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## **South African teachers' perceptions of learners' human rights: Implications for classroom management**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This interpretivist research paper discusses the teachers' perceptions of learners' human rights and their implications for classroom management. Since the abolishment of corporal punishment, most teachers believe that learners' human rights are being prioritised owing to this, classrooms are places of violence and teachers' classroom management strategies ineffective. This paper uses the lens of critical emancipatory research (CER), which has a mission to critique and challenge, reform, and empower; it promotes social fairness and strengthens democratic ideals. This qualitative paper purposively held focus group interviews with fifteen teachers in public secondary schools in the Lejweleputswa District. This paper answers two questions: What are teachers' perceptions of learners' human rights in a school context? and What implications do learners' human rights have for classroom management? The data were analysed thematically. The findings demonstrate that teachers lack knowledge of human rights education. Considering the findings, this study suggests that teachers need urgent and continuous training on human rights education.

**Keywords:** classroom management, critical emancipatory research, learners' human rights, teachers' perceptions

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Maintaining order in the classroom is essential for efficient teaching; it presents one of the biggest problems for all teachers — both experienced and novice. The introduction of human rights education (HRE) emphasized the promotion of learners' human rights in a school context which led to the complete abolishment of corporal punishment in schools. This, in turn, affected teachers' classroom management strategies, leading to the disruptions of seamless teaching and learning in classrooms. Owing to recent laws expanding children's rights, the classroom has turned into a battleground for violence and disturbances leaving little room for productive teaching or learning (Baruth & Mokoena, 2016). Because of this, Segalo and Rambuda (2018) contend that learners' disregard for morality, values, and respect has an adverse effect on teachers' conceptions of learners' human rights, which, in turn, causes poor classroom management and a sense of teacher disempowerment. According to Coetzee and Mienie (2013), teachers still struggle to acknowledge that learners' human rights should be taught in the classroom. As a result, there is negative discipline in the classroom and inadequate and ineffective classroom management techniques. Research indicates that teachers do not feel adequately equipped to handle the human rights promotion and classroom management component, as these areas seem to be the most problematic for them (Cargas, 2019; Mahaye, 2023; Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021).

Numerous research studies have been conducted on how teachers view learners' human rights and how it affects classroom management and school discipline in South African schools (Baruth & Mokoena, 2016; Segalo & Rambuda, 2018; Mahaye, 2023). Mahaye (2023) examined how teachers' views on learners' rights affected the disciplinary process. He concluded that teachers believed that learners' rights in a school setting created a situation that made it difficult for them to be held accountable for their misbehaviour. Munongi (2023) investigated how teachers in Kwazulu-Natal province perceived and understood the application of learners' human rights as one of the classroom management strategies. He established that most South African teachers struggle to maintain classroom discipline because of their sensitive approach and their very limited understanding of learners' human rights. Abbott (2006) undertook a similar investigation as that of Mahaye (2023), sampling the Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces to examine how teachers interpreted the incorporation of human rights into classroom management techniques. In his study, Abbott (2006) contended that after the total abolishment of corporal punishment in schools, South African teachers were unable to maintain order in their classrooms because they believed that the emphasis placed on the rights of the learners was excessive. This view is shared by other researchers globally, placing South African teachers on the 'normal' scale by creating the perception that teachers around the world are equally frustrated by learners' human rights in schools' context. This perception impacts badly on their ability to maintain order in classrooms. Additional research on alternatives to corporal punishment carried out in Taiwan by Lwo and Yuan (2011), in the USA and Korea by Koh and Shin (2014), and in China and Britain by Briesch et al. (2015) revealed that although the majority of teachers comprehended and supported the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, there were differing opinions, particularly regarding issues pertaining to the challenge of disciplining learners while upholding their human rights.

Our study is unique in that it advocates for the inclusion of human rights as one of the classroom management strategies, even though the studies mentioned above have contributed to the understanding of teachers' perceptions of learners' human rights in relation to classroom management. None of the studies have, however, concentrated on the implications that those perceptions have for teachers' classroom management strategies. Considering this, the study's objective is to discuss how teachers view learners' human rights and the effects those views have on classroom management.

