

**MANAGING LEARNER AGGRESSION IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
THE EMPANGENI DISTRICT OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the subject

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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JUNE 2012

DECLARATION

I declare that *Managing learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to:

- Almighty God for giving me the strength, courage and inspiration to complete this study.
- Professor J. M. Steyn for her invaluable guidance, support and commitment in terms of evaluating my work critically and providing constructive comments for the refinement of this dissertation.
- Mrs. C. Jansen for the highly professional and clinical editing of my dissertation.
- Dr. G. Dehaloo for being my mentor throughout this study and for his unconditional support and inspiration.
- My wife, Rashina and daughters Taryska and Yaniska for their unwavering love, encouragement, understanding and tolerance.
- The principals of the five secondary schools who allowed their staff and learners to participate in this research.
- The principals, teachers and members of the RCL of each of the five secondary schools for their cooperation and invaluable contributions to this study.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my late parents, **DOLAN and LALIE SINGH**, who always inspired me to pursue my goals and dreams in life through education.

SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to investigate the causes and consequences of learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District of KwaZulu-Natal. The study also sought to establish the management strategies required to manage learner aggression in rural secondary schools. An in-depth literature study was conducted in this regard. A qualitative research design and methodology was adopted to investigate the phenomenon through an interview process with participants from five rural secondary schools. This study found that the causes of learner aggression were rooted in the family, the environment and the school. It was further established that the consequences of learner aggression were so serious that it resulted in victims experiencing intense fear, anxiety, tension, depression and ill-health. Furthermore, the findings of the empirical investigation concurred, to a large extent, with the findings of the literature study. Based on these findings, recommendations were made regarding the management of learner aggression in rural secondary schools.

KEY TERMS

Aggression; Rural secondary schools; Physical aggression; Verbal aggression; Bullying; Causes of aggression; Consequences of aggression; Aggression theories; Disruptive behaviour; Aggression model; Managing aggression.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BAT	Behaviour alteration technique
CBM	Cognitive behaviour modification
CDP	Child Development Project
CD	Conduct disorder
DC	Disciplinary committee
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
EBD	Emotional and behavioural difficulties
GBG	Good behaviour game
KZN	Kwazulu-Natal
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers organisation of South Africa
NATU	National Teachers Union
NCS	National senior certificate
OBE	Outcomes based education
ODD	Oppositional defiant disorder
PA	Physical aggression
PPN	Post-provisioning norm
PTSD	Post traumatic stress disorder
RCL	Representative council of learners
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SANCA	South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
SAPS	South African Police Service
SMT	School management team

SES	Socioeconomic status
SGB	School governing body
SPF	Single-parent families
USA	United States of America
VA	Verbal aggression

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

In chapter one, the researcher introduces the reader to the problem of learner aggression as it manifests itself in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The impact of learner aggression on teachers, parents and learners themselves, as well as the factors that cause learners to display aggressive behaviour, are highlighted. The researcher also attempts to provide a rationale for the management of learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district.

As the principal of a primary school, the researcher became aware of the magnitude of the problem of learner aggression when colleagues from local secondary schools complained about the problems that former primary school learners were presenting at their schools. It became apparent to the researcher that previously disciplined learners at primary school level were now displaying behavioural problems that included stealing, bullying, vandalism and in some cases, were committing violent acts, which resulted in frequent brushes with the law. The researcher's concern with this radical shift in the behaviour of learners, who were generally well nurtured in the primary school, prompted this study so that a greater insight can be obtained into the problem with the view to finding possible solutions to manage the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The Bill of Rights (Chapter 2:24a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (2009:19) guarantees a safe environment for all citizens. Schools are integral community-based institutions that ought to be safe havens for all stakeholders in order for teaching and learning to take place in an uninterrupted manner. However, in practice this is not the case. Schools have become hotspots for crime and violence, often because of learner aggression, which, in turn, has a profound impact on teachers, parents and learners in particular. The learners' experiences of aggression in secondary

schools may result in them suffering from poor health. The timing of the aggression is often unexpected and unpredictable, resulting in increased stress (Rigby 2002:123).

Sections 4(1) and (2), the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996, clearly outlines (ELRC 2003:B65) that:

- All public schools are (hereby) declared drug free zones and dangerous object free zones; and
- No person may cause any form of violence or disturbance, which can impact negatively on any public school activities.

However, despite these statutory pronouncements, school violence continues unabated primarily because of learner aggression.

A study conducted by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) in 2008 has found that South African schools are the most dangerous in the world. In this study, South African school pupils were asked whether they felt safe at school and whether they had experienced incidences of stealing, bullying and injury to themselves and others in their class within a four-week study period. Their responses were startling. Only 23% of South African pupils reported that they felt safe at school. On average, South African schools rank more than twenty percentage points below the worldwide average of 47% of pupils declaring that they experience a high degree of safety in the classroom (Blaser 2008:35).

The rural Empangeni district in which this research was carried out is no different. High incidences of learner aggression have provided the spark for many instances of learner violence in schools. For years, both teachers and learners have been confronted by incidents of violent behaviour in their schools. In this regard, the local print media have reported on numerous incidents of abuse, crimes and violence stemming from learner aggression in schools. In addition, the widespread use of drugs and alcohol on the school premises during school hours and the use of weapons by learners to force teachers and innocent learners into submission, is a serious cause for concern.

The growing use of drugs, especially the notorious “tik” (crystal methamphetamine) in the Western Cape, the infamous “sugars” (narcotic drug mix containing heroin and cocaine) in Chatsworth, Durban and “dagga” (marijuana) in the Empangeni region, has been identified as a significant contributing factor to the growing phenomenon of learner aggression in schools. (Carter 2006:27). It needs to be pointed out that the use of drugs by learners even on the school grounds during school hours and the involvement of learners in the drug trade are widespread in some regions (Carter 2006:27). According to Naidoo (2008:1), the use of “sugars,” heroin and rock cocaine is rapidly spreading to all township schools in KZN. In fact, dealers are now opening branches in rural areas as well because these drugs are highly addictive and in great demand. This has resulted in a drastic increase in drug-related crimes with learners engaging in stealing, prostitution, shoplifting and robbery to pay for their habits (Naidoo 2008:1). According to Dorasamy (2010:1), more than 50% of shoplifters were driven by their addiction to “sugars” and marijuana, among other hardcore drugs.

As a rule, firearms are prohibited in public places, and schools are no exception (South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996:B65). Inevitably, the use of guns increases the chances that violent conflict will result in injury or even death. However, guns are being brought to school without the knowledge of parents, caregivers or educators. In the recent past, several reports of gun and weapon-related violence in schools have been reported. In Umlazi in Durban KZN, a school learner went on a shooting spree. A few days prior to that incident, a female educator was held up at gunpoint and robbed of a mere R20 (Naidoo 2008b:1).

According to the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC 2003:H6), learners who bring guns and dangerous weapons to school hold a superior status among their peers. In fact, learners often idolise other learners with guns. A key component to building safe schools is to ensure that schools become gun-free zones. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 clearly stipulates in Schedule 4(2) that no person may:

- Allow any dangerous object on public school premises;
- Carry any dangerous object onto public school premises.

Even though this is legislated through the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 in Schedule 4(2), inadequate security measures at schools result in weapons being smuggled into schools anyway, as this study purports to prove.

The researcher is of the firm belief that learner aggression affects all stakeholders at school, namely, the teachers, the parents and the learners themselves. An act of aggression on a teacher by a learner can be traumatic for the teacher concerned as civil society expects a learner to be respectful towards teachers. Continued acts of aggression can lead to heightened tension, anxiety and sometimes even depression, which can lead to the deterioration of teachers' health, causing extended absenteeism and even resignations. Teachers have expressed feelings of hopelessness and often feel exasperated by a sense of not being heard or supported by the relevant authorities. Furthermore, learner aggression also affects the personal lives of teachers, with some resorting to alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse, as mechanisms for coping with the situation (Dibetle 2008:7).

Not surprisingly, Balt (2008:8) asserts that aggression and violence by learners at school contribute to the low morale among staff. In effect, the current rate of attrition, caused by a variety of reasons, including disciplinary problems and violence in schools, results in stress and the low morale of staff. Consequently, there is a real possibility of a looming shortage of teachers across various subjects and phases. These shortages will exact a heavy toll on the government's plan to improve education. Undoubtedly, the characterisation of the school as a dangerous and unsafe environment is unlikely to assist in recruiting new members to the profession (Balt 2008:10).

According to Bemak and Keys (2000:18), learners who were previously abused, developed reactive aggressive patterns in response to their experiences and this has also been observed to be true in the Empangeni district where, in some instances, abused learners themselves became the perpetrators of violence. Whenever they are dissatisfied or provoked, they usually respond with aggressive verbal and physical responses. Bemak and Keys (2000:17) find that aggressive learners see nothing wrong in pinching a classmate if he or she refuses to do as instructed. Moreover, since they

believe that they are never wrong or at fault, they also resort to aggressive verbal behaviour (Bemak & Keys 2000:18).

Discussions with fellow colleagues reveal that victims of aggression present the following learning problems: a limited concentration span, serious numeracy and literacy problems, an inability to handle class assignments, poor performance in the classroom, tests and examinations and high absentee and dropout rates. Through the consistent experience of failure because of a lack of concentration, aggressive learners become envious of their peers. It is important to note that aggressive learners' poor concentration emanates from their concern over their own safety (Bemak & Keys 2000:8).

Another manifestation of aggression in the Empangeni district is sexual aggression, which is expressed in sexualised verbal bantering and the sexual abuse of victims (Carter 2002:30; Lock 2002:80). Frequently boys use sexual innuendos or bantering to embarrass girls and to humiliate them. Girls promptly retaliate by calling them names such as "gay," "poof" or "dick-head." This counter-attack by the girls is aimed at lashing out at the boys. According to Carter (2002:30) and Lock (2002:80), such behaviour and counter-behaviour is not abnormal. Furthermore, boys' sexual aggression may manifest itself through physical harassment of girls at school. This can be observed when boys touch girls inappropriately or attack them (Duncan 1999:56). Boys can also manifest sexual aggression by writing pornographic graffiti on the school property and public places such as on walls and public toilets (Duncan 1999:153).

Anecdotal evidence reveals that the humiliation and embarrassment experienced by parents whose children are aggressors, can lead to depression, especially when they cannot discipline their children whose behaviour stems directly from substance abuse. Furthermore, it is the belief of this researcher that parents experience further humiliation from teachers, the school governing body (SGB) disciplinary committees as well as from school management teams who put pressure on the parents to correct their children's aggressive behaviour. Clearly, learner aggression can have a profound effect on all the stakeholders of the school.

Environmental causes also contribute to aggressive behaviour among the youth. Poverty, which is rife in rural communities due to unemployment, may cause people to seek illicit ways to survive, such as prostitution and theft (Bauer & Shea 1999:129). In addition, peer pressure can also result in learners adopting an aggressive approach to situations. To be accepted by a group, new members are expected to adhere to certain norms and conform to certain types of behaviour. Carter (2002:30) points out that groups are often gregarious in nature. If aggression is considered an acceptable norm among members, it is expected of everyone to conform to this culture.

Learner aggression can also develop because of the school itself. According to Carter (2002:28), teachers who terrorise learners into submission for any reason whatsoever, may succeed in inciting intolerance and fear. Thus, boys will emulate the dictatorial model of the male teachers and girls will emulate the verbal aggression of their female teachers. Most aggressive learners lack adult care and when teachers behave in a rigid manner in class and do not show compassion towards these learners who may be experiencing problems, they actually intensify the learners' aggressiveness. Many teachers appear to derive pleasure and satisfaction from exercising power and thus abuse it by demanding unquestioning obedience from the learners, which hardens learners' attitudes towards authority (Carter 2002:28). The inflexible implementation of academic rules, without taking into account the individual needs of learners, coupled with the dependence on punishment to correct any unacceptable behaviour, eventually exacerbates their aggressiveness.

According to Olweus (2000:11), bullying is an aggressive act, which often occurs without provocation and manifests itself as a serious problem in rural schools. Bullying may be carried out verbally, for instance, by threatening, taunting, teasing and name-calling and also through physical actions such as hitting, pushing, kicking or pinching (Olweus 2005:9). Children who are victims of bullying are likely to be depressed, lack self-esteem, dislike school and in extreme cases, display suicidal tendencies (Keeton 2010:25). One out of every ten teenage deaths in South Africa is because of suicide (Keeton 2010:25). The effects of being a bully are also severe. Bullies are more likely to be arrested for

committing criminal offences as adolescents and are more likely to be abusive towards their spouses in later life (ELRC 2003:H11).

