A CRIMINOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF LEARNER-ON-EDUCATOR VIOLENCE IN THREE BASIC EDUCATION DISTRICTS IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE, SOUTH AFRICA

by

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DECLARATION

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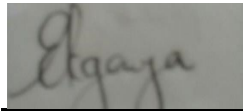Degree: **MASTER OF ARTS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

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DEDICATION

THIS DISSERTATION IS DEDICATED TO MY 5-YEAR-OLD SON,

KEARABETSOE KEATLEGILE KGANYA

who was with me from the beginning of this project, serving as a constant source of motivation.

Thank you, Son for inspiring me to successfully finish this endeavour.

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ABSTRACT

Learner-on-educator violence has become a significant and escalating concern within the educational landscape, particularly in public secondary schools. This phenomenon not only disrupts the teaching environment but also has profound implications for the well-being and professional efficacy of educators. This study investigated learner-on-educator violence based on the lived experiences and perceptions of 23 educators. The research followed an explorative qualitative research approach where data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The participants were all employed as teachers in nine (9) public secondary schools in the City of Tshwane West, North and South Districts of the Gauteng Department of Basic Education. Educators who participated in this study reported that the most predominant type of learner-on-educator violence that occurred in the above-mentioned Districts was verbal attacks, followed by physical abuse and then cyberbullying. The participants revealed that learner-on-educator violence, as it took place in their specific places of employment, was a result of intersecting factors such as the family background (i.e., the lack of discipline by and disrespect of parents, violence in the family, absent or uninvolved parents; peer pressure; avoidance of homework; banishing of corporal punishment; gang involvement; substance abuse; and disregard of the school code of conduct. The research findings also revealed that victims of learner-on-educator violence are not only emotionally and physically affected, but their work is also impacted negatively. To cope with the constant stress of dealing with violent learners, the research participants stated that they used disengagement coping mechanisms such as resigned acceptance, financial motivation, and retirement. Of concern, the educators revealed that they were not aware of any support structures the Districts had put in place for victims of learner-on-teacher violence in their schools. The victims relied on collaborative collegial support structures such as informal counselling by the principal or a colleague. The participants lamented that learners, in their opinion, had more rights and received more support than the teachers.

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are made. As explained by Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework theory, a child's behaviour is a result of his/her

interactions with the actors within his/her mesosystem (i.e., the family, peers, community, school). Therefore, efforts to tackle violent learner behaviour should focus on utilising a whole-school or ecological approach that includes every actor in the child's mesosystem, because "*it takes a village to raise a child*". This is why a moral regeneration clarion call is made through this study for communities to go back to their roots where it truly took a village to raise a child; where the spirit of *ubuntu*, which promotes collectivism over individualism, was embraced; and where teachers at school were like parents *in loco parentis*. Also, preventative strategies aimed at reducing learner-on-educator violence should be approached through a human rights perspective, emphasising increased awareness, and understanding of all fundamental human rights. It is thus also important to teach learners that their rights should not infringe on the rights of their teachers, and that, while it is important to know their rights, they also need to exercise responsibility.

Keywords: Department of basic education, cyberbullying, learner-on-educator violence, physical attack, verbal aggression, psychological impact, physical impact.

KAKARETŠO

Dikgaruru tša baithuti godimo ga barutiši di fetogile selo se segolo seo gape se tshwenyago ka gare ga sebopego sa thuto, kudu ka dikolong tša sekontari tša mmušo. Tiragalo ye ga e tsenegare fela tikologo ya borutiši eupša gape e na le ditlamorago tše kgolo go bophelo bjo bobotse le go šoma gabotse ga barutiši ka mokgwa wa profešenale. Nyakišišo ye e nyakišišitše dikgaruru tša baithuti godimo ga barutiši go ya ka maitemogelo le dikgopolo tša barutiši ba 23. Nyakišišo e latetše mokgwa wa nyakišišo wa khwalithethifi moo datha e kgobokeditšwego ka dipoledišano tšeo di rulagantšwego seripa. Batšeakarolo ka moka ba thwetšwe bjalo ka barutiši dikolong tša sekontari tša mmušo tše senyane (9) ka Bodikela bja Toropo ya Tshwane, Dilete tša Leboa le Borwa tša Kgoro ya Thuto ya Motheo ya Profense ya Gauteng. Barutiši bao ba tšerego karolo ka nyakišišong ye ba begile gore mohuta wo o atilego kudu wa dikgaruru tša baithuti godimo ga barutiši woo o diregilego Dileteng tšeo di laeditšwego ka mo godimo e be e le wa ditlhaselo tša mantšu, tše di latelwago ke go tlaišwa mmeleng gomme ka morago ga moo e be go tlaišwa ka inthanete. Batšeakarolo ba utulotše gore dikgaruru tša baithuti godimo ga barutiši bjalo ka ge di diregile mafelong a bona a itšego a mošomo e be e le sephetho sa mabaka ao a kopanago a go swana le setlogo sa lapa (e lego, go hloka kgalemo le go se tlhomphe batswadi, dikgaruru ka lapeng, go se be gona ga batswadi goba batswadi bao ba sa bapalego karolo ya bona); kgatelelo ya sethaka; go se dire mošomo wa gae; go fedišwa ga thupa; go bopa karolo ya dihlopha tša bosenyi; tšhomišompe ya diokobatši; le go se latele molao wa maitshwaro wa sekolo. Se sengwe gape seo se utulotšwego ka dikutullo tša nyakišišo ye e bile gore batšwasehlabelo ba dikgaruru tša baithuti godimo ga barutiši ga ba amege fela maikutlong le mmeleng, eupša le mošomo wa bona o amega gampe. Go kgona go phela ka kgatelelo ya monagano ya ka mehla ya go šomana le baithuti ba go hlola dikgaruru, batšeakarolo ba nyakišišo ba boletše gore ba šomišitše mekgwa ya go dira gore ba phele ye e aroganyago go swana le go amogela selo se se sa fetogego, tlhohleletšo ya ditšhelete le go rola modiro. Se se tshwenyago ke gore barutiši ba utulotše gore ba be ba sa tsebe ge go na le dibopego tša thekgo tšeo Dilete di di beetšego batšwasehlabelo ba dikgaruru tša baithuti godimo ga

barutiši dikolong tša bona. Go boletšwe gore batšwasehlabelo ba ithekgile ka dibopego tša thekgo ya tirišano go swana le thobamatswalo ye e sego ya semmušo ka hlogo ya sekolo goba mošomimmogo. Batšeakarolo ba belaetše ka gore baithuti, go ya ka bona, ba be ba na le ditokelo tše ntši le gore ba hweditše thekgo ye ntši go feta barutiši.

Go ya ka dikutullo tša nyakišišo ye, ditšhišinyo tše mmalwa di dirilwe. Bjalo ka ge go hlalošitšwe ke teori ya foreimiweke ya tswalano ya diphedi le tikologo ya Bronfenbrenner, maitshwaro a ngwana ke poelo ya dikopano tša gagwe le badiragatši ka gare ga mesosestemo ya gagwe (e lego, lapa, dithaka, setšhaba, le sekolo). Ka fao, maitapišo a go rarolla boitshwaro bja dikgaruru bja baithuti a swanetše go tsepelela go tšhomišo ya mokgwa wa sekolo ka moka goba ikholotši wo o akaretšago modiragatši yo mongwe le yo mongwe ka go mesosestemo ya ngwana, ka gobane *"ngwana o godišwa ke motse ka moka"*. Ke ka lebaka leo boipiletšo bja go tsošološa boitshwaro bo dirwago ka nyakišišo ye gore ditšhaba di boele morago medung ya tšona moo go tšerego motse ka nnete go godiša ngwana; moo moya wa *botho* wo o tšwetšago pele popagano go feta go rata botee e amogetšwe; gomme moo barutiši sekolong ba bego ba swana le batswadi ba ba lego *loco parentis*. Gape, maano a thibelo ao a lebišitšwego go phokotšo ya dikgaruru tša baithuti godimo ga barutiši a swanetše go dirwa ka pono ya ditokelo tša botho, go gatelela temošo ye e oketšegilego le go kwešiša ditokelo ka moka tša motheo tša botho. Ka go realo go bohlokwa gape go ruta baithuti gore ditokelo tša bona ga se tša swanela go gatakela ditokelo tša barutiši ba bona, le gore le ge go le bohlokwa go tseba ditokelo tša bona, gape ba swanetše go ba le maikarabelo.

Mantšu a bohlokwa: Kgoro ya Thuto ya Motheo, bomphenyašilo bja inthanete, dikgaruru tša baithuti godimo ga barutiši, tlhaselo ya mmele, tlhaselo ya mantšu, khuetšo ya monagano, khuetšo ya mmele

TSHOBOKANYO

Tirisodikgoka ya morutwana mo morutabaneng e ile magoletsa moo e leng gore ke matshwenyego a magolo mo lephateng la thuto, segolo bogolo mo dikolong tsa sekontari tsa puso. Tiragalo eno e kgoreletsa maemo a go rutelwang mo go one e bile e na le seabe se segolo mo boitekanelong le boitumelo, gammogo le bokgoni jwa porofešenale jwa barutabana. Thutopatlisiso eno e ne e batlisisa tirisodikgoka ya morutwana mo morutabaneng go ya ka kitso ya botlhokwa e e itemogetsweng le dikakanyo tsa barutabana ba le 23. Tlhotlhomiso e latetse molebo wa tlhotlhomiso ya go sekaseka setlhogo se sentšhwa moo data e kgobokantsweng ka go dirisa dipotsolotso tse di botsang ka ga maikutlo le maitemogelo a batsayakarolo ba tlhotlhomiso. Batsayakarolo botlhe ba ne ba thapilwe jaaka barutabana mo dikolong di le robonngwe (9) tsa sekontari tsa puso tse di mo Bophirima jwa Motsemogolo wa Tshwane, Dikgaolo tsa Bokone le Borwa tsa Lefapha la Thuto ya Motheo la Gauteng. Barutabana ba ba tsereng karolo mo thutopatlisisong eno ba begile gore mofutamogolo wa tirisodikgoka ya morutwana mo morutabaneng e e diregileng mo dikgaolong tse di umakilweng fa godimo e ne e le go tlhapadiwa, go go latetsweng ke go tlhaselwa ka go itewa mme morago e nne go kgerisiwa mo inthaneteng. Batsayakarolo ba senotse gore mokgwa o tirisodikgoka ya morutwana mo morutabaneng e diregang ka teng mo mafelotirong a bone a a rileng, o bakwa ke ditlhotlheletso tse di jaaka lemorago la lelapa (k.g.r., go tlhoka kgalemelo ga batsadi le lenyatso mo batsading, tirisodikgoka mo lelapeng, batsadi ba ba seyong kgotsa ba ba se nang seabe); kgatelelo ya ditsala; go efoga go dira tirogae; go fedisa kotlhao ya bana ka thupa; go nna karolo ya digongwana; go dirisa diritibatsi; le go itlhokomolosa melawana ya maitsholo ya sekolo. Se gape se senotsweng mo diphitlhelelong tsa tlhotlhomiso eno e ne e le gore batswasetlhabelo ba tirisodikgoka ya morutwana mo morutabaneng ga ba amege fela mo maikutlong le mo mmeleng, mme tiro ya bone le yone e amega ka tsela e e sa siamang. Go leka go samagana le kgatelelomaikutlo ya gangwe le gape ya go dira ka baithuti ba ba dirisang dikgoka, batsayakarolo ba tlhotlhomiso ba kaile gore ba dirisitse mekgwatiriso ya go ikgogela morago e e jaaka go amogela seemo ka go itse gore o ka se kgone go se fetola, go rotloetsa badirimmogo ka

merero ya ditšhelete, le go rola tiro. Ntlha e e tshwenyang ke gore barutabana ba senotse gore ba ne ba sa itse ka mekgwatshegetso epe e dikgaolo di neng di na le yone ya batswasetlhabelo ba tirisodikgoka ya morutwana mo morutabaneng mo dikolong tsa bone. Go kailwe gore batswasetlhabelo ba ne ba ikaegile ka mokgwatshegetso o o rotloetsang tirisanommogo ya badirammogo o o jaaka tshidilomaikutlo e e seng ya semmuso ka mogokgo kgotsa modirammogo. Batsayakarolo ba ngongoregile gore, go ya ka bone, barutwana ba ne ba na le ditshwanelo tse dintsi e bile ba amogela tshegetso e ntsi go feta barutabana.

Go ya ka diphitlhelelo tsa thutopatlisiso eno, go dirilwe dikatlanegiso di le mmalwa. Jaaka go tlhalositswe ke tiori ya ga Bronfenbrenner e e tsepamisang mo boleng le seemo sa tikologo e ngwana a golelang mo go yone, maitsholo a ngwana ke ditlamorago tsa dikamano tsa gagwe le bannaleseabe ba ba mo tikologong ya gagwe e e amanang le bannaleseabe ba ba mo tlhotlheletsang ka tsela nngwe (k.g.r., balelapa, ditsala, batho ba mo motseng, le sekolo). Ka jalo, maiteko a go samagana le maitsholo a tirisodikgoka ya barutwana a tshwanetse go tsepamisa mo go diriseng molebo wa sekolo sotlhe kgotsa tikologo, o o akaretsang monnaleseabe mongwe le mongwe yo o mo tikologong ya ngwana e e amanang le bannaleseabe ba ba mo tlhotlheletsang ka tsela nngwe, gonne "ngwana sejo o a tlhakanelwa". Ke ka moo thutopatlisiso eno e ikuelang gore go nne le tsosoloso ya maitsholo a a siameng gore setšhaba se gopole medi ya sone moo ngwana e neng e le sejo a tlhakanelwa ka nnete; moo go neng go amogelwa mowa wa ubuntu o o rotloetsang ntlhatheo ya tshwaragano le tirisanommogo go na le ntlhatheo ya bonosi le boitebo; le moo barutabana ba kwa sekolong ba neng ba tshwana le batsadi ka go tsaya maemo a botsadi. Gape, ditogamaano tsa thibelo tse di dirwang ka maikaelelo a go fokotsa tirisodikgoka ya morutwana mo morutabaneng di tshwanetse go lejwa ka ntlhatebo ya ditshwanelo tsa botho, e e gatelelang gore go nne le temoso e ntsi le go tlhaloganya ditshwanelo tsotlhe tsa motheo tsa botho. Ka jalo, go botlhokwa gape go ruta barutwana gore ditshwanelo tsa bone ga di a tshwanela go nyatsa le go tlola ditshwanelo tsa barutabana ba bone, le fa go le botlhokwa go itse ditshwanelo tsa bone, ba tlhoka gape go nna boikarabelo.

Mafoko a botlhokwa: Lefapha la Thuto ya Motheo, go kgerisa badirisi ba bangwe ba inthanete, tirisodikgoka ya morutwana mo morutabaneng, tlhaselo ka ntwa, tiriso ya mafoko a a utlwisang botlhoko, ditlamorago mo tlhaloganyong, ditlamorago mo mmeleng

ABBREVIATIONS

CAQDA	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CJCP	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
CLAW	College of Law
CSTL	Care and Support for Teaching and Learning
CT	Cape Town
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District Based Support Team
DoE	Department of Education
DSD	Department of Social Development
EAP	Employee Assistance Programmes
EBC	Expert Behavioural Consultancy
EBS	Effective Behavioural Support System
EUSA	Education Union of South Africa
FCA	Firearm Control Act
GDBE	Gauteng Department of Basic Education
GP	Gauteng Province
GFSA	Gun-Free South Africa
GFZ	Gun-Free Zone
ILST	Institution-Level Based Support Teams
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LRC	Learner Representative Council
LO	Life Orientation

MEC	Member of the Executive Council
NGFZ	National Gun-Free Zones
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa
NDBE	National Department of Basic Education
NSSF	National School Safety Framework
NSVS	National School Violence Survey
MP	Mpumalanga Province
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SA	South Africa
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASA	South African School Act
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Teams
SAPSPSS	South African Police Service Prevention School Safety
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
SAOU	Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwys Unie
TA	Teachers Assistant
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction and problem statement

Despite progressive policies and frameworks on school safety developed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), violence in South African schools continues to be a problem. School violence denies the learners and educators a safe and secure environment to work in (Qwabe, Maluleke & Olutula, 2022:127). Moreover, school violence has a negative impact on victims' academic or work performance, and their physical and mental health (Qwabe et al, 2022:127). The focus of this study was on learner-on-educator violence, a sub-type of school violence. Mahome (2019:91) posits that learner-on-educator violence in public schools is a significant issue that is not properly researched in South Africa. In their learner-on-teacher bullying quantitative study, with a sample of 153 public secondary school teachers in the Tshwane Municipality, Woudstra, Janse van Rensburg and Visser (2018:1) revealed that 62% of the teachers reported being verbally bullied by learners, 34,6% reported physical bullying, 27% were indirectly bullied, and 66,6% reported being cyber bullied. Simelane (2019:np) adds that learner-on-educator violence in South African schools includes, but is not limited to slapping, stabbing, threatening, and throwing objects at teachers. The last National School Violence Survey (NSVS) undertaken in 2012 by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), which consisted of 5,939 learners, 121 principals and 239 educators, revealed that the most common forms violence inflicted by learners on their educators are verbal abuse, hurling of insults, physical assault, and sexual assault (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:27). Thobane, Artz and Ngubane (2023a:6) conducted a recent study with 69 educators from two schools in Alexandra and two schools from Soweto in the Gauteng Province. Seventy-five percent (n=52) of the educators perceived verbal abuse as the most common type of learner-on-educator violence followed by "bullying (n=33; 48%), physical abuse (n=32; 46%), gender harassment (n=24; 35%), ethnic harassment (n=23; 33%) and sexual harassment (n=18; 25%) as the top six forms of learner-on-educator violence in the schools" (Thobane et al, 2023a:6). Mahome

(2019:91) opines that many of these attacks go unreported and some teachers claim that the perpetrators are not disciplined appropriately, so they do not see the need to report them. Van Niewenhuizen (2018:np) agrees that attacks against teachers are easy to get away with in South Africa because the perpetrators face little or no consequences for their behaviour. Furthermore, Ngobeni (2017:1) asserts that, while working as a teacher in a school in Winterveldt in the Tshwane West District, he witnessed many disturbing cases of school violence. The question of how schools could address the acts of violence remains unanswered (Ngobeni, 2017:1). Pahad (2010:71) iterates that, based on interactions with teachers, the statistics for learner-on-educator violence is higher than what is reported because teachers feel embarrassed to report that they have been victimised by their learners.

1.2 Study rationale and value

The violent behaviour of some learners is becoming a growing concern in South African schools (Naidoo, 2021:np). Ferreira (2016:38) asserts that although learners are aware that they have the right to education in South Africa, disruptive behaviour in class and disrespecting their teachers violates not only their school code of conduct, but also their classmates' rights to education. Unfortunately, despite acceptable behaviour, respect, tolerance and responsibility being taught to learners, these are not behavioural characteristics a perpetrator exhibits (Ferreira, 2016:38). Therefore, more needs to be done to resolve the issue of learner-on-educator violence in South African schools.

Violence directed at teachers by learners is rampant. Incidents are not only increasing at a drastic rate (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010:224) but acts are becoming more violent with long lasting and wide-ranging consequences on victims (Fakude, 2022:119). Yet, very little is done in terms of research, prevention, and support for the victims. Available research on school violence focuses on learner safety or on learners as victims of school violence while the safety of educators or educators as victims of school violence is neglected. This lack of scientific research focusing on educators, as victims of school violence, therefore inspired this study.

In terms of contribution, the researcher hopes that this study will contribute to the scant scientific literature available on the phenomenon. Additionally, although the findings of this study cannot be generalised because data were collected from a small sample of 23 educators, it is the hope of the researcher that this study will be used as a baseline for future studies on the same topic. The researcher also hopes that the DBE, specifically the three Tshwane Districts (i.e., West, North and South) that participated in this study, can use the findings of this study and the recommendations made to develop or strengthen reporting and prevention strategies, and support structures for victims.

1.3 Research aim, objectives and questions

Defining the research aim, questions and objectives constitutes an important phase in the research process since everything that follows focuses on responding to or addressing the research questions or statements (Fouché, 2021b:64). The formal articulation of a research topic or problem statement will enable decisions regarding the most appropriate approach (Fouché, 2021b:63). Fouché (2021b:63) emphasises the necessity of stating a question or hypothesis as soon as a researchable topic is identified – a process known as focusing. The study aimed to investigate learner-on-educator violence based on the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers employed in nine (9) schools in the Tshwane West, North and South DBE Districts. Based on the primary aim of the research, the study objectives, related specifically to the three districts, were as follows:

- To explore the nature of learner-on-educator violence;

- To describe the impact learner-on-educator violence has on the victims;

- To explain the reasons for learner-on-educator violence;

- To determine the type of support offered to victims of learner-on-educator violence; and

- Based on the research findings, to recommend possible preventative measures that can be put in place to curb learner-on-educator violence.

Fouché (2021b:64) asserts that the process of constructing a research question or problem statement is based on three factors: (a) a decision concerning the research goal, (b) available literature, and (c) the unit of analysis. As such, study objectives and research questions influence the research strategy and ultimately the ideal research design (Fouché, 2021b:64).

1.3.1 Research questions

Writing a clear primary question involves several steps (Ravindra & Kestle, 2019:12). The first step is to identify the knowledge gap, which requires an in-depth understanding of the topic and the relevant literature (Ravindra & Kestle, 2019:12). A good study question should address a significant gap in current knowledge (Ravindra & Kestle, 2019:12). Moreover, the clarity of the primary question not only ensures that the research stays focused and feasible but also withstands scrutiny during the grant review and publication process (Ravindra & Kestle, 2019:12). The primary research question guides the researcher in the correct direction and typically influences the sample size, feasibility, and budget of the study (Ravindra & Kestle, 2019:13). While secondary questions can be included, they should not undermine the primary question (Ravindra & Kestle, 2019:13). Secondary questions provide valuable insights and generate new hypotheses but should not compromise the study's primary aim or its ability to conclusively address the primary question (Ravindra & Kestle, 2019:13).

The primary aim of this research was: What are the educators' lived experiences of learner-on-educator violence in the three districts of basic education under investigation?

The secondary research questions were thus as follows:
- What is the nature of learner-on-educator violence?
- What is the impact learner-on-educator violence on the victims?
- What are the reasons for learner-on-educator violence?
- What support is offered to victims of learner-on-educator violence?
- What preventative measures can be put in place to curb learner-on-educator

violence?

O'Leary (2020:np) explains that research questions in qualitative research: (a) define the investigation; (b) set boundaries; (c) provide direction; and (d) are a frame of reference for assessing the research project.

1.4 Definition of key concepts

Defining key concepts is crucial for ensuring that readers understand the study's components as intended by the researcher. Readers might have their own interpretations of terms or be entirely unfamiliar with them (Javed, 2022:np). Defining concepts allows people to share a common understanding of a term or subject, fostering meaningful discussions (Mubita, 2021:77). Moreover, Thobane, Artz, and Ngubane (2023c:viii) opine that terms should be defined as they have been specifically conceptualised for the study. Additionally, Mnguni (2020:7) asserts that key concepts are briefly discussed to facilitate a better understanding of the study. Baxen (2021:4) adds that defining terms helps the readers comprehend the scope and content of the research.

1.4.1 Learner

The concept of a "learner" refers to a pupil or a student at any school, further education and training institution or adult learning centre (South African Council for Educators [SACE], 2017:3). The focus of this research was on learners in secondary schools whose ages range between 12 and 18 years (Kapur, 2018:2).

1.4.2 Teacher

SACE (2017:3) defines a teacher as a professional educator who is fully, provisionally or conditionally registered with the Council. Kapur (2018:3) explains that the academic performance of the learners is significantly influenced by the teachers who have been given the power to oversee instruction and control all activities in the classroom.

The terms "teacher" and "educator" were used interchangeably throughout this study.

1.4.3 Principal

A principal is defined by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2009:6) as the teacher who has been appointed as or is serving as the head of the school. Principals are critical to school improvement and play a vital role in creating inclusive and high-performing schools (DeMatthews, Knight & Shin, 2022:76). Moreover, principals play a significant role in creating a healthy and positive school environment conducive to teaching and learning. Also, a principal holds the power to make decisions in the school (Kapur, 2018:3). Principals serve three interdependent roles as heads of schools, namely, administrator, manager, and leader (Kwatubana, Nhlapo & Moteetee, 2022:306).

1.4.4 School

A school is defined by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 as "a public school or an independent school which enrols learners in or more grades from Grade R (Reception) to grade twelve" (DBE, 1996:np). This study comprised nine (9) secondary schools which enrol learners from grades eight (8) to 12.

1.4.5 School violence

School violence is broadly defined as the use of force or the threat of using it with the aim of harming someone, either at school or while participating in school-related activities (Kutywayo, Mabetha, Naidoo, Mahuma, Njobe, Hlongwane & Mullick, 2022:3). Various forms of bullying, aggression, fighting, threats, and crimes involving the use of weapons are covered by this broad definition (Turanovic & Siemick, 2022:3). Qwabe et al (2022:127) add that there are two types of school violence: 1) physical violence, also known as bullying; and 2) physiological violence, also called "indirect violence". Mahome (2019:93) further defines school violence as any intentional use of physical or other force of power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group within the school environment, that either results in or has the likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. Moreover, school violence may include bullying, intimidation, gang activity, weapon use and assaults, and may occur

in different social contexts such as the classroom, school neighbourhood; and involve learners, teachers, and administrative staff (Mahome, 2019:93).

1.4.6 Learner-on-educator violence

Learner-on-educator violence, according to Cummings (2020:5), is verbal and physical assault and manipulation of teachers, with the intent to inflict immediate harm, property damage, and social coercion.

Learner-on-educator violence, in this study, was referred to as incidents, by learners against teachers, such as verbal attacks, physical abuse, bullying and/or cyber-bullying. These acts of violence occur during school hours on and around the school premises.

1.4.6.1 Bullying

According to Grobler (2018:21), bullying is a form of school violence; it is a pattern of behaviour rather than an isolated event of violence which has a detrimental effect on the victim (a teacher, in this instance), the bully and the onlookers. Since learner-on-teacher bullying occurs within the school context, the place of work for teachers, bullying is also regarded as a form of workplace violence (Woudstra et al, 2018:1).

With the use of technology, cyberbullying has become more prevalent. Rajbhandari and Rana (2022:95) describe cyberbullying as one of the forms of bullying behaviour, which occurs when individuals use technology and networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, email, live chats, online games, websites, and texts or pictures sent to mobile devices to intentionally harm or harass another person. The purpose of cyberbullying is to destroy someone's social reputation or risk his/her social acceptance (Mooij, 2011:234; Ngidi, 2018:165).

Bullying is defined in this study as persistent acts of violence, by learners against teachers, such as threats to inflict injury, name calling, intimidation and violation of rules. Cyberbullying refers to violence with the use of a digital device by a learner to threaten, intimidate, blackmail, and spread false rumours about a teacher to destroy his/her

reputation.

1.4.6.2 Physical abuse

Physical assault involves one individual using physical force to harm another person's body (Windvoël, 2023:39). Windvoël (2023:39) adds that physical abuse may include the use of weapons or objects that can serve as weapons. Such violence can cause minor or severe injuries requiring hospitalisation or even death, in extreme cases. Thobane et al (2023c:ix) defines physical abuse as pulling another's clothes, slapping, punching, stabbing, and/or kicking the victim. In this study, physical abuse was defined as an act of violence or force by learners that causes pain, injury, and physical impairment to the teachers.

