CAUSES AND MANIFESTATION OF AGGRESSION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

by

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submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

with specialisation in

Inclusive Education

at the

University of South Africa

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November 2006

Declaration

i

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my late father, SEKOKO MABITLA, whose inspiration to empower myself with Education still lives on to date.

Acnowledgements

Summary

This study investigated the causes and manifestation of aggression among secondary school learners. Aggression was defined. Various theories of aggression were discussed. From the literature study, nine hypotheses were developed. The study used a quantitative approach by means of a survey design. The research site was a rural, secondary school. A closed-ended questionnaire was used as data collection tool. Only learners were involved as respondents. The impact of various moderator variables was considered.

The study discovered that aggressive behaviour is not confined to a specific gender. Above all, female aggression is on the rise. Possible causative factors were confirmed and risk factors were identified. Recommendations were made in line with the findings based on the empirical results. Limitations of the study were also pointed out.

KEY WORDS

Aggression
Secondary school learner
Adolescent

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B

List of tables

Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This section aims at motivating the importance of the study project, its potential and the envisaged contribution and constraints. The researcher holds the position of a manager at a secondary school with an enrolment of 450 learners in the Dennilton Coordination Circuit, Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province. As such, the researcher constantly grapples with cases of learners' acute aggressive behaviour. Other educators in the school also continually complain of individual learner's misbehaviour and subsequent poor academic performance. The prevalence of the problem forces some educators to forfeit their break time dealing with problems of fights, use of obscene language, writing of provocative graffiti and vandalism to property.

In similar vein, Digiulio (2001:1) observed the increase in antisocial behaviour of learners in schools worldwide. Educators are counted among the concerned people. Ohsako (1997), Botha (1995), Burnett (1998) and Straker (1996) concede that emerging third world and industrial nations are equally challenged by this moral dilemma. The seriousness and prevalence of the problem is evinced by the increased erection of maximum-security prisons that incarcerate alarming proportions of juveniles aged 13 to 19 years (e-News @7, 07.10.2003) in industrialized nations such as Great Britain, the United States of America and South Africa (Digiulio 2001:3).

From time immemorial aggression was associated with maleness (Renfrew 1997:12). Females were considered to lack aggression. However, this view is said to be a myth (Bjorkvist & Niemela in Ramirez & Richardson 2001:69) and it has been corroborated by a recent study on female aggression in schools in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) (Virasamy 2004). It

was discovered that at present, female aggression is in vogue (Virasamy 2004:57). Cooyeman (2003:1) and True Love (2003:136) bluntly state that girls strive to get a feeling of power more than they did in the past. Collins (2003:135) further states that adolescent girls use very subtle methods to bully one another.

Challenged by the sudden emergence of the dilemma of learner aggression, parents feel that the youths at secondary schools are frequently "a law unto themselves" (The Star 2001:11). Moreover, in another newspaper report, school governors were reported as saying, "If it were in the olden days, the bullyheads could have long been straightened by spanking them" (City Press 2004).

The researcher was further challenged to conduct this research in an attempt to investigate parents' allegations that by according the so-called rights to the learners, it increased their aggressive behaviour. At the same annual general meeting, parents accused educators of contributing to the deterioration of immorality in secondary schools, as they tend to be afraid of dealing with troublesome learners on campus (The Star 2001:13).

According to Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch (1997:vi) and Sibaya (1996:300-3001) democracy poses a serious challenge to existing social norms and values. In South Africa, democracy brought about dramatic transformation, especially in the education of the young people. For the first time, education became all the stakeholders' business (The Teacher, October 1996:6). The commonly known top-down parental authority became null and void as resolutions taken at School Governing Body meetings had to be shared with the learners in secondary schools.

The causes of learner aggression are multiple. Learners are often subjected to aggression at school, which occurs in tandem with aggression at home and aggressive behaviour in the community outside the school. Chetty (1997) observed that children exposed to aggression in this way risk becoming either victims or perpetrators of antisocial behaviour. Coupled with inconsistent parental intervention, these children are likely to become deviants, delinquents and a public nuisance (Chetty 1997).

The researcher observed that there exists an anomaly between the adults' and the youths' perceptions of the world.   Parents still expect unquestionable obedience from their children as it was the case prior to the annulment of apartheid in South Africa.   The mixing of children as was the case with the influx of urban children in stable rural schools, led to the acceptance of values that displease the older generation (Motshekga 2004:31).   This has also been evident in secondary schools in the Dennilton Coordination Circuit, where learners' sudden aggressive behaviour is a growing concern.

Against this background, the purpose of this research is to investigate the possible causes and the manifestations of aggression in secondary schools in the above-mentioned district, and thus compile appropriate recommendations to try to improve the situation.   Moreover, this topic is under research in South Africa (Renfrew 1997:12), and thus needs to be further investigated.

1.2   RESEARCH PROBLEM

Against this background (cf 1.1 & 1.2), the following research question is posed: What are the factors relating to aggressive behaviour among secondary school learners in the Dennilton Coordination Circuit?

The posing of the research problem generates the following sub-questions:
- Which factors are related to aggressive behaviour among secondary school learners in the region mentioned above?
- How does aggression manifest itself among the target group of learners?
- How can learner aggression be addressed and reduced in secondary schools in the area?

1.3   HYPOTHESIS

The following general hypothesis may be stated: certain factors are significantly related to aggressive behaviour among secondary school learners.

1.4　RESEARCH AIMS

The following research aims have been formulated:

The research intends to

➢　determine the main factors related to aggressive behaviour by the secondary school learners of the Dennilton Coordination Circuit in Limpopo Province;

➢　illuminate the manifestations of aggression;

➢　make recommendations to address the problem of aggression in secondary schools.

1.5　RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is defined by De Vos and Fouché (1998:99) as the "road map or a blueprint according to which the researcher intends achieving his research goal and objectives". Mouton (2001:55) and Smit (1995:15) also regard a research design as a plan that helps the researcher in deciding how the research will be carried out. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:30-31) agree that the research design describes the procedures for conducting the study and the methods to be employed when collecting the empirical data.

To carry out this study, the following terms have been considered and described briefly in the ensuing paragraphs: empirical research; the quantitative approach and survey design (see 1.5.3).

1.5.1　Empirical research

According to Black (2002:3), the word empirical means that information, knowledge and understanding are gathered through experience and data collection.   People collect data on a daily basis, although that happens unintentionally and unconsciously.   But, in scientific study, research should be empirically systematic.   Wallen and Fraenkel (1997:4) define 'empirical study' as the part of research that involves the collection of first-hand information about the research problem.   Mouton (2001:53) further explains that in empirical investigation information of any sort, namely documents, interviews, questionnaire responses

and test scores are collected, then analysed and finally interpreted in order to address the problem under study. Therefore, in a quest to verify the truth, the researcher would access information mainly numerically. If the collected data are verbal, the applicable approach is called qualitative; if the data are statistical, the relevant approach is called quantitative (Leedy 1993:139).

To conduct the empirical study, a quantitative approach briefly described below will be employed.

1.5.2 Quantitative approach

A quantitative approach is described by Miller and Brewer (2003:192) as numerical measurement of specific aspects of phenomena. It is very structured in nature. The data are gathered in statistical form (Best & Kahn 1993:139, Mouton 2001:152). It distinguishes itself from the qualitative approach by the following characteristics (Sibaya 1994:70):

➢ It is deductive in nature, i.e. it reasons from a general idea or set of facts to a particular idea. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1991:267) defines 'deduction' as 'a process of reasoning using general rules or principles to form a judgment about a particular fact or situation'.

➢ Questionnaires will be used as data collection instrument.

➢ The formulation of a hypothesis is the departure point for the research.

Details on this research will be provided in Chapter 3.

1.5.3 Survey design

Mouton (2001:152) defines a survey as a study that is usually quantitative in nature and which provides a broad overview of a representative sample of a large population. It is also exploratory research that is strongly quantitative in form (Neuman 2000:121). It can be identified by the following characteristics:

➢ it is easily applied to large groups of respondents that constitute a sample of the research population;

➢ it is exploratory and well suited for a broad introductory approach;

5

> it is based on questions that are directed at describing the population characteristics, defining and establishing any connections between the variables.

Details about the research design will appear in Chapter 3.

1.6   DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1   Secondary school learner

A learner is defined by the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 (Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata & Squelch 1997:vii) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (1998:vi) as: 'any person, whether a child or an adult who receives or must receive education'.

In this study, a learner refers to a child who receives education on a full-time basis (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education 1996:4).   A definition of a secondary school learner is also derived by the following descriptions obtained in Sayer (1984:1) :
> a post-primary learner;
> a child who exudes uncertainty about his/her self-concept;
> a child generally aged between 13 and 18 years;
> a child who is physically mature, sexually reproductive and cognitively fully developed, as he/she can reason rationally.

Therefore, from the study of literature, as shown in 1.6.1 above, the researcher defines a secondary school learner as any post-primary school learner who receives education in a formal secondary school and is characterised by dramatic growth spurts, and moral immaturity, who experiences an identity crisis and who is cognitively fully developed.

1.6.2   Aggression

There exists no consensus on a single definition for the concept (Brown 1997:59; Ramirez & Richardson 2001:51). Breakwell (1997:59) believes that people commit aggression with ease, but find the term too complex to define for all fields of study.   The difficulty of defining the

concept is aptly described by Bandura in the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Psychology (1992:23) as a 'semantic jungle'.

A number of definitions are provided below:

➢ Aggression refers to 'the use of power by one or more people intentionally to harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others' (Brown 1997:31).

➢ The Dictionary of Empirical Education/Educational Psychology (1990:17) defines 'aggression' as 'an emotion expressed in hostile, injurious or destructive behaviour directed toward another'. Learners from pre-school to primary school through to adolescent years may resort to aggression to resolve conflicts.

➢ Aggression refers to 'a motivational state, personality characteristic, a response to frustration, an inherent drive or the fulfilling of a socially learned role requirement' (Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Psychology 1992:23).

Research-oriented psychologists consider aggression to be an intentional injury of another and distinguish it from other actions given the same label in ordinary speech, for example, assertiveness, and attempts to achieve mastery or ritualized threat displays. Aggressive behaviour manifests itself when a certain organism or thing makes a hostile attack, physically or verbally, upon another organism or thing.

From all definitions the researcher finds the definition of the Dictionary of Counselling (1993:6) to be the most apt. It defines 'aggression' as 'a general term for the attitude and behaviour that is energy-directed outwards in hostility, threat or violence'. However, the victims and bystanders can experience aggression psychologically, physically and emotionally. It is directed at and results in harm to a target, which can either be an organism or property. It should be understood that the concept is complex, multi-faceted and expressed and experienced differently by different cultural groups and social classes. For instance, middle-class children may indulge in verbal aggression, whereas those from the working class may express themselves physically. Sometimes a victim who cannot retaliate against a punitive perpetrator may physically or verbally lambast another who is more vulnerable or defenseless.

Expression of aggression differs. In its extreme form, it is criminal behaviour, for instance, as, in committing murder. Its moderate form is associated with insensitivity to others' needs, indifference to social norms of courtesy, as well as verbal emotional bullying. Finally, the Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology (1996:28) states that aggression is antisocial behaviour that is difficult to predict.

1.7   OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction and overview

This chapter gave a brief background and overview of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter comprises a literature review. Theories pertaining to aggression are studied and used to explore the concept of aggression and contextualize it. Causes and manifestations of aggression are outlined.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

The chapter provides details of the research methodology employed in conducting the study. The chapter also describes the quantitative research instrument employed to gather data. Details on the closed-ended questionnaire to be used in collecting data are outlined, as well as sampling procedures.

Chapter 4: Results and discussion

The data collected are analysed by making use of a computer software package. The results are presented and discussed in relation to the literature documented in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, recommendations and limitations

The study is concluded and recommendations made for the improvement of practice. Limitations of the study and areas for further research are identified.

1.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter gave an overview of aggression and how it manifests in schools. The research problem, hypothesis and aims of the research were described. The chapter gave a brief description of the research methodology to be employed in carrying out the study.   Key concepts were defined.   In the next chapter, Chapter 2, the focus is on literature review, using information from articles, books and other documents relevant to the topic.

Chapter 2

Aggression: Theories, Causes and Manifestations

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shall elaborate on the literature review on the topic of aggression. The theoretical information will be contextualised with regard to the prevalence of the problem as it occurs in secondary schools, with a focus on rural, disadvantaged ones in the province of Limpopo in South Africa.

A number of theories regarding aggression will be discussed in brief, followed by a discussion of the causes of aggression as it occurs among adolescents. Key aspects among the causes are those pertaining to the family, environment and the school.

The researcher will also attempt to identify and describe the specific ways in which the problem may manifest itself among school-going adolescent learners. The researcher will clearly indicate which behavioural acts could be associated with the aggressive nature of the learner.

2.2 SOME THEORIES REGARDING AGGRESSION

2.2.1 Evolutionary theory

According to evolutionists, this theory is an extension of the evolutionary animal series (Cavanagh 2005:1-2; Hawley 1997:213-214). Concerning aggression in subhuman animal species, it is believed that animals are genetically predisposed for protection against any

invasion. Animals are naturally inclined to aggressive behaviour even though they had never been given any prior or explicit training to fight. That is, their aggressive behaviour is self-induced, for example, fierce fighting among rats (Hawley 1997:113). Cavanagh (2005:1) also observed that once isolated, the animals would engage in fierce, compulsive and repetitive fighting until they are exhausted.

Fromm (in Biancoli 2000:227) observed that man is a primate that is least equipped with instinct, yet with a maximum brain development. During experimentation with rats with septical lesions, they performed impulsively and poorly on a delayed schedule of reinforcement. Individuals who are exposed to external cues of impulsivity are also likely to act impulsively. Appropriate inhibition to impulsive behaviour would be detached from their general behaviour. Stated differently, the diminishing social controls and the emergence of impulsivity in organisms' environment results in biochemical-genetic diathesis for impulsive behaviour (Biancoli 2000:227).

