LEARNERS' AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN SECONDARY SCHOOL: A PSYCHO-SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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I declare that **LEARNERS' AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A PSYCHO-SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

…………………………   …………………………….
SIGNATURE   **DATE**
(V.G. GASA)

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my God-given children, Simphiwe, Thandeka and Mpho who inspired me through their love, understand and respect.

Prologue:

It is in the fire that the intensity

of the clay is tested and its spirit is

allowed to dance.

It is in the fire where the fierce light

pierces to the core and the once

fragile become strong.

It is in the fire where an individual piece

of clay claims its own true

identity.

Some of the most beautiful pieces

will crumble under the extreme conditions,

while crumble under the extreme conditions,

while other average looking pieces,

will get stronger

and take on whole new identities.

Whatever the case,

the process is not complete until the clay

has had its time in the

fire.

Aknowledgements

My gratitude to

Summary

This study was undertaken to determine the extent of aggressive behaviour exhibited by secondary school learners.

Many factors were considered when investigating the problem of aggressive behaviour. The problem was traced from the theorists' perspectives and factors related to the family, school and community. An extensive literature review showed that the above factors contribute to aggressive behaviour among adolescents.

In order to support or reject the findings of the literature study, quantitative (questionnaire) research and qualitative research (interviews) were conducted. The results of the quantitative research concerning learners' aggressive behaviour in secondary schools were analysed and interpreted while at the same time a deeper understanding of aggressive behaviour was revealed through qualitative research.

The results of the empirical research indicated that the more negative the family climate, school climate, community climate or influence of friends are, or the more negative the emotional self-concept of the adolescent is, the more aggressive the adolescent is, and vice versa. Based on these findings recommendations for the implementation of prevention programmes were made.

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An introductory orientation

1.1   INTRODUCTION

It is reported by different kinds of media – radio, television and newspapers that hostility and aggression are perhaps the most common forms of interaction between people in today's society. Reports of assault, random aggression, gun fights, violent threats and other forms of attacks are continually in the headlines. It appears as if one lives in a world that is increasingly violent and out of control. Unfortunately, adolescents are not immune to this aggressive behaviour, either as perpetrators or victims because may live in violent communities for most of their lives. Adolescents, who grow up in a climate of widespread political and social conflict, are of great concern to educators. This continual exposure may desensitise adolescents and encourage them to accept aggressive acts as a normal mode of conflict resolution. On the other hand, they may be emotionally damaged by the experiences of violence, repeated harassment or the witness of the death or brutal treatment of relatives. Little is known about 'delayed effects', that is emotional disturbances that appear after a long period, but they appear to be very damaging.

Through the media, one learns of an adolescent who commits some horrifically violent act. Another adolescent, for no apparent reasons or critical incident, seemingly erupts and seriously injures or kills someone. Educators who are confronted by angry, defiant teenagers wonder about contributing factors. Homes are no longer isolated from the effect of hostility and aggression. Very often family life is disrupted by an angry and difficult child. Much is said about the effect of the family upon the adolescent, but the impact of poor relationships is reciprocal. Communities, schools, neighbourhood and cities are severely affected by this aggression.

It is clear that this is a worldwide social issue. The involvement of youth in violent activities is prevalent in almost every American community. Violent crime among youth rose at an alarming rate with juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offences such as murder, forcible rape, robbery or aggravated assault escalating more than 150,000 in 1994

(Carney 2000:213). South Africa, like other countries, is also affected and frustrated by this issue. In a recent study conducted in four schools in the Johannesburg area (Fineran, Bennet & Sacco 2001:216), 36 percent of male learners reported that they had kicked, punched, or beaten another learner in the previous year. Another study conducted in the Kwazulu Natal Midlands (Govender & Killian 2001:8) revealed that 73 percent of learners reported that they had witnessed violence at school in the previous 12 months with 10 percent reporting that they had been part of a group that had killed a person, and 4 percent indicating that they had killed a person without being part of a group. A similar study conducted by Collings and Magojo (2003:125) in Durban, Kwazulu Natal, shows 78.8 percent of high school males had a history of violent behaviour, with 8.2 percent reporting that they had killed a person.

Aggressive behaviour that learners exhibit in secondary schools is a concern for everyone. Most learners are involved directly or indirectly in this situation. This experience does not only affect learners but also education personnel, teachers, parents, school governing bodies, students' representative councils and the community at large. This behaviour frequently interrupts the smooth running of the school and leads to a school climate not conducive to learning and teaching. It places everybody's life at risk and makes the culture of learning and teaching very difficult.

It appears that learners' aggressive behaviour stems from different factors. It can be traced to learners' family backgrounds, community, school and value systems. If the learner is unstable due to the above factors, he/she may suddenly display deviant behaviour, tends to be emotionally disturbed and exhibits destructive tendencies. Theories of aggression suggest that aggression is acquired through a process of trial and error, instructing, and observation of models. The aggressive behaviour is affected by reinforcement, the past experiences of the person, the social environment or social milieu, and one's personality (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:125).

It is clear that frequent exposure to aggressive people may involve any individual in aggressive episodes, and the presence of aggressive models increases the likelihood of imitation. Aspects of personality, such as impulsiveness, hostility and fearfulness, may act as moderators of aggressive behaviour (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:126). The highest rates

of aggressive behaviour are found in environments where aggressive models abound and where aggressiveness is regarded as a highly valued attribute (Bandura 1973:97).

1.2 PROBLEM ANALYSIS

1.2.1 Exposition of the problem

The researcher became aware of the situation as an educator in an area that is characterised by aggressive learners. In most secondary schools in this area aggressive learners disrupt classes on a daily basis. Most secondary learners are involved in different groups with different names. They usually fight with each other, fight in the community, disobey and quarrel with their own parents. They frequently oppose the school rules and are in conflict with their teachers. Most of them have served prison sentences. The police force, schools and the community have tried to address the problem but in vain.

> ➤ This problem of aggressiveness amongst learners has also been highlighted by media, i.e., television and newspapers, in a number of instances. After a year-long study, Dr Clive Harber, a British researcher, found overwhelming evidence that most South African schools are confronted with problems of violence - possession of guns, attacks with knives and open scissors (*Sunday Times*, 16 April 2000:7). Newspaper reports show that violence in schools is experienced countrywide as follows:

> ➤ In *Sowetan Sunday World* (5 March 2000:19) aggressive behaviour was reported when a female teacher was viciously assaulted by her own pupils inside the principal's office at a well-known school in Soweto. The same newspaper reported that in Phuthaditjhaba, Free State, pupils attacked their teachers, assaulting them in full view of some parents.

> ➤ A similar incident was reported in *Sunday Times* (2 April 2000:18). Two eleven-year-olds arrived at their Pretoria school armed with their parent's guns. A *Pretoria News* (20 September 2000:12) reporter concurs by saying: *What should a teacher do when a pupil is rowdy, is being disrespectful, fights or bullies classmates and often brings a gun to school?*

➢ In the *Eastern Province Herald* (22 February 2001:3) it was reported that two seventeen-year old boys involved in a schoolboy scuffle in which a chunk of one boy's cheek was bitten out were found guilty by the school's disciplinary committee.

➢ In Kempton Park, Gauteng, a boy was found semiconscious and bleeding profusely after being assaulted in the school's toilets by another boy (*The Star*, 4 July 2001:20).

➢ A certain principal in Ennerdale, Gauteng became so desperate that he was forced to close his school for a day. He said, *Somebody has to take the bit between the teeth. The pupils push the envelope mercilessly. They provoke you deliberately. It's like going into a boxing match with Mike Tyson with one hand tied behind your back. Teachers are under a hell of a lot of pressure* (*Citizen*, 24 August 2001:1).

➢ At KwaDukuza in KwaZulu Natal, a 16 year-old girl was assaulted and robbed of her possessions by a group of scholars (*Leader*, 14 September 2001:11).

➢ The attack on a Rhodes teacher, who was left with five stitches on her head, a broken left wrist and a swollen knee, by a thirteen-year old pupil, who attacked her with a hammer, drove home the reality experienced by teachers in schools around the country. A similar incident happened in Manenberg where they had to disarm a pupil who had brought a gun to school (*Pretoria News*, 23 October 2001:8).

➢ A certain principal at Empangeni in KwaZulu Natal, vowed to get to the bottom of the petrol-bombing incident at the school where two eighteen and one seventeen year-old boys were questioned by the police following homemade petrol bomb thrown through a window in the classroom. At the same school it was reported that gangs were terrorizing the school and thirty pupils had been suspended for continuous disruption of classes and carrying weapons (*Natal Witness*, 20 November 2002:1).

➶   At Chatsworth in KwaZulu Natal, the near fatal stabbing of a thirteen year-old pupil by a fellow pupil was reported in *Daily News* (23 May 2003:8).

The above evidence shows the situation requires grave attention. The Former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, and other provincial Ministers of Education promised to implement some measures but in vain. Kader Asmal said: *The Education Department is to set out guidelines to regulate access to schools. With fatalities that have taken place, the use of firearms and physical injuries, we are going to have some kind of ground rules* (*Pretoria News*, 28 March 2000:4).

The escalating incidents of violence in KwaZulu Natal schools prompted the provincial department of education to draft a policy to deal with discipline, safety and security in public schools (*Leader*, 14 September 2001:11). But these measures met with much disapproval from learners as was shown during a rampage through the streets of Johannesburg by thousands of unruly pupils who looted and smashed car windows as they went to protest against a Gauteng Department of Education directive that schools close their gates during teaching hours for safety reasons (*The Star*, 28 May 2002:2).

1.2.2 Exploration of the problem

A literature review indicates that many factors lead to learners' aggression in secondary schools. Factors contributing to aggressive behaviour could be classified inter alia in the following categories:

➶   Family - dysfunctional family, divorce and separation, domestic violence, and abusive parents.

➶   School - peer interaction, intergroup relations, excessive discipline, racial and cultural diversity.

➶   Community - community instability, social injustices and political influences.

Peer interaction or peer pressure has been highlighted, among other school factors, as most crucial in shaping the behaviour of the learners. Peer pressure is defined as compulsion to do or obtain the same things as others in one's peer group (Robinson 1996:1019).

McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter and McWhirter (1998:138) find that peer pressure sometimes leads to norms of risky behaviour and irresponsibility. The peer group not only provides support, fairly clear norms and the structure that most learners want but also sometimes compels them to conformity. Harilal (1996:40) defines conformity as, *The tendency to change one's behaviour, beliefs, opinions or actions to correspond with the norms expressed by other people because of implicit or explicit social pressure.* During this conformity one's own moral standards are violated and the peer groups exert an important influence in shaping one's behaviour either positively or negatively.

Some secondary school learners express aggressiveness with an aim of gaining popularity among their peers. Some become so aggressive, act immaturely and display disruptive and deviant behaviour if they are not accepted by a peer group (Budhal 1998:81).

The dysfunctional family, among family factors, has also been mentioned as playing an important role in shaping the behaviour of learners towards aggressiveness. A dysfunctional family is defined by a marital disruption such as divorce, separation and unwedded or single parenthood. Although the family may seem intact, it might be characterized by spousal violence, child abuse and alcoholism (McWhirter, et al 1998:49).

Divorce and separation have been identified as causing stress for the whole family. Learners who are part of this situation feel frustrated and often display behavioural problems. These behavioural problems can be seen through anger, disruptive behaviour and aggression (Neuhaus 1974:149). Parents who are going through a process of divorce and separation also become frustrated and start to retaliate. They sometimes abuse their children physically or emotionally and sometimes resort to alcohol. In some cases parental hostility becomes so extreme or gets out of control and serious abuse of the learners occurs (Conger 1991:200). Learners who are exposed to this kind of home life are sometimes traumatized and start to show deviant behaviour, delinquency and maladjustment. They also resort to aggression as a form of attention seeking.

Racial and cultural diversity can also contribute to aggressiveness among learners. Rosa (1994:61) defines culture as *the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a*

community or population. Diverse means very different from each other (*Oxford: Wordpower Dictionary* 1998:187).

Learners of different cultures now attend one school. They are placed in schools with students and teachers who look, speak and behave differently than them (Ford 1996:78). According to Irvine (1990:26), cultural misunderstandings may be expected among them. These misunderstandings may result in conflict, distrust and hostility. Many people tend to react suspiciously, defensively, even aggressively towards individuals who differ in obvious physical characteristics (Kvaraceus, Gibson & Curtin 1967:9). In some of the schools this cultural misunderstanding has led to serious conflict among learners and one learner was badly stabbed.

Instability within the community also shapes the behaviour of the learners. Community is a group of people who live in the same area or who have the same interests, religion, or nationality (*Longman Active Study Dictionary* 1991:144). Instability means lack of stability (*Longman Active Study Dictionary* 1991:367). The instability of a community can be traced to political violence, social violence, suicides and crimes such as hi-jacking, kidnapping, rape, hostage, house breaking, senseless killing, gangsterism, et cetera. Such a community or environment may place learners in a stressful situation and compel them to be aggressive. Learners may experience psychological problems in adjusting to normality and end up believing that violence is the only way to address problems. Because of these incidents learners lose respect for authority and reject restraint or discipline (Kimaryo and Hilsum 1993:20).

Excessive discipline can also be identified as one of the factors that shape the learners' behaviour. Excessive discipline is defined as the infliction of physical pain upon a person's body as punishment for a crime, wrongdoing or infraction (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1995:646).

Excessive discipline (such as corporal punishment) did not prove to be effective and has therefore been abolished by legislation in South Africa. It was popular as it was quick and easy - 'you mess up, take your punishment, it is done'. But it caused a stressful situation. The stress causes negative feelings in a learner. These feelings in turn create attitudes

that may lead to some kind of misbehaviour, particularly aggressive behaviour (Riak 2001:11).

Empirical evidence shows that offenders who are punished by corporal means are actually slightly more likely to commit further crimes (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1996:646). Skinner in Riak (2001:11) once said, *The more serious the punishment, the more violent the bi-product.* The frustration that excessive discipline causes can lead to hostility which encourages the learner to be violent at an adult stage.

1.2.3   Statement of the problem

From the exposition above, it is evident that secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour stems from different factors. It is necessary to undertake an investigation in order to gain more information and clarity on the aspects related to such aggressiveness. For the purpose of this study therefore, the following question and its sub-questions are investigated:

What factors inside and outside of school contribute to aggressive behaviour in secondary school learners?

> ➢ What is the view of the theorists about aggressive behaviour?

> ➢ What is the nature of the problems related to aggression?

> ➢ Is there any relationship between these identified factors and aggressive behaviour?

> ➢ What support systems are available in the school and outside the school to help reduce aggression among learners in secondary schools?

1.3   THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims at:

> ➢ Revealing the factors that lead to aggression among learners in secondary schools.

> ➢ Providing guidelines for educators, school governing bodies, community and parents to develop the skills to deal with the situation.

> ➢ Recommending and developing a programme that can reduce aggressive behaviour among learners in secondary schools.

1.4   DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF INVESTIGATION

The study focuses on aggression in secondary schools. Secondary schools characterized by aggression are found throughout South Africa, and to subject all of them to this investigation was not possible. For this reason, the secondary schools in Thabo Mofutsanyane District (Bethlehem) were selected for this investigation.

Although the investigation was undertaken in Thabo Mofutsanyane District, it should be of some significance to other secondary schools throughout South Africa, who are experiencing similar problems.

1.5   DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.5.1   Learner

Mothata (2000:94) defines a learner as any person, ranging from early childhood development to the adult education phases, who is involved in any kind of formal or non-formal education and training activity, any person who receives or, is obliged to receive education. The term 'learner' refers to persons studying in ordinary, public school and replaces the term 'pupil' and 'student'. A student is a person who is undertaking study at further or higher education level. There is a growing tendency to substitute student for pupil (of compulsory school-age) so the old distinctions are being blurred (Blake and Hanley 1995:162).

According to the stages of development the secondary school learner is in the adolescent stage. Barnhart and Barnhart (1976:29) define adolescent as a person growing up from childhood to manhood or womanhood. Freud (Rice 1996:58) perceives adolescence as a period of internal conflict, psychic disequilibria and erotic behaviour. During this stage the emotional development of adolescents are perturbed pertaining to the relationship with their parents, peers, teachers, and the whole society. Emotions of aggression and inhibitory (fear, anxiety, and worry) or joyous emotions are experienced by adolescents. Growing older helps the adolescents to control their aggressive behaviour unlike during early adolescence where outbursts of anger and physical violence are common (Mwamwenda 1995:75).

The adolescents' emotions are heightened by unfulfilled expectations of obtaining freedom to make choices, to exert their own independence, to argue with adults and to assume responsibilities (Rice 1996:336). During this period adolescents are afraid of being talked about, teased about relationships with the opposite sex, certain persons at school, unfairness and parental interference in their affairs (Rice 1996:76). Eric Erikson cited in Rice (1996:196) finds that during this stage, adolescents want to achieve their central development task. Their task is the formation of a coherent self-identity, which is achieved by choosing values, beliefs and goals in life. Mwamwenda (1995:73) makes it clear that during this stage the adolescents are preoccupied with search for identity because *they want to know who they are, what are they capable of achieving, what values they want to adopt as theirs and whom they want to spend their lives with, the kind of family they want to have and identity redefinition and refinement if things do not go according to their expectations.*

For this study learner refers to school going adolescent learners in the adolescent phase and around 15-19 years old.

1.5.1.1 Development of the secondary school learner (adolescent)

❖ **Physical development**

The onset of adolescence is heralded by significant changes in physical development. There is a dramatic change in size and shape as children enter the adolescence growth spurt. The tremendous biological upheavals that the adolescents experience play a major role in shaping their self-concept. This, in turn, may affect the ways they will relate to other people in life (Shaffer 1993:176). Rice (1992:182) emphasizes that there is relationship between physical attractiveness and the adolescents' positive self-evaluation, popularity and peer acceptance. Physical attractiveness is an important ingredient in interpersonal attraction because it is perceived as influencing personality development, social relationships and social behaviour. On the other side, it is possible that physical unattractiveness can indirectly lead to social isolation because unattractive persons receive less social reinforcement than their attractive peers. This social isolation may lead them into creating a wall of defence which is characterized by aggression.

❖ **Cognitive development**

Bruno (1985:42) defines cognitive development as the growth of the intellect over time, the maturing of the higher thought processes from infancy to childhood. Corsin and Averbach (1996:46) define cognition as the psychological process of obtaining knowledge. It is the process involved in knowing, or the act of knowing, which in its completeness includes perception and judgment. It includes all processes of consciousness by which knowledge is build up, including perceiving, recognizing, conceiving and reasoning (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica* 1996:434). It incorporates an individual's self-concept, personal belief system, worldview, typical coping responses and ideals. It refers to the individual's mode and accuracy of perception, style of thinking, goal-directed behaviour and focus of attention (Hjelle & Ziegler 1981:456).

People's cognitive abilities increase rapidly during the adolescent years, with the result that they can perform tasks more easily, quickly and efficiently. Without the cognitive development, the child is unable to carry out the degree of abstract thinking required for

the development of generalized standards, as opposed to highly specific, concrete prohibitions (Gouws & Kruger 1994:72,180).

❖ **Affective development**

Lansdown (1984:165) defines affection as a warm regard, friendliness, sympathy or helpfulness. Affective is defined as non-cognitive characteristics that include emotions, moods, attitudes, motivation and anxiety. It is a process of establishing, maintaining or disrupting the relations between the person and the internal or external environment, which strongly suggests that emotional development can affect adolescents' social relationships with their peers. Emotionally, adolescents tend to be less stable because a great deal is happening in the metamorphosis between childhood and adulthood (Hamachek 1985:109). Barbarin (1993:383) maintains that emotional development leads to psychosocial outcomes, such as social competence and psychological health. It may also be linked to anxiety, guilt, aggression, impulsiveness, delinquency, substance abuse and hopelessness when individuals veer off the expected developmental course.

Adolescents suffering from generalized anxiety disorder tend to make an enormous catastrophe out of the smallest mishap and believe the perceived catastrophe exists. Depression is the most common experience among adolescents where adolescents are characterized by feelings of sadness, despair, melancholia, reduction of mental activity and physical drive. Depressed adolescents may complain of feelings of emptiness, isolation and alienation (Rice 1992: 277). These adolescents therefore may be deprived of social interactions that reinforce age-appropriate social skills that are necessary for continued development of the understanding and management of interpersonal situations (Kovacs & Goldston 1991: 389).

❖ **Moral development**

Lansdown (1984:184) defines moral behaviour as conformity with the code of the social group. It is accomplished by a feeling of personal responsibility and involves putting the interests of others before oneself. According to him, there are four components to moral development:

- ➢ Conformity to social standards

    Learning the laws, customs and rules of the group.

- ➢ The role of conscience

    It acts as a mechanism for ensuring internal control.

- ➢ The role of emotions

    Children who feel guilty acknowledge that their behaviour has fallen short of the standards they have set themselves.

- ➢ The role of social interactions

- ➢ Contact with others.

When children are born they do not possess any moral values. They are like a clean slate that needs some printing on. They are not expected to have a conscience or to behave in a prosocial way. Gradually the voluntary components develop when more or less adult standards are at least expected (Lansdown 1984:185). Important moral changes take place during adolescence. Adolescents are expected to replace the specific moral concepts of childhood with general moral principles and to formulate these into a moral code which will act as a guide to their behaviour (Hurlock 1973:243).

But if moral development of the adolescents were hampered in childhood by non-conducive circumstances in and outside the home, the whole development of the child will be affected. This may also lead to adolescents developing antisocial behaviour which might be characterized by aggressiveness.

- ❖ **Social development**

Lansdown (1984: 162) defines social development as the acquisition of the ability to behave in accordance with social expectations. It is phrased as 'learning the rules of the games'. The process by which one learns the rules is called socialization. It includes three components:

> ➢   Learning how to behave

      Understand what the rules are and then learning to obey them.

> ➢   Playing approved social roles

      Every group has defined roles that people are expected to play.

> ➢   Developing social attitudes

      Children realize the value of group membership and feel a need to join.

The formal group created by children themselves becomes increasingly important. It offers a relief from adult supervision and meets the needs not adequately catered for in an adult-oriented society. Gang membership fosters social discrimination since it encourages notions of the in-group and the out- group. In-group is an exclusive group of people with a shared interest or identity whereas those who do not conform are referred as the out-group and become outcasts (Lansdown 1984:166).

1.5.2   Aggression

Felson and Tedeschi (1993:58) define aggression as an act that injures or irritates another person. It is any form of behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment (Baron & Richardson 1994:7). But Berkowitz (1993:3) sees it as any form of behaviour that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically. Brain (1986:12-14) explains aggression from four different views:

> ➢   The psychoanalitic view of human aggression
>   One of Freud's views of aggression was that it stemmed from an innate, self-directed death wish that could be relieved by redirecting it towards others.

> ➢   Aggression viewed as an instinctive drive
>   Aggression is derived from an innate fighting instinct, which is common to all humans.

➢   The frustration aggression hypothesis

It stems primary from an externally elicited 'drive' to harm others; frustration elicits a persistent 'drive' toward aggression.

➢   Aggression as a learned social response

Bandura (1973) feels that instrumental conditioning and social modelling are strongly involved in the acquisition of responses of aggression.

Berkowitz (1993:8-14) identified the goals of aggression as follows:

➢   Coercion

Attackers may hurt their victims primarily as an attempt to influence the other person's behaviour.

➢   Power dominance

Aggressive behaviour is often aimed at preserving or enhancing the attacker's power and dominance.

➢   Impression management

Many of the offenders were 'self-image promoters' who work hard at 'manufacturing the impression' of themselves as 'formidable and fearless' whose fights designed to impress the victim and the audience.

➢   Evidence of the desire to hurt

Having been provoked earlier by the recipient of the injury, they want to hurt another individual. This means they hurt another because something provokes their previous experience of hurt.

Moeller (2001:25) delineated two major types of aggression, physical aggression and verbal aggression. Physical aggression includes activities in which actual physical harm is intentionally done to a person, animal or object. Examples include hitting, kicking, stabbing, shooting, pushing and shoving, throwing objects, breaking windows, defacing property, and setting fires. Verbal aggression involves the use of words to harm another.

Examples include behaviours such as making threats or writing threatening notes or letters, calling names, spreading gossip, and teasing. The third type of aggression is being examined, it is called relational aggression. Relational aggression is defined as behaviours that harm others through damage to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion.

Aggression can also be *hostile, instrumental, or reactive.* Hostile aggression has *the primary goal of doing harm to the victim or of making the victim suffer,* whereas instrumental aggression involves *the use of force in order to obtain some non-aggressive goal.* Reactive aggression refers to *an angry aggressive act in response to some precipitating environmental event or behaviour.* Instrumental aggression is sometimes referred to as *unprovoked aggression,* whereas reactive aggression is also called *provoked aggression* (Moeller 2001:25).

1.5.3   Aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour is a behaviour directed towards causing harm to others (Fraczek & Zumkley 1992:4). According to Wolman (1989:14), aggressive behaviour is the acts of behavioural responses of an organism that display the quantity of aggression while aggressiveness is the tendency to display hostility by performing act of aggression. It is a behavioural trait characterised by hostile attack, usually upon someone or something else (Bruno 1992:12).

Moeller (2001:294) gave a clear picture of the early warning signs of potential future aggressive behaviour. These warning signs involve some type of aggression that warrants attention:

➢   Social withdrawal.

➢   Extensive feelings of isolation and being alone.

➢   Excessive feelings of rejection.

➢ Being a victim of violence.

➢ Feelings of being picked on and persecuted.

➢ Low school interest and poor academic performance.

➢ Expression of violence in writings and drawings.

➢ Uncontrolled anger.

➢ Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviour.

➢ History of discipline problems.

➢ Past history of violent and aggressive behaviour.

➢ Intolerance of differences and prejudicial attitudes.

➢ Drug and alcohol use.

➢ Affiliation with gangs.