1.4.6.3 Verbal abuse

Bullying and verbal abuse are similar. However, verbal abuse differs slightly in that it does not involve any physical violence (Mustapha, 2022:132). Verbal abuse is frequently defined as the use of actions or words that are more likely to result in psychological harm than in actual physical harm (Mustapha, 2022:132). Additionally, this form of abuse involves using foul language, such as threats, yelling, screaming, criticism, and derogatory remarks (Mustapha, 2022:132). It is classified with other forms of abuse that cause long-lasting effects like stress, depression, physical disorders, and other damage due to the serious effects it has on the abused individuals (Mustapha, 2022:132). Verbal abuse is reported as the most common form of violence directed against teachers, with learners being the prime perpetrators (Mahome, 2019:91).

Verbal abuse in this study refers to the use of foul language, such as threats, yelling, screaming, criticism, and derogatory remarks by learners against their teachers.

1.5 Research methodology

The term "methodology" refers to a systematic, philosophical, and scientifically informed approach of solving a research problem (Sefotho, 2021:11). Furthermore, research

methodology is referred to as a framework that guides all the, methods, and approaches employed from the beginning to the end of the study (Sefotho, 2021:11). Research methodology thus determines how research will be conducted and which systematic procedures will be used to solve the identified research problem (Sefotho, 2021:11). The methods and procedures used to carry out research are referred to as "research methods" (Kapur, 2018:4). These are the techniques that the researchers employ when carrying out their research projects (Kapur, 2018:4). In other words, the research methods are the techniques the researcher employs to analyse the issues raised by his or her research (Kapur, 2018:4). Moreover, Leavy (2017:16) asserts that methodology is the map that gives direction on how the research will proceed.

This part of the chapter provides a detailed discussion of the methodology which was utilised to conduct this research. Discussions start with the research approach, followed by the research design, sampling and the techniques used to select research participants, data collection and analysis methods. This chapter also determines the trustworthiness of the data collected as well as the ethical principles followed throughout the research process.

1.5.1 Research approach

There are two conventional methods to social research which are quantitative and qualitative approaches (Fouché, 2021a:39). The essence of the phenomenon to be studied influences the methodological approach chosen (Fouché, 2021a:39). To answer questions about the complex nature of the learner-on-educator violence, a qualitative approach was used, with the goal of exploring the phenomenon from the participants' lived experiences and perspectives (Fouché, 2021a:41). Fouché (2021a:41) explains that the qualitative approach, in comparison to the quantitative approach, is less rigid and allows for flexibility in all aspects of the research process. As such, the qualitative method is often preferred to explore the nature of a problem or phenomenon that requires a less structured approach (Fouché, 2021a:41). In general, qualitative research is suitable when the primary main goal is to explore, describe, or explain (Leavy, 2017:9).

A qualitative study is concerned with non-statistical methodologies and small samples, which are frequently purposefully chosen (Fouché, 2021a:42). The values that guide qualitative research emphasise individuals' subjective experiences, meaning-making processes, and understanding (i.e., detailed information from a small sample) (Leavy, 2017:9). Allowing participants to describe their experiences in their own words is given more weight in qualitative research to account for differences between research participants (Leavy, 2017:28). Additionally, a qualitative approach is an interpretive technique that is holistic in character and is primarily oriented to understanding social life and the meanings that people attach to it (Fouché, 2021a:42). Qualitative research also generates descriptive data in the participants' own words, whether written or spoken (Fouché, 2021a:42). As a result, the qualitative researcher is more interested in describing and understanding human behaviour than in explaining or predicting it, in observation rather than controlled measurement, and in the subjective exploration of reality (Fouché, 2021a:42). Thobane (2014:280) further explains that the qualitative research approach is naturalistic in that it investigates people's daily lives in their natural environments.

Since the qualitative approach generates participants' accounts of meaning and experience, which offers an in-depth description of a complex social world, this method was deemed feasible for this study as the purpose was to understand the complex phenomenon of learner-on-educator by those who experience it on a regular basis.

1.5.2 Research Design and Goal

According to Fouché (2021b:64), the goal or the type of study one wishes to undertake will influence the research methodology and, ultimately, the research design. Disclosing the methodology is sometimes referred to as providing the context of justification (Leavy, 2017:43). This describes and defends the methods used and the steps taken during the research design process (Leavy, 2017:43). Methodological openness means that others can comprehend how the conclusions were reached (Leavy, 2017:43). Moreover, the type of the problem posed by the research goals determines which design should be used (Walliman, 2018:9). A research design defines the type of the study being

conducted. Fouché (2021b:65) mentions that there are various types of research goals, namely, exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, correlational, evaluation, intervention and participatory. Due to its qualitative nature, this study followed an exploratory and descriptive research (Leavy, 2017:124).

1.5.2.1 Exploratory research

According to Kapur (2018:26), exploratory research refers to a methodical and scientific design or goal. It aids in developing the research question and hypotheses when applied to issues where there is a lack of available knowledge (Kapur, 2018:26). The goal of exploratory research is to become familiar with basic information and to form a broad picture of a research situation to learn more about a phenomenon, a community, or a person (Fouché, 2021b:65). Babbie (2010:92) asserts that most of the studies in social sciences are conducted to allow the researcher to explore a specific topic that is new or under-researched (Babbie, 2010:92; Leavy, 2017:5). Exploratory research can fill a knowledge gap in a narrative or understudied subject or take a fresh approach to the subject to generate new and emerging insights (Leavy, 2017:5). Furthermore, a lack of sufficient research is frequently a sign that an exploratory research, with an appropriate methodological strategy, is required (Leavy, 2017:5). This preliminary research may direct researchers towards particular research issues, techniques for gathering data, subjects, and/or audiences (Leavy, 2017:5). Even though learner-on-educator violence is not a new phenomenon, not a lot of scientific research, especially in the Tshwane Municipality area, has been conducted on the topic. As a result, the researcher explored the phenomenon in-depth with an explorative research design.

1.5.3 Sampling

Due to time and cost constraints, it is not possible to include an entire population in a study (Walliman, 2018:106). Therefore, sampling is the process of choosing a small number of cases from a larger group (Walliman, 2018:106). There are many approaches to drawing a sample that include probability sampling and purposeful sampling techniques that have their own strengths (Leavy, 2017:78). In qualitative research, non-

probability sampling methods are less structured and not focused on the probability of selection (Strydom, 2021:380). They depend on the data collection methods used, such as observation and interviewing, that do not require big and representative sample sizes (Strydom, 2021:380). These techniques are used to collect detailed information from a small number of individuals as the purpose is not to quantify and generalise research findings but to collect in-depth information (Strydom, 2021:380).

When using the non-probability technique, each unit in a sampling frame does not have an equal chance of being chosen for the study (Strydom, 2021:381). A qualitative researcher looks for individuals, groups, and environments where the processes relevant to the topic under investigation are most likely to occur (Strydom, 2021:381). Methods of judgemental or non-probability sampling are also known as non-probability sampling techniques (Kapur, 2018:44). Three sub-types of non-probability sampling were used in this study. Firstly, convenient sampling was used to select the schools, whereas purposive/judgemental and snowball sampling were used to select the individual educators who participated in the interviews.

1.5.3.1 Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that involves selecting participants from a target population based on their availability and accessibility (Golzar, Noor & Tajik, 2022:72; Golzar et al, 2022:73; Scholtz, 2021:2). Golzar et al (2022:73) note that, in qualitative studies, convenience sampling is commonly employed in education and social sciences, particularly when researchers have easy access to the existing target population. Before entering the schools, the researcher first applied to conduct research in the Tshwane West, North and South Districts. After permission was granted (refer to Annexure B for DBE permission letter), the researcher was then provided with a list of all the public schools that fell under the above-mentioned districts. From the list of the names in the three districts, nine schools were selected. The permission letter from the DBE did not include the names of specific schools but gave the researcher permission to conduct the study in the three districts. The nine schools were then selected based on their convenience in terms of their location and accessibility for

the researcher.

To select individual participants from the schools, purposive and snowballing sampling were utilised.

1.5.3.2 Purposive or judgemental sampling

Purposive sampling means that research participants are purposely selected because they possess characteristics desired for a particular study. Purposive sampling involves approaching the sample with a prior objective in mind (Kapur, 2018:45). Strydom (2021:383) adds that some authors refer to the purposive sampling technique as "judgemental sampling", which means that the researcher relies entirely on his/her judgement to select participants who have the typical attributes of the population being studied. Leavy (2017:79) agrees that purposive sampling is based on the idea that selecting the best cases for the study produces the best data and that the cases sampled directly influence the findings of the research.

Using purposive sampling, the teachers who participated in this study were selected because they were deemed experienced in the phenomenon of learner-on-educator violence, by virtue of their work and personal experiences. To draw the sample from the schools, the researcher first had individual meetings with the principals of the nine schools. During the meetings, the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the study purpose, aims, objectives and goals. After the meetings with the principals, the researcher was given an opportunity to address the teachers during their staff meetings to explain the purpose of the research to all staff members. After the meetings, volunteers came forward. The researcher took the volunteers' contact details so that she could contact them individually to arrange for interviews.

1.5.3.3 Snowball sampling

According to Strydom (2021:383), snowballing entails contacting an initial respondent or case that can offer extensive and valuable information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Even though some teachers volunteered to participate in the study based

on the criteria provided, issues of victimisation are very sensitive and thus the initial number that volunteered was not enough. The researcher resorted to snowball sampling where initial volunteers were requested to recommend their colleagues who fitted the sampling characteristics and would be willing to participate (Strydom, 2021:383; Kapur, 2018:46). Snowball sampling is particularly useful in qualitative research because it allows for the identification of difficult-to-reach individuals, such as victims or witnesses of crime, as was the case in this study (Strydom, 2021:383). Participants who were initially chosen from the list of schools were asked to refer other participants who met the criteria (i.e., victims of learner-on-educator violence or witnesses of learner-on-educator violence).

1.5.3.4 Unit of analysis

According to Miles (2019:2), the unit of analysis refers to the primary entity under examination in a study. The selection of the unit of analysis is guided by the researcher's interest in investigating or elucidating a specific phenomenon (Miles, 2019:2). Examples of unit of analysis encompass individuals, groups, artifacts (such as books, photos, newspapers), geographical units (such as towns, census tracts and states), and social interactions (dynamic relations, divorces, arrests) (Miles, 2019:3). Fouché (2021b:67) explains that there are many different types of units of analysis, but the most prevalent categories are individuals, groups, organisations, and programmes. The selection of the unit of analysis is determined by the research question (Fouché, 2021b:67). The primary unit of analysis from which data were collected for this research, were 23 secondary school teachers who were either victims or witnesses of learner-on-educator violence.

1.5.3.5 Sampling size

Strydom (2021:380) asserts that, in qualitative research, there are no guidelines for sample size. What the researcher wants to know, the objective of the investigation, what is at stake, what is significant, what has credibility, and what can be done with the time and resources available, are all factors that influence sample size (Strydom, 2021:380). Furthermore, in qualitative research, sampling occurs after clearly outlining the study's

circumstances to achieve transferability (refer to sub section 1.5.1 *infra*) rather than generalisability (Strydom, 2021:380). Therefore, qualitative research is focused on gaining in-depth data (refer to sub section 1.5.7.2.1 *supra*), the goal is to elucidate the particular and the specific rather than to generalise (Strydom, 2021:380). Nieuwenhuis (2018:84) emphasises that sample sizes in qualitative research should not be so large that it is difficult to extract thick, rich and in-depth data. At the same time, the sample should not be so small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation or theoretical saturation (Nieuwenhuis, 2018:84; Kapur, 2018:41). An ideal sample is one that satisfies the criteria for effectiveness, dependability, and flexibility (Kapur, 2018:41). Leavy (2017:77) adds that, even though sample size guidelines are not specified, the amount of information required to answer the research questions depends on the unique situation presented by the specific population.

For this study, a total of 23 research participants comprising teachers who were either victims or witnesses of learner-on-educator violence were selected. Of the 23 participants, 10 were from Tshwane West, followed by seven (7) from Tshwane North and six (6) from Tshwane South. Nine research participants who initially agreed to take part in the study withdrew from the study prior to being interviewed. Eight (8) of the withdrawals were from Tshwane West and one (1) from Tshwane South. Consequently, the number of the participants from each district as well as the overall sample size was determined by the willingness and the availability of the research participants. The total number of 23 participants was deemed acceptable for a qualitative study as in-depth information can only be collected from a small number of participants. Moreover, the sample sizes per district were substantial for the collection of qualitative data in terms of the research phenomenon as experienced first-hand by the participants.

1.5.3.6 Geographical delineation

The selected research site for the study was the City of Tshwane Municipality, which is situated in Gauteng Province of South Africa. The research site was selected for convenience and feasibility. The former is because the researcher was, at the time of the research, a resident of the City of Tshwane and the latter was because the researcher

did not have funding to expand the study in other areas outside of her residential city. Kapur (2018:42) explains that choosing the sample requires taking into account the budgetary restrictions that have a significant influence on decisions relating to sampling.

1.5.4 Data collection: Semi-structured interviews

Before data were collected from the participants, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the University of South Africa (UNISA) College of Law (CLAW) Research Ethics Committee. After ethical clearance was granted, an application was submitted to the DBE Tshwane West, South and North Districts to conduct research in public secondary schools in the three districts. After permission was granted by the three districts, the researcher approached the principals as the "gate keepers" to request permission to conduct research in their schools. After permission was granted by the schools, the researcher then started collecting data from the 23 participants (refer to discussions on the sample in the preceding section).

Qualitative researchers have access to a variety of interview techniques, such as focused, semi structured, oral history or life history, biographic minimalist, and many others (in which multiple participants are interviewed at once in a group) (Leavy, 2017:139). The research topic, research questions, study goal, research design, and study population are factors to consider when deciding on the data gathering methods (Geyer, 2021:335). The method used in this study was one-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviewing. In qualitative research, interviewing, whether with individuals or groups, is the predominant data collection approach (Geyer, 2021:335).

The acquisition of real, detailed, rich, and thick qualitative data requires verbal communication (Geyer, 2021:335). The semi-structured one-on-one interviewing method was, therefore, suitable for this study as the goal was to collect first-hand experience and in-depth data from the research participants. Geyer (2021:355) further explains that individual interviews are more effective when researching a sensitive topic. As a result, due to the sensitive nature of the topic that was studied for this research (i.e., learner-on-educator violence), individual interviewing was chosen as the data collection method.

Depending on the situation, the interviews can be conducted face-to-face, telephonically, or online via platforms such as Microsoft Teams or ZOOM. All the interviews in this research were conducted face-to-face. A benefit of face-to-face interviews is the opportunity to build rapport, pick up on visual cues, and use gestures (Leavy, 2017:141). Face-to-face interviews can be conducted in a variety of settings, including at home, at work, outside, on the go (i.e., while traveling) (Walliman, 2018:115). The semi-structured interview method requires an interview schedule with pre-determined questions (refer to Annexure D). The interview schedule includes standard questions that are posed to the interviewee to gather information (Kapur, 2018:34). Geyer (2021:358) adds that, when conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher goes into the interview with an understanding of the relevant literature and a list of open questions (Geyer, 2021:358). In this study, the interview schedule was not used to dictate, but to guide the interviews, as each interviewee had a different experience. The interview guide was utilised to provide structure to the interview process and helped the researcher to be well-prepared with relevant questions.

Because the primary goal of this current study was to explore the phenomenon of learner-on-educator violence by collecting in-depth first-hand data on an under-researched phenomenon, semi-structured interviewing was deemed suitable. There are two main advantages to conducting semi-structured interviews. Firstly, participants are actively involved and provide direction to the interview, and it is possible to follow up on both verbal and non-verbal communication (Geyer, 2021:358). Secondly, individual interviews facilitate the collection of rich and thick descriptions and the detailed exploration of the topic from a smaller sample (i.e., 23 participants in the case of this study) (Geyer, 2021:358).

The face-to-face interviews for this research were conducted for almost a month from 22 March to 16 April 2021. Each interview session took between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews took place at the school in the staff room, in a restaurant or at the teacher's home. To ensure privacy and confidentiality (refer to section 1.5.6 on ethics *infra*) all the interviews took place in private (i.e., in the staff room when no other staff members were

present, at home in a private room or in a private corner at the restaurant). Conducting the interviews in an environment where the educators were comfortable further facilitated the process of building rapport. Leavy (2017:39) explains that building trust, establishing rapport, and setting expectations are important ethical considerations (see section 1.5.6) when conducting research as this necessitates close interaction with participants to collect or generate data (Leavy, 2017:39). The interviews were conducted during lunch breaks, before classes, or after school depending on the availability of individual interviewees.

Even though the researcher took notes during the interview sessions, permission was sought from the interviewees for an audio recorder to be used as well so that the researcher was able to focus on the conversation rather than on writing notes (Geyer (2021:357). The ethical principle of consent is discussed in more detail in section 1.5.6.1 below. Audio recording of the interviews was necessary as it is difficult to write everything down or to recall everything that was said in an interview. Therefore, recording offsets the risk of misrepresenting the research participants by reporting on incorrect information.

1.5.5 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

The process of adding order, structure, and significance to the data obtained is known as data analysis (Schurink, Schurink & Fouché, 2021b:391). Schurink et al (2021b:391) further explain that the research design, data collection, analysis, presentation, and distribution are all linked to the data analysis. Kapur (2018:52) agrees and states that the process of giving the collected data structure, order and meaning, and finding explanations for relationships between various classifications of data is known as data analysis. It is a complex, drawn-out, resourceful, and fascinating process (Kapur, 2018:52).

According to Schurink et al (2021b:401), there are two approaches to data analysis in qualitative research; the first includes preliminary data analysis and the second includes intensive data analysis. These methods are intended to cope with the massive amounts of data generated by interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and collected material, such as

documents, images, videos, and audio recordings (Schurink et al, 2021b:401). Since researchers can only communicate their understanding of their findings to their readers through writing, writing is an important aspect of interpretation and analysis (Schurink et al, 2021b:401) (refer to Chapter 4). The presentation of data therefore determines the trustworthiness of a study (Schurink et al, 2021b:401) (see section 1.5.7.2 on trustworthiness). For this research, thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the data. Thematic analysis relies on verbal data such as descriptions, accounts, opinions, and feelings (Walliman, 2018:149). Thematic analysis is typically used when people are the subject of a study, in social groups or as individuals (Walliman, 2018:149).

The subsections that follow present the steps that were followed to analyse data in this research.

1.5.5.1 Organising the data

Schurink et al (2021b:403) assert that the researcher organises the data into folders or computer files at an early stage in the analysis process. Further, the researcher manually or automatically converts the files to appropriate text units, usually words, for analysis (Schurink et al, 2021b:403). During this phase, the researcher also types and organises the handwritten fieldnotes and transcribes the audio recorded data (Schurink et al, 2021b:403). In this study, the researcher engaged in the preparation phase by organising handwritten collected data using the main research questions for which manual hardcopy folders were created.

1.5.5.2 Transcribing the data

Interviews should preferably be analysed from transcriptions and not from the raw audio or video footage (Geyer, 2021:372). This means that the researcher should transcribe what was said and how it was said from the audio or video recording (Schurink et al, 2021b:403). Schurink et al (2021b:403) assert that it is important to ensure that the transcription is done thoroughly in sufficient detail as this is the first step of the data analysis and interpretation process. In this study, after completing the field work, the

researcher in this study used the transcription process to immerse themselves in the data for increased insights (Schurink et al., 2021b:404) by listening to the audio recorded interviews, reading the field notes, and then transcribing the recordings verbatim.

The research questions helped the researcher to combine all the relevant data to resume the analysis process. The researcher read the transcripts thoroughly looking for critical terms, key events or themes in relation to the aim and objectives of the study. The transcripts were added to the folder that contained the back-up notes and observational notes made by the researcher during the interviews.

1.5.5.3 Data familiarisation

In order to be fully immersed in the data, the researcher read and reread the transcriptions a few times. This phase allowed the researcher to become intimately familiar with the content (Schurink et al, 2021b:404). Further, the researcher critically evaluated the meaning of the words used by participants or the visual material presented (Schurink et al, 2021b:404). This enabled the first step in the coding process known as a code of identification (Schurink et al, 2021b:404). A code is a descriptor that represents a specific meaning assigned to a piece of text (Schurink et al, 2021b:404). After the researcher gained a basic understanding of the data and identified the first codes, she moved on to the next steps in the process which included the code clustering (continuous code production), theme development, and pattern description (via categorisation) (Schurink et al, 2021b:404–405). Codes are the building blocks for themes as, when they are grouped together, they form a pattern of meaning supported by a central concept, known as categorisation (Schurink et al, 2021b:405).

1.5.5.4 Coding (**first order analysis**)

This step transitions the researcher from informal, observational note-taking activities and code identification to systematic coding by labelling the text (Schurink et al, 2021b:406). Coding can be done in a variety of ways, with "text units" that can be analysed line by line, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, or the entire text, if necessary

(Schurink et al, 2021b:406). Codes are labels or tags that are used to give the data units meaning beyond physical facts (Walliman, 2018:153). Furthermore, coding aids in data organisation, the conceptualisation process, and the avoidance of data overload brought on by an abundance of unprocessed data (Walliman, 2018:153). The analytical process of coding necessitates the review, selection, interpretation, and accurate summarisation of the data (Walliman, 2018:153). Thematic analysis thrives on breaking down data material into manageable chunks and then reassembling it in a new way (Schurink et al, 2021b:403). Themes are created through an iterative and interpretative analytic coding process that encourages both rigour and systematic process (Schurink et al, 2021b:403). This process is known as "open coding" (Schurink et al, 2021b:406). Within a hermeneutic circle, coding development, refinement, and correction take place iteratively (Schurink et al, 2021b:406). This means that the coding method may be altered when new meanings for similar text units develop (Schurink et al, 2021b:406). The term "open coding" refers to the first phase (first order) of the coding process in qualitative research, and it is derived from Glaser and Strauss's (1967) approach outlined in their landmark work, "The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research".

Coding in this study was done manually on Microsoft Word, and not through a computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) programme such as NVIVO or Atlas.ti. The researcher used different colours to highlight themes on the transcripts. The same colours were used to underline similar themes across all transcripts, sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph. Further, descriptors which conveyed meanings that developed as the researcher read through the transcripts were assigned using track changes comments on the margins of the documents. A themed approach was, at the same time, applied to interpret and understand the meanings of the phenomenon of learner-on-educator violence as described by the research participants. The themes were created through a systematic, rigorous, and analytical coding process (Schurink et al, 2021b:403).

1.5.5.5 Theme development (second order analysis)

This is an active phase of pattern identification and organisation of codes into themes

(Schurink et al, 2021b:407). A researcher might choose to theme the data as he/she works with the codes and categories (Leavy, 2017:52). A theme, as opposed to a short code, may be a longer phrase or sentence that conveys the deeper significance of a code or group of codes (Leavy, 2017:152). In practice, the lines between coding and theme development can become blurred as the researcher begins to consider grouping extensive code networks as the coding progresses (Schurink et al, 2021b:407). Moreover, identifying key themes and recurring ideas, as well as connecting people and settings, makes this the most intellectually demanding stage of data analysis (Schurink et al, 2021b:407). For this study, main themes were developed from the research questions, which captured a blend of the participants' understanding of their experiences and the researcher's interpretations of the meaning the participants formulated. This was done in relation to the research objectives and research questions as advised by Leavy (2017:151) and Schurink et al (2021b:407). As the researcher identified different themes, he/she identified recurring themes or underlying similarities between them and used colours to differentiate the responses collected from each question. This approach was followed to group all the responses to identify the similarities in their answers. All responses were grouped together and analysed. For example, the question on what impact learner-on-educator violence had on the victim, all the participants' responses to this question were grouped together. Throughout this analysis process, the researcher was constantly aware of differences or deviations from the norm. As a result, searching for cases that either confirm or disprove previously formulated themes increases the credibility of the research conclusion (Schurink et al, 2021b:408). Refer to Table 4.3 for themes that emerged during data analysis for this current study.

1.5.5.6 Data interpretation and report writing

The final stage of the data analysis process is the interpretation phase (Schurink et al, 2021b:408). At this point in the analysis, the researcher steps back to form broader opinions about the content of the data (Schurink et al, 2021b:408). To strengthen the interpretation of the data, existing literature on specific themes was used to support or refute the study findings. In addition, the three theories that underpinned the study were

also used to explain the findings (refer to Chapters 3 and 4). To finalise the data interpretation phase, the findings are presented in Chapter 4 using a narrative writing style where the findings are confirmed using the participants' verbatim responses.

1.5.6 Ethical considerations

Strydom and Roestenburg (2021:118) maintain that ethics is a set of moral principles or rules on behavioural expectations in research projects for the best treatment of participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants, and learners. Moreover, ethical guidelines, principles, and regulations should be integrated into a researchers' practice and behavioural framework, to guide ethical conduct and practice (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:118).

Throughout the research process, the researcher followed the ethical guidelines in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics dated September 2007. This study received ethical clearance first from UNISA CLAW Research Ethics Committee (see section 1.6.4 and Annexure A for ethical clearance letter). The Gauteng Department of Basic Education gave an approval letter granting the researcher permission to conduct research in Tshwane West, North, and South Districts high schools (see Annexure B for permission letter). Additionally, even though permission to conduct research at the schools was granted, the researcher first asked the principals for permission to conduct the interviews (refer to sub-sections 1.5.3.2 and 1.5.4 *supra*). Further permission was sought from each participant.

The researcher was open and honest, and the participants were extensively briefed on the study's intent, which was done in English, a language they all understood. In addition, the following basic ethical principles were considered:

1.5.6.1 Informed consent

Prior to data collection, consent should be given (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:121). Potential subjects or their legal representatives should be given information about the investigation's goal, expected behaviour, duration of involvement, the procedure to be

followed, possible advantages and disadvantages, possible dangers to which participants may be exposed, and the researcher's credibility (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:122). Participants were fully informed of the purpose of the research through Annexure C which was read, signed and dated by each of the participants at the beginning of the interviews. Since the interviews were done face to face, participants had an opportunity to ask the researcher for clarity if necessary. The participants were informed, through the consent form, that participation was voluntary and that they were free to opt out whenever they felt that they no longer wanted to participate in the study. The informed consent form further detailed the aim and objectives of the study, participants' rights as well as how the data would be stored and how the findings will be disseminated.

1.5.6.2 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation means that no information from or about a participant will be used for research purposes unless the subject gives their uncoerced consent (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:121). The researcher ensured that all participants gave their full and autonomous informed consent to participate in the research after being thoroughly informed of the aims and objectives of the study and their rights. There were no consequences for the nine (9) participants who withdrew from the study (also see sections 1.6.3.5 *supra* and 5.6.1 *infra*).

1.5.6.3 Non-maleficence (**Do no harm**)

Researchers should remain sensitive to participants' feelings and analyse the situation on a regular basis (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:119). Even though the research topic is sensitive, the researcher was careful not to cause any harm to the participants. This was done through repeatedly informing the participants that they should not answer any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. None of the research participants chose not to answer questions. Furthermore, before the interviews commenced, the researcher asked each of the interviewees if they had the contact details of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and if they would be able to access psychosocial services should they feel emotionally or psychologically impacted by the interview. All the participants

expressed that they have access to EAP psychosocial services, and they will access the services should the need arise.