Another serious problem affecting young teenagers today is cyber bullying (Comins 2010:5). Cyber bullying occurs when bullies use the electronic media to tease, humiliate, harass, embarrass and threaten people. Research has shown that about 62% of pupils surveyed at two South African high schools reported that they knew children who had been cyber bullied at school (Comins 2010:5). According to Keeton (2010:25), cyber bullying or electronic aggression involves aggressive behaviour communicated over a computer or cell phone. Notably, cyber victims reported higher levels of depression than cyber bullies or bully victims. Cyber bullying has played a significant role in, triggering anxiety disorders, depression and suicide attempts in secondary school learners (Keeton 2010:24).

Significantly, studies have found that learner aggression also stems from domestic violence at home. Domestic violence affects children emotionally, socially, physically and behaviourally (Szyndrowski 2005:10). Furthermore, physical aggression within the marriage has been repeatedly associated with greater externalising and internalising of child behaviour problems. Hill (2002:152) states that through parental aggression, children may learn that aggression is a normative part of family relationships and that it is an effective way of controlling others and that aggression is sanctioned rather than condemned.

Adolescents who have experienced family violence, either as victims or witnesses, are likely to feel negative about their parents and end up being aggressive (Spillane-Grieco 2000:427). Inadequate child rearing practices, disruptions in the family, antisocial parents, child abuse and aggressive interactions between siblings are regarded as the risk factors associated with adolescent aggression in secondary schools (McAdams & Lambie 2003:1). These problems may lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and an array of psychological problems, which build up to aggression (Grych & Jouriles 2000:84).

The researcher is of the opinion that the above factors militate against the provision of a safe school environment for learners and teachers in which effective teaching and learning can take place. In fact, the entire school community is affected negatively by this challenge because the school violence stemming from learner aggression, can result in the ethos of the school, as well as its functionality and progress becoming compromised. Irrespective of its origin, nature or progression, the violence emanating from learner aggression has catastrophic and dire consequences for teachers, parents and learners in particular. Unless effective solutions are found and implemented timeously, learner aggression has the potential to create turmoil in schools and ultimately render schools ungovernable.

It is against this background that the researcher has found it imperative to investigate the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools. The researcher also believes that a qualitative research study should be conducted with a view to providing solutions on managing learner aggression in secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal. For the purpose of this study, five schools were selected from the Empangeni district, which were located in the Ensingweni ward.

1.3 PROBLEM FORMULATION

The Empangeni district of KZN comprises mainly rural schools. Many of these schools have experienced criminal activity arising from learner aggression to the extent that teaching and learning have been negatively affected. Furthermore, both teachers and learners have become targets of intimidation by the aggressive youth. Consequently, the teacher morale has been lowered, learners suffer and the school's overall performance drops (Balt 2008:8).

The impact of learner aggression on the culture of teaching and learning is considerable. In the researcher's interaction with the principals and teachers of the local secondary schools concerned, it has become abundantly clear that they are too scared to teach in these schools. Because of this fear, many suffer from stress and depression and absent themselves from school for long periods. In addition, teachers from rural and township schools are resigning from their jobs because they are victims of psychological and

physical violence perpetrated by the learners (Dibetle 2008:7). With the declining morale, teachers no longer value their profession and see their jobs merely as a means to an end. The dedication and passion they once had for the profession is no longer there, as they are now forced to feel more concerned about their safety than about their core responsibilities in the classroom.

It needs to be pointed out that the learners experience these problems firsthand as they are directly involved in the aggressive encounters in the schools. They are bullied, threatened, beaten or even sexually assaulted. In fact, many girls from the local schools have become victims of sexual violence inflicted on them by boys and are too scared to report such incidents for fear of retaliation by the aggressors. Accordingly, the consequences of aggressive acts have a devastating effect on the learners' physical and mental health. Because of their negative experiences with regard to violence and aggression, they display feelings of helplessness, humiliation, disappointment, a poor self-concept, low self-esteem and depression. Withdrawal from activities, refusal to go to school, defiance, crying, disturbed sleep and stomach pains or headaches are among the symptoms of stress in children (Keeton 2010:24). In effect, the experiences of violence in secondary schools can undoubtedly lead to mental health problems (Rigby 2002:123).

Learner aggression will continue to pose a problem in our schools until we seek to find answers to the many questions that arise, look for possible solutions and find a way to prevent aggressive episodes from taking place in our schools. Because of this, the overarching question the researcher attempts to answer is:

“How do principals, school management teams and teachers manage learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal?”

In order to investigate and find answers to this question, it is imperative to state the aims and objectives of the research clearly.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The overarching aim of this study is to identify the root causes of learner aggression, its effect on educators and learners and to identify strategies that can help to manage learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KZN. In order to achieve the over-arching aim, several specific objectives are pursued in this study.

These specific objectives are:

- To determine the underlying causes of learner aggression in rural secondary schools.
- To determine the consequences of learner aggression in rural secondary schools.
- To formulate possible recommendations/ management strategies to address the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools.
- To establish the levels of involvement of the relevant stakeholders in education in addressing the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework not only positions research in the discipline in which the researcher is working, but also provides an orientation to the study (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004:25). In this study, various theories and models related to learner aggression in secondary schools are used to verify the findings of the empirical investigation.

In this regard, the researcher incorporated the *social learning theory* advocated by Albert Bandura (Renfrew 1997:152). This theory was developed from experiments demonstrating how children can learn aggressive behaviour by observing others. Bandura further stresses how a modelling process is responsible for learning behaviour, including aggression (Feist & Feist 2009:483). The continued exposure to acts of violence is likely to induce a process of learning and imitation, culminating in the acceptance of violent conduct as a dominant and normal mode of conflict resolution (Govender & Killian 2001:1).

The *social learning theory* emphasises the role of cognition in affecting behaviour as the person evaluates situational variables such as the intent of another person's acts,

his/her own capabilities for carrying out an aggressive act and the probable outcome of the act (Renfrew 1997:152). Bandura also stresses external environmental cues as elicitors of aggression. He suggests that aggressive behaviour is learned and maintained through environmental experiences. From this, it follows that the social learning approach to understanding aggression underlines how the observation of aggression leads to its acquisition, maintenance and expression (Renfrew 1997:152).

Since depression is one of the main consequences of aggression, *Bandura's social cognitive theory* is also considered. This theory contends that depressed people not only judge themselves harshly, but are also inclined to treat themselves badly for their shortcomings resulting in chronic misery, feelings of worthlessness, a lack of purpose and pervasive depression (Feist & Feist 2009:499). The theory suggests that psychological stress depends on the cognitions related to the person and the environment (Lazarus 1990 in Pervin & Cervone 2010:366). Strong emotions, such as when people experience intense fear, acute anxiety or high levels of stress, ordinarily lower performance (Feist & Feist 2009:491). *Beck's cognitive theory of anger* confirms that strong emotions result in negative phenomenological experiences that exist in a continuum in which the frequency, intensity and duration of the experience often lead to impairment of the cognitive processes (Olatunji & Lohr 2004:1).

The social learning approach complements the respondent and operant mechanisms of the *behavioural theory*, which emphasises the learning of aggression within a social context (Moeller 2001:29). These theorists argue that aggression can be learned, maintained as well as unlearned through the processes of classical and operant conditioning and through rewards and punishment. Thus, it has been confirmed that children can learn to be aggressive through positive and negative reinforcement (Moeller 2001:29). In this regard, the researcher believes that the process of reward and punishment can be viewed as a successful treatment technique in controlling aggression.

Buss's theory of aggression is also considered in this study as it highlights the two common forms of aggression in schools, namely, vicious verbal and physical attacks (Bandura 1973:149). According to this theory, verbal aggression is viewed as a vocal

response that delivers negative stimuli in the form of rejection, threats and insults, whereas physical aggression is considered aggressive when one individual delivers physically negative stimuli to another (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:98). Buss emphasises the use of instrumental aggression, which includes direct aggression that occurs in the presence of and is aimed at the victim and active aggression, which requires an instrumental response that delivers negative stimulation to the victim. The theory relates aggressive behaviour to antecedent experiences specifically related to past frustrations (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:101-103).

Since frustration plays a significant role in learners becoming aggressive, *Dollard's frustration-aggression theory* is also applied. The theory states that learners are motivated to behave aggressively by a frustration-produced drive; when learners are frustrated by their personal negative circumstances (deprived of valued rewards and blocked from reaching desired goals), aggressive energy is created and that energy activates dominant aggressive responses (Bandura 1973:31-33). This is in line with *Berkowitz's reactive aggressive theory* where he emphasises that aversive stimuli are responsible for negative effects (Berkowitz 1993:44). The instigation to aggression causes aggressive behaviour (Berkowitz 1993:45).

Carl Rogers's person-centred theory is also considered as it postulates that individuals behave in ways that are congruent with their concepts of self (Pervin & Cervone 2010:177). People with low self-esteem seem resigned to maintaining a poor self-image and the experience of negative emotions. Ancer (2009:7) agrees with the theory by stating that victims of aggression tend to have low self-esteem, are anxious, fearful and passive and struggle to assert themselves. This is also in keeping with *Kelly's construct theory* that states that fear occurs when a new construct is about to enter a person's construct system and as a result of the person's inability to manage threatening events, the person experiences great distress (Pervin & Cervone 2010:547).

According to Shaffer and Kipp (2010:433), elevated levels of stress are major contributors to the negative effect of aggression on adolescents who become seriously depressed, are constantly "down" and as a result may become suicidal. In this regard, *Durkheim's theory of suicide* was used to explain why learners commit suicide. The

theory views suicide as a phenomenon that arises from societal pressures and influences (Holmes & Holmes 2005:27). Durkheim has pointed out that social forces increase a person's probability of committing suicide (Holmes & Holmes 2005: 27).

Apart from these theories, various models of disruptive behaviour have been explored to understand the problem of learner aggression better and to provide possible management strategies to reduce the problem in rural secondary schools. According to the *biopsychosocial model*, research reveals a moderate degree of heritability for delinquency, disruptive and antisocial behaviour from childhood to adulthood (Dodge & Pettit 2003:4). The *medical model* proposes that disruptive behaviour is the result of maladjustment in children who need to be referred to child guidance clinics for therapy (Jones 2003:147). The *conceptual model of ADHD* describes the clinical efficacy of behavioural interventions as a primary, complementary or alternative treatment of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Rapport, Chung, Shore & Isaacs 2001:48). Furthermore, the *educational model* states that emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) are the domain of teachers who can make profitable use of systemic insights and particular intervention techniques to modify the behaviour of disruptive learners (Jones 2003:154). The *teaching pyramid model* concurs with the educational model in that it proposes a three-tiered model of classroom strategies for promoting the social-emotional development of all children, particularly children with challenging behaviour (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph & Strain 2003:48).

However, the model that requires in-depth investigation is the *action research model of consultation and collaboration* since it involves all stakeholders of the school system in the child's rehabilitation. This model posits that behavioural consultation and collaboration among all stakeholders of the school system (administrators, teachers, parents, school staff, human service professionals, mental health consultants, school psychologists and other community stakeholders) are necessary processes in the endeavour to help children with disordered conduct (Conwill 2003:239).

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:9), research is the systematic process of collecting and logically analysing information (data) for some purpose and research methods are the ways in which one collects and analyses data.

For the purpose of this study, the research method entailed:

- A literature study of all available and relevant literature.
- An empirical investigation: A qualitative method of enquiry using observations, interviews and focus group interviews to gather the required data.

1.6.1 The literature study

A literature study was conducted in order to provide insight into what theorists in general, and experts in particular, have already researched and documented with regard to the causes, manifestations and control of learner aggression in rural secondary schools. Books, journal articles, media reports, papers presented at conferences and internet data from worldwide websites form the basis of the theoretical foundation. Thereafter, an empirical investigation was conducted to collect data from learners, teachers and principals at five rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal.

1.6.2 Empirical investigation

In conducting the empirical investigation, a qualitative research design was used where the researcher gathered data from face-to-face interviews with learners, teachers and principals in their settings, all of whom came from the five rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:315). The purpose of adopting this approach was to ascertain, first hand, the learners' responses to acts of aggression inflicted upon them by aggressors, the teachers' responses to acts of aggression by learners and the principals' perspectives and management strategies used to contain incidents of learner aggression in their schools.

