DE GRUYTER
OPEN

Research Article

The Causes of a Lack of Discipline among Secondary School Learners in Mauritius

Dr. Belle Louis Jinot

Lecturer (Education)
Open University of Mauritius

Abstract

A lack of learners' discipline is a major school problem in secondary schools in Mauritius. The study aims at determining and examining the main causes of this problem in the context of Mauritius. Qualitative data were collected from learners, educators, principals and parents of four secondary schools by using focus group interviews and individual face-to-face interviews. By using content analysis, the study revealed that the causes of learners' lack of discipline originate from the family (the parenting style, working parents, ineffective parental discipline and the dysfunctional family), the learners' attitudes to education and schooling, the educators' attitudes to their role of maintaining learner discipline, the principals' lack of authority and leadership in managing learner discipline and the influence of peer group in the school setting. The study shows that all the stakeholders of the school community are responsible for the deterioration of learner discipline in secondary schools. It recommends that there should be a decentralisation of learner discipline strategies from the Ministry of Education to the secondary school principals who should be empowered to set up their institutional school discipline plan.

Keywords: *a lack of learners' discipline; stakeholders; decentralisation; school discipline plan*

1. Introduction

The current education system in Mauritius was framed on the former education system under the British Administration when the country got its independence in 1968. According to the Education Regulations (1957), the Ministry of Education is the sole authority to determine the policies, practices, procedures and requirements for education at all levels of education. Learner indiscipline has never been a serious matter of concern for the Ministry of Education as the various educational reforms and education policy papers barely mentioned it (Ramharai, Curpen, Mariaye & Ramful, 2006). This implies that, for the Ministry of Education, the manifestation of a lack of learner discipline in secondary schools is not a major problem. Yet, Beebeejaun-Muslum (2014) argues that there has been a deterioration of learner behaviour in schools. Moreover, in a study on educator motivation in the Flacq district of Mauritius, Belle (2007) found that this school problem is a demotivating factor for educators to ensure effective teaching and learning. The School Management Manual stipulates that discipline underpins every aspect of school life and it is a key indicator of a successful school (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2009).

Discipline is defined not only as the degree of order and structure in the school (Mukuria, 2002), but also as the extent to which the school community views the learner behaviour as the appropriate socially accepted behaviour (Oplatka & Atias, 2007). So, in this study, learner discipline helps the learner to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and provides them with the capabilities to govern their own behaviour in their interactions within the secondary

school context.

The aim of this study is to examine the main causes of the manifestations of a lack of learner discipline in secondary schools. This will give the researcher greater insights into the problem and come up with appropriate recommendations in order to help the educational authorities and stakeholders better understand it. The learner discipline problem is becoming an alarming matter and the authorities should most urgently adopt discipline policies to address it from wider perspectives.

2. Theoretical Framework

According to Mohapi (2013), indiscipline among secondary school learners is a major school issue that is mostly concerned by parents, researchers, educators, politicians and public speakers. Learner's lack of discipline in secondary schools is therefore a school phenomenon that has multiple causes that must be studied. This section review six models that are related to the causes. Indeed, Griffiths (1997) and Sharma (2009) confirm that conceptual or theoretical understanding of the various causes of a phenomenon is enhanced by the models or theories that attempt to give possible explanations to it.

2.1 The Dreikurs' model of democratic discipline

Dreikurs (1968) posits that discipline is giving assistance to learners to improve their behaviour. He argues that four hierarchical mistaken goals explain the lack of discipline among learners, namely attention-seeking, power and superiority seeking, revenge seeking and social withdrawal. Learners find the best manner to gain attention is to misbehave by disrupting the lesson, asking special favours, refusing to be on task unless the educator stays by them, acting tough and engaging in mild misbehaviour (Van Wyk, 2009). Learners also manifest a lack of discipline because they are given freedom without feeling responsible for their behaviour (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972). Bear (2005) adds that when learners do not get the necessary attention that they have sought to establish power, they then seek revenge by hurting others in order to give themselves a certain status.

2.2 The Glasser's model of non-coercive of discipline

The underlying assumption of this model is that the learners' needs such as the need for survival, the need to belong and love, the need to gain, the need to be free and the need to have fun, must be met (Glasser & Dotson, 1998). Otherwise, they feel frustrated (Loyd, 2005). Glasser (in Brandt 1988) mentions that "*unless we pay attention to what students need, we will continue to have trouble teaching the basics successfully*". Besides, schools which do not have an invitational environment and do not provide opportunities for learners to be happy, to succeed and to grow intellectually encourage them to manifest a lack of discipline (Glasser, 2001).

Learners are likely to misbehave if they experience their school life frustrating, boring and dissatisfying (Glasser, 1986); Glasser (2005) also points out that when the seven caring habits, namely supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting and negotiating differences, are absent in the relationships between the learners and the educators, the former misbehave. Besides, Glasser (1998) asserts that a lack of learners' discipline is the result of the fact that the school curriculum and the evaluation of the learner's performance are useless or irrelevant to his/her life.