Therefore, evolutionists believe that as far as evolution is concerned, aggression is passed on from *humanid* to *humanoid* to *homo sapiens*, as stated by Biancoli (2000:228). These theorists believe that humans were also inspired, like animals, to discharge their aggressive instincts through the rapidity of technological development, such that they are able to express their aggression by participating in sports and other harmless competitive activities.

2.2.2   Instinct theory

Popular instinctivists include giants such as Freud, Lorenz, Mclean, Thorndike, James and McDougall (Petersen & Davies 2005). These theorists believe that aggression springs from an innate fighting instinct. That is, aggressive energy is spontaneously generated within a person more continuously and constantly. Once accumulated, this energy must be expressed independently of the individual's choice (Petersen & Davies 2005:3). In the Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology (1996:27) it is stated that: "... aggressive energy inexorably accumulates and inexorably must be expressed". It implies that aggressors can't be held accountable for their aggressive behaviour since the behaviour is expressed involuntarily. They may not have proper control over it.

2.2.3   Drive theory

Protagonists of this theory such as Leornard Berkowitz and Seymour Feshbach (in Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:27) assert that it is likely that aggressors could be people who were once victims of aggression at some stage in their lives. According to Berkowitz frustration induces anger that by itself leads to one's readiness to respond aggressively. He concludes that aggression-relevant cues (stimuli such as places, people and objects) which are also relevant to current or previous anger instigators can enhance or stimulate a person's aggression.

2.2.4   Socio-cultural anthropological theory

Great scholars of the above-mentioned theory include Malinowski, Mead, Benedict Kardiner, Bandura and Buss (Encyclopaedia of Social Learning 1994:40-42). These socio-cultural anthropologists observed that any form of deprivation begets behavioural or neurochemical and neurophysiological alterations. Once a group of people, such as a tribe, is isolated from others, a spiritual and cultural void would be created. In the end, the group's mental health gets lowered. Gradually, the group members would become more vicious and aggressive to one another such that they would indulge in acts of cannibalism, as it happened with the Kwakiutles of America's north-west coast (Baron & Richardson 1994:238).

All over the world men slipped into aggressive preying on their own species, with the neighbouring tribes living in an unending round of death and revenge. The graphic evidence on the world map proves that warfare among the primitive people was both endemic and on occasion, internecine (Encyclopaedia of Social Learning 1994:45). Human's preoccupation with aggressive behaviour dissociated them from their social and cultural realities and thus made them more vulnerable to environmental influences. The Encyclopaedia of Social Learning (1994:44) states that people's intimacy with their institutional forms will beget a healthy existence, i.e. it would be less aggressive, and *vice versa*. Isolation induces aggression. People who suffer from the isolation syndrome would experience trauma and subsequently, aggressive behaviour, out of parental neglect.

Isolated people may fight instinctively because their mental health is lowered. Therefore, both the people's sound spirituality and culture may compensate for unfulfilled realities.

2.2.5 Social learning theory

Social learning theorists believe that aggression is acquired via direct or vicarious means (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:27). Direct experiences include childhood pushing and shoving as well as adolescent fighting (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:26). Vicarious experiences through which aggression could be acquired include adult militancy, since aggressive children come from aggressive, unstable and frustrated families (Corvo & Williams 2000:13). Once the aggressive behaviour is acquired, the individual will also learn how to instigate such acts overtly and also how to maintain them. If the child's aggression, which occurs through trial-and-error, is reinforced, it increases their probability to acquire aggression.

The theory further implies that individuals' neurophysiological characteristics enhance their aggressive behaviour. It purports that the genetic, hormonal, central nervous system and the resultant physical characteristics all influence the individuals' capacity to aggress and their likelihood to learn specific forms of aggression (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:27).

The social learning theorists assert that the theory provides the most theoretically sound, empirically supported and pragmatically useful view of aggression. Above all, it is testable and provides logically consistent sets of constructs of increasingly demonstrable validity. It is apparent that the actual outburst of aggression can be influenced by aversive events, modelling influences, incentive inducements, instructional control, delusional control and environmental control (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:28).

Some of these factors will be briefly discussed below.

2.2.5.1   Agitation

It comprises aversive events, adverse reduction reinforcement and verbal insults or physical threats.

(a)   Aversive events

Aversive events always result from frustration, which doesn't demonstrate itself in pure form since it is delayed, repressed, displaced or changed in form or deflected (Poggenpoel & Myburgh 2002:161). As mentioned in the Encyclopaedia of Human Aggression (1994:41), frustration can be best understood in deep feelings to pay revenge. Coupled with other aversive instigators, frustration may have equipotential results in addition to aggression, for example, withdrawal, dependency, psychosomatisation, self-orchestration with drugs and alcohol, as well as regression (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:28).

(b)   Adverse reduction in reinforcement

It is the second major aversive instigator of aggression (Morrisen, Robertson & Harding 1998:217; Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1998:28). In the main, collective aggression such as school mobbing, riots and so forth are instigated by a perceived sense of deprivation and/or the mortified hardships to others and poor socio-economic circumstances (Poggenpoel & Myburgh 2002:161).

(c)   Verbal insults and physical threats

Though considered additional, they are potent aversive instigators of aggression. Verbal threats, which include threats to one's reputation on manly status and public humiliation may evoke, in many instances, physical assaults (Mooij 1998:374; Pepler & Sedigdeilami 1998:1; Smith & Furlong 1998:201-202; Solomon & Serres 1999:339).

2.2.5.2   Modelling influences

People who live in an environment that is characterized by assaultiveness are prone to lead an aggressive lifestyle (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:29). The models who behave aggressively and are not disciplined effectively can lead to vicarious exhibition of fear on observers and thus inspire them to be aggressive. Observing aggressive behaviour

could lead to emotional arousal which is considered the most powerful facilitator of aggression (Smith & Furlong 1998:201-202)

2.2.5.3   *Incentive inducement*

Incentive inducement encompasses incentive-induced and angry aggression types.   An incentive-induced type is someone who seeks to achieve a sought-after reward that is hindered by a fundamental obstacle that can only be removed by aggressive means.   The angry aggressor's motive is to inflict harm (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:29).

2.2.5.4   *Insructional control*

Instructional control means that individuals are inspired to aggress against others through instructions of their inner voices, bizarre beliefs, paranoid suspiciousness, perceptions of divine messages and delusions of grandeur (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:290).   The aggressors justify their aggressive behaviour in messianic (self-defense) terms in expressing their heroic responsibility.

2.2.5.5   *Environmental control*

The many identifiable external factors that instigate aggression in people include, *inter alia*, high temperatures, overcrowding as in disadvantaged rural schools and high noise levels as in instances where educators arrive late in their classrooms so that there is no supervision (Kruger, Rech & Van Staden 1993:10; Smith & Furlong 1998:201-202).

2.3   CAUSES OF AGGRESSION AMONG ADOLESCENTS

2.3.1   Biological causes

2.3.1.1   *Genetic predisposition*

A particular characteristic (gene) present in parents is likely to be passed on to their children (Groebel & Hinde 1989:44).   Certain character traits are hereditary.   Copps (in Bauer & Shea

1999:71) agrees that approximately 30% of fathers and 20% of mothers of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder have inherited the disorder themselves. Again, schizophrenic parents will give birth to children with schizophrenia (Bauer & Shea 1999:72). It is said that all male animal species show more aggressive behaviour than females because they possess testosterone. The latter is a male hormone that is believed to enhance aggression in the male species.

The genetic element called the Y chromosome that is transmitted from father to son is associated with abnormal tallness (asynchrony) and abnormal aggressiveness in the males comprising the normal XY constitution (Groebel & Hinde 1989:48). Thus, those males with a XYY constitution manifested hyper-aggressiveness and also maintained an unusual, 'supermale' image. Any child with this XYY chromosome abnormalities is amenable to aggression, since he is exposed to all intricacies of parental, familial and cultural influences during his development (Manning in Groebel & Hinde 1989:54). The chromosonally abnormal children can be identified by an increased incidence of severe temper tantrums and more behaviour problems, i.e. lability of mood and unstable impulsivity and a lower Intelligence Quotient (IQ) than that of the control group, delayed speech development and dyslexia, although they seem to perform on average in Mathematics.

2.3.1.2 Psychoneurology

Children who are hyperactive, inattentive and disruptive could be afflicted with a neurologic disease called encephalitis (Bauer & Shea 1999:72). Such children are considered 'brain damaged' or 'behaviour disordered'. Due to the distaste of the word 'damage', the name of the condition was changed to 'minimal brain dysfunction'. This caused aggressive behaviour in children.

Any child with a deficiency in chemical elements such as catecholamine, dopamine and norepinephrine will have deficit hyperactivity disorder and is likely to develop behavioural disorder problems such as aggression (Bauer & Shea 1999:73). Moreover, some children who experience inefficient transmission of neurological impulses (which affect the entire system of the brain) may suffer from the so-called Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder (AHDD). Such children would not be able to regulate, integrate and coordinate various cognitive

processes to support goal-directed behaviour. Thus, learners who are deficient of the executive control are neurologically incapacitated to select and maintain goals, to anticipate, plan and complete tasks and to adapt plans (Bauer & Shea 1999:73). Therefore, they cannot think, judge and plan critically or monitor their behaviour properly. They are mainly impulsive, reckless, aggressive and/or manifest suicidal behaviour (Sylvester 1997:75-79).

It was discovered that an important transmitter called serotonin is an important regulator of self-esteem and aggression as well as one's position in the social hierarchy (Sylvester 1997:75). High levels of serotonin are associated with high self-esteem, smooth control and social status, and the converse is also true. Low levels of serotonin are related to impulsive, reckless, violent or suicidal behaviour (Bauer & Shea 1999:75). Neurochemical researchers discovered that people who use alcohol to deal with depression increase their serotonin levels for a short term. Thereafter, it depletes stored serotonin and finally increases their impulsive control (Bauer & Shea 1999:75; Groebel & Hinde 1989:48).

All individuals in all societies, irrespective of age, are known to be temperamental. Observable temperamental characteristics include withdrawal, poor attention span, insensitive reaction, distractibility and moodiness. Temperament is adaptable and has a genetic component.

According to Martin's model (in Bauer & Shea 1999:75), temperament affects the learners' behaviour and learning across home and school settings. In classrooms, it affects their attitudes and in turn has an additional impact on their educational outcome. In case the learners' peers judge their behaviour as being disordered, they risk rejection and alienation (Szyndrowski 2005:9). Ultimately, they would resort to aggression to be accepted in the peer group.

Finally, the biological theory asserts that parents differ from their children regarding temperament, because of their advanced development (Bauer & Shea 1999). Although they share their genetic material they respond to different demands differently as compared to their children (Bauer & Shea 1999:76). Children, in general, are emotionally immature. That is why they fail to apply reason prior to their actions.

2.3.2   Family related causes

2.3.2.1   Discipline

Szyndrowski (2005:9) observed that between 3,3 and 25 million children throughout the world experience some form of domestic violence each year. This ongoing process of child maltreatment may cause disturbances in their care-taking. Bauer and Shea (1999:120) state that extreme measures of discipline may lead to child abuse and child neglect. Child abuse may take verbal, physical, mental and sexual harassment forms.   Under those circumstances, the victim's health and welfare is harmed. Child neglect refers to the parent's failure to provide for the physical, medical, emotional or educational needs of the child by the individual responsible for his/her welfare.

Research findings state that family interaction patterns and parental discipline practices strongly affect the development of aggressive behaviour in children (Szyndrowski 2005:9). According to the social learning theory, peers learn and maintain their relations based on some core modeling, a discipline style that promotes certain behaviours in the child and parent-child relationships whose quality affects the development of emotional regulation processes serving as representational models of relationships and parental behaviour. Parental behaviour may teach children some values, morals, problem-solving techniques and pro-social behaviour. If parents intervene ineffectively in the lives of their children the parents may inspire children with aggressive behaviour in their general conduct.

Studies found that domestic violence affects the children emotionally, socially, physically and behaviourally (Szyndrowski 2005:10). Inadequate child rearing practices, disruptions in the family, antisocial parents, child abuse and aggressive interactions between siblings are regarded as risk factors associated with adolescent aggression in secondary school (McAdams & Lambie 2003:1). Children subjected to coercive disciplinary measures could develop aggressive behaviour in their social interactions with others. They may resort to aggressive outbursts – a sign of poor anger management – and physically abuse others (Indiana Youth Institute in Bauer & Shea 1999). According to Szyndrowski (2005:10), maltreated boys are 1 000 times more likely to commit violent acts against an adult

partner and or their children. Compared with their non-maltreated peers, they demonstrate bizarre behaviour such as disruptiveness. They are often defiant bullies with frequent interpersonal confrontations with peers and educators (Bauer & Shea 1999:120). They spend more time fighting than learning. Juveniles who were victims of aggression are often imprisoned on charges of homicide, aggravated assault and robbery under aggravating circumstances, because of their increased rates of psychopathology, decreased self-esteem and interpersonal problems (Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans & Herbison 1996:7-12).

Szyndrowski (2005:10) observes that children subjected to a *laisez faire* discipline are likely to be lawless, undisciplined and behave antisocially. Girls from such families are more susceptible to sexual immorality and get pregnant as teens due to their exposure to lack of scruples. Again, they may be unable to conform appropriately to community rules such as privacy and may be disrespectful in their communication with adults (Szyndrowski 2005:10). Aggressive learners are socially incompetent, for they are mainly unable to elicit positive social responses, but they indulge in negative responses in various social contexts. French, Conrad and Turner (1995:858) conclude that the aggressive and disruptive behaviour are correlates of rejection in classroom.

2.3.2.2 Upbringing

The most vulnerable learners come from one-parent households, which may be due to bereavement, divorce or the unmarried status of the existing parent. It may also be related to being left in the foster care of grandparents or being left alone by living parents who work in urban areas (Hermandez 1994:19). Rural secondary school learners develop on their own towards adulthood and have to learn values from the street. These children are more at risk to aggression because they experience more alienation, indifference and antagonism. Bauer and Shea (1999:117) acknowledge that the absence of the father figure in the family may lead to low self-esteem, susceptibility to group influence and juvenile delinquency. Obviously, the age-segregated peers will take advantage of the situation and thus fill the void left by parents (Safran 1995:66) and the learners my not learn the culturally established patterns of co-operation and mutual concern (Bauer & Shea 1999:102). Eventually, the learners will only depend on social settings comprising a small circle of friends with a

limitation of their friendships to school bus, telephone conversations and pre-arranged activities (Farmer & Hollowell 1995:154; Bauer & Shea 1999:117).