The researcher used the qualitative research approach for the express purpose of minimising threats to the reliability of the data collected since qualitative research is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspective (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:315). The researcher further employed inductive logic to report on the findings of observations to form a descriptive narrative and to construct concepts from that narrative. By applying inductive reasoning, the researcher attempted to reach a conclusion by observing particular cases and generalising from the cases to the whole class of similar cases.

Since qualitative research is a naturalistic type of inquiry, the researcher operated in a natural setting, maintained an openness about what was to be observed or collected and captured participants' perceptions as they occurred naturally (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:232).

This study was both of a qualitative and phenomenological nature. The study was qualitative as semi-structured interviews were held in five secondary schools with principals, teachers and learners. In addition, the research was phenomenological in nature because the researcher went directly to the phenomenon itself to make sense of the participants' perspectives, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, ideals and actions in natural situations (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:336). It could also be considered hermeneutical (understanding and interpreting the experiences of the participants), naturalistic (giving a true reflection of the participants' situation) and constructivist (with the emphasis on the participant constructing the conceptualisations) (Babbie & Mouton 2007:30&293). Participants formed constructions to make sense of their world and reorganised these constructions as viewpoints, perceptions and belief systems. The participant's perceptions are what they consider real and what directs their actions, thoughts and feelings (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:315).

1.6.3 Sampling, site selection and selection of participants

The researcher used a purposeful sampling technique because it involved "selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth" (Patton 2002, in McMillan & Schumacher 2006:319). Samples were drawn from five rural secondary schools (the sites) in the

Empangeni district where the problem of learner aggression has manifested itself to a large extent. The participants consisted of eight learners from the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) (for the focus group), eight teachers (for the focus group) and the principal (for individual interviews) from each of the five rural secondary schools. Prior arrangements with the principal of each school were made and permission sought from learners, teachers and parents before the sites were visited and the interviews conducted.

1.6.4 Data collection methods

Data collection and analysis are interactive and occur in overlapping cycles (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:336). The researcher used interactive data collection techniques such as interviews, observations and focus group interviews to gather information-rich data (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:236). In order to capture the information from the interviews authentically, oral histories were conducted using a tape recorder. This method complemented the interviewer note taking in that it recorded the entire conversation, which was played back during the data analysis process (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:237).

1.6.4.1 Interviews

According to Berg (2004:75), interviewing may be defined simply as a conversation with the purpose of gathering information to help with the understanding of a phenomenon. In this study, interviews were conducted with learners, teachers and principals from five secondary schools to understand their perspectives regarding the negative and destructive impact of learner aggression on their lives. Accordingly, qualitative interviewing allowed the researcher to enter into the inner worlds of the participants in order to gain an understanding of their perspectives (Johnson & Christensen 2008:207). The researcher established a good rapport with the participants, which won their trust. In addition, the researcher attempted to be sincere, patient and non-confrontational, maintained frequent eye contact and adopted a low-key approach during the full duration of the interview process.

For this phase of the study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews (Creswell 2002:204-205). The questions were compiled beforehand, seven questions for the

principals (for the individual interviews), six questions for the teachers (for the focus group interviews) and five questions for the learners (for the focus group interviews). Subsequently, the interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed. Direct quotations from the data illustrate participants' meanings and thus ensure validity (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:325).

1.6.4.2 Observations

Observations are an integral part of both participant observations and in-depth interviewing (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:359). The critical aspect of observations is watching, with the researcher taking in as much as possible without influencing the participants in any way. The researcher also recorded the non-verbal body language and facial expressions of participants to help interpret the data accurately (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:359).

1.6.4.3 Focus group interviews

This variation of ethnographic interviews is used as a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of the effects of learner aggression on both teachers and learners who are victims of aggression (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:360). The researcher achieved this by interviewing a group of eight teachers and a group of eight learners in each of the five schools. By creating a social environment in which group members were stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each other, the researcher increased the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than is possible with one-on-one interviewing (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:432). The researcher used this technique to increase not only the validity of the findings (interviews and observations) but also the credibility of the entire study.

1.6.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive, systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon, which in this case is learner aggression (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:364). The researcher used a process of coding to reduce data from the large quantities of

descriptive information gleaned from interviews (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:238). In order to make sense of the large volume of information gathered, the researcher organised the collected data into categories and sub-categories and identified patterns among the categories.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:364), most categories and patterns will emerge from the data, rather than be imposed on the data prior to data collection. The researcher ensured that the technique of comparing and contrasting was used in practically all intellectual tasks during analysis (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:264).

1.6.6 Ethical considerations

As this research focusses primarily on human beings (learners, teachers and principals), the researcher is ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the participants since the study involves issues of physical and mental discomfort, harm and danger (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:16). The researcher gained the trust and co-operation of all participants in the study and gave an undertaking that the information collected would be confidential. The participants were told from the outset that their participation was voluntary and that interviews would not be conducted without consent from them or their parents and without prior arrangements with the principal of the school. The researcher ensured that a sense of caring and fairness and personal morality prevailed at all times (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:335).

In conducting this research, the researcher ensured the privacy, respected the confidentiality of the data, ensured that the participants were not harmed in any way and respected the participants' right to anonymity (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:438). In order to ensure anonymity, the researcher ensured that the settings and participants were not identifiable in print and all the names and places were coded (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:334).

1.7 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The following concepts are defined for the purpose of this study:

1.7.1 Learner

Mothatha, Lemmer, Mda and Pretorius (2000:94) define a learner as any person, ranging from early childhood to the adult education phases, who is involved in any kind of formal or non-formal education and training activity, any person who receives or is obliged to receive education.

1.7.2 Secondary school learner

Sayer (1984:1) defines a secondary school learner as a post-primary learner, a child who exudes uncertainty about his/her self-concept, a child aged between 13 and 18 years and who is physically mature, sexually reproductive and cognitively fully developed, as he/she can reason rationally.

1.7.3 Aggression

According to Dodge, Coie and Lynam (in Shaffer & Kipp 2010:565), aggression is any form of behaviour designed to harm or injure a living being who, in turn, is motivated to avoid such treatment.

1.7.4 Aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour is behaviour directed towards causing harm to others (Fraczek & Zumkley (1992:4). Aggressive behaviour has multiple goals that need to be achieved. Underwood (2003:31) concludes that aggressive behaviour is more heated, angry or impulsive, while other types of behaviour are cooler, planned, calmer and more deliberate.

1.7.5 Bullying

Neser, Ovens, Van der Merwe, Morodi, Ladikos and Prinsloo (2004:28) describe bullying as “intentional, repeated hurtful acts, words or other behaviour, such as name-calling, threatening or shunning, committed by a child or children against another child or children.”

1.7.6 Management

The Encarta Concise English Dictionary (2001:875) defines management as “the organizing and controlling of the affairs of an organization or business.” For the purpose of this study, the principal, management team and teachers will be responsible for the control of learner aggression in schools.

1.8 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter one focusses on the introduction to and the background of the investigation with regard to learner aggression in rural secondary schools, the problem statement, the aims of the investigation, the theoretical framework of the study, research design, the value of the research and the explanation of concepts.

Chapter two provides an in-depth literature study on the causes of learner aggression and its consequences for learners in rural secondary schools.

Chapter three contains an in-depth literature study on managing disruptive behaviour in schools with a specific focus on the various models of disruptive behaviour.

Chapter four provides an explanation on the research methodology and design used to conduct the investigation. A qualitative research approach was used in this study.

Chapter five consists of the research findings and provides a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the research results.

Chapter six focusses on the summary, conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study.

1.9 SUMMARY

Chapter 1 orientated the reader to the problems faced in rural secondary schools with regard to learner aggression and learner violence. The South African school landscape has been beset with acts of violence emanating from learner aggression, in particular after the nation realised its democracy post-1994, when schools were permitted to enrol learners from varying backgrounds. Inter-racial violence due to racial bigotry,

stereotyping, cultural misunderstanding, coupled with socio-economic deprivation, poverty, the onslaught of HIV and AIDs, sibling parenting, drug and substance abuse have all contributed significantly to the problem of aggression in secondary schools.

Aggression in schools has indeed been a challenge to all stakeholders in the educational landscape. When acts of aggression and violence are committed within the schools' confines, all the role players are affected in one way or another. These include learners fearing for their safety, parents fearful that their children will fall prey to teenage predators, teachers afraid of doing their duty, cognisant of the teenage temperament and the community that fears that aggressive acts might spill over into the neighbourhood. In fact, the entire school is affected in terms of its ethos, vision, mission, goals and aspirations and confusion and uncertainty take hold when school violence prevails.

Strong committed leadership involving all the stakeholders in education ranging from the representative councils of learners (RCL), teacher unions, parent and governing body associations, non-governmental organisations, welfare bodies and departmental officials is needed. These stakeholders need to work in unison, regularly and with commitment if the scourge of learner aggression in schools is to be confronted and solutions found for its effective management and control. Only then will our schools be in a position to deliver quality education as mandated by the South African Constitution and thereby create a better society for all its citizens, particularly our children.

Chapter two will present an in-depth literature study on the causes of learner aggression and its consequences for teachers, parents and learners in rural secondary schools.

CHAPTER 2

THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF LEARNER AGGRESSION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The frequent occurrence of highly aggressive and often violent behaviour displayed by learners in secondary schools of late has had a devastating effect on the school system and has become a cause for great concern among all stakeholders connected with the South African school system (Bester & Du Plessis 2010:204). The violent acts perpetrated by aggressive youth impact negatively on the ethos of the school, compromise the safety of learners and teachers and in turn, affects teaching and learning adversely in the classroom (Naran 2006:8). The researcher believes that in order to address this problem with a view to providing possible solutions, it becomes necessary to investigate the root causes of learner aggression and highlight the drastic consequences this negative behaviour can have on the learners, teachers, parents and the school community at large.

2.2 CAUSES OF LEARNER AGGRESSION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

According to Bemak and Keys (2000: 15), various factors play a critical role in causing aggression in children. These factors include family factors, school factors, environmental factors and biological factors. Understanding the role of biology in aggressive behaviour is pivotal in attempting to reduce or inhibit aggressive behaviour (Nelson 2005:134).

2.2.1 Biological factors

Aggression develops before birth, during childhood and continues into adulthood (Venter, Poggenpoel & Myburgh 2005:1). Biological factors contributing to aggression include genetics, hormonal factors, neuro-anatomical factors such as neurotransmission and neuro-logical disturbances.

2.2.1.1 Genetics

Numerous studies conducted in the first half of the 20th century provided the first supporting data on the relationship between genetics and aggressive behaviour (Siegel 2005:10). Recent studies suggest that aggression in children may indeed be heritable (DiLalla 2002:593). During prenatal development, the mother's nutritional level, whether she smokes, consumes alcohol, takes drugs, has any diseases or has undergone exposure to radiation - are all critical and determining factors. Importantly, they contribute to how the Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) instructions are carried out and this plays a crucial role in the development of the brain and the central nervous system (Moeller 2001:730). Prenatal problems in the development of these structures can lead to psychological problems after birth and any genetic dysfunction may cause an increase in aggression as the child develops into adolescence and adulthood.

When the child is born, the newborn's phenotype (the observable physical and behavioural characteristics) is a result of the child's genetic endowment in conjunction with the prenatal environment to which the developing organism has been exposed (Moeller 2001:73). Children having a certain genetic disposition may be more sensitive to certain environmental stimuli and may therefore be more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour (DiLalla, Elam & Smolen 2009:451). This means that attributes that have a strong genetic component are often modified in important ways by environmental influences (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:99).

Although genetics might predispose children towards aggressive behaviour, it is likely that neurological abnormalities (diseases and disorders affecting the nervous system) may also produce overt behavioural aggression (Moeller 2001:81).

2.2.1.2 Neurology

(a) Neurological abnormalities

Research findings indicate that neurological abnormalities such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as well as localised dysfunction of the brain may lead to aggression (Gosalakkal 2003:9). Antisocial behaviour in general and aggressive

behaviour in particular, originates in the limbic system and the frontal cortex. Cortical damage or dysfunction reduces the ability of the cortex to inhibit these impulses, thus allowing them to be expressed in overt aggressive and angry behaviour (Moeller 2001:82).