The teaching style of the educator also has a negative impact on the learners' discipline. According to Glasser (2001), when learners have a boss educator, they misbehave. A boss educator is one who sets the learning standards, outcomes and tasks, talks but never demonstrates, gives grades to learners without having the learners involved in the evaluation process and uses coercive attitudes when learners resist to him/her.

2.3 The Patterson's social interactional stage model of discipline

Patterson, Reid and Dishion (1992) maintain that "*parent-child and child-peer interactions are the key determinants for the socialisation process of the learner*". The Patterson's model demonstrates that young learners misbehave when their parents adopt harsh, punitive and inconsistent parenting practices (Patterson, Forgatch, Yoerger & Stoolmiller, 1998). For Patterson, Reid and Dishion (1992), the causes of learner misbehaviour are ineffective parental discipline, lack of parental supervision, parental use of physical punishment, academic failure, parental rejection, peer rejection, member of deviant group, low self-esteem and social disadvantage. This model therefore assumes that the parental behaviour has an influence on the learner behaviour.

2.4 The Albert's model of cooperative discipline

Albert (1995) asserts that educators should not have a direct control on the behaviour of learners, though they may influence the latter. Both should work cooperatively to develop the code of conduct and to raise the learners' self-esteem through encouragement. Encouragement is the most powerful tool for educators to enhance the motivation of learners to cooperate, learn and demonstrate good behaviour (Charles, 2002).

According to Albert (2003), learners manifest a lack of discipline when they are not able to complete tasks, they cannot connect with their educators and classmates, they do not feel they belong to the group, they feel their relationships with the educators and peers are not based on trust, mutual respect and understanding, they feel they are not valued, and when the classroom structure is inappropriate for them. In such learning situation, learners are likely to feel worthless.

2.5 The Curwin and Mendler's model of discipline with dignity

The model focuses on building a sense of dignity and providing a sense of hope for learners to be successful at schools. Learners misbehave when they feel that their sense of personal dignity is threatened (Curwin & Mendler, 1992). As a consequence, they withdraw themselves, act as if they do not care, refuse to comply with the requests of the educator by arguing and talking back, tap pencils and swop books, withdraw from class activities and manifest aggressive behaviour. Mohapi (2007) claims that they do so because their motivation is low, they tend to show their resistance and they develop the desire for revenge. In the view of Price (2008), when educators treat learners with a lack of dignity, the latter develop an aversion to learning and the school.

Curwin and Mendler (1999) suggest that learners' lack of discipline is also the result of learner boredom, feelings of powerlessness and unclear behavioural limits. Consistent with Curwin and Mendler (1992) who assert that learners misbehave to gain control over the school system that threatens their sense of dignity, Mohapi (2007) adds that learners misbehave in an attempt to protect themselves.

2.6 The Nelson, Lott and Glenn's model of positive discipline

The underlying assumption of this model is that when the educator assumes, explains, directs, expects and suggests to learners what they ought to do, learners are hesitant to develop good relationships. Good relationships are built only when the educator checks, explores, encourages, celebrates and respects (Nelson, Lott & Glenn, 1997).

Nelson, Lott and Glenn (2000) theorise that learners misbehave when they lack the three empowering perceptions, namely the perceptions of personal capabilities, significance in primary relationships and personal power to influence their own life, and the four essential skills, namely the intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, strategic skills and judgemental skills. The perception of personal capability is the ability of the learner to express himself/herself and be listened to; the perception of significance in primary relationships is the perception of the learner that others listen to him/her and take his/her feelings, thoughts and ideas in a serious manner; the perception of personal power to influence one's own life is the perception that he/she may make mistakes in a

safe atmosphere, be responsible for the mistakes and learn from them without being judged in a negative manner (Charles, 2005). Charles (2002) posits that intrapersonal skills are the abilities of the learners to understand their personal emotions and behaviour by getting feedbacks from classmates; interpersonal skills are skills of conflict resolutions that allow the learners to dialogue, share, listen, empathise, cooperate and negotiate to enable problem-solving; strategic skills are the abilities of learners to adjust to problems by responding to the limits and consequences of everyday life; and the judgemental skills are the abilities of learners to make an evaluation of situations in order to make good choices.

These models of discipline provide a framework for analysing with greater insights the causes of a lack of learner discipline in secondary schools in Mauritius.

3. Research Methods

A qualitative research approach was used as it suits the aim of the study which was to determine, examine and understand the causes of a lack of learner discipline in secondary schools. The phenomenon should be understood in its natural setting. A qualitative research consists of interpreting material practices that make the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this study, the researcher aims at constructing the reality of educators, learners, principals and parents. He attempts to understand the reality that they experience concerning learner indiscipline in their everyday life, based on interpretations (Sarantakos, 2013). Indeed, qualitative research is more about exploring a topic (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection about the lack of learner discipline.