Some parents instill bravery and heroism in their children, especially in boys, because being manly is considered to be macho. In certain cultures, as among the Hellenic Greeks, a boy-child is trained to be stoical (Biancoli 2000:228). They subject them to severe physical pain and inspire them to hold back their tears because crying is considered a feminine characteristic. King (1992:128) observed that African cultures uphold the same maxim that a man should not cry when injured or beaten to a pulp, but should suppress the pain like a sacrificial lamb. In spite of the nature of suffering man finds himself in, he should not shed a tear. As such, despite internalising the ego, males are indirectly inspired to resist challenges.

In some way, males are taught to retaliate against perpetrators of aggression, instead of crying and running home to report such incidents. The Biblical injunction "an eye for an eye" is upheld by the male genre and should be applied in conflicting situations (Matthew 5:38 in Good New Bible 1990:8). It is common, as the researcher observed, for educators at our school to adjudicate over cases that involve slapped victims who in turn retaliated by throwing an object or a weapon that injures the perpetrator in the end.

2.3.2.3 Aggressive parents

Research indicates that between 50% and 75% of male aggressors also abuse their children (Bauer & Shea 1999:9). Parents who are aggressive during disagreements, may ultimately handle disharmony in a noisy and moody way. In the heat of the moment, either party may indulge in verbal offensives or subject another to physical aggression. A boy-child who observes his father regularly beating his mother each time they have differences, is likely to batter his partner in an attempt to coerce her unto submission (Szyndrowski 2005:11). A girl-child who observes that her mother subjects her partner to verbal slurs, will learn to humiliate others verbally if things do not go her way. Szyndrowski (2005:9) says that parents who address their children in vulgar language terms may imprint such behaviour in them and subsequently adapt it to their way of life.

The examples illustrated (regarding boys' and girls' vicarious experiences) imply that, in lieu with the social learning theory, as well as exposure to and experience of aggression in the family can easily be adapted by such children in the public domain. Sadly, the public may opt to alienate them due to their unethical and aggressive conduct.

In the end, the children who witnessed abusive relationships are likely to exhibit problems relating to authority, psychosomatic complaints, fear and distrust of close relationships or patterns of over-compliance and fearfulness (Szyndrowski 2005:10).

2.3.2.4   Parental substance abuse

Many learners in rural, disadvantaged schools come from homes where alcohol and other illegal drugs play a significant role (Dodge, Bates & Petit 1990). Children from such families experience neglect as their siblings are forced to become their caretakers as their parents' care-taking abilities might be hampered. Drugs lead to dull reactions, sleepiness, euphoria and a general dysfunction in users or abusers. Addicted parents get annoyed by their children seeking attention and consequently scream at them or chase them away. Powell, Zehn and Kottler (1995:25) concede that addicted parents are quick to find fault with their children, yelling at them inappropriately for small problems. They often blame forces beyond their control that propelled them to addiction to drugs. Feeling frustrated, neglected and abused, these children can be perceived acting out their frustrations on their peers at school, e. g. getting easily annoyed even at the slightest provocation. Thus they may scream and physically or verbally abuse others without reason (McAdams & Lambie 2003:1). Such a form of aggression is called reactive aggression.

Parents who abuse substances try to maintain a closed home environment where everyone is controlled. That is problematic to adolescents who aspire to develop personal autonomy and a sense of self (McAdams & Lambie 2003:1). There is limited space for personal freedom, since they have to yield to their irrational parents. Thus, adolescents may also fall into the dependency syndrome. Ultimately, they'd fail to establish and maintain meaningful, wholesome relationships with others. Since old habits have a propensity to stabilize (in Szyndrowsky 2005:9) aggressive learners take their learned roles as enablers to the classrooms whereby both colleagues and educators alike may be recruited as co-

conspirators in drug abuse (Powell *et al* 1995:55).   This badly influences the school environment.

In a way, such children learn the skill of denial (of the problem). They have difficulty in expressing their feelings; they learn to keep their feelings to themselves.   Finally, these children cannot deal with emotionally charged situations appropriately.

Powell *et al* (1995) observed that marijuana addicts experience increased lethargy, indifference and mood swings.   The Brown University Digest of Addiction: Theory and Application (2004:5-8) provides the following reasons why drug use is associated with aggression:

(i)   a crime could be committed to service the habit or resources needed to purchase drugs;

(ii)   in the illegal drug trade, violence is often a means of solving disputes;

(iii)   violence and drug use both may result from similar factors such as the high sensation-seeking in drug users;

(iv)   drugs can increase the likelihood of violence because of their direct effects on users.

2.3.2.5   Parental role models

Some learners like to use as models their fathers' use of alcohol and drugs, as well as how they terrorize their mothers and siblings. They may also rape girls while in a drunken stupor in gang-polluted areas like the Cape Flats. Physical fights may be a good alternative when reason is relegated to cowardice. Struggling for recognition, such learners may rebel against any authority in order to be praised and equally feared.   A heartbreaking incident occurred whereby a six-month pregnant lady educator was kicked in the stomach by an angry learner (Mohamed & Nandipha 2005:23). The learner had the audacity to do harm to the educator because it was customary for parents to storm the schoolyard and beat up their children's educators for reprimanding or disciplining them. Forgatch and Patterson (1998:86) rightly concede that adolescent learners can literally be trained to be aggressive during episodes of conflict with others.

2.3.3   Environmental causes

2.3.3.1   Community related causes

Most secondary school learners residing in rural areas do not have before and after school programmes that help to prevent them from admiring the antisocial lifestyles that surround them. Seeing their models and other people in their neighbourhood gaining more respect and status because of their notoriety might adversely inspire young adolescents to emulate them. And in instances of experiencing rejection, the learner may indulge in aggressive behaviour to be accepted by gangsters (Christie, Jolivetti & Nelson 2000:1).

Learners who come from abusive families are sometimes withdrawn. They mostly meditate about the possible panaceas to their social problems that make life more and more meaningless with each passing day. However, armed with a denial skill, they learn to attain emotional support by antisocial means (Forgatch & Patterson 1998:86).

Lack of recreational facilities and opportunities as well as the lack of availability of adult mentors may leave adolescent learners with a huge social void. To fill the social gap children may imbibe alcohol in an attempt to boost them, though this lasts for a short time only. Alchohol leads to stimulation and inappropriate responses (cf. 2.3.3.5). Children intoxicated with alcohol may be sexually stimulated and thus inappropriately choose to entertain themselves through sex, an activity they would spurn when sober. Finally, alcohol increases pain sensitivity and impulsivity. Thus, intoxicated children are prone to aggressive reactions.

Poverty, which is also rife in rural communities due to unemployment (Bauer & Shea 1999:129), may cause people to seek illicit ways to survive, such as prostitution, burglaries and theft. Therefore, young adolescents wouldn't acquire effective social skills and creative thinking for survival sake, but might easily model what is prevalent in their community for fear of being different (Skiba & Peterson 2000:347). This vicarious symbolic modelling may reward him/her with status or material gain (Christie *et al* 2000:1).

2.3.3.2   Adult role models

Aggressive learners are sometimes enticed by and want to emulate the life of the 'high-flyers', but might not have the money to maintain their newly acquired 'elitist' lifestyles. Hence they may start stealing from their parents (Christie *et al* 2000). Such role models may be known by their queer dress code that is in conflict with societal and religious norms, for example, baggy trousers among boys and mini-skirts among girls. Those opposed to the dress codes may be jeered and ridiculed for being barbaric and backward.

Some aggressive adult role models, such as rap music divas like Sean Coombs, also known as Puff Diddy, use a unique language and obscene lyrics that are also adapted by young adolescents to communicate among themselves. Learners imitating their models may also abuse their peers verbally. That alone may be enough provocation for physical retaliation by the victim(s) in question.

2.3.3.3   Peer culture

The peer culture is perceived to be in conflict with that of adults. Secondary school learners typically turn to their peers for guidance in matters of dress, identity, social attitudes and "acceptable" behaviour (Bauer & Shea 1999:10). To be accepted in a group, a new member should conform.   Carter (2002:30) observed that groups are often gregarious in nature. If aggression is considered an acceptable norm among the members, it is expected of everyone to conform to its culture. Demonstration of disruptive behaviour on others in and out of the classroom may be a fitting way to gain peer approval or recognition (Gable, Arllen & Hendrickson 1995).

The culture may aggravate what Haywood in Carter (2002:30) calls 'the often loud and confident banter of others'.   Carter (2002:30) says that "... your mates knock you ... it's easier to see things the way they do and you don't feel disappointed". A good example is that illustrated by Haywood (in Carter 2002) whereby a soccer player is forced to feel bad after missing a goal, though he himself doesn't find fault in that. In peer culture, praises are sporadic, capricious and difficult to negotiate. They are outweighed by prolific criticism (Carter 2002:30).

Among the peer group, individual perception doesn't count. Each member is dependent on their daily negotiation of conflicting information of who they want to be and what they are told they were (Carter 2002:30). The approval-disapproval syndrome is neither consistent nor empowering, for the peers develop precarious self-images and are forever engulfed in doubt (Carter 2002:30).

Gangs, like peer groups, serve as an extended family. Thus, loyalty is obligatory and adherence to the code of conduct is always mandatory (Lal, Lal & Archilles 1993:17). People join gangs due to the perks that are freely touted: *esprit de corps*, pride in appearance, grooming younger and lesser able members, adherence to strict rules and codes, desire for respect and recognition (Lal *et al* 1993:16).

Recently, there has been an upsurge of female gangs that are independent of the males (Lal *et al* 1993:16). All gangs, irrespective of gender, commit the following acts: disruptive and antisocial behaviour, face-to-face confrontations, intimidation, assaults, fights, defying authority, vulgar language use, committing illegal and violent acts (Lal *et al* 1993: 20). Very important, however, is that youth gangs exist primarily for social reasons and their illegal activities are usually crimes of vandalism. Vandalized property is a common sight in the schools being studied.

2.3.3.4   The media

The media present a distorted and biased view of public schools (Berliner & Biddie 1998:12), biased in that only the negative side of the news is reported and distorted in that a too simplistic and incomplete view of educational problems and issues are presented to the public (Fields 2002:74).

The media can enhance the adolescent learner's aggressive behaviour by their coverage of violence as a means to solve problems. The incursions of British and American coalition forces in Iraq is a classic example. Another example is the visuals of the notorious Vlakplaas forces that eliminated the Gugulethu Township politicians, as shown on television during the hearings of the Transitional Reconciliation Council (21H00 of 16.06.2005). These visuals

illustrate the forces' *laisez faire* attitude and the heinous use of physical torture on their victims to extract the truth. The social learning theory (Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychology 1996:28) says that young learners can acquire aggression through observational experiences. This could occur by watching all the episodes of a TV drama called "Yizo Yizo". This drama inspires learners to use drugs freely, commit antisocial behavioural acts such as raping innocent girls, doing crime and undermining school rules and parental involvement in the education of secondary school learners.

Incidences of television violence is believed to be increasing. Chorry-Assad and Tamborini (2004:494) agree that verbally aggressive sitcoms occur in a humorous context. Consistent with antisocial behavioural acts, Chorry-Assad and Tamborini (2004:494) discovered that increased exposure of learners to verbally aggressive sitcoms is associated with aggressive communications. Therefore, the learners acquire the aggression and also adopt the aggressive language of sitcoms when communicating with others (Zillman & Weaver 1999:145).

Headlines in the press such as "Two Gunmen at Colorado School Reportedly Kill Up to 23 Before Dying in a Siege", are sensational. Such stories of aggression by two adolescent learners from Colombine High School who were armed with guns and explosives, killing 23 fellow learners and an educator before taking their own lives could encourage learners to carry weapons and be aggressive. In press reports about Nazi Germany and Bosnian conflicts, homicides were committed on innocent targets. That is displaced aggression that could be acquired by emulating the behaviour of a hero or heroin as touted by the media (Donohue, Sirachi & Ziedenberg 1998:61). Educators' resentment of learners can encourage the learners to be aggressive towards them and ultimately wish to participate in serious forms of delinquency (Donohue *et al* 1998:61). To avoid victimization, the victims may turn out to be aggressors by carrying weapons under the pretext of self-defense against perpetrators. The carrying of weapons encourages learners to commit homicides on aggressors or even suicides to escape threats and humiliation (Donohue *et al* 1998:61). Weapons give a feeling of power and anyone in possession of them may be encouraged to react aggressively once provoked or threatened.

2.3.3.5   Substance abuse

Alcohol, the most accessible drug to secondary school learners, often produces psychomotor stimulation effects that lead to increases in sensation-seeking and impulsivity, as well as increases in confrontational and provocative behaviour (Breslow & Smothers 2004:6). Powell *et al* (1995:35-6) state that 19% of the secondary school learners use alcohol weekly. Breslow and Smothers (2004:6) observe that aggressive behaviour associated with the stimulation effects includes sexual aggression, family and marital violence, child abuse and suicide.   Alcohol dampens feelings of stress and anxiety, it diminishes fear and disinhibits aggressive behaviour that could be inhibited by fear, it heightens pain sensitivity and the significance of provocation.   Heightened pain, in itself, expedites aggressive behaviour (Breslow & Smothers 2004:6).   Alcohol interferes with the user's cognitive functioning, particularly the executive functioning, because the intoxicated person can't select appropriate response options and can't effectively inhibit behaviours (Breslow & Smothers 2004:7).   Accordingly, Powell *et al* (1995:36) say that acute intoxication also leads to slurred speech, unsteady gait, perceptual distortions and mood swings.   Eventually, anyone intoxicated with alcohol, will fail to monitor his/her own behaviour to assess its appropriateness.