Children who experience inefficient transmission of neurological impulses (that affect the entire brain system) may suffer from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Mabitla 2006: 16). According to Shaffer and Kipp (2010: 312), ADHD is an attentional disorder involving distractibility, hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour that often leads to academic difficulties, poor self-esteem and social or emotional problems. Attention-disordered adolescents are likely to struggle both socially and academically and they frequently drop out of high school or impulsively commit reckless, delinquent acts without thinking about the consequences (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:312).

In order to understand how neurological abnormalities occur, it becomes imperative to explore the workings of neurotransmitters, “a chemical that carries messages between different nerve cells to trigger or prevent an impulse in the receiving cell” (Encarta Concise Dictionary 2001:974).

(b) Neurotransmitters

Since behaviour is mediated by the brain and brain activity involves biochemical processes, researchers have sought to determine the relationship between certain types of neurochemicals and children’s aggressive and anti-social behaviour (Moeller 2001: 83). The two neurotransmitters found in the limbic system and are directly associated with children’s aggression are serotonin and norepinephrine. Serotonin is widely distributed in the central nervous system and there is some indication to suggest that serotonin may inhibit aggression (Gosalakkal 2003:11). It follows therefore that the serotonin levels among antisocial and aggressive children should be relatively low. Norepinephrine is also associated with children’s aggression. Studies conducted show that when aggressive boys are compared with their nonaggressive peers, aggressive boys have relatively low levels of norepinephrine (Moeller 2001:85).

Just as neurotransmitters involve chemical processes that trigger or prevent aggressive behaviour, hormones also involve a chemical process that produces a physiological response in aggressive children.

(c) Hormones

Data from more than 100 countries around the world reveal that boys and men are more verbally aggressive on average, than girls and women (Shafer & Kipp 2010: 567). Accordingly, the boys' higher levels of male sex hormones- namely testosterone and cortisol may contribute to sex differences in aggression. Testosterone, a male sexual hormone, is a major hormone produced in the testes. These hormones have an effect on behaviour, including sex and aggression. Studies have concluded that increased aggression was noted to occur during puberty when testosterone production increases. It is more likely that individuals with higher levels of testosterone will be to engage in aggressive action than those who possess relatively lower levels of testosterone (McDermott 2006:7).

Cortisol, a stress hormone, secreted by the adrenal cortex is essential for orchestrating a person's physical responses to environmental stresses (McDermott 2006:7). Overall, cortisol levels appear to be inversely related to aggression and anger. In one study of 38 boys referred for their disruptive behaviour, low cortisol boys demonstrated three times more aggressive symptoms than high cortisol boys did. According to Delfos (2004:68), the hormone cortisol reduces the degree of violence and aggression in people.

It is clear from the above that biological factors play a key role in aggressive behaviour. However, research findings confirm that apart from biological factors, family factors, particularly poor parenting, to a large extent, have also been found to contribute to the aggression displayed by secondary school learners (Dullay 2008:23)..

2.2.2 Family factors

Family factors play a significant role in contributing towards the secondary school learners' aggressive behaviour (Venter *et al* 2005:1). These factors include the inability to cope with frustration during puberty, uncomfortable environments, poor socio-

economic circumstances, poor family relationships and exposure to aggressive role models such as parents with aggressive behaviour.

2.2.2.1 Parental role models

Parents who demonstrate poor self-control and aggressive and violent behaviour serve as role models for their children (Bemak & Keys 2000:17). Antisocial and aggressive behaviour is more likely among adolescents when parents model such behaviour, when they are overly harsh and punitive, when they fail to issue commands effectively and when they reinforce coercive behaviour, in either a positive or negative way (Moeller 2001:110-111).

A teenager who observes his father beating his mother every time they have a difference of opinion, is likely to batter his partner in order to coerce her into submission (Szyndrowski 2005:11). This aggression can also be transferred onto other adult role models such as teachers. According to Makwabe (2007:4), at the Perseverance Secondary School in Belhar, north of Cape Town, a teacher Nompumelelo Feni was kicked in the stomach by a 15-year-old learner when she was five months pregnant. A similar incident occurred at the Darnall Secondary School, in KwaDukuza, Kwazulu-Natal (KZN) when a female teacher was badly assaulted by a learner during the interval break and she subsequently refused to return to school for fear of her life (Krishna 2002:3)

According to Bemak and Keys (2000:17), this type of aggression develops over time as the child internalises a family system characterised by harsh, inconsistent discipline, poor supervision, inappropriate parent modelling and overall poor management of the child's general aggressive behaviour. It is important to note that ineffective parents tend to have a very narrow repertoire of discipline strategies- often limited to either verbal or physical aggression (Lochman 2002:17).

Two major parental risk factors tend to characterise hyper-aggressive children: firstly, such children tend to be born to teenage mothers (under the age of 18); and secondly, the parents of these children tend to show high rates of psychopathology (Moeller 2001: 98).

(a) Teenage mothers

Past research indicates that children born to adolescent mothers are at a greater risk of chronic, physical aggression during the early years of childhood (Mack 2010:10). In effect, these children are at a greater risk of developing behavioural problems and engaging in delinquent activity during the course of their lives. Many of these teen mothers leave school early, are less socially competent, display higher rates of stress, report more internal and external behavioural problems and exhibit delinquent behaviour. In South Africa, 33% of all women who give birth are under the age of 18 (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:234).

Many adolescent girls, particularly the younger ones, are not psychologically prepared to become parents, a fact that can greatly affect their babies' developmental outcomes (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:234). Significantly, teen mothers have a higher probability of coming from broken homes and low income families, have little education, utilise an aversive parenting style and engage in prenatal substance abuse and this leads to aggressive behaviour exhibited by the child (Mack 2010:9).

(b) Parental psychopathology

Research has shown that oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and conduct disorder (CD) were associated significantly with both parental alcoholism and antisocial personality disorder. According to Hill (2002:149), the parent's behaviour increases the likelihood of the child showing further oppositional or aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, alcohol consumption has been linked to the commission of a variety of violent crimes including wife battering (Robbins 2000:122). As mentioned above, a boy-child who regularly observes his father assaulting his mother every time they disagree is likely to batter his partner in an attempt to force her into submission (Szyndrowski 2005:11).

Tests conducted by Hamberger and Hastings (Robbins 2000:121) suggested that alcohol abusers had a more severe psychopathology, in effect, they were more anxious and depressed and were more likely to distort and personalise perceptions of environmental events. Even when there is no physical aggression in a drunken episode between spouses and only hurtful and hostile words are uttered- the damage to the relationship

can be considerable. According to Robbins (2000:121-122), drinking does not only promote aggression, but it serves as an excuse for it.

2.2.2.2 Parental substance abuse

According to Rigby (2002:153), parents do influence the behaviour of their children. In fact, the research indicates that aggressive parents will most probably have aggressive children, as this is the example set for children to follow. Significantly, alcohol consumption has been linked to the commission of physical and verbal aggression by husbands with regard to their wives and children (Robbins 2000:122). Parents who use vulgar language in the presence of children, may imprint such behaviour in them and they may subsequently also use this type of language (Szyndrowski 2005:9). McAdams and Lambie (2003:1) assert that parents who abuse substances try to maintain a closed home environment where everyone is controlled. This is problematic for adolescents who feel frustrated, neglected and abused and they vent their anger by screaming and by abusing others at school both verbally and physically (McAdams & Lambie 2003:1).

While alcohol abuse can lead to assaultive behaviour, for women, being assaulted can also lead to alcohol abuse (Robbins 2000:125). Accordingly, when a woman is beaten or raped, she may react to this trauma by the increased use of alcohol or drugs as a way of coping with the psychological pain induced by the assault. Therefore, alcohol and illicit drugs may become part of a relationship culture in which a man and a woman may not only abuse each other, but they may also abuse substances. It is important to note that substance abuse does not only promote aggression, it also serves as a catalyst for divorce, separation and single parent homes (Robbins 2000:125).

2.2.2.3 Divorce, separation and single parent homes

Divorce or separation can influence the start of behavioural problems in secondary school learners leading to aggressive anti-social behaviour (Delfos 2004:138). Importantly, adolescent boys react more aggressively to divorce, as they are more demanding and ready for action than adolescent girls who are more emotionally labile and inwardly directed. According to Heavens (2001:66), parental separation and divorce will affect an ever-increasing number of adolescents who respond to the situation with

anger, resentment, bewilderment, shame, anxiety, depression, confusion and aggression as divorce is most stressful to most adolescents. Accordingly, parental divorce or separation and losing a parent or living with one parent only can have serious harmful effects on young children. In fact, the trauma these adolescents experience before and after such incidents is not easily erased from their minds. They end up adopting survival tactics such as aggressive behaviour in order to cope with the situation (Gasa 2005:45-46).

Most research indicates that children in single-parent mother-alone homes show elevated levels of externalising problems (Moeller 2001:115). According to Gasa (2005: 45), in single-parent homes, the absence of paternal authority and role models explains the higher rates of adolescent aggression and violence. Furthermore, the socio-economic conditions of single parent households, disciplinary styles, difficulty with securing assistance and support as well as problems with supervision and monitoring of the child may result in aggressiveness (Valois, MacDonald, Bretous, Fischer & Drane 2002:456). The relationship between single parent households and childhood aggressiveness seemed most profound in low-income families (Robbins 2000:70).

Research regarding the effects of divorce on secondary school learners, show that the short-term effects of divorce are considerable (Delfos 2004:140). Difficult divorce proceedings can cause serious behaviour problems in young adolescents, which often have a detrimental effect on their school performance. In fact, divorce can be an extremely traumatic experience for a young adolescent who may resort to antisocial behaviour to cope with the trauma of divorce (Delfos 2004:141).

2.2.2.4 Traumas

According to the Encarta Concise English Dictionary (2001: 1537), trauma refers to an extremely distressing experience that causes severe emotional shock and may have long-lasting psychological effects. The younger the child is when it experiences a traumatic event, the more extensive and lengthy the consequences are, consequently the experience may have a profound effect on the child (Delfos 2004: 133). This means that the traumatic experience affects all developmental tasks (such as intellectual, socio-

emotional, physical and motor development) and it starts in early childhood and extends into adulthood. The person experiencing the trauma displays behaviour that deviates from his/her usual behaviour- a docile child may suddenly become cheeky. The degree to which a child exhibits behaviour difficulties is, in addition to predisposition, not only dependent on the seriousness of the trauma, but is also and mainly dependent on the degree to which the child has been able to share the trauma and has been comforted (Delfos 2004:133). Importantly, a child can develop post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of a traumatic experience, which may include intense fear, horror or helplessness (Delfos 2004:134). The reaction to a traumatic event takes the form of irritability and excited, chaotic behaviour.

There is a heightened sense of arousal manifested in sleep disorders, hyperactivity, anxiety and temper tantrums with the adolescent youth often reacting aggressively to the slightest provocation (Delfos 2004:137). Apart from coping with the trauma related to divorce and substance abuse, adolescents also have to cope with pubertal changes which often result in depression and restlessness (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:226).

2.2.2.5 Puberty

According to Rimland (2005:3), a large number of cases of aggressive or self- injurious behaviour have been found to be the child's response to physical pain caused by the onset of puberty. Accordingly, children change dramatically with regard to size and shape when they enter the adolescent growth spurt and reach sexual maturity. When the pubertal changes are peaking, adolescents exhibit signs of moodiness, bouts of depression and restlessness and feel less close to their parents with whom they often argue (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:226).

Research has shown that a girl who matures very early may look very different from her female classmates, who may tease and poke fun at her because of her more womanly attributes. Peplar (2005:9) is of the opinion that young adolescent girls may be affected by their early maturation, leading to deviant peer group involvement and family conflict. Research has shown that early maturing girls tended to perform rather poorly at school and were most likely to drop out than their late maturing classmates. According to

Underwood (2003:135), these girls are affected negatively by their situation and may react adversely by hurting their peers with verbal insults.

Early maturing boys, on the other hand, enjoy a number of social advantages over boys who mature late (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:227). They tend to be poised, confident in social settings and popular with their peers. Nevertheless, studies have concluded that late maturing adolescents are found to be more eager, anxious and attention seeking, less masculine and less physically attractive, feel socially inadequate and inferior, have lower educational aspirations and also score lower in school achievement tests (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:227).

