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How Chaotic and Unmanageable Classrooms Have Become: Insights into Prevalent Forms of Learner Indiscipline in South African Schools

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ABSTRACT The study sought to establish teachers' insights into the most prevalent forms of learner indiscipline and ascertain how the insights reflect on safety and security in schools and classrooms. The study was a descriptive survey which employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. It looked into insights of 125 teachers selected from 15 independent schools in Mthatha district in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Data were collected from teachers through a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews. The SAS/SAT statistical package version 17 was used to analyze the quantitative data. Qualitative data were analysed through content analysis on emerging key issues led to themes that guided analysis. The study found that the following forms of indiscipline: noisemaking, non-submission of work for marking, leaving learning materials at home, talking without teacher's permission, teasing other learners, absenteeism, swearing at others and non-completion of given assignments were prevalent in schools participating in this study whereas truancy, bullying, threatening other learners, theft, verbal attacks on fellow learners, assault on fellow learners, graffiti on classroom and toilet walls, vandalising school property, verbal attacks on teachers, substance abuse, sexual harassment, and indecent assaults on female learners were prevalent major forms of indiscipline. The study concluded that there were numerous disciplinary problems in schools as reported by teachers ranging from the minor to more serious ones and recommends that teachers should be always on the lookout for different forms of learner indiscipline in schools and classes in an attempt to create safe and conducive learning environments.