4. Sample

Semi-structured focus group interviews were used to obtain information about the learners' lack of discipline from 24 educators, 24 parents of the school governing bodies(SGB) and 24 learners of the student council in four secondary schools. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in terms of the order of the questions in order to let the participants develop their ideas, perceptions, views and opinions more widely on the phenomenon (Descombe, 2010). An individual interview was done with each of the four school principals. In each focus group and individual interview, the main question dealt with the possible causes of a lack of learners' discipline in the school of the participants. The individual face-to-face interview gave each principal the opportunities to tell their stories and reality regarding this phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. The educators had to have at least five years teaching experience, the parents were in the SGB; the learners, aged between 11 to 18 years old, should form part of the student council; and the principals were those who were confirmed in their post with at least five-year experience in schools.

5. Ethical Consideration

Permission was obtained from the Ministry of Education through the Zone Directorate. Consent was obtained from all the participants, in addition to signed assent form that was obtained from the learners. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through the data collection process and interpretation, and after. The researcher was allowed a voice recorder, except one principal objected to it and he wrote his response on paper during the interview.

Data was analysed through an inductive approach of content analysis. Content analysis is defined as the technique of analysing qualitative data that can be carried out on transcribed interviews (Basit, 2010). The six steps of data analysis suggested by Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2010), namely preparing and organising the data; reviewing and exploring the data; coding data into categories; constructing thick descriptions of people, places and activities; building themes; and reporting and interpreting data were used.

6. Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this paper is to determine and examine the causes of a lack of learners' discipline in secondary schools in Mauritius. Five themes were identified from the information collected from the participants on the topic: the family, the learner's attitudes, the educator's attitudes, the principal's authority and leadership, and peer group pressure. These are the main causes of learner misbehaviour.

6.1 The family

The family is the first institution which shapes a learner's behaviour at school (Noun, 2015). Oloyede and Adesina (2013) add that the root causes of learner misbehaviour at school are found in the homes. This study revealed that the parenting styles, working parents, ineffective parental discipline and dysfunctional family are causes of a lack of learner discipline that originate from the family.

6.1.1 Parenting styles

When parents demonstrate an authoritative style at home, the adolescent manifests misbehaviour at school. School principal A posited: "*Where the family is too strict, it is so drilling as much as the mind of the kids that they crack down.*" In the same vein, a parent of School B observed: "*The parents do not give enough love and affection to their children. Else, the children would have a feeling of care and affection for their parents and they will not misbehave.*"

In addition, parents overprotect their children by being too permissive and so the latter manifest socially unacceptable behaviour at school. This overprotection is manifested in the parents' attitude to provide them with a mobile phone to school. The use of mobile phone is prohibited on the school premise, yet when the superintendent confiscated it and call parents to collect it from school, the latter does not give a positive reaction to their child. An educator of School D complained: "*When the parents come to school, they show their fury as they do not agree that the educator has confiscated their child's mobile phone; they point out that they gave the mobile phone so that she may use it for the afternoon tuition.*"

The use of the mobile phone is a major cause of indiscipline among learners, as succinctly pointed out by an educator of School C: "*Learners from low-income families who do not have much money or do not have a mobile phone may be frustrated on seeing their rich classmates with the latest sophisticated mobile phones and rob them of their money or mobile phone or even take their kin's mobile and misuse it*". Principal B added: "*A learner, who was nice in lower forms, now brings pornographic films on his mob to show to classmates.*" Indeed, parents who adopt a laissez-faire attitude towards their children encourage socially unacceptable behaviour from the latter who do not respect the laws nor demonstrate socially acceptable behaviour (Mabitla, 2006).

6.1.2 Working parents

In many families in Mauritius, there is a working mother. So, parents do not have time for parenting; they are busy working for the benefits of the family. This does have an influence on the children's attitudes at school. A parent from School A declared with much lamentation: "*I think parents do not have much time to take care of their child. They leave home early in the morning to go to work when the child is still sleeping and come back home late in the afternoon: the child is free in between to do whatever, go wherever and behave however she wishes. The parents are not here to oversee their behaviour. They are left on their own under no parental supervision. So, children have more freedom and therefore they are also free to misbehave.*" A learner of School D confirmed the statement of the parent: "*When the superintendent calls the parents of the learner who has misbehaved, they do not come. So, the learner takes advantage of the indifference of the parents to their behaviour at school and they fearlessly misbehave at school.*" Watson and Bogotch (2015) concur on the findings by stating that working mothers have less time to support the

academic and behaviour attitudes at school.