While each of the above factors related to the family contributes significantly to aggressive behaviour in adolescents, the research findings confirm that environmental factors contribute to aggression as well (Robbins 2000:26).

2.2.3 Environmental factors

Aggression is an internal process related to the human being's relationship with his/her self, other persons and the environment (Venter *et al.* 2005:1). According to Robbins (2000:26), a variety of aversive conditions in the human environment may increase the tendency of aggressive learners to exhibit hostility or mete out punishment to others.

2.2.3.1 Community characteristics

Certain community and neighbourhood characteristics can also enhance a youngster's proclivity for aggressive, violent behaviour (Bemak & Keys 2000:19). Low neighbourhood attachment, community disorganisation, availability of firearms and drugs, adults in the community involved in crime, exposure to aggressive and racial prejudice in the neighbourhood, community laws and norms favourable towards violence, all help promote a culture of aggression and violence among secondary school learners living in a particular community (Valois, MacDonald, Bretous, Fischer & Drane 2002:459). Furthermore, accessibility to firearms is a major contributing factor in many youth homicides (Bemak & Keys 2000:19).

(a) Accessibility to firearms

Being able to access firearms easily presents young people, many of whom may already feel powerless, may imbue them with a feeling of power and bravado that can have fatal consequences (Bemak & Keys 2000:19). In some instances, a cause for concern is the high levels of violence in secondary schools resulting in the death of innocent children. In this regard, according to a recent study, each year, in KZN alone, nearly a million children are victims of crime (Naran 2006:8). Naran (2006:8) cites an incident in which a learner was shot dead by one of his fellow pupils near the school grounds of a Gauteng school.

Importantly, the American Psychological Association estimates that nearly 50% of American households have firearms. It also estimates that about 270 000 learners carry guns to school each day. According to Naidoo (2008:1), a 15-year-old was arrested for possession of an unlicensed firearm in Pretoria. The availability of these guns to a youngster who typically resorts to violent and aggressive behaviour in social situations leads to a greater likelihood that angry or aggressive encounters may have a lethal outcome (Bemak & Keys 2000:19). Significantly, research findings confirm that many violent youths come from poverty-stricken and low socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, statistics show that poverty is correlated with violent crime (Huston & Ripke 2006:426).

(b) Poverty

According to a study by Nancy Guerra (Robbins 2000:61), poorer children are more likely to experience both greater life events stress and neighbourhood violence stress. Most of these stressors are associated with family poverty and low socioeconomic status (SES), which in turn, have been linked to a variety of behavioural problems among secondary school learners (Moeller 2001:120). Living in a lower SES family in middle childhood raises the odds of low achievement and dysfunctional behaviour in adulthood and these children are at a higher risk of displaying adolescent and adult aggression and of having poorer educational outcomes and lower occupational attainment (Huston & Ripke 2006:425).

Moeller (2001:121) refers to research that indicates that poverty affects parenting behaviour directly or indirectly, which in turn, affects youthful antisocial behaviour. Poor parents are more likely to enforce harsh punitive discipline, to the extent that the child is exposed to violence (Huston & Ripke 2006:426). Furthermore, poor people are more likely to be arrested for violent criminal acts than middle class and well-to-do-people because poor, hungry people steal regularly for sustenance with violent confrontations being a consequence somewhere along the line (Robbins 2000:61). In addition, low income families have a greater likelihood of producing poor performing and aggressive individuals and impoverished neighbourhoods that lack basic facilities that induce the youth to engage in antisocial lifestyles (Huston & Ripke 2006:426-427).

(c) Lack of facilities

Various other factors contribute to a learner's discontent and rage (Bemak & Keys 2000:21). Accordingly, neighbourhoods with inadequate housing, high unemployment rates, high rates of crime and violence and few or nonexistent community-based services, such as job training, day-care, recreational facilities and public transportation, further contribute to their belief that violence is acceptable. Parents of poor families often expend a considerable amount of energy in merely satisfying the basic needs for food, shelter and safety. Providing sufficient supervision and instilling discipline regarding their children may play a secondary role, while caring for those more basic needs. Thus, poor neighbourhoods may have greater limitations and fewer opportunities for gainful employment. In addition, the lack of recreational and other facilities for extramural activities compounds the frustrations already experienced by the youth (Bemak & Keys 2000:21). It is important to note that the lack of facilities within a community together with poor socio- economic conditions, lead to the youth adopting aggressive antisocial behaviour in order to be accepted by gangsters operating in the community (Valois *et al.* .2002:459).

2.2.3.2 Gangsterism

As secondary school learners become increasingly independent of their parents, environmental contexts outside the family assume increasing importance (Huston & Ripke 2006:428). Accordingly, peers and peer groups become important influences in terms of the learner's navigation through middle childhood. However, an individual's peer group may also place him or her at risk (Bemak & Keys 2000:16). As a rite of passage into a group, the learner may have to conform to the peer group's norms regarding various types of behaviour, sometimes even violent behaviour, in order to be initiated into and accepted by the group. Furthermore, poor learners living in impoverished communities are lured into gangs in this way, with the concomitant risk of potential violent behaviour manifesting itself (Robbins 2000:56).

The research findings indicate that although gang members account for 30% at most of the youth population, they are responsible for 68% to 89% of all serious adolescent offences (Moeller 2001:216-217). Wandersman and Nation (Robbins 2000: 56) note, "The numbers of juvenile arrests and court appearances were higher in neighbourhoods where there were large numbers of poor and minority families and in neighbourhoods where there were high rates of turnover among the residents." In the city of Chicago alone there are about 40 major gangs, four of which have a membership of about 19 000 members (Robbins 2000: 57). Significantly, in 2003, the Cape Argus reported that gangs on the Western Cape Flats had a work force of approximately 120 000 members.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) report on school based violence in the Western Cape in 2006, shows that violence in schools does not simply entail learner on learner bullying (Dibetle 2008:7). In some instances, it has escalated into fatalities, where teachers have died at the hands of their learners. In fact, In the Western Cape, where gangsterism manifests itself in the classroom, learners and educators are exposed to gang violence to the extent of gang members shooting at each other at the school (Dibetle 2008:7). In effect, gangsterism is endemic and behind much of the violence experienced by youths (Carter 2006:27). In this regard, five youths were gunned down in Langa, Cape Town, apparently after tensions at a local school had led to clashes between rival groups and the murder of a student. However, gang related aggression is

not associated with boys only. In KwaZulu-Natal, two teenage girls were arrested in Cato Manor after allegedly assaulting another schoolgirl, who later attempted to commit suicide (Carter 2006:27).

It is important to note that research findings indicate that gangsters ply their trade openly on both the school grounds and in the school buildings by selling alcohol and drugs freely to learners. This results in drug and alcohol abuse among learners, resulting in the display of aggressive behaviour (Maluleka 2010:1).

2.2.3.3 Drug and alcohol abuse

Gangs often have a violent culture, infiltrate schools and are involved in drug trafficking and the alcohol trade (Robbins 2000:56). Consequently, adolescent substance abuse is widespread and reports of substance use in schools may alarm many administrators (Finn & Frone 2003:38). The use of and trading in drugs, as well as the carrying of weapons to school, are the most widespread violence-related types of behaviour amongst secondary school learners (De Wet 2006: 20). National surveys reveal that schools are places where alcohol and other drugs are both present and accessible. For example, 33% of learners in grades 9 to 12 recently reported that drugs were available to them at school. Furthermore, 36% of the learners whose ages ranged from 12 to 19, reported that marijuana (*dagga*) was easily accessible, not only in the school buildings, but also on both the school grounds and on school buses (Finn & Frone 2003:38).

In the Empangeni and Ethekeweni regions of KZN, the increased use of *dagga* is becoming the norm because it is readily accessible (Maluleka 2010:1). Alcohol and drugs often produce psychomotor stimulatory effects that lead to an increase in sensation-seeking and impulsivity, as well as an increase in aggressive, confrontational and provocative behaviour (Breslow & Smothers 2004:6).

A top Durban girl's high school sought to expel a learner caught with a list containing the names of other learners who had apparently placed orders for "space muffins" (muffins baked with *dagga*), also known as *dagga* cookies (Maluleka 2010:1). Furthermore, in many township and rural schools, the so-called *whoonga* drug, a cocktail of heroin, crystal meth (tik) and sugars, has been blamed for an increase in violent crime and

break-ins. It is either the drug dealers or learners themselves who are responsible for bringing the drugs into schools because they have a ready market on the premises (Maluleka 2010:1).

While aggressive behaviour increases because of drug and alcohol abuse on the one hand, it intensifies substantially under the influence of television and the media on the other hand (Huston & Ripke 2006:319).

2.2.3.4 Television and media influence

According to Baron, Byrne and Branscombe (2006:431), violence in the media increases aggression in children. The prevalence of violence in the media renders the youth prone to violent and aggressive behaviour (Bemak & Keys 2000:21). In this regard, watching violence on the television or movie screen not only has an influence on stimulating aggressive behaviour, it may create a tolerance for aggressive behaviour in others (Robbins 2000:105). Importantly, children learn by observing what is shown in these movies, especially considering that these movies make violence appear acceptable (Siegel 2004:158). In many instances, the violence is justified in these movies and it may even seem that there is a reward for violent behaviour (Orpinas 2006:52).

Some children may not only become desensitised to watching violence, they may develop a preference for it (Robbins 2000:106). In effect, children tend to emulate what they observe. If the role models to which they are exposed provide examples of aggressive behaviour, the latter becomes the norm (Orpinas 2006: 65). The child can then think about and plan proactive aggressive acts without experiencing any negative effects or feelings of guilt, thereby making proactive aggression more likely (Huston & Ripke 2006:305). Violence is an integral part of some sporting events, with many athletic heroes earning reputations for being tough and for being no-nonsense people (Bemak & Keys 2000:22). Children emulate this type of behaviour and become aggressive as a result (Robbins 2000:106).

Importantly, Chorry-Assad and Tamborini (2004:494) agree that the increased exposure of learners to verbally aggressive sitcoms is associated with aggressive communication styles. Thus, learners acquire the aggression and also adopt the aggressive language of

sitcoms when communicating with others (Chorry-Assad & Tamborini 2004:494). It is clear that the telecommunications revolution of the twentieth century has created a new environment for our children. Radio, television, movies, videos, video games and computer networks have assumed central roles with regard to socialising our children while the influence of parents and teachers has diminished significantly (Huston & Ripke 2006:303).

2.2.4 School factors

Research findings in South African schools illustrate the ways in which aggression continues to have a detrimental impact on adolescents in secondary schools mainly because of inadequate school resources and a poor school ethos (Venter *et al.* 2005:1).

2.2.4.1 Inadequate schools and school ethos

Significantly, evidence suggests that schools contribute to youthful antisocial behaviour and aggression (Moeller 2001:276). Poor physical conditions and inadequate facilities and equipment contribute to the development of antisocial behaviour within a school. Learners entering such schools receive the message that the school and its community do not care about education. This decreases the learners' academic motivation and commitment to school (Moeller 2001:276).

The lack of resources in many South African schools has not only decreased teacher morale but learner morale as well where teachers and learners become disillusioned and frustrated by the government's inability to deliver services to the schools (Masondo 2011:6). While teacher unions have welcomed Basic Education Minister, Angie Motsheka's action plan to improve internet access and libraries at schools and to upgrade school physical infrastructure and specialist rooms (particularly science laboratories), they have called on the education department to fast-track the supplying of textbooks and stationery and other essential resources to rural and township schools (Masondo 2011:6).

Good classroom management on the part of the teacher, clear school-wide norms and consistency of school values constitute the ethos of the school and this ethos is

important with regard to good academic achievements as well as for good learner conduct (Moeller 2001:279). However, if teachers arrive unprepared at school do not deliver their lessons confidently and enthusiastically and if they are not consistent in terms of applying school rules and are overly authoritative, learners experience a feeling of hopelessness and frustration with some learners resorting to unacceptable antisocial conduct. Accordingly, this affects the classroom communication process between learners and teachers resulting in the learning environment becoming compromised (Moeller 2001:279-280).

2.2.4.2 Antisocial classroom communication

In terms of maintaining a positive and productive classroom environment, both teacher and learner communications play an important role (Chorry-Assad & Paulsel 2004:98). Learners are more engaged in learning activities when they are in classrooms with high levels of instructional quality and emotional support (Huston & Ripke 2004:422-423). In addition, classrooms that encourage group work have learners who display more frequent positive peer interaction. On the other hand, in classrooms with high levels of punishment, scolding and negative forms of discipline, on the other hand, learners are more disruptive (Huston & Ripke 2004:423).

