Discipline or Discrimination? School Punishment and Its Impact on Delinquent Behavior in Adolescents

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Abstract

Maintaining order in schools often involves disciplinary strategies intended to guide student behavior; however, certain practices may inadvertently affect students' sense of belonging and behavioral development. This research explores the complex relationship between school discipline approaches and behavioral outcomes among adolescents. Utilizing survey data from 812 students across both urban and rural secondary schools, the analysis identifies that measures such as temporary removals from class and public corrections are more frequently directed at specific student groups, potentially leading to perceptions of unequal treatment. Applying logistic regression and path analysis, the research examines how students' perceptions of fairness in disciplinary actions influence the connection between school responses and behavioral tendencies with the p- value of <0.001. Results indicate that excessively strict or inconsistently implemented disciplinary measures may be counterproductive, highlighting the importance of consistency and perceived fairness. Research promotes more supportive and participatory approaches to school discipline that foster communication, equity, and student inclusion. Implications for educators and youth support systems are discussed.

Keywords: Delinquent (DQ), adolescents, behavioral tendencies, logistic regression, path analysis

1. Introduction

Schools utilize an array of strategies to manage allegations of misconduct and facilitate safe learning environments [1]. Adolescent delinquency (DQ) is receiving increasing attention in many societies; the percentage of secondary-school students participating in DQ behavior has increased in the past several years and can be manifesting itself through social, psychological, and educational deprivation [2]. Management of order and facilitation of appropriate behavior among students are the primary duties of schools. Therefore, schools often use disciplinary processes such as, but not limited to, verbal warning, out-of-class removal, and suspension to try to fix problematic behavior and create safe, rigorous learning environments for students [3].However, these disciplinary consequences also affect students' social identities, self-concepts, and subsequent behavioral outcomes. Recent meta-analytic research indicates that exclusionary forms of discipline (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) are consistently associated with escalations in DQ, suggesting that punishment accentuates misconduct rather than mitigates it [4].

Longitudinal panel data provide additional evidence for this finding, as receiving a suspension is associated with within-person increases in offending, and multiple suspensions result in increasing behavioral differences between individuals [5]. Currently, there is some evidence to suggest that punishment is not fairly distributed. There are student groups that experience significantly higher rates of punishment, especially ethnic minorities, students from low socio-economic households, and students with learning difficulties [6]. Critics assert that zero-tolerance and exclusionary disciplinary policies reinforce the school-to-prison pipeline and uphold systemic inequities embedded in educational and justice systems [7].Furthermore, the qualitative experience of discipline as well as the quantitative frequency of discipline are significant. In considering the impact of discipline on students, procedural and school fairness, and how students perceive the consistency, transparency, and neutrality of the application of the heuristics (rules and expectations), it is important in shaping how students respond to discipline. Students' perceptions of school rules and their enforcement produce negative behaviors, such as aggression, truancy, and disengagement, when these perceptions are inconsistent or unfair [8].

Recent empirical work has established that school fairness, conceptualized as a critical dimension of school climate, is significantly related to a variety of student outcomes, such as victimization by bullying, disruption in classrooms, and underachievement. Research shows that perceived unfairness in rule enforcement or treatment in the school context indicates increased peer aggression, greater misbehavior in classes, and a lack of motivation to learn. The punishing nature of the discipline rates, and their management as unjust develop oppositional attitudes to authority and are contrary to the expectation of the rehabilitative effects of disciplinary actions [9].Theoretical frameworks, such as labelling theory and social control theory, can further explain how institutional responses to deviancy can affect a student's self-concept and social identity, which in turn can affect their future behavior. Students, who may be labelled after numerous behaviors that are problematic, can internalize that label and become disengaged from their school role, and become involved in a plethora of dysfunctional behavior, marginalization, and school failure. Labelling can change how peers and adults view students, forming a self-fulfilling prophecy of deviance, and prevent positive behavior changes [10].

1.1 Objective and Key contribution of the research

School disciplinary experiences, particularly perceptions of teacher discrimination, were investigated in this research, which influences DQ behavior among adolescents. The research aims to explore the mediating roles of depression and school attachment in shaping the relationship. This research seeks to give a comprehensive perspective of the psychological and environmental pathways that contribute to youth DQ within school contexts by integrating individual, social, and emotional factors such as low self-control and peer substance use.