1.5.6.4 Beneficence

Predicting the potential degree of harm is just as difficult as determining actual direct benefit of the research, because potentially detrimental experiences cannot be predicted or ruled out in advance (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:121). The researcher explained to the participants that there was no monetary compensation for their involvement and that their participation was meant to assist the researcher complete her qualification and to also assist the DBE, specifically, the three districts, to develop preventative measures for learner-on-educator violence.

1.5.6.5 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

The study ensured the privacy, anonymity, the right to self-determination, and confidentiality of the participants (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:124). The physical environment in which data is collected is referred to as privacy (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:124). The researcher ensured that the interviews were private as they took place in an empty staff room, a private room in the participant's home or in a private corner of a restaurant (see section 1.6.4).

Anonymity refers to safeguarding personal information that might allow others to identify a participant, whereas confidentiality relates to how this information is stored (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:124). Confidentiality can be viewed as a continuance of a privacy agreement between individuals that restricts others' access to personal information (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:124). Anonymity means that no one should be able to identify any of the participants (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:124). Full anonymity in face-to-face interviews cannot be ensured as the researcher has a personal interaction with the participants. Each participant was given a pseudonym or a number so that no one, besides the researcher, would be able to associate any data presented in this dissertation or verbatim responses to a particular participant (refer to Chapter 4). One of

the conditions highlighted in the permission letter by the DBE was that they study was not to reveal the names of the participants or the schools (refer to Annexure B). To ensure confidentiality, the information collected from the participants was not shared with anyone besides the study supervisor. To further ensure confidentiality, hardcopy documents (i.e., signed informed consent forms) were kept in a lockable cupboard in the researcher's home, which only the researcher has access to. The documents were later scanned into the researcher's password protected laptop and the hardcopies were destroyed by shredding. The fieldnotes were also scanned onto the researcher's laptop and the hard copies were shredded. All the electronic versions of the research documents (i.e., consent form, fieldnotes and transcripts) are currently stored on the researcher's laptop and the cloud for safekeeping. These documents will be kept for 15 years after completion of this research, after which they will be permanently deleted from both the researcher's laptop and the cloud.

1.5.7 Reliability and trustworthiness

The following section discusses the reliability of the data collection instrument and the trustworthiness of the collected data.

1.5.7.1 Reliability

Reliability means that a measuring instrument consistently yields the same results (Thobane, 2017:55; Kapur, 2018:24). Thobane (2017:55) explains that reliability can be ensured by asking clear, straightforward, and unambiguous questions in interviews. When providing their answers, participants must be trustworthy and dependable (Kapur, 2018:24). In this study, reliability was ensured as the questions asked in the interview guide were unambiguous and clear. Also, conducting the interviews face-to-face increased the reliability of the information provided by the research participants as the researcher was able to ask the clarity seeking questions based on their responses, and questions which were not clear to the interviewees were clarified by the researcher. Data triangulation, in terms of interviewing multiple participants (n=23), increased reliability because participant responses were compared for similarities and differences.

1.5.7.2 Trustworthiness

As characteristics of credible qualitative research, transferability, dependability, conformability, and credibility are commonly viewed as significant measures of trustworthiness (Schurink et al, 2021b:393).

1.5.7.2.1 Transferability

The extent to which a study's findings may be utilised in different contexts and investigations is referred to as the transferability of research findings (Schurink et al, 2021b:393). This is the process where the findings of the research can be transferred from a specific situation or case to another (Schurink et al, 2021b:393). Transferability should not be mistaken with generalisation, as generalisation is not the aim of contextualised, qualitative research (Schurink et al, 2021b:393–394). The findings, or output, of a qualitative study and the setting in which the investigation was done should be recognised by other scholars (Schurink et al, 2021b:394). The degree to which a reader, who is not part of the study, can identify with the topic demonstrates transferability (Schurink et al, 2021b:394). Transferability in this study was ensured by providing detailed descriptions of the methods applied throughout the research process.

1.5.7.2.2 Dependability

According to Schurink et al (2021b:394), the researcher uses this criterion to determine if the study process is rational, well-documented, and audited. Dependability refers to the extent to which the research could be repeated by other researchers in the same environment under similar circumstances and yield the same results (Schurink et al, 2021b:394). This is an alternative to reliability in which the researcher tries to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon being studied as well as changes in the design brought about by the environment (Schurink et al, 2021b:394). Dependability, in this study, was reached through an inquiry audit where the research supervisor continuously reviewed the entire research process.

1.5.7.2.3 Confirmability

Schurink et al (2021b:394) assert that confirmability encapsulates the classical notions of objectivity and neutrality of the research findings. Confirmability, in this study, was attained by providing a descriptive audit trail of all the steps taken to analyse the collected data. Furthermore, thick descriptions were used to present the research findings which were confirmed using verbatim responses from research participants (refer to Chapter 4).

1.5.7.2.4 Credibility or authenticity

In qualitative research, credibility is an alternative to internal validity. When a measuring device or instrument measures what it is intended to measure, it is said to be valid (Kapur, 2018:24). The purpose of credibility is to demonstrate that accurate and reliable research participants were sampled for the study (Schurink et al, 2021b:394–395). Credibility, in this research, was firstly attained by selecting participants who had the experience and knowledge on the research topic. Secondly, credibility was reached through the process of data triangulation by collecting and comparing data from multiple participants at different times and locations (Schurink et al, 2021b:396) (see sub-section 1.6.7.1 *supra* on reliability). Finally, to ensure credibility during the data collection phase, the researcher engaged in a process of reflexivity and bracketing of preconceived ideas about the research subjects.

1.5.8 Dissertation layout

Below is an overview of the chapters that make up this dissertation.

Chapter 1

The first part of this chapter introduces the study in relation to its aims and objectives. The rationale and value of the study are also discussed in this chapter. The second part presents the research methods applied throughout the study in terms of the approach and design, sampling strategies as well as data collection and analysis tools.

Furthermore, ethical guidelines as well as reliability and trustworthiness of the research and data are discussed in the last part of the chapter.

Chapter 2

This chapter examines existing literature on the topic at hand. It provides a discussion of the nature of learner-on-educator violence, its causes and the impact the crime has on the victims. Chapter 2 further focuses on current measures used to prevent learner-on-educator violence.

Chapter 3

This chapter mainly deals with the theories that underpinned the study, namely, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Hirschi's social control theory and social learning theory.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents the interpretation and analysis of the research findings.

Chapter 5

The final chapter summarises the findings presented in Chapter 4 followed by recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

1.6 Summary

This chapter provided the general orientation of the study through a discussion of the problem statement, the study rationale as well as the aim, objectives, and research questions. The second part of the chapter focused on the research methodology. To conduct the research, the qualitative research approach with an explorative goal was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 23 educators. Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the data. A discussion of the ethical principles that guided the research process also took place in this chapter. The chapter ended with

deliberations of how the reliability of the data collection instrument and trustworthiness of the data were ensured.

The next chapter focuses on the review of the literature related to the topic.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW OF LEARNER-ON-EDUCATOR VIOLENCE

2.1 Introduction

Snyder (2019:333) suggests that integrating findings and perspectives from various empirical studies allows a literature review to address research questions more effectively. It also provides an overview of disparate and interdisciplinary research areas. Moreover, a literature review synthesises research findings, presenting evidence on a meta-level and identifying gaps where further research is necessary. This process is crucial for developing theoretical frameworks and building conceptual models (Snyder, 2019:333). According to Schurink, Roestenburg and Fouché (2021a:94), a literature review is a process of ensuring that a study is based on an existing body of knowledge and discipline within which the investigation is done. A literature review:

- Concentrates on the issue and conceptualises connections, rather than assuming that a topic or thought is unique;

- Places the research in the context of contemporary debates;

- Encourages experimentation with and learning from other people's methods/techniques;

- Provides a path for the topic's evolution by allowing for the growth of knowledge in the field;

- Adds to the study's background and reasoning, thereby aiding in the development of a thorough understanding of all factors that influence the topic; and

- Compares findings with previous research and studies, which adds to the growth of knowledge.

To conduct this study, various sources of information were examined, including research reports, postgraduate theses and dissertations, textbooks and newspapers. The objective was to gather relevant literature on learner-on-educator violence. This chapter

discusses the nature and types of violence directed towards teachers, the causes of learner-on-educator violence and the impact learner-on-educator violence has on the victim. Furthermore, the chapter discusses current measures, including legislation, used to prevent school violence, of which learner-on-educator is a sub-type.

2.2 The nature of learner-on-educator violence

Baxen (2021:viii) and Fakude (2022:25) indicate that violence on teachers is not only physical in nature; it involves both physical and non-physical harm (e.g., verbal, psychological and cyber related) that may both result in physical or psychological damage, pain, fear and trauma.

2.2.1 Verbal abuse

Fakude (2022:108) and Thobane (2023a:5) report that the most prevalent type of violence encountered by teachers is verbal abuse (also refer to subsection 1.1). Mahome (2019:100) asserts that teachers are verbally abused when they enter the school, inside the classroom, and during break times. Fakude (2022:108–109) adds that verbal abuse manifests in various ways, including issuing threats and insults towards teachers, using derogatory language to refer to teachers, and subjecting them to sexually harassing remarks. Reports suggest that teachers are verbally attacked daily, especially at the beginning of the academic year since some of the learners who had failed the grade blame the teachers for not allocating the correct marks for tests (Mahome, 2019:97).

2.2.2 Cyberbullying

Grobler (2018:24) asserts that cyberbullying is a growing phenomenon globally. Kopecký and Szotkowski (2017:103) believe that teachers may be victims of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying does not require physical proximity between a victim and a perpetrator (Ngidi, 2018:166). In cyberspace, teachers most often become victims of verbal aggression, particularly humiliation, insults, embarrassment, gossip and ridicule (Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017:104). Moreover, cyberbullying of teachers includes cyberbaiting or "provoking the teacher and recording his/her surprised reaction mostly through mobile

phones" and subsequently sharing these materials with others (Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017:104). Cyberbullying also includes creating fake websites demeaning the teacher, creating fake profiles dishonouring the teacher, extortion of the teacher and hacking of a teacher's online account and subsequent theft of the teacher's identity; as well as threats of harm and intimidation of teachers (Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017:104). A single act by the learner, such as posting an inappropriate comment regarding a teacher on a website or on social media, becomes available to a wide audience far beyond the school environment and the teacher's workplace (Hoffmann, 2015:12).

2.2.3 Physical abuse

Physical violence includes the use of weapons, beating, shoving, pushing, punching, hitting, throwing, and grabbing (Windvoël, 2023:93). Learners have used knives and scissors to attempt to stab teachers, chase teachers with brooms, throw objects like bricks, dirty socks, and plates of food at teachers, hit teachers with art projects, grab a teachers aggressively by their chest, and punch, shove, and beat their teachers (Windvoël, 2023:93). Fakude (2022:25) states that physical manifestations of violence encompass actions such as striking, spitting, pushing, and pulling of hair. Makhasane (2022:206) reports that, in his study conducted with 15 participants in two high schools located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, teachers believed that physical violence was characterised by intentional acts like pushing, pulling, and assault. The participants referred to an incident where a learner physically attacked and killed a teacher in the classroom as well as one where a learner stabbed a female teacher to death during the lesson in Grade 8 class while she was invigilating and spotted a learner who was cheating and confronted him (Makhasane, 2022:206). The senseless killing of a teacher by a learner at this school, though it was a one-off occurrence, demonstrates that the physical violence experienced by teachers can have dire consequences (Makhasane, 2022:208).

2.3 The causes of learner-on-educator violence

There are many causes of learner-on-educator violence. In this section, the researcher

deliberates on the causes of learner-on-educator violence by looking at an intersection of risk factors between the individual, family, community/society, peers and the school.

2.3.1 Individual Risk Factors

To examine the individual risk factors, this section covers the learner's age, educational ambition or attainment, and substance abuse.

2.3.1.1 Age as a factor

According to Pahad (2010:81), age plays a role in predisposing a learner to school violence as a victim or perpetrator. Pahad (2010:81) claims that, in her study conducted in 2009, one educator emphasised that age was a contributing factor because the age gap among learners in one class often made it difficult to control the learners. Older learners in a class may presume that, because of their age, they should not be reprimanded (Pahad, 2010:81). Consequently, teachers often lose control of the older learners (Pahad, 2010:81). Singh and Steyn (2013:5) confirm that many learners who demonstrate violence are substantially older than the other learners in the grade, and some are even older than their teachers because they have experienced delays to their progress through school (Social Surveys, 2010:np). These delays can be caused by entering the school system late, missing school temporarily but for substantial periods and repeating a grade or multiple grades (Social Surveys, 2010). Furthermore, the younger learners may take advantage of the teacher's lack of control of the older learners and start misbehaving and acting aggressively in class knowing that the teacher will not reprimand them. This contributes to the teacher losing control of the class (Pahad, 2010:81).

2.3.1.2 Low educational ambition or attainment by learners

According to Moreroa (2022:56), a child who feels rejected by the school or performs poorly in academic work may become estranged from school and act aggressively. This affects the motivation to succeed academically (Chauke, 2021:17087). Learners with low levels of intellectual ability or learning disabilities face challenges in comprehending

academic content, which results in poor performance on tests (Fakude, 2022:159). This often leads to ridicule and mockery from their peers, exacerbating their negative emotions (Fakude, 2022:159). These negative social dynamics can contribute to the development of violent tendencies in such learners, as they may feel frustrated, humiliated and seek to assert themselves through aggressive behaviour (Fakude, 2022:159). Two surveys conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga with 72 and 59 educators respectively, Thobane et al (2023b:15; 2023c:16) found that the "Promotion and Progression Policy" contributes to the low educational ambition by learners. The policy provides details on how and when a learner moves from one grade to the next (Equal Education Law Centre, n.d.). The central principle is that a learner cannot spend more than four years in one phase and only in exceptional cases can permission be given for a learner to repeat more than once per grade or phase (Equal Education Law Centre, n.d.). The general feeling from the educators who participated in the above-mentioned studies was that this policy is being abused by learners and their parents (Thobane et al, 2023b:15; Thobane et al, 2023c:16).

Additionally, Cascio (2019:np) lists the following as factors that contribute to learners' low educational ambition or poor performance:

- Learner related factors that include: learning disabilities; a lack of motivation; or learners not caring about their performance or schoolwork;

- Teacher related factors that include: a lack of teaching experience; a lack of passion for teaching; failure to manage learners in the classroom; and not being qualified or being under-qualified;

- School-related factors that include: lowered pass marks by the department or the school; a lack of funding for the school or overcrowded classrooms; and

- Family related factors that include: a lack of involvement by the parents in their children's schoolwork or performance, abusive parents or living in a poverty.

2.3.1.3 Substance abuse by learners

Moreroa (2022:96) opines that the prevalence of substance abuse amongst learners in South African schools has two significant implications. Firstly, it contributes to an increase in criminal activities (Moreroa, 2022:96), and secondly, the existence of profitable criminal activities makes the potential gains from such actions more appealing (Moreroa, 2022:96). Substance abuse among learners is evident and contributes to bullying in schools (Mangena, 2022:29). Some teachers have noted that, after break, a few learners exhibit behaviours indicative of substance abuse. Consequently, these learners become uncontrollable in the classroom (Mangena, 2022:29).

In research in Gauteng Province conducted by Thobane et al (2023a:14) in four schools in Alexandra and Soweto, substance abuse by learners was reported by 45 of the 69 participants (65%) as the most predominant cause of school violence. Results from the aforementioned study revealed that the most common types of substances used on the premises of the four schools were alcohol reported by 57% of the educators who completed the survey, followed by marijuana (48%) and tobacco products (46%). The educators who participated in Thobane et al's (2023a:21) study reported that dagga and other drugs are brought to school every day and that some learners are constantly "high", especially after break which makes it difficult for teachers to teach them. This study further reported that both boys and girls bring alcohol to school and that some learners come to school drunk while others drink on the school premises (Thobane et al, 2023a:14). The study further revealed that some learners drank with their parents at home and when the parents were called to the school to inform them that their children were drinking on school premises, they saw nothing wrong with the behaviour (Thobane et al, 2023a:21). According to the South African Police Service (SAPS, 2019:22), alcohol is one of the multiple generators of crime because the abuse of alcohol and other substances impacts negatively on one's ability to think rationally or resolve conflict in a peaceful manner. Zwane (2021:105) adds that the issue of violence against teachers in South African schools is greatly exacerbated by the alcohol consumption of learners that is challenging to address.

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 declares all schools drug free zones. This means that possession of alcohol and illegal drugs on school premises and the use thereof is not allowed. Please refer to the section 2.5 *infra* on prevention, specifically sub-section 2.5.2, for a more in-depth discussion of the South African Schools Act.

2.3.2 Family risk factors

Families play a vital role as the primary environment in which learners develop and grow (Fakude, 2022:167). Their upbringing and development largely depend on the influences and interactions with significant others within the family unit (Fakude, 2022:167). This section focuses on the family risk factors that contribute to a child committing learner-on-educator violence. Attention is specifically paid to the family background, violence in the home, broken homes, substance abuse by parents or caregivers and child poverty.

2.3.2.1 Family background

Singh and Steyn (2013:3) indicate that factors contributing to learners' aggression, in the form of physical and verbal bullying, may be traced back to learners' family backgrounds such as broken homes or households headed by single parents, mostly mothers. In this situation, the boy child may take the role of the main male or a "father figure" and exhibits a controlling attitude, which he may extend outside of the home and express as aggressive behaviour towards teachers. In the African culture, when there is no father in the family due to various reasons, such as absence or death, the first-born son or the only boy is often expected to take up the role of the father (Thobane, 2014:129). "The absence of a father figure has a negative effect on the socialising process, especially with regards to boys" (Thobane, 2014:128). Thobane's assertion regarding the impact of the absence of a father figure on the socialising process, particularly concerning boys, raises important considerations about the role of parental figures in child development. When a father figure is absent from a child's life, especially during crucial developmental stages, it may have significant implications for their socialisation and overall well-being. Some parents are not involved in their children's lives because they work long hours and are not physically able to be a part of their child's life or they may lack the necessary

educational or social skills to raise their children (Ferreira, 2016:29) (refer to section 3.3.2 for a discussion of the exosystem). Mkhomi and Mavuso (2021:32) add that the lack of parental supervision and control over learners at home translates into learners who act independently, often challenge authority figures, such as teachers and principals, and reject discipline. Zwane (2021:205) explains that children inadequately disciplined (i.e., who are not disciplined at all or whose parents use excessive forms of discipline such as corporal punishment) often exhibit antisocial behaviour at school. The importance of healthy parenting methods and parental involvement in raising children is considered crucial in predicting violent behaviour by learners (Windvoël, 2023:52). The way parents raise their children and their relationship with them significantly influence their behaviour as they grow up (Windvoël, 2023:52). Improper and inappropriate parenting can lead to aggressive and violent behaviour. Parents who use violent methods when disciplining their children are more likely to raise children who exhibit violent tendencies (Windvoël, 2023:52).

Further, the death of learners' parents creates a gap in terms of socially accepted values, morals and respect for adults (Makhasane & Khanare, 2018:18). In 2021, approximately 33,8% of South African children resided with both their biological parents, while 18,8% did not live with either of their biological parents (Department of Statistics South Africa [StatsSA], 2021b:23). About 61,5% lived in nuclear households (StatsSA, 2021b:23) that is defined by StatsSA (2021:2) as a household comprising the household heads, their spouses and their children. A household head is an individual, regardless of gender, who takes on the responsibility for the household (StatsSA, 2021b:2). Notable differences were observed between urban and rural areas, with rural areas having a higher percentage of children living in extended households (72,6%) compared to urban areas (53,1%) (StatsSA, 2021:23). Extended households encompass the nucleus along with additional relatives (StatsSA, 2021:3). Conversely, children in urban areas are more likely to live in nuclear households compared to their rural counterparts (StatsSA, 2021:23). The living arrangements of children also varied among different population groups (StatsSA, 2021:23). Children belonging to the white and Indian population groups were more likely to live in nuclear households, while children from black African and coloured

population groups were more likely to be found in extended households (StatsSA, 2021:23). Males were more likely to be the heads of youth households, accounting for 28,6%, compared to females at 22,2% (StatsSA, 2021:46). In terms of household living arrangements, a substantial proportion of the youth population (58,5%) resided in extended households, with 56,4% for males and 60,5% for females (StatsSA, 2021:46). Furthermore, additional aspects of the demographic characteristics of the South African youth population highlighted that a significant concentration of youth-headed households was observed in Gauteng Province (StatsSA, 2021:46). When considering intergenerational household type, over half (55,4%) of the youth-headed households consisted of a single generation (StatsSA, 2021:46). The primary function of a family is to provide guidance and nurture children to ensure that they acquire the values, norms and societal standards necessary for their socialisation (Fakude, 2022:167). However, when children do not live with their parents or they are heads of households, they are robbed of an opportunity to learn what behaviour is appropriate or in appropriate from their parents. The lack of these fundamental societal values contributes to violence, which the affected learners often direct at their teachers in the school environment (Makhasane & Khanare, 2018:18).

2.3.2.2 Violence in the home

Mkhomi and Mavuso (2021:32) found that violent homes marked by domestic violence have a negative impact on the children. Learners who use violence as a way of resolving conflict are more likely to bully others at school (Mkhomi & Mavuso, 2021:32). When violence is normalised within the household, it implies that mistreating and disrespecting others through violent means is acceptable because it aligns with the behaviour witnessed at home (Sibisi, 2016:34). Mkhomi and Mavuso (2021:32) add that children's values and prosocial behaviour come primarily from their families. A child learns what behaviour is appropriate and inappropriate in their home as their first socialisation agent (Mkhomi & Mavuso, 2021:32). The family structure plays a significant role in shaping a child's socialisation process, including their behaviour and attitudes towards teachers in the school environment (Fakude, 2022:113). This is accomplished by parents setting an

example for their children by modelling desired behaviour and by punishing undesirable behaviour (Mkhomi & Mavuso, 2021:32) (refer to the social ecological framework and the social learning theory in Chapter 3). Sibisi (2016:34) states that adolescents who grow up in abusive households are more prone to displaying aggression towards others compared to those who are raised in nurturing and loving environments.

2.3.2.3 Substance or alcohol abuse by parents or guardians

With regards to the abuse of alcohol or other substances by parents or guardians, Fakude (2022:168) maintains that parents who abuse substances tend to neglect their children. In many instances, parents who consume alcohol excessively show minimal attention to their children's needs (Fakude, 2022:168). This parental neglect and lack of supervision contributes to learners resorting to maladaptive behaviours (Fakude, 2022:168).

2.3.2.4 Child poverty

Govender (2015:2) posits that, throughout her 15 years of teaching experience, she discovered that learners have become more aggressive towards their teachers for a variety of reasons, the majority of which are underlying factors such as poverty, drug abuse, and dysfunctional families. Fakude (2022:168) explains that some children come from families where they experience neglect and a lack of proper nutrition due to poverty that adversely affect the emotions and behaviour of the learners who may turn to violence as a means of coping (Fakude, 2022:168).

2.3.3 Community/society societal risk factors

Learners exist within communities where they encounter different negative experiences that contribute to emotional challenges (Fakude, 2022:166). Mkhomi and Mavuso (2021:33) claim that a community's violent culture, which the learners are exposed to and raised in, inevitably normalises the use of violence. Therefore, the learners' behaviour towards others reflects the influence of the environment they come from (Fakude, 2022:109). Some communities in South Africa often resolve their issues (i.e., lack of service delivery) by resorting to violence, such as group gatherings and setting tyres on

fire in the streets when expressing dissatisfaction or opposing something within the community (Fakude, 2022:109). As a result, the learners imitate these behaviours in an attempt to address their own problems in schools, mirroring the actions of their adult counterparts (Fakude, 2022:109). Sibisi (2016:3) further emphasises that schools are not isolated entities but are interconnected with the larger society or community in which they exist. Consequently, the presence of school violence may be a reflection of what is happening in the immediate community where the school is situated (refer to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in Chapter 3).

2.3.4 Peer risk factors

In this section, peer risk factors are discussed in terms of peer pressure and gang involvement.

2.3.4.1 Peer pressure

Peer interactions offer a valuable opportunity for learners to acquire certain skills that may not be learned through other social relationships (Fakude, 2022:175). During adolescence, peer groups play a significant role in shaping an individual's self-concept and identity (Fakude, 2022:175). However, peer influence can also lead learners to engage in harmful behaviours (Fakude, 2022:175–176). When children are part of a peer group where members exhibit violent tendencies, they are more likely to adopt and express violent behaviour themselves (Fakude, 2022:176). If a learner's friends engage in violence and demonstrate such behaviour within the school context, there is a higher likelihood that the learner will learn from and imitate these actions, and subsequently display similar violent behaviour (Fakude, 2022:176).

2.3.4.2 Gang involvement

Due to peer pressure, learners also join gangs where there are conflicts between different groups and bring weapons to school because of peer pressure or wanting to belong to a gang (Fakude, 2022:176; Moreroa, 2022:95; Thobane et al, 2023a:20). In their pursuit of gaining acceptance, some learners deliberately infringe upon the rights of others

(Fakude, 2022:176). The behaviour stems from their desire to be perceived as powerful and influential within the peer group, even if it means engaging in actions that are harmful or that violate the right of others (Fakude, 2022:176). Moreroa (2022:96) reports that gangs represent a significant subgroup of learners who are more likely to be at risk and to present risk to other learners than the general adolescent population. Due to a lack of resources, negligence, and often teacher and parent rejection, learners become frustrated and turn to gangs to fill the void (Mkhomi & Mavuso, 2021:36). For some learners, gangs provide a place to call home and, on occasion, provide more acceptance and love than parents and teachers (Mkhomi & Mavuso, 2021:36).

2.3.5 School Risk Factors

According to Sibisi (2016:6), a school should provide an environment where teachers can impart knowledge, and learners can engage in studying to reach their highest level of achievement but school has frequently been viewed as a dangerous environment in which learners can replicate societal violence (Pahad, 2010:94) (see previous section and next chapter on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory). According to Pahad (2010:94), issues with school management as well as the principal's leadership, or lack thereof, contributes to the occurrence of violence in the school. Makhasane and Khanare (2018:19) add that the way in which teachers keep order in their classrooms has a potential to cause or inhibit violence. McMahon, Davis, Peist, McConnell, Anderman, Espelage, Reaves and Reddy (2020:2) agree that teachers' individual behaviour and classroom management strategies may mitigate or aggravate violence directed against both teachers and learners. Venketsamy, Baxen and Hu (2023:56) add that the occurrence of violence against teachers implies that teachers lack authority and control over their classroom.

On the contrary, Makhasane and Khanare (2018:18) believe that school-related factors, such as overcrowded classrooms, are some of the reasons for violence as overcrowded classrooms are difficult to manage and thus hamper teaching and learning (Thobane et al, 2023a:41). In one of the schools in Thobane et al's (2023a:17, 41) research, there were classes that had up to 96 learners when the recommended maximum number is 40

learners per class. Crowded classrooms have adverse effects on teachers' morale, student behaviour, and the equitable distribution of classroom resources (Thobane et al, 2023a:17).

2.4 The impact of learner-on-educator violence

Incidents of learner-on-educator violence have a negative impact on teachers' safety as well as their ability to enforce discipline and provide a safe and caring environment for other learners (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018:1). The following subsections examine the impact of learner-on-educator violence on the primary victim.