## **CRITICAL EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH AS THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN SCHOOLS**

Critical emancipatory research (CER) originated from the emancipatory role of critical theory. German social theorists developed critical thinking in 1923 at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, eventually immigrating to the United States of America to spread the concept's popularity (Msimanga & Hlalele, 2021). Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), and Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) were some of the founding members of the theory at the Frankfurt School (Bananuka, 2023). German social intellectuals were worried about the rise of fascist rule in their country at the time, which led to the founding of CER. Horkheimer's early philosophy included criticisms of positivism, metaphysics, and the method of interdisciplinary social research. It concentrated on happiness and suffering as well as the function of reason in emancipatory movements (Bananuka, 2023). Karl Marx, however, disagreed with the Frankfurt School's beliefs and the school's affiliation with prominent Jewish thinkers, which ultimately led to its collapse (Akom, 2016). The idea of peace education through human rights education was born because of the Frankfurt School philosophers' substantial contributions to the development of critical theory in their quest to free the oppressed (Mahlomaholo, 2009). The idea that humans should be free from authority served as the basis for this thought. This concept is the basis for the creation of HRE pedagogy implementation communities.

According to Nkoane (2012) and Dube and Hlalele (2018), CER seeks to further the liberating, enlightening, emancipating, and empowering democratic values of equality and justice. CER was selected as the most appropriate theoretical framework for supporting teachers in expressing their genuine beliefs about learners' human rights in the workplace because of its values and principles of social justice, equity, respect, peace, freedom, and the hope that the oppressed will be empowered and emancipated. Two considerations that are pertinent to societal transformation serve as the foundation for CER's approach to school relations. First, it is important to recognise that classroom violence is not a necessary component of order, as stated by Humphries et al. (2020). Academics need to go on critical thinking journeys to problematize it and to identify and combat problematic school ties as these interactions create a global order predicated on lies and violations of human rights. Second, to address the issue of human rights breaches effectively in South African schools, Watson and Watson (2011) argued for "open discourse on how to engage minds in a critical manner" (p.70).

CER is crucial for the purposes of this research because it offers a theoretical framework for a perspective on planning that emphasises broad public participation, information sharing with the public, reaching consensus through open discourse to improve relations rather than using force, avoiding the prioritisation of experts and bureaucrats, and substituting one of the reflective planners for the technical expert model (Dube & Hlalele, 2018; Malebese et al., 2019; Motsoeneng & Qhosola, 2021). This paper makes the contends that by fostering deliberative interactions that lessen the scourge of human rights violations in schools, societies and schools can direct the energy of conflict into constructive rather than destructive channels (Abu-Nimer et al., 2007), as cited in Dube and Hlalele (2018). The researchers concur with Mahlomaholo (2009) that one of the best strategies for challenging this distorted consciousness and fostering a positive academic identity seems to be CER.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The right to education is one of the most important constitutional rights in South Africa since it promotes the social and economic well-being of the nation. When putting human rights education into practice, it is imperative to distinguish between the right to education and the right to a basic education. The right to education must be protected, upheld, advanced, and fulfilled by the state; this can only be accomplished by enacting the relevant laws and regulations, developing sensible policies, and implementing the appropriate programmes. A few unfavourable issues, situations and events have seriously undermined the South African educational system. Furthermore, teacher education

programmes in higher education institutions have not provided any training to prepare aspiring teachers to manage classrooms by incorporating human rights education as one strategy to reduce violence in the classroom. Inequalities in the classroom, a lack of safe, high-quality education, inadequate facilities, a lack of qualified teachers, and the school system's failure to account for student learning differences are just a few examples. Solutions have been sought for numerous of these aggravating issues, conditions, and situations, some of which have been successful.