Marijuana (dagga) is the second most used drug by secondary school learners (Powell *et al* 1995:36).   It leads to habituation, because it produces a relaxing feeling and euphoria. Learners use it to 'self-medicate' their stress and personal discomfort, i. e. to avoid facing their own problems (Powell *et al* 1995:36).   Behaviour associated with marijuana includes uncontrollable giggling, withdrawal symptoms and unusual facial expressions.   The chronic use of marijuana may lead to decreased motivation, a negative impact on the learner's academic achievement and negative emotional reactions.

Cocaine ranks third in use among secondary school learners.   It increases the heart rate, speeds up the central nervous system, depresses appetite and decreases fatigue (Powell *et al* 1995:37).   Cocaine produces a feeling of euphoria.   According to Powell *et al* (1995:38), cocaine leads to learner's impairment of attention span and comprehension.   Therefore, the learners may become restless, irritable, talkative, easily agitated and anxious.

Restless learners may destabilize lessons and they could react aggressively when called to order, because of their irritability. Any learner whose attention span is impaired could feel out of place and later aggress fellow learners and educators out of envy and failure to impress academically.

Narcotics, also called opiates, are the least used drugs by the secondary school learners, because they are the hardest of the hard drugs, most addictive and most dangerous (Powell *et al* 1995:38). They have a dramatic impact on the learners' behaviour and may impel them to drop out of school to support the habit. They are known to increase the learners' level of anxiety (Powell *et al* 1995:39). Anxious learners are prone to aggression because of their repetitive experience of failure at school and the fact that they are classified as *persona non grata*.

In summary, secondary school learners addicted to drugs would experience lack of motivation to earn which relates to disciplinary problems, impaired short-term memory, limited participation in class activities due to reduced attention span, dropping out of the extra-curricular activities, increased depression, isolation and stealing of money at home, exhibition of increased behaviour problems which include fighting, obscene language, defiance, mood swings and a negative attitude towards school and educators (Corvo & Williams 2001:13; Fitzgerald & Arndt 2001:43-44; Haemelie, Montgomery & Cowell 1998:29-32; Nagy & Dunn 1998:1-2; Parent & Newman 1998:13; Powell *et al* 1995:34).

2.3.4 School related causes

2.3.4.1 Educator role models

Carter (2002:28) observed that educators who terrorise learners into submission for any reason might synchronously incite intolerance and fear, especially if they are further managed with hostility and conflict *in lieu* of the school ethos. Thus, boys would adopt the dictatorial model of the male educators and girls would be enticed by the verbal aggression of their female educators. The use of threats, derogatory names and sharp humour, ironically suggests Cunningham's (1991:97) practice: "Don't do as I do, but do as I say".

Carter (2002:97) posits that a battery of hostile and abusive remarks by educators sow antagonistic feelings in learners.

An emphasis on fixed control measures troubles the learners and makes them feel disgruntled (Carter 2002:28). Many educators derive pleasure and satisfaction in exercising power and thus abuse it by demanding unquestioning obedience from the learners. This hardens their attitudes towards authority (Carter 2002:28). An educator who realizes that his authority was waning on the learners uttered the following provocative remark: "I don't care if you hate me, but you'll respect me" (Carter 2002:28).

Through their conduct or example, the male educators may express, make, celebrate and confirm the so-called top-dog masculinity (Carter 2002:29). Such pervasive masculinity may influence the learners' behaviour and beliefs, as depicted in an educator's remarks (in Carter 2002:29): "...the school is ideal, is heterosexual, strong and respected..." It implies that homosexuality is unacceptable on campus. Homosexual learners are ridiculed, harassed and called names or subjected to verbal cussing (Carter 2002:34; Osler & Starkey 1996:34).

Without adult intervention, the name-calling might equally urge victims to retaliate against the perpetrators in order to prove their manhood. Some educators tell victims that it is 'unmanly' to seek help on petty incidents such as pushing, name-calling and being subjected to verbal cussing (Amnesty International 1997:12; Carter 2002:34). Ignoring victims aggression or meting out light punishment on aggressors may anger the victims so much that they may take the law into their own hands to prove to everybody how powerful they are. That is, they develop the metaphorical iron lung to prove that they can also be aggressive, if given the opportunity to do so (in Carter 2002:34). Amnesty International (1997:12) concludes that: "... students are allowed to call other students ... offensive names and no action is taken by the teachers, this sends a message to students that intolerance is acceptable."

Ignorance is often perceived as inability to control learners. An educator (in Carter (2002:35) interviewed on her *laisez faire* attitude on discipline was quoted as saying "...I just pretend not to notice or to hear when they call my name (for help). It's not that I don't care, just that I don't want to be shouting all the time". Indirectly, the learners are

encouraged to lose respect for educators, because they are not corrected for their disruptive behaviour and ill-discipline (Lock 2002:77).

2.3.4.2   Educator-learner relationships

Duncan (1999:129-30) posits that learners react aggressively if their classroom environment continues to further the alienation, as opposed to a controlled classroom milieu. Mostly, such a situation is aimed at suppressing behaviour instead of teaching any skills.   Ideally, educators should be pillars of strength and hope in this relationship.   However, there are unhappy educators at schools who are characterised by low retention levels, poor support to their learners, little allocation of time to develop the curricula, rare completion of their paperwork and failure to plan ahead (George, George, Gersten & Grosenick 1995:227). Learners would find them helpless and subject them to contempt and resist their instructions all the time.

Most aggressive learners lacked adult care - a salient etiological condition for proper development.   A less emphatic relationship with such learners aggravates their risk conditions. This is typical of educators who manifest rigidity in class (Duncan 1999:130). The inflexible implementation of academic matter and dependence on punishment to correct unbecoming behaviour eventually worsen their aggressiveness. Such learners are said to be grossly sensitive to criticism. Negative comments on learners' performance and appearance may further worsen bad relationships with educators (George *et al* 1995:227).

2.3.4.3   Educator interaction and instruction

(a)   Negative reinforcement

Bauer and Shea (1999:146) define 'negative reinforcement' as 'the contingent of an aversive stimulus that results in increased behaviour production to escape or avoid the aversive stimulus'.   Educators who present learners with too difficult tasks during instruction, reinforce the learners' off-task behaviour. When learners are attacted to and focuses on something else other than the content imparted to them during the lesson, their behaviour is said to be off-task. According to DePaepe, Shores, Jack and Denny (1996:316), learners engage in aggressive behaviour in order to escape or avoid the educators' aversive

instruction. Instructing behaviourally disordered learners to perform tasks that expose their knowledge level, is likely to expedite their aggressiveness and lower their level of compliance (Harrison, Gunter, Reed & Lee 1996:184). On average, non-inclusive instructional strategies encourage learners to seek escape routes or avoidance tactics through illicit ways (Bauer & Shea 1999:148). Some illicit ways learners may choose include provoking educators. Provocation is considered a well-thought strategy by which, when dismissed, learners will escape embarrassment before their peers who might undermine them.

Learners with language problems, as observed by Harrison *et al* (1996:185), may choose to act out, so that they disengage from the lesson upon experiencing failure to respond appropriately to questions.

(b)   Uncritical instruction

Uncritical instruction does not incorporate the background, experience, knowledge and interests of the learners and the authentic tasks in the teaching-learning process. The critical pedagogy based on the critical theory (Bauer & Shea 1999:149) posits that any didactic milieu that emphasises form rather than meaning and correctness over creativity and divergent thinking stimulates learners' aggression. Compared to the dialogical educator-learner interactions, uncritical instruction is educator-centered and is therefore unhelpful. Since it is characterized by competition and less co-operation, learners may manifest confrontational and antagonistic body language whenever they are assigned a task (Carter 2002: 31). Often learners fail to acquire meaningful listening skills. Powerful or gifted learners domineer and are also heaped with lots of praises while their weaker counterparts may be condemned viciously. Secondary school learners who are criticized negatively feel alienated and belittled. Thus they adopt a negative attitude towards lessons and finally behave aggressively so as to draw attention.

(c)   Curriculum and language problems

All instructional materials and activities designed against the learners' interests may be considered too boring and complex to be comprehended. Learners find the curricular tasks too individualistic, especially if groupwork is not central in their instruction (Cornwell and Bawden 1992). If the learners are denied the opportunity to learn from their peers in class, they indulge in disruptive behaviour as a way to escape the embarrassment.

Educators who are not competent put more effort in controlling learners. They would hardly inspire their learners to develop self-regulation. As a result, the learners' interest to learn meaningfully depreciates, as compared to their more successful peers (Cornwell & Bawden 1992). It is therefore eminent that the non-inclusive curriculum would be a threat to those behaviourally challenged learners, especially those destined to aggravate others in all sorts of ways.

Learners who are not competent in the language of instruction would always feel marginalized by their more capable peers. The language of the curriculum should accommodate less competent learners, else they will opt for disruptive behaviour for fear that they may be less favoured by the level of difficulty of the content that uses the language that undermines their intellectual abilities. Aggressive reactions become a norm to them.

2.4   MANIFESTATIONS OF AGGRESION

Aggression is manifest in secondary school learners in more ways than one. Some manifestations embarrass both the aggressor and the victim alike. Overall, the aggressor's manifestations often castigate the perpetrator in to becoming a social outcast. These manifestations include hyperactivity, impulsiveness, depression, Tourette's disorder, suicidal ideation, verbal aggression, aberrant sexual behaviour, consistent class repetition, tardiness and absenteeism, vandalism and criminality (Diaz, Stall, Hoff, Daiggle & Coates 1996; Hollander & Stein 1995; Lock 2002; Marin, Conzalez & Gomez 1998; Powell *et al* 1995). These manifestations will be discussed individually, though in relation to one another.

2.4.1   Hyperactivity

Many aggressive learners just can't sit still because they exhibit hyperactivity (Powell *et al* 1995:68). Their energy often gets them into trouble, because it is not harnessed. It interferes with the educators' lessons and also gets other learners off-task. Hyperactive learners become a nuisance, though unintentionally so. They move around the classroom

indiscriminately and shuffle their feet and may stand up in the middle of the class without the educator's permission to do so.

2.4.2   Erratic and unpredictable behaviour (failure to socialise)

Aggressive learners vacillate between withdrawal and explosive tendencies.   The one moment, they may be calm and cause no trouble, but at the next moment they may be temperamental, manifesting a don't-care-attitude, such that they terrorise other learners, although unprovoked (Powell *et al* 1995:49). Some may go to the extreme of teasing their educators so that the educators chase them out of the classroom.   They thus have a 'legitimate' reason to drop out of school.

2.4.3   Tardiness and absenteeism

Learners who enjoin themselves to a subculture that does not regard the school as an institution through which they can be developed academically and socially, do not attach any value to schools or education (Powell *et al* 1995:48).   They are easily bored by the organised and routine nature of academic activities.   As a result, they choose to bunk classes in order to get high and remain intoxicated throughout the day.   That is, they become apathetic and listless in the classroom.   They prefer to be in those places where drug deals take place.

2.4.4   Underachievement and consistent class repetition

Aggressive learners are preoccupied with things other than school.   To them, school is a place for socializing with peers. They find themselves obliged to serve two masters at once, something they cannot successfully do. They seem to try to catch up in preparation for tests, because they do not manage their time effectively (Powell *et al* 1995:49).   Consequently they find that they are fatigued prior to the tests sessions and may suffer from burnout syndrome.

From experiencing consistent failure due to lack of concentration, the aggressive learners become envious of their peers' success (Bemak & Keys 2000:8).   Aggressive learners' poor

concentration emanates from their concern with safety (Bemak & Keys 2000:8). Those educators who may have tried to correct their misdirected aggression may be openly accused of causing them to fail examinations. Aggressive learners always have excuses for their failure and subsequently misplace their aggression on others.

2.4.5 Drug abuse

Aggressive learners may expend their frustration on drugs, in their attempt to escape reality. These learners may develop impaired short-term memory. That causes them to fail to respond to post-instructional questions aimed at assessing their level of understanding with regard to the content just taught. Their lack of motivation to learn causes disciplinary problems at school.

Aggressive learners' reduced attention span and limited participation in class activities spur them on to resort to fighting, defiance of authority, the use of obscene language in public places and they consequently develop negative attitudes towards their parents, relatives and the school. Eventually, they drop out of school. Having developed distrust with their parents, they isolate themselves and don't fear coming home intoxicated. These adolescents take liquor home. Their mood swings may lead them to experience serious depression and anxiety in life (Powell *et al* 1995:34).

2.4.6 Sexual aggression

Sexual aggression is expressed in sexualized verbal bantering and sexual abuse of victims (Brown 1997:166; Carter 2002:30; Duncan 1999:38; Lock 2002:80). Girls' and boys' sexual slurs are used for various purposes. For boys these slurs could be associated with lusty appeals or to elicit salacious details about the girls, for example, 'your ass looks sweet' (Duncan 1999:43). The boys may sometimes use the sexual bantering to embarrass girls or to humiliate them. This occurs in instances of being repelled or rejected and thus, the boy would send out a barrage of insults and sexual denigration to disguise his feelings. Names that crop up include 'prossie' (woman going out with many men or getting paid for sexual favours), 'slag' (woman who acts bitchy or who sleeps around with many blokes), 'cow', 'dog', 'whore', 'tart', and so on (Carter 2002:30; Duncan 1999:43; Lock 2002:80). Boys may

indulge in obscene name-calling to themselves when they want to give the impression that they are more potent, for example, 'I am a dick-head' (Duncan 1999:38).

Because boys' sexual slurs against girls are aimed at hurting them, the latter may promptly retaliate by calling them 'gay', 'poof' and or even 'dick-head', and so on. The counter-humiliation on girls' part is aimed at making boys mad. The girl versus girl slurs are overtly sexual and they commonly refer to one another's sexual character or appearance, for example, a 'slag' in their closeted gossip exchange in toilets. Such a word is incisive and damaging, and considered a swearword in heated exchanges between boys (Duncan 1999:60).