2.4.1 Professional impact

Learner-on-educator bullying occurs in the context of the school, a place of employment for teachers, and is considered a form of workplace violence with serious consequences that include negative emotions, leading to poor mental health of teachers, disempowerment, low morale, and low motivation (Woudstra et al, 2018:1). While teachers may theoretically have control over their learners, they feel disempowered when learners gang up against them and/or publicly defy their authority (De Wet, 2019:98). This forces teachers to relinquish their authority and they become unable to defend themselves against abusive learners (De Wet, 2019:98).

Sibisi (2016:31) asserts that when learners are uncontrollable, ill-disciplined and unmanageable in the classroom, teachers spend more time trying to keep them calm than teaching the day's lesson, which interrupts teaching and learning. This type of behaviour and other forms of teacher bullying have serious negative consequences on the victim's professional life that can result in the teacher losing his/her passion for teaching (De Wet, 2019:99). This form of victimisation may also change the belief and attitude teachers have towards their learners and the workplace (Mashile, 2017:17). Consequently, teachers' morale decreases, they become demotivated or find the class empty as learners leave school during tuition time (Mahome, 2019:100). De Wet (2019:99) and Hoffmann (2015:80) explain that learner-on-educator violence may

unintentionally result in victims being absent from work on a regular basis. In addition, the self-esteem, job satisfaction, psychological and physiological well-being of victimised teachers are negatively affected and may motivate teachers to leave the school (Hoffmann, 2015:84). Seventy per cent (70%) of Thobane et al's (2023a:26) respondents reported that absenteeism is one of the by-products of school violence while 36% reported that educators resign from work due to school-related violence.

Furthermore, teachers are at a high risk of burnout and professional disengagement (Grobler, 2018:29). Zwane (2021:201) reports that teachers also feel frustrated, uncertain, disregarded and unappreciated by the Department of Education. The psychological impact of learner-on-educator violence is discussed in more detail in the proceeding sub-section.

2.4.2 Psychological impact

Violence against teachers has a detrimental impact on their mental health, making their work experience intolerable (Windvoël, 2023:128). Teachers report experiencing stress, difficulty waking up, constant anxiety about future events, panic attacks, low morale, and a loss of enjoyment of their work (Windvoël, 2023:128). In addition to their poor mental health due to victimisation, victimised teachers also perform poorly at work (Zwane, 2021:201) (also refer to the preceding sub-section on professional impact). Fakude (2022:148) believes that the way a teacher chooses to communicate, such as harsh tone, belittling remarks, or dismissive behaviour, can create an unfavourable environment that trigger negative emotions in learners (Fakude, 2022:148). Consequently, learners respond unfavourably to the teacher's anger and may eventually engage in physical altercations (Fakude, 2022:148). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to be mindful of their communication approach to foster a positive and constructive atmosphere conducive to learning (Fakude, 2022:149). A high level of stress among teachers leads to mental health issues such as depression (Mthanti, 2023:489). These stressors, combined with various violations, impact teachers psychologically, physically, and emotionally, resulting in conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, burnout, and a lack of motivation (Windvoël, 2023:63).

DSM-5 defines PTSD as:

"Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in at least [one] of the following ways:

1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s)... (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)."

Daniels, Bradley and Hayes (2007:653) further explain that victims may experience both immediate and long-term consequences, which include physical, behavioural, emotional, and cognitive responses. De Wet (2019:99) states that victimised teachers suffer from a major depressive disorder for which they take anti-anxiety medication or sleeping pills to alleviate their physical and mental symptoms. Bester and Du Plessis (2010:224) conclude that teachers are affected on different levels, resulting in feelings of danger and fear.

2.4.3 Physical impact

Physical impacts are the most visible and can include minor or severe wounds, bruises, fractures, chronic diseases such as hypertension, panic attacks and migraines, disability and deaths, or suicide (Pahad, 2010:117). Teachers, as noted by Makhasane (2022:206), perceive physical violence to involve intentional actions like pushing, pulling, and assault. Extremely violent incidents have occurred leading to deaths (Makhasane, 2022:206). For example, at Book High School (BHS) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, a Grade 8 learner stabbed a new female teacher to death during a lesson and, in another tragic incident, a teacher who confronted a learner for cheating during an exam was fatally stabbed (Makhasane, 2022:206–207). Furthermore, Fakude (2022:23) reports that a teacher recounted an incident where she was physically assaulted by an 11-year-old learner, leading to a dislocated shoulder.

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As discussed in this section, victims of learner-on-educator violence do not only suffer on the professional level but also experience acute psychological problems, such as PTSD, and are also at a risk of experiencing serious physical injuries or even death. The discussions above show that learner-on-educator violence is a serious issue with grave consequences and, if prevention measures are not developed as a matter of urgency, schools are "going to turn into crime scenes" as described by Minister of the SAPS, Mr. Bheki Cele (Mashego, 2022:np).

The proceeding section looks at the current measures put in place to prevent learner-on-educator violence.

2.5 Current preventative measures of learner-on-educator violence

Violence directed towards teachers is under-researched and, as a result, knowledge of how to support victimised teachers is limited (McMahon et al, 2020:1). Teachers are experiencing existential crises, a lack of support from the DBE and, as a result, feel ill equipped to face the challenges of educating violent learners (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010:224). Fakude (2022:123) expresses that the lack of support from the DBE may contribute to the perpetual issue of school-related violence. The Department of Education only acts when incidents are reported through the media and catch the public's attention (Fakude, 2022:123). The sections that follow focus on current preventative measures of school violence in general, and not only learner-on-educator violence, as prescribed by the following laws, frameworks and policies:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No. 108 of 1996

- South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1998

- The National School Safety Framework

- The National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Alcohol and Drug Use

- The Policy Management and Prevention of Drug Use and Abuse by Learners in Public schools and Further Education and Training Institutions

- The Implementation Protocol between the Department of Basic Education and the South African Police Service on prevention of crime and violence in all schools

- The Firearms Control Act (FCA) 60 of 2000: Gun-Free Zones

2.5.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No. 108 of 1996

Section 29(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, hereinafter referred to as "the Constitution", provides that everyone has the right to basic education which includes adult and basic education (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996a:29). Primary education for children between the ages of seven (7) and 15 is further made compulsory by the South African Schools Act No. 84 amended in 2011 (Department of Education, 2011:7). The nature and extent of school-related violence in South African schools deny learners the right to safety as well as their right to an environment where they can learn. Therefore, prevention strategies must be prioritised so that learners who wish to learn enjoy their "right to education" in a safe environment free of violence.

The laws, frameworks, and policies discussed in the proceeding sections should be read in relation to the Constitution.

2.5.2 The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996

As mentioned above, another pivotal piece of legislation is the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, hereinafter referred to as "the SASA of 1996". The purpose of the SASA of 1996 is "[t]o provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance of schools; to amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools; and to provide for matters connected therewith" (DBE, 2011:1). To ensure that schools run smoothly and effectively, the SASA of 1996 prescribes that public schools must have a school governing body (SGB). The SGB is a committee comprising parents, learners who are members of the representative learners of council (RCL) and staff members. One of the most important roles of the SGB that relates to school safety is the development and adoption of the code of conduct for learners (DBE, 1996:27). A code of conduct is a set of principles, expectations, and/or rules that are given to students and parents to ensure that the

expectations that the school has for behaviour are clearly communicated to them. Schools are responsible for creating safe and structured learning environments that will promote the school's goals for student learning. Codes of conduct can clarify an organisation's mission and values. They also indicate how the school will provide and enforce behavioural expectations (O'Conner & Peterson, 2014:np).

Every public school in South Africa is required to have a set of rules and regulations known as a code of conduct which creates a disciplined and focused school environment (Fakude, 2022:172). The DBE (2004:26) states that the code of conduct "aims to promote a school environment dedicated to the improvement of the quality of the learning process." Furthermore, the main purpose of the code of conduct is positive discipline focused on constructive learning instead of being punitive and punishment-oriented (DBE, 2000:9). It is thus important that the code of conduct should be built on principles and values of the school community (DBE, 2004:26). Moreover, the learners should feel that they own the code of conduct; this will encourage them to support it and adhere to it (DBE, 2004:26). Therefore, the SGB must develop the code of conduct in consultation with the learners, parents, and teachers at the school (DBE, 2004:26).

Although schools have different codes of conduct, however the following elements need to be included in all the codes of conduct (DBE, 2004:26):

Table 2.5.2: National DBE Code of Conduct example

1. Introduction
2. Aim
3. The rights of learners
4. The responsibilities of learners
5. The responsibilities of teachers with regards to learners
6. The responsibilities of parents with regards to learners
7. School rules, regulations and procedures
8. The scope of the code of conduct and its implications
9. Disciplinary procedures

Source: DBE (2004:26)

The DBE (2004:27) stipulates that disciplinary measures contained in the code of conduct must highlight that corporal punishment was outlawed when the SASA of 1996 was passed in 1996 as discipline is meant to be "fair, corrective and educative" as opposed to being punitive. South Africa has several laws that banish corporal punishment. Firstly, section 12(1) of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to security, which includes the right to be free from all types of violence, "not to be tortured, treated, or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way" (RSA, 1996a:1247). Secondly, as per section 10(1) of the SASA, no one may use corporal punishment at a school to discipline a learner (DBE, 1996:17). The SASA of 1996 highlights that anyone who administers corporal punishment against learners will be guilty of an offence and, if found guilty in a court of law, will be convicted (DBE, 1996:17). Thirdly, the Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act 33 of 1997 also barred corporal punishment in schools (DoJ & CD, 1997). Fourthly, section 7(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 highlights that "any behaviour that would inflict injury on a child whether it is physical or emotional is not allowed" (DoJ & CD, 2005:22). Lastly, as highlighted in the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 "…

no person shall administer corporal punishment, or subject a student to psychological or physical abuse at any education institution …" (RSA, 1996b:4). Moreover, the Minister of Education is mandated under the National Education Policy Act to develop policies dealing with the control and discipline of learners in schools (RSA, 1996b:4). As such, with the banishment of corporal punishment, the DBE introduced the *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: A Practical Guide for Educators* (DBE, 2000), hereinafter referred to as "the Guidelines". The Guidelines are built on the principle that "violence begets violence" and, as such, using corporal punishment to discipline learners does not yield the desired results of a culture of learning and discipline (DBE, 2004:7).

If developed correctly following the guidelines by the DBE, a school code of conduct for learners can be used for preventing learner-on-educator violence. This is attributed to the fact the DBE prescribes that the code of conduct must include various types of misconduct as well as the disciplinary actions to be taken should a learner be found guilty of a specific misconduct.

Table 2.5.2a lists examples of types of misconduct categorised from level 1 to level 5 where behaviours listed in level 1 are less serious and those listed under level 5 are defined as criminal.

Table 2.5.2a: Levels of misconduct

Level of Misconduct	Description of Misconduct
Level 1 Minor violation of general classroom discipline	❖ Failing to attend class on time ❖ Leaving class without permission ❖ Cheating in class test ❖ Failing to complete homework ❖ Dishonesty with minor consequences
Level 2 Minor violations of school code of conduct or rules	❖ Frequent repetition Level 1 infringement ❖ Possession or use of tobacco ❖ Truancy of several classes ❖ Cheating during examinations ❖ Verbally threatening safety of another person
Level 3 Serious violations of school code of conduct or rules	❖ Frequent repetition Level 2 infringement ❖ Minor injury to another person ❖ Possession or use of alcohol/narcotic substance ❖ Severely disruptive behaviour ❖ Possession of a dangerous weapon ❖ Theft/vandalism
Level 4 Very serious violations of school code of conduct or rules	❖ Frequent repetition of Level 2 or 3 infringements ❖ Threatening with a dangerous weapon ❖ Intentionally causing physical injury to somebody ❖ Extortion of another person's property
Level 5 Criminal/serious violations of school code of conduct or rules but also of civil law	❖ Frequent repetition of Level 4 infringement ❖ Possession and peddling of narcotic substances ❖ Assault ❖ Sexual harassment or abuse ❖ Robbery or major theft ❖ Intentionally using a dangerous weapon

Source: Adapted from DBE (2004:29)

Based on Table 2.5.2a, acts relating to learner-on-educator violence would fall under levels of misconduct 2, 3, 4 and 5. The levels of misconduct outlined in Table 2.5.2a categorise learner-on-educator violence from minor to severe, highlighting the varying

degrees of threats and violations teachers might face. Level 2 misconduct includes minor violations such as verbal threats and frequent truancy. These behaviours disrupt the educational environment and show early signs of disrespect and non-compliance that can escalate if not addressed. Level 3 misconduct encompasses more serious violations, including repeated minor infringements, minor physical injuries, substance abuse, and possession of dangerous weapons. These actions pose direct threats to teachers' safety and the integrity of the school environment. Level 4 involves very serious violations, such as frequent serious infringements, threatening with weapons, intentional physical injury, and extortion. These behaviours put educators' lives in danger and indicate severe behavioural issues requiring immediate intervention. Level 5, the most extreme form of misconduct, includes criminal acts such as assault, sexual harassment, robbery, and the intentional use of dangerous weapons. These actions necessitate law enforcement involvement as they not only violate school rules but also break civil laws. In the context of this study, this categorisation underscores the importance of robust support systems and disciplinary measures to protect educators and maintain a safe school environment. Addressing lower-level misconduct early can prevent escalation, while severe cases require immediate and serious interventions to ensure educators' safety and well-being.

Table 2.5.2(b) below lists the levels of misconduct from 1 to 5 as well as the disciplinary actions that should be taken per level of misconduct.

Table 2.5.2b: Levels of misconduct and disciplinary actions

Level of Misconduct	Description of Action Taken
Level 1 Minor violation of general classroom discipline	❖ Verbal warning ❖ Detention ❖ Demerits ❖ Menial task e.g., cleaning classroom ❖ Extra work
Level 2 Minor violations of school code of conduct or rules	❖ Any level 1 disciplinary action ❖ Disciplinary talk with learner ❖ Talk with parent or guardian ❖ Written warning ❖ Behavioural contract with learner
Level 3 Serious violations of school code of conduct or rules	❖ Any level 2 disciplinary action ❖ Referral to counsellor, social worker etc ❖ Suspension from extramural activities, support ❖ Written final warning
Level 4 Very serious violations of school code of conduct or rules	❖ Any level 3 disciplinary action ❖ Referral to relevant outside agency ❖ Application for limited suspension
Level 5 Criminal-serious violations of school code of conduct or rules but also of civil law	Note to be carried out by higher school authority, SGB and Department Application to the Department for expulsion or transfer from the school after a tribunal hearing Law Enforcement Authority involvement

Source: Adapted from DBE (2004:30)

Table 2.5.2b outlines the levels of misconduct and corresponding disciplinary actions, providing a structured approach to managing learner-on-educator violence within schools. This framework categorises disciplinary responses from minor infractions to severe violations, ensuring appropriate measures are taken to address each level of misconduct. For Level 1 misconduct, which includes minor violations of general

classroom discipline, actions taken typically involve verbal warnings, detention, demerits, menial tasks such as cleaning the classroom, and extra work. These actions aim to correct behaviour through relatively mild consequences, promoting adherence to classroom rules and expectations. When dealing with Level 2 misconduct, which includes minor violations of the school code of conduct or rules, the disciplinary actions build upon those of Level 1. They may include any of the Level 1 actions, along with additional measures such as disciplinary talks with the learner, discussions with parents or guardians, written warnings, and behavioural contracts with the learner. These actions are designed to involve both the students and their support system in addressing the behaviour. Level 3 misconduct involves serious violations of the school code of conduct or rules. Disciplinary actions at this level include any Level 2 actions, as well as referrals to counsellors or social workers, suspension from extramural activities or support programmes, and written final warnings. These measures aim to address more severe behavioural issues by providing targeted support and imposing stricter consequences. For Level 4 misconduct, which involves very serious violations, the disciplinary actions escalate further. These include any Level 3 actions, referrals to relevant outside agencies, and applications for limited suspension. Such actions indicate the need for external intervention and more significant consequences to address the serious nature of the behaviour. Level 5 misconduct, which encompasses criminal and serious violations of both the school code of conduct and civil law, requires the involvement of higher school authorities, the School Governing Body (SGB), and the DBE. Disciplinary actions at this level include applying for expulsion or transfer from the school after a tribunal hearing and involving law enforcement authorities. These measures reflect the gravity of the misconduct and the need for formal legal intervention. These disciplinary actions provide a comprehensive framework for addressing varying degrees of misconduct. Minor infractions can be managed within the school through warnings and corrective tasks, while more severe behaviours necessitate involvement from parents, external support agencies, and law enforcement. This structured approach ensures that appropriate and effective measures are in place to protect educators and maintain a safe and orderly learning environment.

Both the types of misconduct as well as the disciplinary actions to be taken must be published in the school code of conduct so that the school community, especially the parents and learners, know what actions will be taken against the learners should they be found to be in violation of the school code of conduct. The DBE (2004:27) highlights that educators, specifically class educators, as individuals who usually spend most time with the learners and take on the role of first responders, have the responsibility to maintain discipline in the school. However, class educators are not the only persons responsible for the discipline of learners. If necessary, educators may refer matters of discipline to a senior staff member and then to the principal. If the misconduct is of a very serious nature, the principal may refer it to a tribunal, the SGB, the provincial department of education, and finally the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of Education.

2.5.3 The National School Safety Framework (NSSF)

The NSSF, hereinafter referred to as "the Framework", was developed by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) and the DBE to provide and all-inclusive strategy to guide national and provincial departments of education to coordinate efforts in addressing school-related violence. The main objective of the Framework is to establish a secure, nurturing learning environment that is free from violence and threats for learners, educators, principals, SGBs, and administration (NSSF, 2015:20). To understand the aim of the Framework, all stakeholders involved in the creation of safety in schools should understand the nature of violence as it affects the school community and collaborate with each other to arrive at clear definitions of their varying roles and responsibilities in response and prevention of school violence. The objectives of the Framework are to:

- assist schools to understand and identify their security issues and threats;

- guide schools to successfully respond to and identify security issues and threats;

- create reporting mechanisms, and manage reported cases; and

- help schools monitor and evaluate their progress (NSSF, 2015:20–21).

The Framework was developed to create violence and threat-free schools that provide a safe, supportive learning environment for all stakeholders involved (i.e., learners, educators, principals, the SGB and administrative staff) (NSSF, 2015:20). Because school violence is caused by individual, school, family and societal risk factors that intersect with one another, the Framework adopts a "whole school" or the "ecological approach" (Thobane et al, 2023a:35) (refer to section 2.3 *supra* on the causes of school learner-on-educator violence and also see Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner in Chapter 3).

The whole-school approach to violence prevention calls on all the stakeholders involved (i.e., principal, school safety committee, parents, learners, educators, SGB, Learner Representative Councils (LRCs), members of the community, other members of staff in the school and other school structures such as the District/Provincial-Based Support Teams (DBST/PBST) to play their part in ensuring that the school environment is safe and conducive to learning. Below is a summary of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders that play an important role in the creation of safe school environments as outlined in the whole-school approach to violence prevention (NSSF, 2015:16)

- **Principal:** As the leader of the school, the principal needs to provide leadership in terms of creating and implementing policies; capacitating staff members through training initiatives; providing support to both learners and members of staff; and reporting incidents of violence to the relevant structures.

- **School safety committee:** Thobane et al (2023a:36) explain that all schools should, in line with the NSSF, have a school safety committee (SSC), school safety policy, school safety plan, emergency plan, and a code of conduct for learners.

- **Parents:** Parents should provide consistent discipline to their children; identify and report problems; and build positive relationships with their children's teachers.

- **Learners:** Learners are urged to commit to addressing violence and to identify and report problems.

- **Educators**: The role of educators in creating a safer school environment is to instil positive discipline in learners; to identify problems; to build positive relationships with parents; and to commit to addressing bullying and violence.

- **SGB:** The SGB is viewed as an oversight body that is responsible for developing policies and instilling discipline in the school.

- **LRCs:** Roles and responsibilities of the student leaders are to identify problems; together with the school safety committee develop a safety plan; and develop positive relationships with both learners and educators.

- **Community:** Community actors, such as Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOS) and Faith-based Organisations (FBOs) are, according to the whole-school approach, responsible for supporting learners and educators referred to them for services such as counselling; these entities should also build positive relationships with schools.

- **Other school staff (i.e., administrators, ground staff and security personnel):** These staff members are encouraged to commit themselves to addressing violence; and identifying problems within the school community.

- **Other school structures (i.e., DBST, PBST):** These structures are also listed as important role players in the creation of safe school environments.

Zwane (2021:102) believes that the Framework is successful in locating schools within their larger communities, but it failed to offer a workable, systematic solution to the violence against teachers. The Framework confirms the DBE's commitment to the rights of all teachers in South Africa, but it can only be seen as a first step in the right direction (Zwane, 2021:127). Botha and Zwane (2021:12) assert that involving parents and fostering accountability in supporting teachers are essential in mitigating the adverse effects of school violence. As emphasised by the whole-school approach to violence, the responsibility of preventing and addressing violence against teachers in schools extends beyond parents. As such, all stakeholders and individuals with a direct interest in education must make a commitment to prevent and eliminate violence against teachers

(Botha & Zwane, 2021:12). Establishing positive and collaborative relationships between teachers and learners is particularly important in combating violence against teachers (Botha & Zwane, 2021:12). The perception and mutual understanding between these stakeholders play a critical role in preventing school violence (Botha & Zwane, 2021:12).

2.5.4 National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Alcohol and Drugs Use Amongst Learners in Schools

According to the DBE (2013:ii), the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Alcohol and Drugs Use Amongst Learners in Schools, hereinafter referred to as "the National Strategy", is located within a general framework called the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Programme which is a Southern African Development Community (SADC) initiative aimed at the realisation of education rights of all children. "Alcohol and drug use as a key barrier to learning is located within Health Promotion, one of the nine priority areas of the CSTL Programme" (DBE, 2013:ii). The primary objectives of the National Strategy are to:

- make sure that schools are free of alcohol and drugs;

- facilitate the increase of knowledge, life skills and confidence of learners so that their chances of engaging in alcohol and drug use are decreased; and

- efficiently manage problems related to the use of alcohol and drugs among learners to improve learning outcomes and the retention of learners (DBE, 2013:22).

Furthermore, the National Strategy is built on four pillars, namely, (i) an enabling environment; (ii) primary prevention; (iii) early detection; and (iv) treatment, care and support. Figure 2.1 below provides a summary of the above-mentioned four pillars. The figure outlines a comprehensive framework for addressing alcohol and drug use in schools through four key areas: Enabling Environment, Primary Prevention, Early Detection, and Treatment, Care, and Support. The Enabling Environment focuses on developing integrated policies, ensuring political support, and establishing support teams to create a supportive infrastructure. Primary Prevention involves curricular and co-

curricular activities, such as life skills training and awareness campaigns, aimed at preventing substance use. Early Detection emphasises training educators and parents to identify warning signs and implementing drug testing where necessary. Treatment, Care, and Support highlight the need for strong referral systems, awareness of treatment options, and removing barriers to access. Applying this framework to the study on learner-on-educator violence, it emphasises the importance of a holistic approach in schools, incorporating policy development, preventive education, early identification of problematic behaviours, and robust support systems to address both learner and educator needs, thus creating a safer and more supportive school environment.

Enabling Environment

Policy
- Develop integrated policies
- Allow for regular review of policy and legislation
- Implement policies in schools

Institutional
- Engender political support
- Establish support teams in schools
- Make available human & financial resources
- Advocate for more age-appropriate services and greater funding
- Keep accurate records of alcohol and drug use in schools
- Ensure that relevant research is disseminated
- Monitor and evaluate programmes

Partnerships
- Coordinate multi-sectoral and inter-institutional responses
- Participate in lobby groups in the community

Primary Prevention

Curricular
- Implement school-based alcohol and drug use prevention programmes including life skills training as part of life skills / orientation subject

Co-curricular
- Implement information & awareness campaigns
- Implement co-curricular activities and safety interventions such as peer education clubs
- Implement drug free sport programmes
- Involve families & communities

Early Detection
- Partake in early warning systems
- Train educators & parents to identify warning signs
- Train educators & district officials to conduct drug testing
- Implement drug testing in schools where there is reasonable suspicion that learners are using drugs

Treatment, Care and Support
- Establish strong referral systems to access treatment, care & support
- Create awareness of treatment and counselling services
- Address barriers that limit access to treatment amongst learners (e.g. transport, cost, stigma)
- Set up systems to ensure continuation of education during treatment

Figure 2.1: Summary of the Four Pillars of National Strategy

Source: DBE (2013:vi)

2.5.5 The Policy Management and Prevention of Drug Use and Abuse by Learners in Public schools and Further Education and Training Institutions

The Policy Management and Prevention of Drug Use and Abuse by Learners in Public schools and Further Education and Training Institutions, hereinafter referred to as "the Policy", was developed by the DBE in 2002 and it aims at providing a direction on the systems that should be put in place to address substance abuse in public and independent schools as well as further education and training institutions. The guidelines recognise the inclusion of drug education for learners, parents and educators in terms of "drug use, misuse and dependency, and support provided where appropriate" (DBE, 2002:8). Further highlighted is that learner drug education should be included in the life orientation (LO) subject to ensure that learners receive age and context appropriate education for them to acquire life skills that will protect them from using or misusing drugs and dependency (DBE, 2002:8). Moreover, the Policy highlights that schools should involve outside organisations specialising in drug education and abuse prevention (i.e., South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence [SANCA]) to add to the life skills education provided by the schools (DBE, 2002:8). Moreover, it is recommended that courses should be made available to train educators on how to cope with substance-related incidents within the school (DBE, 2002:7). Other interventions highlighted in the policy are as follows (DBE, 2002:7):

2.5.5.1 Random search and seizure

Chapter 2 of the SASA of 1996, subsection 8A, stipulates that a school principal or any of his/her delegates may conduct random searches of learners or the property for any dangerous weapons or illegal substances should they have a fair and reasonable suspicion that:

(a)   a dangerous weapon or an illegal substance may be found on the school premises or during a school activity; or

(b)   learners are in possession of dangerous objects or illegal substances on the school premises or during a school activity (DBE, 1996:13).

The SASA of 1996 further stipulates that before a random search is conducted, the principal or his delegate needs to take the following precautionary measures: (i) ensure that the search is conducted in the best interest of the learners in question; (ii) prioritise the safety and health of the learners in question; (iii) ensure that there is evidence of the illegal activity; and (iv) be in possession of the evidence (DBE, 1996:13). Furthermore, where a body search is conducted, the principal or his delegate must be the same gender as the learner; it must be done in private; an adult witness of the same gender as the learner must be present; and the search should not extend to body cavities of the learner (DBE, 1996:13–14). In an event that a dangerous weapon or illegal drugs have been found during the search, the dangerous object or drugs must be correctly labelled with full details such as: the name of the learner in whose possession it was found; time and date of the search and seizure; a reference number, name of the individual who conducted the search; name of the adult witness; and any additional information that will make it easy to identify the item as well as the incident (DBE, 1996:14). After the dangerous object or illegal substance has been labelled, the principal or his/her delegate must immediately hand it over to the police so they can dispose of it in terms of section 31 of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1997 (DBE, 1996:14). If the police cannot collect the item(s) from the school, the principal or his delegate should go to the nearest police station to hand it over to the police (DBE, 1996:14). Regardless of whether the police collected the dangerous objects or illegal drugs from the school or one of the representatives from the school went to the nearest police station to hand the item over, the police officer who receives the item(s) must issue an official receipt (DBE, 1996:14).