The importance and urgency of the right to education in South African schools are lessened by the way teachers' view and respect the human rights of their learners. Consequently, enforcing or promoting human rights in schools through instruction and practice would enhance the infrastructure for education. A child's right to an education is closely linked to other socioeconomic rights, according to the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), which is often regarded as one of the best on the continent. Despite new goals and ongoing reforms to the educational system that are directed by a robust Constitution, the quality of education seems to be low and a reflection of the oppressive legacies that persist within the nation.

Human rights are universal and apply to every person. Hung (2014) and Mpindo and Mphojane (2024) assert that these are inalienable rights that everyone possesses and is free to use against the state and the community. To create a society founded on rights, there has been a growing international consensus over the past ten or so years regarding the significance of human rights education. Teachers are unquestionably an essential part of human rights activities since teacher education is a major emphasis of human rights pedagogies. These aim to raise awareness of human rights through teacher knowledge, pedagogical skills, and classroom behaviour (Bajaj, 2011). This is to enable them to serve as transmitters, role models, and intermediates for rights education. However, there has not been much prior research on how teachers regard learners' human rights that has examined the effects of human rights education on teachers as individuals. Du Preez and Roux (2010) investigated the opinions of teachers regarding the prohibition of corporal punishment as a primary method of classroom management. They found that teachers believe that learners' human rights are prioritised over their responsibilities, which results in a highly complex and violent learning environment for both teachers and learners. They maintained that to support effective classroom management techniques, schools should begin negotiating, at the very least, the values and teacher training on human rights.

Coetzee (2010) argues that teachers in South Africa promote children's rights by using a constructive discipline method such as kneeling in class, detention and picking up papers after school, to mention a few. She also pointed out that South African teachers' views on learners' rights forbid them from establishing a structured classroom. De Klerk and Rens (2003), Coetzee and Mienie (2013), and Cargas (2019) all support the idea that teachers' ignorance of human rights contributes more to subpar classroom management techniques and leads them to blame learners' rights as the main cause of violence in schools. Research on learner conduct in the classroom during the late 1960s and early 1970s typically focused on the discipline component (Wolhuter & Steyn, 2003). It was because personal development and awareness were prioritised in psychology back then. It was critical to comprehend the issues facing the children. Most of the strategies employed to accomplish this centred on improving learners' self-awareness and encouraging teamwork among them to foster more productive behaviour. The influential publications of Kounin (1970) as cited by Steins, et al. (2015), Brophy and Evertson (1976) as cited by Hall (2015), and Emmer et al. (1980) as cited by Alter and Haydon (2017) brought about a shift in the way that classroom management was approached. The focus shifted from what teachers did to address learner misconduct to how teachers presented or encouraged learners' misbehaviour. Because of this, studies on classroom management conducted after the 1970s frequently concentrated on three areas of classroom management: first, teachers' support and tolerance of learners'



human rights; second, the interaction between teachers and learners; and last, pedagogical skills. Owing to its significance, classroom management has been the focus of a great deal of research on pre-service teachers' learning to teach. This research has ranged from concerns, anxieties, and confidence (Munte, 2022) to teachers' knowledge and perceptions of classroom management (Stewart, 2004; Mokhele, 2006).

Studies have also been conducted with the goal of determining teachers' attitudes towards classroom management and the requirement for human rights inclusion (Wielga, 2023). For instance, Dunhill (2016) conducted a study about how teachers feel about teaching human rights in schools and promoting the rights of others. In that study, Dunhill (2016) found that all teachers expressed support for children's rights; however, private schools' teachers were significantly more supportive than public school teachers. Some studies have revealed most public-school teachers are sensitive to democratic classroom management techniques, such as actively incorporating human rights into their lessons. This is frequently owing to a lack of training on how to apply human rights (Donnelly & Whelan, 2020; Osler & Starkey, 2017). Teachers are unlikely to support rights-based education or have the confidence to transition to rights-consistent teaching if they are uncomfortable with democratic pedagogy or if they do not fully understand or have misconceptions about children's rights (Christie, 2010). Conversely, university students, especially those training to become teachers can gain an understanding of the convention and attitudes that promote rights (Russell et al., 2019). Disparities in how they view resources and training demonstrate the importance of early training and the influence of starting attitudes on teachers' reactions to rights-respecting education.