- To present a comprehensive model for analyzing adolescent misconduct through multiple interacting predictors and latent variables for combining self-control, peer influence, and school dynamics.
- To highlight depression and school attachment as mediators between teacher discrimination and DQ, emphasizing the emotional and relational pathways influencing adolescent behavioral outcomes in school settings.
- To apply SEM to validate a comprehensive model, enabling simultaneous examination of latent constructs and mediating effects, thus enhancing the precision of behavioral pathway analysis.

- To identify significant predictors of DQ using logistic regression, measuring how factors like PSU and LSU increase the likelihood of rule-breaking behavior among adolescents.

The organization of the research is as follows: Section 2 presents a review of related literature that forms the foundation of the research. Section 3 outlines the conceptual model and development of hypothesis based on the theoretical and empirical insights. Section 4 details the methodology, including participants, instruments, and data analysis strategies. Section 5 reports the empirical findings. Section 6 provides a thorough discussion of the results, and section 7 concludes the research with key implications, and suggestions for future studies.

2. Related works

The effect of school-level stress on DQ behavior in Chinese adolescents was investigated [11]. With individual strain and other sociodemographic factors taken into account, the results indicated a positive correlation among school-aggregate strain and self-destructive and other-directed DQ actions. The impact of school level stress on self-destructive DQ conduct, however, was only partially mediated by individual strain. According to the report, initiatives aimed at lowering juvenile DQ should focus on strategies that relieve aggregate and individual stress while also giving children more access to services and assistance.

The life-course viewpoint investigated [12] the relationship between school experiences and long-term life outcomes, namely the school-to-prison pipeline. The relationship among school suspensions and the possibility of incarceration in young adulthood was examined. Even when criminal offending levels were taken into consideration, the results indicated that being suspended was a significant turning point towards increasing incarceration. However, recurring suspensions didn't increase the likelihood of jail. The research emphasized how school discipline affected young people's life paths.

Although the exact association between aggression and CP unclear, self-control was found to be a defensive issue against concurrent aggression in the research that used data from the z-proso [13]. However, the protective powers of self-control differed according to risk exposure, gender, and stage of adolescence. Self-control did not consistently act as a moderator. The research indicated that rather than lessening the consequences of exposure to severe punishment, therapies that target poor self-control were likely to be advantageous because of their direct effect on aggression. The results suggested that treatments for poor self-control could be advantageous.

The relationship between parental CP and teenage aggressiveness was examined [14], along with the mediating effects of negative emotions, support for violence, and a lack of self-control. Data from 1,635 pupils in central China revealed that lower self-control, negative emotions, and the support of violence by adolescents all had a role in mediating the relationship among CP and teenage aggression. The responsiveness and demandingness of the parents moderated the indirect effects.

According to this Taiwanese study, children's sadness and engagement in school violence were indirectly influenced by parents' attitudes regarding physical punishment [15]. Children's despair and participation in school violence were not predicted by positive parental attitudes. However,

parental attitudes were strongly and indirectly linked to melancholy and participation in school violence, using the actual use of CP. It lent credence to the theory that children's sadness and school violence could be predicted by a combination of parental approach and real CP.

Strain theory was used [16] to compare the DQ conduct of migrant teenagers in various schools with that of their metropolitan counterparts. In 32 middle schools in Guangzhou, China, 485 migrant kids and 836 urban students participated. DQ was lower in metropolitan public schools but greater in informal migrant schools. Strain characteristics were found to be responsible for the dissimilarity in DQ between migrant and urban adolescents. However, DQ behaviors were lower among migrant adolescents attending public schools than among urban adolescents when strain metrics were taken into consideration. The research's consequences for policy were examined.

The variations in aggressive conduct among Chinese teenagers from various family configurations were examined [17]. It was discovered that compared to boys vs girls, boys displayed more aggressive, DQ, and proactive aggression. On the contrary, violent behaviors, anxious/depressed symptoms, and proactive aggression were more prevalent in children from stepmother families. Additionally, for depressed/anxious behavior, reactive aggression, and aggressive behavior, the investigation discovered substantial interaction effects between family structure and gender. The results implied that family structure affected DQ conduct and proactive violence, but only for boys.

Research [18] investigated the connection between criminal behavior and religiosity among school children. The city's low DQ rate prompted experts to look into the relationship between criminality and religiosity. A mixed methodology was employed, which included semi-structured interviews with discipline teachers and school counselors as well as a MRPI tool. The findings revealed a modest degree of religiosity among pupils, but there was a negative correlation between DQ and religiosity. The researchers suggested religion as an effective way to reduce student DQ.

