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Teachers' Explanations on Causes of Problematic Behaviours among Learners in Midrand District of South Africa

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Abstract

The study examined teachers' explanations on causes of problematic behaviours among learners in Midrand district of South Africa. The study's foundation will be Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory. The research design chosen for this study was a multiple case study. Participants were fifteen teachers of fourth grade. For this study's data collection, semi-structured interviews were employed. Thematic analysis was employed for the study of the qualitative data. Teachers explained away their students' problematic behaviours with a wide range of explanations, according to the research: difficult family situations, learning difficulties, physical or mental health issues, attention-seeking behaviours, peer pressure, emotional trauma, and academic anxieties. The study recommends that teachers establish enduring and morally sound relationships with both the student and their parents/guardians in order to comprehend each child and spot any aberrant behavioural trends.

Keywords*: Teachers, Perspectives, Causes, Problematic Behaviours, Learners, South Africa.*

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in an individual's life. Education is critical to an individual's self-growth and development, and teachers help to supply this need. Teachers are driven to transfer knowledge and skills to students as part of the ongoing teaching and learning process by employing a variety of instructional strategies, tried-and-true approaches, and tactics designed to enhance the learning of the particular student. It is hoped that by going through this process, students will learn new things and reach their full potential. The aforementioned supposition is reinforced by Marais and Meier (2010), who show that the most often discussed topic in South African schools continues to be students' "challenging"

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behaviour. Additionally, Mncube and Harber (2013) noted that the presence of weapons and other strange objects in South African schools has raised concerns about student safety. The South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2011) concurs with these findings and states that a significant problem of student-inflicted school-based violence exists in South African primary schools. More recently, Rubbi-Nunan and Ntombela (2019) agree that a significant number of South African primary schools' deal with "challenging" behaviour from their students. In a similar vein, Jacobsz (2015, p. 1) expressed worries on issues with behaviour in Botswana. According to Jacobsz (2015, p. 1), "[d]isruptive behaviour in schools has been a source of concern for school systems for many years," within this country. The author continues by stating that one "major obstacle" that instructors deal with on a daily basis is misbehaviour. Neither of these studies aims to explain the potential contributing elements to problematic behaviours or determine whether the sorts and types of problem behaviours that children are displaying or whether the types and kinds of problem behaviours children are exhibiting now have changed significantly. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that teachers must first comprehend the factors that lead to the behaviours displayed before they can address the issue of problem behaviours.

Richter, Griesel, and Barbarin (2000) discovered that although several reports of problematic behaviours had been made in Soweto, Johannesburg, there had been no prior studies on the frequency of behavioural issues in pre-adolescent adolescents in South Africa. They added that a high rate of problem behaviours is present in South Africa, which is concerning given the country's poverty, crime, violence, unstable families, and degradation of the country's natural and social environments. These factors have a big influence on a child's behaviour right away. Problem behaviours exhibited by students include violent outbursts, daydreaming, agitated moods, inactivity, bullying, and inadequate social skills (Richter, Griesel, & Barbarin, 2000). The difficulties young individuals encounter in their sociocultural contexts have a big influence on how they behave. Dhlamini (2014) states that social circumstances and a child's environment have a significant impact on how learners behave and that "the abolition of corporal punishment in 1996 necessitated a shift towards alternative discipline methods." Family structure, poverty, and socioeconomic level can all have an impact on behaviour (Dhlamini, 2014). Dhlamini (2014) argues that in order to facilitate effective instruction in the classroom, the school must regulate student behaviour. Nonetheless, educators faced considerable challenges when implementing efficient strategies to help with disruptive conduct. Teachers lacked "alternative measures regarding corporal punishment which teachers could use as a source of discipline for learners when need arises" and "[n]on-implementation of the school code of conduct in some schools was a problem" (Dhlamini, 2014, p. 843). A school's teaching and learning will be unsuccessful if discipline issues are not addressed. Dhlamini (2014, p. 840) stated that "poor academic performance in these secondary schools reflects a lack of discipline". As a result, the child's educational experience is significantly impacted.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory was employed to guide this research. Bronfenbrenner considered human development as shaped by the interaction of the individual