Some sexual slurs may overtly display the perpetrator's irrational and negative homophobic attitudes towards homosexual persons (Lock 2002:80). Herek (1994:207) agrees that negative homophobic attitudes, irrespective of their socio-cultural, religious, or political conservatism and/or psychological origin, lead to destructive behaviour and aggression. On the other hand, Adams (1996) notes that deviations from the heterosexual constructs are likely to be stigmatized and a curse to the victim's family and the society at large. Females are not exempt from these discriminatory acts, though statistics show that male homophobic attitudes dominate (Lock 2002:81).

Socially, the homosexual learners wouldn't be befriended openly by their heterosexual peers for fear of humiliation and harassment (Marsiglio 1993:13). Homosexual learners are also prone to familial abandonment and to becoming destitute (Lock 2002:81). They would face harsh forms of victimization and rejection and they may finally seek escape from both intrapersonal and interpersonal aggression through suicidal ideation (Davis & Sandoval 1994:707).

In spite of homosexual learners' vulnerability to sexualized verbal aggression, they may continuously be followed or chased around and threatened (Lock 2002:81). Some perpetrators' aggressive acts may culminate in throwing objects on and physically abuse the homosexual learners in an attempt to humiliate them (Pilkington & D'Augelli 1995:34; Thurlow 2001:26). Consequently, these 'effeminate' learners experience insecurity both at school and outside of it.

This sexual aggression may manifest itself through physical harassment of girls at school. That can be observed when boys inappropriately touch girls or attack them (Duncan 1999:56). Aggressive boys may also act bored when girls give answers in class. Boys could also manifest sexual aggression by writing pornographic graffiti on school property and public places such as wall fences and public toilets (Duncan 1999:153).

Furthermore, Duncan (1999:153) observed that girls could manifest sexual aggression by wearing sophisticated make-up, colouring and styling their hair in a way that needs constant attention during the lesson as well as the shortening of their skirts. Over and above that, these girls may wear tattoos on their body.

2.4.7   Temperament

Over the years it was discovered that some aggressive learners have a rare disease called Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) (Bauer & Shea 1999:78-79). To that effect the research conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health (1996) discovered that only 2% of the total population have OCD. Victims of OCD manage their obsessions through compulsions, i.e. the repetitive behaviours that are involved with counting, listing or rearranging objects.

Learners who were previously abused develop reactive aggressive patterns. Their response styles are mainly disrespectful and characterized by volatility, short fuses and a tendency to over-attribute hostile intentions to others' intentions (Bemak & Keys 2000:18). Whenever dissatisfied or provoked, they usually respond with aggressive verbal and physical responses. Bemak and Keys (2000:17) found that aggressive learners find nothing wrong in pinching a classmate if he/she refuses to do what is wanted. Since they believe that they are never wrong or at fault, aggressive utterances occur (Bemak & Keys 2000:18). In conceding to the impact of verbal aggression, Brown (1997:30) concludes that it is wrong to say that verbal abuse does not hurt victims.

Confrontational body language is common among aggressive learners. It could also be used to provoke their victims, for they believe that other learners are out 'to get them' or to set

them up for failure or ridicule. Elliot (1992:595-603) remarks that aggressive learners are always awful to their victims.

2.4.8 Tourette's disorder

Learners with Gilles de la Tourette's Disorder demonstrate so-called tics. Bauer and Shea (1999:77) define 'tics' as 'repetitive, recurring, involuntary movements or sounds'. Anderson (1993:81) differentiates between motor and vocal tics. Motor tics range from eye-blinks to complex muscular patterns.   On the other hand, vocal tics include grunts, barks, screams or a disturbing clearing of the throat. Bauer and Shea (1999:77) state that learners afflicted with the Tourette's disorder syndrome often manifest aggressive behaviour that is at best considered acutely disruptive in class.

2.4.9 Vandalism

Stahl (2000:1) defines vandalism as 'wilful or malicious destruction, injury, disfigurement or defacement of any public or private property, real or personal without the consent of the owner or persons having custody or control'. As a criminal term, it is merely described as 'an injury to property' (Geason & Wilson 2000:1).

Vandalism is the most serious criminal act that commonly occurs with high frequency at all schools (De Wet 2004:206) Vandalism is on the increase in countries such as Canada, Australia, the United States of America, France, Britain and South Africa (De Wet 2004:206; Poggenpoel & Myburgh 2002:161). De Wet (2004:206) observed that vandalism is mainly perpetrated by the own school's male learners aged 14 to 16 years. Finn and Frone (2003:46) agree that vandal learners are usually boys, because their aggressive nature is readily seen and reported. However, vandalistic behaviour of girls occur in more subtle ways (Virasamy 2004:60).

The main reason for vandals to target the school property is because they have a notion that the school belongs to no one (Poggenpoel & Myburgh 2002:162). Herbert (in De Wet 2004:206) observed that vandal learners at secondary schools' motivation for vandalism may be life crises, peer or family concerns, independence and power issues.   De Wet

(2004:206) further discovered that adolescent vandal learners vandalise the school's property out of boredom, vindictiveness, malevolence, frustrations, and or ideology (in De Wet 2004:2008; Wendel 1997). Vandal learners are identified and described by Black (2002) as follows:

(i)   bored vandal learner: commits vandalism in search of excitement;

(ii)   vindictive vandal learner: harbours revenge against a particular educator or any staff member of the school;

(iii)   frustrated learner: is any learner filled with anger. She/he feels that the school and the community have been very hostile to him due to experiences such as class repetition;

(iv)   learners driven by a specific ideology, wishing to draw attention to a specific problem.

Zuzile (2003:1) and Perry (2001:1) acknowledge that vandalistic behaviour leads to the total collapse of teaching and learning at schools. Asmal (1999:3) also agrees that vandalism causes a feeling of powerlessness, uncertainty and fear among the educators and other learners. Fields (2002:73) concedes that such disruptive behaviour causes irritation, frustration and exhaustion for educators. Targets of vandalism would then experience intense bodily, site and psychological damage. Nonetheless, the impact of vandalism is always two-pronged. It comprises financial and social costs (De Wet 2004:206). Social costs entail the disruption of educational programmes as a whole; and gangs or peer groups manifesting a degree of disruptiveness and causing psychological damage to victims. Reparations and replacement of the damaged property needs money.

According to Vasquez, Denson, Pedersen and Miller (2003:61) the aggressive learners who commit vandalism manifest triggered displaced aggression against the previously provoked aggressor who would be responding to a triggering event. If the aggressor is prevented from retaliating against the original provocateur, the perpetrator will aggress against a seemingly innocent target (Marcus-Newhall, Pedersen, Carlson & Miller 2000:670).

2.4.10 Verbal aggression

Chorry-Assad and Tamborini (2004:494) define verbal aggression as an attack on the self-concept of another person instead of , or in addition to the person's position on a topic of communication.   Verbal aggression involves insulting the other's character, competence, background and physical appearance (Chorry-Assad & Tambourini 2004:494). According to Infante, Sabourini, Rudd and Shannon (1990:362), verbal aggression can also be expressed as maledictions, teasing, threats, swearing, nonverbal emblems, rejection of others and mocking.

According to a cognitive neo-associationistic perspective, when a person experiences an event such as watching a verbally aggressive film, related ideas as well as emotions and emotional tendencies will be stimulated. In relation to aggressive ideas, there is a possibility for the viewer to experience other aggressive thoughts during and shortly after exposure to aggressive film (Bushman 1998:538). Thus, the learners' frequent exposure to aggressive television language will activate their mental constructs associated with aggression (Chorry-Assad & Tamborini 2004:495). Subsequently, these mental constructs become more readily accessible (Bushman 1998:539) and more likely to be applied in their daily language.

2.4.11   Suicidal ideation

As global problem (O'Connor & Leenaars 2004:339), suicide could be inspired by the old adage 'suicide is the permanent solution to a temporary problem' (Davis & Sandoval 1994:707).   Each society has an aptitude to suicide , despite their markedly different cultures (Leenaars, Fekete, Wenckstern & Osvath 1998:147).

Leenaars (1996:222) proved that the notion of suicide is both intrapsychic and interpersonal. It is intrapsychic in the sense that it could be resulting from unbearable psychological pain, cognitive constriction (tunnel vision), helplessness, overpowering emotions, contradictory feelings and the inability to adjust to life events (O'Connor & Leenaars 2004:341).

Suicide ideation could also be interpersonal in that suicide can be caused by rejection, the impact of relationships and aggression. Vandervoort and Rockach (2004:5), as well as

O'Connor and Leenaars (2004:343) say that the interpersonal aspect includes traumatic events such as unmet love, abusive relationships, failing marriages and so on. Consistent with the latter factors is the suicidal incident at the researcher's school. A Grade 11 adolescent male learner committed suicide in 2004 after his romantic ties with an adolescent Grade 10 girl were severed. He hung himself after being told to look elsewhere in the presence of a newly found partner. Rejection weakened his ego and led him to suicidal ideation (O'Connor & Leenaars 2004:343).

2.5   CONCLUSION

The literature discussed in this chapter shows that aggression is both multi-faceted and complex. It is complex in the sense that researchers cannot agree on a single definition for the phenomenon. Aggression is multi-faceted since it is found to be innate, instinctual, vicariously acquired or passed on genetically.

The data gathered from the literature suggest that aggression cannot be caused by a single particular factor, but by a combination of different aspects such as biological causes, family related factors, the environment and the school. Thus, the genetic disposition and neurological makeup of the individual, the disciplinary styles adopted by the parents, the school set-up and the environment in which the learners are situated could enhance their aggression. Through observational experiences an adolescent can develop into an aggressor through media influences and the idolizing of celebrities or admired role models who are aggressive.

Learners may manifest aggression in many different ways. They could be verbally, physically, sexually or emotionally aggressive when interacting with others both at school and in public. Any learner who develops aggressive behaviour might also choose to live by the dictates of the peer group whose culture is mainly in conflict with adult values and norms. Aggression may lead to consistent academic underachievement, drug abuse, vandalism and a tendency for suicide ideation.

In the following chapter the research design to investigate the abovementioned issues will be discussed. Methods of date collection will be explained in detail.

Chapter 3

Research design

3.1 INTRODUCTION

From the literature review presented in Chapter 2 on causes and manifestations of aggression, it became clear to the researcher that aggression is a serious behavioural problem in the life world of secondary school learners. This chapter will attempt to describe, explain and justify the research design that was considered appropriate in collecting data for this study. The research design was influenced by the research problems stated in section 3.2 and 3.3 and the hypotheses stated in 3.4.

3.2 GENERAL RESEARCH PROBLEM

The general research problem as stated in Chapter One (see section 1.2) is as follows: What are the factors related to aggressive behaviour among the learners in a secondary school in the Dennilton Coordination Circuit; how does it manifest itself and how can it be reduced?

3.3 SPECIFIC RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The specific research problems that were identified during the literature study are stated below. These problems will direct the statement of hypotheses and finally the empirical research of the study on secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour.

(1)   Is there a significant relationship between family related aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population?

(2)   Is there a significant relationship between community aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population?

(3)   Is there a significant relationship between school related aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population?

(4)   Is there a significant difference between learners from different age groups in the manifestation of their aggressive behaviour?

(5)   Is there a significant difference between learners from different genders in the manifestation of their aggressive behaviour?

(6)   Is there a significant difference between learners with parents with different marital statuses in the manifestation of their aggressive behaviour?

(7)   Is there a significant difference between learners with parents with different levels of education in the manifestation of their aggressive behaviour?

3.4   HYPOTHESES

Black (2002:28) defines a hypothesis as a formal means to study the expected research outcomes, more firmly fixing the direction of a study.   A hypothesis also provides some tentative propositions about the relationship between two or more phenomena or variables (Black 2002:29). For each of the abovementioned specific research problems stated in 3.3, both null and experimental hypotheses will be stated.

(1)   Research problem 1

Null hypothesis:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between family related aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population.

Experimental hypothesis:

H_1 There is a significant relationship between family related aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population.

(2)   Research problem 2

Null hypothesis:

H_{02}:   There is no significant relationship between environmental aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population.

Experimental hypothesis:

H_2: There is a significant relationship between environmental aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population.

(3)   Research problem 3

Null hypothesis:

H_{03}:   There is no significant relationship between school related aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population.

Experimental hypothesis:

H_3: There is a significant relationship between school related aspects and secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour in the sampled learner population.

(4)   Research problem 4

Null hypothesis:

H_{04}:   There is no significant difference between learners from different age groups in the manifestation of their anger.

Experimental hypothesis:

H_4:   There is a significant difference between learners from different age groups in the manifestation of their anger.

(5)   Research problem 5

Null hypothesis:

H_{05}:   There is no significant difference between learners from different genders in the manifestation of their anger.

Experimental hypothesis:

H_5:   There is a significant difference between learners from different genders in the manifestation of their anger.

(6)   Research problem 6

Null hypothesis:

H_{06}: There is no significant difference between learners with parents with different marital statuses in the manifestation of their anger

Experimental hypothesis:

H_6: There is a significant difference between learners with parents with different marital statuses in the manifestation of their anger

(6)   Research problem 7

Null hypothesis:

H_{07}:   There is no significant difference between learners with parents with different levels of
          education in the manifestation of their anger.

Experimental hypothesis:

H_7:   There is a significant difference between learners with parents with different levels of
        education in the manifestation of their anger.

3.5   RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study is to determine those factors that are related to (and possible causes of) aggressive behaviour among secondary school learners. To this end, a quantitative approach was used. The selected design is a survey design, because it can only provide a broad exploratory overview of a sample of respondents (Mouton 2003:152; Neuman 2000:121).

3.5.1   Sample

According to Sapsford and Jupp (1996:26), the survey researcher is expected to define the population clearly and accurately. For this research project, all the learners in a rural secondary school where the researcher is an educator will be the population. This school has an enrolment of 450 learners. All these learners will be the sample. This sample will not enable the researcher to confidently claim that what is true for the convenience sample is also true for the population (Gomm 2004:71). In other words, the results from this sample cannot be used for generalization purposes to other schools because a convenience sample is not necessarily representative of other schools (Gray 2004:89). However, the data would be useful to other similar schools in similar contexts (Gray 2004:89). Since there are many schools with similar rural circumstances, the study is useful and relevant to the South African context.