The relationship between adolescent DQ and educational attainment was examined in terms of gender inequalities [19]. Unobservable family-level characteristics were shown to be responsible for about half of the correlation. Additionally, adjusting for unobserved family-level variation reduced the correlation between female adolescent criminality and educational achievement. While female DQs didn't exhibit these patterns, male DQs experience social relationship disadvantages and lower educational aspirations.

Research [20] focused on conflict between parent and child, self-control, and subjective well-being to investigate how academic pressure affects problem behavior in teenagers. The suggested ways to lessen troublesome behavior were strengthening self-control, encouraging character traits, fostering a peaceful home environment, lowering and raising subjective well-being.

Discipline that excluded pupils frequently had detrimental effects, especially on students of color [21]. The national longitudinal study of add health data was used to determine the factors that lead pupils to be disciplined by exclusion. According to the results, defiance theory provided a theoretically sound framework for comprehending how school sanctions affect future results and how these impacts differ depending on a student's race.

Research investigated how school punishment, brain injuries, and victimization relate to juvenile offenders [22]. It was discovered that young people who witness violence were more likely to be

balanced or expelled, because these people were more likely to sustain brain injuries and engage in problematic activities. The results suggested that using trauma-focused, school-based treatments, along with TBI screenings might be able to prevent the trajectories leading to suspension and expulsion, but the impact of racial bias on those trajectories were required for consideration.

The multidisciplinary study analyzed the relationship between criminal justice systems and education, frequently from the school-to-prison pipeline model [23]. The research examined the implications of enrolment status and the source of school referrals on differential court outcomes through the school-prison nexus framework, with implications for larger systems of inequality and to understand the institutional and structural mechanisms linking schools and incarceration.

2.1 Research Gap

Although existing literature has significantly explored the influence of school stress, CP, self-control, family structure, and religiosity on adolescent DQ behavior, much of it is focused on isolated psychosocial or environmental factors without integrating the broader disciplinary practices within institutional contexts. Many studies emphasize associations rather than causal or mediating mechanisms, and few examine how perceptions of school punishment shape adolescents' behavioral trajectories. Additionally, cultural and regional diversity is often underrepresented, especially in localized settings where school punishment intersects with individual strain and family dynamics. There is also a lack of empirical studies that use integrated structural modeling to quantify these complex relationships and identify indirect effects. To address this, a SEM approach was adopted to comprehensively examine how perceived school punishment influences DQ behavior in adolescents, accounting for both individual and contextual mediators.

3. Conceptual Model

The conceptual model is designed to investigate the pathways through which teacher discrimination (TD), low self-control (LSC), and peer substance use (PSU) influence adolescent delinquency (DQ). In particular, the framework considers the direct effects of these independent variables on DQ and the mediating roles of depression (Dep) and school attachment (SA) in the relationship between teacher discrimination and DQ behavior.

Independent Variables:

- *Teacher Discrimination (TD):* Students' perceptions of being unfairly treated by teachers based on race, behavior, academic performance, or other personal characteristics.
- *Low Self-Control (LSC):* Represents an individual's limited capacity to regulate impulses and behavior in accordance with social norms.
- *Peer Substance Use (PSU):* Captures the degree to which an adolescent's peer group engages in the use of substances such as alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.

Dependent Variable:

- *Delinquency (DQ):* Encompasses a range of antisocial or rule-breaking behaviors including truancy, vandalism, theft, and aggression.

Mediating Variables:

- *Depression (Dep):* A psychological state characterized by persistent sadness, low motivation, and emotional distress.
- *School Attachment (SA):* The emotional bond students feel toward their school, encompassing their connection to peers, teachers, and the broader educational environment.

3.1 Hypothesis Development

Grounded in social control theory, labeling theory, and general strain theory, the following hypotheses are proposed to empirically test the pathways suggested in the conceptual model.

H1: Teacher Discrimination (TD) is positively associated with Delinquency (DQ).

Students who perceive higher levels of discrimination from teachers are more likely to feel alienated and marginalized, leading to an increase in oppositional or DQ behaviors. This aligns with labeling theory, which posits that perceived negative labels from authority figures can foster deviant self-concepts.

H2: Low Self-Control (LSC) is positively associated with Delinquency (DQ).

A lack of self-control often leads to poor decision-making and difficulty resisting immediate temptations, making individuals more susceptible to DQ acts.

H3: Peer Substance Use (PSU) is positively associated with Delinquency (DQ).

Adolescents are highly influenced by their social environment. Peer groups that engage in substance use may normalize or encourage deviant behaviors, increasing the likelihood that individuals will engage in similar activities.