Teachers often use behaviour alteration techniques (BATs) in their attempts to influence learners in the classroom (Chorry-Assad & Paulsel 2004:100). With regard to managing learner behaviour, teachers may either use prosocial BATs, compliance-gaining strategies that learners perceive as potentially rewarding or antisocial BATs, compliance-gaining strategies that learners perceive as potentially punishing. Prosocial BATS involve attempting to influence learners to do better by saying such things as, "You always do such a good job," whereas antisocial BATs may be punitive and include, "I will give you an 'F' if you don't do your work." Prosocial BATs tend to be well received by learners and are effective in preventing learner misbehaviour (Chorry- Assad & Paulsel 2004:100).

Even though teachers report that they use prosocial BATs most of the time, they also report predominantly using antisocial BATs in response to more active learner misbehaviour (Chorry-Assad & Paulsel 2004:100). Learners associate their teachers' use

of more antisocial BATs with coercive and legitimate power and perceive their teachers as bad because they use antisocial BATS in contrast with those who use prosocial BATs. As teacher use of antisocial BATs is related to learner resistance, it is likely that teacher use of antisocial BATs will also be related to learners displaying more aggressive attitudes towards their teachers (Chorry-Assad & Paulsel 2004:100). When learners begin to display antisocial behaviour towards their teachers, school rules are ignored and discipline suffers.

2.2.4.3 School rules and discipline

Schools have also come under scrutiny with regard to contributing to aggressive behaviour (Bemak & Keys 2000:18). School rules that require rigid and unquestioned conformity may also routinely lead to feelings of anger, resentment and rejection. When rules are designed purely for heightening control, without any proper explanations being given, learners who find it difficult to make sense of the rules, tend to become agitated and frustrated. Consequently, a learner who does not feel understood will not be inclined to follow the advice given by his teachers, will be recalcitrant and this behaviour will be reinforced over time (Delfos 2004:194).

Often school rules become punitive when many staff resort to policing the environment to enforce the rules instead of educating the learners regarding why the rules are necessary. This unexplained repression may provide the learner with motivation for aggression (Bemak & Keys 2000:19).

The South African School's Act, Act 84 of 1996, stipulates that:

- No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner.
- Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence, which could be imposed for assault.

However, even though this is gazetted in the Schools Act, research findings indicate that corporal punishment continues to be administered in many schools around the country. All through the ages, theoreticians from various backgrounds have emphasised that punishment has no positive effect on the development of the child (Delfos: 2004:207). In

fact, the use of corporal punishment has been shown to be positively related to higher rates of learner interpersonal aggression (Lochman 2002:71).

Harsh disciplinary measures such as beating learners, can prove to be detrimental to the secondary school learners who feel humiliated by such actions, which, in turn, results in them retaliating with hostile, antisocial and aggressive behaviour. (Delfos 2004:207). Apart from becoming aggressive because of the harsh discipline meted out to them, secondary school learners may have difficulty with adapting to the school curriculum and with being forced to learn in a language that is not their mother tongue (Mbanjwa 2011:2).

2.2.4.4 Curriculum and language problems

According to Gottfredson (Moeller 2001:278), antisocial and aggressive behaviour is due to an irrelevant and uninspired curriculum combined with teaching techniques that fail to engage the learners' interest, especially at secondary level. As a result, students become bored, play truant and thus begin to engage in antisocial and aggressive behaviour (Moeller 2001:278).

During the past decade, the South African education system was first introduced to outcomes based education (OBE) by the then Minister Sibusiso Bhengu (Maluleka 2011: 1). He was followed by Kader Asmal who attempted to revise the curriculum (Curriculum 2005). Subsequently, in 2010, under Minister Angie Motsheka, learners wrote the national senior certificate (NCS) examinations introduced in 2008. According to Anthony Pierce, KZN chief executive officer (CEO) of National Professional Teachers' Professional organisation in South Africa (NAPTOSA), teachers struggled to come to grips with the new curricula, which had caused major setbacks over the past decade. National Teachers Union (NATU) deputy president, Allen Thompson states:

One of the factors contributing to fluctuating pass rates was the change of the curriculum. OBE required research by learners and more resources were needed. When the curriculum was changed, resources were not provided and teachers were not trained adequately for the new curriculum (Maluleka 2011:1).

The provincial secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), Mbuyiseni Mathonsi, asserted that the major hindrances to the improvement of education was the “language question” with reference to the use of English as the main medium of instruction at schools (Mbanjwa 2011:2). The SADTU contended that because English was introduced at a very early age, this had an impact on the performance of the learners who were not mother tongue speakers of the language. According to Mabitla (2006:32), learners who are not competent in the language of instruction will always feel marginalised by their more capable peers. This situation has the potential to lead to problems such as racism and intolerance because learners of the other racial groups have an unfair advantage over those who were not schooled in English from an early age (Mbanjwa 2011:2).

2.2.4.5 Racism and intolerance

According to Maree (2000:4), racism, homophobia, sectarianism, and religious intolerance are frequent phenomena in our rainbow nation, which subsequently spills over from households and neighbourhoods to the school environment. Because of this, some egocentric youngsters have the tendency to categorise people rigidly in terms of their skin colour (and the other physical correlates of ethnicity) and to favour the group to which they belong (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:513). Increases in prejudice during early adolescence may also reflect the fact that personal identity issues are becoming increasingly important, thus praising the virtues of one’s own group and highlighting the shortcomings of the other groups is a way of solidifying one’s group identity and one’s enhancing self worth.

However, the intolerance of learners towards people of other races, religions, cultures and sexual orientation can contribute significantly to learner aggression among affected learners (Maree, 2000:4). Gross (2003:493) makes it clear that discrimination, prejudice and racism have far reaching negative effects in the life of a secondary school learner. Institutional racism inflicted, either by learners on learners or teachers on learners, thwarts their efforts and aspirations and renders them embittered and angry. In the United States of America (USA), there is evidence to indicate that African American children experience less positive school contexts than do other ethnic groups (Huston &

Ripke 2006:427). African American children attending classes received instruction of a lower quality, on the one hand and more punitive discipline, on the other hand, than the Non-Hispanic White children did.

The research findings indicate that for every aggressive act there is a consequence that not only affects the individual concerned adversely, but also the entire school and its community (Huston & Ripke, 2006:427).

2.3 CONSEQUENCES OF LEARNER AGGRESSION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The psychological harm that occurs in an environment plagued by violence and aggression should not to be underestimated (Bemak & Keys 2000:8). Accordingly, teachers who are concerned about their safety are less able to focus on teaching and student learning. Likewise, learners who worry about being safe are less able to concentrate and succeed academically than learners who feel safe and secure. Victims of learner aggression, which include learners, teachers and management staff, may express an inability to experience emotion, as well as the fear that the aggressive act may occur again. In addition, they may experience anxiety, difficulty sleeping, disinterest in schoolwork or social activities, feelings of guilt and difficulty paying attention in class (Bemak & Keys 2000:9). Accordingly, the many and varied consequences of learner aggression will be discussed individually.

2.3.1 Hyperactivity

Hyperactivity refers to busy, overactive and restless behaviour (Delfos 2004:169). Aggressive learners cannot sit still and use their energy to disrupt class lessons, move around the class indiscriminately and disturb their classmates during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the ADHD can be defined as a “persistent pattern of inattention and/ or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development” (Moeller 2001:53).

The hyperactivity, which is a symptom of ADHD, does not occur without impulsivity (Delfos 2004:169). Furthermore, it is characterised by a continual unrest, which occurs in

a generalised way in all situations. A child with the ADHD cannot process many stimuli at one time. It means that the limited processing of stimuli causes the child to move from one stimulus to another, because processing two stimuli at the same time presents problems. Therefore, that which presents itself at that moment, captures the attention. Accordingly, the child will stop the previous activities with which he/she was engaged, and often leave them unfinished. For example, the child will be busy writing, when all of a sudden, he will raise his hand and ask the teacher a question and before the teacher can finish answering the question, the idea of pinching another child comes to mind, which he/she then proceeds to do (Delfos 2004:170). Consequently, this kind of behaviour often results in these children being rejected by their peers, teachers and parents (Moeller 2001:58).

Hyper-aggressive children are most likely to suffer from a concentration disorder and difficulty with maintaining the level of attention for extended periods (Delfos 2004:170). Parents of hyper-aggressive children also portray their offspring as disruptive and prone to fits of physical aggression. The consequences of these types of behaviour are lower academic achievement, more school expulsions, more antisocial behaviour, more substance abuse, a poorer occupational adjustment, more parent and teacher hostility and higher levels of delinquency (Moeller 2001:55). In effect, hyperactive children are non-compliant, defiant, easily distracted and extremely temperamental (Moeller 2001: 58).

2.3.2 Temperament

Another consequence of aggression is a difficult temperament. In this regard, “temperament” is defined by Rothbart and Bates as “constitutionally based individual differences in emotional, motor, and attentional reactivity and self-regulation” (Moeller 2001:14). Children with a difficult temperament have trouble responding to new situations, resist change and react to new stimuli with shock or rejection (Delfos 2004:86). This type of difficult temperament is often the precursor of conduct disorders during youth when children display heightened irritability and react angrily at the slightest provocation through acts of physical and verbal aggression.

Learners who are prone to violent and aggressive behaviour generally experience a broad range of maladaptive behaviours (Bemak & Keys 2000:31). According to Moeller (2001:15), children with difficult temperaments experience unpredictable eating and sleeping cycles, react negatively to new situations and commonly exhibit negative emotional moods. The research findings indicate that children with difficult temperaments are more at risk for developing serious behaviour problems, such as bullying, later during adolescence (Moeller, 2001:15),

2.3.3 Bullying

The word “bullying” refers to a social process in which an adolescent exerts power or influence over another learner in a negative manner to achieve a desired effect or outcome (Jenson & Dieterich 2009:3). It is important to note that bullying occurs in physical, social and emotional contexts and varies considerably in severity. It occurs when a more powerful person directs his/her aggression repeatedly at a less powerful person. Bullying was most frequent early in adolescence (sixth to eighth grades) and was equally common in urban, suburban and rural areas (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:571). Accordingly, boys were more likely to be physically bullied, whereas girls were more likely to be verbally bullied or abused in psychological ways (such as being excluded socially, victimised by rumours and malicious gossip).

Bullying can be verbal, physical or social and has the intention to hurt, humiliate and isolate individuals (Ancer 2009:7). It can include name-calling, shunning and ignoring, threatening, mocking, physical violence, spreading rumours, and extorting money and possessions. These days, it happens not only in schools and during social gatherings, but also through the electronic media (cyber-bullying), in the form of harassing or threatening e-mails and instant messages, defaming websites and online “slam books” in which others are invited to post mean or insulting comments about them (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:572).

For the victims of bullying, the consequences are devastating (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:572). Consequently, victimised children are at risk of developing a variety of adjustment problems, including loneliness, anxiety, depression, further erosion of self-esteem and a

growing dislike for and avoidance of school. The most devastating long-term effect of bullying, however, is suicide (Moeller 2001:225). Unable to cope with the incessant and chronic harassment from their aggressive tormentors, victims become socially withdrawn, sedentary, physically weak, depressed, are reluctant to fight back and ultimately resort to taking their own lives (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:572). In this regard, Olweus (Moeller 2001:225), cites the case of a 16-year old male who hanged himself after being constantly threatened, pushed around and humiliated by his classmates.

Bullies manifest antisocial aggressive behaviour in the form of physical, verbal and sexual aggression (Carter 2006:27).

2.3.4 Physical, verbal and sexual aggression

In humans, aggression manifests itself in many forms: physical, verbal, sexual, with or without a weapon and it may be impulsive or premeditated (Nelson 2006:134). Aggression can be intended to do psychological as well as physical harm. Thus, a learner who threatens another or who says mean things with the intention of hurting another's feelings would be committing aggression (Moeller 2001:24). This tense situation in schools may compromise the learning environment and contribute to severe psychological distress among learners and teachers (Marsh *et al.* 2009: 246). Research by the Free State University's Education Department revealed an extremely high rate of verbal, physical and sexual bullying at secondary schools by both learners and teachers (Carter 2006:27).