In contrast to early warning signs, Moller (2001:294) also discovered imminent warning signs where the learner or adolescent is very close to behaving in a way that is potentially dangerous to self and others. These signs include:

➢ Serious physical fighting with peer or family members.

➢ Severe destruction of property.

➢ Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons.

➢ Detailed threats of lethal violence.

➢ Unauthorized possession of and/ or use of firearms and other weapons.

➢ Self-injurious behaviour or threats of suicide.

Baron and Richardson (1994:88) revealed that children acquire aggressive modes of dealing with other people because of influences from three primary sources:

➢ The family is a source of reinforcement for and models aggressive behaviour. The extent to which a child is exposed to aggression in the home relates to the likelihood that he/she will behave aggressively.

➢ Children also learn about aggression from interacting with peers; playtime often is the time when children learn about rewards for aggressive behaviour.

➢ Children acquire aggressive responses by watching at live models, for example, parents, peers and teachers, but also from observing symbolic models in the mass media.

Moeller (2001:36) revealed why aggressive behaviour is maintained once it is learned. He, following the lead of cognitive theory and the work of Bandura, described four reasons why aggression might persist:

➢ Aggressive children expect that their aggressive behaviour will pay off for them. They believe that aggression is easy for them and that it will yield tangible payoffs and terminate others' noxious behaviour.

➢ Aggressive children attach much value to their ability to dominate and control others, and they find that their aggressive behaviour enhances this goal.

➢ Aggressive children's antisocial behaviour is often socially sanctioned by their peers. Aggressive children often socialize with other aggressive children and thus reinforce each other's aggressiveness.

> ➢ Aggression may be intrinsically reinforcing for these children.

Because their value system might consider aggression to be a positive value, aggressive youngsters might exhibit a sense of pride in their ability to hurt others.

1.5.4 Family

Le Roux (1994:49) and Havemann and Lehtinen (1990:27) distinguish two different kinds of families, a nuclear family and non-nuclear family. A nuclear family comprises of a wife, husband, and their children living together in their own residence. The husband and wife maintain their own home and regard themselves as a more or less independent and self-sufficient unit (Havemann & Lehtinen, 1990:27). Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1988:518) divided the nuclear family into three basic types: the incipient nuclear family consists of married couple; the simple nuclear family consists of a married couple with their children living with them; and the attenuated nuclear family consists of the solo or single parent whose children live with one parent. A single parent is a parent who lives alone with his/her children due to spousal death, being unwedded, divorce, separation and desertion (Elliot 1986:518).

The non-nuclear family can be associated with many synonyms such as the dysfunctional family, disrupted family, to mention a few. People often use the term 'dysfunctional or disrupted family' to characterize a family who lives apart as a result of marital disruption such as divorce, separation, unwedded and the death of a spouse (McLanahan & Sanderfur 1994:46).

According to Le Roux (1994:49) a non-nuclear family consists of a husband or a wife and one or more children. In other words this refers to a single-parent family, or a group of people merely living together outside the bonds of matrimony. McWhirter et al (1998:49) define the non-nuclear family as a disintegration of the nuclear family as a unit through divorce, separation, death, spousal violence, substance abuse, work or parental psychopathology.

1.6   THE RESEARCH METHOD

The methods of this research are based on a literature study, where the starting point is the problem in the real world and it is designed to provide information. The literature study is followed by empirical research based on a two-part design that is quantitative and qualitative.

1.6.1   Literature study

A study of relevant literature on factors that lead to aggression is discussed in broad perspective.

1.6.2   Empirical research

Two approaches known as the quantitative and the qualitative approach are used in this study. The quantitative part is in the form of questionnaires whereas the qualitative component is in the form of interviews.

1.6.2.1   Questionnaire

A questionnaire is used to facilitate research in this study. It is used for collecting data on some subject in a standardized form (e.g. a questionnaire) from a representative sample of the population. A self-developed questionnaire is used for the gathering of data. It will be directed to learners who have been exposed to aggression.

1.6.2.2   Interviews

Self-developed questions are used to facilitate research in the form of interviews. The literature review enabled the researcher to compile appropriate questions. Senior teachers or principals and parents (School Governing Body members) were interviewed individually.

1.7   PLAN OF STUDY

Chapter 1 concentrates on the problem statement, objectives of the study, explanation of the main concepts, demarcation of the field of investigation and the methods of study.

Chapter 2 provides an exposition on theoretical perspective and views of the theorists on how aggressive behaviour is acquired.

In chapter 3 the literature survey covering family factors that are related to aggression are discussed.

Chapter 4 provides a literature review on the community as well as school factors that are responsible for shaping learners' aggressive behaviour.

The research design and the presentation of data are discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 6 provides the results and findings of the empirical investigation as well as a summary of the data.

In chapter 7 possible guidelines for prevention programmes that might help in reduction of aggressive behaviour will be highlighted.

The conclusions from the literature study and the empirical investigation, as well as recommendations are outlined.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ACQUISITION OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The foundation that is going to be laid in this chapter shows that aggression is not a phenomenon at all. It was laid by different theorists many years ago, although it is believed it was in a more humble way and could not capture the seriousness of the problem. As old as this phenomenon may be people and current researchers are still learning new things. Researchers are now building on the foundation of these theories. Therefore, this chapter will concentrate on these theories with the aim of revealing the past in order to understand and predict the future.

But it should be borne in mind that this chapter is only laying the foundation and need not be discussed in length. These theories are only mentioned and briefly discussed to form a basic point of departure for the rest of the study. On the other hand, these theories might help us understand the basic question posed in the introduction of Chapter 1, "What is or could be happening to our youth or how did it get to this point? It is predicted that there is a root in all aggression that a person demonstrates and these theories might help us find and understand that root.

 Each scientific discipline has its own level of analysis and develops its own set of theories and methods to explain phenomena. Biologists focus on evolutionary principles, genetic codes, biochemical factors, or central nervous system activity as explanations of aggression. Psychologists tend to focus on internal tensions and frustrations, learned associations, emotions, and perceptions in developing their theories. Sociologists are more apt to focus on social, demographic, and cultural factors to explain aggressive behaviour (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:3).

This chapter also shows us the multidimensional features of aggression as discussed by different theories such as:

➢ Genetic and biological theories of aggression.
➢ Instinctual behaviour theory.
➢ Frustration-aggression theory.
➢ Aggressive-cue theories.
➢ Two-factor theory of emotions.
➢ Theory of Excitation Transfer.
➢ Social learning theory.
➢ Bahaviouristic theory.

The above mentioned theories will be briefly discussed below with the aim of finding their relevance to aggressive behaviour displayed by secondary school learners.

2.2   GENETIC AND BIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF AGGRESSION

A number of theories have postulated that aggression is due to either genetic or biological factors. Genetic theories argue that aggressiveness is transmitted by means of genetic inheritance from one generation to another. Freud as interpreted by Moeller (2001:26) held that aggression is rooted in biology. He believed that *humans are born with a drive called the thanatos that seeks the cessation of life. Although the thanatos might be directed toward self-injury, it can also be discharged toward others.* Another Freudian process involved in aggression is the defence mechanism of **displacement.** When applied to frustration, this process is sometimes referred to as 'kick the cat' phenomenon. This means when a child is frustrated, he cannot retaliate against the person causing the frustration but might choose to kick the cat. The cat might not be the true object but a symbolic substitute for the true object of the child's aggression. Freud (1963:314) also introduced the idea of **catharsis** (charge of energy), emphasizing that if the strength of the aggressive drive begins to build up, something must be done to release the energy before it becomes so intense. According to the cathartic hypothesis, the pressure associated with the aggressive drive is reduced by any aggressive act, including displacement aggressive responses as well as fantasy modes of aggression (Moeller 2001:26).

This might be happening in our schools with our adolescents who are aggressive. For the fact that some are bearing the scars of the legacy of community violence and family squabbles, it is surprising that they might be frustrated and become involved in displacement 'kick the cat' phenomenon. They are charged with aggressive drive which emanates from the circumstances around them. Given the history of South Africa where most youth were at the frontline of the struggle for liberation and suffered detentions, beatings and torture, it is not amazing that violence has become part of their lives (Ramphele 1997:1189).

This genetic inheritance or innate drive of aggression which is vented out because of obstruction will further be discussed by Instinctual behaviour theory.

2.3   INSTINCTUAL BEHAVIOUR THEORY

This theory was proposed by Lorenz (1966; 1974). He proposed an evolutionary perspective on aggression with a view of human nature that is similar to that of Freud (Lorenz 1966:41; Baron & Richardson, 1994:15). One of Freud's views of aggression was that it stemmed from an innate, self-directed death wish that could be relieved by redirecting it towards others (Brain 1986:1). Like Freud, Lorenz (1966:41) believes that aggression is inevitable, stemming largely from innate forces.

A particularly influential ethological theory of instincts was offered by Lorenz (1966). His view was that many behaviour patterns are inherited and that some force or drive is necessary to activate them. He makes it clear that aggressive behaviour is not just a reaction to outside stimuli but results from an inner aggressive drive or inner excitation that must find expression regardless of the presence or absence of releasers (Lorenz 1966:21, 72).

In Lorenz's ethological theory and in Freud's psychoanalytic theory a major factor postulated as causing aggressive behaviour is aggressive energy, which is assumed to be part of the organism's genetic makeup. Freud even points out in his early theory of aggression that aggressive behaviour might result from the damming up or obstruction of the expression of sexual energy (De Corte & Weinert 1996: 203).

According to Brain (1986:13) aggression is derived from an innate fighting instinct which is common to all humans (everybody). To sum up all these, Felson and Tedeschi (1993:7) confirmed that among the biological factors that have been posited to cause aggressive behaviour are instincts, genes, pain-elicited reflexive fighting, hormones, brain structures, and inborn aggressive drive.

Aggression is seen as an instinctive drive (Brain 1986:13). According to Felson and Tedeschi (1993:8-10), ethologists identified five characteristics of instincts:

> ➢ An instinct is a complex behaviour, (t consists of a sequential pattern of responses that unfolds over time and achieves some instrumental goal for the organism.

> ➢ Instincts are automatically elicited by environmental stimuli.

> ➢ Instincts are innate, that is, the behaviour patterns that are identified as instincts are not learned.

> ➢ Instincts are behaviour patterns performed by all members of some category within a species.

> ➢ Finally, the strength of the instinctual behaviour is affected by biochemical factors.

The point mentioned in this theory (Instinctual behaviour theory), that aggression is an innate, self-directed wish that could be relieved by redirecting it towards others may be responsible for adolescents' involvement in aggressive episodes. Although aggression may be inherited, innate and instinctual it can be automatically elicited by environmental stimuli and finally may need to be vented out either verbally or through other forms of behaviour.

The above two theories emphasized the role played by frustration in re-directing an individual towards aggression. For this reason the Frustration Aggression Theory will be briefly clarified below.

2.4   FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION THEORY

This is Clark Hull's most rigorous theory. Psychologists, especially Clark Hull, believed that frustration produces aggressive energy, which activates aggressive behaviour (Hull 1984:51). Felson and Tedeschi (1993:40), under the influence of Hull's work, describe factors associated with the strength of the instigation to aggression:

➢   The amount of frustration is directly affected by the strength of the response that is frustrated.

➢   The degree of interference with a response is directly related to instigation to aggression.

➢   The number of frustrated responses experienced by the individual.

If a person is frustrated, aggressive energy is created and that energy activates dominant aggressive responses. These aggressive responses are considered self-reinforcing because they reduce the negative 'drive state' produced by frustration. If a person is frustrated, this self-reinforcement increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviour (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:41).

The amount of frustration experienced by an individual instigates aggression. This concludes that frustration is one of the aversive stimuli that may instigate aggression if suitable aggressive cues are present. Hence, a brief discussion of Aggressive-Cue Theory follows.

2.5   AGGRESSIVE-CUE THEORY

This theory was instigated by Berkowitz (1962). He argues that frustration is one of a number of different aversive stimuli that may instigate aggressive reactions. Although these aversive stimuli do not directly produce aggressive behaviour, they create readiness for aggressive action. This behaviour does not happen in a vacuum but follows only if suitable aggressive cues are present. It can be heightened by environmental stimuli associated with present or previous anger instigators. Berkowitz (1962:258-259) cited

classical conditioning as an example on how stimuli become aggressive cues: *A stimulus may acquire aggressive meaning by being associated with positively reinforced aggression or by association with previous unpleasantness or pain.*

In order to intensify the seriousness of the stimulus in reinforcing aggression Berkowitz revised his original theory and put more focus on emotional and cognitive processes. As a result the 'Cognitive neo association model and Reactive aggression theory' was developed and will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.5.1 Cognitive neo association model

Berkowitz (1993) revised his original theory. He wanted to put more focus on the emotional and cognitive processes that underlie the frustration-aggression link. In the cognitive neo association model, he emphasized that frustration or other aversive stimuli instigate aggressive reactions by creating a negative affect (Berkowitz 1993:86).

The response is only determined by an individual's interpretation of the negative affect. For instance, a goal blockade would not instigate aggression if an individual does not experience it as an unpleasant event. Berkowitz (1993:191) argued: *Thwartings produce an instigation to aggression only to the degree that they generate negative affect.*

It is revealed that people react aggressively only if they relate the incident with a previous negative experience. If the incident is not perceived as negative despite how bad it is, the chances of aggressive reaction are low to none.

2.5.2 Reactive aggression theory

Berkowitz also introduced this theory to emphasize his point that aversive stimuli arouse negative affect, which in turn causes an instigation to aggression in the form of an 'urge to hurt'. If an individual associates cognitions as having a negative affect, that may lead directly to instigation to aggression. The instigation to aggression causes aggressive behaviour (Berkowitz 1993:45).

Even Felson and Tedeschi (1993:65) agree with this theory when saying negative affect or negative arousal or appetitive aggression drive state, as it is called, is produced by the aversive stimulus conditions. This in turn increases the readiness of the individual to engage in aggressive behaviour. Berkowitz (1993:56-58) stresses, *High provocation produces anger, which is aversive, and high aversiveness interferes with the experience of empathy.* This means if the empathy is low and an individual has an aversive experience, pain cues reinforce aggressive behaviour and should be associated with increased aggression.

Because adolescents are often threatened by high incidents of violence in their families, schools and society, they also react violently. Much of the adolescents' aggression is due to their experience of their surroundings and relates to their socialisation as well as environmental factors (Olivier 2003:104). Not only aggressive cues may be blamed for perpetuating aggression but also rewards and punishment. In order to highlight these, Buss's Theory of Aggression will be discussed below.

2.6   BUSS'S THEORY OF AGGRESSION

This theory was proposed by Arnold H. Buss in 1961. He applied the instrumental learning theories of Thorndike and Skinner to aggressive behaviour. According to Buss, aggressive behaviour is learned, like other instrumental behaviour, through rewards and punishments. Buss (1986:52) considered behaviour to be aggressive whenever *one individual delivers noxious stimuli to another.* He considered instrumental aggression to be more important and it was described as including physical and verbal, active and passive, and direct and indirect aggression.

Felson and Tedeschi (1993:98) mentioned, explained and expanded on the forms of instrumental aggression revealed above in the following manner:

> ➢   Physical aggression
>
>   It consists of inflicting pain on another organism.

> Verbal aggression

It is a vocal response that delivers noxious stimuli in the form of rejection and threat.

> Direct aggression

It occurs in the presence of and is aimed at the victim,

> Indirect aggression

It consists of harming the victim from a distance, for example, spreading vicious gossip or slashing the tires of a victim's automobile.

> Active aggression

It requires an instrumental response that delivers the noxious stimulation to the victim.

> Passive aggression

It involves an action that blocks the target person from obtaining a desired goal.

Although Buss accepted that arbitrary frustration may sometimes lead to aggression, he also recognised that the individual may learn almost any other response to frustration. He pointed some factors contributing to aggressive behaviour as antecedent experiences specifically related to frustration by others, and the personality of the individual. He was convinced that the past experiences of the individual are the primary cause of the behaviour exposed at that time (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:101-103).

People of South Africa are engulfed by aggressive episodes and involved in different forms of aggression because some feel that they were unfairly treated during the apartheid regime. South African children and adolescents have been caught up in the circle both as victims and perpetuators of violence (Ramphele 1997:1190). The Two-Factor Theory of Emotions sheds more light on emotional disturbance and will be discussed in brief.

2.7   TWO-FACTOR THEORY OF EMOTIONS

This theory was proposed by Schachter and Singer in 1962. According to them people do not feel angry because their muscles tense, their jaws clench, their pulse rates increase but because they are generally aroused, and people have certain cognitions about the nature of their arousal (Berkowitz 1993:89). Kemper (1978:167) summarises their theory by emphasizing that major determinant of the qualitatively different emotions is the cognitions of the precipitating events.

This theory emphasizes that people experience anger because they think of themselves as being angry (Berkowitz 1993:97). It all boils back to attributions that generally influence emotional experiences (Berkowitz 1993:91). Firstly, a person must cognize, in the sense of interpretation, the external situation in a particular way before a given emotion is elicited (Kemper 1978:167). Schachter and Singer in Berkowitz (1993:90) further explained, *The aroused persons form a belief about the nature of their sensations, and this cognition will mold the general, undifferentiated arousal state into the specific emotional experience.*

If emotions are charged, some people resort to displaced aggression. The child who is excessively punished for transactions and is also given little affection is more likely to displace the aggression and turn it towards others. It is believed that high parental punishment leads to aggression against school mates (Kemper 1978:260). The two main types of aggression instigated by emotions were partitioned by Kemper (1978:261) as instrumental and expressive or reactive aggression. In instrumental, the purpose of aggression is to gain the consummatory gratification, and expressive or reactive aggression results from the prior emotions of anger. This means expressive aggression is initiated by anger while instrumental aggression is initiated by interest in a consummatory goal.

In line with the above statement Kemper (1978:262) proposed eight types of aggression of which only five can be traced and labelled. They were categorized into those which are instrumental and those which are expressive and only the expressive will be briefly discussed. The expressive aggressions in which anger and possibly some other emotions, for example fear, are induced include:

> Inter-male

A struggle for dominance and power.

> ➢   Fear-induced

Function of power threat.

> ➢   Irritable

Minor status losses and deprivations.

> ➢   Territorial

Major status - deprivation threat.

> ➢   Maternal aggression

A response to status deprivation.

Two theories were developed in order to support the two-factor theory of emotions. These theories are 'Schachter's theory of emotions and James-Lange theory of emotions'. These theories will be discussed in the following section.

2.7.1   Schachter's theory of emotions

Schachter developed this theory in order to shift the emphasis away from physiological states. He wanted to focus on an individual's cognitive interpretations of stimulus situations (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:73). He argued that if situational cues heighten or reduce negative emotional states, then they may affect the probability and the intensity of aggressive behaviour. This means if a person insults another who is already in an aroused state, the insult would surely produce additional arousal which in turn intensifies aggressive behaviour (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:74). Schachter (1964) in Felson and Tedeschi (1993:75) further explained, *If a person attributes all of the arousal to the insult, he or she will experience more anger than would have been experienced if no residual arousal had been present when the insult occurred.*

Miller and Dollard (1967:249-250) came up with a stimulus - response theory to support Schachter. He believed that the shock gave rise to an intervening 'fear' response to previously neutral cues which could be learned. He regarded anger as another intervening stimulus - producing response.

Children, from a younger age, are often made to understand that retaliation is necessary to counteract a hurtful experience. Unhealthy home environments combined with parents' personal problems may contribute to children's emotional disturbance. Certain parental and family patterns and events might make children more susceptible to emotional and behavioural problems. For example, hostile and aggressive children are more often found in hostile and aggressive families (Zionts, Zionts & Simpson 2002:45).

It has been emphasized that the way people interpret events and relate them to past experiences lead them to aggression. Insult will not arouse anger or aggression if it is not related to hurtful experiences.

2.7.2   The James-Lange theory of emotions

This theory was suggested by James and Lange to help people to get better understanding of the things involved in the formation of angry feelings. This theory challenges the widespread belief in the psychological benefits of expressing feelings (Berkowitz 1993:98).

According to James (Berkowitz 1993:98) there are four steps in the production of an emotional experience:

➢   The event is perceived.

➢   Impulses travel from the central nervous system to muscles, skin, and viscera.

➢   Sensations arising from changes in these parts of the body are transmitted back to the brain.

➢   *These return impulses are then cortically perceived, and when combined with the original stimulus perception, produce the 'object-emotionally-felt* (Berkowitz 1993:98).

Emotional thoughts activate feelings, other ideas, and even tendencies to act. People think as well as act, and their thoughts can influence what they do and how they feel after they are emotionally aroused. It is believed that hostility is obviously kept alive by the ill effects of brooding. This means thoughts can stimulate angry feelings and aggressive inclinations (Berkowitz 1993:104-105).

Mention has been made that emotional thoughts activate feelings and tendencies to act. For example, if a child has been physically abused, he/she can easily learn that aggression is a solution to problems and also in cases of neglect children may build a world model where there is no care and one has to fight to survive. This also applies even if the child is not directly abused but witness abuse of a mother by a father or vice versa. In the abused child, aggression will be piled up and cannot be expressed to the abuser because he/she may be too powerful. But may only come out when the child gets into a powerful position with regard to a powerless person (Delfos 2004:123). This arousal of aggressive behaviour from one source to another will be detailed in the Theory of Excitation Transfer that follows.

2.8   THEORY OF EXCITATION TRANSFER

Excitation transfer is a process proposed by Zillmannn (1979) in the framework of a more general theory of aggression. Zillmann (1979:335-337) proposed three factors that are important in explaining aggressive behaviour:

- ➢ The evocation of excitation or arousal associated with emotional states.
- ➢ The dispositions or learned behaviour patterns of the individual.
- ➢ The monitoring function of higher cognitive processes that appraise the appropriateness of both emotional states and courses of behaviour.

Zillmann (1979:40-41) considered aggression to be motivated by arousal, a construct that can be observed and measured. He felt that arousal is different from drive which is a hypothetical construct that cannot be measured. He referred to arousal as excitation of the sympathetic nervous system as evidenced by bodily reactions such as increased heart rate, perspiration, and elevated blood pressure. The reactions mentioned above can be

part of the 'fight or flight' response that may have evolved because of their value to survival.

Zillmann as cited by Felson and Tedeschi (1993:76) reveals that cognitive regulation of aggressive behaviour is highly impaired under high levels of arousal. He stated: *A person who is attacked and experiences a high level of arousal will not retaliate unless predisposed to do so by past learning. Provocation elicits plans for retaliation that correspond to the level of attack. The stronger the provocation, the greater the excitation, or arousal, and the more intense the aggressive behaviour.*

Zillmannn (1979:335-337) believed that arousal from one source can combine with arousal from another source and thereby increase or decrease the strength of the emotional response. Felson and Tedeschi (1993:76) also concur with this statement saying, *Excitation transfer occurs when the individual experiences two successive sources of arousal but attributes the combined arousals to only one of the sources. It only occurs when an individual is provoked and does not affect the intensity of aggressive behaviour of unprovoked persons.* The degree of anger experienced and the intensity of subsequent aggressive behaviour may not be mitigated when the provoked individual is under high levels of excitation and his or her cognitive control is weakened.

According to Zillmannn cited in Berkowitz (1993:94, 96), an attribution-mediated transfer of the excitation produced by an emotional neutral event can strengthen reactions to another. This might be influenced by continued emotional occurrence. Aggressive ideas may develop in the intense and persist over time. The anger might become firmly implanted in the person and when the hostility continues, the provoked persons may attack their tormentor later in cold blood. *Zillmannn maintains that we experience anger only after we think of ourselves as being angry* (Berkowitz 1993:97).

Given the above contexts, it is not surprising that unstable and inconsistent parenting may implant anger to the adolescent which might lead to the retaliation if provocation occurs. For example, children whose parents engage in frequent conflict may develop maladaptive ways of coping with emotional problems. Also, family disruptions, particularly when severe and prolonged, are believed to interfere with essential parenting practices, which in turn leads to negative child outcomes such as aggressive behaviour (Cavell 2000:13). It is

highlighted above that parents, members of the community and peer groups act as models to adolescents. This point of modelling and observation is better clarified below in Social Learning Theory.

2.9   SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

This theory was developed by Albert Bandura (1973:1983). He developed a cognitively oriented social learning theory of aggression that does not depend on internal drives. He believed that anticipated positive consequences are a major cause of aggression. It is these anticipated consequences that produce aggressive behaviour (Bandura 1973:53-54). Baron and Richardson (1994:33) also give a clear explanation when saying an individual may acquire a wide variety of aggressive responses when rewarded for such behaviour. Providing reinforcement for acts of aggression increases the probability. These rewards and punishments, mentioned above, that regulate aggressive behaviour are labelled by (Baron and Richardson 1994:35) as of three sorts:

- ➤ One kind comes from sources external to the individual and includes tangible rewards and punishments, social praise or rejection, and or the reduction of and increase in aversive treatment from others.

- ➤ Aggression may be regulated by vicarious experiences, for example, observing the rewarding or punishing consequences of aggression for others.

- ➤ Finally, rewards and punishments may be self-administered.

People sometimes learn aggressive behaviour through trial-and-error processes but the fact remains that most complex skills are learned vicariously. People learn by observing others, i.e. models, who use different skills to obtain goals in a variety of situations (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:103). According to Bandura (1983) cited in Felson and Tedeschi (1993:106) there are four processes by which modelling can instigate aggressive behaviour:

- ➤ A direct function of modelling serves to inform the observer about the casual means-ends relations in the situation.

➢   An inhibitory function of a model teaches observers that they avoid punitive outcomes associated with aggressive conduct.

➢   Observation of others who engage in aggressive behaviour causes emotional arousal in the observers, which may increase the likelihood of imitative aggression or may heighten the intensity of aggressive responses.

➢   Observation of a model may have stimulus-enhancing effects by directing the observer's attention to the kinds of implements or tools being used.