H4: Depression (Dep) mediates the relationship between Teacher Discrimination (TD) and Delinquency (DQ).

Experiencing discrimination from teachers can elevate feelings of sadness, helplessness, or worthlessness. These emotional disturbances may serve as a psychological strain that contributes to DQ coping behaviors.

H5: School Attachment (SA) mediates the relationship between Teacher Discrimination (TD) and Delinquency (DQ).

When students feel discriminated against by teachers, their sense of belonging and connection to the school may diminish. Reduced school attachment is a known risk factor for disengagement and rule-breaking behavior.

The conceptual framework is graphically illustrated in Figure 1, outlining the hypothesized relationships among these variables.
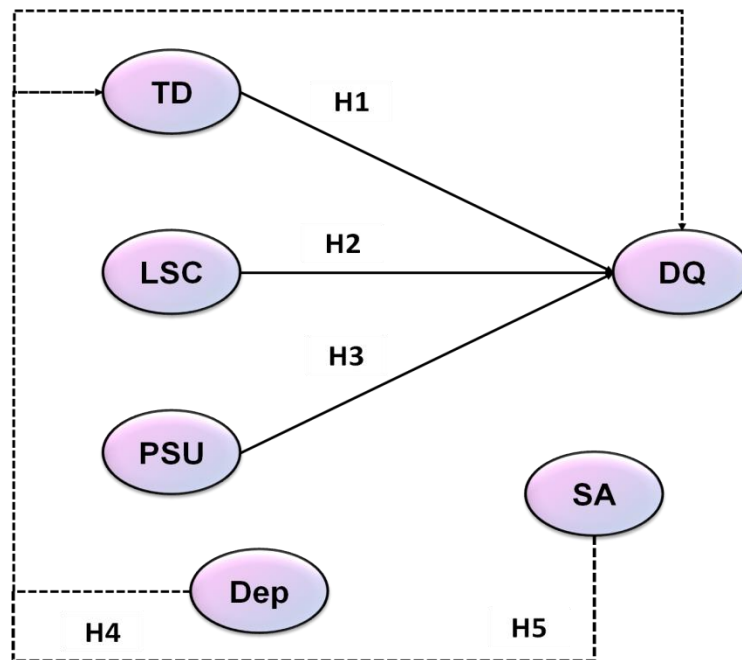

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This conceptual model helps to dissect the complex mechanisms by which school experiences—particularly negative interactions with teachers—affect behavioral outcomes in adolescents. The inclusion of both individual LSC and social PSU risk factors, along with emotional Dep and institutional SA mediators, provides a comprehensive approach to understanding adolescent DQ.

4. Methodology

The methodological framework adopted in the research was outlined, including detailed descriptions of the participants, the structure and design of the questionnaire, and the statistical procedures used for analysis. The research involved a diverse sample of secondary school students from various demographic and academic backgrounds. A structured questionnaire measured six key variables relevant to adolescent DQ. Data were analyzed using both logistic regression and path analysis using SEM techniques to examine direct and indirect relationships among variables and to assess the mediating roles of depression and school attachment in the pathway from teacher discrimination to DQ behavior. Figure 2 gives the flow of the methodology.
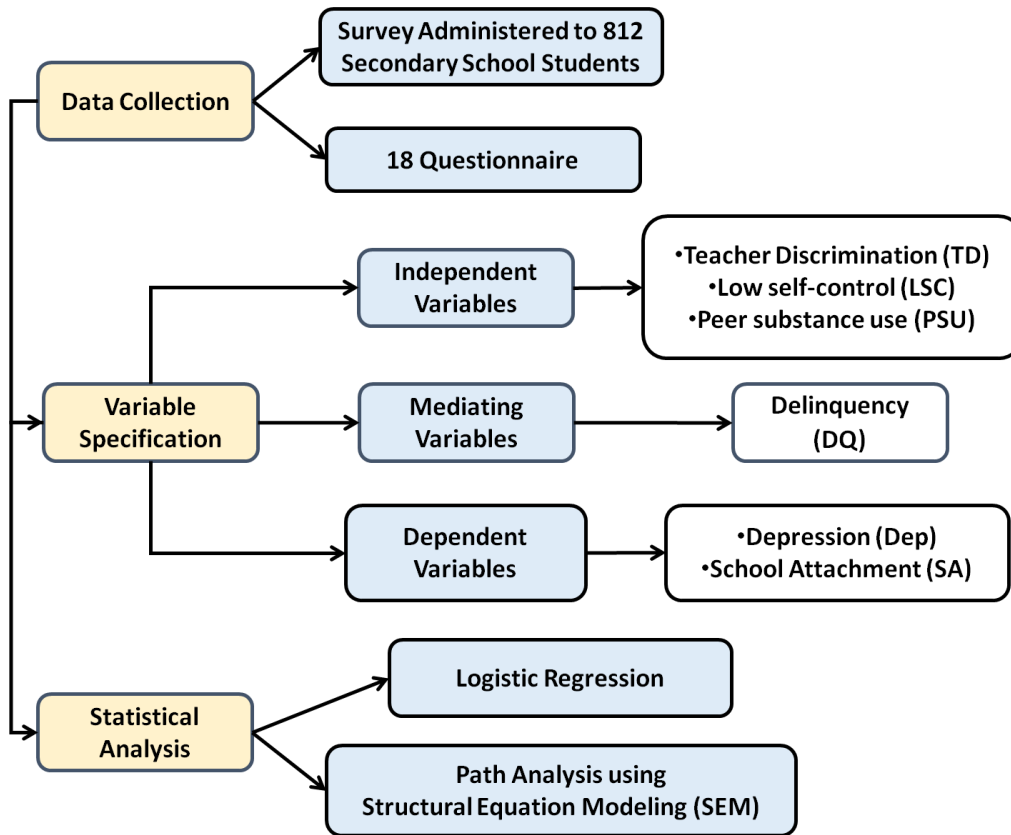
Figure 2: Flow of methodology