2.3.4.1 Physical aggression

Physical aggression includes activities in which actual physical harm is intentionally done to a person, animal or object (Moeller 2001:25). Some examples of physical aggression are hitting, kicking, stabbing, shooting, pushing and shoving others, throwing objects, breaking windows, defacing property and setting objects alight. According to Smit (2003:31), boys tended to be more involved in physical aggressive behaviour than girls. Retaliation because of provocation and bullying at school are further contributory factors leading to violence (Bester & Du Plessis 2010:209).

In addition, other factors such as alcohol use, gangsterism, gambling and prejudiced behaviour in the form of xenophobic threats and sexism play a significant role in promoting physical aggression among secondary school learners. Harsh language and bullying are types of behaviour viewed as precursors to physical aggression (Marsh *et al.* 2009:256). According to Carter, McGee, Taylor and Williams (2007:51), physical fighting is reported by most teachers as occurring frequently (at least once a week). Sixteen percent of the teachers reported that fights occurred at their school on a weekly basis. US research has also identified physical aggression against teachers as a problem, together with similar incidences of threats of injury and being physically attacked by students at school.

Physical aggression and bullying may affect the learning environment in the school and research in the USA has found that teachers believe that the threat of violence by aggressive youth has a direct impact on the quality of education offered to children (Marsh *et al.* 2009:256). Importantly, Gerler (in Bester & Du Plessis 2010:209) views physical violence at school as a product of irrational, overblown retaliation to verbal abuse.

2.3.4.2 Verbal aggression

Verbal aggression involves the use of words to harm another (Moeller 2001:5). Verbal aggression can involve behaviour such as making threats or writing threatening notes or letters, calling names, spreading gossip and teasing others. It is interesting to note that girls are more inclined to make use of verbal and indirect aggression than boys (Smit 2003: 31) do. The research findings indicate that verbal insults were also seen as the largest problem by secondary school teachers in the USA (Marsh *et al.* 2009:256).

Girls are more likely than boys to display covert forms of hostility towards others by snubbing or ignoring them or by trying to undermine their relationships or social status (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:529-530). With regard to these subtle forms of aggression, the perpetrator does not hit anybody, does not need to confront the target person and may, in fact, there may be no physical evidence of the aggressive deed (Robbins 2000:33).

Verbal threats of aggression can be just as damaging as physical aggression as was the case with a physical science teacher of a Durban school in KZN (Naidoo 2007: 4). The teacher apparently received death threats from a Grade 10 learner who had reported him to the management of the school for bunking classes. The learner stormed into the classroom hurling verbal insults and threatened to hijack the teacher concerned in full view of the learners. This led to the teacher slipping into a state of stress and depression and eventually quitting the profession because she was filled with terror (Naidoo: 2007:4).

2.3.4.3 Sexual aggression

Sexual aggression is expressed in sexualised verbal bantering and the sexual abuse of victims (Carter 2002:30). Boys sometimes use sexual bantering to embarrass girls or to humiliate them after being rejected by girls. They often resort to uttering insults and using sexual denigration and foul language, for example, by calling them names such as “whore,” “tart” and “bitch” (Lock 2002:80). In turn, because the boys’ sexual slurs are aimed at hurting them, girls may retaliate by calling the boys “dick head,” “poof” or “gay.” These words are incisive and damaging and considered swear words in the heated exchanges between the sexes (Mabitla 2006:35).

When teenage boys’ advances are rejected by girls, they tend to express their anger and frustrations indirectly through acts such as substance abuse and sexual misconduct (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:569). Boys may also manifest sexual aggression by physically harassing girls and by touching them inappropriately against their will. In this regard, sexual offenses committed by boys include fondling (59%), exhibitionism (11%) and in extreme cases, rape (23%) (Moeller 2001:228).

Girls manifest sexual aggression by wearing sophisticated make-up, colouring and styling their hair, shortening their skirts and wearing tattoos to gain boys’ attention (Mabitla 2006: 36). Boys also express their sexual frustrations by violating rules and writing pornographic graffiti with inappropriate language on school walls, toilets and public places (Moeller 2001:4).

2.3.5 Vandalism and arson

According to the Encarta Concise Oxford Dictionary (2001: 1598), “vandalism” is defined as “the malicious and deliberate defacement or destruction of somebody else’s property.” Significantly, vandalism has increased enormously within western society in recent years (Delfos 2004:161). According to De Wet (2004:206), vandalism is on the increase in countries such as South Africa (SA), Canada, Australia, USA, France and Britain.

Research reports confirm that school vandals are likely to be youngsters between the ages of 11 and 16 who are chronically suspended or who truant. Even though both male and female learners engage in vandalism, male learners (58%) were most likely to engage in interpersonal aggression and damage school property than female learners (22%) (Finn & Frone 2003:46). Both interpersonal aggression and vandalism at school were more likely to occur among learners who have rebellious personality characteristics and learners with low levels of school identification and poor school achievement (Finn & Frone 2003:46). Damaging buildings can be an expression of resisting authority (Delfos 2004:161). Another way for a youngster to experience a sense of power and control is by damaging a building and defacing it with paint (graffiti).

In addition to vandalism, schools also face the possibility of arson. According to Jones (Moeller 2001:270), arson accounted for approximately 57% of all school fires or about eight school fires per day. In 80% of the cases, the arsonists in these cases are juveniles. Arson is connected with inadequate impulse control and is accompanied by fierce aggression against teachers and parents (Delfos 2004:161).

Committing acts of vandalism and arson may be the aggressive learner’s way of gaining attention because of the low self- esteem he/she experiences (Ancer 2009:7).

2.3.6 Low self- esteem

Some studies support the view that low self- esteem is related to antisocial and aggressive behaviour among secondary school learners (Moeller 2001:200). Learners with low self-esteem are unable to gain recognition from others in socially conventional

ways such as through academic activities, sport or extracurricular activities. Anxious, insecure and frustrated with their inability to gain needed recognition, these learners resort to antisocial and aggressive behaviour in order to gain recognition and feel better about themselves (Moeller 2001: 200). Learners who do not perceive themselves as competent during middle childhood may be at risk of developing future problems such as social isolation, depression and anger (Huston & Ripke 2004:261).

On the other hand, the victims of aggressive behaviour suffer feelings of anxiety, insecurity and fear (Dellasega & Nixon 2003:8). Feelings of inferiority and guilt may cause loss of self-esteem and predispose youngsters to depression and suicidal tendencies (Moeller 2001:201). These learners' inability to cope with the injustice, helplessness and hopelessness of their situations results in them repressing their feelings and expressing antisocial behaviour in the form of absenteeism, reclusiveness and substance abuse. Skipping classes or staying at home for fear of being bullied at school leads to academic underachievement where the learner falls behind in his/her assignments, homework, tests and assessments (Bemak & Keys 2000:11).

Learners who are the victims of repeated aggression do tend to have certain characteristics in common (Ancer 2009:7). They tend to have poor coping mechanisms in ordinary situations. In addition, they often have low self-esteem and may also be anxious, passive and struggle to assert themselves. On the other hand, they may also respond too impulsively or aggressively to an event, making them a sure target for aggressors who thrive on getting a rise out of their victims (Ancer 2009:7).

Learners who are insecure and who experience social isolation because of low self-esteem are prone to academic underachievement (Bemak & Keys 2000:11).

2.3.7 Underachievement

One of the best-documented facts regarding antisocial and aggressive children and adolescents is that they do not perform well at school (Moeller 2001: 273). According to Maguin & Loeber (Moeller 2001:273), 35% of academically low performing children become delinquents. Learners with poor academic skills become frustrated, lose academic motivation and as a result, eventually resort to antisocial and aggressive

behaviour. The learner's lower I.Q. makes achievement in school difficult, leaving the learner frustrated. In turn, aggressiveness is a reaction to this frustration (Robbins 2001:77). As they constantly experience failure due to the lack of concentration, aggressive learners become envious of their peers' success (Bemak & Keys 2000: 8). As a result of their limitations, learners become bored easily, disrupt lessons, play truant, join deviant peers, harass other learners, become delinquents and drop out of school (Moeller 2001:280). Accordingly, a negative school orientation and negative experiences (manifested by low school identification, low academic self-efficacy and low grades) are associated with increased aggression in secondary school learners (Finn & Frone 2003:41). According to Keller and Tapasak (Bester & Du Plessis 2010:209), the relationship between academic underachievement and antisocial behaviour, particularly aggression, is well established.

According to Marsh, Williams and McGee (2009:250), teachers perceived harsh language, bullying students and absenteeism due to truancy as the main problems in their schools that contributed significantly to the poor performance of both aggressive learners and their victims. Learners who are victims of aggression, suffer psychological trauma, are concerned about their safety and are less able to concentrate and succeed academically (Bemak & Keys 2000:8). They experience constant fear, anxiety and insecurity, and their self-confidence and self-esteem are reduced making it difficult for them to accomplish their tasks. These negative feelings may cause them to lose interest and become detached to the extent that they are unable to relate to their teachers and their peers effectively, thereby affecting their academic performance adversely (Dibetle 2008: 7).

It is important to note that various factors contribute significantly to underachievement on the part of both learners and teachers at school. Fear and intimidation leads to prolonged absenteeism, frequent resignations and even death caused by stress, anxiety and depression (Makwabe 2007:4).

2.3.8 Absenteeism, resignations and death

Just as is the case with counsellors, teachers and management staff, learners may experience intimidation and fear at school (Bemak & Keys 2000:11). It is not uncommon for affected learners to skip lunch or avoid the use of the school toilets for the entire school day out of fear of confrontation. In more extreme instances, learners absent themselves from school in order to minimise stress. Importantly, prolonged absenteeism is detrimental to the learner's progress as he/she falls farther and farther behind academically (Bemak & Keys 2000:11).

Teachers who feel vulnerable themselves are less likely to provide additional services, beyond school hours, for fear of intimidation, preferring instead to retreat from the "war zone" as quickly as possible at the end of the school day (Bemak & Keys 2000: 10). In effect, the country's teachers are in crisis, with violence being perpetrated on them by learners as well as the frequent experience of depression, anxiety and stress by teachers working in South African schools (Makwabe 2007:4). Accordingly, teachers are taking long periods of leave from schools because of stress-related problems and this prolonged absenteeism affects teaching and learning adversely at school. At the Woodlands Secondary School in Mitchells Plain on the Cape Flats, in the same month, ten teachers were on leave because of stress. In addition, one teacher who had been diagnosed as suffering from depression, died in his sleep.

According to the report of the South African Human Resources Commission (SAHRC), teachers are resigning from their jobs in large numbers because of the psychological and physical violence perpetrated on them by learners (Dibetle 2008:7). At a number of secondary schools, notably in the Western Cape and KZN, learners and teachers are exposed to gang violence to the extent that gang members shoot at each other at school. In some instances, it has escalated into fatalities, where teachers and learners have died at the hands of aggressive learners. Furthermore, the high levels of stress caused by school-based violence can result in teachers becoming depressed and being absent from school for days on end because of ill-health (Dibetle 2008:7).

2.3.9 III- health

Often, victims of aggressive acts cannot cope with the resulting stress, anguish and humiliation (Carter 2006:27). According to Rigby (2002:123), such victims may suffer from poor health because of their inability to cope with the harassment, nastiness and constant victimisation. Therefore, it becomes important to identify the factors that affect parental and teacher awareness of these health-compromising types of behaviour among adolescents (Marsh, Williams & McGee 2009:258). Undoubtedly, the aggressive behaviour displayed by violent youth can affect children mentally, psychologically and physically, most notably through the emergence of a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Moeller 2001:161). In this regard, community surveys have found that between a quarter of and a half of youths living in high violent crime areas report moderate to severe PTSD symptoms. A learner can develop PTSD because of a traumatic experience, especially when this is an existential threat (Delfos 2004:137). The reaction to a traumatic event includes intense fear, horror or helplessness, irritability and excited, chaotic behaviour. The behaviour may be relived in a dream, nightmare or play. Furthermore, there is a higher level of arousal, in the sense of sleeping disorders, hyperactivity or temper tantrums (Delfos 2004:137).