and their environment. Hertler, Figueredo, Peñaherrera-Aguirre, & Fernandes (2018, p.325) presented a concept of 'social systems' that encompassed both human and system interactions. The approach emphasises the many environmental and societal impacts on child development. The child first interacts with their parents, then with their extended family and friends, and finally with society as a whole. According to Hertler et al. (2018), Bronfenbrenner hypothesised five stages of social systems (p. 325). The first system is the microsystem which is “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief” (Härkönen, 2001, p. 7). The second system is the mesosystem, which involves the interaction of two or more microsystems. Härkönen (2001, p. 10) defines the mesosystem as "the linkages and processes that occur between two or more settings containing the developing person." The third system is the exosystem, which comprises the external environment that indirectly influences development, such as the parent's workplace.

According to Härkönen (2001, p.11), the exosystem “encompasses the linkage and processes taking place between two or more settings”. The fourth system is the macrosystem which encompasses the cultures in which people live and shapes human development. According to Härkönen (2001, p.12), the macrosystem “consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other broader social context, with particular reference to the developmentally-instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems”. According to Hertler, Figueredo, Peñaherrera-Aguirre, and Fernandes (2018), the fifth system is the chronosystem, which involves the patterning of environmental events and transitions across one's life. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory emphasises the idea of ecology, which encompasses the interactions between individuals and their surroundings. It further examines how the environment affects the child's social, physiological, and emotional well-being. The many components in the ecological system, consequently, influence the child's growth. According to Bronfenbrenner, children are immersed in a variety of ecosystems with which they must engage and which influence all parts of their lives.

Literature

Numerous factors may have an impact on how students behave. "Behaviour is thought to be influenced not only by the belief that a particular action will lead to desirable outcomes," claim Giallo and Little (2003) (p. 22). "Many different origins of children's challenging behaviour can exist: biological, psychological, and social," according to Smaragda (2013, p. 3). The current study will examine some of the causes of problem conduct in light of these findings. Mestry and Khumalo (2021), p. 106, state that "active partnership between parents and schools has great benefits and parents can have a powerful effect on children's behavior"—a reference to how parental support affects a child's inappropriate behaviour. Many children have been "exposed to multiple adversities in low and middle-income countries placing them at potential risk of psychological problems," according to Cortina,

Fazel, Hlungwani, Tollman, Cortina-Borja, and Stein (2013) (p. 1). Teachers have documented high levels of behavioural and emotional challenges, and they assert that socioeconomic disadvantages have a substantial impact on children's performance (Cortina, Fazel, Hlungwani, Tollman, Cortina-Borja & Stein, 2013, p. 1). Barbarin and Richter's (2001) study confirms the previous study's findings by stating that a variety of environmental risk factors have an impact on children's behaviour. Additionally, compared to non-poor households, poorer households had higher rates of bad conduct and emotional trauma, which had an impact on the general wellbeing of the children (Barbarin & Richter, 2001, pp. 1-5). "[e]cological models usually emphasises situation-specific factors that contribute to occurrences in the classroom, including classroom indiscipline," according to Lopes and Oliveira (2017) (p.235). The reason behind the disruptive behaviour of students in the classroom is highlighted by Lopes and Oliveira (2017) who state that "societal values such as individualism, community, and collectivism significantly influence social relationships and, consequently, the interpersonal relations in schools" (Lopes & Oliveira, 2017, p. 235).

Unite, Osagiobare, and Edith (2013) expand on the idea of social influences by stating that "[o]nce students are in school, the dual factors of socialisation and social status contribute significantly to behaviour" and that poverty contributes to the emotional trauma a child experiences, which in turn affects the child's behaviour (p. 151). Unity, Osagiobare, and Edith (2013, p. 152) state that emotions of inadequacy, alienation, melancholy, and anxiety can lead to impulsive or violent behaviour that hinders academic success. While children raised in impoverished environments may "often fail to learn these responses" and thus inherit certain behaviours that can be expressed, children raised in enriched environments may have strong and stable relationships that will help "stabilise children's behaviour and provide the core guidance needed to build lifelong social skills" and these children will adopt healthy and appropriate behavioural responses to situations (Unity, Osagiobare, & Edith, 2013, p. 155). Because they struggle to establish positive relationships and follow instructions, people who were raised in low-income homes are more likely to display problem behaviour in the classroom, which negatively affects their academic achievement.