4.1 Participants detail

The participants for this research consisted of 812 secondary school students, aged 11-18 years, who were in grades 6-12 in both urban and rural schools (Table 1). Participants were selected from a diverse set of educational institutions, including public and private schools, to ensure variability in socioeconomic and academic backgrounds. The sample of students included various family types, such as living with two parents, living with one parent, or living with a guardian. The research also indicated residential stability, with some students being stable residents and others from a migrant family. In addition to collecting demographic data, students were asked to self-report their behavioral history and academic status, allowing the researchers to analyze the breadth of the impact of disciplinary experiences and perceptions of fair disciplinary practice and adolescent deviance.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Variable	Categories	n	%
Total Participants	—	812	100
Age	11–13 (early adolescence)	270	33.3
	14–16 (middle adolescence)	320	39.4
	17–18 (late adolescence)	222	27.3

Gender	Male	410	50.5
	Female	402	49.5
Class Level	Class 6–8	300	36.9
	Class 9–10	310	38.2
	Class 11–12	202	24.9
School Urbanicity	Urban	420	51.7
	Rural	392	48.3
Family Structure	Both Parents	528	65.0
	Single Parent	198	24.4
	Guardianship	86	10.6
Residential Status	Stable Resident	600	73.9
	Migrant Background	212	26.1
School Type	Public	446	54.9
	Private	366	45.1
Behavioral History	Reported disciplinary action (yes)	235	28.9
	No prior disciplinary record	577	71.1
Academic Performance	High achievers	320	39.4
	Average performers	346	42.6
	Below average	146	18.0

4.2 Questionnaire design

Data collection for the current research used a structured questionnaire that measured 6 key variables: TD, LSC, PSU, DQ, Dep, and SA. The research measured each of the 6 variables with three targeted items (3 per variable), resulting in 18 questions (Table 2). All items were based on existing validated scales with adjustments for the adolescent context in school settings. Items were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale between (1) (Strongly Disagree) to (5) (Strongly Agree) to capture attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors overall. The questionnaire was focused for clarity and reliability prior to distribution, ensuring content validity and understanding of items for the participants in the research.

Table 2: Structured Questionnaire items measuring core research variables

Variable	Question
Teacher Discrimination (TD)	Treated unfairly by teachers compared to other students.
	Disciplined more harshly than others for similar behavior.
	Teachers show favoritism toward certain students.
Low Self-Control (LSC)	Finds it difficult to resist doing things that may cause trouble.
	Acts without thinking about consequences.
	Easily distracted from schoolwork or responsibilities.
Peer Substance Use (PSU)	Friends frequently use alcohol, tobacco, or other substances.
	Substance use is common among peer group.
	Friends encourage trying alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs.
Delinquency (DQ)	Skipped school or classes without permission.
	Engaged in physical fights or aggressive behavior.