According to Baron and Richardson (1994:32), social learning theory treats aggression as a social behaviour, involving activities that *entail intricate skills that require extensive learning.* Bandura (1983) puts this example to support the above statement, *In order to engage in aggressive action, individuals must learn how to use a weapon, they must learn the movements that make physical contact painful for the victim, or they must understand what words or actions will be considered hurtful to their targets.* No human is born with such knowledge, but have to learn how to behave aggressively through interaction with others.

The continued exposure to acts of violence is likely to induce a process of learning and imitation, culminating in the acceptance of violent conduct as a dominant and normal mode of conflict resolution (Govender & Killian 2001:1). Bandura (1977) in Felson and Tedeschi (1993:103) revealed that learning by observation involves four interrelated processes:

➢   The individual must notice or pay attention to the cues, behaviour, and outcomes of the modelled event.

➢   These cognitive processes are transformed into imitative response patterns that are new for the individual.

➢   Finally, given the appropriate inducements or incentives, the learned behaviour pattern will be performed.

Although Bandura (1973:90-91) still believes that observational learning is the most influential, he cannot turn away from the notion that human beings also acquire some forms of aggression through direct experience. People do not only acquire aggressive responses by observing the behaviour of the people but there are a number of different contributing factors (such as biological, internal drives, etc). These factors operate to ensure that these responses are regulated, maintained, strengthened, or controlled.

Despite the social learning theory's emphasis of observational learning and direct experience in the acquisition of aggressive responses, the contribution of biological factors was also acknowledged by this theory. It was also stressed that engaging in aggressive action depends on neurophysiological mechanisms. In the social learning view: *People are endowed with neurophysiological mechanisms that enable them to behave aggressively, but the activation of these mechanisms depends on appropriate stimulation and is subject to cognitive control. Therefore, the specific forms that aggressive behaviour takes the frequency with which it is expressed, the situations in which it is displayed, and the specific targets selected for attack are largely determined by social learning factors* (Baron & Richardson 1994:33).

This theory provides a logical theoretical link between exposure to community violence and the later development of aggressive behaviour. Exposure to community violence teaches aggressive behaviour and encourages the acceptance of aggression as a norm (Collings & Magojo 2003:125). The fact that South African children are exposed to high levels of violence, both at school and in the general community (Ramphele 2002:25) suggests that the desensitising effects of such exposure are likely to be of significance in the development of aggressive behaviour among South African youth.

2.10   BEHAVIOURAL THEORY

Like the social learning theory, behaviouristic theory emphasizes the learning of aggression within a social context. These theorists also argue that aggression can be learned, maintained, and unlearned through the processes of classical and operant conditioning. Aggression tends to be learned through classical conditioning and strengthened and maintained through operant conditioning. According to classical conditioning, if a stimulus for an aggressive response repeatedly occurs at the same time and in the same place as some initially neutral environmental stimulus, that aggressive response will eventually begin to occur in the presence of the initially neutral stimulus. In Pavlov's terms, the environmental stimulus becomes the conditioned stimulus for the conditioned response of aggression. In operant conditioning, aggressive responses are reinforced thereby strengthened and maintained. For instance, the aggressive response might produce some positive pay-off; in this case the aggression is strengthened through positive reinforcement. It is, therefore, confirmed that children can learn aggression through both positive and negative reinforcement (Moeller 2001:29).

Some adolescents' involvement in aggressive behaviour is rewarded by their peer group. Deviant adolescents interacting with deviant friends have been found to reinforce each other's talk of rule-breaking behaviour. Peer rejection has been labelled as a punishment one gets if he/she is not abiding to the rules. For the sake of peer acceptance, adolescents may be involved in aggressive episodes to prove their loyalty to the group. This is likely to happen in South Africa, specifically in schools, that is already labelled as the most violent country (Cavell 2000:17).

2.11   CONCLUSION
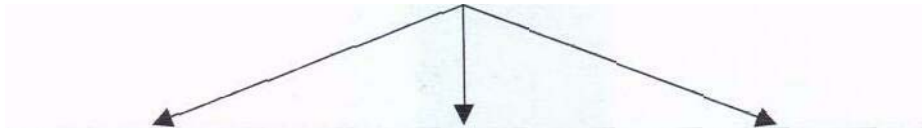
The instinct theories, which are the oldest, believed that aggressive behaviour is largely innate. Freud held that aggression stems from innate, self-directed death instinct that is turned outward against others. Drive theories proposed that aggression stems primarily from an externally elicited drive or motive to harm others. According to frustration - aggression theory, frustration elicits a persistent instigation (i.e. drive) toward aggression. Cognitive models of aggression suggest that the way people think about or interpret

threats or provocations will influence how they feel and how they behave. Similarly, the extent to which an individual experiences emotional arousal or negative affect will influence the cognitive influences involved in interpreting the extent of danger to the self.

According to social learning perspectives, aggression responses are acquired and maintained through direct experience and through observational learning. Exposure to many aggressive people may involve any individual in aggressive episodes, and the presence of aggressive models increases the likelihood of imitation. Aspects of personality – such as impulsiveness, hostility, and fearfulness - may act as moderators of aggressive behaviour.

Adolescents are still in process of cognitive development and therefore should learn positive coping skills with regard to aggressive behaviour and causes of aggressive responses. Possible learnt and imitated aggressive behaviour patterns observed and react accordingly form a framework for the questions in the empirical research.

Table 2.1: A summary of the theories explored in this chapter.

THEORIES

Genetic (Biological)	Cognitive	Social
Instincts	Understanding	Observation
Innate	Emotions (fear)	Learned
Aggressive energy	Interpretation	Imitation
Reaction	Expression	Reward (incentives)
Stimulus-response	Excitation	Conditioning

The above theories made us believe that aggressive behaviour revolves around family, school and society. It has been concluded that violence begets violence, so it is not surprising that South African adolescents have been caught up in the cycle both as victims and perpetrators of violence (Ramphele 2003:1190). Most adolescents face being potential victims/perpetrators of violence in their communities, schools and homes on a daily bases. It is for this reason that the subsequent chapters are dedicated to the role played by family, school and society in the development of adolescents' aggressive behaviour.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FAMILY AS AN EXTERNAL DETERMINANT OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In the light of the acquisition of aggressive behaviour as discussed in Chapter two it has been shown that some of the theories regard the modelling of aggression in the family as an important determinant for imitation or learned behaviour. It is therefore important to explore family life as an external determinant of aggressive behaviour and establish how this factor contributes to adolescent aggressive behaviour.

There is, in nearly all accounts of dysfunctional families, an overriding emphasis on the difficulties and problems its members' experience. The experience of living in a home that is unstable, for whatever reason, is unbearable and leaves its members with emotional scars. These emotional scars take time and are not easily healed. They pervade the present and threaten the future expectations of the victims. Unresolved problems or inhibited emotions do not automatically disappear but accumulate and often find destructive channels. These channels continue haunting, disturbing and shattering the hopes of the individual. The one involved becomes vulnerable and heightened emotions lead to aggressive behaviour (Gasa 2001:10).

Some homes may appear intact but have a pervasive oppositional style. These homes may be characterised as being dysfunctional and cause its members to be aggressive. The members adopt an aggressive style of behaviour as a form of seeking help or attention and in order to cope in that unconducive climate (Gasa 2001:10). This was confirmed by Heavens (2001:71) who states, *Conflict, high discord and poor and uncooperative communication between parents are more likely to result in poor adjustment by the adolescent.* Even in the previous chapter it is made clear that frustration produces aggressive energy which activates aggressive behaviour (see section 2.4). If the adolescents are frustrated because of witnessing conflict between their parents, they may

resort to aggressive behaviour. Witnessing violence between parents is also an important factor that causes aggressive behaviour. The social learning theory illustrates that people learn by observing models, for example, parents. Observation of others (parents) who engage in aggressive behaviour causes emotional arousal in the observers (adolescents), which may increase the likelihood of imitative aggression or may heighten the intensity of aggressive responses (see section 2.8).

This chapter will put more emphasis on the family factors that are responsible for shaping the behaviour of the adolescents. The pressure that divorce, separation and single parenthood exert on adolescents, the involvement or witnessing interfamilial adult violence, the exposure to severe physical discipline (abuse), the excessive use of drugs and the low socio-economic status of parents will be dealt with in length in this chapter.

3.2   AGGRESSION AND THE DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

The dysfunctional family can be traced to unconducive family relations and other adjustment issues, family stress, conflict and poor communication among its members. These aspects are caused by different problems that the family is exposed to, like divorce and separation, domestic violence, abusive parents, substance dependency and socio-economic status of the parents. In this regard, Heavens (2001:53) states, *The family is a powerful socializing agent and the quality of attachment and bonding processes between parent and infant in the first few months and years of life are important for the later emotional health of the individual. Family is regarded as an important support system available to the child and adolescent. Consequently, any disturbance of this support system through factors such as parental separation and negative parenting style, have implications for adolescent functioning.*

These problems will be singled out and discussed in broad terms so as to identify their connection to aggressive behaviour or how they incite those involved to become aggressive.

3.2.1   Divorce, separation and single parenthood

Divorce is defined as a termination of marriage officially by competent court of law or legal dissolution of marriage between husband and wife. Separation is defined as the arrangements by which husband and wife remain married but live apart. In most cases this occurs when the married couple has reached the point of the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, sometimes when they are waiting for the divorce papers to be served (*The Hutchinson Dictionary of Ideas* 1995:153).

According to Lawson, Peterson and Lawson (1983:169) divorce is a major source of stress for the whole family. But adolescents are affected more because of their adolescence experiences. Adolescents who are victims of divorce may suddenly display deviant or misbehaviour (Sandberg 1987:54), Lauer (1986:449) concurs when he states, *Broken homes and homes in which parents frequently quarrel have been linked to stress in children and stress often results in physical and emotional illness.* Divorce does not end there but also brings unpredictability, unreliability and insecurity into the adolescent's world. Bewilderment, anxiety, anger, grief, and shame are common responses (Elliot 1986:149; Rice 1996:354).

Children have different reactions towards divorce. Many react with shock, anger or despair and show grief, loss or emptiness and restlessness. These children, especially adolescents, are likely to have a lower self-esteem and self-image, have more interpersonal difficulties, are encompassed by guilt feelings and social embarrassment because of what happened to their family (Lauer 1986:454; Rice 1996:363). As Aiken (1994:103) clearly states, *Teenagers often have a great sense of guilt about what has happened to their parents, amounting at times to a feeling that in some way the divorce is an outcome of what they have done, or not done.*

Adolescents fare badly when they see their family splitting or falling apart and find that there is nothing they can do because things are beyond their control. They start to regress, withdraw and become aggressive or depressed (Conger 1991:181; Lauer 1986:453). Grossman (1986:166) makes it clear that family break-up threatens the children's positive sense of themselves and their world. Rice (1996:362) finds that it delays cognitive

functioning and the development of moral judgment. Children of divorcing parents demonstrate an increased level of aggression before the divorce took place. The increased risk of aggression experienced by these children is related to the family conflict prior to the divorce or separation, rather than to family break-up itself. Disruptive parenting practices and antisocial personality of parents before divorce may also be a contributory factor (Valois, MacDonald, Bretous, Fischer & Drane 2002:456).

According to Havemann and Lehtinen (1990:272) and Rice (1996:355), children of divorced parents have more difficulties than their parents do. In their research, they found that five years after the divorce only about a third of the children were doing well. About three out often revealed a mixed picture, sometimes doing well in some respects but badly in others. The largest group, 37 percent were depressed, could not make friends and suffered a wide range of other behaviour problems. Ten years after the divorce, when many of the children had reached adulthood, 45 percent were doing well but 41 percent were worried, underachieving, self-deprecating and sometimes angry young men and women. As Heavens (2001:66) puts it, *Parental separation and divorce will affect an ever-increasing number of children and adolescents. Children respond to divorce with anger, resentment, anxiety, depression, confusion and aggression. Divorce is most stressful for most adolescents.*

Conger (1991:182) and Lauer (1986:449) find that divorce affects boys and girls differently. Boys are more vulnerable to the effects of divorce than girls. Even six years after their parents' divorce, they perform more poorly and become more aggressive while girls tend to withdraw. Wyn (1964:147) associates divorce with juvenile delinquency while Berg (1990:9) sees it as causing children to become more disruptive. Skinner, Elder and Conger (1992:260) find that the disruptive behaviour in these adolescents is caused by these circumstances: *Marital conflict may distract parents from child-rearing responsibilities, thereby limiting their effectiveness in monitoring and controlling an adolescent's expression of aggression. Children may emulate parent hostility with potentially disastrous consequences for the family, peer group, and school. Adolescents may simply become annoyed with parents who are irritable and difficult to deal with, and respond aggressively.*

High rates of divorce or separation have serious harmful effects on children. The trauma they experience is not easily erased from their minds. It leaves a syndrome that eats and destroys their sense of self-esteem. Dwelling on many upheavals during the ultimate conflict that led to divorce is unbearable. These experiences become part of their daily lives at home, at school, in the community, in the playground - actually wherever they are or go their life is characterized by these traumatic events. This trauma causes high rates of instability and lead to aggressive behaviour. As Moeller (2001:116) puts it: *The discord and conflict surrounding an unhappy marriage might be the best explanation for the externalizing problems exhibited by children living in disrupted family situations.* Children's aggression may also be increased by marital discord because the children imitate their parents' discord, Bandura's (1977) theory confirms that children are more likely to imitate aggressive behaviour modelled by their parents (Hill 2002:152). Even Baron and Richardson (1994:34) confirm that observational learning and direct experience are the most influential in the acquisition of aggressive responses (see section 2.8).

Aggressive behaviours of children have been influenced in some way by the familial environment (Spitlane-Grieco 2000:414). Being born into a single-parent family has also been associated with increased risk of aggression and violence. The different outcomes of socio-economic conditions of single-parent households, disciplinary styles, difficulty in securing assistance and problems in supervising and monitoring might result in aggressiveness (Valois et al 2002:456). Children living in a home that has been disrupted by divorce are more likely to exhibit antisocial and aggressive behaviour and become involved with delinquent activities and substance abuse (Moeller 2001:115).

James (1995:50) confirmed that single mothering and the consequent absence of a father figure significantly contribute to parenting resulting in delinquent males. The absence of paternal authority and role model explains higher rates of aggression and violence. The children with unmarried parents are more likely to suffer from different kinds of problems, including heightened levels of maladjustment and hostility towards adults and other children.

Parental divorce or separation and losing or living with one parent have serious harmful effects on children. The trauma these adolescents experience before and after such

incidents is not easily erased from their minds. They end up learning survival roles like being aggressive in order to cope with the situation.

3.2.2   Domestic violence

Hampton, Guillotta, Adams, Potter III and Weissberg (1993:116) define violence as an act performed with the intention of causing physical pain or injury to another person. The Department of Justice in Pretoria reveals that about 2297 cases of domestic violence were reported in Pretoria in 2001. Domestic violence occurs in physical, emotional, psychological and sexual forms developed to perpetuate intimidation, power, and control of the abuser over the abused. It usually involves parents, the husband abusing the wife and sometimes children become part of the quarrel.

A home with continual conflict and coldness can be very damaging to the children. Unhappy homes have a record of producing children with deviant behaviour, delinquency and maladjustment (Lauer 1986:453). McWhirter et al (1998:48) also concur saying: *The psychological effect of family violence on the development of a child is wholly negative, whether the violence is experienced or only witnessed.* Downs and Miller (1998:66) confirm that experiences of parental violence in childhood can cause immoral behaviour in adulthood. Some children may not cope with traumatic memories brought about by their parent's violence. They feel powerless, if not overly powerful, to control people and events. Sometimes they experience emotional sensitivity and difficulty with emotional expression. Failure to express emotions can affect their behaviour and burst into aggressiveness (Ammerman & Hersen 1991:243).

According to Robbins (2000:66) witnessing angry exchanges between parents causes distress in the child. It is most distressing for the child who witnesses episodes of domestic violence, such as his father striking and injuring his mother. The child may want to retaliate, although he is powerless to do that. This might result in a child reacting with anger, anxiety and despair. This means the child might be at risk of becoming aggressive himself. Fraczek and Zumkley (1992:172) outline this clearly when saying: *Parents influence the child's behaviour intentionally or unintentionally, depending on how they themselves behave. Aggressive children often have aggressive parents as a model for their behaviour.* Parental conflict is often highly disturbing to children and can provoke

conflict. When children observe high levels of destructive conflict, their functioning might be affected and they may develop tendency to feel threatened by conflict. Taking responsibility for causing or resolving it may lead to greater feelings of anxiety, depression, or helplessness that might develop into aggressive behaviour (Grych & Jouriles 2000:85).

Aggressive inclinations among children can also be aroused by parents' disagreements, family tension and disharmony between parents. When children are exposed to aggression they tend to become aggressively inclined themselves, *'violence breeds or begets violence'* (Berkowitz 1993:187). This is also confirmed by Baron and Richardson (1994:104-106) who maintain, *Children who witness physical violence between their parents are likely to use similar actions in their interactions with others. Children who are exposed to unresolved conflicts respond with high levels of anger and distress. Violent upbringing teaches approval of violence as well as 'how to hit, what to hit with, and what the impact should be'* (see section 2.9).

Szyndrowski (1999:10) confirms that domestic violence in the home affects children emotionally, behaviourally, socially, and physically. Children who witness violence often exhibit:

➢ Patterns of general aggressiveness.

➢ Patterns of overcompliance and tearfulness.

➢ Low self-esteem.

➢ Fear and distrust of close relationships.

➢ Conflict concerning taking sides with parents.

➢ Guilt at having escaped punishment and extreme fear for the future.

➢ Psychosomatic complains.

➢ Problems relating to authority.

➢ Behaviour problems often blamed on the victim.

Marital physical aggression has been repeatedly associated with greater externalizing and internalizing child behaviour problems. It has also been associated with a wide range of psychological difficulties in youth (Mahoney, Donnelly, Boxer & Lewis 2003:4). As Hill (2002:152) puts it: *Through parental aggression children may learn that aggression is a normative part of family relationships, that it is an effective way of controlling others, and that aggression is sanctioned rather than punished.* Adolescents who have experienced family violence, either as victims or witnesses, are likely to feel negative about their parents and end up being aggressive (Spillane-Grieco 2000:427). Children and teenagers are likely to learn behaviours from others while still relatively young. For them, violence becomes an acceptable response in a way of dealing with a threatening situation or uncertainty (Heavens 2001:98).

Hill (2002:150) confirms that there is substantial evidence that marital conflict is associated with conduct problems in children. In his study he recorded, *Marital negative conflict management, comprising negative communications, lack of collaboration and negative affect, were associated with critical parenting and low emotional responsivity to children and mothers and fathers. Low emotional responsivity in mothers and fathers was associated with child conduct problems.* These children learn to accept and live in a situation that is characterized by violence. This leads to desensitization toward violence. As Robbins (2000:67) states: *If parents are hostile and aggressive during conflict, children may learn that aggression is an acceptable way to deal with disagreements. Children who learn to be aggressive in conflictual situations might not aggress against their larger and more powerful parents, but may instead act aggressively when interacting with peers or younger children* (see section 2.7).

Moeller (2001:116) reveals the relationship between parents' squabbles and children's aggressiveness:

➢ Children might learn from observing their parents' fights that anger and aggression are the preferred methods for getting one's way and solving conflicts.

➢ Children might exhibit either externalizing or internalizing behaviours in order to gain the attention of parents who are preoccupied with their conflicts or in order to consciously diffuse their parents' anger toward each other.

➢ Children exposed to high levels of marital conflict might thus exhibit higher levels of overt aggression.

➢ Parental conflict might reduce the effectiveness of parental child-rearing practices through more lax discipline and less monitoring, thus promoting more aggression.

➢ Parental conflict might reduce the ability of parents to respond to their children in an emotionally warm manner, thus threatening the children's sense of security and promoting acting-out behaviour.

A variety of adjustment problems may be associated with exposure to domestic violence. These problems may develop into anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and an array of psychological problems, which build up to aggression (Grych & Jouriles 2000:84).

Living in a home where there are continual fights humiliates the children. Children feel embarrassed in such a way that they hide their feelings by being aggressive towards their peers and community. They feel that everybody sees through their problems. It is difficult to share their problems with peers and teachers because they think the whole world is hostile towards them. These children act aggressively towards anybody, thereby making it very difficult for people to approach them and offer some help. They think if they receive help from anyone, it shows cowardice. However, receiving help is not the norm of their family upbringing that is characterized by power struggles. The conditions to which they are exposed threaten their own development and maturity towards responsible adulthood (Gasa 2001:40).

It is clear that parental conflict is an important factor that heightens adolescents' aggressive behaviour. It becomes stressful to witness the continual conflict between parents and causes the adolescents to see aggression as the only solution to any

problem. Some of them get used to violence in such a way that they find it acceptable to fight in order to be recognised.

3.2.3   Abusive parents

Some parents practice aggressive acts against the children which sometimes take a form of unusually severe discipline or maybe cross the line and become child abuse. Child abuse is defined as any act of omission or commission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development (Pagelow 1984:48). Hertzberger (1996:8) gives an analysis of known cases of violence showing that at least one out of one hundred children is maltreated each year through physical, sexual or emotional abuse in America. Pagelow (1984:49) finds that, according to the earlier statistics in America from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, over 1000 000 children are abused or neglected each year by their parents. According to Barth and Derezotes (1990:1), most American adolescents are abused during their high school years. There is an upward trend regarding child abuse in South Africa. The statistics reveal that in 1993 about 17 000 children were abused and the number increased to approximately 36 000 in 1998 (Mwanda 2001:2).

According to McWhirter et al. (1998:48) almost all children who are abused in their families find themselves at risk of future problems. Teenagers in these families have poor emotional and behavioural control. Some become easily upset, usually disturb the smooth running of the school with unusual behaviour, and have discipline problems. Abusive parents destroy personal, social, moral and physical dimensions of the child's self-concept. Robbins (2000:69) agrees: *Physical abuse of children is a risk factor for violence in adolescence. Adolescents who are aggressive and violent are more likely to have experienced physical abuse during childhood.* Tedeschi and Felson (1993:123) also concur that there is intergenerational transmission of violence. Children learn to engage in violence when they observe any form of physical punishment.

When the therapists were working with angry and abusive people, they find that these people were abused as children. As Robbins (2000:67) puts it: *The findings indicate that there is greater chance of parents abusing their own children if the parents were themselves abused as children. The researchers found that the boys who continued to*

show aggressive patterns over a period of years were more likely to report that their parents used higher levels of punishment in disciplining them. These children are characterized by thoughts that they are bad, uncontrollable, and unlovable. Family abuse destroys their ability to trust and they end up being involved in abusive practices (Potter-Efron 1990:103). Children who have been physically abused are more likely to encode threatening aspects of social situations and to perceive threats in everyday experiences. This might expose the child to aggressive acts (Hill 2002:139).

According to Fraczek and Zumkley (1992:172) if the parents punish and reject the children, those children have a greater possibility of becoming criminals/delinquents. Baron and Richardson (1994:88) find these abusive parents as disinterested in their child's development, lacking warmth and affection, being indifferent or permissive towards their children's expressions of aggression. It is revealed in their study that severity of punishment at age eight was related to aggressive behaviour at ages eighteen and thirty. Some parents indirectly encourage their children to be aggressive. Antisocial aggressiveness developed because of the long-term impact of child rearing. Parents tend to practise aggression for aggression policy, for example, a boy should stand up for himself. He should learn to fight back when he is attacked (Berkowitz 1993:165).

Berkowitz (1993:175) also identified some unpleasant conditions that provoke aggressiveness;

➢ Mistreatment
Parents can mistreat their children by being cold and indifferent, by inflicting brutal punishment, or not being clear and consistent in specifying what they expect of their children.

➢ Parental rejection
Parents can be less affectionate.

➢ Harsh parental treatment
Harsh, punitive parents are somewhat likely to produce highly aggressive and antisocial children.

According to Hill (2002:149), *the parent's behaviour increases the likelihood of the child showing further oppositional or aggressive behaviour. Parents of antisocial children are found to be more inconsistent in their use of rules, to issue more, and unclear, commands, to be more likely to respond to their children on the basis of mood rather than the characteristics of the child's behaviour, to be less likely to monitor their children's whereabouts, and to be unresponsive to their children's prosocial behavior.* Alien, Mauser, Eikholt and Bell (1994:536) emphasize the depression in these adolescents and lack of family cohesion and closeness. The externalizing symptoms and behaviours that they expose have been linked to parental rejection, lack of parental involvement, and harsh aversive behaviour. The lack of relatedness between adolescents and parents may remove an important behaviour-regulating influence within the family. This behaviour-regulating influence is a desire to please parents and without it, externalizing and problematic behaviours become much more common.

Valois et al (2002:457) confirm that parental attitudes such as poor management practices, poor involvement, child maltreatment and interaction of the parent with the adolescent and poor bonding to the family put the adolescents at risk of misbehaviour. Adolescents who have been both abuse victims and witnesses to family violence exhibit significantly more behaviour and adjustment problems and are at high risk for violent behavior (Shahinfar, Kupersmidt & Matza 2001:137). This is also emphasized by Smith, Mullis, Kern and Brack (1999:135) who state that aggressive behaviour that leads to violent acts stems from a recurring pattern of physical abuse in the home. Parenting styles, the family atmosphere, variables of cohesion and adaptability, and levels of emotionality have their levels of influencing adolescent aggression. Family interaction patterns and parental discipline practices strongly affect the development of aggressive child behaviours (Szyndrowski 1999:9).

Robbins (2000:68) found that children exposed to harsh corporal punishment are apt to manifest a variety of emotional and behavioural problems. Corporal punishment places children at risk for maladjustment and individuals who were subjected to physically abusive parenting during childhood are at risk for drug use and other delinquent behaviours during adolescence. Harsh parenting might be expected to foster child aggressiveness. Family interaction patterns and parental discipline practices strongly affect the development of aggressive child behaviour. Children who are raised in a discouraging environment may

draw the conclusion that they are not worthy or good enough and do not have a place in the family. When denied anything, they respond in a way that usually is very painful to those around them, such as with physical or verbal aggression (Szyndrowski 1999:9).