6.1.3 Ineffective parental discipline

Parents are no more concerned with the moral and academic performances of their children since they do not have sufficient time to assume their parental role to discipline them (Abidoye & Onweazu, 2010). This research showed that, as a matter of this situation, parents lose their children who look for other people and ways to get affection, attention, care and love. An educator of School B commented: "*When parents do not discipline their child, the latter will do the wrong things and will make friends with unwanted people.* Principal C argued that such parents spoil their child. In Principal C's opinion: "*Because today's parents were so much disciplined by their parents when they were themselves a child, they are now too much flexible, but they do not realise that by accepting the caprices of their child not to go to school for a day, may encourage him or her to find excuses not to go school anytime.*"

Compensating their children for a lack of love towards them by giving them money or material things is also an unreasonable habit of parents that influence their children's behaviour at school. An educator of School A stated: " *…but they forget that their child rather needs their love, affection, care and company, not money or valuable things.*"

The parents' lack of responsibility prevents the principal of secondary schools to maintain discipline among learners. Principal A maintained: "*At school, we may discipline learners: I use measures like special report, parental meeting, reprimanding. But this discipline is not reinforced at home. The indiscipline at home is rather reinforced as the learner is only six hours at school.*" According to Joubert and Bray (2007), the parents must be responsible for the child's behaviour both at home and at school.

6.1.4 The dysfunctional family

The participants in the interviews are of the view that the children of a dysfunctional family lack character education at home. Magwa and Ngara (2014) argue that children from such a family develop unsocial behaviour. Parents are bad role models for their children. This is confirmed by a learner in School D: "*When a learner is reported for drinking alcoholic drinks at school he says to the principal that he has the right to drink and the school cannot prevent him from doing so because his parents knows he drinks.*" An educator in School A concurred: "*Parents watch films with indecency or violence together with their children. The father drinks wines or beers with friends at home. When the child comes to school, he does the same: drinking with friends, and swearing words.*" The Bandura's Social Learning theory assumes that children learn through observation and copying the behaviour of adults (Adigeb & Mbua, 2015).

6.2 The learner's attitudes

The learner is one of the school factors that contributes to the increase in violence (Bezuidenhout, 2013). Besides, secondary school learners in Africa are indifferent to education at school (Modiba, 2015). From the interviews with the participants, the learner's attitudes constitute a causal factor of a lack of discipline. A parent from School B explained the disinterest of learners in the class: "*The child calls her parents on her phone to come to school to take her home. This may be a pretext for the child to go home as she may not be interested in the subject or she had not done her homework.*" A learner from School D did not hesitate to elaborate: "*Many learners bunk classes. They do not like to do the subject or the face of the educator. They go to play cards on the playground or to meet at a preplanned point outside the classroom.*"

Besides, the learners of the upper Forms are bad role models in terms of learner discipline to the learners in the lower Forms. A learner from School A stated: "*The older girls often skip classes and play truants by jumping the school fence to come back just before the last school bell to go home. The learners in the lower Forms do the same as the older learners as the latter receive no sanctions from the school authority; they follow them.*" An educator of School D affirmed in the

ISSN 2039-2117 (online)
ISSN 2039-9340 (print)

Mediterranean Journal of
Social Sciences

Vol 9 No 1
January 2018

same vein: "*A learner, who was nice in the lower Forms, now brings pornographic films on his mob to show to classmates. The elder learners smoke cigarettes and even synthetic drugs at school. The little ones can see the elders doing so, or they may be friends with the elders*."

Adolescent learners who are 13 to 15 years old manifest a lack of discipline to a greater extent because they are in the adolescent crisis stage. Nealis (2014) and Kapalka (2009) claim that pre-adolescents and adolescents have an identity crisis and greater impulsivity that makes it difficult for them to make good behaviour choices. A learner of School C confirmed: "*Learners in Form three witness a lot of biological changes, they are growing into adolescents. They are a bit confused about whether they should behave like a child or like an adult. So, they may do things that are not necessarily acceptable in the school context.*" An educator of School D added: "*They are biologically changing and so they just show their male feeling of growing into a man. For instance, when the girls of the nearby college walk in front of the school, our boys overact, they are overexcited; they make strange sounds like monkeys. They also do strange sounds when a see a male educator of this school who may be too lenient or effeminate.*"

The secondary school learners also have recourse to drug dealing and sexual activities out of their immaturity and curiosity. This was a sensible issue that parents, principals and learners voiced out with much precaution in the interviews. Principal D dared make the statement: "*We have cases of severe discipline problems such as bringing "weeds" or gandia to school, worst fabricating synthetic drugs in the school chemistry laboratory, selling and consuming them on the school premises. The question of sexuality, we have lots of learners meeting with girls; they sleep with the same sex too. This is not talked in many schools. I don't know why we are deliberately shying away from this problem; homosexuality is also an issue.*" Naidu (2015) maintained that adolescents like the sedative and groggy effects and the "feeling good factor" of drugs, which are sold over the counter in Mauritian pharmacies without prescriptions.

