced by poverty in that learners living in poverty depend on state grants and the national school nutrition programme.

The primary focus of such children is meeting their fundamental needs more than learning. As a result, theft is common in schools with poor learners (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021).

Furthermore, the results obtained from this study revealed that the lack of parental care and attention towards children at home is one of the main external factors that contribute to CDB. Schlebusch et al. (2022) found that parents who work far from home delegate all the aspects of raising a child to teachers and that children are left heading the families. Similarly, Rachel et al. (2022) also found that inadequate parental supervision, lack of parental concern and support, absence of parental discipline, and the inability of parents to serve as positive role models are significant factors that contribute to adolescents engaging in antisocial behavior.

Wolhuter and van der Walt (2020) attest that a significant portion of households in South Africa do not adhere to the conventional definition of intact families, which typically comprise a father, a mother, and their biological and/or legally adopted children. In the scholar's analysis, numerous circumstances have altered the situation, including parental divorce, parental abscondment, and parental death, resulting in the placement of children, sometimes even a collective group, under the guardianship of a grandparent or an older sibling. The implication is that challenges related to CDB in schools are unavoidable.

The study's findings also indicated that the environment in which children are immersed plays a significant role in shaping their behavior. The sample schools are in a geographical area with high levels of poverty, violence and criminal activities. As a result, the learners in this area tend to display disruptive behavior within the classroom setting. Similar attributes are shared by Rachel et al. (2022) that instances of school-based violence can arise from learners who originate from households characterized by violence. Mafumbate and Mkhatjwa (2020) posited that a child's upbringing in a conducive environment leads to positive influences and fosters the expression of appropriate behavior. In contrast, when a child is brought up in an unfavorable setting, their behavior may be adversely impacted, leading to the display of inappropriate conduct.

The results from the four schools collectively indicated that CDB can be attributed to learners who indulge in substance abuse, specifically the consumption of illegal substances, while on school premises. Nemati and Matlabi (2017) argue that individuals who consume drugs or alcohol are prone to exhibiting disruptive and inappropriate behavior both inside and outside the classroom. This behavior includes a lack of concentration, disrespect towards teachers and administrators, vandalism, physical aggression, rejection, theft, graffiti, and verbal abuse. Nemati and Matlabi (2017) (2021) have reported comparable observations regarding problematic behavior among learners because of substance abuse in South Africa. In addition, Mamabolo (2020) discovered that learners in South Africa who are between the ages of 13 and 18 participate in drug abuse on school premises. The association is strengthened even more by the findings of the SADAG (2022), which indicate that the average age of drug dependence among South Africans is 12.

As indicated by the participants, the school-contextual factors contributing to CDB are the outcome of practices carried out by the school and its staff within the schoolyard. The data revealed that the admission policy, progression policy, ineffective textbook retrieval system, lack of extra-curricular activities, school management, teachers and overcrowded classrooms contribute to CDB in these schools.

The findings demonstrated two channels through which the admissions policy contributes to CDB. The first channel does not provide any information regarding the specific ages of learners to be admitted in each grade at secondary school. The participants indicated that learners older than their grade level provide unique behavioral challenges for teachers. According to the participants' responses, these learners exhibit a resistant attitude towards young teachers, possibly due to their similar age, and display bullying behavior towards other learners in the same classroom. Section (31) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (27 of 1996) stipulates that: "If a student is beyond the age of 16 and has never been to school before, is applying for admission for the first time, or did not make enough progress relative to their peers, then they should be encouraged to join in an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centre".

The second channel is that no guidelines for locating learners' prior behavioral records are provided in the admissions policy. Participants reported that schools accept learners with learning barriers during the admission process at the school and the district level. The data demonstrated that learners with learning barriers exhibit disruptive behavior in the classroom. Bolinger et al. (2020) delineated a series of distinctive characteristics demonstrated by children diagnosed with learning difficulties. These behaviors encompass inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. These fundamental characteristics influence a child's behavior within the classroom, as these children may encounter challenges in sustaining a stationary posture. Consequently, they may exhibit behaviors such as manipulating objects, swaying in chairs, or repetitive tapping of their hands or feet (Bolinger et al., 2020). These actions can disrupt the teaching and learning process.