Wielga (2023) indicates that the concerns of teachers cover a broad spectrum, from fulfilling teachers' meeting teachers' needs to dealing with constraints and dissatisfaction related to teaching. According Stahnke and Blomeke (2021), in the case of some researchers, these limitations are related to teachers' well-being, teaching conditions, and survival. Among the challenges noted, survival issues—related to one's suitability as a teacher, classroom manager, having sufficient and appropriate subject and pedagogical knowledge, and satisfying the expectations of parents and supervisors—are said to surface before teaching concerns (Kelly et al., 2024).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research questions**

The study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of learners' human rights in school context? and
2. What implications do learners' human rights have on classroom management?

### **Research paradigm and method**

This research paper was grounded in an interpretivist qualitative research lens. Given that it recognises that participants have thoughts, consciousness, the ability to reflect, feelings, and the capacity to view the human rights pedagogy from a variety of angles, this paradigm made sense in this setting (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). This viewpoint is in line with that of Ling (2017), who argues that realities examined within the framework of human rights discourse consider the participants' subjective perceptions of human rights discourses both before and after 1994. Within the framework of this paradigm, participants are free to share their perspectives on their own activities as they can consider and, if needed, explain their positions. Since it permits participants to talk organically, subjectively and without bias, the

interpretivist method aligns with the discussion of human rights education and CER. The study determines that treating participants with equity and respect is necessary to win their trust and cooperation.

### **Sample-Participants**

This study adopted purposive sampling to generate its data, sampling five schools in the Lejweleputswa District of the Free State province in South Africa, where school violence is on the rise (Mncube & Harber, 2014; Mpindo & Mphojane, 2024). These schools were specifically selected for the sample since they met the requirements for the research. Consequently, the goal of the research's findings was not to generalise these, but rather to offer rich and insightful interpretations and descriptions of the participants in their environments on their continued use of human rights education. The diversity of the participants transcended racial and gender identities, cultural backgrounds, educational environments, and teaching experience. Participants included five white teachers (three females and two males), four coloured teachers (two females and two males), and six black teachers (three females and three males). The duration of the participants' teaching experiences ranged between zero to sixteen years. The educational environments of these schools included local public schools, former model C schools, and private schools. It is interesting to note that the absence of representation from rural and farm schools would have given a distinct perspective on the application of human rights education in South Africa. The objective of this classification was to extract variations from the participants concerning their perspectives and encounters of their responsibilities in instructing human rights concepts in their educational settings.

### **Data collection tool**

A focused group interview was conducted to gather information from the participants. A focus group is described by Billson (2006) as an organised, facilitated conversation with the exclusive goal of obtaining scientific data. The interview guide employed a qualitative approach to ask the participants questions. The wording of the questions allowed for both clarification and in-depth discussion. CER environment requires patience to extract the members' positional thoughts on an issue. When clarity is lacking, the chair listens intently, asks follow-up questions, and rephrases their statements. They do this with great patience. The evidence leaders' opinions are meant to make sense and comprehension rather than draw conclusions. The researchers believed that an audio recording was appropriate. The information was audio taped along with a note-taking method, and a scribe was chosen from among the participants to take notes of the proceedings. To evaluate the data, the following format, which was suggested by Laws et al. (2003) as cited by Dube and Segalo (2022), was employed:

Step 1: Go over the collected data twice.

Step 2: Make an initial list of the subjects that were found.

Step 3: Go back over the information and determine whether the themes identified align with the investigation queries and participant responses.

Step 4: Connect the topics to citations, expert commentary, and annotations.

Step 5: Browse the categories to understand the themes. When analysing the data, keep the investigation queries in mind.

Step 6: Develop an instrument to aid in identifying trends in the information.