6.3 The educator's attitudes

Van Breda (2014) posits that educators disregard the fact that their conduct and attitudes in the classroom may influence the learners' sense of belonging to the school and hence the ways they behave. It is found, in this research, that secondary school educators do not lead by example; they do not model socially acceptable behaviours to their learners. A parent of School D manifested his disapproval of the educators' behaviour: "*There are female educators who come to the class and just sit to do her make-up while crossing their legs on the chair instead of teaching. How will you think that the learners will behave properly in such a class? Some educators even use their mobile phone in the class lesson.*"

Besides, educators are too permissive to learners who manifest a lack of learner discipline as they do not have the qualities to manage the learners' behaviour (Mutemeri & Gudyana, 2008). Learners do not accept the authority of educators by misbehaving. An educator of School B confessed: "*Often when we are too kind to learners they make an abuse of it by manifesting a lack of discipline.*" Also, when educators show a disrespectful authority, learners do not comply to them. Principal C explained this situation: "*When educators talk to learners with non-respect, the latter do not bring their books in the classroom, bunk the class, will go to the rest room pretending that they are ill, and find excuses not to follow their class.*"

Furthermore, educators in secondary schools in Mauritius feel disempowered and they show their disengagement in their role of learner discipline management. A parent from School A affirmed: "*When the educator talks to the learners about discipline, they challenge his authority by being verbally aggressive*." According to Lukman and Hamadi (2014), some learners persuade their classmates to follow their resistance to discipline. Another reason for the educator's lack of commitment to managing discipline and which encourages learners to misbehave is the prevalence of private tuition. A parent from School D commented: "*Educators give private tuition and each learner represents Rs 400 as tuition fee that he may earn. So, to be accepted by the learners as a private tuition provider, he is cool with the learners and tries to maintain good relationships by not taking any disciplinary measures against them. He says nothing when he sees learners loitering around in the school premises and not in the classroom. So, the educator does not have a*

professional consciousness." So, educators are selfish and they lack professionalism. Rampa (2014) confirms that when educators ignore their responsibility for monitoring learner discipline, it creates a vacuum that encourages learners to be involved in misconduct.

6.4 The principal's authority and leadership

The mantra of every principal should be effective teaching and learning since the pursuit of learner academic success and learner positive behaviour is the essential goal of the school (Belle, 2007). Learner discipline management by the principal should be the cornerstone of effective instruction (Belle, 2014).

However, this study revealed that learners manifest a lack of discipline because of the principal's lack of leadership and authority. The statement of Principal D illustrated this situation: "*There is a breakdown of discipline because sometimes the principals do not feel empowered. I can only give rustications for a maximum of two days for a learner wo misbehaves. If we had the power to take severe sanctions and to provide better communication to parents and learners by informing them well in advance about the discipline measures that may be taken against the manifestations of a lack of discipline, then learners could play their good roles.*" Indeed, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Scientific Research and Tertiary Education of Mauritius (2015) postulates that the principal may expel a learner only with the authorisation of the Minister of education. So, principals of secondary schools have a limited authority in Mauritius, though they are responsible for maintaining good order and discipline among the secondary school learners (Belle, 2015).

Almost all the school heads interviewed regretted that they may only adopt a soft policy in terms of learner discipline management in order to avoid police case with parents or administrative problems with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Scientific Research and Tertiary Education. Principal A lamented: "*Using sanctions have negative implications on my job career. I know principals who have got into a mess because of their discipline actions. A principal had to reply to the Ombudsperson and he got a lot of problems*." A learner from School C confirmed the statement of Principal A and supported the fact that they misbehave because of the principal's lack of authority: "*Learner do not put into practice the school rules and regulations because the principal is not severe enough to oblige them to respect the rules and regulations*." Beebeejaun-Muslum (2014) agrees that the lack of learner discipline in secondary schools in Mauritius is the result of the lack of authority by the principal as well as by the educators, and the centralisation of power and authority in terms of discipline management.

Principals also feel helpless because they do not get any commitment from the educators to help maintain learner discipline at schools. Principal B stated with desperation: "*I don't receive the collaboration of educators outside their classrooms. They keep the role of discipline management for the principal for whom it becomes an additional task for the day. It is difficult for me to ensure physically that there is learner discipline in each class and everywhere on the school premises*." There is the absence of school-wide behavioural measures that would involve the educators, parents and even learners in maintaining learner good and socially acceptable behaviour.