3.5.2   Instrument and pilot study

A self-administered questionnaire will be used to collect data on secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour. This instrument is the cheapest and the quickest method of collecting data for a survey design. Closed questions and structured items will be used to design this questionnaire in order to promote effective quantification and to enhance data analysis.

More advantages of this instrument are stipulated below (Gray 2004:187; Sapsford & Jupp 1996:102). Structured questionnaires:

(i)   require little time

(ii)   are associated with low cost

(iii)   do not require extended writing

(iv)   are easy to process

(v)   make group comparison easy

(vi)   are useful for testing specific hypotheses

The self-administered and closed-ended questionnaire was divided into four sections, namely: biographical information (Section A), home environment variables (section B), environmental aspects (section C); school related aspects (section D) and manifestations of anger (section E). (See appendix A.)

For each of the sections B to E, a number of statements were formulated. Respondents had to respond by means of a five point Likert scale ranging from "definitely agree" to "definitely disagree".

The questionnaire was pre-tested in a pilot study with a few adolescent learners.   Some items were thereafter reformulated in simpler language before the questionnaire was finalised.

3.5.3   Procedures

The researcher undertook ethical measures as guided by the guidelines given in Ellis (1994:277-281). Permission to conduct the research was orally requested from the School Governing Body (see Appendix B). Parents were duly informed about the research at an annual general meeting and those who did not want their children subjected to a data collection process would be allowed to withdraw them. No withdrawals were requested.

The purpose of the study was clearly outlined to the learners. In this way, an informed consent was obtained. Deception was avoided at all costs. Participants were assured of confidentiality since their names were not requested when answering the statements/questions. The questionnaires were administered during study periods, one class at a time for four days. Respondents could withdraw their participation at any time.

3.6   VALIDITY

Validity is defined as a relationship of accuracy between the responses and the reality the responses were intended to capture (Gomm 2004:152). According to Blore (2002:58) and Punch (1998:42) validity determines if a test measures what it is purposed to measure. For this study, two measures of validity were chosen, namely content validity and face validity (Black 202:78; Gray 2004:92).

3.6.1 Content validity

Gray (2004:92) says that content validity is associated with validating the content of a test. The literature and the contributions of experts in the field were used to judge the content validity of the questionnaire.

3.6.2 Face validity

This form of validity is solely dependent on the subjective judgement of the researcher. Leedy (1993:41) identifies this key question: At face value, does the instrument measure what it is purposed to measure?

The researcher's supervisor was satisfied that the items of the questionnaire tested the construct that it was supposed to test.   Hence, the questionnaire has face validity.

3.7   RELIABILITY

Blore (2002:59) defined reliability as the degree of consistency and/or accuracy with which the questionnaire measures. The following two questions asked in Grimm and Wozniak (1990:166) will determine the reliability of a test: Will the respondents answer the same question in the same way if they could be asked again? Can the used questions produce stable responses? Finally, computer software was used to analyse the reliability of the data by calculating the Cronbach alpha coefficient of scaled items (Ellis 1994:90-91; Gray 2004:305).

The reliabilities of the scaled items were as follows:

.675 for Section B (family related aspects)

.775 for Section C (environmental aspects)

.763 for Section D school related aspects)

.837 for Section E (manifestations of anger)

The abovementioned reliabilities are good for this kind of questionnaire.

3.8   ANALYSIS OF DATA

Computer software (the SPSS programme) was used to analyse the collected data.   The following statistical techniques were used to test the hypotheses: correlation, t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Gray 2004:305).

3.9   CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher listed the research problems and hypotheses and explained the survey design to test the hypotheses.   The results of the empirical investigation will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Results and discussion of results

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explained the research design.   In this chapter the results will be presented and discussed. The aim of the investigation was to determine various factors that are related to aggression in schools.   To focus the investigation, seven hypotheses were stated.   The results are presented in the following sections.

4.2   RESULTS

4.2.1   Biographical data

Table 4.1 presents the biographical data of the group of the respondents (Section A of the questionnaire).

Table 4.1 Biographical data of the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
12-13 years	11	2. 4
14-16	232	51. 2
17-18	117	25. 8
Older than 18	93	20. 5
Gender:		
Male	195	43. 0
Female	256	56. 5
Parents' marital status:		
Married	227	50. 1
Never married	207	45. 7
Divorced/separated	19	4. 2
Father's education:		
None	85	18. 8
Grade 1-7	89	19. 6
Grade 8-10	102	22. 5
Grade 11-12	145	32. 0
Diploma/degree/higher	31	6. 8
Mother's education:		
None	89	19. 6
Grade 1-7	105	23. 2
Grade 8-10	108	23. 8
Grade 11-12	126	27. 8
Diploma/degree/higher	25	5. 5

Of the sample, 51.2% is between 14 and 16 years of age, 56.5% of the total learner sample comprises girls. From the data collected, only 50% of the parent community is married, with the remaining 45.7% and 4.2% being unmarried and divorced/separated respectively.   It implies that almost half of the learner population does not have father figures at home. Thus, these children look up to behaviour modeled by father figures found in their environment and from the media.   Of the entire parent community only 32.0% and 27.8%,

fathers and mothers, respectively, have Grade 12 as their highest academic level.   A joint 12.3% of the entire parent community has obtained post-matric qualifications.   This shows that few of the parents are well educated.

4.2.2   Learners' response to items that focused on family related aspects

The learners' responses to items that focused on family related aspects (section B of the questionnaire) are presented in table 4.2.   To simplify the results, the two positive responses (definitely agree and agree) were grouped together as "agree" and the two negative responses (definitely disagree and disagree) were grouped together as "disagree".

Table 4.2 Learners' responses to family related aspects

Item	Disagree %	Uncertain %	Agree %
My parents leave me in the care of others	58. 9	9. 5	31. 3
My caretakers are advised to beat me if I do not listen to them	51. 2	17. 9	30. 5
My caretakers fight in front of us	72. 2	13. 2	14. 6
I am left alone because my parents stay/work in urban areas	57. 4	11. 3	31. 1
My caretakers punish me if I fail at school	54. 3	7. 9	37. 7
My caretakers encourage me to fight back if my friends beat me	53. 9	13. 2	32. 9
My caretakers are very strict	45,5	18. 3	36. O
My caretakers scream at me for small mistakes	59,8	13. O	27. 2
My caretakers correct my disruptive behaviour	28,5	12. 8	58,1
I lovingly accept any criticism by adults	45. 7	23. O	31. 2
Violence at my home frustrates me	47,9	19. O	33. 1
My brothers/sisters use drugs illegally	70. 9	13. O	15. 9
My caretakers use drugs	68. 4	12. 8	18. 1
I hit anyone back who hits me	45. 9	15. 2	38. 9
My brothers/sisters use bad language when talking to others	59. 4	19. 4	21. O
My caretakers will fight anyone who treats me badly	39. 3	16. 8	43. 5
My caretakers consider me a hero for causing trouble to others	58. 9	17. 7	22. 7
I want to be like my father/mother when I grow up	37. 1	11. 3	50. 6
My caretakers beat me if I come home late at night	53. 9	13. 2	32. 9

About 58.9% of the learner enrolment showed that their parents did not leave them in the care of others. However, 31.1% of the sample of learners are left on their own while the parents work in urban areas. In such situations, elder children take care of their younger siblings. Such learners are prone to aggression, because there is no adult around to monitor and regulate their exposure to aggressive films and pictorial information. Only educators, in case they profiled them and care about them as vulnerable learners, could be of assistance. But, with the tantalizing peer culture which is in conflict with adult values, it is unlikely that educators alone can successfully prevent such learners from indulging in aggressive behaviour. In addition, many learners (54.3%) are not punished when they fail tests at school. That is typical of neglected children.

58.1% of the learners agree that their parents make some efforts to correct their aggressive or disruptive behaviour. This statistics evinces the extent and the severity of the problem in the site being studied. Many learners (30.5%) are beaten if they don't listen to their caretakers. In addition, 32.9% are beaten if they come home late at night. Such aggression may lead to aggression in the child (see section 2.3.2.3). It means that these children learn that physical abuse is the ideal measure to correct behaviour. In line with the social learning theory, it is apparent that these children could acquire aggression as modeled in their homes. Aggression is probably mostly a learned response. Accordingly, 38.9% of the respondents indicated that they hit back at anyone who hits them, while 33.1% said that violence at home frustrates them. Smith and Furlong (1998) have found that observing aggressive behaviour, facilitates aggression (see section 2.2.5.2). About 43.5% of the respondents are overprotected, as they agree that their parents are ready to beat anyone who aggress them. Overprotection is a risk factor of aggressive behaviour. Many learners (37.1%) also indicated that they do not want to be like their fathers when they grow up. This may be because many parents are autocratic, despite living in a new democracy.

4.2.3 Learners' response to items that focused on environmental aspects

The learners' responses to items that focused on environmental aspects (section C of the questionnaire) are presented in table 4.3. To simplify the results, the two positive responses ('definitely agree' and 'agree') were grouped together as "agree" and the two negative responses ('definitely disagree' and 'disagree') were grouped together as "disagree".

Table 4.3 Learners' responses to environmental aspects

Item	Disagree %	Uncertain %	Agree %
I admire adults who are feared in the community	36. 2	22. 7	41. 1
There are few facilities to entertain the youth in our village	27. 2	18. 5	54. 3
I force myself upon those who reject me	45. 3	17. 4	37. 3
My friends do crime	53. 9	21. 6	24. 5
My friends fight with others	54. 7	19. 6	25. 6
I like songs of musicians who use abusive language	59. 6	11. 0	29. 4
People avoid my company as I use abusive language	44. 6	25. 8	29. 4
I take drugs	72. 2	5. 5	22. 3
I am forced to do the same things as my friends	62. 3	13. 5	24. 3
I like violent films	38. 4	12. 1	49. 4
My friends approve of my violent actions	48. 1	25. 4	26. 5
Girls' peer groups like causing fights	33. 3	16. 8	49. 7
I have friends who carry weapons to school	53. 0	22. 1	24. 9
Adults criticise the type of clothes I wear	38. 4	27. 8	33. 8
My friends use rap musicians' language to communicate	46. 6	22. 1	31. 1

Of the learner enrolment 36.2% does not admire aggressive role models in their community. Only 22.7% of them are uncertain. But, 41.1% of the learner community wants to be like their aggressive role models in their community. That is, they want to be feared and 'respected' because of their ability to coerce others unto submission. This group of learners is prone to criminality and subsequent exclusion by society. It is apparent that these learners could be carrying weapons which give them a sense of power. Like their masochistic role models, these learners would not use reason to resolve conflicts. This aspect has been highlighted in section 2.3.3.2.

Of the learners, 38.4% does not like violent films. These learners may be influenced by positive (non-aggressive) family norms and values. For instance, they may be allowed to watch movies on television appropriate for their age up to a regulated time at night. Of the remaining learners, 12.1% were uncertain while a staggering 49.4% of the learners enjoy violent films. Only learners who are neglected could be exposed to violent media. The role of the media to facilitate aggression in children has been explained in section 2.3.3.4.

33.3% of the respondents did not agree that girls' peer groups cause fights, while 16.8% of the respondents remain uncertain. However, 49.7% of the respondents agree that girls' peer groups cause fights at the school being studied. This revelation contrasts with the old belief that aggression is a male domain, was also highlighted in section 1.1.

Of importance is the fact that 37.3% of the respondents force themselves upon those who reject them, and 33.8% indicated that adults criticise their clothes. Nearly a quarter (22.3%) indicated that they take drugs. The important role of substance abuse in poor behaviour has been mentioned in section 2.3.3.5.

4.2.4   Learners' response to items that focused on school related aspects

The learners' responses on items that focused on school related aspects (section D of the questionnaire) are presented in table 4.4. Positive and negative responses were grouped together as "agree" and "disagree", respectively.

Table 4.4 Learners' responses to school related aspects

Item	Disagree %	Uncertain %	Agree %
Our schoolyard is untidy	41. 3	20. 3	38. 2
Bad writings appear on school property	43. 7	20. 8	35. 5
Girls' appearances at school are way out	42. 4	26. 0	30. 7
My school friends use foul language at school	40. 0	17. 0	43. 0
My school friends have negative attitudes towards education	38. 9	26. 5	34. 2
My school friends use drugs	48. 8	18. 8	32. 5
My friends dropped out of school for no reason	42. 8	24. 5	32. 7
My schoolfriends generally disobey rules	39. 5	24. 5	36. 2
Girls wear short skirts to attract boys	38. 4	18. 3	43. 3
I feel unsafe at school	41. 5	16. 3	41. 7
Some of my school friends beat up other learners at school	37. 5	14. 6	47. 9
I often write tests without studying properly	47. 5	12. 6	40. 0

43.3% of the respondents agree that girls at the school wore short skirts with the intent to attract boys sexually. It means that the female learners are the center of attraction on campus. That means that they are obsessed with fashionable attire which is mainly revealing and unethical. 38.4% of the respondents disagreed. Only 18.3% of the respondents were uncertain. The role of sexual aggression was also highlighted by previous researchers (see section 2.4.6).

40.0% of the respondents disagreed that their peers use foul language and 17.0% of the respondents were neutral. Contrarily, 43.0% of the respondents agreed that their peers subject others to verbal aggression at school. Verbal aggression is a precursor to physical aggression, as explained in section 2.4.10. That is, it is known to provoke the victim to respond physically with the intent to harm the verbally aggressive provocateur. It is not surprising that 47.9% of the respondents agree that some learners abuse others physically at the school. Learners who physically abuse others at school do so because they are socially

unskilled and unexposed to acceptable anger management skills.   About 37.5% of the respondents disagreed with this statement, whereas 14.6% were uncertain.   Such a school milieu is not conducive to meaningful learning, because its safety condition is precarious. Indeed, 41.7% of the respondents agree that they felt unsafe at school, 41.5% of the respondents disagreed, with only 16.3% being uncertain.

More than a third of the respondents (38.2%) indicated that they perceived the school yard as untidy; that bad graffiti were written on walls (35.5%); that their school friends had negative attitudes towards education (34.2%); that their friends disobeyed school rules (36.2%) and that they did not prepare well for tests (40%).