The hostile, erratic behaviour of physically abusive parents often prevents an emotional bond from developing between the parent and child. Some parents fail to manifest consistency, caring and support, and their children are likely to show less conformity to parental values and standards of behaviour. There is a relationship between exposure to severe physical discipline and a child's level of anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. Some children start to have low self- esteem, poor anger management, inability to solve problems and also display behaviours of the abuser, such as manipulation, poor impulse control, aggressive outbursts and inability to conform to the community rules (Szyndrowski 1999:11). They end up accepting that severe, coercive measures are a normal part of parenting, and as adults start to enact these parenting scripts to their counterparts. They see it as communicating the lesson that physical aggression is a legitimate strategy for resolving disagreements (Heavens 2001:97).

It has been demonstrated that the family sets the context in which children and adolescents learn to be aggressive. Excessive use of physical force on the child, or violence between parents may induce the child to act in an aggressive manner. Recent studies revealed that bullying was associated with experience of physical parental discipline style (Heavens 2001:97). Ziegler and Stevenson (1993:571) found that adolescents who are delinquents had been abused and neglected. Having experienced abuse and disrespect from their parents, they learn aggression and exploitation as a means of negotiating life. They imitate their parent's behaviour by exerting their strength on those who are less powerful. Even Adams, Gullotta and Markstrom-Adams (1994:69) confirm: *Families can set the stage for antinormative behavioral patterns in both male and female adolescents. Overcontrol and restrictive interactions between parent and child have been associated with aggression.*

To be abused by a parent is a very traumatic event that breaks the bond between the child and the very same parent. It also disrupts the trust that the child has with the parent and eventually with any grown-up. The child ends up being so sensitive and resorts to aggressive behaviour. The child also avoids any direct conversation with his\her peers,

fearing that they might discover what has happened to him\her. This means the child loses adult and peer accompaniment and this has a direct impact on the development of the child as a whole. Some children resort to attention seeking by being disruptive and very aggressive (Gasa 2001:23).

It has been emphasized that adolescents who were abused during their childhood are likely to be aggressive when they grow older. The abuse that they experience in their early life destroys their ability to trust people and leads them to believe that inflicting pain on others is the only acceptable norm.

3.2.4   Substance dependency

Dependence on drugs and/or alcohol is a worldwide problem. Drug abuse is defined by Ghodse (1991:8) as a persistent or sporadic excessive use of drugs inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice. Narramore (1973:33) defines alcoholism as a disorder associated with the excessive use of intoxicating beverages. Alcohol use and abuse is certainly among the highest of all drugs affecting broad segments of the population. Most of the parents use alcohol to escape their family problems. The well-known ill effects of alcoholism are seen through domestic violence, child abuse and loss of control (Cook 1993:201). McWhirter et al (1998:48) find parental alcoholism causes emotional damage and social adjustment problems among children.

According to Havemann and Lehtinen (1990:269) alcoholism results in poor relationships, problems and break-ups of marriages or relationships. As Le Roux (1992:155) puts it: *Alcoholism is a stressor, which disturbs family harmony, and leads to increased indecent aggressive activity.* The home with an alcoholic parent is often characterized by family conflict, arguments, incongruent communication, spouse abuse, emotional neglect and isolation of children. The children bear the emotionally disturbing experience for the rest of their lives and observe unpredictable behaviour from the parent concerned who says one thing and does another, leaving them not knowing what message to respond to (Lawson et al. 1983:175).

Children of alcoholics are exposed to the distressing situation whereby their parents refrain from disciplining them, but often abuse and neglect them and also assault each other.

They are likely to behave more extremely (Hertzberger 1996:148). This results in children becoming tools in the struggle between parents (Royce 1989:142). They become terrified, having behaviour problems within and outside the home, are confused, inattentive at school, hostile, rebellious, insecure and defensive. Some act out their resentment and frustration by engaging in vandalism, truancy and are characterized by neurotic disturbance, antisocial behaviour and suicidal tendencies (Saitoh, Steinglass & Schuckit 1992:98).

Children of alcoholics are subjected to daily tension and pressure, which results in severe stress among school going children. In these families children's basic emotional needs are ignored and their feelings are unacknowledged. They are provided with few concrete limits and guidelines for behaviour. This ruins their lives and causes depression, temper tantrums, and disruptive classroom behaviour (Wilson & Blocher 1990:100). Gress (1988:19) finds that emotional scars that children of alcoholics suffer are severe and their social development is retarded in such a way that the view they have of themselves is also distorted. Some children learn survival roles by being aggressive or choosing impulsive peers who agree with everything they suggest.

The above mentioned researchers emphasize that children from alcoholic families are at risk of psychodynamic problems and their problems are beyond human understanding. The life they live is unbearable and characterized by anger and fear. They are not only angry with themselves for failing to smooth things at home but also with their parents who choose to live an unpredictable life. They live in fear that if their problems become known they will never be given the same respect as their counterparts, their peers will laugh at them and people will pity them as cowards (Gasa 2001:27).

Finally these children, especially adolescents, use fantasies to work through unresolved feelings about their families. They bring to school family roles that allow them to survive in their alcoholic homes but only to find that these roles are dysfunctional outside the home. Since a home with alcoholic parents is often characterized by family violence, these children see school as a battlefield where they expose all the negative things that are happening at home. They see teachers and peers as rivals in their war. They punish them by not obeying the school rules and this in turn affects their whole behaviour (Gasa 2001:28).

It has been stressed that adolescents who live with alcoholic parents are exposed to emotional disturbing experiences. They always observe unpredictable behaviour from their parents and do not know what to expect from their parents. They are embarrassed by the behaviour of their parents and end up being insecure and aggressive.

3.2.5   Socio-economic status of parents

There is an association between economic hardship and children's problem behaviour, such as aggression. Experience of intense economic stress produces negative exchanges within the family. As negativity increases between the parents, short-tempered responses to children also increase (Skinner et al 1992:260). According to Ushasree (1990:18) in the disadvantaged families parents tend to be indecisive, disorganized, apathetic, rejecting and have low self-esteem. They do not believe that they can control their children's life as well as theirs. They are likely to give their children immediate gratification rather than guide them toward a long-term gratification.

The findings by Marshall (1992:204) shows that children of low status parents are marginalized and reside in deteriorated neighbourhoods which bring staggering obstacles to achieve decency, dignity and well informed decisions. Low socio-economic status is linked with a variety of behaviour problems. Poverty directly or indirectly affects parenting behaviour, which in turn affects youthful antisocial behaviour (Moeller 2001:121). Economic deprivations can be a major source of unhappiness. The family's financial problems may contribute to aggressive tendencies as some low-income couples are more likely to fight or assault each other due to depression. *People whose occupations, education, and income are low on the social ladder have a greater probability of being assaultive than do people who rank higher. High proportion of abusive families have 'insufficient income'* (Berkowitz 1993:259).

The above discussion indicates that adolescents who are brought up in a low socio-economic status family may develop a variety of behavioural problems. These problems are caused by growing up in a socially and economically deprived family. As a result of continual financial squabbles at home, the adolescents themselves become aggressive.

3.3   CONCLUSION

It is confirmed that the extent to which children are exposed to a number of different family risk factors cause children's aggressive behaviour. Children's aggression is viewed as a reaction to frustration in an attempt to reduce aversive stimuli. Disruptive parenting practices are causally related to child antisocial behaviour. This also occurs when family members are distant and disengaged from each other and have little emotional bonding.

The starting point for aggression may be children's feelings of weakness within their family. The significant relationship between verbal aggression and parental rejection suggests that the parent-child relationship may be influential in the lack of development of social interest as well as in the existence of aggression. The intense levels of anger and anxiety that are present when adolescents resort to aggression may be related significantly to parental behaviour. What at times appear to be power struggles between parents may in fact be the manifestation of adolescent anxiety as adolescents strive to overcome feelings of inferiority when they perceive parental negative behaviour?

Aggression is perceived as a means of overcompensation for feelings of inferiority, embarrassment, anxiety and fear. These negative feelings may be so intense in these adolescents that social interest, empathy, and fear of consequences lack the power to inhibit aggression as participants over compensate these feelings by use of anger and aggression. The anger that is built up internally may direct attention, interests, perceptions, and memory into paths of impulsive aggression.

This chapter shows that aggressive behaviour exists and stems from different factors in the family. This chapter explains why many adolescents become aggressive and it contributes to an understanding of adolescent aggression and its correlation to society and school. It shows the importance of family in influencing the behaviour of adolescents.

In the next chapter the influence of adolescent behaviour and their family life will be discussed in relation to the school and broader society,

CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOOL AND SOCIETY AS EXTERNAL DETERMINANTS OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Social learning theories suggest that aggressive behaviour is learned and maintained through environmental experiences (see section 2.8). Adolescents who are exposed to antisocial environment learn to participate in antisocial behaviour. Antisocial behaviour is not only related to family, as it has been discussed in the previous chapter, but also to school and society. The school and society expose children to new behaviours which were not acquired at home during the adolescent's childhood. Some of these behaviours may be positive or negative, depending on the environment.

Much of the behaviour of aggressive children involves social interaction with the community and their peers. Such interaction plays a crucial role because the adolescents not only learn a number of social skills but also important lessons that will stay with them for life. According to Baron and Richardson's (1994:32) interpretation of the theories discussed in chapter two, human beings are not born with knowledge of how to use a weapon, how to make physical contact with the victim painful and what words or actions will be hurtful to their target but learn that through interaction with others (see section 2.8).

In this chapter, the influence that the school and society have on aggressive behaviour of the adolescents is dealt with. The focus is on the harsh discipline that is applied by the school that aggravates aggression, the role that is played by the peers in exposing adolescents to aggression, the different groups that model aggression to and cultural misunderstanding and intolerance that bring frustration, aggression and confusion to adolescents' lives.

4.2   AGGRESSION AND UNCONDUCIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

A school is an institution providing education for young people up to the age of about 19 years (Rowntree 1981:265). It is a site where children of school-going age are taught. Such schools can be public or independent (private) schools and usually run from Grade 1 to Grade 12 (Mothata, Lemmer, Mda & Pretorius 2000:151). It is in this school setting where learners learn new behaviours. Some of these behaviours may be positive or negative, depending on the school environment. *Learning involves the modification of perception and behaviour, which also means that behavioral modifications occur in meeting, changed conditions so that obstacles are overcome* (Nemangwele 1998:17).

Teachers and peers play a dominant role in shaping these behaviours either positively or negatively. *Every teacher is responsibly directly to God for the welfare of each child placed in his care, so if he looks on silently while a child needing assistance is led to destruction as an adult, he is co-responsible and will have to answer for his actions before God* (Nemangwele 1998:17).

Some teachers end up using harsh methods in trying to discipline the adolescents who are showing antisocial behaviour. One of these methods is excessive discipline.

4.2.1   Excessive discipline

Excessive discipline that is practised in some schools has a very harmful influence on children. Although corporal punishment is said to have been abolished, most schools engage in some other form of harsh discipline as an alternative method to corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is defined as the infliction of physical pain upon a person's body as punishment for a crime, wrongdoing or infraction (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica* 1995:646).

Corporal punishment did not prove to be effective and has therefore been abolished by several acts. It was popular, as it was quick and easy, *'you messed up, take your punishment, it is done'.* But it caused a stressful situation like other forms of harsh discipline that are accepted as alternative methods, for example, hard labour in the schoolyard or suspension. The stress causes negative feelings in a learner. These

feelings in turn create certain thoughts leading to some kind of behaviour, particularly aggressive behaviour (Riak 2001:11).

Empirical evidence shows that offenders who are disciplined harshly are actually slightly more likely to commit further crimes (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica* 1996:646). Riak (2001:11) said, *The more serious the punishment, the more violent the bi-product.* The frustration that harsh and excessive discipline causes leads to hostility which encourages the learner to become violent in adulthood. This was also confirmed by Robbins (2000:68) when revealing his investigation about adolescent hostility, *In adolescence, children were interviewed about assaultive behaviours such as being in gang fights, striking parents and using strong arm methods to get money from other people. It was reported that the more severe the physical discipline at pre-school age, the higher the average level of physical assault in late adolescence. The effects of early physical mistreatment of children can extend across a span of many years, influencing adolescent assaultive behaviour.*

Seven years since the banning of corporal punishment and teachers still resort to aggressive behaviour. Aside from the banning, reports have revealed that many pupils still endure painful kicks, slaps, being hit with wooden dusters and the thick chalkboard ruler. In a certain school a horrified sixteen-year-old schoolgirl revealed how she was forced to squat on the floor in front of her classroom (*Leader*, 21 March 2003:6). It was also reported that lawmakers find corporal punishment bad for a student's self-image and academic achievement and usually leads to disruptive and violent student behaviour. They said one obvious effect of corporal punishment was that it could result in physical as well as emotional injury (*The Citizen*, 20 September 2000:12). Although corporal punishment was banned in 1996, some teachers are still found guilty of such offence. Twelve KwaZulu-Natal teachers were facing disciplinary action for allegedly meting out corporal punishment to pupils (*Daily News*, 12 September 2002:1).

Many incidents give evidence that excessive discipline still prevail in schools like the death of an eight-year-old child through corporal punishment. It shows that in South Africa the old adage 'spare the rod and spoil the child' is still widely accepted. In Mpumalanga, an unruly thirteen-year old schoolboy was repeatedly burnt with cigarettes, and had molten plastic dripped over his genitals and naked body. Although the teacher was found guilty by provincial authorities and will never teach again, the problem seems far from being over

(*The Star*, 21 July: *teenagers learn aggression from their peers. Peers may elicit aggression, or may serve as role models to other children who have a predisposition to act aggressively. Moreover, peers may reinforce aggressive behaviour* (see section 2.9)).

4.2.2 Peer pressure

Peer pressure is defined as compulsion to do or obtain the same things as others in one's peer group (Robinson 1996:1019). During adolescence, children begin to form peer relationships in which there is equality, mutuality and reciprocity between members (Budhal 1998:72). Peer groups provide the opportunity for learning specific skills that may not be available in other social relationships. Peer interaction plays a unique and essential role in developing sociability and attachment, socialization of sexuality and gender roles, moral development and developing empathy (Budhal 1998:79). Bandura (1973) in Heavens (1999:18) found that the peer group has a significant influence on the teenager's social development because it sets the cultural norms or 'rituals' for acceptable behaviour. Adolescents are likely to do the same as their closest friends and will emulate the behaviour or the dress of their idols through observation and imitation. As Hartup and Stevens (1999:97) puts it: \t *is possible that children and teenagers learn aggression from their peers. Peers may elicit aggression, or may serve as role models to other children who have a predisposition to act aggressively. Moreover, peers may reinforce aggressive behaviour* (see section 2.9).

Peers often act as role models for an adolescent's behaviour and involvement with peers provides powerful opportunities for the formation of the identity (Sutcliffe 1996:114). According to Harilal (1996:37), peer groups are essential for the following reasons:

➢   They are bridges between the individual and the larger society.

➢   They provide the setting in which individuals meet most of their personal needs.

➢   They help develop a positive self-concept, which is frequently associated with peer acceptance.

➢   They encourage co-operation and close relationships of intimacy and mutuality.

➢   They provide models to be copied.

McWhirter et al (1998:138) found that peer groups do not only provide positive settings but peer pressure can also lead to norms of risky behaviour and irresponsibility. The peer group not only provides support, fairly clear norms, and structure that most adolescents want but also sometimes compels them to conformity. Harilal (1996:40) defines conformity as *the tendency to change one's behaviour beliefs, opinions or actions to correspond with the norms expressed by other people because of implicit or explicit social pressure.* During this conformity one's own moral standards are violated and peer groups exert an important influence on the self-concept throughout life, either positively or negatively. Children who form friendships with antisocial peers appear to be at heightened risk for later antisocial behaviour (Szyndrowski 1999:10).

Peers often act as role models for adolescents' behaviour (Sutcliffe 1996:114). Children learn appropriate and inappropriate social behaviours through their interaction with other children. Aggression is another behaviour that may be acquired or learned in the process of peer interaction (Baron & Richardson 1994:101). As Robbins (2000:75) puts it, *Children learn much of their behaviour patterns from modelling the behaviours of others they see around.* This can be seen in nursery-school children. If they were the victims of peer-directed aggression, they often begin initiating aggression when they grow up. They model the aggressive behaviour to which they are exposed and successfully defend themselves with aggressive counteracts (Baron and Richardson 1994:106). This has also been pointed out in section (2.9 p. 38) that, *No human is born with such know/edge (aggression), but has to learn how to behave aggressively through interaction with others.*

Most adolescents conform because they are afraid of being rejected by their peers. They become engaged in inappropriate behaviour so as to gain acceptance and approval of the group. These groups can be deviant groups consisting of antisocial youth gangs. But the adolescents join them so as to find acceptance and status by being valued by others of their own age and to find reassurance that the perceptions and attitudes they have are right. The conversation and actions they experience with other members strengthen their and attitudes and reinforce antisocial inclinations (Berkowitz 1993:171). As Hartup and Stevens (1999:84) concur, *There is much pressure to conform to group norms. Strict normative codes often exist in peer groups, with those who deviate from these norms being rejected by other members of the group.*

Hartup and Stevens (1999:92) found the relationship between rejection and aggression:

➢ Rejected adolescents are thought of as aggressive, disruptive and lacking in qualities.

➢ Rejected adolescents are seen as quarrelsome, irritable and unfriendly.

➢ Aggressive and rejected youth dislike being teased by their peers. They tend to overreact to teasing, as they see it as a form of provocation.

Some adolescents find it acceptable to be identified with an aggressive group and to adhere to a Gang Code of Conduct. As a fact that aggression characterizes this group, the likelihood of being attacked is high, and anger stimuli are common, rife and intense. These incidents lead to the perpetration of aggression (Tedeschi & Felson 1993:101). Many children who are aggressive as young children continue to be aggressive as they grow older (Robbins 2000:75). They continue to be aggressive because their aggression was rewarded by their peers as valuable. *Countering aggression with aggression may also be praised and valued in certain groups, thus encouraging individuals to be aggressive and reinforcing such behaviour* (Tedeschi & Felson 1993:101). Valois et al (2002:458) confirmed that adolescents who are exposed to and associate with antisocial peers learn to participate in antisocial behaviour through the process of vicarious learning and the principles of reinforcement.

McWhirter et al (1998:87) found these aggressive adolescents not only have distorted perceptions but also lack the core abilities that make for satisfying social relationships. Several core skills that these adolescents lack were identified as follows:

➢ Developing and maintaining sound friendship.

➢ Sharing laughter and jokes with peers.

➢ Knowing how to join an activity.

➢ Skilfully ending a conversation, and

➢ Interacting with a variety of peers and others.

It has been highlighted that teachers' harsh discipline can contribute to aggressive behaviour. Kemper (1978:260) supports this, stating that if emotions are charged, through severe punishment, some people resort to aggression. The child who is excessively punished and also given little affection is more likely to turn the aggression to others (see section 2.6). It has been also stated that peer interaction, acceptance or rejection is a central determinant of aggression. If adolescents are rejected by their peer groups, they may follow unfavourable routes so as to gain acceptance. Their behaviour may be changed and they might become argumentative, disruptive and aggressive in the school. In other words, they become troubled youngsters.

4.3   AGGRESSION AND SOCIETY

Aggression does not take place in a vacuum. It is likely to be influenced by the interpersonal factors (relations) or the presence and actions of other people in the social environment. Interpersonal refers to something that occurs or exists between two or more persons (English & English 1974:273). Interpersonal relations is defined by Petrovsky and Yaroshevsky (1987:153) as a *system of attitudes, orientations and expectations of group members with respect to each other, which is determined by the content and organization of joint activities and values, on which human communication is based.* But Bhagi and Sharma (1992:567) define it as interactions among individuals which involve the pattern of one's dealings with other people and is regarded as the crucial aspect of one's personality and the basic source of one's emotional security and insecurity. Sutherland (1995:215) believed that a *person's attitudes to himself and indeed his whole personality were a reaction to how others saw him.* Benner (1985:599) supported the above explanation and went as far as saying: *It takes people to make people sick and it takes people to make people better.*

Therefore, interpersonal factors are those factors which one acquires through interaction with others (intergroup relations) or that one performs in order to please others. This can be best described as extrinsic motivation. Nemangwele (1998:41) defines extrinsic motivation in such manner: a *person who does a certain task or performs an activity due to outside reasons, like being given a reward, looking for something in return or pleasing someone.* The external pressure or influence could compel someone to do a certain activity or task or to withdraw from that activity or task. Most adolescents become involved

in violent actions because of the behaviour of the community in which they are brought up. If the community in which adolescents grow up is characterized by violence together with other contributing factors, adolescents may become involved in violent actions. If adolescents live in fear of being attacked, they need to learn survival skills to defend themselves. Some of them end up joining the gangs in order to protect themselves and aggressiveness starts to characterize their lives (Baron & Richardson 1994:128).

4.3.1   Intergroup relations

A *'group'* refers to a collection of two or more persons who share a common focus of interest and attributes (Harilal 1996:25). Relation derived from the Latin verb *'relatum'* that means to carry, support or to convey something to a favourite person, to communicate with another person and to favour him/her by involving oneself with the other person. Relations, therefore, points to a relationship in which people meet each other, Harilal (1996:26) points out that in order to facilitate harmonious (or even inharmonious) relationships, people seek out groups, which comprise any number of people who share similar identities, norms, values and expectations. He identifies different groups that are responsible for shaping the behaviour of the adolescents in the community or society.

These groups are:

> ➢ Reference groups
>   Any social unit or model that individuals use as a standard or frame of
>   reference for evaluating themselves and for guiding their own behaviour.

> ➢ Social groups
>   People who share a feeling of unity, who interact socially and share things such
>   as values and norms.

> ➢ Friendship groups
>   Closely linked to social groups are friendship groups where relationships are
>   formed with others who share similar views.

Prinsloo and Du Plessis (1998:34) find that the relationships within these groups are characterized by the following:

> ➢   A relationship of dependence
> Human beings are dependent on fellow human beings.

> ➢   A relationship of acceptance
> People want to be accepted by other people.

> ➢   A relationship of choice
> The demands of the world make justifiable choices a necessity,

> ➢   A relationship of togetherness
> People belong together, listen to or hear together,

> ➢   A dialogical relationship
> People's existence depends on addressing others and being addressed by them, and on meeting others and being met by them.

In favour of the above relationship, McWhirter et al. (1998:86) identify interpersonal skills, which are necessary for competent, responsive, and mutually beneficial relationships. These skills are the most important skills that an individual should learn. Unfortunately, many adolescents who are brought up in an unconducive environment do not master the skills, such as laughing, joking, befriending, negotiating and playing with a group, sufficiently. These young people sometimes perceive the world in a distorted way, which leads to miscommunication in interpersonal relationships. They are so distorted that they have few positive social interactions with either peers or adults.

Harry Sullivan cited in Mwamwenda (1995:365) developed an interpersonal theory with the understanding that an interpersonal interaction or a person's behaviour is open to direct observation. The major thrust of Sullivan's theory is that: a *person's personality develops as a result of his satisfying his needs in interpersonal interaction.* However, as a person grows his interpersonal interactions multiply, differentiate and become more complex. So, it is significant to trace the socialization life of an adolescent in the following groups.

❖ **Reference groups**

People of high status serve as positive models for adolescents. They become role models of adolescents more frequently than persons of low status. Adolescents like to identify themselves with another person's behaviour, attitudes, and system of values and beliefs. They start to behave exactly like the person being imitated. Through identification with the role model, a person develops a philosophy of life, which guides his/her decision making and overall behaviour (Mwamwenda 1995:205). Harilal (1996:35) concurs that adolescents look for guidance in formulating values, beliefs and styles of behaviour in these groups whose outlooks and behaviours they accept. They identify the following functions of reference groups:

➢ Normative function

They set and enforce standards of conduct and belief.

➢ Comparative function

They serve as a standard against which people assess and appraise themselves and others.

➢ Associative function

People borrow the status of the group and vicariously bask in its reflected glory.

But it is very difficult for adolescents from disrupted background to identify themselves with positive role models. The reason for this is because these adolescents lack interaction with people and they also mistrust people as a result of their past experiences. In the light of this and the above discussion it is clear why some adolescents join gangs or other negative groups that satisfy their violent needs.

❖ **Social groups**

Adolescents seek out social groups, which share things such as values and norms. This is one way of promoting cultural awareness as the members in the group mutually and reciprocally influence each other's feelings, attitudes and actions. Examples of social

groups are cliques, team mates, relatives and friends (Harilal 1996:32). Bandura, cited in Mwamwenda (1995:203), in his social learning theory points out that, *Social learning guides a person's behaviour so that it is in accordance with social norms, values and beliefs, thus enabling the person to adjust successfully to society.*

Harilal (1996:32) also identifies the following essential characteristics of social groups:

➢ A regular and usually sustained interaction between members.

➢ A sense of common identity.

➢ A shared interests, and

➢ Some patterns for organization of behaviour on a regular basis.

Adolescents involve themselves with the social group in order to gain a sense of public identity. Public identity is the specific role or roles one plays within social situations (Sutcliffe 1996:47). According to Rice (1992:427) there are some developmental needs that push adolescents towards a social group. These developmental needs are:

➢ The need to establish caring, meaningful and satisfying relationships with individuals.

➢ The need to broaden childhood friendships by getting acquainted with new people of different backgrounds, experiences and ideas.

➢ The need to find acceptance, belonging, recognition and status in social groups.

➢ The need to pass from the homosocial interest to heterosocial concerns and friendships.

➢ The need to learn about, adopt and practice dating patterns and skills that contribute to personal and social development, intelligent mate selection and successful marriage.