6.5 Peer group pressure

Many learners misbehave because of pressure from their peers at schools (Njoroge & Nyabuto, 2014). This study found that there is the leader-follower relationship among learners when they are in groups. They develop the feeling of togetherness in order not to be excluded from the group. A learner from School A reasoned: "*A learner may be influenced by her peer group which manifests undesirable behaviour. She may follow her friends doing the misbehaviour so that she may prove herself or identify herself with others and be accepted by them*." Indeed, Seegopaul (2016) stresses that learners feel the freedom to manifest a lack of discipline when they are with their friends who push them to show unacceptable behaviour. Temitayo, Nayaya and Lukman (2013) add that criminality is socio-culturally learnt when peers interact in small groups.

ISSN 2039-2117 (online)
ISSN 2039-9340 (print)

Mediterranean Journal of
Social Sciences

Vol 9 No 1
January 2018

7. Discussion

This study was carried out and designed to determine and analyse the causes of a lack of discipline among secondary school learners. It focused on the causes that are related to the family, the learners' and educators' attitudes to this phenomenon, the principal's leadership and authority and the peer group pressure.

The study found that when parents use harsh parenting practices or when they are too permissive to their children, the latter manifest socially unacceptable behaviour (the Patterson's social interactional stage model of discipline). Besides, parents provide their children with a mobile phone for security reasons. However, the use of mobile phones at schools, despite the school rule in the student journal which stipulates that *"mobile phones should be switched off on the school premises. In case of emergency, the school phone may be used"*, is an emerging barrier to the leadership of the principal in maintaining positive learner discipline in Mauritius. Also, working parents have less time to support their children's education. Parents do not assume their responsibilities as primary educators of their children (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). This is making the role of the principal in disciplining learners more difficult (De Atouguia, 2014). These parents shift their responsibility to the educators and principals, who become overwhelmed with their teaching task and the supervision and disciplining of learners at school.

Secondary schools are now having "unwilling learners" (Mutemeri & Gudyanga, 2008) who are no more interested in their learning. The study found that learners bunk classes for the following reasons: they are unaware of the importance of education, their attraction in the opposite sex is more interesting to them at schools, they do not do their homework, and they do not like the face of the class educator or his/her personality. Learners also misbehave because they have an identity crisis which triggers them to transgress the school rules and regulations. They are also involved in drug dealing and sex, without the consent of their parents. It was found that the lack of maturity is a major concern about the learners' lack of discipline. Indeed, learners misbehave because they lack self-judgement and self-control (Oloyede & Adesina, 2013).

The educators' lack of classroom management skills and of learner discipline management skills, feeling of disempowerment to use their authority over the learners, and their unwillingness to discipline learners are the attitudes that encourage learners to manifest a lack of discipline. They are not willing and able to collaborate with the principal in maintain learner discipline for the following reasons: there are no school discipline plans, except the rules and regulations set by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Scientific Research and Tertiary Education, the learners challenge their authority as the learners are legally protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Protection Act and the Ombudsperson for Children Act, and the prevalence of private tuition for secondary school learners. According to Idu and Ojedapo (2011), when educators ignore the problems and complaints of learners, they prepare the ground for learners to misbehave.

The principals of secondary schools also lack empowerment and authority to maintain discipline among learners in Mauritius. They may take corrective measures only in consultation and with the approval of the Minister of Education, as stipulated in the Education [Amendment] Act 2002 and Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Scientific Research and Tertiary Education (2015). So, principals use a soft policy such as parent conferencing and talking with the learners about the school expectations in terms of learner discipline to avoid police cases and administrative problems with the Ministry.

Learners manifest a lack of discipline due to the influence of peers at schools. The leader-follower relationship mostly prevails in secondary schools. The influence is often negative; learners imitate the negative behaviour of peers in an attempt to prevent exclusion from the peer group. Peers influence their classmates to dress differently from what the parents educate them about the dress code; they view pornographic films in class; they smoke marijuana at school when they are in group and they incite them to verbally confront the educators and the principal. Gitome, Katola & Nyabwari (2013) ascertain that peer pressure encourages adolescents to take risks and to violate the personal moral standards.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:
- There should be a decentralisation of school disciplinary policies and procedures from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Scientific Research and Tertiary Education. This would empower the educators and the school principal in maintaining learner discipline.
- Each school should have a school disciplinary plan.
- The school disciplinary plan should be prepared in consultation with the learners of the Student Council, the parents of the School Governing Body, the educators and the School Management Team.
- The school should set up an effective school-parents partnership in order to promote a safe and orderly school environment.
- The school should use the most appropriate behaviour policies to ensure that the school rules and regulations are respected by the learners concerning the use of mobile phones.
- The principal and educators should use the morning assembly as a platform for inculcating human and social values as a form of character education.

9. Conclusion

The findings of this paper made it clear that the causes of a lack of learner discipline originate from the attitudes of the people who form part of the school lives of the learners in the school setting and at home. However, since the study used a small sample of participants, the findings cannot be generalised. Yet, they increase our insights into the root causes of this phenomenon and they allow the stakeholders such as parents, educators, the principals of secondary schools to understand better the problem. Though the problem of learner discipline is as old as education (Mohapi, 2013), yet the stakeholders together with the Ministry of Education must rethink about the phenomenon in an attempt to devise and implement the most appropriate disciplinary strategies to manage it effectively.