4.2.5   Learners' responses to items that focused on manifestations of aggression

The learners' responses to items that focused on manifestations of aggression (section E of the questionnaire) are presented in table 4.5.   As previously, positive and negative results were grouped together as "agree" and "disagree".

Table 4.5   Learners' responses to items that focused on manifestations of aggression

Item	Disagree %	Uncertain %	Agree %
Alcohol makes me feel better	72. 6	9. 5	17. 9
Drugs give me a lot of energy	74. 2	10. 8	14. 8
Alcohol makes me do things that I regret afterwards	42. 8	13. 0	44. 2
I would steal money in order to buy drugs	71. 3	10. 2	18. 1
I act aggressively when I am drunk	54. 7	17. 9	27. 4
I fear no-one if I carry a weapon	48. 8	19. 4	31. 6
Alcohol makes me speak well	70. 0	11. 5	18. 1
I like moving around during lessons	58. 5	17. 4	23. 6
I often fail class tests	45. 0	15. 0	40. 0
I have outbursts of anger	42. 8	23. 0	34. 2
I hate homosexuals	45. 5	16. 3	38. 2
I make sexual slurs to other learners	64. 9	14. 1	21. 0
I often use my body to show my anger	55. 8	16. 1	27. 8
I break something when I am angry	58. 9	10. 4	30. 5
I reject gays/lesbians	46. 6	14. 1	39. 3

Table 4.5 shows that the learners in the sample are at risk of abusing drugs, particularly alcohol, which seems more accessible to them (see section 2.4.5).   17.9% of the respondents agreed that alcohol made them feel better, while 9.5% of the respondents were uncertain. In contrast, 72.6% of the respondents disagreed that alcohol makes them feel better. Thus, the latter group of learners is aware that alcohol stimulates aggressive behaviour. Moreover, 70.0% of the respondents disagreed with the fact that alcohol helped a person to speak well. Indeed, it causes a lapse in speech and gives a false sense of power.   Research proved that alcohol produces psychomotor stimulation effects that lead to sensation-seeking and increased impulsivity (Breslow & Smothers 2004:6).   The inability to speak well when intoxicated, heightens the intoxicants' impulsivity and therefore s/he would easily register her/his point by beating her/his victim.   More than a third of the respondents (44.2%) indicated that alcohol made them do things they later regretted; they often failed tests (34.2%) – also see section 2.4.7; that they hated homosexuals (38.2%); and rejected gays/lesbians (39.3%).   This issue is also addressed in 2.4.6.

4.2.6 Results of the testing of the hypotheses

Seven null hypotheses were stated and tested. These were as follows:

(1)   There is no significant relationship between family related aspects and learners' aggressive behaviour.

(2)   There is no significant relationship between environmental aspects and learners' aggressive behaviour.

(3)   There is no significant relationship between school related aspects and learners' aggressive behaviour.

(4)   There is no significant difference between learners from different age groups in the manifestation of their anger.

(5)   There is no significant difference between learners from different genders in the manifestation of their anger.

(6)   There is no significant difference between learners with parents with different marital statuses in the manifestation of their anger.

(7)   There is no significant difference between learners with parents with different levels of education in the manifestation of their anger.

4.2.6.1   Correlations

The first three hypotheses were tested by means of correlations. The hypotheses are that there is no significant relationship between family related aspects, environmental aspects and school related aspects on one hand, and learners' aggressive behaviour on the other hand. The results are presented in table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Correlations between manifestations of anger and other variables

Variable	Correlation	Significance
Family related aspects	. 552**	. 000
Environmental aspects	. 729**	. 000
School related aspects	. 568**	. 000

**Correlation is significant on the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to table 4.6, all of the above factors, (family related aspects, environmental aspects and school related aspects) correlate significantly with manifestations of anger. All these correlations are positive.   In rank order, the correlation between environmental aspects and anger is the highest, then school related aspects and then family related aspects. All the correlations are moderate (.568 and .552) or high (.729). This means the more negative these aspects are, the more the learner manifests anger. (The aspects are those listed in table 4.2,4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.) The fact that the abovementioned aspects are significantly related to anger, is in accordance with previous findings as highlighted in paragraphs 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4.

The availability of aggressive role models in the immediate community of the research site brings about that young children emulate their behaviour, because they are respected because of fear. That is why 41.1% of the respondents (cf. table 4.3) admire adults who are feared in their community. Table 4.3 also indicates that lack of entertainment facilities is another factor that triggers aggressive behaviour by young children; 54.3% of the respondents agree that their community does not have adequate entertainment facilities and many respondents (49.7%) agree that they are exposed to violent films. Children exposed to violent media would like to sanitise and glamorise what was seen on the television screen.

Table 4.2 shows that negative family related factors such as the over-protection of many learners (43.5%) and parents' lack of interest in their children's education, for they fail to punish their children when they consistently fail tests (54.3%) smacks of a *laisez faire* attitude and licentious upbringing of children that enhances children's aggressive behaviour. Family violence is illustrated by the high mean of angry behaviour by learners whose fathers are uneducated as will be indicated in table 4.10. They inspire their children

to believe in aggressive measures of conflict resolution in their social interaction. This may also play a role in the fact that many (49.7%) respondents agree that girls' peer groups cause fights on the school campus. Many of these girls may have negative father influences.

Regarding environmental aspects, table 4.3 indicates the following: learners agree (43.0%) and (43.3%) to the existence of verbal aggression and sexual harassment, respectively (by the female learners); 41.7% of the respondents agreed that the school campus is insecure and 47.9% agreed that aggressive learners beat up fellow learners on the school campus.

4.2.6.2   Difference in means

The following four hypotheses stated that there was no significant difference in the manifestations of anger between learners from different age groups, gender, with parents with different marital statuses and with parents with different levels of education. These hypotheses were tested by means of a t-test or Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) followed by the Bonferroni t-test if significant differences were found (to identify where the differences were). The results are presented in the tables that follow (table 4.7 to 4.11).

Table 4.7 Means and significance of differences in the manifestations of anger of different age groups

Age group	N	Mean	df	F	Significance
12-13	11	3. 0364			
14-16	232	2. 5493			
17-18	117	2. 4072			
Older than 18	93	2. 3671	3	3. 451	P<0. 05

Bonferroni t-tests that were conducted after the ANOVA test indicated that the significant difference was between the age group 12 to 13 years (who had the highest mean), and the age group older than 18 years (who had the lowest mean). This means that the youngest age group manifests significantly more anger that the oldest age group. This difference is on the 5%-level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis may be rejected on the 5%-level of significance for the two groups.

Children aged 12-13 years old experience the onset of aggression. As these children are still in the process of developing the propensity for physical aggression, they possess the lower level of testosterone. However, as their testosterone increases with age, they also develop increased strength although they may have learnt more self-control when they have reached 18 years of age, in contrast to Tremblay's (2000:132) findings. According to Tremblay (2000:132), children will experience a so-called age-crime curve during adolescence. At this level of development, boys possess increased testosterone which enables them to develop an acute passion for physical aggression. However, children older than 18 years of age can think rationally and reason at an abstract level. Their intellectual maturity enables them to apply their minds when confronting aggressive situations.

Table 4.8 Means and significance of differences in the manifestation of anger of different genders

Gender	N	Mean	t	df	Significance
Male	195	2. 5632			
Female	256	2. 4317	1. 760	449	P>0. 05

Table 4.8 indicates that the null-hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference between boys and girls in their manifestation of anger. In other words, boys and girls behave similarly to show their aggression. This confirms previous findings (see section 1.1).

Table 4.9 Means and significant differences in the manifestation of anger of learners with parents of different marital statuses

Marital status of parents	N	Mean	t	Df	Significance
Married	227	2. 4586			
Never married	207	2. 4592			
Divorced/separated	19	3. 1298	2	6. 796	P<0. 01

Bonferroni t-tests that were conducted after the ANOVA test indicated that the significant difference was between the learners whose parents were divorced/separated (who had the highest mean), and the group whose parents were married. This means that learners whose

parents were divorced or separated manifested significantly more anger than those whose parents were married. This difference is on the 1%-level significance. Thus, the null-hypothesis may be rejected on the 1%-level of significance for the two groups. The conflict that often occurs before divorce may facilitate aggression in the learners. Aggressive parents are often role models for their children. This is in accordance with previous findings (see section 2.3.2.3).

Table 4.10 Means and significance of differences in the manifestations of anger of learners with fathers of different levels of education

Father's level of education	N	Mean	df	F	Significance
None	85	2. 6807			
Grade 1-7	89	2. 6067			
Grade 8-10	102	2. 4354			
Grade 11-12	145	2. 3559			
Diploma/degree/higher	31	2. 4081	4	3. 052	P<0. 05

Bonferroni t-tests that were conducted after the ANOVA test indicated that the mean of the group whose fathers had grades 11 to 12, is significantly lower than the mean of the group whose fathers had no education. This means that learners whose fathers had no education manifested significantly more anger than those whose fathers were educated. This difference is on the 5%-level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis may be rejected on the 5%-level of significance for these two groups.

Table 4.11 Means and significance of differences in the manifestations of anger of learners with mothers with different of levels of education

Mother's level of education	N	Mean	df	F	Significance
None	89	2. 6646			
Grade 1-7	105	2. 5156			
Grade 8-10	108	2. 4302			
Grade 11-12	126	2. 4061			
Diploma/degree/higher	25	2. 3881	4	1. 754	P>0. 05

No significant differences were found between learners whose mothers had different levels of education, since p>0.05. Thus, the null-hypothesis may not be rejected.

Fathers are associated with aggressive behavioural acts, especially of physical nature. Such parents resolve conflicts violently, because of their fathers' upbringing. They were not exposed to alternatives as children's voices were suppressed in authoritarian societies. That explains why least educated fathers' means are higher than their counterparts who had grades 11-12 education. Literacy itself exposes people to a life-world that is abound with alternatives. Thus, fathers with grades 11-12 education might be exposed to diverse cultures and situations whereby serious problems as aggression were resolved non-aggressively. The judicial role in addressing aggression in families is still the prerogative of father figures in patriarchal communities such as the one in which the research site is situated. Therefore, semi-educated fathers like those whose mean is lower, resolve conflicts non-aggressively and democratically whereby the voice of the child is valued.

As explained in the preceding paragraph, there is no significant difference between the manifestation of anger between learners whose mothers had different levels of education, since mothers generally do not physically abuse their children. Mothers are associated with verbal aggression. Physically abused children would opt for physically aggressive measures when addressing aggression.

4.3   DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The biographical data collected for this study are important. Statistics show that only about 50% of the learners' parents are married. The family setups show an imbalance as there are few father figures.

The findings show that many parents are victims of a migratory labour system. Thus, they subsequently leave their children to look after themselves. In this instance, elder children will assume a parenting role over their younger children.

Many parents show little interest in the education of their children. The high failure rate in tests by the children does not bother the parents as they do not try to intervene to correct

such behaviour. However, the few that make an effort to intervene, often use corporal punishment.

Research findings indicate that many parents are over-protecting their children. They physically abuse those people who might aggress their children. Again, empirical research showed that many children admire aggressive role models found in their community.

Alcohol and other drugs are accessible to the respondents and they take them. Above all, the findings in this study show that learners freely abuse their peers on the school campus. Many learners subject their fellow learners to verbal aggression at school.

The high prevalence of physical aggression makes the school environment unsafe to many learners. That is why girls' peer groups are unruly and cause many physical fights at school. The findings further indicate that the female learners of the research site sexually harass fellow learners by wearing provocative clothing.

Finally, the findings show that those male parents with little education seem to be more physically aggressive than their counterparts who have grades 11-12 education. That is, these uneducated male parents may know only of corporal punishment, which they abuse.

4.4   SUMMARY

The empirical data illustrate a high level of insecurity on school campus. Many learners freely abuse others physically. The learners also abuse one another verbally. Some learners have access to drugs, particularly to alcohol. Many learners' parents give little support to the school as they seem uninterested in the academic performance of their children. That is, they neglect their children. This is also shown by leaving their children to rear one another at home while parents work in urban areas. Lack of adult members in the families often cause children to watch aggressive films unmonitored. This is risky, since many of these children could eventually model the aggressive behaviour they viewed on television. Leaving children on their own could tempt them to live in accordance with the peer group's norms. The researcher infers that girls who wear unacceptable school uniforms are not monitored and reprimanded by anyone, because their parents are not around. Negative

environmental and family related factors as shown by the empirical data encourage learners to behave aggressively.

The next chapter will provide conclusions of this study and recommendations will be made. The study's limitations will also be pointed out.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Recommendations and Limitations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the interpretations and analysis of the empirical data. Correlations and differences in means were discussed critically. In the end, a summary of the results was provided.

In this chapter, conclusions will be made; recommendations will be presented and limitations discussed.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

5.2.1 Conclusions from the literature study

From the literature review presented in Chapter 2, we can conclude that learner aggression is a world-wide problem. There is no agreement on how to define aggression across the different fields of study. Aggression as a behavioural problem is not confined to specific causal factors. Above all, it is a learned response. Aggression can also be misplaced, as in the case when someone vents his/her anger on someone else on grounds of provocation.

However, from the literature the researcher learnt that negative family related factors influence children to behave aggressively (see section 2.3.2). Both negative school and community environments aggravate children's aggressive behaviour (as outlined in sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.3). From the literature the researcher realised that the aspect of aggression is

under-researched in South Africa, despite the high rates of crime and the escalation of violence in schools.

5.2.2 Conclusions from the empirical research

5.2.2.1 Family related aspects and aggressive behaviour

From the learners' responses illustrated by table 4.2, (see section 4.2.1) it is clear that the following family related aspects are present that may be conducive to violence:

- caretakers who beat learners if they don't listen;
- learners who are alone at home because their parents work in urban areas;
- caretakers who encourage learners to fight back when their friends beat them;
- violence at home;
- caretakers who beat learners if they arrive home late at night.

In addition, the learners do not have adequate role models with whom they can identify. Only about half indicated that they would like to be like their parents when they grow up.