2.5.5.2 Drug screening/testing

The SASA of 1996 highlights that the principal or his delegate may administer a random urine test or other non-invasive drug tests to any of the learners should there be a fair and reasonable suspicion that they are using illegal substances (DBE, 1996:14). The same precautionary measures highlighted under 2.5.5.1 above must be followed before a drug test is conducted. Should a non-invasive drug test be conducted, rights relating to privacy, dignity and bodily integrity of the learner must be safeguarded by doing the

following: (a) ensuring that the person conducting the urine test is of the same gender as the learner; (b) administering the test in private; (c) marking and labelling the sample appropriately (refer to sub-section 2.5.5.1 for marking and labelling instructions); (d) conducting the test in the presence of an adult witness; and (e) ensuring that an appropriate test kit is used (DBE, 1996:14–15). When the test is concluded, the principal or his/her delegate must: (a) within a day, if possible, inform the parent or guardian of the child of the random test; (b) immediately when the test results become available, inform the learner and his/her parent(s) of the test results.

In summary, a learner may be subjected to disciplinary proceedings if a dangerous object or illegal drugs are found on his/her possession or if his/her sample tested positive for an illegal substance (DBE, 1996:15). Importantly, the disciplinary proceedings must be conducted in terms of the code of conduct discussed previously in great detail under point 2.5.2.

2.5.6 The implementation protocol between the Department of Basic Education and the South African Police Service on prevention of crime and violence in all schools

In response to the growing number of incidents of violence and crime in public schools, the DBE and the SAPS signed an Implementation Protocol on the Prevention of Violence in All Schools and the Promotion of Safe Schools in 2011 (Grobler, 2018:35). The Protocol aims to provide a preventative and proactive school-based crime prevention intervention characterised by the creation and implementation of interventions that deter potential offenders and empower potential and past victims (SAPS, 2019:3).

In 2019/2020, one thousand and three hundred (1300) people were identified to implement a school-based crime prevention programme (SAPS, 2019:12). A school-based crime prevention programme is preventative and proactive and is characterised by the development and implementation of interventions that deter potential offenders and empower potential victims and past victims (SAPS, 2019:12). These programmes are developed by school safety committees (also see point 2.5.3) that work in partnership with the local police stations. One example of a school-base crime prevention programme

is the Safe Schools Programme implemented by the Western Cape Education Department. In collaboration with local law enforcement and community organisations, such as neighbourhood watches and policing forums, the Safe Schools Programme adopts a comprehensive strategy focusing on the safety of teachers, learners and support staff (Warton, 2021:np). The programme is categorised into three sub-programmes aligning with its three-prolonged strategy: environmental, developmental and system programmes (Western Cape Education Department, n.d.). The environmental programmes concentrate on securing the physical structure of the school. This also involves actions such as displaying signs to prohibit trespassing, and restricting access to school premises through the administrative building (Warton, 2021:np). Additionally, through the environmental programmes, it is recommended that schools install comprehensive alarm systems linked to an efficient armed response (Warton, 2021:np). The developmental programmes concentrate on fostering attitudinal or behavioural shifts through assistance and training, aiming to alter and shape the behaviour of parents, educators, and learners within the school environment (Western Cape Education Department, n.d.). The behaviour modification programmes cover various topics, including:

a) proficient management of behaviour;

b) innovative and positive methods for resolving conflicts;

c) mediation within school communities;

d) workshops for parents on gang prevention education;

e) mentorship initiatives;

f) diversion programmes;

g) fostering youth development;

h) empowering victims; and

i) education with a multicultural perspective (Warton, 2021:np).

The aim of the systems programmes is "systematic development, community

relationships and effective partnerships" that focus on employing a holistic approach on the operation of the school especially where safety is concerned. Examples of the holistic approach to make schools safe environments are programmes that address gang violence, prohibit dangerous items, and conduct searches for illicit substances and harmful objects (Warton, 2021:np).

The SAPS (2019:12) admits that the implementation of the school safety programme has been fraught with difficulties, as not all schools have formed school safety committees (SAPS, 2019:12).

2.5.7 The Firearms Control Act (FCA) 60 of 2000: Gun-Free Zones

According to South African Government (2004:35), the Minister for Safety and Security, in accordance with section 140 of the Firearms Control Act (FCA) 60 of 2000, has the authority to designate specific premises or categories of premises as firearm-free zones when it aligns with the public interest and the objectives of the FCA (South African Government, 2004:35). The minister announced the intent to declare all schools and other educational institutions, encompassing higher education institutions and universities, as firearm-free zones under section 140 of the Firearms Control Act (South African Government, 2004:35). Declaring a school as firearm-free zone does not absolve the school or any individual from adhering to the safety measures outlined in the Regulations for Safety Measures at Schools (South African Government, 2004:37). These regulations are set by the Minister of Education under the South African School Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996) (South African Government, 2004:37). Gun-free school zones at the national level have had a substantially positive impact on enhancing school safety in the countries that have implemented them (The Gun Smith, 2023:np). Research indicates that the presence of firearms in schools heightens the risk of violence, while the establishment of National Gun-Free Zones (NGFZs) has contributed to a decrease in shootings and other violent incidents (The Gun Smith, 2023:np). Moreover, these zones convey a powerful message to learners and the community at large, emphasising that schools are secure spaces intolerant of violence (The Gun Smith, 2023:np). This fosters a culture of safety and respect within the school environment, crucial for effective learning

and development (The Gun Smith, 2023:np). NGFZs serve as crucial tools in promoting school safety and reducing the occurrence of gun violence in educational settings (The Gun Smith, 2023:np). Taylor (2015:np) asserts that GFZs establish environments where individuals perceive safety from violence, prompting a shift in attitudes that questions the notion of guns providing security. This, in turn, contributes to a decreased demand for firearms (Taylor, 2015:np). Gun Free South Africa (GFSA), a national Non-Government Organisation (NGO), strives to enhance safety and security in the country by actively addressing and diminishing gun violence (Taylor, 2015:np). GFSA has played a role in establishing GFZs and assessing their effectiveness in schools located in Fothane, Diepkloof and Khayelitsha (Taylor, 2015:np). Mmantulele High School in Fothane, Limpopo is among the 33 GFZs in the Mapela District (Taylor, 2015:np). Designated as GFZs in March 1997, the schools prominently display GFZ signage at the administration centre entrance and employ a security guard as part of their comprehensive school safety programme (Taylor, 2015:np). Namedi High School in Diepkloof Zone 3, Soweto, declared itself a GFZ in 1999 with the collective decision of the school community, including learners, and maintains two security guards. During the 1980s and 1990s, instances of gun violence involving learners occurred both within and outside the school premises (Taylor, 2015:np). Additionally, Zola Secondary School in Khayelitsha, Western Cape, received GFZ status with the backing of the Western Cape government as part of the State Schools Projects (Taylor, 2015:np). This initiative aimed to combat prevalent crime in township schools, emphasising trust rather than resorting to searches or metal detectors (Taylor, 2015:np).

Venketsamy et al (2023:62) opine that schools facing issues of violence against teachers need to implement robust safety measures for teachers, holding those responsible for violence accountable. Although the DBE has introduced laws, policies and frameworks, as discussed throughout this section, to prevent and safeguard teachers from violence, these initiatives have proven ineffective (Venketsamy et al, 2023:62). Botha and Zwane (2021:12) also argue that there is a lack of formalised and practical preventative programmes addressing learner-on-educator violence in South African schools. Additionally, teachers lack sufficient training in conflict management skills to protect

themselves from violence within the school environment (Botha & Zwane, 2021:12). Consequently, the authority of teachers is diminishing, leading to an increase in negative confrontations between learners and teachers (Botha & Zwane, 2021:12). This erosion of authority appears to encourage disrespectful behaviour and defiance towards teachers and authority figures (Botha & Zwane, 2021:12).

The following discussion provides a summary of intervention programmes in countering learner-on-educator violence at school to protect educators and school community members (Botha & Zwane, 2021:7).

2.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive introduction and background on the relevant literature review pertaining to violence experienced by teachers, highlighting the various types of violence they experience. Additionally, the causes of learner-on-educator violence were examined. Furthermore, the chapter delved into the impact of learner-on-educator violence, emphasising the detrimental effects it can have on the victim on professional, psychological, and physical levels. In terms of prevention, the literature review shows that there are no practical preventative strategies put in place to prevent learner-on-educator violence, but the there are various legislations, policies and frameworks that tackle issues of school violence in general and provide guidelines on measures to be put in place to prevent it.

Overall, this chapter serves as a valuable resource in understanding the complexities of violence against teachers, providing insight on the nature of the phenomenon, its causes, impact on victims, and prevention strategies. By addressing these issues comprehensively, stakeholders in the education sector can work towards cultivating safe and supportive teaching and learning environments that promote the growth and development of all individuals involved.

The next chapter focuses on the theories that underpinned this study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

According to Schurink, Roestenburg and Fouché (2021a:101), in qualitative research, theory assists the researcher to define the epistemological disposition and the methodological approach. The researcher's ontology (worldview) and epistemology (beliefs about how things should be studied), as well as existing theories, all help to position and guide the research (Schurink et al, 2021a:103). Frasieur (2019:2) opines that a theory serves as a generalisation about the phenomenon under study or a broader understanding of how the world operates. The components of theories include concepts and hypotheses, with the validity of the latter determined through observation and measurements (Frasieur, 2019:2). To ensure accuracy, theories must be substantiated multiple times by various individuals (Frasieur, 2019:2). Criminological theories have roots in the enlightenment period, driven by a desire for punishments to align with the severity of crimes while opposing extreme and barbaric measures (Frasieur, 2019:2). Constructing criminological theories aims to attain descriptive, explanatory, predictive or intervention-focused knowledge (Frasieur, 2019:3). These theories provide frameworks for accurate observation and description of crimes and societal reactions, concentrating on the development, application, and enforcement of criminal laws (Frasieur, 2019:3). Moreover, criminological theories aspire to establish a foundation of knowledge and methods to control or regulate crime and societal responses (Frasieur, 2019:3).

This research was underpinned by three theories, namely, the social control theory, social-ecological theory, and the social learning theory.

3.2 Hirschi's Social Control Theory

Since its introduction in 1969, Hirschi's social bond/control theory has remained a key paradigm in criminology and has attracted the most empirical attention and sparked the most debate in the industry. The theory contends that everyone, from the moment of birth, has the hedonistic urge to behave selfishly and violently, which can result in criminal

behaviour (Hirschi, 1969:57). The hedonistic urge can manifest itself in various ways, depending on the individual's preference. This could include acts of violence, disrespect, manipulation, or any other actions that harm or undermine the authority and well-being of others. Hirschi (1969:58) asserts that these behaviours are inherent to human nature, but what matters is that most people can manage and restrain these innate urges. Through the social bond/social control theory, Hirschi (1969:58) starts by suggesting that questioning why criminals engage in crime and delinquency is superficial and irrelevant. Instead, he proposes that attention should be paid to understanding why individuals *do not* engage in such behaviours (Hirschi, 1969:58). Hirschi (1969:58) believes that the answer lies in the connections people establish with pro-social institutions, individuals, and values. According to Hirschi (1969:58), these bonds play a crucial role in controlling people's behaviour when they face temptations to commit crime or engage in wrongdoing.

The four interconnected types of social bonds, namely, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief are discussed below.

3.2.1 Attachment

Hirschi (1969:58) defines attachment as the level of emotional fondness an individual has towards an institution (i.e., a school, in the case of this research) and other individuals who promote prosocial behaviour. Hirschi's definition of attachment can be applied to children who develop strong bonds with their parents, teachers, and school. In this context, attachment refers to the extent of emotional connection and affection that learners feel towards their parents, teachers, and educational institutions. It reflects the deep sense of trust, security and love the learners experience in these relationships. According to the social bond of attachment, when learners have a strong attachment to their parents, teachers, and school, they are likely to feel strong psychological bonds and a sense of belonging, which can contribute to their overall well-being and academic success.

3.2.2 Commitment

Hirschi (1969:58) highlights the significance of commitment as the second type of bond, emphasising the value individuals place on their social connections, which they are unwilling to risk compromising through engaging in criminal or immoral actions. Hirschi observed that when people are aware of the potential consequences of their behaviour, they are less likely to engage in inappropriate actions (Hirschi, 1969:58). In the case of young people, this could mean avoiding embarrassment in front of peers, parents, or teachers by refraining from committing crimes, as such behaviour would lead to shame in front of those whose opinions are important to them (Hirschi, 1969:58).

3.2.3 Involvement

The third type of bond is involvement, which pertains to the opportunity costs associated with how individuals allocate their time (Hirschi, 1969:58–59). Hirschi referenced the proverb, "idle hands are the devil's workshop", to highlight the idea that, when people engage in prosocial activities, they are inherently not engaged in antisocial activities (Hirschi, 1969: 59). In simpler terms, involvement refers to the extent to which individuals invest their time in activities that are constructive, beneficial and contribute positively to society (Hirschi, 1969:59).

3.2.4 Belief

Hirschi (1969:59) identifies belief as the final type of social bond, which refers to the extent to which individuals adhere to the values associated with legal behaviour. The more importance individuals place on these values, the less likely they are to engage in criminal deviant actions (Hirschi, 1969:59). For example, if young people prioritise smoking marijuana and playing the latest video game over the idea of attending school, they are more likely to skip school (Hirschi, 1969:59). Conversely, if young people firmly believe that using illegal drugs is wrong, they are less likely to engage in such a behaviour (Hirschi, 1969:59).

Hirschi's underlying concept explores the significant relationship between attitudes and

behaviour (Hirschi, 1969:59). It suggests that attitudes alone do not drive individuals to commit crimes, but rather, prosocial attitudes act as preventative factors, deterring individuals from committing crimes they might have otherwise considered if not for these social bonds (Hirschi, 1969:59). The relationship between attitudes and behaviour is relatively straightforward (Hirschi, 1969:59). The concept of belief, as a type of social bond, highlights the impact of personal values and attitudes on shaping individual's decision and actions (Hirschi, 1969:59). When individuals hold strong prosocial beliefs, the beliefs act as a deterrent against engaging in illegal or deviant behaviour. Hirschi (1969:60) argues that both adult criminals and young offenders lack strong social connections to mainstream society. He suggests that the reason criminals behave the way they do is because their instincts are not effectively restrained or under control.

The following section will cover the discussion of the social ecological theory.

3.3 The social-ecological theoretical framework

According to Sibisi (2016:52), Bronfenbrenner formulated the theory known as the ecological systems theory to make the point that development cannot be explored or explained by any single concept, such as biology, but rather by a more multidimensional and complex system. An individual's development is shaped by various systems within the environment and by the interrelationships among the systems (Sibisi, 2016:52). Furthermore, Mahome (2019:94) asserts that the most adequate theory for a wider understanding of the complexity of the violent behaviour directed toward teachers is Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological approach. In Mahome's study, an adapted version of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory was employed to investigate instances of violence directed towards teachers (Mahome, 2019:94). Similarly, this study utilised the same theory to explore teachers' personal experiences and perspectives regarding learner-on-educator violence and its causes. The ecological perspective theory places an individual within their social context (Sibisi, 2016:52). Bronfenbrenner (1977:513) developed the concept of ecological contexts as comprising different levels which encompass the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

3.3.1 Microsystem

The simplest component of any system is called a microsystem (Sibisi, 2016:52) which is "an immediate environment in which a child lives" (Hartin & Williams, 2022:np) According to Bronfenbrenner (1977:513), a microsystem is a collection of relationships between a developing person and their immediate environment (for an example, home, school, workplace). Examples of microsystems for children are the child's family, school, peers, and neighbourhood (Hartin & Williams, 2022:np). According to Sibisi (2016:53) and Hartin and Williams (2022:np), the child's interaction with actors within their microsystem, such as siblings, parents, teachers, and peers, has an impact on their behaviour. The chances of a child displaying aggressive or violent behaviour during childhood are higher when the actors within child's microsystem are violent (Sibisi, 2016:53). Sibisi (2016:53) posits that children, whose lives have been marked by violence, present problems in the classroom and are very challenging for teachers to discipline. Since violence is the only form of corrective discipline children in violent environments are familiar with, these children are less likely to take any person of authority, such as the teacher, seriously if they are not violent or aggressive toward them (Sibisi, 2016:53).

3.3.2 Mesosystem

A mesosystem is made up of the connections between the key environments in which an individual is developing during a particular life stage (Bronfenbrenner,1977:515). For children, the mesosystem primarily consists of interactions between family, school, and peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1977:515). For some children, it may also include church, a camp, or a job (Bronfenbrenner, 1977:515), though the latter is less common in the South African context than in some other societies. A mesosystem is a system of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977:515). The interconnections among significant environments within the mesosystem influence a child's behaviour in school. Similar to the interconnected links of a chain, the mesosystem underscores the significance of how microsystems impact each other (Hartin & Williams, 2022:np). The family is one of the most, if not the most, important socialising contexts for children and teenagers (Sibisi, 2016:53). As a

result, parents have a significant influence on how their children behave (Sibisi, 2016:53). Children who are raised in the absence of parental involvement or with parents who are not actively engaged in their lives, combined with exposure to a violent environment, are at an increased risk of exhibiting disruptive behaviour and engaging in physical aggression (Sibisi, 2016:53).

3.3.3 Exosystem

An exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem that includes additional formal and informal social structures that are not directly related to the developing person but have an impact on or encompass those environments and, as a result, influence, restrict, or even control what happens there (Bronfenbrenner, 1977:515). Institutions, which function at a concrete local level and are both intentionally structured and spontaneously evolving, are included in these structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1977:515). They include, among other structures, a parent's workplace, societal norms, community influences, the media, school policy, social support systems, family, friends and government policies (Drew, 2023:np). A parent's workplace serves as an example of the exosystem. For instance, some working parents arrive home late in the evening and leave for work early in the morning, while others only have weekends off from their long-distance jobs. This leaves them with insufficient time to raise their children (Sibisi, 2016:55)

3.3.4 Macrosystem

Cultural traits, political upheaval, and economic disruption are examples of macrosystem elements that can individually or collectively shape development and have an impact on all lower layers of the ecosystem (Sibisi, 2016:55). The term "macrosystem" encompasses the overall institutional frameworks of a culture or subculture, which include the political, social, economic, and educational systems, of which the micro, meso and exosystem are the outward manifestations (Bronfenbrenner, 1977:515). In addition to their structural aspects, macrosystems are thought of and studied as carriers of information and ideology that, both explicitly and implicitly, give specific agencies, social networks, roles, activities, and their interrelations a sense of purpose and motivation

(Bronfenbrenner, 1977:515). Factors, such as the political, social, economic and educational systems within the macrosystem, can shape children's attitudes, beliefs and values. For example, if the macrosystem perpetuates a culture of violence or fails to provide adequate support and resources for education, it may contribute to an increased likelihood of learners displaying violent behaviour towards their teachers.

3.4 Social learning theory

The social learning theory connects aspects of Sutherland's differential association theory with broader concepts in behavioural psychology (Akers & Jennings, 2016:230). Burgess and Akers (1966) expand upon the initial series list and emphasise Sutherland's sixth principle, known as the principle of differential association (Akers & Jennings, 2016:231). Sutherland posits that individuals acquire two kinds of definitions for specific behaviour: either a positive or negative view (Akers & Jennings, 2016:231). Applied to understanding crime and deviance, this principle suggests that the likelihood of someone engaging in criminal or deviant behaviour rises when they learn favourable definitions supporting the violation of the law (Akers & Jennings, 2016:231). According to See and Kieser (2018:17), the social learning theory suggests that individuals acquire, sustain or alter both criminal and conforming behaviours through interactions with others. The variation stems from the direction or balance of social influences, including reinforcement, values, attitudes and imitation (See & Kieser, 2018:17). A person's belief about what is right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, justified or unjustified, appropriate or inappropriate, excusable or inexcusable influence their inclination towards engaging in conforming or non-conforming behaviour (Akers & Jennings, 2016:233). These personal definitions, whether supportive of or against crime and deviance, can be broad or specific to a particular behaviour or situation (Akers & Jennings, 2016:233). This research employed Ronald Akers and Albert Bandura's social learning theory.

Social psychologists have formulated theories elucidating how children acquire violence through socialisation that affects how they behave in societal contexts (Joubert, 2022:70). These theories, collectively known as social learning theory, as articulated by Bandura,

posit that children learn violent or aggressive behaviour by observing role models, imitating them, and acting based on those roles (Joubert, 2022:70). Bandura asserts that individuals are not inherently predisposed to act aggressively, instead such behaviour is acquired through observation and life experiences (Joubert, 2022:70). The theory comprehensively addresses the interplay of environmental and cognitive elements shaping the learning process, asserting that people learn by observing the consequences of others' behaviour (Cherry, 2022:np). Dissimilar to purely behaviour theories and cognitive theories, Bandura's approach considers both conditioning and psychological factors, extending to direct or indirect observation of behaviour, whether through direct witnessing or the media (Cherry, 2022:np). Consequently, actions that are rewarded tend to be replicated, while those that are punished are typically avoided (Cherry, 2022:np). Contrary to the behavioural school of psychology, which asserts that all learning stems from direct experiences and environmental associations, Bandura's social learning theory challenges this notion by contending that direct reinforcement cannot explain all forms of learning (Cherry, 2022:np). Reinforcement plays a crucial role in social learning theory by asserting that criminal behaviour is largely a response to stimuli (Joubert, 2022:129). Bandura's theory of social learning recognises that individuals, both children and adults, can learn without direct exposure to certain experiences (Cherry, 2022:np). While behaviour theories focus on associations formed through conditioning, Bandura introduced a social element, proposing that learning can occur through observation alone (Cherry, 2022:np). Learning by observation, a key aspect of this theory, provides insight into various behaviours that may not be fully explained by other learning theories (Cherry, 2022:np). Together, these principles offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals acquire, maintain, and modify both criminal and conforming behaviours through social interactions and observations.

The three fundamental principles central to social learning theory are discussed below.

3.4.1 Learning can occur through observing others

Bandura argues that if individuals had to depend solely on the consequences of their own actions for guidance, the learning process would be arduous and risky (Cherry, 2022:np).

Additionally, he emphasises that a significant portion of human behaviour is acquired through observation learning and modelling (Cherry, 2022:np). Joubert (2022:63) agrees and adds that the social learning theory suggests that individuals acquire behaviour by observing, imitating or reinforcing actions that remain unpunished. By observing others, individuals develop an understanding of how new behaviours are executed, and this encoded information later serves as a guide for their own actions (Cherry, 2022:np). Bandura describes three fundamental models of observational learning. Firstly, a live model entails a tangible individual demonstrating or enacting a behaviour (Cherry, 2022:np). Secondly, a symbolic model involves authentic or imaginary characters portraying behaviours in literacy works, cinematic productions, television programmes, or online media (Cherry, 2022:np). Lastly, a verbal instructional model encompasses the articulation of descriptions and explanations pertaining to a specific behaviour (Cherry, 2022:np).

3.4.2 Mental states cannot be overlooked

Bandura asserts that external environmental reinforcement is not the sole determinant of learning and behaviour (Cherry, 2022:np). Recognising that reinforcement is not exclusively derived from external stimuli, Bandura highlights the significant influence mental state and motivation have on the learning process (Cherry, 2022:np). Intrinsic reinforcement, characterised by internal rewards such as pride, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment, is emphasised (Cherry, 2022:np).

Differential reinforcement is one of four main concepts of Aker's social learning theory. It refers to the possible consequences, whether rewards or punishments, associated with engaging or abstaining from criminal or deviant actions (See & Kieser, 2018:17). This involves evaluating past, present and anticipated consequences in the decision-making process (See & Kieser, 2018:17).

3.4.3 Acquiring knowledge does not always result in transformation

Often, learning is readily apparent when a newly acquired behaviour is demonstrated

(Cherry, 2022:np). For instance, teaching a child to ride a bicycle allows for immediate assessment as they ride unassisted (Cherry, 2022:np). Unlike the behaviourist perspective, which posits that learning results in enduring behavioural changes, observational learning reveals that individuals can acquire new information without an immediate manifestation in behaviour (Cherry, 2022:np). All observed behaviours are effectively learned and the success of social learning depends on factors involving both the model and the learner (Cherry, 2022:np). The observational learning process includes key steps:

- Attention (critical for learning);

- Retention (the ability to store information);

- Reproduction (performing the observed behaviour for skill advancement); and

- Motivation (essential for successful imitation, influenced by reinforcement and punishment experienced by oneself or observed in others) (Cherry, 2022:np).

3.5 Summary

The importance of criminological theory and literature in research lies in providing a conceptual framework to understand and analyse criminological behaviour. Criminological theories offer systematic explanations for why individuals engage in deviant activities, helping researchers make sense of complex phenomena. Moreover, drawing from existing literature situates the research within a broader academic context, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of relevant concepts and debates. This integration of theory and literature enhances the depth and validity of the research, contributing to the development of evidence-based practices and policies in the field of criminology. Criminological theory and literature is crucial for grounding research, guiding methodology, and fostering a deeper comprehension of the intricate dynamics surrounding criminal behaviour.

To explain the phenomenon of learner-on-educator violence, three theories, as discussed in this chapter, underpinned this study. Hirschi's social control theory emphasises the

role of societal bonds and controls in preventing deviant behaviour. The central point of this theory is that a strong attachment or bond with pro-social institutions, such as the family and school, can prevent deviant behaviour. In Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory, the focus is on the various layers of influence on an individual, ranging from microsystems to macrosystems. This perspective aids the understanding of the complexity of learner-on-educator violence by considering multiple interacting factors. It provides a framework for analysing how social institutions, such as the family, peers, the community, and schools, influence the behaviour of learners (see sections 2.3.2.1, 2.3.3, 2.3.4.1 and 2.3.5). Bandura's social learning theory is premised on the fact that children learn behaviour from people closest to them via observation, imitation, and modelling. Together, these theories provided a foundation for exploring aggressive behaviour in the context of this study.

The next chapter focuses on the presentation and interpretation of the research findings.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a thorough discussion and interpretation of the results derived from the data collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 23 educators from nine schools and three districts in the City of Tshwane. As alluded to under section 1.5.5, thematic analysis was utilised to analyse data for this research. Walliman (2018:149) explains that thematic analysis relies more on verbal than numeric data and focuses on providing thick descriptions of the data supported by verbatim responses.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to build a foundation for understanding the phenomenon of learner-on-educator violence, as explained in previous research studies. Some of the literature is used in this chapter to assist with the interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, the research was guided by three theories, Hirschi's social control theory, Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory, and Bandura's social learning theory, which are utilised in this chapter to explain the causes of learner-on-educator violence.

4.2 Biographical information

The biographical information of the participants is not presented as part of the research findings but as a way of providing context on those who participated in the study.

A total of 23 teachers, who were teaching in nine secondary/high schools in three DBE districts in the City of Tshwane (i.e., Tshwane West, North, and East), participated in this research. Of the 23 participants, 13 identified as females and 10 as males. For this research, this was a good balance between the two binary sexes. Moreover, 10 of the participants were based in Tshwane West, seven (7) in Tshwane North, and six (6) in Tshwane South. As previously highlighted under section 1.5.3.5, the final number of participants per district was determined by the willingness and availability of the teachers. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the biographical details of each teacher in terms of their

school, district, their age, the years of teaching experience and their sex.