Some adolescents from disrupted backgrounds have problems interacting with social groups. Their problem is that they cannot communicate their wants and needs without resorting to explosive, impulsive, and ultimately self-defeating and aggressive behaviour. They have not learned those fundamental social skills that may help them deal more effectively with their unconducive situations (McWhirter et al 1998:87). They may isolate themselves from the group or the group does not accept them. Lonely or isolated people sometimes have a low self-esteem and may be less willing to take risks in normal social settings. This could make it harder for them to form relationships, thereby increasing their chances of loneliness which might heighten aggressive behaviour (Budhal 1998:65).

❖   **Friendship groups**

For many adolescents, relations with friends are critical interpersonal bridges to psychological growth and social maturity. They offer consensual validation of interests, hopes and fears. They also bolster feelings of self-worth and provide affection and opportunities for intimate disclosure. Adolescents with stable friendships have a stronger self-esteem and are more altruistic than those without friends (Budhal 1998:123). Sutcliffe (1996:115) concurs that friendships contribute to the sense of identity, especially close friendships.

Adolescents are likely to be attracted to and relate to those who are similar to them in terms of attitudes, values or traits. They selectively choose friends who give honest feedback (Harilal 1996:33). Budhal (1998:123) argues that having friends amount to the following developmental imperative:

➢   Good developmental outcomes depend on having friends and keeping them.

➢   Friendships furnish the individual with socialization opportunities not easily obtained elsewhere.

➢   These relationships are important in emotion regulation, self-understanding, and the formation and functioning of subsequent relationships.

Rice (1992:429) lists some of the reasons why some adolescents cannot make friends.

➢ Some have a poor self-image and feel very vulnerable to criticism. They anticipate rejection and avoid actions that might embarrass them.

➢ Depressed and emotionally disturbed adolescents have difficulty establishing close relationships.

➢ Some adolescents are conditioned to mistrust all people and are therefore cynical about relating to them.

➢ Some feel a lack of support from parents, which makes it harder to make friends.

Conger (1991:300) concludes that adolescents' personality characteristics, cognitive skills and social behaviour affect their chances of being accepted by friends. Adolescents lacking in self-confidence and who tend to react to discomfiture with timidity, nervousness or withdrawal are likely to be neglected by friends. This is true of most adolescents from disrupted backgrounds who in turn are at high risk of developing aggressive behaviour.

4.3.2   Gangs

Short (1997:81) defines a gang as a group whose members meet together with some regularity, over time, on the basis of group-defined criteria of membership and group-defined organizational characteristics. This means gangs are non-adult-supervised, self-determining groups that demonstrate continuity over time. In the beginning gangs were just young people banded together seeking a sense of identity and security, and were not negative or violent. But things started to change when the gangs experienced harassment from other groups and it changed the focus. Their instinctive response was to 'strike back', adding a new element to their purpose, 'protection'. This 'protection' is still a part of gang mentality even today. The group that considers itself superior to all other groups is always ready to shoot to prove its superiority (Miller 1993:71). Jones (2000:77) also concurs that gangs were created through individuals coming together to form a subculture based on adherence to values in opposition to those of the dominant culture.

The fact that youth gangs commit a great deal of violence because they are unsupervised remains unopposed (Short 1997:80). Musick (1995:90) concurs by saying: *In slums*

inadequate family life, poverty, deteriorating neighbourhoods, and ineffective religious, educational and recreational organizations are the norm. Children in disorganized neighbourhoods have an unusually large amount of free, unsupervised time on their hands. Without family control and supervision, slum children will form play groups as a way to acquire social acceptance and support. Play groups develop leaders and stake out turf, opportunities for fighting abound.

Gangs that are known all over the world are classified into different types:

> Scavenger gangs

They are at least organized, and leadership changes frequently. Their crimes are usually not planned, and members are likely to be low achievers and dropouts. They are looked down upon by other gangs (Musick 1995: 72).

> Territorial gangs

They are turf-loyal groups and highly organized. They have initiation rites and other practices that separate members from non-members, and loyalty is obligatory. The gang rituals practised are very similar to those of adult clubs and social groups. Youth gangs adopt a cloak of secrecy not unlike some fraternities and wear similarly distinctive clothing or colours. Initiation rituals are also common to both groups. Prospective members have to prove their loyalty to the group. Their major activity is fighting (Musick 1995: 72).

> Corporate gangs

They are highly structured criminal conspiracies organized to sell drugs. They can be compared to the 'Mafia' gangs that sold liquor during Prohibition. Teens as young as fourteen are members of corporate gangs, although leadership is usually a few years older. These gangs operate under a strict code of behaviour, and punishment for breaking the code is swift and severe (Musick 1995:73).

Most leaders are desensitized to violence by having been victims themselves. In their minds, violence is the only way to resolve disputes, the only response to criticism or rebuke. Each gang tries to control a specific area, and many of them take over entire

neighbourhoods. Thousands of innocent people have died because they were in the wrong place during a gun battle between rival gangs (Miller 1993:74).

Because these adolescents are desensitized towards violence, they start joining the gangs. These gangs have names and recognizable symbols. Gang membership today appears to be growing at a fast rate and is a risk factor to violence. The presence of gangs in schools has been reported as being doubled in 1989 and 1995. During a three-year period in Chicago (1987 to 1990), more than 17 000 criminal offences were classified by the police as gang-related. Included in these offences were 288 homicides and more than 800 violent assaults (Robbins 2000:56). Adolescents may be members of many formal organizations but they are just as likely to be influenced by neighbourhood gangs or by the general cultural environment around them. Adolescents who are *surrounded by deviant moral values may become delinquent because of their environment. Such delinquency has its origin in the values represented by the surrounding subculture* (Rice 1990:502).

4.3.3 Community instability

Wolman (1989:66) defines community as a group of organisms living in close proximity and having some type of social organization. It can also be defined as a group of people who live in the same area or who have the same interests, religion, or nationality. Instability means lack of stability where community is no longer stable (*Longman Active Study Dictionary* 1991:144, 367).

The instability of community can be discerned in all kinds of violence such as political and social violence, social evils, suicides and crimes such as hi-jacking, kidnapping, rape, hostage, house breaking, senseless killings, gangsterism, et cetera. Such community or environment may place learners in a stressful situation and compel them to be aggressive. Learners may experience psychological problems in adjusting to normality and end up believing that violence is the way to address problems. Because of these incidents learners have lost respect for authority and are subject to no restraint or discipline (Kimaryo and Hilsum 1993:20). As Valois et al (2002:459) put it, Low *neighbourhood attachment, community disorganization, availability of drugs and firearms, neighbourhood adults involved in crime, exposure to violence and racial prejudice in the neighbourhood, community laws and norms favourable toward violence all influence individual violence.*

It is not informative to study between school variations in crime without also considering community level contributions to crime. *Schools are embedded within communities and in many ways, reflect larger community-level processes. By far the largest correlates of school disorder are characteristics of the schools' population and community context. Schools in urban, poor, disorganized communities experience much more violence and other forms of disorder than do schools in rural or suburban, affluent, organized communities* (Gottfredson 2001:63).

It has been mentioned that instability within the society leads to children being aggressive. If adolescents witness the aggression in the community, their behaviour and image of reality become altered. Because they frequently see violence, they are likely to expect violence and expect the world to be a hostile place. This is likely to make them feel easily threatened and therefore to respond in an aggressive way (Baron & Richardson 1994:104). As Fraczek and Zumkley (1992:64) put it, *Anger between others is highly arousing for children; this arousal may be translated into increased aggression in children.*

Witnessing violence often leads adolescents to acquire new ways of aggressing. They also become helpless and may experience sharp reductions in the strength of their restraints against engaging in same behaviour. They end up reasoning that if other people aggress with impunity, it is also wise for them to do or act likewise. This means the likelihood of aggressive actions increases. Some become desensitized in such a way that they become so inured to violence that they no longer see it as an inappropriate form of behaviour. This is likely to produce a gradual emotional desensitization to both aggression and signs of pain on their part (Baron & Richardson 1994:104). As Heavens (1999:97) confirms, *Aggression in youngsters may have social antecedents.*

Youth convictions for violence give a clear picture on how violence is depicted among the youth. The statistics obtained from the Department of Correctional Services in 1998 only the number of sentenced and unsentenced youth under the age of twenty-one was 1 157 (sentenced) and 1 951 (unsentenced) (Hoffman & Summers 2001:148). The high rate of youth convictions shows how serious is the problem of aggression among adolescents. These statistics are also supported by the literature review which reveals a great deal of adolescent involvement in violent or aggressive acts.

4.3.4   Cultural diversity

Rosa (1995:61) defines culture as *the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population.* Wolman (1989:80) defines it as *the way a certain society lives. The totality of manners, customs, values of a given society inclusive of its socioeconomic system, political structure, science, religion, education, art, and entertainment.* The *Hutchinson Dictionary of Ideas* (1995:130) found that the concept of culture is employed by several intellectual disciplines in distinct and different ways. In the social sciences it refers to the whole way of life of a particular society. Culture is a way of life of a particular society or group of people, including patterns of thoughts, beliefs, behaviour, customs, traditions, rituals, dress, and language, as well as art, music, and literature. Diverse means very different from each other (*Oxford Wordpower Dictionary* 1998:187).

Learners of different cultures now attend the same schools. They are placed into schools with learners and teachers who look, speak and behave differently from themselves (Ford 1996:78). According to Irvine (1990:26) cultural misunderstanding between these learners and teachers may be expected. These misunderstandings sometimes result in conflict, distrust, and hostility. The conflict may be exaggerated by cultural inversion and cultural aversions. Cultural inversion is related to minority learners' perceptions that certain behaviours are characteristic of the majority and hence inappropriate for them. Cultural inversion is the reluctance of teachers to discuss race and race related issues. Baron and Richardson (1994:234) concur saying, *The motive for inflicting harm on the outgroup is perceived to be conflict of interests. Once individuals perceive such conflict, they tend to dehumanize members of the outgroup, viewing them in negative ways and as undeserving of the respect or kindness usually afforded to other persons.*

Among diversified cultural groups, ethnocentrism is practiced. *Ethnocentrism is the tendency to assume that one's culture and way of life is superior to all others* (Harilal 1996:75). This leads individuals to perceive their values as different from others; they start to build a strong and impermeable boundary between their group and these persons (Baron & Richardson 1994:234). Harilal (1996:75) points out that sometimes ethnocentrism beget racism and prejudice. Other cultures are degraded, and even instructional material reflects only the dominant group's values, attitudes, and viewpoints,

thereby presenting a biased perspective. Particularly in the field of education, this bias is evident in history and literature textbooks. Disadvantaged groups are led to believe that their cultures have had little role in shaping their subcontinent.

It has been revealed that black children compared themselves unfavourably to whites and grow up feeling 'inferior'. Attitudes held by the majority towards one's ethnic group seemed to be consistently reflected in the child's developing attitude towards itself: *the concept of self-hatred was even used to describe how such children reacted to the prejudice and discrimination they experienced.* This compels children from minority group to become highly self-conscious about their status. *Belonging to a particular social group, and being able to define oneself in terms of that group, may have many advantages for a child, but when that group is subject to adverse discrimination and is looked down upon by the rest of society there may be unfortunate consequences for the way in which children define and evaluate themselves* (Gross 2003:493).

Gross (2003:493) makes it clear that discrimination, prejudice and racism have far reaching negative effects in the life of the adolescents, *Racism does not affect their sense of self-worth rather, it is their life chances which are restricted by racism... Institutional racism thwarts their efforts and aspirations, and very likely makes them embittered and angry.* Children grow up understanding that ethnic identity remains constant despite age changes or superficial attributes such as clothing (Gross 2003:492).

Some adolescents are forced by school circumstances to ignore their culture. Loss *of one's culture is a painful experience; it is the loss of oneself. People struggle to retain their culture. Caught in the upheaval of meaning, the newcomer may be confused, upset, frustrated and may easily become aggressive, hostile, or emotionally upset* (Dunn and Griggs 1995:38). This can be aggravated by the fact that most teachers have limited knowledge about cultural groups different from their own and know little about the specific values and characteristics of other groups. They do not provide specific attention to the impact of race, social class and gender on learning (Avery & Walker 1993:27).

Some teachers have the tendency to ignore a learner's race and claim that they treat all children the same. They usually mean that their model of the ideal learner is, for example, white and middle-class, and that all learners are treated as if they are or should be both

white and middle-class. Such treatment contributes to perceptions of inferiority about other cultures and classes (Marshall 1992:208). Irvine (1990:55) and Rattansi and Reeder (1992:63) state that teachers often remark that they are consciously unaware of the race of the learners they teach. They believe that the recognition of a person's race is racist.

By ignoring learners' most obvious physical characteristics, for example, race, these teachers are also disregarding their unique cultural behaviours, beliefs, and perceptions. These are important factors that teachers should incorporate, not eliminate, in their instructional strategies and individualized approaches to learning.

The learners of an ignored cultural group may try to protect their self-esteem by developing ineffective coping styles that alienate them from school and are harmful to academic achievement. Sometimes, they may have a diffused identity, low self-esteem and alienation from both their culture and mainstream. This identity conflict is most likely to develop when the values, attitudes and behaviours espoused in the home and at school are incongruent (Ford 1996:79). The internal conflict they experience results in their inability to adapt to and blend in with people from different racial and cultural backgrounds (Harilal 1996:81).

Dekker and Lemmer (1993:52) concur by saying: *It is naive to assume that desecrated schooling will automatically improve equality in education by simple equalizing access.* Many people tend to react suspiciously, defensively, even aggressively toward individuals who differ in obvious physical characteristics (Kvaraceus et al 1967:9). It is therefore obvious that cultural diversity, sometimes, represents sources of vulnerability to learners. It hinders their ability to function at their full potential and increases their levels of stress which results in deliberate aggression, rebellion against teachers and peers and shunning any behaviour associated with mainstream society.

Cultural diversity could lead to marginalisation, feeling of inferiority and rejection by the dominant group which could aggravate aggressive behaviour.

4.4   CONCLUSION

Children learn many aspects of socialization through interaction with their peers and society at large. Although aggressive children seem to develop as many reciprocated best friendships as do nonaggressive children, these children's best friends also tend to be aggressive. The deviant cliques devalue prosocial behaviour and promote various types of antisocial behaviour, including aggression. As aggressive youths begin to associate with each other in deviant groups, they mutually reinforce each other's antisocial tendencies and form youth gangs. Since antisocial youth gangs tend to be composed of antisocial youths, it is no surprise that gang members are responsible for a disproportionate share of youth violence. This is also reinforced by the society they live in, which is characterized by violence and all sorts of negativity and cruelty. As Bandura (1973:113) confirmed, *Individuals raised in aggressive societies are prone to attribute fighting to man's biological make-up and have difficulty conceiving of people living peacefully.*

The problems illustrated in the previous chapters are a grave concern to all involved with the adolescents. They give a clear picture of severity of the problem of aggression among adolescents. In order to support or bring into question the findings of the literature review in the previous chapters, empirical research is necessary. The empirical research aims at revealing the seriousness of the problem of aggression in reality. The following chapter provides a description of the research design.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapters two to four the literature review revealed that different factors play a major role in influencing the learners' aggressive behaviour. Chapter two provided an exposition of theoretical perspectives and views of theorists on how aggressive behaviour is acquired. Chapter three discussed family factors that play a major role in influencing adolescents to become aggressive. Chapter four exposed community and school factors that are responsible for shaping learners' aggressive behaviour. The factors mentioned above inform this chapter with the aim of supporting or rejecting the predictions of the literature study.

In this chapter the research design to be followed in the empirical investigation of the study will be discussed. It will also outline the specific research questions, null-hypotheses and methods to be used in conducting the study as well as the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methods.

5.2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

In this section the specific research questions that emanated from the literature review will be discussed. Each question that is presented is followed by its corresponding hypothesis.

➢   **Research question 1**

What are frequencies and percentages of the various issues (family climate, school climate, community climate, peer interaction, other social relations, emotional concept) pertaining to aggressive behaviour in school?

➢   **Research question 2 and hypothesis 2**

Is there a significant correlation between various factors (family climate, school climate, community climate, peer interaction, other social relations, emotional self-concept) and the aggression instinct of learners?

Ho2   There is no significant correlation between various factors (family climate, school climate, community climate, peer interaction, other social relations, emotional self-concept) and the aggression instinct of learners.

➢   **Research question 3 and hypothesis 3**

Is there a significant difference in the average aggression instinct of learners with different biographical characteristics?

Ho3   There is no significant difference between the average aggression instinct of learners with different biographical characteristics.

5.3   THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE METHODS

According to Firestone (1987:16) the quantitative method is traditionally associated with the positivist paradigm while the qualitative method is usually based on the interpretative paradigm. The positivist paradigm refers to the acceptance of a stable unchanging, external reality, which can be investigated objectively usually by using an experimental, quantitative method, including the testing of a hypothesis. On the other hand, the interpretative paradigm includes the belief in a reality that consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world. Both paradigms provide different perspectives on reality; none is superior to the other (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:6). Although the two methods are rhetorically different as they encourage the researcher to adopt certain conventions of presentation that advance certain kinds of argument for the credibility of his/her conclusions, the results of the two methods can be complementary (Firestone 1987:20).

5.4   THE USE OF QUANTITATIVE METHODS

One of the paradigms used in this study was quantitative. Such an approach is explanatory in nature.

5.4.1 Procedures followed in the development and implementation of the instrument

This part deals with the method of investigation and procedures followed in the development of the questionnaire (See Appendix A).

Step one - Compilation of items

A literature review enabled the researcher to compile questions suitable for the problem.

Step two - Categorizing of items

The questions compiled with the help of a literature review were categorized into the following broad areas (independent variables):

- ➢   Family climate

- ➢   School climate

- ➢   Community climate

- ➢   Peer interaction (friends)

- ➢   Other social relations
- ➢   Emotional self-concept
- ➢   Aggression instinct (dependent variable)

Step three - Development of the questionnaire

The draft instrument was developed from the items categorized above. It was decided that the draft instrument would take the form of a self-report instrument. The motivation for using a self-report measure was because it allows anonymity. More candid responses can be obtained when using a self-report measure as opposed to a personal interview (Avery 1992:421). This type of questionnaire was also regarded as the most appropriate for scoring purposes.

The questionnaire implemented a Likert-type response scale. Respondents had to respond with a:

'No'

'Undecided' or

'Yes'

Thus, respondents are asked to respond by indicating their degree of agreement or disagreement (Babbie 1998:183).

It was decided that the self-report instrument be formatted into a series of short statements. To prevent misinterpretation of questions, some guidelines when formulating items by Babbie (1998:148-152) were considered.

These are listed as follows:

- ➢ Items must be simple, clear and direct.

- ➢ Each statement should contain only one complete thought.

- ➢ Double-barrelled questions should be avoided.

- ➢ The use of statements that involve double negatives should be avoided.

- ➢ Questions should be relevant.

- ➢ Items must be short.
- ➢ Items that 'vague modifiers' need to be avoided.
- ➢ Respondents must be competent and willing to answer.

5.4.2 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

Validity of the questionnaire is a very important aspect of the research. Two aspects of validity were considered, namely content validity and face validity. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavier (1990:434) content validity refers to whether the items are adequate for measuring what they are supposed to measure and whether they constitute a representative sample of the behaviour domain under investigation,

Face validity, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the questions, on the face thereof, measure the construct it is supposed to measure (e.g. social relations, school climate, aggression instinct, etc).

Both types of validity are determined by judgment of experts. In this regard the questionnaire was evaluated by experts and according to their judgment the questionnaire has content and face validity.

A questionnaire is reliable to the extent that independent administrations of it or a comparable instrument consistently yields similar results under comparable conditions. The statistical programme which was used to analyze the results of this research is the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient. This is a split-halves method. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient is 0.743, which is good for this kind of questionnaire.

5.4.3 Pilot study

To test the items, the instrument was given to one class of Grade 8 learners from Ntsu Secondary School, who was mostly 15 years old. It was discovered that respondents needed guidance as far as language is concerned as they are using English as a second language. Consequently, some items were reformulated, like question 31 in Appendix A ('utterances' changed to 'comments'), question 38 in Appendix A ('flicked out' changed to 'impatient').

5.4.4   Selection of the schools

Seven secondary schools in Thabo Mofutsanyane District, Bethlehem Town in the Free State Province were selected. These schools were selected because they were deemed to represent learners from all backgrounds and different environmental upbringing who have been directly and indirectly involved in aggressive behaviour. Some of these learners were directly involved because they were among the gangsters who were involved in aggressive episodes and perpetrating violence. Others were indirectly involved because they were witnessing this aggressive behaviour in their schools and among their friends. The researcher was also based in this area and had access to these schools. Thus this was a convenient sampling method.

A letter (see Appendix C) was written to the Free State Head of Education to ask for permission to conduct research in the schools. Permission was granted with some conditions:

➢   The questionnaire should be completed outside normal tuition time.

➢   A letter should also be written to the principals (see Appendix E) asking for permission and should be accompanied by the letter from the Free State Department of Education (granting permission).

➢   The report on the study should be donated to the Free State Department of Education (a request).

➢   The findings will be presented to the relevant persons in the Free State Department of Education. This will increase the possibility of implementing the findings.

5.4.5   Selection of participants (sampling)

The following procedure was followed:

- ➢ The principal and staff were informed about the purpose of the study.
- ➢ The name list of learners in each of the Grade ten classes (Grade nine in some of the schools) was obtained.
- ➢ The names of the respondents were selected randomly using each name list.
- ➢ The list of selected names in each school was drawn up.

5.4.6 Application of the questionnaire

The instrument was applied in the natural school environment. The principals, or deputy principals in some of the schools, took it upon themselves to arrange the group of selected learners to meet in one class so that the questionnaire could be administered. The researcher was personally involved in the administration of the instrument in order to clarify misunderstanding. The questionnaire was handed to each learner individually and instructions were read out and explained. Respondents were told to ask for clarity as they are using English as a second language. Most learners completed the test instrument within forty five minutes.

5.4.7 Scoring procedure

Respondents could choose between three options. Options were as follows:

- ➢ 1 = No (N)
- ➢ = Undecided (U)
- ➢ 3=Yes (Y)

There were eighty questions divided into six positive and negative categories (see Appendix A). (These divisions were not indicated on the questionnaire).

5.5 THE USE OF QUALITATIVE METHODS

Another paradigm that was used in this study was a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was taken in order to obtain detailed in-depth knowledge and understanding of aggressive behaviour that secondary school learners exhibited most of the time and the subjective meanings, explanations, beliefs and perspectives of teachers and parents on this phenomenon. Thus, the qualitative research was intended to provide detail and depth

to the more generalisable, but also more superficial, view of aggressive behaviour expected from the quantitative research (Spindler 1982:8).

The qualitative research used was descriptive, exploratory and followed an ethnographic approach in many ways. But for the mere fact that this research was aimed at educational research and is thus utilitarian and pragmatic in nature, it cannot be considered as a true ethnography. The purpose of this research was not strictly cultural interpretation and thus cannot be considered as ethnography. Thus, it is contrary to the goal of true ethnography which aims at helping one understands how particular social systems work. This research only 'borrowed' ethnographic techniques and did not only focus on gaining evidence but also hoped to illuminate and provide understanding of aggressive behaviour exhibited by secondary school learners (Wolcott 1987:53). In this regard, it is phenomenological.

According to Babbie (1988:90) qualitative studies are done for three purposes:

➢ To satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for a better understanding of the phenomenon.
➢ To test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study.
➢ To develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.

An exploratory-descriptive study was carried out to gain insights into the theme of the research. Information in exploratory research can be collected through observation, questionnaires and interviews. For purposes of this part (qualitative measures) information was obtained through interviews (Husen 1997:16-17).

5.5.1 The research instrument

The researcher is considered as the primary instrument of collecting and analyzing data. He/she is the medium through which the interpreted world is presented (Van der Mescht (2002:46). Patton (1990:14) also concurs to this when saying: *Validity in qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork.*

Winegardener (undated:3) stressed that the researcher must conform with the following ethics:

- ➢ Good communication skills.

- ➢ Able to listen effectively.

- ➢ An atmosphere of trust.

- ➢ Establish a rapport with the participants.

- ➢ Sensitivity not only to one's own personal biases, but also to all the verbal and non-verbal data, the overt and hidden agendas, and all the cues and nuances of the people and settings.

Van Wyk (1996:153) outlined some important characteristics of the researcher that may facilitate or hinder the research.

5.5.2 The problem of subjectivity

Van der Mescht (2002:47) puts the qualitative researchers at ease when stressing that it is not necessary for them to apologize for the subjectivity inherent in their method. Far from being a weakness then, the subjective engagement of the researcher is one of the greatest strengths of qualitative research. Subjectivity is regarded as a challenge as it makes strong demands on the empathy and competency of the interviewer. But the researcher, like many other researchers (Van Wyk 1996:169), still believes in 'disciplined subjectivity' and that this can be obtained through the use of different techniques. As a result, the researcher has not only used qualitative and quantitative methodology but also both teachers and parents to enhance the validity and reliability (truth value) of the results.

5.5.3   Data collection

Individual interviews were conducted in a quiet school setting. Individual interviews were chosen so that the interviewees were not influenced by the perceptions and opinions of others and more valid account of their own meaning would result. An attempt was made to create interview protocols that gave the interviewee plenty of time and space to relate their meanings and personal opinions. Van der Mescht (2002:47) warned that many 'semi-structured' interviews are over structured with questions that are closely bound to theory in such a way that respondents have little space to give meaning to their reality through language, metaphor, anecdote and symbol.