Mafumbate and Mkhatjwa (2020) discovered in another study that children's behaviour was significantly influenced by peer influence, family dysfunctionality, socioeconomic status, and a lack of parenting skills. Mafumbate and Mkhatjwa (2020, p. 4) state that the "primary source of influencing maladaptive behaviour among learners" is the home environment. According to the study, a child's behaviour is positively impacted by coming from a healthy household where the parents provide a lot of love, affection, care, support, guidance, and peace. Moreover, Mafumbate and Mkhatjwa (2020, p. 5) suggested that peer pressure and a lack of school discipline both have an effect on a child's behaviour, suggesting that school has a big influence on how they behave. A child will be influenced to behave in a similar way if they are around friends who misbehave or engage in problematic behaviour. The results of the study "revealed that there are currently no intervention strategies in schools for learners to better manage their behaviours" (Mafumbate & Mkhatjwa, 2020, p. 6). Problem behaviour in children is a serious issue that can be brought on by a number of factors, including the child's

home environment, inadequate parenting, dysfunctionality in the home, and family socioeconomic status.

In a contrasting view, "students' desperation for attention and acceptance can cause them to adopt and act out in disruptive ways," argued Nunan and Ntombela (2018, p. 3). Further, Nunan and Ntombela (2018, p. 3) add that students misbehave because they are unable to control their anger, which causes them to act out by stealing or "regularly striking others; throwing, breaking, and destroying things around them" (Marais & Meier, 2010). Furthermore, Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2010, p10), add that, "stress and anxiety can also be caused by feeling scholastically inadequate." Children that experience these emotions may panic and resort to defence mechanisms as a means of self-preservation (Nunan & Ntombela, 2018).

One's upbringing and subsequent life events impact their behaviour and social development (Burgess, 2012). Louv (2009) reiterate that parents act as their children's first and most important teachers by modelling and rewarding desired behaviours in the home. Like educators, parents try to help their kids apply what they learn to all aspects of their lives. It is more likely for kids raised in chaotic homes to believe that this kind of behaviour is acceptable and should be continued in the school. Moreover, Jupp and Purcell (1992, p. 17) contend that "depression, anxiety, anger, phobias, guilt and decreased self-esteem have been noted both in the short and long terms" and that the "consequence of divorce on children" have been demonstrated to be a source of children's troublesome conduct. These emotions have a big influence on how a child behaves in class. Six categories of harmful ideas seem to be prevalent among young children who are going through a divorce. These are delusions of parental reunification and blame, feelings of abandonment and guilt, and anticipations of rejection and mockery from peers. Each of these elements affects how an individual learns in school and how they connect with their teacher and peers (Jupp & Purcell, 1992).

According to Lopes and Oliveira (2017), culture plays a relevant role on the greater or lesser degree of average discipline found in schools and classrooms. According to Lopes and Oliveria (2017), characteristics of children are influenced by their cultural backgrounds. These authors claim that when pupils from different backgrounds are placed in the same school, bad conduct typically results because the children find it difficult to interact and behave appropriately with their peers. Children "with behavioural problems often have underlying language difficulties" or "language impairments," which have an adverse effect on their academic performance in the classroom, claimed Tommerdahl and Semingson (2013, p. 218). They go on to explain that a child's poor language comprehension skills have an adverse effect on their social interactions, capacity to understand instructions, and academic achievement. Students may become irate over this and act out or disrupt class as a result. Tommerdahl and Semingson (2013, p. 219) assert that parents are the ones most likely to recognise linguistic difficulties in their children. Parents have a better understanding of their child's language limitations than the teacher does.

According to Marais and Meier (2010, p. 45), there are common causes of problematic behaviour. They propose nine components that lead to improper conduct. The first in fact, according to Marais and Meier (2010), is "developmental stage," emphasising the idea that children pick up and adopt specific behaviours as they mature. As kids get older, they learn to accept the behaviours of the individuals they spend out with. The second factor that contributes is "inexperience or ignorance," according to Mareis and Meier (2010, p. 45), when students "make mistakes and misbehave simply because they do not understand the "rules" of the classroom or even the dominant culture in the school." Diversity in the classroom also contributes to our understanding of why some children act in various ways, as children are formed by their upbringing. Consequently, these students' social environments and upbringing will shape their behaviour. The third significant factor is "curiosity," which might lead to misbehaviour (Mareis & Meier, 2010, p. 46). As the fourth contributing factor, the "need for belonging" emphasises how "society's invalidation" pushes young people to try to fit in or stand out by seeking acceptance from others and acting inappropriately (Marais & Meier, 2010, p. 46). The fifth factor that contributes is the "need for recognition". In the words of Mareis and Meier (2010), "[m]any learners misbehave because they are starved for attention" (p. 46). The "need for power, control, and anger release" is the sixth contributing element.