Table 4.1: Participants' biographical data

Participant	School Name	Age	Years of teaching experience	Sex[1]
P1	TS1 – Tshwane West	30	5	F
P2	TS1 – Tshwane West	35	10	F
P3	TS3 – Tshwane West	50	25	F
P4	TS8 – Tshwane South	56	30	F
P5	TS7 – Tshwane South	33	3	M
P6	TS1 – Tshwane West	53	28	F
P7	TS1 – Tshwane West	50	28	M
P8	TS7 – Tshwane South	30	5	M
P9	US1 – Tshwane West	44	18	F
P10	TS5 – Tshwane North	52	12	M
P11	TS8 – Tshwane South	55	20	M
P12	TS2 – Tshwane West	46	12	F
P13	TS2 – Tshwane West	45	10	M
P14	TS6 – Tshwane South	30	2	F
P15	TS6 – Tshwane South	50	20	F
P16	TS5 – Tshwane North	29	3	M
P17	US1 – Tshwane West	44	20	M
P18	US1 – Tshwane West	55	32	F
P19	TS4 – Tshwane North	40	15	M
P20	TS4 – Tshwane North	25	1	F
P21	TS5 – Tshwane North	33	7	F
P22	TS5 – Tshwane North	30	6	M
P23	TS5 – Tshwane North	50	27	F

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[1]F=Female and M=Male.

As explained in the methodology chapter (section 1.5.6.5), to ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were utilised to refer to both the individual participants and the schools. This was also a requirement from the DBE (Refer to Annexure B for the permission letter). Participants were allocated the letter P as well as a number as their identity. For example, participant 1 was allocated the pseudonym P1 and participant was allocated P2, etc. To protect their identity, the schools were first named according to the type of area they are situated in (i.e., township or urban) and were further allocated the letter S which stands for school and then a number. For example, TS1 means township school 1. Out of the nine schools that were part of this research, only one was situated in an urban area, and it was named US1 meaning urban school 1. In the presentation of the results, later in this chapter, the complete participant's pseudonym is presented as, for example, P1 (TS1 – Tshwane West). Note that the specific district the participant is from is included at the end of the pseudonym. Because there was only one urban school that took part in the study, as opposed to eight township schools, comparisons in findings cannot be made between urban and township schools.

The ages of the research participants of this study were grouped into three categories, namely, 26–35, 40–49 and 50–55. At the time of the interviews, nine participants (P1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 15, 16, 21 and 22) were in the age group of 26–35. Five participants (9, 12, 13, 17 and 19) were between the ages of 40 and 49. Nine research participants (P 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 18, 20 and 21) were in the age group of 50 to 55.

As presented in Table 4.1, the age of the teachers who took part in this research ranged from 26 to 55 years. This is a combination of both the early career teachers and experienced teachers. In addition, the average work experience in terms of years between the 23 teachers was 14.4 years. This indicates that the individuals who participated in this study had the required teaching experience to contribute to discussions on the research subject.

4.3 Findings (Thematic Analysis)

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the six main themes with sub-themes that emerged

from the data collected from the research participants.

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
1. The nature of learner-on-educator violence	• Verbal aggression • Physical abuse • Cyberbullying
2. Reasons for teacher-on-learner violence	• Family background • Peer pressure • Avoidance of homework • Banishing of corporal punishment • Gang involvement • Substance abuse • Disregard of the code of conduct
3. Factors that put teachers at risk of victimisation	• Teacher's age, gender, and physique • Teacher's character traits
4. Impact of learner-on-educator violence on the victim	• Psychological impact • Physical impact • Work-related impact
5. Coping Strategies	• Disengaged coping strategies - Resigned acceptance - Financial motivation - Retirement
6. Victim support structures	• Informal counselling by colleagues

Important to note is that comparisons in findings are made between the three districts and not between individual schools. However, most themes depicted in Table 4.2 emerged in all three districts. Therefore, unless stated otherwise, the findings presented apply to all three districts.

4.3.1 The nature of learner-on-educator violence

When the teachers who participated in this research were asked about the nature of learner-on-educator violent acts experienced in their school, verbal aggression was mentioned as the most predominant followed by physical abuse and then cyberbullying.

4.3.1.1 Verbal aggression

Of the 23 interviewees, 12 confirmed that they were verbally abused by their learners.

> "*I was verbally attacked by a learner. I was reprimanding the learner for wearing a very short skirt and wearing make-up to school. The learner then started backchatting with me which ended up with the learner swearing at me.*" P1 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*Sadly, I have been victimised by a learner at my school and it was a verbal aggression.*" P5 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

> "*I was once verbally attacked by a learner who did not write his homework. When asked why he did not write some homework, he started arguing with me and writing my name on the teaching board that I was a mean teacher.*" P9 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*It was a verbal aggression. The learner promised to fight me after school.*" P10 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

> "*I was victimised by a learner at the school. It was verbal which almost led to physical attack. I was trying to reprimand the learner who got very angry and stood up trying to physically attack me.*" P12 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

> "*I have been attacked verbally by one learner. I was teaching and one learner interrupted the class and started making noise, when I reprimanded the learner, he started arguing and shouting at me.*" P14 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

> "*It was a verbal aggression. The learner was refusing to participate on her*

class project. She started arguing with me and being very disrespectful." P21
(TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*It was a verbal aggression. Whenever I was busy with the class, he would disrupt the class by making nasty comments.*" P23 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

Verbal bullying is reported as the most common form of violence directed against teachers, with learners being the prime perpetrators (Mahome, 2019:91). Reports suggest that teachers are verbally attacked daily, especially at the beginning of the academic year since some of the learners who have failed the grade blame the teachers for not allocating the correct marks for tests (Mahome, 2019:97). A study conducted in 153 Tshwane public schools reported that 62% of the teachers testified that verbal bullying was the most predominant type of learner-on-educator violence in their schools (Mahome, 2019:97). Verbal bullying, as defined under section 1.4.6.3, involves using foul language, such as threats, yelling, screaming, criticism and derogatory remarks (Mustapha, 2022:132). Naicker (2014:81) adds that other predominant forms of unruly learner behaviour reported by teachers include back-chatting and arguing. Gossiping has been identified as the most predominant form of verbal bullying reported by teachers and is perceived to result in other types of school violence (Pahad, 2010:57). Three participants further reported that verbal abuse may lead to physical abuse.

"*I was victimised by a learner at the school. It was verbal which almost led to physical attack. I was trying to reprimand the learner who got very angry and stood up trying to physically attack me.*" P12 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"*It started verbal and became physical. I asked the learner for homework, and he had not done it, then he started arguing and talking back to me, he then started pushing me and pointing fingers to my face.*" P4 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

"*My colleague was victimised by a learner at the school. It was verbal which led to physical attack. The teacher was trying to reprimand the learner who got*

very angry and stood up and started pushing the teacher." P7 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

Verbal abuse can lead to both short- and long-term effects on the victim, including depression, PTSD, social withdrawal and isolation, anxiety, feelings of shame or guilt, mood changes, self-esteem issues, and substance abuse (Thobane et al, 2023a:9). Thobane et al (2023a:10) emphasise that verbal abuse frequently comes before physical abuse. Therefore, if this form of abuse is not dealt with, it often escalates.

4.3.1.2 Physical abuse

Participants across the six districts unanimously reported that physical abuse is the second most common type of learner-on-teacher violence in their schools. Six participants told their own personal stories of how they had suffered physical abuse at the hands of their learners.

"*It was physical, the learner stood up and slapped me. I was asking for some homework, which he did not do.*" P22 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*I was physically attacked by a learner. The learner did not want to be reprimanded, he started pushing me around.*" P16 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*I have experienced a physical attack. I was asking a learner for a homework and a learner stood up and physically attacked me, shoving me around. Other learners started cheering for him and making a noise.*" P20 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

"*I was a victim of physical attack. I was stabbed with a screwdriver by one learner. Another learner had informed me that learner had a screwdriver in his pocket. When I asked the learner to hand over the screwdriver from his pocket, he refused and started arguing and saying that he will not hand it over. He then took it out of his pocket and stabbed me on the shoulder.*" P3 (TS3 – Tshwane West)

"*One minute I was asking for some homework, the next minute, he was in front of me pushing me around*". P12 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"*When entering the classroom, I found them making noise. I started reprimanding all of them to settle down. Two male learners stood up, they were the eldest in classroom, they then came straight to me and started confronting me, pointing fingers at me, the other one then threw a textbook at me, while the other one shoved me around.*" P2 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

According to Mooij (2011:234), there are two types of physical abuse: mild and severe. Mild physical abuse includes purposefully striking or injuring a teacher, pushing or kicking him/her, tripping a teacher, and punching and hitting him/her. Fighting with a teacher, beating or brawling a teacher, threatening a teacher with a weapon, and using a weapon during a physical confrontation are all examples of severe physical abuse (Mooij, 2011:234).

The submission made by P3 about being stabbed with a screwdriver by a learner suggests that learners bring weapons to school. Even though none of the participants in this research explicitly reported that weapons were brought to school by their learners, literature shows that the presence of weapons is one of the risk factors for school violence (refer to sub-section 1.4.5). In Thobane's (2023a:18) study, a knife was reported to be the most predominant weapon brought to school by learners, followed by a screwdriver. According to Burton and Leoschut (2013:58), in communities where levels of violence are high and weapons are easily accessible, physical violence in schools includes stabbings and shootings.

4.3.1.3 Cyberbullying

In this study, only one participant stated that she was cyberbullied.

"*The learner wrote on the social platform that I was mean. He even took my picture when I was not aware. I was bending and picking up a pen and he took a pic while I was bending and posted it on social media. This picture started*

doing rounds on social media and I would get nasty texts which I suspected were from other learners commenting about my physical appearance." P6 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

Grobler (2018:24) asserts that cyberbullying is a growing phenomenon globally. Kopecký and Szotkowski (2017:103) believe that, with the growing technology, teachers are often victims of some form of cyberbullying as the physical proximity between the victim and the perpetrator is not required for cyberbullying to take place (refer to sub-section 2.2.2.1.2 and see Ngidi, 2018:166). In cyberspace, teachers most often become victims of verbal aggression, particularly humiliation, insults, embarrassment, gossip and ridicule (Kopecký & Szotkowski, 2017:104).

4.3.2 Reasons for learner-on-educator violence

When the participants were questioned about their perspectives on why learners commit violent acts against teachers, the reasons included: family background; peer pressure; avoidance of homework; banishing of corporal punishment; involvement in gangs; substance abuse; unfamiliarity with codes of conduct; cultural influences; and dissimilar views.

4.3.2.1 Family background

Among the 23 interviewees, a significant number of participants emphasised the impact of family backgrounds on learners' behaviour. They pointed out that anger problems and incidents of violence occurring at home were often the causes of violence directed towards teachers by learners. They identified a lack of discipline at home, absent parents, violence in the home, and the disrespect of parents by learners as some of the behaviours that exacerbate poor behaviour at school. Participants in this study expressed that parents seem to be failing when it comes to training their children at home.

"*Parents are absent. These kids have no cultural values and no order at home. Those learners have no limits, then you can tell that there is a problem at home.*" P3 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"*These learners attack their teachers because they are experiencing violence at home.*" P4 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

"*The reason why learner attack their teachers it is because maybe the learner is a troubled child from home. He or she faces difficulties with his growing up or maybe there is violence experienced at home.*" P5 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*The reason why these learners attack their teachers is because they disrespect the teachers, and some learn this behaviour because they disrespect their parents at home.*" P6 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

"*Learners might have anger issues or even deeper-rooted issues from home.*" P 9 (US1 – Tshwane West)

As explained through the social-ecological theory in Chapter 3, sub-section 3.3.1, the child's interaction with actors within his/her microsystem, such as parents and siblings, have an impact on their behaviour (also see Sibisi, 2016:53; Hartin & Williams, 2022:np). In most cases, the child's behaviour reflects their family or how they have been brought up. Albert Bandura's social learning theory (see section 3.4) shows that behaviour is learnt either through social interactions with others or indirectly through the media. Using the social learning theory to explain learner-on-educator violence, the researcher deduced that learners who are raised in homes characterised by violence may depict violent behaviour at school. To further support the findings of this study, Thobane et al (2023a:15) found in their research with four schools in Gauteng that 65% of the educators (45 out of 69) reported violence in the home as a contributing factor to school violence committed by learners.

To affirm the findings of this study, Gasa (2005:2) opines that learners' aggressive behaviour stems from factors such as family backgrounds, community, school, and a lack of moral value systems. Naicker (2014:86) explains that a child's primary micro-system for socialisation is his or her family. As such, a child who is ill disciplined has "baggage from home" and that misbehaving is often a sign that the child lacks love, care and

discipline (Naicker, 2014:86).

> "*The root of learners' misbehaviours is from their family background. Parents not being able to reprimand their children creates a problem for teachers. Since they get away with misbehaving at home, they tend to bring that behaviour to the school, knowing that they can get away with misbehaving.*" P7 (TS1 –Tshwane West)

> "*… and the second reason is that some learners come from a home with no morals and automatically they disrespect their teachers.*" P21 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

Mncube and Harber (2013:102) explain that the lack of parental involvement and support makes it difficult for teachers to effectively discipline their children. Parents are the primary teachers of their children long before they enter the schooling system. As such, parents are responsible for instilling values and morals that underpin the child's ability to differentiate between what is perceived as right or wrong by society. Teachers cannot be expected to instil morals and values in their learners without the help of the parents (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018:3).

Mncube and Harber (2013:102) add that learners whose parents are involved with their schooling are more disciplined and their performance is better than that of learners whose parents are not involved. This suggests that responsibility for discipline should not fall solely on teachers. Both parents at home and teachers at school constitute the mesosystem of a child and should actively engage to promote positive behaviour. Continuous interaction among all stakeholders within the school community is essential for fostering discipline (Buthelezi, 2021:18). Botha and Zwane (2021:12) explain that there is an urgent need for consistency and regularity in disciplinary approaches, both at home and in schools, for effective discipline to be achieved (Botha & Zwane, 2021:12). Additionally, the social learning theory explains that "[a]ctions that are rewarded are more likely to be imitated, while those that are punished are avoided" (Cherry, 2022:np). Therefore, Mkhomi and Mavuso (2021:32) point out that parents need to set an example

for their children by modelling desired behaviour and punishing undesirable behaviour, as suggested by the social learning theory (also refer to sections 2.3.2 and 3.4).

Finally, Hirschi's social control theory explains in section 3.2.1 that children who have strong attachments to the actors within their mesosystem (i.e., parents, teachers and the school) feel a deep sense of love, trust and security and therefore tend to behave well. A mesosystem, as explained in sub-section 3.3.2, is a system of microsystems or the interconnections between family, school, and peers. Learners who do not have strong bonds with individuals within their mesosystem, such as their parents, teachers and peers, are likely to depict negative or violent behaviour at school (refer to the social-ecological theory in Chapter 3). One of the participants confirmed the value of children building strong bonds with actors in their mesosystem by reporting: *"Child and teacher relationship does not exist. Teacher and parents' relationship does not exist"* P20 (TS4 – Tshwane North)**.** With regards to parents being absent, Sibisi (2016:53) opines that children raised in families where parental involvement is lacking, combined with exposure to a violent environment, are at a higher risk of engaging in violent activities (also see point 3.3.2). As previously explained in section 2.3.2.3, a lack of parental involvement includes living with other family members, the absence of parents due to death or other reasons, and the unavailability of parents possibly due to work commitments (also see Pahad, 2010:91 and the exosystem discussion under section 3.3.3). The national statistics from the 2022 general household survey reveal that 42,2% of households were female headed (i.e., headed by a mother, aunt, or grandmother) (StatsSA, 2022a:4). Even though women can raise well-rounded children on their own, Thobane (2014:128) opines that "[t]he absence of a father figure has a negative effect on the socialising process, especially with regards to boys" (refer to point 2.3.2.3). The general household survey further reveals that, in 2022, about 44,1% of children in South Africa lived with their mothers only while about one-third lived with both their parents (StatsSA, 2022:5). Moreover, when the survey was conducted in 2022, roughly 12,3% of children in South Africa had either lost one or both their parents (StatsSA, 2022:6). About 7,7% of the children were paternal orphans, 2,1% were double orphaned (meaning they had lost both their parents) and 2,5% were maternal orphans (StatsSA, 2022:6). The United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF) Sub-Saharan Africa study on the influence of orphanhood on children and labour reveals that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has increased the number of orphans on the continent (Guarcello, Lyon, Rosati & Valdivia, 2004:6). Also, the latter study found that double orphans appear to be the most negatively impacted, in terms of education, and that the "loss of a mother may prove more detrimental than the loss of a father" (Guarcello et al, 2004:6). This discussion shows the significant role played by the family structure in shaping a child's socialisation process (Fakude, 2022:113), and how a home that is broken due to various reasons listed above can be detrimental to a child's upbringing. Singh and Steyn (2013:3) explain that factors contributing to learners' aggressive behaviour can be traced back to learners' family backgrounds where households are headed by single parents or parents are absent due to reasons such as separation or divorce, lack of interest by one or both parents, work commitments or death.

4.3.2.2 Peer pressure

Peer pressure was another reason offered by the participants for learner-on-educator violence. Singh and Steyn (2013:4) assert that learners get involved in illegal activities to impress and fit in with their peers.

> "*The learners attack their teachers because of peer pressure, wanting to prove a point to their peers that they are cool.*" P1 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*The anger emanated from the peers putting pressure on him.*" P2 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*Learners act on frustration, misunderstandings between them and their teachers and mostly from peer pressure.*" P3 (TS3 – Tshwane West)

> "*Learners attack their teachers because of peer pressure and a negative influence from other learners.*" P11 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

In support of the above finding, Fakude (2022:175) explains that, during adolescence, peer groups play a significant role in shaping an individual's self-concept and identity.

Most importantly, peer influence can lead a learner to engaging in harmful behaviours (Fakude, 2022:175). Fakude (2022:175) further explains that when children are part of a peer group where members show violent behaviour, the likelihood of them adopting and expressing the violent behaviour is high (also see discussions on peer pressure in section 2.3.4.1 *supra*). The social-ecological theoretical framework in Chapter 3 also maintains that children's interactions with actors within their mesosystem, such as siblings, parents, teachers, and peers, have an impact on their behaviour (see sub-section 3.3.1).

4.3.2.3 Avoidance of homework

Participants asserted that learners display aggressive behaviour when teachers request their homework or reprimand them for not doing it. P12, 14 and 21 articulated:

> "*The reasons why the learners attack their teachers it is when the teacher is trying to reprimand the learner especially those ones that do not do their homework.*" P12 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

> "*In most cases, the learners who are unruly are those that do not do their homework or who do not participate in class.*" P14 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

> "*Learners attack their teachers because learners do not do their homework and when teachers reprimand them, they disrespect the teacher.*" P21 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

The findings of this study align with those of Naicker (2014:81) that, when homework is being reviewed, defaulting learners generally engage in disruptive behaviour. The verbatim responses above, especially by P12 and P21, show that some learners become violent when they are reprimanded or disciplined by their teachers for not doing their homework.

4.3.2.4 Banishing of corporal punishment

Two participants, from Tshwane North and Tshwane South, expressed that, since the banishing of corporal punishment, they do not know how to discipline the learners.

"Learners are more advanced these days, unlike in the old days. They know their rights and abuses their rights. Moreover, these learners know where the districts offices are unlike when we were still learners, we did not know where those offices were. These learners attack the teachers deliberately so that they can put the teacher's work at risks. Since the corporal punishment has been banished, one cannot reprimand a learner without them disrespecting you or stating their rights and abusing them." (P5: TS7 – Tshwane South)

"The reasons why learners attack their teachers is because they know that teachers will not do anything to them since corporal punishment is against the law. If you ask me, government must return it." (P7: TS1 – Tshwane West)

P5 and P7 expressed that, since corporal punishment was abolished, educators reprimanding learners often results in disrespect, assertion of rights or even abuse. The two educators felt strongly that the banning of corporal punishment, as a form of discipline, has allowed the learners to exploit their rights and feel untouchable. However, the two educators need to understand that there is a difference between discipline and corporal punishment. Omar, Director of Clinical Services at the Teddy Bear Clinic, explained in her interview with the Mail & Guardian that: "Discipline means teaching acceptable behaviours and unlearning maladaptive behaviours with support, guidance and direction in managing behaviour" (Ebrahim, 2017:np). She further stated that the purpose of discipline is to set limits, to clarify rules and responsibilities, and to agree on mutual expectations to ensure expected and compliant behaviour (Ebrahim, 2017:np). Furthermore, Omar clarified that discipline is not punitive but is applied in the best interests of the child. Conversely, the aim of corporal punishment is to exert grievous bodily harm which violates the basic rights of the child (Ebrahim, 2017:np) highlighted in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution (RSA, 1996a).

As previously discussed under section 2.5.2, South Africa has several laws that ban corporal punishment and any educator who administers corporal punishment will be guilty of an offence and, if found guilty, will be convicted (DBE, 1996:17). Also previously explained under section 2.5.2 is that, when corporal punishment was banned, the DBE

developed the Alternative to Corporal Punishment Guidelines.

4.3.2.5 Gang involvement

Only one participant from the Tshwane South district expressed that being a part of a gang or desiring to be part of one, as well as mimicking gang members, is seen as an attractive behaviour by some learners and thus contributes to the reasons why learners are violent towards their teachers.

> "*Learners fight with their teachers at school because they want to be labelled as 'cool' and it's a sign that they are now a man enough to join a gang. This happens a lot among male learners.*" P 11 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

Singh and Steyn (2013:3), and Naidoo (2021:np) support P11 by explaining that the effect of gangsters and gangsterism is pervasive in schools. Mkhomi and Mavuso (2021:36) explain that the lack of resources, negligence, teacher and parent rejection frustrate learners and are often push factors to turn to gangs to fill the void. Mkhomi and Mavuso (2021:36) further explain that gangs provide a home, acceptance, love, and a sense of belonging to learners who are neglected by their parents and rejected by their teachers. Educators who participated in the Gauteng school research, conducted by Thobane et al (2023a:41), revealed that some learners brought weapons to school because they were part of gangs. The latter research also revealed that involvement in gangs leads to fights between learners during and after school (Thobane et al, 2023a:41). See section 2.3.4.2 on a thorough discussion of gang involvement as a risk factor that causes learners to commit learner-on-educator violence.

4.3.2.6 Substance abuse

As mentioned in Chapter 2, substance abuse plays a role in the prevalence of school violence. P9 from Tshwane West affirmed this viewpoint by stating that:

> "*They are usually under the influence of substance ...*" P9 (US1 – Tshwane West)

Pahad (2010:99, 101) supports the above assertion by P9 by indicating that substance abuse plays a role in instigating violence and that many cases of aggression towards teachers originate from their efforts to curb substance abuse. Sibisi (2016: 37) affirms the finding by reporting that, in the past decade, there has been a surge in learners utilising different forms of substances, such as cocaine, *nyaope*, *whoonga* and ecstasy, within schools. Thobane et al (2023a:14) found that alcohol was the most common type of substance abused by learners, followed by marijuana and tobacco products. The South African Police Service (SAPS, 2019:22) explains that alcohol is one of the multiple generators of crime. The abuse of alcohol and other substances impacts negatively on one's ability to think rationally, cooperate or resolve conflict in a peaceful manner (SAPS, 2019:22). Refer to the literature chapter, section 2.3.1.3, for a more extensive discussion that supports this finding relating to substance abuse as one of the reasons for learner-on-educator violence.

4.3.2.7 Disregard of the code of conduct

The participants across the three districts agreed that the disregard of the code of conduct by both learners and their parents is one of the reasons why educators are violated by the learners. The participants were asked if, in their opinion, they felt that everyone in the school community was aware of the code of conduct and what it entails. Some of the responses were as follows:

"*We are all aware of the code of conduct and the consequences. It is just that some learners, even their parents, choose to ignore it and learners misbehaves.*" P9 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*The SGB, principals, teachers, all staff members, learners and their parents are aware of the code of conduct, is just that there is lots of ignorance from learners. I am not aware of any preventative measures and disciplinary measures, except for suspension and expulsion of learners with serious offences like stabbing a learner or bringing any dangerous weapon in the school.*" P14 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

"*I am aware of the code of conduct in my school, and I am quite sure that all learners and their parents are aware of it. School violence, or rather no violence in the school ground is addressed in the school code of conduct. That it will not be tolerated in school.*" P17 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*All learners and teachers are aware of code of conduct. There are no preventative measures covered in the school of conduct. Just sanctions for transgression, suspension or giving a learner a note to ask their parents to come to school for a meeting.*" P23 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

As previously expounded on under section 2.5.2, the SASA of 1996 prescribes that SGBs of all public schools must adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and teachers at the school. Also highlighted in section 2.5.2 *supra* is that it is important to ensure that the types of misconduct, as well the disciplinary actions that will be taken, are published in the school code of conduct so that the school community, especially the parents and learners, know what actions will be taken against the learners should they be found to be in violation of the school code of conduct. Also important is that the SASA of 1996 instructs schools to publish in their code of conduct that corporal punishment has been barred (see sections 2.5.2 and 4.3.2.4).

P9 further expressed that the lack of orientation of both the learners and their parents on the rules and regulations contained in the code of conduct has contributed to non-adherence by the learners.

"*There are no orientation classes, rules and regulations of that school, [for] parents or learners ... If learners are educated on it, they will not misbehave.*"
P9 (US1 – Tshwane North)

P9 essentially insinuated that learners, in the context where he is employed, are misbehaving because neither they nor their parents receive training on the code of conduct.

4.3.3 Characteristics that put teachers at risk of victimisation

When the participants were asked what, in their opinion, are the characteristics that put educators at risk of learner-on-educator violence, two main themes emerged across all three districts, namely, teacher's age, gender, and physique; and teacher's character traits.

4.3.2.8 Teacher's age, gender, and physique

According to the observations of the educators who participated in this study, young female teachers, who are small in physique, face a higher risk of victimisation. The verbatim statements below are supported by Pahad (2010:82) who notes that the age of the teacher plays a role in their predisposition to school violence.

> "*The characteristics that put teachers at risks of being victimised are age and gender. The older and male ones which are between the ages of 50 and 60 are less targeted. The learners fear them.*" P1 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*The teacher was specifically targeted, since she was a female and a bit younger. I think she was 25 at the time. She was a bit skinny and short. Gender, physical appearance, and age are the characteristics that put teachers at risk of being victimised by learners.*" P2 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*I was 25 years old when I was attacked, I think that's why I was the targeted one. These learners always take advantage if you are young.*" P8 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

> "*The younger the teacher, then they tend to think that they have the same interest with their teachers, which leads to conflicts. Learners attack their teachers because the younger the teacher, the same interest, in terms of dating, dress code and the lingo. The conflict might arise from jealousy or competition.*" P17 (US1 – Tshwane West)

> "*Age and the gender, specifically, female and being younger amongst*

colleagues, are the characteristics that put teachers at the risks of being victimised." P5 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*The characteristics that put teachers at the risks of being victimised are age and gender. If you are younger and female, learners tend to think that you cannot defend yourself.*" P13 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"*The characteristics that put teachers at risks of being victimised might be their gender.*" (P14) TS6 – Tshwane South

"*I believe that age, gender and the looks are the characteristics that put teachers at risk of being victimised by learners. The younger you are, being female and being skinny might add as the disadvantages because the learners thinks that you are of the same age and peer.*" P15 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

"*The characteristics that put teachers at risks of being victimised by learners are their age, being younger between the age of 25 and 40, being female and physical appearance, if you don't have any muscles, these learners thinks that they can take advantage of you, and you will not be able to defend yourself.*" P16 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*The characteristics that put teachers at risk of being victimised by the learners are age and gender, when you are a young female.*" P17 (US – Tshwane West)

"*The characteristics that put teachers at risks of being victimised by learners are their age being between the age of 23 and 30, gender (female), and physical appearance, being a bit skinny.*" P18 (US – Tshwane West)

"*Other teachers are more affected or vulnerable to such attacks than others because of their gender as, in my school, the majority are females.*" P19 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

"*I was specifically targeted since I am younger (25 years old) and female.*" P20 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

"*I believe that age and physical appearance are the characteristics that put teachers at risks of being victimised.*" *Being younger to your colleague and not having too many muscles in your body put one at risk of being attacked by these perpetrators.*" P21 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*Age and gender play a huge role, being female and younger makes one a target.*" P22 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*Being female and young makes you a target since these learners thinks that you are of the same age as them.*" P23 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

As highlighted in the verbatim responses above, most educators who participated in this study strongly believed that being female, young (between the ages of 25 and 30) and being small in physique are perceived as a sign of vulnerability by many learners in their schools. Educators expressed that the learners target the above category of educators, firstly, because it is difficult for young educators to reprimand learners as they are almost peers (i.e., the learner and the educator). Secondly, female educators (especially those who are small in physique) experience higher risks of victimisation as learners see them as lacking the physical strength to confront them. The findings of this current study contradict Hoffmann (2015:111) who posits that victims of learner-directed teacher bullying are of different age groups and are not confined to a specific gender.