	Participated in vandalism, stealing, or other rule-breaking behaviors.
Depression (Dep)	Frequently feels sad or hopeless without clear reason.
	Experiences a lack of interest in usual activities.
	Feels tired, restless, or emotionally low most of the time.
School Attachment (SA)	Feels connected to teachers and school staff.
	Believes that school is a place of safety and support.
	Enjoys being at school and feels part of the school community.

4.3 Data analytic strategy

The data analysis was conducted in two primary stages using SPSS and AMOS. Logistic regression analysis was employed in SPSS to examine the predictive strength of the independent variable's TD, LSC, and PSU on the likelihood of engaging in DQ behavior. This approach allowed for the estimation of OR to assess the direction and significance of each predictor.

To explore more complex relationships, including the mediating roles of Dep and SA, path analysis was performed using SEM, which includes both direct and indirect effects. The SEM analysis was conducted in two steps. Measurement Model: CFA was used to validate the constructs of all six latent variables, ensuring acceptable reliability and validity through standardized factor loadings, CR, and AVE. Structural Model: The hypothesized relationships among the variables were then tested using path analysis.

The dual analytic approach enabled a comprehensive assessment of both the individual contributions of predictors and the mediating effects of depression and school attachment in explaining adolescent DQ.

5. Result

The findings were presented in this section, starting with logistic regression identifying key predictors of adolescent DQ. SEM analysis revealed that teacher discrimination, low self-control, and peer substance use significantly influence DQ. Additionally, depression and school attachment mediate the effects of teacher discrimination, highlighting complex pathways leading to youth misconduct.

5.1 Logistic regression analysis

The logistic regression analysis examined the extent to which TD, LSC, and PSU predict the likelihood of adolescent DQ. All three predictors were found to have statistically significant positive associations with DQ behavior. Specifically, students who perceived teacher discrimination were over twice as likely to engage in DQ acts ($OR = 2.06, p < 0.001$), while those with LSC had an even higher likelihood ($OR = 2.34, p < 0.001$). PSU also significantly increased the odds of DQ ($OR = 1.89, p < 0.001$). The regression coefficients (B) for TD, LSC, and PSU were $0.72, 0.85,$ and 0.64, respectively, all with p-values below 0.001, indicating strong significance. Mediating variables are part of causal or path-based models. The model demonstrated good fit, with a Nagelkerke R^2 value of 0.46, suggesting that the three predictors collectively explain approximately 46% of the variance in DQ outcomes. Furthermore, the model's

classification accuracy was 81.7%, indicating strong predictive capability. The constant term was negative and significant ($B = -1.82, p < 0.001$), reflecting the baseline log-odds of DQ when all predictors are at zero. These results underscore the importance of social and behavioral influences in understanding youth DQ (Table 3).

Table 3: Numerical outcomes of predictors on Delinquency-Logistic regression results

Predictor Variable	B (β Coefficient)	SE	Wald	p-value	OR (Exp(B))	95% CI for OR
Teacher Discrimination (TD)	0.72	0.15	23.04	< .001	2.06	[1.52, 2.80]
Low Self-Control (LSC)	0.85	0.17	25.00	< .001	2.34	[1.67, 3.28]
Peer Substance Use (PSU)	0.64	0.14	20.86	< .001	1.89	[1.41, 2.54]
Constant	-1.82	0.42	18.79	< .001	0.16	—

5.2 Measurement model

The results of the CFA presented in Table 4 indicate that all six constructs exhibited strong psychometric properties. All factor loadings are > 0.70, demonstrating good item reliability. The AVE values for each construct ranged from $0.59\ to\ 0.66$, indicating acceptable convergent validity. CR values ranged between $0.82\ and\ 0.86$, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients (α) ranged from $0.79\ to\ 0.84$, both exceeding the recommended cutoff of 0.70, supporting internal reliability across items within each construct.

Table 4: CFA Results for measurement model

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR	α
Teacher Discrimination(TD)	TD1	0.78	0.61	0.84	0.81
	TD2	0.82			
	TD3	0.74			
Low Self-Control(LSC)	LSC1	0.83	0.65	0.86	0.84
	LSC2	0.80			
	LSC3	0.78			
Peer Substance Use(PSU)	PSU1	0.75	0.59	0.82	0.79
	PSU2	0.80			
	PSU3	0.71			
Depression (Dep)	Dep1	0.76	0.60	0.83	0.80
	Dep2	0.79			
	Dep3	0.77			
School Attachment(SA)	SA1	0.81	0.66	0.86	0.83
	SA2	0.82			
	SA3	0.78			
Delinquency(DQ)	DQ1	0.74	0.63	0.85	0.82
	DQ2	0.83			