Step 7: Analyse the information and draw conclusions. In this step, the data are categorised based on the research questions or the ideas behind them, and the research outcomes are highlighted.

The authors ensured the validity of the study by using the member checking approach. The participants were provided with transcribed data so that they could evaluate how well the themes and conclusions matched the interview questions and their responses.

### **Ethical consideration**

The University Research and Planning Committee and the Free State Department of Education were consulted, and permission was obtained (HREIC 02/22/11 ST. M. Ed). The study's purpose, objectives, research methods, nature of participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and potential for publication of study results were all explained to each participant (Cacciattolo, 2015; Khan, 2015). This perspective is consistent with the positions taken by Abed (2015) and Abrar and Sidik (2019), who argue that a qualitative interview is a site of knowledge formation and ought to be considered a moral investigation. Given that CER values humility and respect, this ethical perspective could be considered essential to the process (Mahlomaholo, 2011).

### **Trustworthiness**

The following techniques were applied to explain the qualitative study's reliability. The first author conducted a peer check in which he separately transcribed the interviews' proceedings with second author, and conducted a member check, in which they followed up with the participants to clarify any unclear aspects of the results (Stahl & King, 2020).

### **Data analysis**

According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), the primary goal of analysing qualitative research data is to provide a detailed description that aids in comprehending the context under study. To give a comprehensive explanation of how teachers connected to their human rights education practices so that what they spoke during the interview could be understood, Castleberry and Nolen's (2018) guidance were used. The primary themes that emerged from the focus group interviews were categorised and patterns were identified using a thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2011). The literature review served as a triangulation point for the narrative and detailed description that emerged from the thematic data analysis of the participant contributions.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In South Africa, as in other parts of Africa, it is expected that teachers will teach values that align with human rights principles as espoused in the country's Constitution. In addition, as lifelong learners, teachers are expected to learn new approaches to handling challenging behavioural problems in the classroom. This section presents and discusses findings on teachers' perceptions of learners' human rights and how it affects classroom management. Following the collection and analysis of the qualitative data, the focus group interviews yielded the following findings:

### **a . Teachers' perceptions of learners' human rights**

#### **i. More emphasis on learners' human rights**



Most teachers expressed concern about how learners' human rights are given more recognition than all other human rights combined. They do not, however, perceive or hear the same emphasis placed on the obligations that accompany those rights. Masitsa (2011), Segalo and Rambuda (2018) and Mahaye (2023) all concur that the hostile settings in schools are a result of the focus on the rights learners. Masitsa (2011) emphasises the rights and safety of teachers while also implying that there is no assurance of teachers' safety in schools. There is increasing emphasis on ending all forms of physical punishment in schools and safeguarding both learners and teachers (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Nevertheless, not everyone who was meant to be protected grasped the meaning. This is what Participant 3 had to say regarding this:

*Learners' human rights were good in the pre-apartheid era, but now I don't believe they still relevant, especially in school context. They misbehave in class and there is nothing you can do about it. For example, 50% of the do not do their homework and they know you can't do anything to them, even taking them outside is an issue against their rights. (Participants 3)*

Additionally, Participant 7 commented:

*Human rights as fundamentals of humanity are very important in teaching and learning... But with learners' of today, human rights have become a thorn in the roses. They are talked about more, almost every day, everywhere and anytime without the emphasise on the responsibilities. If we can suspend rights in schools, the schools would be very peaceful and quite place, conducive for teaching and learning. (Participant 7)*

Participant 12 concurred by saying:

*Learners' human rights are very important, and we cannot shy away from that point. However, I feel that they have too many rights which helps them avoid taking responsibilities... Most learners do most harmful things to both learners and teachers and hide behind their rights when have to face the consequences. (Participant 12)*

These responses reveal that participants concur that protecting learners' human rights is crucial to ensuring their peaceful coexistence in classrooms. However, teachers are becoming increasingly stressed to the point where they protect learners from the repercussions. These responses demonstrate how most teachers believe that their authority to maintain order in the classroom has been undermined since nearly all efforts to foster classroom harmony have failed. In support of the claims, Du Preez and Roux (2010) and Coetzee and Mienie (2013) argue that learners' human rights have created animosity in the classroom since most teachers ignore insubordination to comply with the law. This demonstrates the significance of using CER to promote human rights effectively for both learners and teachers to foster and improve human interactions in learning environments, thereby critically advancing peace in schools.