5.5.4   Procedure used for conducting interviews

School A was chosen because it was well-known as being characterized by gangsters. The permission to conduct interviews with some of the senior teachers or the principal was requested. The principal granted permission on condition that his school and interviewees would remain anonymous. The names and the information of the senior teachers and the School Governing Body members were given to the researcher. Two senior teachers and two School Governing Body members were chosen and requested to take part in the interview. They agreed although their schedules were very tight. The two senior teachers were interviewed in their school offices. It was very quiet as it was after school hours and other teachers were already gone. One of the parents requested to be interviewed in the same school as he was having the meeting with the principal the very same day. It was also quiet and there were no interruptions. The other parent was interviewed at home and it was very hectic with the children running around. But eventually they were told to visit their friends as there was an important meeting. Thereafter, it was quiet and a situation conducive to the interview was created.

A case study design was chosen. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997:393-394) in a case study, the researcher selects to understand one phenomenon in depth regardless of the number of sites, participants or documents for a study. However, the "one" may be, one school. In this investigation, one school was selected on the grounds that this was an extreme case in the sense that it was a well-known as being characterised

by gangsters. (It was not necessary to select more schools since the aim was not to generalize with regard to schools or to compare schools, but to describe a phenomenon in-depth).

5.5.5   Recording of data

The interviews were recorded using an audio tape recorder. The interviewees were not intimidated by it as it was a very small recorder and they soon forgot it was there. The interviewees were confident and answered the questions freely. At the end they were keen to hear themselves on tape. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and by hand in the informant's own words. However, Van Wyk (1996:164) cautions that transcribed words may lose meaning in terms of tone, volume and emotionality. But this loss of expression was avoided by putting the notes on those aspects in brackets within the transcripts.

5.5.6   Analysis of data

During the process of transcribing an attempt was made to identify common patterns that seem to preoccupy the informant's discussions. The researcher chose to process the data manually instead of using a software programme to identify, manipulate and code data. The data in this study was manageable manually as it involved only a small number of people. Computer programmes are frequently used to manage the huge volume of data qualitative studies produce. Although the usage of manual data processing is decreasing but it gave the researcher the opportunity to explore the meaning of the data (Wolcott 1994:66).

A methodological and systematic analysis of the transcripts was done. Highlighters were used and copies of the interview transcripts cut into different categories and sorted in broad themes. Wolcott (1994:63) concurs with this when saying in his experience categories do not simply emerge from the data on their own but the researcher should help them emerge. Some ethnographers make 'whopping' generalizations from rather modest observations of a few cases. But experienced researchers can tell the difference between generalisation and over generalization. The research tried to avoid over-generalization in this study, although generalizations based on a combination of the quantitative and qualitative findings were made. Most of the time qualitative data generated meanings

which suggested relationships between variables. These were compared with the quantitative findings as hypotheses which were either supported or rejected. When these hypotheses were supported by the quantitative data, they were accepted for the whole population.

5.5.7   Presentation of data

Analyzed data were presented as readable, narrative descriptions and accompanying interpretations. Where possible a balance of quotes was provided so that no participant was over-quoted or omitted. Editing of the interviewees' responses was kept to a minimum although irrelevant material was discarded. Grammatically incorrect words were not edited. The researcher felt that changing the words and correcting the grammar would result in loss of meaning and authenticity.

5.5.8   Measures to ensure trustworthiness

The researcher has an obligation to maintain trustworthiness throughout the study. This was ensured by following Cuba's model of trustworthiness as depicted by De Vos et al (1998:349-350). Four aspects of trustworthiness that should be applied in research are addressed by this model.

5.5.8.1 Truth value ensured by the strategy of credibility

Truth value seeks to establish whether 'the research has established confidence in the truth of the findings' supplied by participants in the study undertaken (De Vos et al 1998:349). This is obtained from the findings of human experiences as lived and perceived by participants. The credibility strategy helps to achieve this and the researcher reports realities in a multiple manner as clearly as possible. The credibility strategies involved the following criteria:

> ➢   Prolonged engagement

In an attempt to establish a positive rapport the researcher should spend reasonable time with the participants speaking the language they prefer most to ensure that they feel free to participate. This helps them to increase their trust in the researcher and even reveal the hidden facts regarding the study undertaken. It also gives the researcher time to make observations. In this case the researcher spent four days at the school where the study was conducted.

> ➢   Reflexivity

The researcher cannot be separated from the study as he/she is part of it. In order to minimize the influence of his/her own feelings as well as experiences that may influence the research, it is necessary to promote reflexivity. In this case reflexivity was achieved by making use of a tape recorder as well as interview notes.

> ➢   Authority of the researcher

Not only is the researcher a qualified secondary school educator and head of department with nine years teaching experience, but has also studied research methodology in education.

> ➢   Triangulations of methods

The researcher used interviews, as well as observation to collect data.

5.5.8.2 Applicability ensured by the strategy of transferability

Applicability refers to the degree to which findings can be applied in other contexts and settings or to some other groups (De Vos et al 1998:349). Qualitatively, this refers to how well threats to external validity have been managed. The researcher relied on available

data from this study in order to ensure transferability. Strategies employed in the study to ensure transferability are as follows:

➢   Nominate sample

Purposive sampling was used in this study. That means that those participants best able to give rich data, were selected.

➢   Dense description

Where background information with regard to participants and the context of the research is given, it enables others to decide how transferable the findings are to their own settings.

5.5.8.3 Consistency ensured by the strategy of dependability

According to De Vos et al (1998:350), consistency refers to whether the findings would be consistent if the enquiry was replicated with the same participants or in a similar context. The focus then not only shifts to the research design, but also to the research methods already discussed.

As far as auditability is concerned, which is the situation whereby a subsequent researcher can follow the decision trail clearly as used by the original researcher, in this study the relevant data has been kept so as to promote an audit trail if necessary.

5.5.8.4 Neutrality ensured by the strategy of confirmability

This implies the freedom from bias in the research procedures and results (De Vos et al 1998:350). It refers to the degree to which findings are a function solely of the participants as well as conditions of the study and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives of the researcher. To ensure that the data reflects on factors influencing aggression, the researcher employed prolonged engagement, reflexivity and a confirmability audit. External analysis of the data has also been conducted by an experienced researcher.

5.6   SUMMARY

In this chapter the research design was described. A combined quantitative and qualitative approach was used. This included a questionnaire and interview as data collection instruments. In the following chapter the results of the research will be discussed.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The data analysis and interpretations of quantitative as well as qualitative research will be discussed in this chapter. It is a considerable challenge to combine quantitative and qualitative results. Combining two paradigms with different connotations but striving for a common goal is highly challenging. Quantitative methods provide statistically generalisable patterns that only tap the surface of the meaning of the phenomenon in question, whereas qualitative data adds depth, detail and meaning at a very personal level of experience. This means, hypothetically, the results of the quantitative research concerning learners' aggressive behaviour in secondary school are analyzed and interpreted while at the same time deeper understanding of this aggressiveness is revealed through qualitative research (Monadjem 2003:232).

6.2   RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

6.2.1   Introduction

The raw data was computerized and analyzed by an expert. The interpretations were done through the help of the following findings that focus on the listed specific problem statements and their corresponding hypotheses.

6.2.2   Research questions and hypotheses

> **Research question 1**

What are the frequencies and percentages of the various issues (family climate, school climate, community climate, peer interaction, other social relations, emotional self-concept) pertaining to aggressive behaviour at school?

> **Research question 2 and hypothesis 2**

Is there a significant correlation between various factors (family climate, school climate, community climate, peer interaction, other social relations, emotional self-concept) and the aggression instinct of learners?

H_{02}   There is no significant correlation between various factors (family climate, school climate, community climate, peer interaction, other social relations, emotional self-concept) and the aggression instinct of learners.

> **Research question 3 and hypothesis 3**

Is there a significant difference between the average aggression instinct of learners with different biographical characteristics?

H_{03}   There is no significant different between the average aggression instinct of learners with different biographical characteristics.

6.2.3   Biographical data of the respondents

Descriptive statistics (focusing on questions 1 to 14) yielded the following biographical data for the sample.

Table 6.1: Biographical data of the respondents

	Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Age	14 years and less 15 to 18 years 19 years and older	13 164 82.8	6.6 21 10.6
Home language	Sotho Zulu English Other	160 16 1 21	80.8 8.1 .5 10.6
Parents' marital status	Married Never married Divorced Other	120 35 15 28	60.6 17.7 7.6 14.1
Father's work	Unemployed Self-employed Gardener/Cleaner/ Labourer Professional employee Other	45 52 35 13 53	22.7 26.3 17.7 6.6 26.8
Mother's work	Unemployed Self-employed Gardener/Cleaner/ Labourer Professional employee Other	76 33 62 8 19	38.4 16.7 31.3 4.0 9.6
Father's education	None Grade 1-7 Grade 8-12	35 62 75	17.7 31.3 37.9
Mother's education	Diploma/Degree None Grade 1-7 Grade 8-12 Diploma/Degree	26 29 64 81 24	13.1 14.6 32.3 40.9 12.1
The type of house you live in	Big house Small house Shack Other	55 107 27 9	27.8 54.0 13.6 4.5
The type of people you live with at home	Loving Aggressive/Violent Uninvolved	188 7 3	94.9 3.5 1.5

	Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Type of discipline at home	Unreasonably strict Strict but reasonable No discipline	19 174 5	9.6 87.9 2.5
Type of friends you interact with at school	Loving Aggressive/Violent Ordinary	110 15 73	55.6 7.6 36.9
Type of teachers you interact with at school	Loving Aggressive/Violent Unreasonably strict Reasonably strict	55 31 14 98	27.8 15.7 7.1 49.5
Type of friends you interact with in the community	Loving Aggressive/Violent Ordinary	71 23 104	35.9 11.6 52.5
Type of community members you interact with in the community	Loving Aggressive/Violent Ordinary	40 38 120	20.2 19.2 60.6

Table 6.1 reflects that most of the respondents do not know the whereabouts of their fathers because when they were asked about their fathers' work a large number of them (26.8%) responded (other), followed by self-employed (26.3%) and then unemployed (22.7%). The (other) might hold a meaning that the respondents were never exposed to or never knew their fathers or it may be that the father is deceased. This concurs with the commonly held view that the absence of paternal authority and the paternal role model leads to a higher rate of aggression and violence (James 1995:50).

The majority (54%) of the respondents live in small houses whereas (27.8%) live in large houses and a small percentage (13.6%) live in shacks and a very small number (4.5%) cannot identify themselves as living in one of the above options. The above percentages are important for aggression and Fraczek and Zumkley (1992:172) supported this when saying: *the socio-economic conditions of the family are related to child aggression* (see section 3.2.6).

A large number (94.9%) of the type of people these respondents live with at home are loving. However, there was a small number of those who are aggressive (3.5%) followed

by those who are uninvolved (1.5%). At home 87.9% of the respondents are exposed to a strict but reasonable discipline, whereas 9.6% are exposed to unreasonably strict discipline and a small percentage (2.5%) are not being disciplined at home. Most of the friends (55.6%) these respondents interact with at school are loving and 36.9% are neither loving nor aggressive (ordinary) and a very small number (7.6%) are aggressive. The large number of teachers (49.5%) these respondents interact with at school are reasonably strict followed by 27,8% who are loving and smaller percentage (15.7%) who are aggressive and even a smaller number (7.1%) are unreasonably strict. The percentages shown above are important for aggression because they prove that some of the people the respondents' live with at home are uninvolved in the respondents' lives, unreasonably strict, do not give a fair discipline and are also aggressive.

In both the type of friends and community members these respondents interact with in the community, the majority (52.5%-friends and 60.6%-community members) are neither loving nor aggressive (ordinary) as compared to (35.9% and 20.2%) who are loving and least percentage of (11.6% and 19.2%) those who are aggressive. The above percentages are also important for aggression and are supported by Valois et al (2002:459) who state, *Low neighbourhood attachment, community disorganization, exposure to violence in the neighbourhood, community laws and norms favourable toward violence all influence individual violence* (see section 4.3.3).

6.2.4   Frequencies and percentages of various factors

Research problem 1:

What are the frequencies and percentages of the various issues pertaining to aggressive behaviour at school?

Table 6.2: Frequencies and percentages for family climate

Item	% No	% Undecided	% Yes
My parents are supportive	7.6	5.6	86.9
There are interesting things to do at home	16.7	7.1	76.3
My parents often fight with each other	75.8	7.6	16.7
My parents stop me from doing bad things	2.5	2.0	95.5
My father is a good example to me	20.7	14.1	65.2
My parents get worried when I unexpectedly come home late	12.1	3.0	84.8
My parents get upset when I fail at school	8.1	1.5	90.4
My parents are indifferent to my feelings	63.1	2.5	34.3
My parents scold me for no apparent reason	79.3	2.5	18.2
My mother is a good example to me	10.1	5.1	84.8
My home is boring	69.7	1.5	28.8
My parents discourage any form of aggression	15.2	3.5	81.3
My father spends little time with me	50.0	19.7	30.3
My parents teach me right from wrong	6.6	2.0	91.4
My father drinks excessively	57.1	17.7	25.3
My poor background stops me from achieving success	84.3	2.0	13.6
My parents allow me to do whatever I want	85.4	3.0	11.6
My mother drinks excessively	82.8	7.1	10.1
My parents punish me whenever I misbehave	14.1	2.5	83.3
My parents encourage me to fight with other children	96.0	.5	3.5

Table 6.2 shows that the family climate of most of the respondents is positive and conducive because most of them (86.9%) indicated that their parents are supportive. This is also confirmed by 81.3% of the respondents who indicated that their parents discourage any form of aggression. However, the following is important for aggression in learners: 16.7% of the respondents witness fighting between their parents and also find home as not interesting at all, 20.7% confirm that their fathers are not a good example to them, 34.3% find their parents indifferent to their feelings, 18.2% are scolded for no apparent reason, 15.2% are being encouraged by their parents to be aggressive, whereas 30.3% feel that their fathers neglect them as they spend little time with them and 25.3% confirm that their fathers drink excessively. The above percentages prove that family climate is responsible for aggressive behaviour expressed by the adolescents. Lauer (1986:449) confirms, *Broken homes and homes in which parents frequently quarrel have been linked to stress in adolescents and stress often results in physical and emotional illness* (see section 3.2.1).

Table 6.3: Frequencies and percentages for school climate

Item	% No	% Undecided	% Yes
I work well at school	22.7	9.1	68.2
In general, teachers allow me to give my point of view	30.3	7.6	62.1
The teachers punish us for no apparent reason	76.8	3.0	20.2
My school offers stimulating activities	15.2	3.5	81.3
I feel great to be at school	5.1	2.5	92.4
My teachers get impatient when I ask for help	83.8	1.0	15.2
There is a 'we' spirit in our class	58.1	2.5	39.4
The teachers ask unreasonable questions in tests	63.1	4.5	32.3
We learn many useful facts at school	10.6	0.0	89.4
We learn many boring things at school	81.3	3.0	15.7
School is useless for our daily lives	92.4	1.0	6.6
The teachers fail to listen to my problems	60.1	1.0	38.9
School can help us improve our living conditions	3.0	.5	96.5
The teachers think I am stupid	87.4	3.0	9.6
I am actively involved in school activities	38.9	.5	60.6

Most of the respondents have a positive attitude towards schools as 92.4% of them
indicated that they feel great to be at school. Although a large number of the respondents
(92.4%) disagrees that the school is useless in their daily lives, there is a contrast when it
comes to the classroom situation. Most of the respondents (58.1%) indicated that they

disagree with the statement that says "There is 'we' spirit in our classroom". In addition, 22.7% respondents responded that they do not work well at school, 30.3% confirm that their teachers do not allow them to give their point of view, 20.2% get punished for no apparent reasons, 15.2% feel that their teachers get impatient when they ask for help, 15.7% find that they learn boring things at school, 38.9% believe that teachers fail to listen to their problems and they are not actively involved in school activities. All this negativity proves that these respondents are in danger of aggressive behaviour. This is confirmed by Nemangwele (1998:17) that new behaviours are learned at school and teachers and peers play a dominant role in shaping adolescents' behaviours either positively or negatively (see section 4.2).

Table 6.4: Frequencies and percentages for community climate

Item	% No	% Undecided	% Yes
Most people fight in my community	35.9	5.1	59.1
I am exposed to positive male or female role models in the community	23.2	2.0	74.7
Community members are a good example to me	53.5	4.0	42.4

Table 6.4 shows that the community members have a negative impact on the respondents. There is indication that most of the respondents (59.1%) agree that most people fight in the community. This is also confirmed by most respondents (53.5%) who disagree that community members are a good example to them. These are important influences on the aggression instinct of learners.

Table 6.5: Frequencies and percentages for peer interaction (friends)

Item	% No	% Undecided	% Yes
I like to please my friends	80.8	2.5	16.7
I have a good relationship with my friends	14.1	2.0	83.8
My friends like to fight with others	70.2	3.0	26.8
My friends encourage me to do bad things	87.9	.5	11.6
I make friends easily	23.2	2.0	74.7
My friends often ignore me	82.8	5.1	12.1
My friends think 1 am boring	84.8	3.0	12.1
I easily loose friends	86.4	.5	13.1

Table 6.5 shows that most of the respondents (83.8%) have a good relationship with their friends and 70.2% of them also disagree that their friends like to fight with others. The other side of the coin is that 11.6% of the respondents are encouraged by their friends to do bad things and 26.8% like to fight with others. This also proves that they are influenced by their friends to be aggressive. Even Robbins (2000:75) and Hartup and Steven (1999:97) confirm that adolescents learn much of their behaviour patterns from modelling the behaviour of others, especially their age group (see section 4.2.2).

Table 6.6: Frequencies and percentages for other social relations

Item	% No	% Undecided	% Yes
I feel uncomfortable in a group of my peers	60.6	.5	38.9
I feel I am rejected by my peers	82.3	3.0	14.6
I am actively involved in social activities	39.9	1.5	58.6
My peers respect me	27.8	2.5	69.7
I have difficulty establishing close relationships	63.1	1.5	35.4
My peers recognise me as important	17.2	17.2	78.8

In table 6.6 most of the respondents feel comfortable in a group of their peers as they indicated by (60.6%) their disagreement with the statement that they feel uncomfortable in a group of peers. This is also confirmed by their involvement in social activities which is indicated by 58.6%. However, the following are important influences on aggression: 38.9% respondents feel uncomfortable in a group of peers, 39.9% are not actively involved in social activities, 27.8% feel that they are not respected by their peers and 17.2% are recognised as important by their peers. This withdrawal and negativity show signs of aggressiveness. As Budhal (1998:65) puts it, *Lonely or isolated adolescents sometimes have a low self-esteem and may be less willing to take risks in normal social settings. This could make it harder for them to form relationships, thereby increasing their chances of loneliness which might heighten aggressive behaviour* (see section 4.3.1).

Table 6.7: Frequencies and percentages for emotional self-concept

Item	% No	% Undecided	% Yes
My life experiences are mostly pleasant	62.6	7.1	30.3
I am happy with who I am	8.6	2.0	89.4
I feel out of place with other people	61.1	6.1	32.8
I am easily hurt by others' comments	52.5	2.5	44.9
Criticism by my friends upsets me	46.5	.5	53.0
My life experiences are mostly unpleasant	31.3	10.6	58.1
I struggle with mood-swings	75.3	2.0	22.7
I get angry easily	64.1	2.0	33.8
I struggle to handle my feelings	71.7	1.0	27.3
I feel that things are too much for me	78.8	3.0	18.2
I feel negative about my future	92.4	1.0	6.6
I mistrust other people	51.0	2.0	47.0
I often feel depressed	70.2	1.0	28.8

Most of the respondents (62.6%) responded negatively to the statement that their life experiences are mostly pleasant. They also feel upset when their friends criticize them as they indicated by 53%. The confirmation is also shown by 58.1% in favour of the statement that their life experiences are mostly unpleasant. Only 30.3% indicate that their life experiences are mostly pleasant. Negative emotional self-concepts are also illustrated by 38.2% of the respondents who feel out of place with other people, 44.9% are easily hurt by others' comments, 22.7% struggle with mood swings, 33.8% get angry easily, 27.3% struggle to handle their feelings, 18.2% feel that things are too much for them, 47.0% mistrust other people and 28.8% often feel depressed. Negative emotional self-concept sometimes leads to aggressive behaviour.

Table 6.8: Frequencies and percentages for aggression instinct

Item	%: No	% Undecided	% Yes
Fighting is good when you are cross with someone	74.2	3.0	22.7
Fighting is bad	11.1	1.0	87.9
When 1 am really upset 1 become aggressive	76.3	1.5	22.2
Belonging to a gang that can fight together is cool	88.4	1.5	10.1

Most of the respondents (87.9%) feel very negative about fighting as compared to only 11.1% of those who feel positive. They also feel very negative about belonging to a gang that can fight together as it is shown by 88.4%. However, 22.7% respondents feel that fighting is good when someone is cross and 22.2% confirm that they become aggressive when they are really upset. This is confirmed by Moeller (2001:36) who maintains that adolescents who are aggressive believe that aggression will yield tangible payoffs and terminate others' noxious behaviour (see section 1.5.3).

Research problem 2:

Is there a significant correlation between various factors and the aggression instinct of learners?

H_{02} There is no significant correlation between various factors and the aggression instinct of learners.

The factors are:
family climate; school climate; community climate; peer interaction (friends); other than friends social relations and emotional self-concept.

Pearson's correlation will be used to test the hypothesis.

Table 6.9: Correlation between various factors and aggression instinct

Factor	Correlation	Significance
Family climate	-.301	p<0.01
School climate	-.122	p>0.05
Community climate	-.091	p>0.05
Peer interaction (friends)	-.224	p<0.01
Other social relations	-.087	p>0.05
Emotional self-concept	-.357	p<0.01

Thus, the null-hypotheses may be rejected on the 1%-level for the correlation between family climate, relations with friends and emotional self-concept, on the one hand, and aggression instinct, on the other hand. In rank order (from high to low) are the correlations between emotional self-concept, family climate, and then relations with peers, with aggression. Although these correlations are low, they are all negative and they are all significant. This means the more negative the family climate or influence of friends are, or the more negative the emotional self-concept of the learner, the more aggressive the learner is, and vice versa. The more positive the family climate or influence of friends are, or the more positive the emotional self-concept of the learner, the less aggressive the learner is.

Research problem 3:

Is there a significant difference in the average aggression instinct of learners with different biographical characteristics?

H_{03} There is no significant correlation between various factors and the aggression instinct of learners.

These characteristics are different:

ages; home languages; parent's marital status; father and mother's work and education; type of house the learners live in; type of people at home; type of discipline at home; type of teachers; type of friends in community and type of community members.

Analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. Tukey's post hoc tests were performed where significant differences were found. In three instances significant differences were found, namely for:

> type of people you live with at home;
> type of friends in community and
> type of community members.

For these three factors, the null-hypotheses may be rejected.

Results appear in Table 6.10, 6.11 and 6.12.

Table 6.10: Mean aggression instincts of learners who live with different types of people at home

Type	N	Mean	Std. deviation	df	f	Significance
Loving	188	1.3271	.44410			
Violent	7	1.7143	.56695	2	4.267	.015
Uninvolved	3	1.8333	.57735			

According to table 6.10, the null-hypothesis may be rejected on the 5% level (p is 0.15 which is smaller than 0.05). This means that the aggression instinct of learners differs significantly depending on the types of people who live with them at home. The means indicate that the learners' aggression instinct is significantly lower (1.3271) if the people at home are loving than if they are violent (1.7143) or uninvolved (1.8333).

This is a confirmation of Berkowitz (1993:187) who states that if children are exposed to aggression, they tend to become aggressively inclined themselves *'violence breeds violence'.* Baron and Richardson (1994:104-106) concur that children who witness physical violence between people at home are likely to use similar actions in their interactions with others. The above researchers also confirm that violent upbringing teaches approval of

violence as well as 'how to hit, what to hit with, and what the impact should be' (see section 3.2.3).

Table 6.11: Mean aggression instincts of learners who live with different types of friends in the community

Type	N	Mean	Std. deviation	df	f	Significance
Loving	71	1.3028	.44101			
Violent	23	1.6304	.54288	2	5.177	.006
Ordinary	104	1.3173	.42982			

According to table 6.11, the null-hypothesis may be rejected on the 1%-level (p is 0.006 which is smaller than 0.01). This means that the aggression instinct of learners differs significantly depending on the types of friends they interact with in the community. The means indicate that the learners' aggression instinct is significantly lower (1.3028) if the friends they interact with in the community are loving than if they are violent (1.6304).

Tedeschi and Felson (1993:101) also revealed that learners become aggressive because their aggression is rewarded by their peers as valuable. Learners who are exposed to and associate with antisocial peers learn to participate in antisocial behaviour through the process of vicarious learning and the principle of reinforcement (Valois, et al 2002:458) (see section 4.2.2).

Table 6.12: Mean aggression instincts of learners who live with different types of community members

Type	N	Mean	Std. deviation	df	f	Significance
Loving	40	1.3000	.42062			
Violent	38	1.5526	.48685	2	4.869	.009
Ordinary	120	1.3000	,44509			

According to table 6.12, the null-hypothesis may be rejected on the 1% level (p is 0.009 which is smaller than 0.01). This means that the aggression instinct of learners differs significantly depending on the types of community members they interact with in the community. The means indicates that the learners' aggression instinct is significantly lower (1.3000) if the members of the community are loving than if they are violent (1.5526).

This is a confirmation of previous research results by Benner (1985:599) who states, *It takes people to make people sick and it takes people to make people better.* Baron and Richardson (1994:128) also concur that most learners become involved in violent actions because of the behaviour of the community in which they live. As Heavens (1999: 97) revealed, aggression that the youngsters exhibit may have social antecedents (see section 4.3 and section 4.3.3)

6.3   RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY

6.3.1   Introduction

The results of the qualitative interviews with a small number of people who are involved in education are presented in this section. Themes that arose from the literature and the analysis of the teachers and the school governing body members are presented. The original unedited words of the informants are used in all quotes although occasionally a word or phrase was added, or changed for purposes of clarity. Such words or phrases are presented in indented, italic and bold. The qualitative results are discussed in terms of literature and quantitative findings of this study.