> . . . some learners misbehave as a means of issuing a deliberate challenge to the teacher's authority [and] some learners create disciplinary problems by indulging in violent behaviour because they are angry and resentful and are not mentally and emotionally equipped to handle their strong feelings or express their anger constructively. They lash out blindly without thinking (Marais & Meier, 2010, p. 46).

"Factors related to the family" covers the seventh component that contributes. Therefore, "the family is the most direct and possibly the most powerful system influencing the individual." Risk factors, like dysfunctional families and inadequate parental direction, have a significant influence on a child's behaviour (Marais & Meier, 2010, p. 47). "School-related factors" constitute the eighth contributing factor. These factors may "heighten learners' propensity to engage in disruptive behaviour" and include overcrowding in schools, an inadequate organisational structure of the school, a negative school climate, teachers' inadequacy as role models, teachers' professional incompetence (lack of educational/didactic expertise), etc. (Marais & Meier, 2010, p. 48). Lastly, "factors emanating from society" are listed by Marais & Meier (2010, p. 48) as one of the contributing factors for problematic behaviour. These include "moral degeneration of communities, racial conflict, poor housing and medical services, the availability and poor control of firearms, poor law enforcement, and unemployment."

A Kenyan study by Njoroge and Nyabuto (2014, p. 293) states that "student disruptive behaviour is strongly influenced by peer pressure among learners." Peer pressure makes students feel as though they must compromise their beliefs in order to blend in with their classmates and not stand out by joining the social group of their peers. By understanding the

influences from the societal environment and figuring out the underlying causes of problem conduct, we can get knowledge about the consequences on children's behaviour. Problem behaviours that negatively impact classroom instruction and student learning are rooted in an individual's social setting. "[D]iscipline at school plays a vital role in the achievement of expectations and goals," assert Njoroge and Nyabuto (p. 290, 2014). It is evident that a wide range of circumstances affect how well students and teachers learn in the classroom and that the troublesome behaviour of the pupils is "overdetermined." A number of factors that "can be inherent in the individual (internal system), but also in the broader social context or external systems in which the individual operates" (p. 45) are associated with disruptive conduct, according to Marais and Meier's (2010) research. In the words of Marais and Meier (2010), "students from underprivileged backgrounds, such as living in rough and noisy language environments, squatter camps, the streets, or abusive family situations, where stealing is a means of subsistence, need to be taught what is expected of them in the classroom" (p. 46). These students frequently engage in misbehaviour as a means of addressing their desires for approval and control, as well as a sense of belonging (Marais & Meier, 2010). A different study conducted in Swaziland by Mafumbate and Mkhatjwa (2020) found that dysfunctional families, inadequate parenting skills, and family socioeconomic status are some of the home factors that contribute to children's maladaptive behaviour. It was also shown that two school-related factors that contribute to children's maladaptive behaviour are peer pressure and a lack of discipline. Huston, Mcloyd, and Coll (2008) also discovered that children from low-income families are likely more likely to encounter peer conflict, depression, conduct disorders, and low self-esteem. In their investigation, they also noted that these children live in various places and attend various schools as a result of their parents' frequent moves. According to the standard family environment model, children's behavioural issues are more likely to occur when there are marital problems and divorce (Amato and Cheadle, 2008). The Pennsylvania-based study concentrated on children's behavioural issues, marital discord, and parental divorce. Teenagers occasionally copy their pals, according to a 2011 study by Kwaja and Mormah with pupils in secondary schools in Nigeria. A 2003 study by Matsoga suggests that the acceptance and embracing of western attitudes and norms within a very traditional society may be one factor that leads to disruptive behaviour in Botswana's classrooms.