The family related aspects listed in the table are positively and significantly related to aggressive behaviour in the learners (see section 4.2.5.1).

5.2.2.2 Environmental aspects and aggressive behaviour

From the learners' responses in table 4.3, (see section 4.2.2) it seems that the following environmental aspects are present that may facilitate aggressive behaviour in adolescents:

- aggressive role models in the community;
- violent films;
- aggressive girls who fight;
- conflict with adults over clothes.

Added to the above, is the fact that there exists a lack of facilities to entertain the youth in the village. The aforementioned may cause aggressive behaviour in the learners. For

example, a significant number indicated that they force themselves on others when they are rejected.

The environmental aspects listed in the table are positively and significantly related to aggressive behaviour in the learners (see section 4.2.5.1).

5.2.2.3 School related aspects and aggressive behaviour

Table 4.4 (see section 4.2.3) illustrates that the following school related aspects may facilitate aggressive behaviour in learners:

- an untidy schoolyard;
- graffiti on school property;
- learners who use bad language;
- learners with negative attitudes towards school;
- learners who disobey rules;
- learners who fight;
- girls who wear provocative clothes.

In addition to the above, nearly a third of the learners' peer group uses drugs. Consequently, many learners report that they feel unsafe at school.

The school related aspects listed in the table are positively and significantly related to aggressive behaviour in the learners (see section 4.2.5.1).

5.2.2.4 Manifestation of anger

All of the above may facilitate aggression in adolescents. Aggressive behaviour is manifested in the following ways:

- bad behaviour while under the influence of alcohol;
- outbursts of anger; and
- feelings of hate for minorities, such as gay people.

In addition, many of the learners often fail their class tests.

Regarding aggressive behaviour:

- 12 to 13 year old learners manifest significantly more anger than those who are older than 18 years;

- boys and girls do not differ significantly in how they manifest anger;

- learners whose parents are divorced demonstrate more aggression than those whose parents are still married;

- learners whose fathers have some education (grades 11 to 12) show less aggression than those whose fathers have no education;

- the mother's level of education has no significant influence on the aggressive behaviour of the learners.

All the abovementioned conclusions are applicable to the sample only. However, there are many rural schools similar to the one involved in the study. Hence the results may also be applicable to many other schools in South Africa. This would be indicative of the seriousness of the problem and one that *urgently* needs to be addressed.

5.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Recommendations on how to address aggression in schools

Orpinas, Home and Staniszewiski (2003:432) believe that aggressive learners' behaviour could be prevented and remedied through targeted and universal programmes. These programmes will next be discussed.

5.3.1.1   Targeted programmes

Targeted programmes refer to those programmes that are designed for learners who are at high risk to perpetrate aggression or those who have already committed aggressive acts. Targeted programmes are useful in reducing risk factors and the recurrence of violence. The programmes include: a zero-tolerance policy, profiling potentially aggressive learners, peer mediation and conflict resolution and physical surveillance.

(a)   Zero tolerance policy

Zero tolerance policy – a widely recommended disciplinary measure – can be implemented to address learners' aggressive behaviour.   Any staff member who witnesses some manifestations or acts of aggression from aggressors should act immediately.   The policy remains a reaction to a disciplinary problem such as leaners' aggressive behaviour as observed in both structured and unstructured environments of the school.   Aggressors should be repudiated immediately if caught in the act of aggressing other learners.   Also, victims of teasing (name-calling), humiliation and abuse of any form should be encouraged to speak out because silence is consent.

(b)   Peer mediation and conflict resolution

Peer mediation programmes use referrals and aggressive incidents in unmonitored milieux such as sportsfields, and so forth.   Aggressive incidents to be monitored include vandalism, verbal harassments/threats, and so on. A discipline journal where the incidents observed are recorded should be kept and updated regularly, so that special referrals are quickly made to psychologists and other specialists for therapy.

The role of the peer mediator is to monitor the mediation process (between the aggressor and the victim) in the mediation room.   Ground rules such as mutual respect should be steadfastly adhered to.   Mutual respect should be the ultimate goal of mediation and once agreement has been reached verbally, the mediator should provide the two parties with a contract – bearing the agreement – to be signed.   Thereafter, the mediator would ensure that the two parties abide by the terms as signed.

Conflict mediation and resolution programmes provide opportunities to model and rehearse negotiation and resolution tactics with the aid of a peer or an aide.   In this instance, a qualified counselor or psychologist could serve the purpose when employed at the school. Alternatively, in-service training could be offered to selected educators to serve as violence prevention co-ordinators.   Finally, the psychological needs of both at-risk learners and those living in aggressive conditions should be met.

(c)   Profiling potentially aggressive learners

If it is assumed that potentially aggressive behaviour can be predicted, it is imperative that educators should read the warning signs and act immediately. The strategy serves as a preventative measure, since prevention is better than cure.

(d)   Physical surveillance and safety measures

A safe environment enhances a feeling of hope and success to the vulnerable at school. Thus, a safe school situation should be prioritised in order for a conducive learning environment to prevail.

Therefore, aggressive behaviour of learners can be thwarted by employing campus security staff. In poor communities the Department of Education in the province should allocate funds specifically for that purpose. The security personnel will be responsible for patrolling the campus and should, on certain occasions, conduct body searches for weapons. Body searches would scare potential aggressors from carrying weapons for the intentional use to harm as well as warn victims who might carry weapons for defensive purposes.

The police service should also be roped in when hardened aggressors pose potential security threats and are hard to transform after corrective measures have been taken. Aggressors could be apprehended and convicted, and possibly referred for correction at relevant centres for that purpose. Policing at school should be a regular exercise in an attempt to deter any potential aggressors.

5.3.1.2   Universal programmes

Universal programmes, due to their inclusivity, involve all learners (aggressors, victims and bystanders). These programmes are meant for the prevention of and intervention in learners' aggressive behaviour. In the same vein, all staff members should be involved to equip themselves with the skills that could be used to modify the teaching and learning environment.   Examples include: care-giver training, mentoring, violence prevention curricula, educator in-service training, limiting exposure to aggressive media coverage, sports, parenting and community involvement, as well as government intervention. These strategies will be discussed individually, as follows:

(a) Educator in-service training programme

During such training sessions, educators identify those areas of their school environment and behaviour management that they would regard as strengths. Then they label the areas as areas of pride. Once done, they have to identify the areas that have to change.

Educators list and rank aggressive behavioural acts according to extent, severity and sphere of influence using the collaborative decision-making model. The existing strategies are now reviewed and refined for current and future use at schools. In the end, educators will be skilled with prevention and intervention strategies that are non-aggressive, but effective.

(b) Violence prevention curricula

This programme targets both aggressive learners and all others affected by aggression. It is also inclusive. The programme aims to arm educators and learners with social competencies, anger management and conflict resolution and effective classroom management skills (Junoven 2002:4-10). The programme is designed to make learning fun, because schooling should be experienced as fun, so that it becomes meaningful to all.

High energy, simple and adaptable games could be used whereby learners could compete against time or with the facilitator-cum-coach. During the games, mix the learners irrespective of their contrasting characters. In this manner, learners could realise the importance of adopting a collective approach in their interpersonal relations. It could dawn on learners that there is the need for them to strive to adapt to the social values and that any violation would lead them to ostracism.

Plays could be used to enact aggressive behaviour and its possible consequences, *inter alia*, rejection. Learners could be given platforms at debate sessions and symposia to critically discuss the impact of aggressive behaviour in an ideal society and why it is considered undesirable. This inclusive approach would improve learners' self-esteem as they would realise that their voice is also valued in resolving social problems, such as the one under study. Alternatively, expose learners to a so-called forum theatre where they examine, explain and solve problems such as aggression by using suggestions from the audience. Thereafter, assign learners to write letters of advice to the aggressor and the victim, to see

the need to correct his/her behaviour and to speak out to avoid suffering in silence. Learners would learn that silence begets mental ill-health.   Through drama, learners would realise the importance of submitting to adults' value systems as they boast vast experiential expertise.

Drama is an effective medium through which learners can explore and contrast the effects of both inclusion and exclusion in relation to their aggressive behaviour (Victoria 2002:39). Inclusion means using acceptable language endorsing humility as a way of life.   Thus, learners would aspire to develop a sense of belonging in their efforts to attain interpersonal maturity.   Consequently, learners would realise that exclusion emanates from power imbalances in human relationships.   The nature of conduct one manifests when interacting with others would make him feared or ignored for fear of embarrassment.

Educators are advised to recognize positive behaviour and accomplishments. Furthermore, promising behavioural acts should be reinforced at morning assemblies and at other forums. Putting up high quality signs such as "No teasing", "No name-calling", "No vandalism", "No grafitti" and others in and outside classrooms would encourage learners to avoid any form of aggression (Orpinas *et al* 2003:437).

(c)   Care-giver training

Expose parents, foster parents and educators to this training programme, because they would acquire values such as humility, honesty, penance, respect and readiness to learn from others who model these values.   Importantly, care-givers would learn to do away with over-protectiveness and abuse of all sorts.   The latter two factors influence children's behaviour negatively.   The care-givers would learn to guard against neglecting their children/charges since an aggressive environment may corrupt their behaviour.

Care-givers would be duly advised to establish family rules that should be followed.   Mete out punishment promptly whenever the family rules are violated.   Withdrawal of privileges is highly recommended.

(d)   Limiting exposure to aggressive media

The researcher recommends that parents should regulate and monitor their children's exposure to aggressive media coverage of events. If not protected, children will acquire undesirable, unnecessary and harmful patterns of aggression. The children will try to glamorise and sanitise the actions modeled by the aggressors as portrayed in the media.

(e)   Sports

Engagement in sports detracts children from indulging in negative behaviour. Sports reward children with material gain, fame, recognition and healthy interpersonal relationships. Existing rules teach children to co-operate with others and to remain orderly. Failure to uphold the rules is punishable. Extreme aggressive behaviour in sports could earn one a red card, which means being excluded from further participation for a particular period. Teamwork is emphasised over individualism. Through sports, children would learn that life should be fun and enjoyed as such.

(f)   Mentoring

Counsel all learners properly in order to adapt their existence to propitious societal values. A mentoring programme aims at imparting values that would empower learners with acceptable social skills. Learners should freely entrust their lives to educators called to act *in loco parentis* at all times. Educators should exude affability, care, warmth and openness so that learners with problems and frustrations emanating from exposure to aggressive environments could readily run to them for help. All educators should be equally committed in the execution of this task.

Freely dispense prevention strategies such as participation in sports and the avoidance of bad company to all learners. Advise learners to read certain biographies, autobiographies and other fiction books that could help to shape them into acceptable human beings.

Secondary schools should be allocated posts where psychotherapists are appointed so that referred learners (out of their crude aggressive conduct) could access therapy in an inclusive school environment. Alternatively, specific social workers could be assigned to specific secondary schools that can be clustered. These professionals could deal with situations relating to child neglect, poverty, and so forth.

(g)   Parenting and community involvement

Parenting is one responsibility that should not be delegated. As such, parents should take an active part in the upbringing of their own children (Banks 1997:3). Families should nurture their children's lives, prescribing norms and values that should be respected. Any observable deviation should be punished appropriately and non-violently. Observance of family rules should be non-negotiable. Children should be taught that life is all about getting back what you give. Those who manipulate power for personal gain will be rewarded with contempt, but those who respect will be accorded respect. Children should be taught that conflict is never resolved through anger as it is a precursor to violence. Peaceful measures should be taught to children in order to live harmoniously with other people.

The role of respectable community leaders such as clerics, chiefs and politicians cannot be overemphasised. They should be encouraged to campaign strongly against aggressive behavioural manifestations. Aggressive adult behaviour should be publicly condemned to ensure that the youth is protected against risk factors such as abuse, family violence, neglect, and others.

5.3.2   Recommendations for further research

The following topics are suggested for further research:

- an in-depth, qualitative investigation of female aggression;
- designing, implementing and evaluating an intervention programme to reduce aggression at school;
- the role of religion to influence aggression in families;
- the role of recreation/sport to influence aggression in families;
- the relationship between parental literacy and aggressive behaviour;
- the role of delegating the responsibility of parenting to others and agressive behaviour in children.
- a comparative study between rural advantaged and disadvantaged schools, as well as urban advantaged and disadvantaged schools regarding aggression in children. ;

- an follow-up investigation of aggression in learners by involving other stakeholders as well, namely educators and parents.

5.4   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited by the following. It should be considered a small scale project. The site was a small secondary school with only 450 learners and is situated in an impoverished rural environment. The community is little diversified socio-economically.

As a mini-dissertation, the study could not necessarily come up with a theory that could be applied in secondary schools in all rural settings.   Some better-off rural secondary school settings were not covered by the empirical research conclusions reached in this study.   Above all, only learners were used as respondents so that the voice of other stakeholders is excluded in the empirical conclusions of this study.   An in-depth, qualitative study may have enhanced understanding of the phenomenon of aggression.

5.5   CONCLUSION

There is a need to recognize the prevalence of aggression in schools. The impression that only males perpetrate aggression is outdated.   There is an upsurge of female aggression in schools and it needs to be addressed urgently.   Modern female learners resort to physical aggression to resolve conflicts.   This is typical of children who are exposed to aggressive media, an aggressive environment and most of all, a violent family setup.   Children who are the victims of aggression at home by their next-of-kin, would adopt aggressive measures to resolve conflicts.

Neglect of children at home and at school makes them vulnerable to aggression as there is no prompt intervention to correct their behaviour. Peer groups fill that vacuum and children are influenced to live by the unethical codes prescribed by the group.

Though the research project focused on one aspect of aggression only, it draws people's attention to the problem that needs further research. There is little collaboration between the different parties in trying to address the problem.   Despite some evidence of

licentiousness at home and schools, measures used to intervene to correct children's aggressive behaviour seem to encourage more aggression. As time passes, both victims of aggression and bystanders may turn out to be aggressors themselves. They may even be tempted to carry weapons under the pretext of self-defense.

The social learning theory influenced the direction and the conclusions of this study. Programmes designed to reduce learners' aggression require a high level of commitment by all stakeholders of the school. Ultimately, the aim is towards a more peaceful society.

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