6.3.2   Aggression exhibited by learners in the school

The two teachers interviewed showed that there is/was problem of aggression in the school. They felt that although the situation may seem calm or better than before, aggression is present and teachers and learners are affected by it.

One of the teachers interviewed in School X noted:

> *The situation now is not like three to four years where the situation was worse and unbearable. During that time our school was a battlefield for different gangs. Even now aggression still exists but does not usually involve outside gangs. Some children still fight with one another.....*

Another teacher interviewed in School X noted a similar concern:

> **The** *real and most embarrassing aggressive behaviour in our school started in 1999. Our school became the talk of the town when most of our learners were involved with gangsters. But now I can say those days are over although some learners are aggressive in our school but in a different way....*

The problems highlighted by the interviewee can be linked to Table 3 of the quantitative survey. Some of the adolescents do not feel happy at school and their life at school is characterized by negativity. This is important because it may stimulate aggressive behaviour.

6.3.3   Home as a bi-product for learners' aggressive behaviour

Two school governing body members (parents) were interviewed to check the extent of aggressive behaviour that learners might be exposed to at home. The interview showed that aggression at some homes occurs frequently and learners are affected by it.

One of the school governing body members (parent) in School X noted:

> *We usually fight, sometimes a small issue becomes a big one. Even the children, because they are grown up now, usually take sides. Most of the matters are solved by fighting because most of them (extended family) cannot reason because they drink too much.*

Another member of the school governing body (parent) in School X concurred:

He (my husband) used to drink a lot and insult everyone around. My children are sometimes rude and stubborn.....

The issues that the interviewee has expressed is confirmed by table 6.2 of the quantitative survey that some adolescents witness conflict between their parents and their fathers drink excessively.

6.3.4   The causes of learners' aggressive behaviour

The teachers as well as school governing body members confirmed that aggression stems from drug abuse, peer pressure, family neglect and misunderstanding, school's harsh discipline, relaxation of disciplinary measures, lack of morals among family and community members and the availability of weapons.

One of the teachers interviewed had this to say about the causes of aggression in secondary school learners:

> *Some of them (learners) are encouraged by their friends. The use of drugs is also a problem and lack of discipline from parents. Teachers are also causing problems..... Some of them still use corporal punishment.*

Another teacher also concurred with the above statement by saying:

> **Most of these** *children are brought up in homes where there is no discipline.....alcohol and dagga are easily obtainable to them (learners) and end up joining the bad gangs. Disciplinary measures (towards learners) have been relaxed by the government.*

One of the governing body members interviewed agreed with the above statements:

> *Another thing that causes aggression is alcohol and extended family.....they (learners) say they have rights. The other thing is the easily availability of guns.*

Another governing body member had this to say about the causes of aggression:

> The *things that are happening in our community...like stealing, raping innocent children and elderly people, abusing children and women, robbing and killing innocent people.... Another problem that is causing aggression is alcohol.....*

The problems expressed by the interviewee are confirmed by table 6.5 of the quantitative research which showed that some (11.6%) of the adolescents are encouraged by their peers to fight. Table 6.4 shows that 53.5% of the respondents do not find community members to be a good example to them.

6.3.5 The availability of weapons

The availability of weapons has been identified as a problem that causes aggression among most of the learners. As one of the interviewee said: *'If a person is having a gun he starts the fight wherever he goes, knowing nobody will touch him'.* The informants gave evidence that these learners are exposed to many dangerous weapons. These weapons tempt them to fight because they think they are untouchable as they are armed.

One of the teachers revealed more about the experiences he had with weapons in his school:

> *These learners carry dangerous weapons to school. We find knives, screw-drivers, long blade pangas, and some domestic but dangerous utensils.*

Another teacher agreed and confirmed the availability of weapons in their school;

> *We have not found guns in our school but weapons like knives are usually found in the bags and pockets of our learners. Some are drawn out during their fights.... More dangerous weapons like pangas and other homemade, long blade knives.....*

The governing body member also elaborated about his experiences with weapons in his neighbourhood:

> *It is terrible outside there, you hear guns all the night. People are always carrying dangerous weapons.... Even small children carry dangerous weapons.....*

Another governing body member also concurred with the above statement when saying:

> **Most** *people carry weapons in our neighbourhood.... People carry guns and knives.... Weapons are a big problem in our community....*

6.3.6   The problem of gangs in the school and neighbourhood

Gangsters have been blamed for causing havoc in the schools and in the community. It has been revealed that most of the learners' interaction with gangsters caused them to be aggressive. Some were pressurized by these gangs to fight. The interviewees revealed that there is a problem of gangsters.

One of the teachers interviewed confirmed that he had some bad experiences with the gangsters in his school:

> *....gangsters were rife in our school three to four years ago. They called themselves 'Dickies and Dogs of war'. These groups were disrupting the school.....they still exist but they no longer strong.*

Another teacher also confirmed that the gangsters were/are a big problem:

> **Gangsters were a** *major problem in our school in 1999-2001. Some of our learners were involved in gangs.... Because our learners belonged to different gangs they were also fighting inside the premises....*

One of the governing body members also highlighted his experiences with gangsters in his neighbourhood:

> *Many people, especially young boys, are dead because of these gangs.*
> *Even in the schools our children are not safe because that is where they are*
> *operating.*

Another governing body member felt very strongly about the misery that these gangs are causing when saying:

> *....(the gangs) are a cause of this senseless fighting, stealing, rape and*
> *hijacking. They make our lives miserable because even our children are not*
> *safe. These gangs also teach our children to smoke dagga and drink alcohol*
> *so as to get power to fight with other gangs.*

The problems revealed by the interviewee can be linked to table 6.4 of the quantitative survey that shows that most of the people in the community like to fight and that community members are not a good example. The respondents in table 6.8 of the quantitative survey confirm this. 10.1% of the respondents believe that belonging to a gang that can fight is good.

6.4   SUMMARY

In this chapter the quantitative results were presented in 12 tables. The qualitative data were also discussed and compared with the quantitative data. In the next chapter the programme that might help to reduce aggressive behaviour will be presented.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PREVENTION PROGRAMMES FOR AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

7.1   INTRODUCTION

Be careful of your thoughts

For your thoughts become your words.

Be careful of your words

For your words become your actions.

Be careful of your actions

For your actions become your habits.

Be careful of your habits

For your habits become your character.

Be careful of your character

For your character becomes

Your destiny.

(Author unknown)

As the literature study and empirical study illustrated the problems of aggressive behaviour in adolescents, it is important to suggest possible guidelines for prevention programmes aimed at minimising aggressive behaviour. Some of these programmes have been developed to address the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural problems exhibited by aggressive learners as well as school, family and community programmes. They are suitable for implementation by teachers in the school, parents at home, and by community members. This implies that problems of aggression or aggressive behaviour can be addressed in various ways by all those who play a prominent role in the life of learners.

For the proper implementation of these programmes it is recommended that all the stakeholders in the aggressive learner's life receive training. The implementation of the programmes should not be reduced to an isolated hour in the learner's week, but should permeate his or her educational experience. Consequently, the parent's consent for the learner's involvement in these programmes should be obtained and parental training is also advisable. What is happening at home is as critical as what is happening in the school. This calls for all critical subsystems within the school that interact with the aggressive learner to be also involved in training at some level.

Too much emphasis, when it comes to intervention programmes, is centred on the roles of the educators, parents and administrators ignoring the community outside the school. It is also advisable that community systems should bring members of those systems into the intervention effort and should also receive some sort of training (Larson & Lochman 2002:72).

7.2   OBTAINING PARENTAL CONSENT

The need to obtain the informed consent of parents or legal guardians prior to delivering direct intervention services to learners by school-based professionals or educators is established in the South African Schools Act (SASA). It is imperative to obtain consent from parents or legal guardians because frequently learners who have been selected for participation have behavioural difficulties in multi environments, including the home. The process of obtaining informed consent allows the educators to further assess and understand how the learner's anger and aggression are expressed and managed at home (Larson and Lochman 2002:61).

Inviting parents or guardians to come into the school to hear an explanation of the programme and provide consent is preferred. Too frequently, school contacts with parents of disruptive, aggressive learners are of a negative nature. Usually a parent is called in by the teacher or the principal to account for his or her child's misbehaviour. Thus, inviting the parent or guardian for a brief discussion of the intervention can be a welcome break in that pattern. It is very important that the parent or guardian see these programmes as a

positive, proactive feature of the child's total educational experience, rather than a disciplinary, punitive reaction to past misbehaviour (Larson and Lochman 2002:61).

A message, such as 'We have had it with your child. We are sending him/her to the counselling or intervention' should be avoided at all costs. The parents should not leave with the belief that their child is being 'sentenced' to a counselling group, but rather that the school is responding to a learning need in much the same way it might for any other skill deficit. An informed consent form should include three elements: *It should be knowing, competent and voluntary.*

➢ Knowing consent

It implies that a parent has a clear understanding of what the intervention or programme entails for his/her child.

➢ Competent

The competent means that the individual giving consent is a legal adult who has not been judged incompetent in a legal hearing.

➢ Voluntary

The concept voluntary means that the parents or guardians should not feel coerced in any way to provide their consent for the intervention.

If the educator has carefully explained why the learner was selected and what the intervention entails, it will be much easier for parents to sign consent forms. By bringing the parent or guardian into the school for consent, the school has clearly sent a message: 'We have done all this screening and assessment, and we have decided on this. Now we want you to sign the consent form' (Larson & Lochman 2002:64).

7.3   INVOLVING PARENTS IN THE INTERVENTION

Larson and Lochman (2002:6) reveal that school personnel are often inclined to point their fingers at parents when it comes to attributing causes for the disruptive, aggressive behaviour of their children. However, this attribution can be substantially accurate in many cases in the light of the discussion in Chapter three about the possible role of families in the development of aggression. Even school-based professionals often ask: "How can we provide one set of skills in school, only to have the learners go home to learn the opposite set of skills? If the parents continue to use aggressive disciplinary procedures, model aggression in their interactions, fail to monitor aggression in siblings, and do not discourage violent television or video games, isn't the school swimming against an irresistible current?" (Larson & Lochman 2002:65).

The positive aspects of the above question is that if such parents can be persuaded to participate fully in a well designed and structured parent management training (PTM) programme, positive results can be achieved. It is believed that if parents monitor the child's behaviour inside and outside the school, and also recognise, reinforce and model prosocial behaviour, a reduction in aggressive behaviour can be produced (Larson and Lochman 2002:65). This idea of parental training was also reinforced by Miller (1994:85) when identifying six critical parental competencies for training:

➤   Tracking, labelling and pinpointing

Parents should be taught to monitor their children's behaviour more effectively, to avoid global descriptions of the behaviour ('He never does what I ask him/her to do') and to monitor antecedent and consequent events around misbehaviour.

➤   Emphasis on positive child behaviour

Parents should be taught to recognise and attend to prosocial behaviour in their children with appropriate social reinforcers.

➤   Giving appropriate compliance commands

The importance of clear, unambiguous communication from the parent to the child should be emphasised and the necessary skills should be consolidated.

➢   Nonphysical discipline

Parents should be introduced to and trained in a variety of discipline procedures, such as time-out, response cost, and ignoring antisocial behaviour.

➢   Effective communication

Learning how to listen actively, emphasise, resolve conflicts, and cope with personal feelings, anger or depression cued by the child's misbehaviour should be practised.

➢   Troubleshooting and generalisation

Parents should be taught how to apply skills across different settings and to increase collaborative efforts with the school.

Some years ago, many separate approaches to parent training began to unfold. One of those approaches was 'Behaviour Management Parent Training' (BMPT). This approach assumed a predominant role due to the vast amount of empirical work supporting its conceptual base and therapeutic efficacy. It began as an approach to train parents to use the same behaviour modification techniques such as social reinforcement, extinction and token economy that were used by behaviour therapists to reprogramme the social environment. It was designed to increase parents' control over their children's behaviour. The programme emphasises five skills: giving attends, giving rewards, ignoring, issuing commands, and implementing time-out. The manner in which BMPT programmes are delivered can vary from group didactic instruction to intense, closely supervised individual training (Cavell 2000:28).

Parents of aggressive learners – regardless of their contribution to the etymology or maintenance of their children's aggression – face a daunting task. They are expected by

family, friends and professionals to both love and discipline their children. Their failure to perform these tasks adequately may leave them tired, discouraged, and perhaps even resentful. Outsiders are often unable to appreciate the skill and effort needed to turn the tide on a developing aggressive child. Building a productive alliance with these parents is one of the more challenging tasks a school has to face. Most parents with aggressive children want to know what they can do to make things better in their troubled family. In fact, for some parents, the strength of the alliance will depend more on the skills and information they receive than on the emotional support they are provided (Cavell 2000:71).

Instruction, modelling, and rehearsal with feedback are the three most widely used methods of training parents. The task of helping parents learn new skills involves these tried-and-true approaches to training and teaching. Consider the task of instructing parents to use a technique such as time-out. Parents often respond to the topic of time-out with phrases like, 'Oh, I have tried that already and it did not work with him/her'. This kind of remark suggests that parents will filter any new information about time-out. Thus in this situation, processing parents' concerns about time-out would be helpful (Cavell 2000:73).

The value of demonstrating how to use a given parenting skill should not be a regular part of training. Even if parents are familiar with the technique, they may benefit from a thorough demonstration by the practitioner, especially if the demonstration involves their own child. Another approach to live modelling is to have parents play the part of the misbehaving child. Parents often gain valuable insights into their child's tendencies and motivations, and they benefit from seeing the practitioner respond to negative behaviours the child is likely to use (Cavell 2000:74).

Instruction and modelling are usually insufficient for teaching parents the skills that are covered in most parent training programmes. Until parents have an opportunity to try their hand at what has been explained and demonstrated, it will be unclear to them and to the practitioner whether the skill has been successfully acquired. For parents who are deficient in a particular skill area, rehearsal and positive feedback are essential to the process of gradually shaping the parenting behaviours they will need (Cavell 2000:76).

Delivering parent programmes in a school setting is seen to be advantageous. The parent-education programme is designed to serve a large number of parents simultaneously. The assumption is that if large numbers of parents had even minimal information about effective parenting, then the community as a whole would experience lower levels of delinquency and related problems (Cavell 2000:216).

7.4   THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Referring learners to the principal for incidences of aggressive behaviour has been shown to be one of the most frequently selected interventions in the school setting. Being sent to be scolded or otherwise disciplined by the principal is still employed frequently and is considered a testament to how far some schools have yet to go in understanding chronic childhood anger and aggression. The principal has limited choices – talking with the child about the behaviour, holding the child out of class for a while, calling the parents in or suspending the child from school. None of these interventions has been demonstrated to have a lasting effect on chronically aggressive behaviour (Larson & Lochman 2002:71).

In many cases, it is the same children already identified for intervention that the principal sees everyday for one form of misbehaviour or another. This might make the principal less interested in the intervention effort as it is not producing change. So, it is advantageous for the educators responsible for intervention to open the lines of communication with the principal early in the process. An information session, in which a brief explanation of the nature of the intervention, should be given to the principal. The school personnel need to receive some sort of training and be informed that the programme is a long-term effort and that change will come slowly and in small, rather than grandly observable, ways.

7.5   THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

As has been emphasized, the programmes address the needs of the child not only as a member of the school and family but also the community, which makes it very crucial to bring members of community systems into the intervention. But it is important for practitioners to be aware of potential confidentiality issues when communicating with nonschool or nonfamily members about the treatment of minor children. One of the

considerations in attempting to involve the community is an assessment of what it may have to offer. If a school has a police liaison officer who has had contact with any of the group members, he/she can be an useful addition to the intervention effort. It thus becomes important to provide a brief in-service training session or explanation to the officer ahead of the time and offer suggestions as to how he/she might assist by referencing the anger control skills during any interventions with the group members (Larson and Lochman 2000:73).

Now that the groundwork for the involvement of parents, school personnel and other individuals in the community has been laid, the programmes designed to help aggressive learners reduce their aggressive behaviour will be discussed.

7.6   INVOLVING AGGRESSIVE LEARNERS IN THE INTERVENTION

In this section possible prevention programmes that could be implemented to address the problem of aggressive behaviour are briefly discussed. These programmes are developed to target the cognitive, emotional and behavioural problems exhibited by aggressive learners. The family, school and community programmes will also be highlighted.

7.6.1   Cognition-targeted programmes

Cognitive approaches are based on the hypothesis that learners' aggressive behaviour is related to their thought processes. It is believed that changing their thought processes will result in altering their aggressive behaviour. Aggressive learners might lack appropriate social interaction skills. Programmes designed to improve youth's social problem-solving skills seem promising. Through games, academic activities, and stories, learners are taught a structured, step-by-step approach to solving interpersonal problems. Participants are taught to generate alternative solutions, consider the potential consequences, weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each solution, and then choose the best solution (Moeller 2001:297).

7.6.2   Emotion-targeted programmes

Anger Control Training (ACT) attempts to teach learners how to control angry feelings that can initiate aggressive behaviours. In anger coping programmes learners are taught to identify the emotional and physiological signs that precede anger and to use inhibitory self-directions ('Stop, Think') to control their automatic aggressive responses. Social perspective-taking tasks are also used to help children identify the intentions of others. The social problem-solving component helps children make appropriate decisions (Moeller 2001: 282).

The primary objective of Anger Control Training is to teach adolescents to control and better manage their anger. It teaches them *what not to do* in anger- instigating situations. Freindler (1984) cited in Reddy and Goldstein (2001:50) outlined a sequence of behavioural chains for anger prevention. During ten sessions, adolescents are taught to deal with provocations (daily hassles) by following a series of behavioural steps that identify:

➢   Triggers

External events and internal appraisals that serve as provocation to anger.

➢   Cues

Physical and kinesthetic experiences that indicate the presence and arousal level of anger to the adolescent.

➢   Reducers

Strategies that reduce the youth's level of anger further, such as deep breathing, imagery, and counting backwards.

➢   Reminders

Use of self-statements that further decreases anger arousal by disputing and replacing internal triggers.

➢ Self-evaluation

Technique to appraise how well the youth is implementing the previous steps.

7.6.3 Behaviour-targeted programmes

This approach may be used by both educators and parents. It is based on social learning and operant conditioning theories of aggression and on Patterson's coercion theory of conduct disorder (Moeller 2001:299).

➢ Modelling

A model performs the desired response while the child observes.

➢ Social reinforcement

The child receives some positive social interaction (e.g. verbal praise, a hug, a pat on the back) contingent on performing the desired response.

➢ Activity reinforcement

The child is allowed to perform some desired activity contingent on performing the desired response.

➢ Shaping

The child is first reinforced for some approximation of the desired response. Once this first approximation has been learned, the child is then reinforced for a better approximation. This procedure is repeated until the child is making the desired response.

➢ Token systems

The child receives some type of symbol ('a token') contingent on performing the desired response. These tokens are later traded in for some type of desired 'back-up' reinforcement.

➢ Response cost

Something that the child values is taken away contingent on the child performing the undesirable response.

7.6.4 School, family and community programmes

Unlike other approaches, which locate psychopathology within the child, the under-mentioned approaches view the child's antisocial behaviour as a symptom of malfunctioning of the family, the school and community.

7.6.4.1 Family intervention models

Multisystemic therapy is based on all members of the family participating in the therapy sessions, which occur either in the home or in community settings. The initial assessment involves an attempt to determine strengths and weaknesses within the child, the individual parents, the marriage, the sibling subsystem, the school, and the child and family's peer and social networks. After the assessment, interventions such as joining, reframing, and enactment may be used. Issues such as the parents' marital adjustment, parent-school relationships, and the child's peer relations are addressed. Individual treatment of the child, the parents, or both may also be included in the therapy (Moeller 2001:306).

7.6.4.2 School programmes

The under-mentioned programme involves interventions at the level of the school, the class, and the individual (Moeller 2001:289).

➢ Class rules

Each class should have one or more specific and explicit rule regarding aggressiveness.

➢ Praise for anti-aggressive behaviour

Learners should receive praise from teachers for pro-social behaviour and behaviour that attempts to counteract bullying.

➢ Serious talks

The message must be clear that the school does not accept aggressive behaviour and will see to it that it comes to an end.

➢ Talks with parents

It is often appropriate for the school to arrange talks with the parents to establish communication with parents and support them in developing influence over their children.

➢ Peer mediation

Peers should be trained in negotiation skills (the mediators) to help other learners (the disputants) resolve their difficulties through discussion rather than through aggression.

➢ The green chair

This was developed by Lipertz (2001:69) as a motivation for teenagers to replace aggressive behaviour with words. It emphasizes the practice of putting words to aggressive feelings, rather than having them impulsively acted out. Learners are not given the permission to leave a situation (acting out) rather they have the permission to sit in the green chair and say anything they want to say.

7.6.4.3 Moral education training

Training designed to enhance children's values and moral reasoning is critically important for the prevention of aggression. Youngsters exposed to moral dilemmas, in a group context where children are reasoning at different levels, results in cognitive conflict. The resolution of cognitive conflicts frequently enhances children's moral reasoning to that of higher-level peers in the group. It is believed that Kohlberg's moral reasoning in

combination with Anger Control Training provides a comprehensive and effective arsenal for reducing aggression in youth (Reddy & Goldstein 2001:50).

7.6   THE RADS PEER SUPPORT (RPS) PROGRAMME

This programme has been designed and approved by the Free State Education Department to be used in the schools around Free State Province. A group of young people, representing a wide population of youth, are selected as a peer support team to reinforce and strengthen the Life Skills programme in particular schools. Specifically trained adults or educators oversee and co-ordinate the programme. The main purpose of the programme is to saturate the school environment with activities, information and events that reinforce the key messages of the classroom-based learning, thus strengthening the Life Skills learning programme. The vision of the RADS, as this peer support team is called, is that they assist each other to overcome life's hurdles and help each other make decisions and choices that will not lead to regret. If mistakes or wrong choices have been made, they are encouraged to make the best out of the situation (Edwards-Meyer 2003:10).

7.6.1   Important aspects in the RPS programme

The following are important aspects of the RPS programme:

➢   Scientific basis
        A programme based on well-conducted and thorough scientific research. Programme should contain characteristics that are effective in changing risky behaviour amongst young people.

➢   Co-ordination
        Specifically trained adults who are able to demonstrate and model relevant skills need to co-ordinate and oversee the programme activities. This should preferably be the Life Orientation educators.

> Representation
>
> The RPS team must represent a wide social composition of the school community.

> A variety of methods
>
> A wide range of structured and semi-structured methods and activities, based on the needs of youth and the goals of support groups.

> Peer team involvement
>
> Gradual involvement of peer team members themselves in determining the training activities, and in the development and distribution of programme information.

> Meaningful training
>
> Trainees should feel their training is meaningful, special, and based on their needs and existing skills.

> Interactive and experiential
>
> Activities must be interactive and experiential, with coaching and feedback. They should include role rehearsals and practical assignments.

> Wide support
>
> Support of educators, administrators, parents and other learners in school and support of relevant groups and caregivers in a community are vital.

7.6.2 Advantages of a peer support programme

It is assumed that youth learn more easily and more willingly from peers. More youth might be reached and gathered easily. It appeals to a wider range of learners (diverse). Peers are better placed to serve as role models and informal influences. Collective norms for acceptable and responsible behaviour might be developed. It is easier for peers to use learner-centred techniques. Youth have more time available for activities than educators. Peer support has a flexible working schedule. Learners can also be reached after school hours. Peers are more available to recognise peers-in-need. Peers are often more approachable. The peer support team can provide linkages with health and other community services.

7.6.3   Roles of the RPS team

The following are the roles of the RPS team:

➢   Provide positive role models for learners at school

Peer support team members play important roles as informal influences in natural contexts. They become liked and respected. At social events, they can positively influence their peers. The RPS team should be selected because they are genuine, not because they are flawless. They are in the process of developing integrity, and not there to please their friends. The co-ordinators should not be tempted to choose volunteers or the best academic performers (Edwards-Meyer 2003:17).

➢   Reinforce positive values and attitudes

The transmission of knowledge should not be overemphasised at the expense of time needed to examine attitudes, develop norms and practise skills. The peer support team can play a vital role regarding the instilling, as well as the strengthening and reinforcement of values and attitudes. Values and attitudes such as integrity, honesty, responsibility, kindness and caring are essential for character building. Young people can spot behaviour-change messages very easily. It is also necessary to approach them indirectly with challenges concerning attitudes, norms and behaviour (Edwards-Meyer 2003:18).

➢   Provide opportunities for youth to help one another

If there is shame and stigma attached to a problem, youth will be reluctant to talk about it or ask for help, and therefore receive no help or support. For example, consider a class of 40 learners. How many may be worried about their own HIV status? How many have experienced physical or sexual violence and/ or have an alcoholic parent? Which youth are hurting, and how are they coping? Peer support training and activities should be designed to make it easier for learners to ask for help directly and indirectly. The right to privacy is guaranteed in the South African Constitution, but this does not mean that people have to suffer in isolation. Peer team members should be trained to recognise signs of

distress among youth and offer help, and understand referral procedures. This is not the same as invading someone's privacy. The power of silence should be fought. To speak out is not shameful or a reason to accuse anyone, but should lead to assistance and support. Although professional services cannot meet everyone's needs, everything possible should be done to assist those who need help. Affected youth need to realise that they are not alone, they are not crazy or abnormal, it is often not their fault, there are ways that they can take control (Edwards-Meyer 2003:19).

➤   Empower learners through meaningful involvement

Activities that provide opportunities for the youth to get the chance to think, consider and evaluate themselves should be encouraged. Active experiential learning, for example small group discussions, role plays, debates, games and other interactive methods should be planned. A quality learning programme with measurable learning outcomes that build progressively on each other should be applied. Senior, experienced peer support team members could adapt curricula in collaboration with the peer co-ordinator. Activities should not be presented in tightly controlled situations. Learners should be allowed to say things in the safety of the group, even if they are inaccurate, unhealthy, offensive and even immoral. It is better for them to say such things where they can be argued and discredited, especially by other learners, than to simply say them, unchallenged, on the sports field or at a party. Structured activities can create opportunities for the peer team to recognise peers who need more help and assistance (Edwards-Meyer 2003:20).