The review above makes it abundantly evident that teachers need to be well-versed in the behaviour of students that cause problems. The above cited literature offers a succinct overview of the societal elements that contribute to problem behaviour. This understanding is crucial because it enables educators to recognise the problematic habits that children display and may provide them with access to more appropriate and successful practices and techniques to deal with those behaviours. Therefore, the current study set out to find out how teachers in the Midrand district of South Africa justified their pupils' problematic behaviour.

Methods

Research Design

A multiple case study design was selected for this investigation's objectives. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that a "multiple case study" is one in which "a number of cases are

studied to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition." Using a multiple case study approach, this study involved collecting and evaluating data from numerous cases, in this case, three schools in Midrand, Gauteng Province, South Africa. The focus of this study was on teachers' explanations on why their students engaged in problematic behaviour.

Research Participants

Three public primary schools in Midrand, South Africa, were the subject of this study. The fifteen (15) grade four teachers at the three Midrand schools were the subject of this investigation. To get the information needed for this study, these teachers were interviewed. The census sampling technique was used in this study to identify the 15 instructors who work with students in grade 4. According to Mason (2010, p. 1), smaller sample sizes are used in qualitative studies because "qualitative research is very labour intensive, analysing a large sample can be time consuming and often simply impractical." Therefore, this sample size of 15 teachers was appropriate for my study.

Research Tools

In this study, data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. A list of questions or topics to be investigated guided the majority of the interview; neither the exact phrasing nor the sequence of the questions was set. There is a more structured portion if specific information was requested from each respondent. The methodology allowed the researcher to respond to the situation as it was, the respondent's evolving worldview, and new insights into the issue (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 90).

Procedure

Ethical approval was received by the University of Witwatersrand Ethics Research Committee. Second, when the Gauteng Department of Education approved the research's ability to be done in schools, the principals of the selected private schools were contacted to request permission for the researcher to visit them. The objectives of the study, the researcher's evidence of registration, and the ethical clearance certificate were given to the participants. Research interviews conducted in person have become quite challenging due to the present pandemic. Consequently, online interviewing tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams were employed. Every interview with an instructor lasted roughly 45 minutes.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. "[T]hematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data," according to Braun and Clarke (2006) (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3352). The six stages of theme analysis are described in Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017). Keeping a record of all the raw data collected and becoming acquainted with the interview data obtained was the first stage. The second phase involves using audit trails and peer debriefing to create preliminary codes from the qualitative data. Finding themes was the third step; it's critical to understand how themes relate to one another. The themes are reviewed in the fourth step. Determining and labelling themes was the fifth phase. The report was then created in the sixth step, which included peer

debriefing and member checking in the final draft (Nowell, Norris, White& Moules, 2017, p. 4).

Results

The study explored teachers' explanations on causes of problematic behaviours among learners in Midrand district of South Africa. The data analysis revealed the following themes: challenging home environments, learning challenges, medical and psychological issues, attention-seeking behaviours, peer pressure, emotional trauma, and insecurities related to academics. Each of these is covered in further depth below.

Theme 1: Difficult Circumstances at Home

Individual's home environments have an influence on how they develop. The term "circumstances at home" describes the state in which a student is involved in their home environment and has an impact on them. The majority of participants discovered that the behaviour of the learners was impacted by their home environment. According to selected transcripts of the interviews, the participants stated:

> *"The cause of problem behaviour is when there are changes that learners undergo within themselves or home environment."* (Participant 1).
> *"You find that the child does not get attention from home, and they spend most of their time alone, resulting in having them seeking attention at school by being disruptive. In addition, that divorce or losing one parent can also be a cause, as children do not know how to handle the pain they experience and therefore act out/ react at school"* (Participant 2).

The learners' home environment was the primary source of problem conduct, according to the participants. They proposed that a child's social circle, a lack of parental guidance, and the difficulties they encounter on a daily basis could all contribute to bad behaviour. The claim highlights how a learner's behaviour is significantly impacted by the people they associate with and how this influences them. The idea put forth by the participants was that every learner is unique. Since each person comes from a different background and environment, they will all have unique traits. The learner's uniqueness comes from their diversity. As Bronfenbrenner previously stated, a child's development is influenced by a variety of environmental and societal factors, which helps to explain how a child would behave in particular circumstances. It is clear from the statistics that the teachers were aware of this and were able to recognise the different problematic behaviours that students exhibited.