	DQ3	0.80			

When each construct's sq.root of AVE is higher than its correlations with other constructs, discriminant validity is evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, as shown in Table 5. Each construct met this condition, confirming that the latent variables are empirically different from one another. The sq.root of AVE for TD (0.78) is superior to its correlation with PSU (0.45), indicating clear separation between constructs. Overall, the measurement model demonstrates strong validity and reliability, justifying its use in subsequent structural modeling.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity results

Constructs	TD	LSC	PSU	Dep	SA	DQ
TD	**0.78**					
LSC	0.51	**0.81**				
PSU	0.45	0.47	**0.77**			
Dep	0.56	0.50	0.43	**0.77**		
SA	-0.48	-0.41	-0.39	-0.52	**0.81**	
DQ	0.62	0.66	0.61	0.60	-0.58	**0.79**

5.3 Structural Model Results

The structural model results presented in Table 6 indicate that all three independent variables, such as TD, LSC, and PSU, have significant direct effects on adolescent DQ. Specifically, TD ($\beta = 0.31$), LSC ($\beta = 0.36$), and PSU ($\beta = 0.29$) each show (< 0.001) strong positive standardized path coefficients, confirming that higher levels of perceived discrimination, lower self-control, and greater peer influence are associated with increased DQ behavior.

Table 6: Direct Effects of key predictors on DQ Behavior

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value
TD → DQ	0.31	0.05	6.20	< .001
LSC → DQ	0.36	0.06	6.00	< .001
PSU → DQ	0.29	0.05	5.80	< .001

Table 7 highlights the significant indirect effects of TD on DQ through two mediating variables, Dep and SA. The mediated path through depression (TD → Dep → DQ) yields a standardized indirect effect of β = 0.13 (p < .001), while the path through school attachment (TD → SA → DQ) shows an even stronger indirect effect of β = 0.15 (p < .001). Bootstrapped confidence intervals for both mediation paths do not include zero, further confirming their statistical significance. These results suggest that the impact of teacher discrimination on DQ behavior operates both directly and indirectly through emotional and institutional pathways, reinforcing the importance of addressing students' psychological well-being and their connection to the school environment when considering interventions for youth misconduct. Figure 3 gives the path analysis (Std. Beta) of the hypothesis.

Table 7: Indirect Effects (Mediated by Depression and School Attachment)

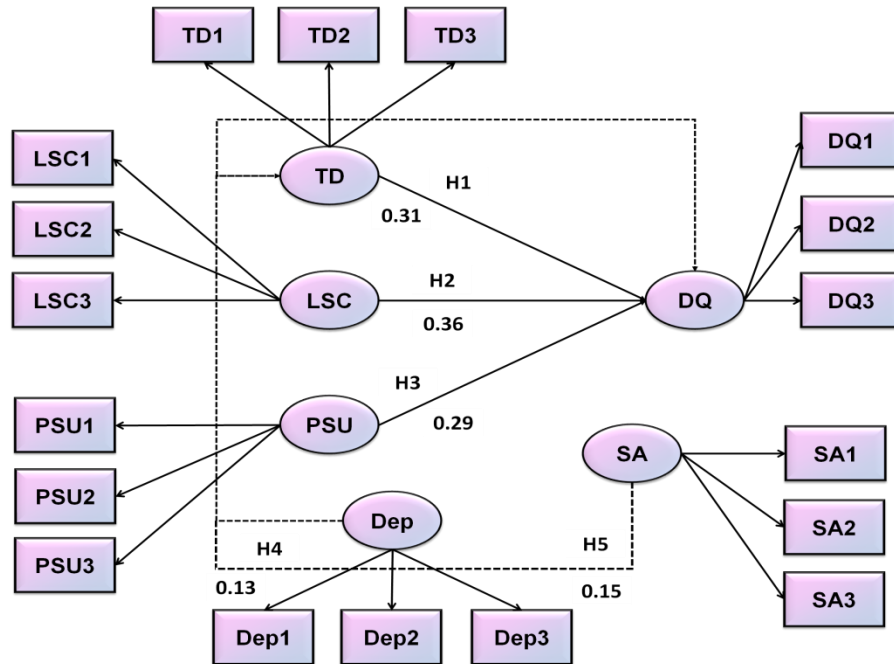| Indirect Path	Std.Beta	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI (Bootstrapped)
TD → Dep → DQ	0.13	0.03	4.33	< .001	[0.08, 0.19]
TD → SA → DQ	0.15	0.04	3.75	< .001	[0.10, 0.21]