## **ii. Learners use rights as an ammunition against teachers**

Even though most participants agreed that learners' human rights were important in the classroom, they were worried about how these rights were increasingly being used in a way that was becoming intolerable. This is because learners are using their right to participate in class activities voluntarily. Discourse also revealed that most learners use their knowledge of rights to challenge authority in the classroom because they are aware that nearly everything done in schools to promote positive behaviour may violate their human rights, particularly their right to an education (Widodo et al., 2010; Urinboyev et al., 2016; Hamad & Al-Abri, 2019). Regarding this issue, Participant 3 declared:

*Learners have too many rights and they also shield behind those rights to violate other learners' rights. They have attitudes in class and around the school because they understand that even chasing them out of class is not an option. (Participant 3)*

Participant 4 alluded:

*Going to classroom sometimes feels like going to war that can be avoided. Personally, I am demotivated to go to class because it is not so nice to be disrespected by a child who is at the same age of yours. These learners are so violent sometimes you would swear that they are sent by someone. Most teachers are being suspended from work because of contradicting learners' rights.... (Participant 4)*

Participant 2 confirm this by saying:

*These learners are brave to the extent that they can even pick a fight with teachers because they know you can never retaliate. It's worse because even when you write a letter requesting parents to come to school, they do not come. There is no punishment or any correctional measures in place to call them to order. (Participant 2)*

The responses above imply teachers are demoralised. Teaching has been called a dangerous profession, and teachers are finding it difficult to educate learners for the future (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010). These participants are frustrated teachers when it comes to classroom management techniques and reducing the violence in schools. The claims made above relating to the danger to the human rights culture in classrooms caused by teachers' lack of readiness to incorporate human rights into their lessons are corroborated by Emmert and Eur (2011), Canlas et al. (2015), and Osler and Skarra (2021). However, this also highlights the necessity of critically educating teachers regarding the rights of learners in classrooms and helping them foster a supportive learning environment that promotes peace in schools.

## **b . Implications for classroom management**

### **i. Most instances of ill-disciplines are being over-looked**

Because of the constant focus on learners' human rights, some teachers choose to ignore instances of poor behaviour in the classroom, thinking that they are upholding the law, while others do so because they believe the learners are putting them to the test. Black (2016) suggests that public schools suspend millions of learners annually for misbehaviour; yet, because of learners' rights and procedures, less than ten per cent of these suspensions are maintained. In a similar vein, Koehler (2015) contends that the low frequency of successful suspensions for misbehaviour deters teachers from trying to hold learners accountable for their actions, which in turn causes misbehaviour to go unnoticed or be overlooked. This was also confirmed by Participant 1 who indicated the following:

*Even if you try to hold learners accountable for their misbehaviour in classroom, your efforts are not being valued, because even principals are not willing to be in disputes with the circuit manager and the district. If disciplining learners backfire, you are on your own. (Participant 1)*

Participant 11 added:

*Last year we had a case of suspending a learner in the school, and that went straight to the district office. I am not sure what happened, but the principal called me to his office to tell me that the district rejected the suspension, and the learner will be coming to school from tomorrow. (Participant 11)*

Participant 6 articulated:

*Due to such incidents, it becomes easy to just overlook the misbehaviour as long as is not directed to you. We focus and protect ourselves more that trying to bring peaceful culture in schools. (Participant 6)*

These responses demonstrate that teachers have given up trying to enforce rules in the classroom. Nakpodia (2010) asserts that principals do not provide teachers with adequate support because most principals believe that the regular suspension of learners has a negative impact on those who misbehave, bystanders, and the school's quality results or targets. This shows that there is a lack of assistance or direction from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for principals regarding how to assist teachers in enforcing positive discipline in classrooms. Most impacted parties are unaware that implementing good discipline in schools is crucial for any school to succeed academically, notwithstanding the goals set by the principals and schools.