The implications derived from the findings indicate three potential scenarios that lead to CDB regarding the admissions policy. The first scenario is that schools do not actively encourage the enrolment of over-age learners in ABET programmes. The second scenario is that parents or guardians of these learners often reject the schools' recommendations to enrol their children in ABET, as the policy merely emphasizes the school's role is to encourage in such cases. The last scenario is that there might be a lack of adherence to the progression policy at the primary school level, resulting in students entering secondary school at an older age than expected.

The progression policy stipulates that no learner should be retained more than once within any educational phase, namely the foundation phase (Grades R–3), intermediate phase (Grades 4–6), senior phase (Grades 7–9), and Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grades 10–12) (DBE, 2017), implying that the age disparity among Grade 8 learners is limited to a maximum of two years, assuming that a learner may have repeated both the foundation and

intermediate phases once. In Grade 10, it is also suggested that the age difference should be three years if the learners repeat the senior phase in addition to the previous phases. The implication is that secondary schools should avoid admitting learners three years older than the anticipated age for Grade 8 to mitigate the potential challenges arising from a significant age disparity resulting in CDB. However, the study results show a trajectory of secondary schools admitting learners older than their anticipated age, leading to situations where older learners exhibit CDB.

The findings revealed that the progression policy contributes to CDB in two ways. One significant concern is the potential for fostering a culture of apathy among learners, resulting in a lack of prioritization of their academic responsibilities and a diminished display of commitment, devotion, and dedication. The participants expressed that this is because learners know they will proceed to the next grade regardless of their failure to complete homework assignments and participate fully in classroom activities, especially in Grades 8 and 9. The subsequent contribution is that these learners arrive at the next grade without grasping the fundamental aspects of different subjects from the previous grade. Consequently, as the participants alleged, they resort to disruptive behavior to conceal their academic limitations. With a progression policy in place, the school must devise methods to help learners transition academically from one grade level to the next (DBE, 2017), meaning the school has to ensure that such learners are assisted in bridging the gap from the work they did not understand in the previous grade while at the same time not falling behind with the work for the grade in which they are. Nevertheless, Nyathi (2021) discovered that these learners do not receive sufficient school support. Similarly, Mogale and Malatji (2022) found that teachers rarely consider progressed learners' views when designing intervention plans. The lack of consideration observed may be ascribed to the findings that many teachers maintain that learners facing difficulties should remain in their current grade rather than progressing to the next grade until they are sufficiently prepared (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021).

The study findings indicated that schools contribute to CDB due to the lack of an effective system for tracking and recovering all textbooks distributed to learners. The participants suggested that the deficiency in book management contributes to a scarcity of resources and, subsequently, CDB. School financial allocation is often done between March and May at the start of the fiscal year, suggesting that CDB will likely be prevalent in schools from January to May (the whole first term and a portion of the second term) if learners do not return textbooks. Although the teachers may attempt to make copies, as Frome highlighted during the interview, the copying machine operates under severe pressure and is prone to break down. Therefore, teachers are likely to encounter difficulties in effectively engaging learners in the classroom when faced with a scarcity of resources. As the findings indicated, the outcome of this purportedly leads to CDB. Tshatshu (2016) found that insufficient resources in township schools impede learners' holistic development. The observation indicates that such schools encounter several obstacles that hinder the provision of high-standard education, primarily due to

inadequate resources. Nonetheless, the insufficiency of resources in this study is attributed to the school's failure to preserve them.

Chapter 6 of the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) outlines the roles and responsibilities regarding school support structures. It is mandated that the school must provide sports activities (DBE, 2015). The policy delineates that engagement in sports offers a beneficial and constructive avenue for individuals to spend their time, engage in physical activity, foster camaraderie within a team, and cultivate a health-conscious atmosphere. However, the findings in this study reveal that schools do not have various extra-curricular activities and that the situation contributes to CDB.

Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) found that when schools do not provide extra-curricular activities, hyperactive learners may be encouraged to misbehave since they cannot satisfy their natural curiosity about the world beyond the classroom. Similarly, Naidoo's (2021) findings revealed that three of the five sampled township secondary schools in the Western Cape were severely limited in their capacity to conduct extra-curricular activities due to a lack of facilities. Makhasane and Majong (2023) discovered insufficient school sports activities to provide for gifted learners, making it difficult for schools to effectively handle CDB in the form of learner-on-teacher violence in South African secondary schools.