Theme 2: Learning Difficulties

Mental disabilities or cognitive illnesses, as previously established, are the cause of learning difficulties in acquiring new knowledge and skills at the standard level relative to their age group. Participants discovered that learning disabilities were among the main reasons behind bad behaviour. Here are excerpts from the transcribed interviews:

"The lack of diverse teaching methods, lack of learning support, with no learning differentiation or accommodation of different learning styles can lead to frustration or boredom and cause problem behaviour" (Participant 3).

"In most cases that I have worked with, learners who display problematic behaviour is learners that are put in mainstream teaching that does not belong in mainstream teachings, they need to be put in an LSEN (remedial) school environment where they can accomplish something" (Participant 7).

Participants noted that because of the different learning challenges that students face, students may experience anxiety, tension, anger, low self-esteem, or lack of confidence, which may also contribute to their disruptive conduct. The behaviour of the students may also be impacted by the teachers' lack of use of instructional strategies. Pupils who experience insecurity, frustration that they are not good enough, difficulty learning or understanding the material being taught, or difficulty answering questions in comparison to their peers often act out and exhibit problematic behaviour in the classroom.

Theme 3: Medical/ Psychological Conditions

Disorders, mental illnesses, and a malfunction in psychological, biological, developmental processes are all categorised under the general phrase "medical and psychological conditions." an individual's derangement and morbidity, which results in aberrant feelings, ideas, and behaviours. Instructors were notified by guardians/parents of students dealing with psychological and medical problems. Participants said that a lot of medical and psychological issues influence how many students behave. The participants asserted the following:

"It could be some conditions within the learner themselves, for example; medical conditions. There are medical conditions that we are not aware of, it could also be that the learner does not have the confidence to do the work. For example, in math, you can see some fear in the learner about certain things, and when that happens the learner wants to get the attention of others distracted because he cannot put his own focus into the problem." (Participant 5).

"In my experience, the causes of this behaviour usually come from two places: from home, or from some underlying medical or psychological condition. An unfortunate number of learners have uncaring home environments. This can lead children to seek attention from other places, unfortunately sometimes using disruptive techniques or seeking negative attention" (Participant 9).

Numerous physiological and psychological disorders have an impact on both the conduct and learning capacities of the students. Students behave in an impetuous, defensive, rebellious, and oppositional manner. Owing to their medical and psychological disorders, students may

also find it difficult to handle irritation, become quickly agitated or worried, frequently appear angry, place the blame on other students, disobey the rules, argue, and have temper tantrums, among many other behaviours. Participants discovered that learners' misbehaviour was partly caused by these physiological or psychological conditions.

Theme 4: Seeking Attention

The endeavour to draw attention from others by acting audaciously and excessively, which then diverts attention from others, is highlighted by the term "seeking attention." Participants discovered that, as a result of their personal experiences, students frequently seek attention for a number of reasons, such as a need to be noticed, a sense of contentment and acceptance, and a sense of belonging. It was challenging for teachers to cope with disruptive behaviour in the classroom, such as pupils acting out because they were attention-seeking. Participants made the following statements:

> *"In some instances, you find that the child does not get attention from home and spends most of their time alone, thus when they come to school, they tend to be chatty all the time with their friends"* (Participant 2).
> *"Learners might seek attention and manifest problematic behaviour to get attention of the adult in the classroom"* (Participant 3).

Learners who were attention-seeking exhibited problematic behaviours included suppressing their needs and wants, acting manipulatively, being hostile, yelling, and having a dramatic personality. This can have a significant impact on how a child behaves and how they feel. Participants found that when a student receives little attention at home, he or she will turn to peers and teachers at school in an attempt to get attention. They would act out in class to get attention since they were attention-seekers.

Theme 5: Peer Pressure

Peer pressure refers to the impact exerted by members of one's own peer group. Many students believe that in order to feel accepted, respected, or loved, they must behave in the same way as other members of their age group in a social group. Participants discovered that students experienced negative effects from feeling pressured by their classmates to act in a particular way. Peer pressure was experienced by the students because they believed that acting badly made them "cool," as they were seen and received attention for acting out and disturbing the classroom. Participant 3 reported:

> *"Belonging to or fitting into a group means that learners must be bold when dared to do wrong things to gain friendship with their peers. With the lack or no parental support/ guidance, they can easily be influenced by their peers"* (Participant 3).