Figure 3:Std.Beta values for the hypothesis

6. Discussion

Previous analysis has acknowledged the influence that perceived discrimination (especially from teachers) has on students' disciplinary outcomes. For example, in a large-scale study with approximately 12,000 students across 131 schools, while peer discrimination was not shown to be a significant predictor for suspension, teacher discrimination was a significant predictor of suspension, demonstrating how influential educators are in student behavioral outcomes [24]. In addition to the large meta-analysis conducted, national data from the 2012-2018 Monitoring the Future report also indicated that minority students, girls particularly, received a greater percentage of punishment (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) and experienced various levels of disadvantage based on race, gender, and parents' educational background [25].

In addition to this, research studying African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls found teacher discrimination to be statistically significantly related to greater school discipline, although measures such as school bonding and family wealth had some buffering effects for Caribbean Black girls [26]. Overall, these analyses indicate that the ways in which teachers discriminate is a significant factor in how discipline was perceived and enforced, particularly for marginalized groups. These findings provide a relevant foundation for the present research, which expands this line of inquiry by exploring not only the direct effects of teacher discrimination on adolescent DQ but also the mediating roles of emotional distress and school attachment.

The findings from the analysis of the SEM strongly supported each of the five proposed hypotheses. As hypothesized, teacher discrimination (H1), low self-control (H2), and peer substance use (H3) all had statistically significant and positive direct effects on adolescent DQ; however, low self-control was the strongest predictor of the three. These findings are consistent with social control and general strain theories, reaffirming the notion that individual characteristics and social environments are central to understanding deviant behavior.

Moreover, the mediation effects were supported. Dep significantly mediated the relationship between TD and DQ (H4); therefore, the emotional distress stemming from discriminatory experiences may lead students to maladaptive behaviors. Additionally, school attachment mediated the relationship, indicating that the lessened emotional bond with school due to perceived unfairness places students at greater risk of engaging in DQ activities (H5). The indirect effect through SA was slightly stronger than the effect through depression, providing further support for fostering belongingness and connectedness in schools. Overall, these findings illustrate the pathways through which school-based experiences impact adolescent behavioral outcomes and highlight the need for restorative disciplinary policies, inclusive teacher-student relationships, and interventions that promote emotional resilience and attachment to the school system.

7. Conclusion

The complex link between disciplinary practices and adolescent behavior was underscored, revealing that how discipline is perceived, not just administered, can significantly impact student outcomes. Results from an investigation survey of 812 students suggest that punitive strategies, such as public reprimanding or removal from the classroom, are being disproportionately addressed to particular groups of students, which could lead to feelings of discrimination. Perceptions of discrepancy in disciplinary strategies related to diminished attachment to school, and psychological distress, which, in turn, was related to DQ behaviors. The analytical framework used in this investigation, which included logistic regression and structural equation modelling, adds to understandings of adolescents because it identified the role of depression and school attachment as mediators in the discipline-DQ puzzle. Furthermore, the perceptions of fairness, or fairness and consistency, in school settings emerged as an important influence on student behavior. These results (p- value of <0.001) indicate the need for disciplinary practices that emphasize equity, transparency, and restorative methods over punishment or exclusionary practices; schools that have developed an element of trust or inclusion may obtain success in limiting future behavioral issues. Research makes an important contribution to educational and developmental psychology by highlighting evidence of how the contextual elements of discipline, rather than the severity of the punishment, influence adolescent behaviors and psychosocial adjustment.

Limitations and Future Scope: Limitations include dependence on self-reported data and a cross-sectional plan that limits causal inference. Future research should use longitudinal designs and incorporate teacher or administrative perspectives. Expanding the research to include more diverse geographic and cultural contexts could enhance the applicability and robustness of the findings across educational systems.

Appendix

Abbreviation	Full form

Zurich Project on the Social Development from Childhood to Adulthood	z-proso
Muslim Religiosity–Personality Inventory	MRPI
Adolescent and Adult Health	Add Health
Structural Equation Modeling	SEM
odds ratios	OR
Confirmatory Factor Analysis	CFA
Composite Reliability	CR
Average Variance Extracted	AVE
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA
Tucker-lewis index	TLI
Comparative Fit Index	CFI
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR
Standardized Beta	Std.Beta
Square root	sq.root
Traumatic Brain Injury	TBI
Statistical Package for the Social Sciences	SPSS
Analysis of Moment Structures	AMOS
corporal punishment	CP

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