It became evident from the findings of this paper that there is a misunderstanding of the phenomenon of learner indiscipline and its main causes as it is becoming a public health issue in schools. The acts of learner indiscipline are becoming numerous on a daily basis in secondary schools in Mauritius. This paper has unveiled the different types of manifestations of learner indiscipline and the reasons for this serious state of affairs.

References

Abidoye, A. A. & Onweazu. O. 2010. Indiscipline among the female secondary school students in selected rural communities of Rivers State in Nigeria: Causes and Effects on academic performance. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 1(1): 8-13.

Adigeb, A. P. & Mbua, A. P. 2015. Child abuse and students' academic performance in Boki local government area of Cross River State. *British Journal of Education*, 3(3): 34-42.

Albert, L. 1995. Discipline: is it a dirty word? *Learning,* 43-46.

Albert, L. 2003. *Cooperative discipline: teachers' handbook*. American Guidance Service, Inc.

Bandura, A. 1977. *Social Learning Theory*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Basit, N. B. 2010. *Conducting research in educational contexts*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Bear, G. G. 2005. *Developing self-discipline and preventing and correcting misbehaviour*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Beebeejaun-Muslum, Z. N. 2014. Delinquant and antisocial behaviour in Mauritian secondary schools. *Research Journal of Social Science and Management*, 3(12): 124-135.

Belle, L. J. 2007. The role of secondary school principals in motivating teachers in the Flacq district of Mauritius. Unpublished Masters Dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Belle, L. J. 2014. *Learner Discipline Management*. Reduit: Open University of Mauritius.

Belle, L. J. 2015. *Educational Leadership and management*. Reduit: Open University of Mauritius.

Bezuidenhout, C. 2013. *Child and youth misbehaviour in South Africa: A holistic approach*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Blaxter ,L., Hughes, C., & Tight, M. 2014. *How to research*. UK: Open University Press.

Brandt, R. 1988. On students' needs and team learning; a conversation with William Glasser. *Educational Leadership,* 38-45.

Charles, C. M. 2002. *Building classroom discipline*. Seventh Edition. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

Charles, C. M. 2005. *Building classroom discipline*. Boston: Pearson.

Curwin, R. 1992. *Rediscovering hope: Our greatest teaching strategy*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

Curwin, R.L., Mendler, A. N. 1999. *Discipline with dignity*. Alexandria VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

De Atouguia, D. 2014. Adolescents' perspectives of discipline problems at a secondary school in Gauteng. Unpublished Masters dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Denscombe, M. 2010. *The good research guide for small scale social research projects*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Denzin, H. K. & Lincoln, S. Y. 2005. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Dreikurs, R. & Cassel, P. 1972. *Discipline without tears: What to do with children who misbehave?* New York: Howthorn Books.

Dreikurs, R. 1968. *Psychology in the classroom: A manual for teachers*. New York: Haper & Row.

Education [Amendement] Act. 2002. *Education*. Republic of Mauritius: The Government Printer.

Education Regulations. 1957. *Education*. Republic of Mauritius: The Government Printer.

Gitome, J. W., Katola, M. T. & Nyabwari, B. G. 2013. Correlation between students' discipline and performance in the Kenya certificate of secondary education. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 1(8): 1-10.

Glasser, W. & Dotson, K. 1998. *Choice theory in the classroom*. New York: Harper Collins.

Glasser, W. 1986. *Control theory in classroom*. New York: Harper & Row.

Glasser, W. 2001. *Every student can succeed*. Chatsworth, CA: William Glasser, Inc.

Glasser, W. 2005. *Treating mental health as a public health problem: A* new leadership role for the helping professions. Chatsworth, CA: William Glasser Institute.

Griffiths, D. 1997. The case for theoretical pluralism. *Educational Management and Administration*, 25(4): 371-380.

Idu, A. P. & Ojedapo, D. O. 2011. Indiscipline in Secondary Schools: A Cry to All Stakeholders in Education. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 1(4): 729-735.

Joubert, R. & Bray, E. 2007. *Public school governance in South Africa*. Pretoria: CELP.

Kapalka, G. 2009. *8 steps to classroom management success: A guide for teachers of challenging students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T. & Voegtle, K. H. 2010. *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Loyd, B. D. 2005. The effects of choice theory/reality therapy principles on high school students' perceptions of need satisfaction and behaviour change. *Dissertation Abstracts International*.

Lukman, A. A. & Hamadi, A. A. 2014. Disciplinary measures in Nigerian senior secondary scholls: Issues and Prospects. *IOSR Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 4(3): 11-17.