While friends can positively encourage students to take initiative in class, learn to be more aggressive, try new things, and get interested in school, they can also have a detrimental influence on students. Peer pressure that is harmful might influence students to make poor

decisions or choices in life. Participants discovered that students' behaviour is significantly impacted by peers' easy influence over them. Students will act in a certain way to fit in in order to get their friends' approval or to belong to a social group. Because of this, students who are surrounded by people who consistently exhibit problematic behaviour will also be influenced to behave in that way.

Theme 6: Emotional Trauma

Trauma is the emotional reaction to a terrible incident that has happened. Traumatic reactions can be a persistent problem for students, causing them to experience emotional distress, depression, anxiety, and trouble controlling their emotions and interacting with others. Individuals have behavioural changes as a result, and students may engage in problematic behaviour. Teachers were able to better grasp the student when parents/guardians told participants about the painful experience they had gone through. The statements of the participants indicate that a sizable portion of students had gone through traumatic experiences, which have an effect on their behaviour. Participants stated:

> *"There can be social anxiety, the child may have been bullied and this distracts them in class as they may fear to participate in lessons. When you are emotional, you don't focus as well as you normally would"* (Participant 3).

> *"Emotions play an important role, a lot of also relates to the family structures in our country. Children who live with their mum or dad only, with their grandparent/s, or their siblings, or their aunt or uncles, and this greatly impacts their emotional issues which are brought into the classroom"* (Participant 5).

Based on the findings, it can be deduced that students who have experienced traumatic events possess symptoms of traumatic stress that influence their behaviour, making it harder for them to control their emotions and behaviours in different contexts. Participants found that because of the traumatic experiences they had, students tended to become scared, erratic in their conduct, hard to comfort, and reluctant to interact honestly and openly in order to protect their feelings. Because of this, students exhibit negative behaviours that are thought to be a result of traumatic experiences, including restlessness, impulsivity, low frustration, avoidance, inattention, dissociation, aggressive behaviour, and poor social connections.

Theme 7: Academic Insecurities

Lack of confidence, uncertainty, and anxiety about oneself are characteristics of insecurity. Academic concerns highlight students' lack of confidence in their capacity to study and in their methods for picking up new knowledge. The participants found that students exhibited sentiments of insecurity and uncertainty about their own skills and opinions in the classroom. The following are some remarks made by the teachers in the transcripts of the interviews:

> *"Inadequate implementation of school discipline systems can also relate to the problem behaviour displayed by learners, for instance, "having a merit and demerit system in place but with no consequences"* (Participant 3).

> *"Due to academic insecurities, low self-esteem can result as the cause of problem behaviour. Learners are not confident and this impacts their learning abilities and as a result they tend to act out in class"* (Participant 14).

To conclude, every participant understood that undesirable conduct might stem from a variety of factors. Academic anxieties had a big impact on how a learner behaved. Academic performance is impacted when a student exhibits excessive concentration on their perceived flaws, such as downplaying achievements, self-doubt, issues with self-esteem, or self-effacing to a fault. The sociological and historical elements that may be considered as a contributing component to understanding the roots of problem behaviour are not addressed by any of the aforementioned themes, which all offer a psychological explanation for problem behaviours.

Discussion

The study examined teachers' explanations on causes of problematic behaviours among learners in Midrand district of South Africa. The findings showed that although most instructors lack the theoretical background knowledge necessary to understand the root reasons of issue conduct. Notwithstanding this, they may identify common reasons of problematic behaviour based on their real-world encounters. Teachers identified emotional trauma, learning difficulties, social pressure, attention-seeking, emotional insecurities, physiological and psychological problems, and family circumstances as contributing factors to misbehaviour. Even when teachers are able to pinpoint potential causes of problem behaviour through psychological explanations, they are unable to accurately identify the fundamental roots of such behaviour through historical dimensions. Smaragda (2013) made a similar claim, stating that a variety of circumstances influence an individual's behaviour and can have a significant impact on it. Smaragda (2013) also mentioned the possibility of biological, psychological, and social roots for dysfunctional behaviour. According to the literature analysed for the study, there could be a number of contributing elements that affect how students behave. Bronfenbrenner noted the numerous social and environmental elements within the several ecosystems that affect a child's growth and may also have an effect on the child's traits and conduct. The child's conduct is influenced by the interactions between the ecosystems and themselves.