## **ii. Breakdown in discipline affects teaching and learning**

Effective teaching and learning are the main reasons for everyone to be at school, and they demand a conducive classroom with peaceful, progressive, and working classroom management strategies. The smooth process of teaching and learning becomes affected when teachers overlook the misbehaviour because of the fear of violating learners' human rights. This is corroborated by Duze (2011), who argues that disrupting the pattern of ideal conditions for teaching and learning, ignoring misbehaviour in the classroom, and using subpar classroom management techniques have adverse effects throughout the educational system. Adegbija and Fakomogbon (2012), however, point out that some teachers do not even attempt to impose disciplinary measures—hiding instead behind loud calls to defend the rights of their learners. Teachers' opinions about how the breakdown in discipline impacts teaching and learning as observed by Participant 9 who mentioned:

*When these learners disrupt class, there is nothing you can do apart from pausing from teaching and reprimand the learners in question. That is where the innocent learners are affected because now their time is being wasted. (Participant 9)*

Participant 10 concurred by saying:

*Sometimes as a teacher when you are being attacked by a learner, you take a break from teaching, you go out to get calm and to be honest, when you come back to class, the teaching momentum is different from before. (Participant 10)*

Participant 13 alluded:

*Teaching profession is no longer taken serious like before, sometimes you just go out during the class because a certain parent wants to meet with you regarding the ill-discipline of her child.... (Participant 13)*

These responses demonstrate how teaching and learning take longer to complete than planned for each period. Naidoo and Cartwright (2022) affirm the opinions of these teachers by arguing that dealing with classroom misbehaviour wastes teaching and learning time. This contributes to an unproductive learning environment and poor educational outcomes. This has an additional negative impact on the standard of education provided in South African secondary schools. Moreover, the alternatives to physical punishment are just as ineffective as the classroom management techniques employed in today's educational setting. To restore order in schools, education stakeholders must act quickly (Baruth & Mokoena, 2016) since this has an additional negative impact on the standard of education provided in South African secondary schools (Dunhill, 2016).

## Implications for teaching and learning

The negative teachers' perceptions of learners' human rights contribute to an unproductive teaching-learning environment and poor educational outcomes. The rights of learners to education are infringed on because of human rights violations that continue to occur in classrooms, impacting negatively on teaching and learning. When teaching and learning do not take place effectively, the right to education as outlined in the Constitution is being infringed on; therefore, schools become accomplices to other constitutional delinquency intuitions, thereby continuing to produce citizens that have little to no awareness of human rights.

## CONCLUSION

Two study questions were addressed in this CER-based paper: What are teachers' opinions of learners' human rights in the school context, and how do these rights affect classroom management? The study identified several variables that contribute to classroom ill-discipline, including teachers' lack of knowledge and training in learners' human rights, poor classroom management techniques, and inadequate substitutes for corporal punishment. The study found that teachers and learners need ongoing training in human rights education to address learner misbehaviour. Therefore, the research suggests the following:

- The DBE needs to consider the alternatives to current classroom management techniques.
- Human rights education ought to be taught and promoted in regular classrooms by adopting an HRE curriculum approach.
- Schools must incorporate best practices from other nations that have successfully integrated human rights education into their curricula and educational systems.

Although there are several linked trajectories that are also surmountable, human rights education is nevertheless essential for controlling conduct, regulating people's emotions, and promoting amicable conflict resolution. Since there are incidents of innocent lives being lost in schools on a regular basis, it is imperative that this issue be taken seriously. In terms of CER, human rights education can be used to ease the problem, as it has been done in many nations where curricula still include human rights education.

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