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**Including the excluded: Exploring perspectives of preventing
disciplinary exclusion from school from the lived experience
of students**

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Abstract

Disciplinary exclusion from school is experienced by some of the most vulnerable young people, and the challenges of preventing it are well documented. The literature on preventing disciplinary exclusion has primarily focused on positive alternatives to it, however there have been no studies in New Zealand that explore the prevention of disciplinary exclusion from the perspective of those with lived experience of it. This research aims to contribute to this gap in the knowledge base about what could work to prevent disciplinary exclusion.

The study focuses on 14 young people from around New Zealand who have experienced disciplinary exclusion. Using a qualitative research design and a preventative approach to establish what could work to prevent disciplinary exclusion, data was collected via focus group interviews with young people attending Youth Guarantee Fees-Free programmesⁱ to obtain their perspectives.

Using thematic analysis, participants' lived experiences of disciplinary exclusion were captured through three emergent themes – school factors, classroom factors and personal factors. Themes were interpreted to explore how participants experienced disciplinary exclusion, and how these experiences informed the emergence of insightful possibilities – possibilities for preventing the disciplinary exclusion of other students from schools.

The implications of the findings are discussed in relation to the changes and improvements required to prevent disciplinary exclusion. It is proposed that 'including the excluded' may reveal to us potential avenues for further inquiry.

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