The results of this study corroborate the hypothesis put out by Mestry and Khumalo (2021) that a child's problem behaviour is influenced by the absence of parental support. Furthermore, they claimed that family history matters since "those with issues of discipline originate from families with histories of physical abuse, conflict, and domestic violence as well as [a] lack of parental support" (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012, p. 107). In accord, Cortina, Fazel, Hlungwani, Tollman, Cortina-Borja, and Stein's (2013) research also showed that

teachers noted high levels of behavioural and emotional issues and that socioeconomic disadvantages had a significant impact on a child's performance in South African schools. In a similar vein, Unity, Osagiobare, and Edith (2013) argue that a child's behaviour is influenced by their socioeconomic standing and that poverty contributes to the emotional pain they experience (p. 151). These can ultimately result in emotions of isolation, inadequacy, melancholy, and anxiety, all of which have a significant impact on the child's behaviour. According to Nunan and Ntombela (2018), learners may exhibit disruptive behaviour as a result of their hunger for approval and attention. They went on to say that students often misbehave because they are unable to control their anger, which causes them to act out in different ways. Last but not least, the results concur with Barbarin and Richter's (2001) study, which suggests that youngsters in South Africa are significantly impacted by their economic situation, community threat, and psychological issues. They claimed that a variety of environmental risk factors had a significant impact on children's conduct. Furthermore, compared to non-poor households, impoverished households commonly experienced emotional trauma and problematic behaviour, both of which can be detrimental to a child's wellbeing. Mafumbate and Mkhatjwa (2020) conjectured that a child's behaviour is significantly influenced by peer pressure, parental dysfunction, socioeconomic position, and a lack of parenting skills. The results of the study demonstrated that a child's home environment has an impact on their behaviour. A child raised in a healthy environment would be positively influenced and exhibit acceptable behaviour, claimed Mafumbate and Mkhatjwa (2020). On the other hand, a youngster reared in an unhealthy environment is likely to exhibit inappropriate behaviour and be negatively influenced. In addition, children who grow up in chaotic households may be negatively impacted, claim Coldwell, Pike, and Dunn (2006). Children who grow up in dysfunctional or disordered homes are more likely to tolerate and normalise certain behaviours. Unknowingly, children then begin to emulate this negative behaviour. When such behaviour is seen in classrooms, it causes issues for the teachers.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The study concludes that in order to fully understand problematic behaviour in the classroom, a lot of external circumstances must be taken into account. It is impossible to explain problem behaviours among students in an empty setting. Generalised cultural standards about what should be done in schools can impact the tactics instructors use to handle problem behaviour. But the majority of the tactics used in the classroom are stopgap measures to deal with disruptive behaviour. Long-term solutions are needed to allay the worries teachers have about problematic behaviour. Problem behaviour never goes away; it shows up in societal settings outside of the classroom as well. Teachers cannot effectively handle issue behaviour on their own; cooperation with parents and guardians is needed to help deal with the behaviour in an appropriate manner. It is necessary to take into account and address every aspect of the learners' lives. To control bad conduct, parents/guardians and teachers must collaborate to enforce consistent discipline. According to the study, in order to comprehend each student and recognise unusual behavioural patterns, teachers should establish ethical and long-lasting relationships with both the learner and their parents or guardians. To be able to effectively handle students' problematic behaviours in the classroom, teachers must have a sufficient understanding of each learner's historical background.

Additional interventions that can help children within as well as outside of the classroom are required, such as scheduling psychological visits for pupils, educational evaluations, parent support, and student counselling. This is due to the study's findings, which indicated that while educators attempt to employ techniques to assist in managing issue behaviour, students actually require more professional assistance and support in order to effectively handle the problem behaviours they encounter. In order to help address issue behaviour, the report also suggests that schools implement performance-based school fees, where students who conduct well would pay the allotted amount and students who persistently cause problems will pay a greater price. This is due to the study's findings that the school does not assist in promoting good behaviour.

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