The findings indicated that teachers contribute to CDB by failing to prepare before they teach. Consequently, their lessons are not engaging, and learners become disruptive. The findings are similar to research conducted by Thilagaratnam and Yamat (2021) in Malaysia and Forsberg et al. (2021) in Sweden. The scholars provide empirical evidence that suggests a considerable portion of disruptive behavior observed in schools can be ascribed to teachers' inadequate implementation of effective instructional strategies, potentially stemming from insufficient preparation. Similarly, Schlebusch et al. (2022) observed that teachers contribute to CDB in secondary schools in South Africa through various means, such as inadequate planning, tardiness, and a lenient attitude towards disciplinary issues. While the teachers play a significant role in the exacerbation of CDB, SMT is also attributed, as the findings indicated. The findings of this study showed that the SMT contributes to CDB by not fulfilling school monitoring responsibilities.

Furthermore, the results of this study revealed that teachers attribute overcrowded classrooms to CDB, primarily due to the challenges teachers face in effectively monitoring the progress of all learners within the classroom, as the limited physical space restricts their movements and teaching techniques. Consequently, as the participants alluded, the classroom environment becomes disordered and unruly. The findings of this study align with those of Mamaile and Omodan (2023) conducted in a high school in Gauteng Province and those of Khanyile and Mpuangnan (2023) in secondary schools in KwaZulu Natal Province. In contrast to private schools, South African public schools are characterized by a notable prevalence of overcrowded classrooms (Mahlangu et al., 2021). Letshwene and du Plessis (2020) have highlighted that Curro Holdings, the leading private school operator in South Africa, maintains

a pupil-to-teacher ratio of 15:1 across its extensive network of 110 schools. On the contrary, the ratio of government schools (commonly called public schools) surpasses 40:1, as Zenda (2020) reported. Naidoo (2021) also observed that a single teacher was responsible for instructing 71 students within the classroom setting of public township schools in South Africa. A larger classroom, as Wangdi and Namgyel (2022) established, limits the teacher's mobility and draws a variety of disruptive actions from learners.

The learners themselves were allegedly one of the significant elements of CDB. The findings indicate that their influence is evident through peer pressure. Schlebusch et al. (2022) assert that a substantial portion of secondary school learners are currently experiencing the stage of adolescence. In addition to various transformations, adolescence is distinguished by increased engagement in risky behaviors, the pursuit of novel experiences, and a tendency to distance oneself from familial ties and seek companionship with peers (Bates & Trujillo, 2021). These behaviors can potentially violate regulations and societal standards (Rachel et al., 2022), resulting in learners deviating from school rules.

### **Recommendations**

When framing strategies to curb CDB, schools should prioritize implementing effective textbook retrieval systems to avoid lacking resources. The study suggests that the education district should closely supervise the enrolment of learners in schools to prevent excessive admissions that could result in overcrowding. The study unveiled that the classrooms are excessively populated and that this circumstance significantly contributes to CDB. Moreover, the study recommends mandatory implementation of the SIAS policy at all schools. It was discovered that secondary schools admit learners without requiring them to submit Support Needs Assessment (SNA) forms. Thus, this practice allows mainstream schools to accept learners, particularly those with significant learning disabilities, yet such schools are limited in resources that can support such learners. The study recommends that the admission policy clearly outline the age criteria for learners to be enrolled in each grade level and plainly indicate that parents should enrol their children in ABET if they exceed the specified age limit. The study demonstrated that another significant contributing factor to CDB is overage learners. Within secondary schools, it is imperative to expressly forbid the enrolment of learners over the specified age limit. Currently, schools could just encourage parents to enrol their children in ABET. There exists a loophole whereby parents have the option to decline the schools' suggestions.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study explored the factors contributing to learners' disruptive behavior in the classroom. The study has determined that teachers attribute disruptive conduct in the classroom to elements outside of the school environment, those within the school environment, and the features and qualities of the learners. The study offered a further understanding of the causative factors associated with external effects, such as the surrounding area of the school. The study provides a deeper understanding of how schools, via their day-to-day activities, contribute to

CDB, corroborating the claim that learners are not exclusively accountable for disruptive behavior in the classroom. Hence, it is crucial to consider all pertinent factors while addressing the behavior to develop efficient strategies.

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