4.3.2.9 Educator's character traits

Certain educator character traits, such as being calm, sweet, soft spoken, friendly, strict or a disciplinarian, or a humiliator (i.e., educators who humiliate learners in front of other learners), were identified as factors that increase vulnerability to learner-on-educator violence.

"*The learners also take advantage of those teachers that are calm in character.*" P6 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

"*The characteristics that put the teachers at risk are displaying a kind character*

or a lack of being firm. The learners take advantage." P11 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

"*The characteristics that put teachers at the risks of being victimised by learners are soft spoken and being too friendly.*" P12 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"*… and if you are a soft-spoken teacher or sweet in character, the learners tend to take advantage of that, thinking that this one will not be able to defend themselves.*" P8 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*… and how they speak. If they are soft spoken, learners take advantage.*" P10 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*I believe that firm character and being a strict teacher are the characteristics that put teachers at risks of being victimised by learners. Learners do not like you or want to prove a point to their peers that, even though you are strict, it doesn't mean that you are untouchable.*" P3 (TS3 – Tshwane West)

"*I believe that the characteristics that put teachers at risk of being victimised by learners are that some learners have said that teachers who discipline them in front of other learners, by means of shaming them, aggravates their anger as they feel the teacher wants to embarrass them in front of their peers.*" P4 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

"*She was specifically targeted because she is labelled as a strict teacher, so they wanted to deal with her as this was communicated to her by one learner. Being strict and wanting order in class are the characteristics that put teachers at risk of being victimised by learners.*" P9 (US1 – Tshwane West)

Hoffmann (2015:84) found that learners feel that gentle and soft educators are fearful of them. A participant in Naicker's (2014:97) research linked discipline issues in her classroom to her perceived inability to assert herself, which made her feel like a failure for not maintaining the necessary discipline. An educator in Grobler's (2018:92) study

reported that the learners started responding to her when she adopted a more assertive approach. Conversely, Naicker (2014:41) explains that authoritarian educators' classroom regimes, characterised by excessive rigidity and punishment, can contribute to learner misbehaviour. Naicker (2014:42) posits that strict teachers are inclined to adopt authoritative approaches where learners are seen as subordinates and should adhere to instructions without asking any questions. Naicker (2014) also opines that some educators' autocratic style of managing classrooms plays a role in heightened levels of anxiety and conflict which, in turn, influences the behaviour and learning capabilities of learners. Furthermore, screaming and shouting in fury, name-calling and shaming of misbehaving learners portrays the educator's inability to manage his/her classroom and may escalate the tension between the educator and the learners (Naicker, 2014:97). In support of Naicker (2014:), Fakude (2022:148) adds that learners respond unfavourably to teachers who shout at them or express their anger through shouting and may eventually engage in physical altercations with such teachers (Fakude, 2022:148; also see sub-section 2.4.2).

4.3.3 Impact of learner-on-educator violence on the victim

This research found, across all three districts, that the victims of learner-on-educator violence are impacted negatively psychologically, physically, and professionally.

4.3.3.1 Psychological impact

Most of the participants in this study confirmed that learner-on-educator violence has a psychological impact on them. They mentioned that the emotional and psychological toll of the violence hampers their ability to effectively deliver lessons and manage their classrooms which, in turn, leads to difficulties concentrating, and affects their overall work performance. In addition, the participants highlighted negative emotions, such as anxiety, fear, low self-esteem, low self-confidence, shame, and anger, as some of the negative emotions they experienced due to learner-on-educator violence.

"*The impact this has on me is that it has affected me psychologically, that I*

fear the learners, even considering career change." P1 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

"*It affected her psychologically; she now has a low self-esteem.*" P3 (TS3 – Tshwane West)

"*I feel fearful and threatened. I do not know what will happen next time if I reprimand these learners.*" P5 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*This incident has instilled fear in me, I am affected psychologically since I am now anxious when I must go to my class, not knowing what will happen.*" P6 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

"*This has impacted negatively on the teacher because he fears for his life and is now scared of these learners.*" P7 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

"*This has affected her negatively; she is very reserved ever since and fears the learners. This made her very angry as well.*" P9 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*This incident has affected me in a way that I feel shameful, scared for my life.*" P10 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*I no longer relate well with my husband and kids well. I am always angry.*" P12

"*My self-confidence is gone; I am not even confident to stand in front of learners and teach.*" P14 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

"*She is now afraid of being in class and with learners.*" P16

"*I now suffer from anxiety.*" P18 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*This has caused me emotional destruction. I gets very angry and emotional when I see that learner who slapped me.*" P20 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

"*The impact this has on the teacher was that the teacher lost her self-*

confidence since she was expected to go to the same class to teach the very same learners who were cheering the learner who victimised her, and the very same learner came back to school after two weeks suspension. She was also scared because she did not know if the learners will bring weapons or not. She was also afraid because she did not know if the same learner will attack her again. Self-confidence was also gone. She was also scared of this learner."
P21 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*This has affected the teacher very badly to a point that she is now on anti-depression pills since our boss could not assist her and being a bread winner at home, she decided to keep quiet and do as the principal said. Which was to let the matter go, since the learners were suspended.*" P23 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

Wilson et al (2011:2355) affirm that victimised teachers may experience symptoms of PTSD, heightened levels of stress, and increased fear (refer to section 2.4.2). These symptoms may arise within three months of the event (acute reaction) and may persist for longer than three months (chronic reaction) (Sibisi, 2016:47). Symptoms of PTSD may be delayed in their onset, sometimes not surfacing until six months or more after the traumatic experience, such as violence at school (Sibisi, 2016:47). Moreover, De Wet (2007:12) indicates that violence on teachers is not only physical in nature; it involves both physical and non-physical harm (e.g., verbal, psychological and cyber related) that may result in physical or psychological damage, pain, fear and trauma. Sibisi (2016:46) maintains that, being a victim or witnessing violence daily, would affect most people, either at a personal or at a professional level.

4.3.3.2 Physical impact

Educators who took part in this study reported that victims of learner-on-educator violence suffer both mild and severe physical impacts such as bruises, stab wounds and permanent pain (also refer to point 4.3.1.2 above).

"*I was stabbed with a screwdriver by one learner … I was so badly injured that even now my shoulder is not working properly. I spent a week in hospital and being 50 did not make the healing process easy, this type of incidents stay with you forever.*" P3 (TS3 – Tshwane West)

"*I fell on my back after I was pushed around, my back has been in pain ever since. I drink pain killers almost every day.*" P12 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"*It was just a bruise from a slap.*" P22 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*I just got bruises from falling, luckily no bone was broken.*" P20 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

"*I lost balance and fell on my hand, which left my hand fractured. It was a very painful experience.*" P16 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*The textbook that one learner threw at me cut me below my eye, as you can see, I still have a mark from that day.*" P2 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

Moreover, some educators reported that their exposure to violence in the schools contributed to the worsening of pre-existing or the development of chronic health problems.

"*I was having my blood pressure under control before coming to this [school], but, with an encounter of these unruly learners, I can hardly put it under control. It has worsened to an extent that I am forced to consult [the doctor] time and again.*" P8 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*My ulcer condition was mild before but now it has worsened to an extend that my doctor has suggested surgery.*" P4 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

"*These days, one constantly experiences heart palpitations. This condition was normally under control, but with the prolonged exposure to violence, they are now constant.*" P23 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*My high blood skyrockets these days. These kids will kill you.*" P10 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*I am now experiencing sleeping disorders. One cannot even rest at night, because you are constantly worried about what's going to happen next.*" P9 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*Before I started working here as a teacher, I never had any headache problems. These days, I take Disprin to alleviate the headache I get because every day there is a new story or a fear of being abused by learners.*" P5 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*Eish, these learners will increase your blood pressure. When I am home or during the weekends, my blood pressure is under control, but coming here, one constantly gets dizzy, which is a sign that one experiences stress and the blood pressure is up.*" P3 (TS3 – Tshwane West)

"*I have recurring stomach cramps due to a lot of stress I am put under dealing with these kids that are unruly.*" P15 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

"*Hmmm … I always had ulcer issues but then, as I grew up, I managed to get it under control, until I started working here and facing learners. My ulcer has resurfaced because of the stress one experiences at school.*" P16 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

In support of the above findings, De Wet (2010:196) reports that, in his study, participants suffered from headaches, sleep deprivation, eating disorders, stomach cramps, stress, and burnout. This also aligns with the Department of Education's (2010:18) findings that reveal that stress related illnesses, such as stomach ulcers, high blood pressure and headaches are frequently reported among educators. Participants in Shields, Nadasen and Hanneke's (2014:5) study also mentioned feeling unwell, including headaches, which may be stress related. Wettstein, Jenni, Schneider, Kühne, Holtforth and La Marca (2023:1182) emphasise that "… aggressive student behaviour is one of the primary

sources of teacher stress in the classroom, with possible adverse long-term effects on teachers' health."

4.3.3.3 Work-related impact

Participants in this study revealed that the violence directed at them by learners had work-related impacts. Woudstra et al (2018:1) opine that, because learner-on-educator violence occurs in the place of employment for teachers, it is considered a form of workplace violence with serious consequences such as negative emotions leading to poor mental health, disempowerment, low morale, and low motivation (see sub-sections 1.4.6.1 and 2.4.1). Many educators who took part in this current study reported various workplace impacts of learner-on-educator violence such as feeling demoralised, frustrated, and disengaged from their work (also refer to the discussion on psychological impact *supra*). P22 further highlighted that, due to the traumatic nature of their work environment, educators often question their career choices and that many contemplate leaving the profession entirely. Participants reported that the emotional and psychological toll of learner-on-educator violence hampers their ability to focus which, in turn, leads to their inability to effectively deliver lessons, and manage their classrooms.

> "*This had a negative impact on him since he is no longer free to teach in class. The affected teacher is now scared and no longer enjoys teaching.*" P22 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

As well as the participants in this study, Sibisi (2016:46) emphasises that educators who work in an environment where they are constantly disrespected and violated by their learners affects their personal health, work performance and their attitude towards their profession and the learners that they teach.

4.3.4 Coping strategies

Coping is defined by Baqutayan (2015:485) as behaviours individuals use to manage stressful situations. Learner-on-educator violence leads to professional disengagement and demotivation among teachers. Teachers struggle to focus on their work due to a lack

of energy and passion for working with learners (Windvoël,2023:129). Young and Limbers (2017:683) further explain that, while there are several coping strategies, two types have been highlighted, namely, the engagement (approach) and disengagement (avoidance). The sub-sections that follow focus on the coping strategies of educators who took part in this study.

4.3.4.1 Disengagement coping strategies

When discussing how participants cope with learner-on-educator violence in schools, three disengagement coping strategies emerged from the research: resigned acceptance, financial motivation, and retirement. Resigned acceptance, as elucidated by Nakumura and Orth (2005:283), entails a passive form of acceptance characterised by a cessation of outward-directed actions and a negative outlook towards the future. In the context of dealing with violence in schools, individuals who adopt resigned acceptance may feel powerless to effect change and thus withdraw from actively addressing the issue. This coping strategy reflects a sense of surrender and resignation in the face of persistent challenges.

Furthermore, the mention of financial motivation and retirement as coping strategies suggests that some participants may seek to distance themselves from the problem by focusing on financial incentives or by opting for early retirement. These strategies align with the concept of disengagement coping, wherein individuals attempt to minimise their emotional investment in stressful situations by withdrawing or disengaging from the source of stress. Understanding these coping strategies provides insight into how individuals navigate and manage the impact of learner-on-educator violence in schools. It underscores the importance of addressing systemic issues within educational institutions to prevent the adoption of passive coping mechanisms and promote proactive approaches to creating safer learning environments.

"*I pretend as if nothing has happened.*" P2 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

"*To avoid embarrassment from the learners and teachers, I go on as normal*

..." P3 (TS3 – Tshwane West)

"*I act strong and go on with my work.*" P4 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

"*One goes on, what can you do?*" P6 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

"*You teach and pretend as if nothing has happened ...*" P8 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*For your sake, you go on.*" P9 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*The reality is, nothing is going to be done to assist you, you turn a blind eye and continue teaching.*" P12 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"*No choice, you continue with your work.*" P13 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"*We go on, you think of other learners who wants to be educated.*" P15 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

"*You pretend as if those who have victimised you are not in class and you continue with your lessons.*" P16 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*You teach those that want to get education and ignore the rest.*" P17 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*I go on with teaching as usual.*" P19 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

"*What can you do? You go on.*" P20 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

The responses by P15 and P17 show that educators choose to employ the resigned acceptance coping strategy so that they can focus on learners who want to learn and ignore those who are being disruptive.

Furthermore, some research participants mentioned that they used **financial motivation** as a coping mechanism. They expressed that they shifted their focus from the violence they experienced in their workplace to their monthly salary and the responsibility of

providing for their families.

> "*I think of the main reason I came to work, is to support my family.*" P1 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*I block everything and think of the financial gain, my salary at the end of the month.*" P5 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

> "*Ahh, as long as I get paid, I just pretend as if this has not happened.*" P10 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

> "*I never mind the rest and think of month end.*" P7 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*Money that I get keeps me going especially because this is my first job.*" P14 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

> "*I don't care anymore as long as I get my pay check at the end of the month.*" P19 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

> "*As much as I love teaching, I don't care anymore. As long as I get my salary.*" P20 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

In addition, three of the participants expressed they were due for **retirement** soon and were looking forward to retiring from teaching. This helped them to cope with the daily stress of their work.

> "*Five years from now, I will be going on pension, so I just think of that, and I manage to cope regardless of the situation.*" P11 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

> "*If it wasn't for the fact that I will be going on pension soon, I will not be coping.*" P18 (US1 – Tshwane West)

> "*I just think of the fact that I will be out of here soon. Pension.*" P23 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

Dijkstra and Homan (2016:2) explain that engagement coping strategies produce more positive psychological and physiological outcomes than disengaged coping strategies. These, according to Dijkstra and Homan (2016:3), include but are not limited to: (i) actively confronting the situation or directly and consciously facing the stressor (i.e., learners who misbehave in this context); (ii) seeking social support or actively asking others for help, for example, from colleagues and parents; (iii) having reassuring thoughts or putting things into perspective and acknowledging that "it is not the end of the world"; and (iv) expressing emotions or vocalising one's feelings regarding the stressor. It would, therefore, be beneficial for educators who participated in this study to adopt engagement coping strategies to deal with misbehaving learners.

4.3.5 Victim support structures

The researcher also explored whether teachers who had been targeted by learners received support from the DBE. This investigation uncovered that, in the schools and districts that participated in this study, there was a lack of established formal structures to support educators who are victims of learner-on-educator violence. The participants lamented that the learners receive more attention and priority in terms of support while teachers are neglected. Most of the participants, across the three districts, confirmed that they were not aware of any formal support structures in place to assist them to deal with the trauma or victimisation they experience in their workplace.

> "*There are no formal support structures for teachers who have been victimised. A learner who victimises a teacher is suspended.*" P1 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*It makes me feel helpless and embarrassed because there is no recourse for teachers. There is no support. No support structures at all.*" P2 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

> "*There is no support structure in place, the teachers just counsel each other. The support structures for teachers who have been victimised are not*

adequate since there is no professional counselling." P3 (TS3 – Tshwane West)

"*There are no formal support structures for teachers who have been victimised. I received counselling from the principal.*" P4 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

"*I was offered counselling by my colleagues and few days off, no formal support structure.*" P6 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*I believe that there is a gap when it comes to a support structure for teachers who have been victimised.*" P7 (TS1 – Tshwane West)

"*Learners are given priority when it comes to the support system by the department, not us teachers.*" P8 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*No formal support structures. If learners suffered the same consequences as teachers, then this could improve the situation. Teachers suffer suspension from school without salary for any misconduct whereas, in some cases, learners are simply just moved from one school to another and continues with their lives as if nothing happened.*" P9 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*I do not know of any support structures in place for teachers who have been victimised.*" P10 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*The support structure is not adequate since you are not even counselled by a professional.*" P11 (TS8 – Tshwane South)

"*There was no support, we continued as if nothing has happened.*" P14 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

"*She did not receive any support. Just disciplinary hearing for those learners. There are no adequate support structures for teachers.*" P15 (TS6 – Tshwane South)

"*There is no formal support structure.*" P16 (TS5 – Tshwane North)

"*Not that I know of.*" P17 (US1 – Tshwane West)

"*I can't think of any support structure.*" P19 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

"*The support structure is not adequate for victimised teacher; it favours learners.*" P20 (TS4 – Tshwane North)

The statements above illustrate that there are insufficient support systems in place to aid teachers who have been victimised. The findings of this study align with those of Sibisi (2016:45) who emphasises the need for multiple steps to assist both learners and teachers after a violent incident at school. However, these services might not be readily accessible due to financial constraints faced by the government in providing professional support for victims of violence in public schools (Sibisi, 2016:45). There is also limited research on the assistance offered to teachers to help them cope with their daily work stressors, as most of the literature focuses on helping learners cope with traumatic events (Sibisi, 2016:45). Additionally, the findings of this study mirror those of Pahad (2010:71) who posits that the lack of support from authorities leads educators to feel reluctant about reporting incidents. Sibisi (2016:48) states that, following a traumatic event, the DBE tends to focus on identifying inappropriate teacher behaviour and resumption of classes promptly, overlooking the long-term impact on the educators involved.

On the other hand, three participants, one from Tshwane South and two from Tshwane West, expressed satisfaction with the provided support. They shared the following:

"*The principal gives the victimised teachers support, 'counselling' that the support structure is adequate. The learner who victimises the teachers is given a punishment, for example, that of cleaning the toilets or [is] suspended if the incident is serious.*" P5 (TS7 – Tshwane South)

"*I was offered counselling by the vice-principal, and I coped.*" P12 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

"Counselling offered by my colleagues helped me a lot." P13 (TS2 – Tshwane West)

The responses from the three satisfied participants still highlight that educators solely rely on each other or the principal for counselling and support instead of the formal support structures established and recommended by the DBE. As formulated in various policy documents, support structures for schools, learners and educators in South Africa include the development of a DBST and the Institution-Level Based Support Teams (ILST) also referred to as School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016:3). The first level of support for learners and educators is the ILST which includes teachers, volunteers, members of the SMT, DBST members and community stakeholders such as health professionals, other government departments and NGOs. Also, refer to section 2.5.3 for a discussion on the whole-school approach on violence prevention as well as Bronfenbrenner's social-ecological framework under section 3.3. As explained by Nel et al (2016:3), the main function of the ILST is to ensure that services and support within the school are coordinated by identifying and addressing the needs of the school community, developing support programmes for learners, providing training to educators, encouraging collegial support, and liaising with the DBST. Should the ILST not be able to provide adequate support to the affected learner(s) or the educator(s), the DBST ought to be approached for additional support or to monitor the support provided at the school level (Nel, Nel & Lebeloane, 2013:56–57). None of the educators who participated in this research shared information about the above-mentioned support structures. What is still unclear, and was unfortunately not answered in this study, is whether the participants were aware of these structures or whether their schools had the above-mentioned necessary support structures in place.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the extensive findings of the study. It commenced by outlining the demographic composition of the participants, followed by a thorough examination of the insights derived from semi-structured interviews. The evidence gleaned from the discussions with the research participants painted a vivid picture of the most predominant

types of learner-on-educator violent acts experienced in the three districts that participated in this study. These are verbal aggression, physical abuse, and cyberbullying. Factors, such as family background, peer pressure, avoidance of homework, banishing of corporal punishment, gang involvement, substance abuse and disregard of the code of conduct, were the reasons provided for learner-on-educator violence. Also uncovered was that teachers' individual characteristics, such as their age, gender, and physique as well as character traits such as being calm or a disciplinarian, put them at risk of being victimised by learners. The research participants further revealed that educators were psychologically and physically impacted due to learner-on-educator violence. Their work was also negatively impacted. To cope with the daily stressors in their work environment, disengagement coping strategies, such as resigned acceptance, financial motivation and retirement, were applied. The research participants revealed that they were not aware of any formal structures and services put in place by the DBE to support educators who are victims of learner-on-educator violence. They instead mentioned that they received support in a form of informal counselling from their colleagues.

The next chapter summarises the findings presented in this chapter, deliberates on whether the research objectives were met and provides recommendations after which the dissertation is concluded.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Fouché and Chubb (2021:143) explain that a research report is concluded with a section on the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Moreover, statements on the contribution the research may have made, how well the original question has been answered, and to what extent the purposes have been obtained are presented in the last chapter (Fouché & Chubb, 2021:144). The study aimed to investigate learner-on-educator violence based on the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers employed in three districts of DBE in the City of Tshwane (i.e., Tshwane West, North and South). The research objectives, based specifically on the three districts, were as follows:

- To explore the nature of learner-on-educator violence;

- To describe the impact learner-on-educator violence has on the victims;

- To explain the reasons for learner-on-educator violence;

- To determine the type of support offered to victims of learner-on-educator violence; and

- Based on the research findings, to recommend possible preventative measures that can be put in place to curb learner-on-educator violence.

To meet the above objectives, data were collected through semi-structured interviews from 23 educators (refer to section 1.5.4). The qualitative approach was chosen because its explorative nature matched the goal of this research and allowed for the collection of thick and in-depth information on an under-researched phenomenon.

5.2 Summary of findings

The purpose of this section is to summarise the research findings as well as to declare whether the objectives were met.

5.2.1 Objective 1: To explore the nature of learner-on-educator violence

According to the educators who participated in the study, the most predominant types of learner-on-educator violence experienced across the three districts of Tshwane were verbal aggression, physical abuse, and cyberbullying. These are described below:

- **Verbal Aggression**: Educators in this study shared that they frequently faced verbal aggression from learners. This included instances where learners used insulting language, yelled at them, made derogatory remarks, or issued threats. Such behaviour creates a hostile and intimidating atmosphere, significantly affecting the educators' ability to teach and their overall sense of safety and well-being (see section 4.3.1.1).

- **Physical Abuse**: Educators in this study reported experiencing physical abuse by learners. This included being hit, pushed, kicked, or having objects thrown at them. The physical abuse was particularly alarming as it led to injuries and left educators feeling vulnerable and unsafe in their teaching environment (see section 4.3.1.2).

- **Cyberbullying**: One educator in this study also noted that cyberbullying was a significant issue. Learners used social media to harass, threaten, or embarrass her, often anonymously. This form of violence extended beyond the classroom, affecting the educator's personal life and mental health (see section 4.3.1.3).

The study documented these types of violence comprehensively by gathering data from educators across the three districts of Tshwane. Section 4.3.1 of the report provides a detailed analysis of the findings, highlighting specific incidents, patterns, and the impact of these violent acts on educators. The objective was successfully achieved by identifying and explaining the predominant types of learner-on-educator violence.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To explain the reasons for learner-on-educator violence

According to the teachers who participated in this study, family background plays a significant role in the behaviour of learners. The absence of parents, lack of parental discipline, and disrespect towards parents at home were identified as key factors

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contributing to learners' misbehaviour (see sub-section 4.3.2.1). Additionally, peer pressure was noted as a reason for learners to victimise teachers (see sub-section 4.3.2.2). Teachers revealed that some learners acted aggressively when asked about their homework or when reprimanded for not completing it (see sub-section 4.3.2.3). The banning of corporal punishment was also highlighted by two participants from Tshwane West and South as a significant factor that has led to increased victimisation of teachers. These teachers mentioned that, since corporal punishment was banned, they have faced challenges in disciplining learners. They complained that learners became disrespectful, abused their rights, and mistreated their teachers, knowing they cannot be physically punished (see sub-section 4.3.2.4). One teacher from Tshwane South reported that some learners are violent because they are part of gangs (see sub-section 4.3.2.5). Additionally, substance abuse was cited by an educator from Tshwane West as another reason for learner-on-educator violence (see sub-section 4.3.2.6). Participants also mentioned the ignorance of the rules and regulations stipulated in the code of conduct by both learners and their parents as a reason for the heightened incidents of violence in their districts (see sub-section 4.3.2.7). To further explore this objective, participants were asked about the characteristics they felt put individual teachers at risk of becoming victims of learner-on-educator violence. It was unanimously reported across the three districts that teachers' age, gender, physique, and character traits contributed to their chances of being victimised. Young female teachers with a small physique were seen by learners as more vulnerable and incapable of physically protecting themselves (see sub-section 4.3.2.8) Additionally, certain character traits, such as being calm, strict, a disciplinarian, or a humiliator, were found to expose educators to learner-on-educator violence. Based on the above summary of the findings and the detailed discussion in sub-sections 4.3.2.1 to 4.3.2.9, this research objective was met successfully.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To describe the impact learner-on-educator violence has on the victims

As discussed in detail under section 4.3.3 of the previous chapter, teachers who participated in this research expressed that the constant exposure to violence perpetrated

by learners against them negatively impacted them psychologically, physically and professionally. The educators from all three districts unanimously reported feeling negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, and low self-confidence, because of learner-on-educator violence. The educators further reported that they or their colleagues suffered minor to severe bruises, cuts, stab wounds and pain because of physical forms of violence perpetrated on them by learners. Additionally, the educators who participated in this study experienced worsening or development of chronic health problems, such as hypertension, stomach ulcers and headaches, because of prolonged exposure to violence. Furthermore, the 23 educators revealed that they suffered related impacts which significantly affected their professional roles and passion for teaching. The research participants expressed that they often felt demoralised, frustrated, and disengaged from their work, with some even considering resigning. Based on the summary of the findings and the detailed discussion in sub-section 4.3.3, this research objective was achieved.

5.2.4 Objective 4: To determine the type of support offered to victims of learner-on-educator violence

When asked about the type of support educators who are victims of learner-on-educator violence receive from the Department of Basic Education (DBE), all educators reported that they were unaware of any support structures and services available to them in their schools (refer to point 4.3.5). They expressed concern that more attention is given to learners while educators are often neglected. In the absence of formal support services, educators in this research relied heavily on collegial collaborative support, such as informal counselling by colleagues, the principal, or the vice-principal (refer to point 4.3.5). Despite not being able to confirm whether formal structures and services exist in the three districts to support victims of learner-on-educator violence, this research objective was explored and met successfully. Additionally, the fact that the research participants were unaware of any support structures for victims of learner-on-educator violence is a significant finding. The researcher also explored whether teachers who had been targeted by learners received support from the DBE. This investigation uncovered

that, in the schools and districts that participated in this study, there was a lack of established formal structures to support educators who are victims of learner-on-educator violence. Most participants lamented that learners receive more attention and priority in terms of support while teachers are neglected. They indicated that there were no formal support structures in place, and that they often had to rely on support from colleagues or school administration rather than professional services. A few participants mentioned that they received some support from principals or colleagues, but this support was informal and not part of a structured programme. Most educators felt that the existing support structures were inadequate, often leading to feelings of helplessness and neglect. They highlighted the need for professional counselling and better formal support systems. Based on the summary of the findings and the detailed discussion in sub-section 4.3.5, this research objective was achieved.