7.6.4   Selection and recruitment of the RPS team

RPS team members should be recruited and selected from a wide range of learners in order to be representative of all cultural groups, and inclusive of both genders. Activities should be planned and carried out by a representative group. They should receive training to provide them with the information, knowledge, values, attitudes and skills needed to function in their roles. They should be encouraged to participate for one to two years. Parental consent should be obtained (Edwards-Meyer 2003:22).

7.7   POSSIBLE SUGGESTED PROGRAMME

The programmes tabled above seem to target only a certain area in a given time, hence the suggestion of the 'Adolescent in Totality Programme'. The programme addresses the whole being or totality of the adolescent.   The key elements of the programme are depicted in Figure 7.1

Figure 7.1: Adolescent in totality
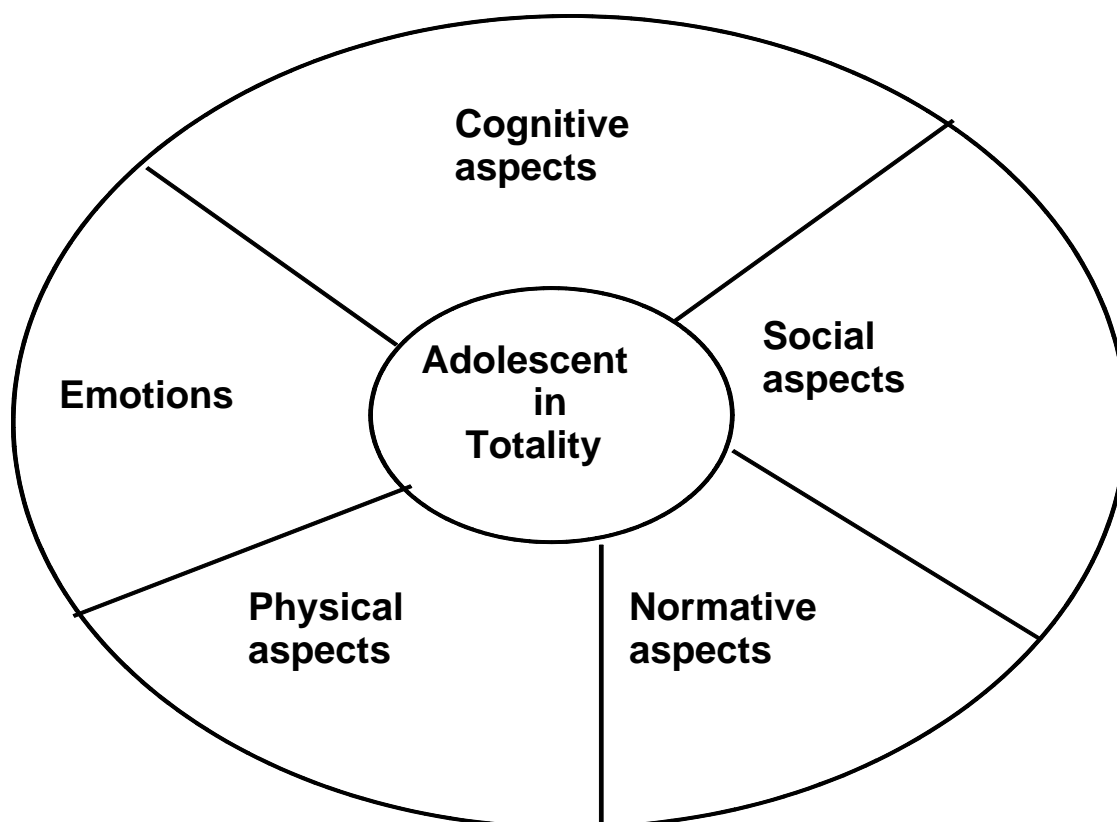
All aspects of the adolescents should be addressed by the programme as follows:

➤   Cognitive

The thought processes of adolescent should be modified through games, academic activities and problem-solving activities which improve reasoning skills, goal-directed behaviour and focus of attention.

➤   Emotions/Affective

Adolescents should be given tasks that will teach how to control their anger. Tasks where they are required to make appropriate decisions, like social problem-solving and case studies, should be encouraged.

➤   Physical

The physical changes that the adolescents are experiencing should be recognised and explained in a warm manner. The point of understanding and acceptance should be encouraged.

➤   Normative

The activities that involve the feeling of personal responsibilities and putting the interests of others before oneself should be practised.

➤   Social

Socialisation processes should be encouraged through appropriate activities. Through these activities, adolescents should be exposed to appropriate behaviour, playing approved social roles and developing social attitudes.

Table 7.1: Adolescent in totality

Cognitive	Emotions	Physical	Normative	Social
Knowledge	Self-concept	Acceptance of physical change	Personal responsibility	Social expectations
Perception	Attitudes	Understanding	Others' interest	Learn to behave
Judgement	Motivation	Appreciation	Models	Socialisation
Consciousness	Stability	Satisfaction	Conformity	
Recognising	Social skills		Conscience	
Reasoning	Personal belief		Social interactions	
Attention	Psychological health		Moral values	
Ideals	Social competence			
Coping responses				
Problem-solving				

7.7.2   Recovery room

The feasibility of the above programme in poor communities might be impossible, hence the proposal of the 'Recovery room'.

Throughout the literature it has been revealed that anger is a conflict that burns within an individual. It leads to aggressive behaviour and a desire to hurt. It is up to that individual who experiences it to re-direct it to a less hurtful channel towards others. Most people feel that if anger is experienced it has to be taken out, one way or the other, for someone to feel better. Most programmes suggest ways on how anger should be expressed or vented rather than taken out, hence the Recovery room.

The Recovery room can be secured even in poor communities. In a school setting, one classroom can be identified as the Recovery room. No tuition should take place in this

room except aggression related issues. The room should be filled with all the alternatives to decrease anger. People should take a walk, drive around, punch the walls, keep themselves busy when they feel angry rather than attacking those who make them angry.

This is what the room should look like:

➢ Spacious

To allow free movement, jogging and extensive exercise.

➢ Punching bags (self-made)

To re-direct anger (punch bags instead of other human beings).

➢ Writing boards

To write all the feelings being experienced at that moment, for example:
What makes him/her angry.
What is he/she expects to be done.

➢ Posters

To show the feelings of others when someone is aggressive.

To show the consequences of aggression.

➢ Activities booklet

Compiled activities that will help in dealing or managing anger.

➢ Guidance Teacher

To listen and solve problems immediately.

To teach learners the power of meditation (close eyes, think positively, relax).

To give learners activities that will help to decrease anger.

Angry adolescents should run to this room whenever they feel very angry in order to vent their anger. They should be encouraged to use some of the above alternatives.

7.8   CONCLUSION

In this chapter programmes designed to directly and indirectly reduce aggressive behaviour have been described. It has been revealed that schools can intervene effectively in the lives of aggressive learners in many ways and by involving all the stakeholders in the intervention programmes. By this inclusive intervention the problem of aggressive behaviour will be tackled in all angles. In the next chapter the conclusions of the whole study and recommendations will be presented.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1   INTRODUCTION

As indicated in chapter one, adolescents' aggressive behaviour is a concern for society and stems from different factors. It was therefore the purpose of this study to determine which factors contributed to the onset and development of these problems.

A literature study was done to determine the perspectives of the principal theorists concerning aggressive behaviour and factors that contributed to the aggressive behaviour of adolescents were identified. The factors identified in the literature study related to the family, school and society.

An empirical investigation was conducted to support or reject the predictions of the literature study. It was discovered that family, school and society play an important role in influencing adolescents to adopt aggressive behaviour

8.2   CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY

The literature study provided key information concerning adolescents' aggressive behaviour and the contributory factors. The information, obtained from the literature study was used to develop an item inventory that assisted in the compilation of the questionnaire and interview questions. The questionnaire and the interview questions were used in the empirical investigation to confirm the findings of the literature study.

8.2.1   Theoretical perspectives on acquisition of aggressive behaviour

In chapter 2 (section 2.3) instinctual behaviour theory identified that instincts, genes, pain-elicited reflexive fighting, hormones, brain structures and inborn aggressive drive cause aggressive behaviour. In section 2.4 frustration-aggressive theory suggests that frustration produces aggressive energy which is responsible for activating aggressive behaviour. When a person is frustrated, aggressive energy is created and that energy activates dominant aggressive responses.

In section 2.5.1 the cognitive neo association model was discussed. Its focus is on the emotional and cognitive processes that underlie the frustration-aggression link. It has been emphasised that frustration arouses negative affect that leads directly to instigation to aggression. However, in section 2.5.3 Buss's theory of aggression revealed that aggressive behaviour is learned through rewards and punishments. In section 2.6 the two-factor theory of emotions suggests that people experience anger because they think of themselves as being angry. This was confirmed in section 2.6.1 where it was shown that if a person insults another who is already in an arousal state, the insult will surely produce additional arousal which in turn intensify aggressive behaviour.

In section 2.8 the social learning theory proposes that aggression does not depend on internal drives but is learned through observing others. Nobody is born knowing how to fight but they learn how to behave aggressively through interaction with others.

8.2.2   The family as an external determinant of aggressive behaviour

In chapter 3 (section 3.2.1) divorce, separation and single parenthood were identified as factors that cause major stress for the whole family. Parents who are in this state are so distressed that they cannot adequately fulfil their noble calling of raising their children for responsible citizenship. Because children are not well looked after and guided, they exhibit behavioural problems. These behavioural problems can be seen in anger, shock, despair, emptiness and restlessness. Some children may imitate the aggression shown by their parents.

In section 3.2.2 domestic violence has been identified as another factor that creates problems for the entire family. This is a factor that leads to divorce, separation and single parenthood, but some parents do not resort to divorce and separation for the sake of the children, as they usually say. They persevere despite continual conflict and coldness for their families' well-being, exposing their children to violent episodes. This exposure to violence becomes so traumatic for adolescents that it affects their level of becoming and acceptable norms. Adolescents who have experienced family violence are likely to feel negative about their parents and become aggressive. They learn behaviours from others while still relatively young. For them, violence becomes an acceptable response to deal with a threatening situation.

Abusive parents discussed in section 3.2.4 cause turbulence in the adolescents' world. Adolescents who are from abusive families have poor emotional and behavioural control. The family sets the context in which children and adolescents learn to be aggressive. Having experienced abuse and disrespect from their parents, adolescents learn aggression and exploitation as a means of negotiating life. Adolescents who are exposed to abuse show behaviour problems such as self-destructive behaviour, non-compliance, passion disposition, hostility, sullenness, low self-esteem, social detachment, depression, lack of socialization and most of all, excessive aggression.

Substance abuse as discussed in section 3.2.5, is another factor that exposes adolescents to the unbearable situation whereby their parents often abuse and neglect them and may assault each other. This situation causes children to be terrified, develop behaviour problems and become confused, hostile, rebellious, insecure and defensive. Some adolescents end up learning survival strategies by being aggressive.

Socio-economic status of parents, as dealt with in section 3.2.6, has been identified as associated with adolescents' problem behaviour. Experience of intense economic stress produces negative responses within the family. In disadvantaged families parents tend to be indecisive, disorganized and rejecting. Economic deprivation can be a major source of unhappiness and the adolescents may reveal this unhappiness through aggression.

8.2.3   School and society as an external determinant of aggressive behaviour

In chapter four (sections 4.2 and 4.2.1) it is stated that the school plays a dominant role in shaping the behaviour of adolescents either positively or negatively. If the discipline is excessive, it can have a harmful effect on children because the frustration that harsh or excessive discipline causes leads to hostility which subjects the adolescent to be violent at an adult age. In section 4.2.2 peer pressure is also influential in adolescents' lives because sometimes they learn aggressive behaviour from their peers whom they regard as their role models. The peer group not only provide support, fairly clear norms, and structure that most adolescents want but also may compel them to conformity whereby their moral standards are violated.

In section 4.3.2 it was indicated that gangs can be a considerable influence in the adolescent's life. If adolescents are having trouble, they turn to one another and form a gang. Each gang considers itself superior to the other and is always ready to shoot and terrorize others to prove its superiority. The gang members become desensitized to violence and see violence as the only way to resolve disputes.

8.3   CONCLUSION FROM EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

As this study included two methods, quantitative and qualitative, the conclusions from both methods will be discussed.

8.3.1   Quantitative survey

It is stated in chapter 6 that some adolescents resort to violence because the people they live with at home are violent. Some are exposed to unreasonably strict discipline. Even their friends and teachers are sometimes aggressive.

Tables were drawn in order to show the results from testing the null-hypothesis. Most depicted that one way or another aggression is present in adolescents' surroundings. Table 6.2 show that family climate exposes adolescents towards aggressive behaviour. Table 6.3 also shows that school climate is an important factor that contributes to

adolescents' aggressive behaviour. Most respondents felt that they do not get along in the classroom.

Table 6.4 shows that the community members have a negative impact on the adolescents. It was revealed that fights are common in the community and community members present a bad example to adolescents. Table 6.5 shows that adolescents are encouraged by their peers to misbehave and to be aggressive. Table 6.7 shows that most of the adolescents find life unpleasant which confirms the existence of negative self-concept. This negativity encourages aggressive behaviour. Table 6.8 reveals that most adolescents do not like to fight and do not like being involved with a violent gang. However, a small number of adolescents believe that fighting is good.

According to Tables 6.9, 6.10, 6.11 and 6.12 adolescents who are exposed to a positive family climate, school climate and relations with peers have less aggressive instincts. This means the more negative the family climate or influence of friends is, the more aggressive the learners are.

8.3.2   Qualitative survey

The interviewees showed that there is a problem of aggression exhibited by learners in the school as well in the society. The quantitative survey tables together with the qualitative survey report reveal that aggressive behaviour is rife among the adolescents.

In section 6.3.2 it is revealed that some adolescents are not happy at school and their life is characterised by negativity, which encourages aggressive behaviour. In section 6.3.3 the interviewees confirmed that the home can be labelled as a contributor to learners' aggressive behaviour. The interviewees (section 6.3.4) indicated that drugs, lack of discipline, community's ill-behaviour and lack of morals are the cause of aggressive behaviour. They also revealed that availability of weapons and presence of gangs (sections 6.3.5 and 6.3.6) expose adolescents to aggressive behaviour.

8.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

➢   The programmes suggested in chapter 7 should be implemented at all levels of the education structure – elementary, middle, and secondary. Disadvantaged schools that are unable to refer learners to outside counsellors due to financial constraints should use school-based professionals (educators).

➢   The empirical survey was limited to one town in the Free State Province. Further study should be done which includes more respondents to generalise the findings.

➢   Support groups for adolescents and parents should be initiated by schools in poor communities. Poor communities lack resources and parents lack education and are less likely to take charge of the education of their children. Support groups should be initiated in order to help parents understand the importance of their involvement in the education of their children.

➢   The curriculum for pre-service training of teachers should include more information regarding anger/aggressive behaviour management in adolescents to equip teachers with knowledge regarding anger management.

➢   The subject Life Orientation should be included in the curriculum activities, as well as concepts that were discussed in the programmes in chapter 7.

➢   The school should compile a policy regarding aggressive behaviour similar to that of the HIV/AIDS or Language policies.

➢   The school-based support team should take cognisance of the different programmes available as well as the comprehensive programme suggested in the study for implementation in the school as part of a preventive measurement.

➢ The school/Life Orientation/guidance teacher could implement a parent guidance programme to enable parents to educate their children effectively. The programme should *inter alia* include knowledge and skills regarding the prevention and handling of aggressive behaviour.

8.5   SUMMARY

The focus of this chapter has been to summarise everything dealt with in the six previous chapters. Chapter 1 provided an introductory orientation, clarification of terms and outline of the whole thesis. Chapter 2 provided an exposition of theoretical perspectives and views of the theorists on how aggressive behaviour is acquired. Chapter 3 dealt with family factors that are related to aggression. Chapter 4 provided a literature review on the community as well as school factors that are responsible for shaping learners' aggressive behaviour. The research design and the presentation of data were discussed in chapter 5. Chapter 6 dealt with results and findings of the empirical investigation. In chapter 7 possible programmes that might help in the reduction of aggressive behaviour were highlighted. In chapter 8 the conclusions from the literature study and empirical investigations, and recommendations were presented.

Adolescents need knowledge and skills to cope with aggressive behaviour. Although different levels of anger, aggressive or violent behaviour exists, it is the duty of parents, teachers and the community to identify behaviour problems, implement effective behaviour modification and preventive programmes. Teachers and parents need empowerment to be able to fulfil this role.

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LEARNERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Hi, there! This is not a test but a questionnaire for which you have all the answers.

Consider the following before you start:

❖   There are no wrong or right answers.

❖   Complete all questions accurately and truthfully.

❖   You will remain anonymous, as no identification is required.

Circle the correct number to indicate your response, e.g. (2).

1.	Age	14 years or less	1	
		15 to 18 years	2	V2
		19 years and older	3	
2.	Home language	Sotho	1	
		Zulu	2	
		English	3	V3
		Other	4	
3.	Parents' marital status	Married	1	
		Never married	2	
		Divorced	3	V4
		Other	4	
4.	Father's work	Unemployed	1	
		Self-employed	2	
		Gardener/Cleaner/Labourer	3	V5
		Professional employee	4	
		Other	5	
5.	Mother's work	Unemployed	1	
		Self-employed	2	
		Gardener/Cleaner/Labourer	3	V6
		Professional employee	4	
		Other	5	

6.	Father's education	None	1	
		Grade 1-7	2	
		Grade 8-12	3	V7
		Diploma/Degree	4	
7.	Mother's education	None	1	
		Grade 1-7	2	
		Grade 8-12	3	V8
		Diploma/Degree	4	
8.	The type of house you live in	Big house	1	
		Small house	2	
		Shack	3	V9
		Other	4	

Which of the following is most applicable?

Circle the correct number to indicate your response.

9.	The type of people you live with at home.	Loving	1	
		Aggressive/Violent	2	V10
		Uninvolved	3	
10.	Type of discipline at home.	Unreasonably strict	1	
		Strict but reasonable	2	V11
		No discipline	3	
11.	Type of friends you interact with at school.	Loving	1	
		Aggressive/Violent	2	V12
		Ordinary	3	
12.	Type of teachers you interact with at school.	Loving	1	
		Aggressive/Violent	2	
		Unreasonably strict	3	V13
		Reasonably strict	4	
13.	Type of friends you interact with in the community.	Loving	1	
		Aggressive/Violent	2	V14
		Ordinary	3	

14.	Type of community members you interact with in the community.	Loving Aggressive/Violent Ordinary	1 2 3	V15

Circle a 1, 2 or 3 to indicate your answer.

The numbers have the following meanings:

I=No (N)

2 = Undecided (U)

3=Yes (Y)

		1 N	2 U	3 Y
15.	My parents are supportive.	1	2	3
16.	There are interesting things to do at home.	1	2	3
17.	I work well at school.	1	2	3
18.	In general, teachers allow me to give my point of view.	1	2	3
19.	My parents often fight with each other.	1	2	3
20.	I like to please my friends.	1	2	3
21.	Fighting is good when you are cross with someone.	1	2	3
22.	My life experiences are mostly pleasant.	1	2	3
23.	I am happy with who I am.	1	2	3
24.	The teachers punish us for no apparent reason.	1	2	3
25.	Most people fight in my community.	1	2	3
26.	I have a good relationship with my friends.	1	2	3
27.	My parents stop me from doing bad things.	1	2	3
28.	My school offers stimulating activities.	1	2	3
29.	My father is a good example to me.	1	2	3
30.	I feel out of place with other people.	1	2	3
31.	I am easily hurt by others' comments.	1	2	3
32.	Fighting is bad.	1	2	3
33.	Criticism by my friends upsets me.	1	2	3

34.	My parents get worried when I unexpectedly come home late.	1	2	3
35.	I feel great to be at school.	1	2	3
36.	My life experiences are mostly unpleasant.	1	2	3
37.	I struggle with mood-swings.	1	2	3
38.	My teachers get impatient when I ask for help.	1	2	3
39.	My friends like to fight with others.	1	2	3
40.	I feel uncomfortable in a group of my peers.	1	2	3
41.	My parents get upset when I fail at school.	1	2	3
42.	I get angry easily.	1	2	3
43.	There is a 'we' spirit in our class.	1	2	3
44.	The teachers ask unreasonable questions in tests.	1	2	3
45.	My friends encourage me to do bad things.	1	2	3
46.	I struggle to handle my feeings.	1	2	3
47.	I feel I am rejected by my peers.	1	2	3
48.	My parents are indifferent to my feelings.	1	2	3
49.	We learn many useful facts at school.	1	2	3
50.	I make friends easily.	1	2	3
51.	I am exposed to positive male or female role models in the community.	1	2	3
52.	My parents scold me for no apparent reason.	1	2	3
53.	My mother is a good example to me.	1	2	3
54.	My home is boring.	1	2	3
55.	I feel that things are too much for me.	1	2	3
56.	I am actively involved in social activities.	1	2	3
57.	My parents discourage any form of aggression.	1	2	3
58.	My father spends little time with me.	1	2	3
59.	We leam many boring things at school.	1	2	3
60.	I feel negative about my future.	1	2	3
61.	When I am really upset I become aggressive.	1	2	3
62.	My parents teach me right from wrong.	1	2	3
63.	My father drinks excessively.	1	2	3
64.	School is useless for our daily lives.	1	2	3
65.	My poor background stops me from achieving success.	1	2	3
66.	My peers respect me.	1	2	3

67.	My friends often ignore me.	1	2	3
68.	The teachers fail to listen to my problems.	1	2	3
69.	My parents allow me to do whatever I want.	1	2	3
70.	My mother drinks excessively.	1	2	3
71.	School can help us improve our living conditions.	1	2	3
72.	My parents punish me whenever I misbehave.	1	2	3
73.	My friends think I am boring.	1	2	3
74.	I easily loose friends.	1	2	3
75.	My parents encourage me to fight with other children.	1	2	3
76.	I have difficulty establishing close relationships.	1	2	3
77.	The teachers think I am stupid.	1	2	3
78.	My peers recognise me as important.	1	2	3
79.	I mistrust other people.	1	2	3
80.	I often feel depressed.	1	2	3
81.	I am actively involved in school activities.	1	2	3
82.	Belonging to a gang that can fight together is cool.	1	2	3
83.	Community members are a good example to me.	1	2	3

Appendix B

SUMMARY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE INDICATING EACH VARIABLE

Item number	Variable	Scoring direction
15,16,27,29,34,53,57,62,72	Family climate	+ve
9,41,48,52,54,58,63,65,69,70,75	Family climate	-ve
17,18,28,35,43,49,71,81	School climate	+ve
24,30,38,44,59,64,68,77	School climate	-ve
51,56,83	Social relations	+ve
25,65,76,79	Social relations	-ve
20,26,50,66,78	Peer interaction	+ve
33,39,40,45,47,67,73,74,82	Peer interaction	-ve
22,23	Emotional self-concept	+ve
31,36,37,46,55,60,76,80	Emotional self-concept	-ve
32	Aggression instinct	+ve
21,42,61	Aggression instinct	-ve

Positive statements   :   28

Negative statements   :   <u>43</u>

                                          <u>71</u>

Appendix C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Principals or senior teachers

1. To what extent do you experience problems with aggression in your school?

2. How is aggression handled in the school?

3. What do you think are the causes of aggression in those children?

4. What experiences have you had with weapons in your school?

5.   What experiences have you had with gangsters in your school?

School Governing Body (SGB) members – representing parents

1. To what extent do you experience aggression among family members at your home?

2. What were the consequences?

3. What do you think are the causes of the aggression?

4. What experiences have you had with weapons in your neighbourhood?

5. What experiences have you had with gangs in your home or neighbourhood?

Appendix D

Box 2652

Bethlehem

9700

25 June 2004

The Head

Department of Education

Private Bag x20565

Bloemfontein

Dear Sir/Madam

Permission to conduct research in Bethlehem schools

I am currently registered with the University of South Africa doing a Doctorate Degree (Doctor of Education). My topic is 'Learners aggressive behaviour in secondary schools: a socio-psychological perspective'. In order to fulfill the requirements of this degree I have to conduct research in different schools so as to obtain empirical data. I humble request for a permission to conduct this research in seven secondary schools in Bethlehem town (Thabo Mofutsanyane District). The schools identified are as follows:

- ➢ Ntsu Secondary School
- ➢ Tiisetsang High school
- ➢ Thabo-Thokoza High School
- ➢ Bethlehem Combined school
- ➢ Behtlehem Comprehensive School
- ➢ L.K. Ntlabathi Intermediate School
- ➢ Khanyeng Intermediate School

All learners taking part in this research will remain anonymous as no identification is required. All the information obtained will be strictly kept confidential.

Yours faithfully

V.G. Gasa (Ms)

Appendix E

Box 2652

Bethlehem

9700

01 August 2004

The Principal

………………………..

………………………..

………………………..

Dear Sir/Madam

Permission to conduct research in your school

I am currently registered with the University of South Africa for a Doctorate Degree (DEd). My research topic is 'Learners aggressive behaviour in secondary schools: a socio-psychological perspective'. In order to fulfil the requirements for this degree I have to conduct research in different schools so as to obtain empirical data. Your school is among identified schools and I humble request your permission to conduct this research in your school.

The completion of the questionnaire by learners will not interfere with the smooth running of your school as it will be conducted after school hours and will only take your learners thirty minutes to complete. All learners participating in this research project will remain anonymous as no identification is required. All information obtained will be kept strictly confidential.

A letter of approval from the Department of Education is enclosed / attached.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully

V.G. Gasa (Ms)