Mabitla, M. A. 2006. Causes and manifestations of aggression among secondary school learners. Unpublished Masters dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Magwa, S. & Ngara, R. 2014. Learner indiscipline in schools. *Review of Arts and Humanities*, 3(2): 79-88.

Mestry, R. & Khumalo, J. 2012. Governing bodies and learner discipline: Managing rural schools in South Africa through a code of conduct. *South African Journal of Education*, 32: 97-110.

Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Scientific Resources and Tertiary Education. 2015. *The Student Behaviour Policy*. Phoenix: IVTB House.

Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources. 2009. *The School Management Manual: Policies, procedures, and guidelines on school management issues*. IVTB House, Phoenix: School Management Division.

Modiba, N. S. 2015. Learners cease to be pride of their society: Effects of a conditioned mind. *International Journal of Educational Science*, 9(3): 297-304.

Mohapi, S. J. 2007. The influence of educators' life experiences on classroom discipline practices. University of Pretoria: Dissertation.

Mohapi, S. J. 2013. The influence of Ndebele cultural practices in school discipline in two secondary schools in Mpumalanga province, South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(11), 376-383.

Mukuria, G. 2002. Disciplining challenges: How do principals address the dilemma? *Urban Education*, 37(3): 432-452.

Mutemeri, J. & Gudyanga, A. 2008. Battling with the unwilling learner: A case for Gweru urban schools in Zimbabwe. *SA-eDUC Journal*, 5(1): 1-8.

Naidu, D. 2015. Teens drug abuse: The cough syrup and pregabalin epidemic. *Education Weekly*, 21-27 May.

Nealis, L. 2014. Safe and supportive school discipline: Promoting positive student mental health. *Principal Leadership*, 12-16.

Nelsen, J., Lott, L. & Glenn, H. S. 1997. *Positive Discipline in the Classroom.* Tulsa, OK: Empowering People Books.

Nelsen, J., Lott, L. & Glenn, H. S. 2000. *Positive discipline in the classroom*. Rocklin, CA: Prima.

Njoroge, P. M. & Nyabuto, A. N. 2014. Discipline as a factor in academic performance in Kenya. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 4(1): 289-307.

Noum, M. 2015. The use of Classroom Management Techniques to reduce discipline problems. A case study: First year English language learners at Idressi Mohamed Secondary School Foughala, Biskra. Masters' Dissertation. Algeria: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Oloyede, E. O. & Adesina, A. D. O. 2013. Egalitarianism and classroom discipline: A pre-requisite to successful instructional processes in Mathematics. *Global Advanced Research Journal of Educational Research and Review*, 2(6): 139-143.

Oplatka, I. & Atias M. 2007. Gendered views of managing discipline in school and classroom. *Gender and Education*, 19 (1): 41-59.

Patterson, G., Forgatch, M. S., Yoerger, K. L. & Stoolmiller, M. 1998. Variables that initiate and maintain an early-onset trajectory for juvenile offending. Development and *Psychopathology*, 10: 531-547.

Patterson, G., Reid, J. & Dishion, T. 1992. *Antisocial* boys. Eugene, OR: Castalia Publishing Company.

Patton, M. 2002. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (pp. 169-186). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Price, P. B. 2008. Teacher perceptions of the impact of professional development and teacher-student relationships on school climate. Doctoral Dissertation: Alabama: Auburn University.

Ramharai, V., Curpen, A., Mariaye, H. & Ramful, A. 2006. *Discipline/Indiscipline and violence in secondary schools in Mauritius*. Reduit: Mauritius Institute of Education.

Rampa, S. H. 2014. Discipline in schools: Assisting the positive alternative invitational discipline approach. *World Journal of Education*, 4(4): 20-29.

Sarantakos, S. 2013. *Social research*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Seegopaul, R. 2016. An analysis of the causes and types of discipline problems faced by a school; the strategies used by the school administrator to improve discipline: A case study in a model school in Mauritius. Masters' dissertation. Reduit: Open University of Mauritius.

Sharma. D. 2009. *Educational management: A unified approach of education.* New Delhi: Global India Publications Pvt Ltd.

Temitayo, O., Nayaya, M. A. & Lukman, A. A. 2013. Management of disciplinary problems in secondary schools: Jalingo Metropolis in focus. *Global Journal of Human Social Science, Linguistics and Education*, 13(14): 7-19.

The Ombudsperson for the Children Act. 2003. Revised laws of Mauritius. Republic of Mauritius: Government Printer.

Van Breda, M. 2014. School Truancy: Poor school attenders' perceptions of the impact regarding dysfunctional teacher-learner relationships on truant behaviour. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*, 5(23): 1056-1063.

Van Wyk, N. 2001. Perceptions and practices of discipline in urban black schools in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 21(3): 195-201.

Watson, T. N., Bogotch, I. 2015. Reframing parent involvement: What should urban school leaders do differently? *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 14: 257–278.