5.3 Recommendations

The purpose of this section is to provide a detailed discussion of the recommendations made in this study based on the research findings. This section of the report relates directly to the fifth research objective:

Objective 5: Based on the research findings, to recommend possible preventative measures that can be put in place to curb learner-on-educator violence.

5.3.1 Recommendations to the community regarding discipling children: *Let's go back to our African roots!*

As found in this research, one of the factors that contribute to learner misbehaviour is family background, specifically violence in the home, a lack of discipline and absent parents. As much as the family is the primary microsystem and children's interactions with actors within their family units has an impact on their behaviour, it is not easy to raise a child. It is for this reason that the ancient African proverb accentuates that "*it takes a village to raise a child*". This proverb is embedded in the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* which promotes collectivism over individualism. As emphasised throughout this dissertation, a child is a product of their interactions with the actors in their micro and

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mesosystems. This means that children's immediate surroundings shape their development and that families and communities are basic systems wherein children's characters are shaped and strengthened through instilled beliefs, values, and norms (Buthelezi, 2021:6). However, families and communities no longer embrace the culture of bringing up children together as a collective. In the past, it was the responsibility of any elder in the community to discipline a misbehaving child, nowadays some parents do not allow anyone to reprimand their children when they do wrong. It was not common in previous years for a law abiding elder to turn a blind eye when they saw a child partaking in wrongdoing. The current turning of a blind eye and the law abiding elders' inability to reprimand children, in the opinion of the researcher, has led to moral degeneration and, in turn, an increase in bad behaviour among children.

In South Africa, the common law principle of *in loco parentis* previously entitled teachers, as the guardians in the school environment, to discipline learners (Mitchell, Crowson & Shipps, 2011:09). However, in view of new legislation advancing children's rights, it is unclear as to the extent to which teachers can or do enact the *loco parentis* role. (Mitchell et al, 2011:09) *In loco parentis* is Latin for "in place of a parent" meaning that, in the context of a school or the classroom, the teacher fulfils the role of the parent of each learner (Mitchell et al, 2011:09). Mitchel et al (2011:09) explain that the *in loco parentis* principle means that the parents give teachers the consent to discipline their children as well as to ensure their safety while they are in their care. This is another example of a child being raised by a collective. The researcher therefore recommends that the family, school, and community unite and go back to their African roots where raising a child is not only a concern of the parents but a concern of their entire community.

The research makes this recommendation with caution but adds that all stakeholders involved should be guided by the Constitution in relation to children's rights. Most importantly, children are also human and thus basic human rights also apply to them. The researcher wishes to highlight that literature shows that educators sometimes become victims of school violence because they still use punitive disciplinary measures to discipline learners (Mncube & Harber, 2023:16; Graham, 2018:495). As previously

discussed under section 2.5.2, "violence begets violence". Therefore, if an educator applies a violent measure to discipline a learner, it is highly likely that the learner will retaliate with violence. The latter also applies to anyone who has the responsibility to instil discipline in a child. Examples of the punitive disciplinary measures, which are corporal punishment in nature, include hitting with rulers or other objects, flogging, grabbing, and forcing learners to perform physically painful activities. As highlighted throughout this dissertation, in South Africa, corporal punishment has been banned. Therefore anyone (parents included) who is found guilty of administering corporal punishment to children will be prosecuted in a court of law.

The participants in this study revealed that it is difficult for educators to discipline children who are not disciplined at home. Therefore, it is important that relationships be forged between educators and parents or caregivers. The schools need to establish proactive measures to engage parents and guardians in promoting a safe and respectful school environment and instilling discipline in the learners. It is thus recommended for the school to conduct regular parents meetings, workshops, and awareness campaigns to educate parents about the importance of addressing and preventing learner-on-educator violence. The researcher acknowledges that it is difficult for teachers to get parents to attend school meetings, but the schools can employ strategies, such as having meetings over the weekend instead of during the week, so that parents who are employed can also attend. Additionally, parents can also be consulted on suggestions regarding how and when meetings can be held. The CJCP (2012:11) suggests the following strategies for engaging parents:

Share codes of conduct with parents: The school code of conduct as well as classroom rules can be sent home with learners or can be discussed with parents during parent-teacher meetings. Parents should also be encouraged to discuss the classroom rules and school code of conduct with their children and sign it. Refer to the next section for a detailed discussion of the learner code of conduct.

Know your learner: Educators should show interest in individual learners as parents are more likely to listen to the teacher if they feel the educator knows their child.

Meet the parents/caregivers: Educators should arrange parent-teacher meetings. If it is safe to do so, home visits can also be set up when the educator needs support from the parent or caregiver so that, where there are issues, collaborative solutions can be worked on by the learner, teacher, and parent/caregiver.

Share good news with parents/caregivers: It is important for educators not to focus on reporting only bad news to the parents but to also share good news. Educators are encouraged to, when necessary, contact parents to share their child's progress and accomplishments.

Homework: Difficult as it may be for some parents/caregivers, especially those who may not be educated, to help their children with homework, there are many ways of supporting a child with their schoolwork. It is thus important for educators to encourage parents to be involved in their child's schoolwork. As discussed in the findings in section 4.3.2.1, learners whose parents are involved with their schooling are more disciplined and their performance is better than that of learners whose parents are not involved (Mncube & Harber, 2013:102).

Further recommendations relating to the improvement of disciplinary measures in the school context is discussed in the sections that follow.

5.3.2 Recommendations to the DBE: Tshwane West, South and North Districts and the Schools

Based on the findings of this study, as well as the literature, the researcher recommends the following measures to the DBE (i.e., the three districts and the school).

5.3.2.1 A whole-school/ecological approach

As previously explained, a child's behaviour is shaped by his/her interactions with different actors within the mesosystem (i.e., the family, peers, community, school, church, etc.). Therefore, issues relating to misbehaviour need a holistic approach which includes all the actors, within the mesosystem that the child interacts with. It is for this reason that

the DBE has, through the Framework, developed the whole-school or ecological approach to violence prevention. Refer to section 2.5.3 for a discussion of the Framework. The researcher thus recommends that the districts that participated in this research ensure that their schools are implementing the whole-school approach as prescribed by the Framework.

The whole-school approach to violence prevention calls on all the stakeholders involved (i.e., principal, school safety committee, parents, learners, educators, SGB, learner LRCs, members of the community, other members of staff in the school and other school structures such as the District/Provincial-Based Support Teams (DBST/PBST) to play their part in ensuring that the school environment is safe and conducive to learning. Refer to section 2.5.3 for the summary of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders that play an important role in the creation of safe school environments as outlined in the whole-school approach to violence prevention.

Furthermore, the researcher highlights that the districts must ensure that all their schools have a functional SSC in place. Responsibilities of the SSC, as underscored in section 2.5.3, are to develop and ensure implementation of: (i) the relevant school policies; (ii) the school safety plan; (iii) the emergency plan; and (iv) the code of conduct for learners. The Code of Conduct for learners is discussed in more detail in the section that follows. As explained by the whole-school approach, the SSC should also work in partnership with the local police station to develop a school-based crime prevention programme (refer to section 2.5.6).

5.3.2.2 Strengthen disciplinary measures

A review of existing disciplinary policies and procedures of the schools that participated in this research needs to take place to ensure that the measures are robust and effective in addressing violence perpetrated by learners against teachers. Windvoël (2023:140) recommends that schools should begin implementing strict measures such as hearings, suspensions, and expulsions for learners. Additionally, schools should work with other stakeholders to develop and enforce a clear code of conduct that outlines acceptable and

unacceptable behaviours along with their corresponding consequences (Windvoël, 2023:140). It is recommended that the three districts that participated in this study conduct a review of the schools' codes of conduct for learners to ensure that they have incorporated all the important elements contained in the example of a code of conduct recommended by the National DBE. In this example, the levels of misconduct as well as the disciplinary actions for each level of misconduct are explicitly outlined. Refer to section 2.5 for the code of conduct example, also refer to Table 2.5.1(a) and Table 2.5.1(b) for a list of the levels of misconduct as well as the disciplinary actions respectively.

Franklin and Harrington (2019:7) suggest that, to ensure ownership and a sense of responsibility, classroom rules and the school code of conduct should be collectively constructed with learners and their parents or guardians. To emphasise the importance of co-constructing the code of conduct with the learners, Haruyama (2019:np) posits that the focus of positive discipline is for learners to develop self-discipline through their own efforts rather than the efforts of others. Moreover, "[t]he positive discipline approach is most effective where there is communication between parents and educators, and consistency in discipline style between the school and home environments" (CJCP, 2012:11).

After all the code of conducts in the districts have been reviewed and align with the model code of conduct provided by the DBE, individuals in the school community (i.e., learners, teachers, administrative staff, parents, and members of the SGB) must be made aware of it and understand the consequences if a learner contravenes it. The participants in this research revealed that, although their schools have codes of conduct in place, the orientation of parents and learners on the content of the policy document is not done. The researcher recommends that meetings be held between the above-mentioned stakeholders to make them aware of the code of conduct. The SASA of 1996 highlights that, after reading through the codes of conduct, learners and their parents need to sign a commitment form to show that they have read the code of conduct and they agree and will abide by its rules (CJCP, 2012:11). This process ought to be repeated at the

beginning of every school year and when changes are made (CJCP, 2012:11). It is thus recommended that the three districts monitor the schools to ensure that the codes of conduct have been workshopped to the school community and that parents and learners have signed the commitment forms.

5.3.2.3 Schools to collaborate with the police

Level 5 of misconduct includes criminal and serious violations of the school code of conduct or rules but also of civil law and therefore the police need to be involved in such cases (see Table 2.5.1(b) in Chapter 2 for a list of the levels of misconduct as well as the disciplinary actions). It is recommended that stronger collaboration be developed between schools and the police to ensure swift and appropriate responses to incidents involving serious threats, violence, or criminal behaviour. It is further recommended that protocols for reporting such incidents to the police be established and existing protocols be workshopped to the entire school community. Existing protocols, for example, are (i) Protocol on the Prevention of Violence in All Schools and the Promotion of Safe Schools; and (ii) Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and harassment in Schools.

5.3.2.4 Capacity building of educators: Comprehensive training programmes

The researcher recommends that the districts, together with the National DBE, develop comprehensive programmes for teachers that focus on conflict resolution, de-escalation techniques, and effective classroom management strategies. These programmes should also address the recognition and reporting of warning signs of potential violence, as well as strategies for building positive relationships with learners. Moreover, educators need to be trained and empowered on alternative ways of instilling discipline in place of corporal punishment. Finally, it is important for the educators to receive training on all the laws, policies and frameworks that deal with school safety and how to implement them.

5.3.2.5 Strengthen support for teachers

The educators who participated in this study complained that the DBE is not supporting

victims of learner-on-educator violence. It is thus recommended that the DBE put measures in place that prioritise the support and well-being of teachers who are victims of school violence. If these support systems already exist, awareness campaigns need to be facilitated at school level for teachers to receive information on how to access the services.

5.3.3 Recommendations to the SGB: Raise funds to improve security measures

Research shows that schools often face difficulties in affording adequate security measures due to financial constraints (Caluza, 2019:1). Because schools do not receive funds from the DBE for security services (Caluza, 2019:1), it is recommended for the SGBs in the schools within the three districts that participated in this research to come up with ways in which they can raise funds for the purpose of improving security measures. The recommended security measures include the posting of at least two security officials on the school premises who will assist with access control and daily searches of learners (for weapons and alcohol) at the school gates; a closed-circuit television (CCTV) with cameras positioned at critical areas around the school (i.e., playgrounds, toilets, staff rooms and offices).

5.3.4 Recommendations to learners: Adopt a culture of rights and responsibilities

Preventative strategies aimed at reducing acts of violence should be approached through a human rights perspective, emphasising increased awareness, and understanding of all fundamental human rights (Botha & Zwane, 2021:11). In the South African context, learners inherently possess the legitimate right to maximum practicable protection (Botha & Zwane, 2021:11). However, what often goes overlooked is the importance of equally educating learners about exercising responsibility alongside their human rights (Botha & Zwane, 2021:11). All human rights have certain limitations and individual rights should not infringe upon or disregard the rights of others (Makhasane & Khanare, 2018:19). Consequently, the failure to address teacher victimisation, including learner-on-educator violence and any form of cruelty, constitutes a serious violation of human rights (Botha & Zwane, 2021:11). Unfortunately, the rights of teachers in schools are consistently

disregarded, and incidents of learner-on-educator violence persist due to a growing culture of disrespect, where the promotion of human rights seems to be partially distorted, giving the impression that learners have more rights than teachers (Botha & Zwane, 2021:11, also refer to point 4.3.2.4). It is important to educate learners that their rights should not infringe on the rights of their teachers, and that, while it is important to know their rights, they also need to exercise responsibility.

5.3.5 Recommendations for future research

As alluded to at the beginning of this research, very little international and local research has been conducted on the phenomenon of learner-on-educator violence, therefore, the researcher recommends ongoing research and monitoring of learner-on-educator violence to gain a deeper understanding of the trends, underlying causes, and effective intervention strategies. Also, the researcher hopes that this study will serve as a foundation for future research projects and that the gaps and limitations of this study can inspire other researchers who are interested in the phenomenon of learner-on-educator violence.

In the forthcoming section, the study limitations of this research are discussed.

5.4 Study limitations

In research, study limitations refer to inherent weaknesses in the research design that can impact the outcomes and conclusions. By acknowledging these limitations, researchers ensure that readers understand the scope and potential constraints of the study. This transparency is essential for maintaining the integrity of the research process and preventing misinterpretation of the findings. Therefore, researchers have a responsibility to provide a comprehensive and honest assessment of the limitations in their work (Ross & Zaidi, 2019:261).

5.4.1 Participant withdrawal

This study utilised qualitative semi-structured one-on-one interviews as its research

method. However, certain limitations arose during the interview process at the schools. One challenge encountered was that, despite initially agreeing to participate in the interviews or scheduling appointments, a total of nine (9) educators requested to withdraw from the interviews. Of the nine (9) withdrawals, the majority (n=8) were from two schools in Tshwane West and one (1) was from Tshwane South. Of concern is that five (5) of the withdrawals were from one school in Tshwane West as the educators mentioned that they were afraid of the principal as the study was tackling a very sensitive topic. The Tshwane West district schools still had the highest number of participants (n=10) in comparison to Tshwane North (n=7) and Tshwane South (n=6). In addition, the educators who dropped out expressed concerns that their identities would be revealed to others outside the research, potentially leading to negative consequences for their reputation or the school's reputation even after the researcher assured them of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality, as stipulated in the consent form. When they were asked if telephonic or online interviews through ZOOM or TEAMS would help to conceal their identities as they would not be seen with the researcher by other colleagues, they still insisted on withdrawing as they were adamant that it would be known that they participated in the research. It is an ethical requirement for research dealing with human beings to include a statement in the consent form that explains that participants may withdraw at any time from the research without any negative consequences. This statement was read out to each of the nine (9) participants, and they were free to drop out of the study without any repercussions. The withdrawals took place before the researcher commenced with the interviews and thus the data collection process and the data itself were not affected. Additionally, a total of 23 participants from three districts was big enough to conduct a qualitative study since the focus of the research was not to make generalisations from large numbers of participants, but to collect rich and in-depth information based on the lived experiences of educators. As such, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the general population of public secondary schools in South Africa but are only applicable to the context of the specific educators who participated in this study. As explained under the recommendations for future research section (refer point 5.5.3 above), the researcher hopes that the findings of this study can

be used to conduct bigger studies at a national level with more schools.

5.4.2 Non-interference with educators' contact time

One of the conditions provided by the DBE regarding conducting of the research was that, to avoid interfering with contact time, the research may only be conducted after school hours or the Principal in the specific school must be consulted about an appropriate time to carry out the study. As explained previously under section 4.5, to gain access into the individual schools, the researcher first met with the Principals/Vice-Principals, as the gatekeepers and managers of the schools, to request permission to conduct interviews with educators. After the meeting with the school gatekeepers, permission was granted to address the educators during their staff meetings and they agreed that interviews could either take place during lunch breaks, before school or after school, specific research participant's availability (also see section 1.5.3.2). However, it proved difficult to conduct interviews with educators as they spent most of their time in class and they wanted to use their free time (i.e., lunch break) to rest. Some teachers who were being interviewed during the lunch break seemed agitated that their mealtime was being interrupted which is completely understandable. Moreover, interviews that were being conducted in the morning were also an inconvenience as the educators had to leave their homes and families earlier than usual to meet the researcher at the school. After school the teachers were tired after a long day of work and wanted to go home to rest. Even so, the researcher was understanding whenever a participant asked for an appointment to be rescheduled and ensured that she was flexible enough to meet the teacher at a time that was convenient for him/her.

5.5 Conclusion

As discussed at the beginning of this dissertation, even though learner-on-educator incidents are an area of concern, very little research has been conducted on the phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher hopes that this study will contribute to scientific knowledge on the phenomenon and pioneer a way for future researchers who would like to conduct research on the same topic.

This study revealed that learner-on-educator violence, as experienced by educators who participated in the research, comprise verbal aggression, physical abuse, and cyberbullying. The research also shed light on the causes and impacts of learner-on-educator violence, the coping mechanism employed by the educators as well as the availability of support structures for victims. Regarding the causes, it was found that learner-on-educator violence takes place because of an intersection of risk factors such as family background, peer pressure, avoidance of homework, banishing of corporal punishment, substance abuse, gang involvement and disregard of the code of conduct. The study also revealed that learner-on-educator violence has grave consequences for the victim on the psychological, physical, and professional levels.

Even though the educators reported that they supported each other as colleagues, it is concerning that all the participants mentioned that they were not aware of any official structures put together by the DBE to support victims of learner-on-educator violence. Accessible prevention strategies and programmes are necessary to support victims. To further address this issue, the DBE needs to implement training initiatives aimed at equipping teachers with coping skills and knowledge on how to counteract violence. Also, while teachers need to be trained on classroom management and how to use alternative means of instilling discipline to replace corporal punishment, learners need to be taught that their rights should not infringe on their teachers' rights and that rights go together with responsibility. In concluding, it was clear from this study that learner misbehaviour cannot be tackled by the teachers only and therefore, a whole-school approach, where different stakeholders play their part, is highly recommended. Essentially, teachers and parents alone cannot be burdened with the responsibility of instilling discipline in children because "*it takes a village to raise a child*".

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Annexure A: UNISA Ethical Clearance

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA CLAW ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date 20200312

Reference: ST 27 of 2020
Applicant: HE Kganya

Dear HE Kganya

Decision: ETHICS APPROVAL
FROM 01 March 2020
TO 01 March 2023

Researcher: Ms. HUMA EMILY KGANYA

Supervisor: Prof. J Prinsloo

A Criminological Assessment of the Impact of School Violence perpetrated by Learners Against Teachers, in Gauteng South Arica

Qualification: MA Criminal Justice

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa CLAW Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years.

The CLAW Ethics Review Committee reviewed the **low risk application** on 1 March 2020 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was ratified by the committee.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

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2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the CLAW Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No research activities may continue after the expiry date **1 March 2023**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number ST 27 of 2020 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

PROF T BUDHRAM
Chair of CLAW ERC
E-mail: budhrt@unisa .ac.za
Tel: (012) 433-9462

PROF M BASDEO
Executive Dean : CLAW
E-mail: MBasdeo@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-8603

URERC 25.04.17 - Decision template (V2) - Approve

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Annexure B: DBE Permission Letter

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

	8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	05 October 2020
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2021– 30 September 2021 2019/335A
Name of Researcher:	Kganya HE
Address of Researcher:	389 Wonderpark Estate
	Cnr Hendrich & 1st Avenue
	Karen Park,0182
Telephone Number:	012 429 6001/072 239 4606
Email address:	humakganya@gmail.com / kganyhe@unisa.ac.za
Research Topic:	A criminological assessment of the impact of school violence perpetrated by learners against teachers in Gauteng, South Africa
Type of qualification	Masters of Arts in Criminal Justice
Number and type of schools:	9 Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane South, Tshwane North and Tshwane south

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

06/10/2020

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1.   Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
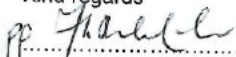7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.
4. The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 06/10/2020

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Making education a societal priority

Annexure C: Informed Consent Letter

Informed Consent Letter
The University of South Africa
College of Law
Department of Criminology and Security Sciences
Researcher: Huma Emily Kganya
Title of Study: **A criminological analysis of learner-on-teacher violence in nine schools in the City of Tshwane, South Africa**

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Huma Emily Kganya and I am doing research in the Department of Criminology and Security Science towards a Masters of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice, at the University of South Africa. You are invited to participate in a study entitled: **A criminological analysis of learner-on-teacher violence in nine schools in the City of Tshwane, South Africa**

a) What is the purpose of this study?

I am conducting this research to understand the phenomenon of learner-on-teacher violence in your school. This study aims to fill the gap in addressing the phenomenon of learner-on-teacher and seeks to conceptualise and understand the problem. The study therefore aims to investigate learner-on-teacher violence based your lived experiences and perceptions as a teacher employed in the (9) sampled schools in the Tshwane West, North and South DBE Districts. Based on the primary aim of the research, the study objectives, related specifically to the three districts, are as follows:

- To explore the nature of learner-on-educator violence;
- To describe the impact learner-on-educator violence has on the victims;
- To explain the reasons for learner-on-educator violence;
- To determine the type of support offered to victims of learner-on-educator violence; and
- Based on the research findings, to recommend possible preventative measures that can be put in place to curb learner-on-educator violence.

b) Why am I being invited to participate?

You are a teacher in one of the nine schools and may have knowledge or experienced of learner-on-teacher violence in your school. The method that was used to obtain your information stemmed from, and was guided by the purposive sampling where research participants are purposively chosen to participate in the study because of their knowledge in a particular phenomenon.

c) What is the nature of my participation in this study?

You will be required to participate in a direct (face to face) interview that will be recorded with your permission. The interview will be conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule, creating informal, flexible atmosphere to do an in-depth exploration of the research themes and other information relating to the research topic. The interview will focus on your professional knowledge and experience. The expected duration of the interview is between 30 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. The guidelines for the interview can be made available to you upon your request.

d) Can I withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. In the event that you wish to withdraw participation, the data from your interview will be destroyed. The researcher will be the only individual who has access to the raw data from the interviews, thereby ensuring that the data will be treated as confidential and your anonymity will be ensured. However, the research supervisor, Dr M.S. Thobane, may for supervisory purposes request access to the data.

e) What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?

Your participation in this study will contribute to the conclusion of this study with the hope of adding valuable contribution to the scientific research community and for the Department of Basic Education and the criminal justice departments to an in-depth understanding the phenomenon of learner-on-teacher violence and come up with preventative strategies, thereof. Information from this study may also be used to create awareness to schools and the public on issues relating to learner-on-teacher violence.

f) Will the information that I convey to the researcher and my identity be kept confidential?

You have the right to anonymity and confidentiality if you participate in this study, unless you wish to waive the right of anonymity by indicating that you wish to be identified in the study. Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one, apart from the researcher, will know about your involvement in this research if you wish to remain anonymous. Your identity will not be mentioned in the study. You will be referred to with the use of a pseudonym/number.

g) Are there any negative consequences for me if I participate in the research project?

Although this may be a sensitive study, there are no physical harmful risks identified in participating in the study. Moreover, the researcher will take all measures to the best of his ability to assure your anonymity and the confidentiality of the information.

h) How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?

The researcher will ensure anonymity and confidentiality by scanning the hard copy of transcribed notes into his laptop and destroy the hard copy through shredding after scanning. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Electronic documents containing your information will be destroyed after 15 years of completing the study as guided by the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

i) Will I receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?

There will be no incentives or payments made for your participation in the study. In addition, you, the participant will not need to incur any financial costs by participating in the study.

k) How will I be informed of the findings/results of the research?

Findings from the study will be available online once the examination process of the dissertation has been completed. You are welcome to contact me, Huma Emily Kganya (kganyhe@unisa.ac.za) for further information in this regard.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact (Dr Mahlogonolo Thobane at kwadims@unisa.ac.za) or the Chair of the UNISA College of Law Research Ethics Committee (Prof Trevor Budhram at budhrt@unisa.ac.za).

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I, _____ (participant's name), confirm that the researcher is asking for my consent to take part in this research study. The researcher has explained to me the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience I can expect if I participate in the study. I have been informed (in writing and orally) and understand the purpose of the study and what will be expected of me.
I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the specific consent agreement.

Participants Name & Surname …………………………………………… (Please print)

Participants signature ……………………………………….Date……………………..

Researchers Name & Surname …………………………………………… (Please print)

Researchers Signature ……………………………………..Date……………………..

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Annexure D: Participant Interview Schedule

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE/GUIDE

DATE: ……………………………………

CONSENT FORM SIGNED

YES	NO

INTERVIEW NUMBER

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

GENDER

Male	Female

Age

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

………

The questions in this section can be answered based either on your personal experience or opinion.

SECTION B: UNDERSTANDING OF LEARNER-ON-EDUCATOR VIOLENCE

1. In your opinion or personal experience, are educators violated by learners in your school?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

2. What are the different ways in which educators are violated by learners in your school? (i.e., types of learner-on-educator violence)

……………………………………………………………………………………………

3. Which type of learner-on-educator violent act have you personally experienced?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

4. What in your opinion are the reasons why learners violate their teachers?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION C: VICTIMISATION INFORMATION

5. Have you or any of colleagues ever been victimised by a learner at your school?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Can you tell me what exactly happened?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

7. What in your opinion are the characteristics that put teachers at risk of being victimised by learners?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION D: IMPACT

8. What impact did the attack(s) have on you or you colleague?

....

SECTION E: COPING STRATEGIES

9. What strategies do you or your colleagues use to cope with learner-on-educator violence?

....

SECTION F: SUPPORT

10. What support did you receive after the incident? Or what support is in place for teachers who are victimised by learners?

....

11. Do you believe that support structures for teachers who have been victimised are adequate?

....

Thank you for participating 😊

Annexure E: Turn-it-In Similarity Report

turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	Huma Emily Kganya
Assignment title:	Revision 1
Submission title:	Dissertation First Draft
File name:	Kganya_Full_Dissertation_final_-_27February2027_-_Turn-It-I...
File size:	755.31K
Page count:	126
Word count:	39,438
Character count:	214,986
Submission date:	27-Feb-2024 05:18PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	2306018038

Dissertation First Draft

Annexure F: Language and Technical Editing Certificate

Barbara Shaw

Editing/proofreading services

18 Balvicar Road, Blairgowrie, 2194

Cell: 072 1233 881

Email: barbarashaw16@gmail.com

Full member of The Professional Editors' Guild

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to inform you that I have done formatting, language editing and reference checking on the thesis

A CRIMINOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF LEARNER-ON-EDUCATOR VIOLENCE IN THREE BASIC EDUCATION DISTRICTS IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE, SOUTH AFRICA

by

KGANYA HUMA EMILY

Barbara Shaw

23/02/2024