Feelings of anger, frustration, resentment and hostility towards the aggressor are only some of the physical symptoms experienced by the victim (Robbins 2000:87). Accordingly, researchers and clinicians have highlighted the role of stress and depression in the formation of other physical symptoms such as headaches, weakness, back problems, diarrhoea and bladder problems (Moeller 2001:86). On the other hand, of all the diseases that may be linked to anger and hostility on the part of the aggressor, the most attention has been given to coronary heart disease (Robbins 2000:89). Aggressive learners possess “type A” personalities, which “refers broadly to the behaviour patterns of any person who is involved in an aggressive and incessant struggle to achieve more and more in less and less time and is characterized by a sense of urgency, impatience and free-floating hostility.” As a result, aggressive learners with “type A” personalities were more prone to develop coronary heart disease (Robbins 2000:90).

The consequences of ill- health in learners affected by aggression can be devastating to the extent that learners can suffer depression, which can eventually lead to suicide (Shafer & Kipp 2010:572).

2.3.10 Depression and suicide

Depression is a psychiatric disorder showing symptoms such as persistent feelings of hopelessness, dejection, poor concentration, lack of energy, inability to concentrate and sleep and sometimes also suicidal tendencies (Encarta Concise Oxford Dictionary 2001: 387). Moeller (2001:55) confirms this by stating that depressed learners exhibit signs of intense and pervasive unhappiness, intense irritability, a lack of interest or pleasure in activities such as eating, sleeping and motor activity. Importantly, irritable behaviour in learners can be an indication that anxiety or depression is being experienced by them (Delfos 2004:201).

It is important to note that the physiological and hormonal changes that accompany sexual maturation during adolescence may contribute to increased moodiness and restlessness with young adolescents experiencing loneliness and a sense of low self-esteem (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:433). During this period, bouts of serious and subclinical depression increase, affecting as many as 15% to 20% of teenagers, with more girls than boys showing an elevated depressive symptomatology.

During childhood, dysfunctional families can also contribute significantly to depressive episodes amongst teenagers as a result of poor support structures, communications and the lack of acceptance and problem solving in the family (Huston & Ripke 2004:131). Individuals experiencing socio-ecological risks as youngsters tend to be less competent with establishing supportive relationships and avoiding peer rejection and are consequently more likely to experience depression, psychopathologies and poor social and occupational functioning in adulthood (Huston & Ripke: 2004:131). According to O'Connor and Leenaars (2004; 343), depression and ultimately, suicide can result from a traumatic event such as the unrequited love caused by the rejection of one partner by the other because of the affected partners' weakened ego.

2.4 SUMMARY

It needs to be stressed that learner aggression is a serious problem in secondary schools. In this regard, the carrying of guns as well as other dangerous weapons to school by aggressive youths makes the learning environment extremely prone to violence and intimidation. Because of this, the climate conducive to effective teaching and learning is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve, resulting in a severely compromised school system. In theory, schools are supposed to be safe havens for children where they can receive quality, uninterrupted education in a warm and caring environment. This basic right is outlined clearly in the Bill of Rights, which states, “education includes the rights of learners and teachers to learn and teach in a safe environment, free from all forms of violence and aggression.” Unfortunately, this is not the case as the current school climate and educational setting not only exposes children to violence, but also teaches them how to be violent.

The causes of learner aggression, as outlined in this chapter, are many and varied as numerous factors contribute to the prevalence of learner aggression in schools such as biological factors, family factors, environmental factors as well as school factors. This means that all stakeholders regarding the school community (learners, parents, teachers, school governing bodies, elders in the community as well as professional people including social workers, the police and doctors) have a responsibility to ensure that the problem is addressed urgently and appropriately. The researcher has determined that the consequences of learner aggression can be devastating and have a serious effect on the victims’ mental health as it can lead to high levels of stress, anxiety, depression and even suicide. Understanding the causes of learner aggression and its consequences for learners, teachers and parents, is pivotal before an attempt can be made to provide possible and effective solutions to managing the problem in schools. Therefore, chapter three focusses on an in-depth literature study on managing disruptive behaviour in the school.

CHAPTER 3

MANAGING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN THE SCHOOL

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Several definitions and terms such as “conduct disorder,” “anti-social,” “non-compliant,” “oppositional,” “disruptive” and, the most commonly used, “seriously emotionally disturbed” can be found in the literature to describe learners with behaviour disorders (Kehle, Bray, Theodore, Jenson & Clark 2000:475). Antisocial behaviour refers to the set of behaviours, which are in opposition to established rules or norms (Justicia, Benitez, Pichardo, Fernandez, Garcia & Fernandez 2006:131).

According to the Encarta Concise Oxford Dictionary (2000:414), “disruptive behaviour” refers to behaviour that interrupts the normal order or progress; in other words, it is a state of disorder caused by antisocial influences. Gordon and Browne (2004:639) agree that inappropriate, antisocial behaviour can have a detrimental effect on the teaching and learning situation. McMahon and Loschiavo (2006:1) concur with this by stating that disruptive behaviour repeatedly and continuously hampers the ability of teachers to teach and of learners to learn.

Nonetheless, the core foundation of these definitions and terms include the notion that behavioural disorders are persistent and are of sufficient severity and deviancy from age and social norms, that they substantially interfere with the learning process, militate against satisfactory interpersonal relationships and impair academic and social functioning (Kehle *et al.* 2000:414).

Concerns about aggressive and disruptive behaviour in schools have increased in recent years (Farmer 2000:299). Learners with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties have learning difficulties; they may fail to meet expectations at school and, in many cases, may also disrupt the education of others (Jones 2003:147). Hence, disruptive behaviour continues to be the most consistently discussed problem in South African schools

(Marais & Meier 2010:41). Teachers of learners with significant behavioural problems are faced with enormous challenges (Robinson, Smith, Miller & Brownell 1999:195). According to Marais and Meier (2010:41), teachers are becoming increasingly distressed by disciplinary problems in school, as corporal punishment has been abolished by legislation such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) and the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b).

Learners who exhibit behavioural problems frequently engage in behavioural deviancy including aggression, hyperactivity, impulsivity, lack of self-control, inattention and disrespect toward authority (Robinson *et al.* 1999:195). Attention deficit or hyperactivity (ADH) problems, conduct problems and oppositional defiant behaviour in childhood are associated with many negative outcomes in adolescence and adulthood (Van Lier, Muthen, Van der Sar & Crijnen 2004:467). Hence, misbehaving learners and disciplinary problems have become a disproportionate and intractable part of every teacher's experience of teaching (Marais & Meier 2010:41).

Research findings indicate that various types of behaviour play a significant role in promoting disruptive behaviour among learners (Marais & Meier 2010:44). These include behaviour that interferes with the act of teaching and learning (for instance, a learner who distracts other learners during lesson presentations) and behaviour that interferes with the rights of others to learn (for example, a learner who continually shouts out while the teacher is explaining content). Further undesirable behaviour is that which is psychologically or physically unsafe (such as leaning on the back legs of a chair, constant teasing and harassment of classmates) and behaviour that causes the destruction of property (such as vandalism in the classroom) (Marais & Meier 2010:44).

According to Farmer (2000:302), disruptive learners tend to be the most popular learners in class and they often wield a considerable social influence within the social network. Popular girls use social aggression (such as gossip, manipulation, ostracism) to gain a competitive advantage in the pursuit of popularity, while boys use their physical prowess to establish social power and control (Farmer 2000:303). However, the short- and long-term consequences of behavioural difficulties are numerous. Children who are identified with disruptive, antisocial behaviour as early as pre-school, have a high

probability of continuing to have difficulties in elementary school and beyond (Hemmeter, Ostrosky & Fox 2006:584). They are at risk of school failure and of developing academic difficulties, and have poor relations with peers, early initiation into substance use, exhibit conduct disorders, have convictions for violent crimes and an increased risk of mental disorders in adulthood (Van Lier *et al.* 2004:467).

National studies in Scandinavia indicate that a lack of on-task orientation and troublesome behaviour have become an increasing problem in many schools in Western societies and that urgent interventions are required to manage the problem (Bru 2006:23). It follows that the impact of a universal, classroom-based preventative intervention on the reduction of disruptive behaviour in young elementary schoolchildren is critically necessary to arrest the onset of potentially violent, aggressive behaviour during adolescence and adulthood (Van Lier *et al.* 2004:467).

In order to manage disruptive behaviour in the school, it becomes necessary to explore and understand the various models explaining disruptive behaviour that have been formulated by professionals in the field of education.

3.2 MODELS OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Various models have been designed to explain the disruptive behaviour of secondary school learners. The empirical findings from these models provide a basis for a better understanding of disruptive behaviour and are designed to provide guidance to teachers and educational practitioners regarding the strategies that need to be employed to manage disruptive behaviour in schools.

3.2.1 The biopsychosocial model

This model posits that biological dispositions and sociocultural contexts place certain children at risk of chronic behavioural problems, but that life experiences with parents, peers and social institutions increment and mediate this risk (Dodge & Pettit 2003:1). Some children are born with neural, endocrine or psychophysiological dispositions or grow up in sociocultural contexts that launch them on a path that predisposes them to developing problems in late adolescence or early adulthood (Shafer & Kipp 2010:108).

3.2.1.1 Biological dispositions

The biopsychosocial model proposes that biological dispositions are probabilistically related to conduct problem outcomes. Genetics research has revealed a moderate degree of heritability for delinquency as well as disruptive and antisocial behaviour from childhood to adulthood (Dodge & Pettit 2003:4). Shafer and Kipp (2010:105) agree that because of the genetic component of personality, personality traits are moderately heritable. According to the neurobiology of aggression, simple regulatory and impulsive functions are governed by more primitive, reactive areas including the brainstem and the midbrain (Newman & Newman 2006:297). An over-reactive brainstem that produces intense and frequent impulses may result from any one or a combination of factors, including foetal exposure to alcohol and drugs, cigarette by-products, lead poisoning as well as hormonal abnormalities. As a consequence of this, disruptive children commonly reflect hyper-arousal, including startle response, increases in heart rate, sleep disturbance, anxiety, and motor hyperactivity (Newman & Newman 2006:297). Empirical evidence suggests that inherited traits are more likely directed toward generally deviant and dysregulated behaviour than towards violence *per se* and that polygenetic factors render certain children ill-equipped to manage the ordinary tasks of social life, placing them at risk of developing behavioural problems (Dodge & Pettit 2003:4).

3.2.1.2 Socio-cultural contexts

The model under review proposes that their early disadvantaged environments, result in a probabilistic risk for later behavioural problems for the child. A full understanding of behavioural problems requires embedding a society in a historical and cultural context (Dodge & Pettit 2003:5). The society into which a child is born will influence the child's behaviour patterns, to a large extent, as he navigates from childhood to adulthood. Children born into and growing up in harsh, violent communities may emulate what is prevalent in their community for fear of being different and may thus display disruptive and antisocial behaviour, become involved in face-to-face confrontations, resort to intimidation and become involved in assaults and fights, defy authority and use vulgar language (Skiba & Peterson 2000:347).

The accumulation of exposure to violence across several settings, including in the community, the school and the home, coupled with low parental monitoring and the likelihood of being a victim of violence, creates a context in which children exhibit extremely disruptive and violent behaviour (Newman & Newman 2006:296). The risk factors pertaining to the community are poverty, unemployment, marital divorce, low level of education, single-parent households, high residential mobility and low incomes (Dodge & Pettit 2003:5). However, to a large extent, early life experience risk factors also involve, the child's emergent relationships with peers as will be discussed in the next section.

3.2.1.3 Peer relationships, parents and social institutions

It needs to be noted that behavioural problems grow out of life experiences, especially with peers, parents and social institutions such as the school (Dodge & Pettit 2003:6). The biopsychosocial model proposes that the amount of exposure that a child has to aggressive peers at a day care centre, pre-school or school is predictive of later disruptive behaviour and perhaps because of modelling effects (Sinclair, Pettit, Harrist, Dodge & Bates 1994 in Dodge & Pettit 2003:7). Disruptive children who are excluded from joining prosocial groups that exhibit prosocial behaviour such as co-operation, understanding, sharing and caring, often lead them to criticise or disrupt the group activities of these groups and they often threaten reprisals because of exclusion from the group (Fogel & Melson 1988:296). Consequently, rejected children are most likely to join antisocial peer groups and are at greater risk of displaying deviant, antisocial behaviour and other serious adjustment problems later in life (Shafer & Kipp 2010: 618).

This researcher concurs with the view that children's social rejection by peers in the elementary school grades is a potent risk factor for adolescent behavioural problems. Many children in the researcher's school have displayed negative behaviour, which, as observed from early pre-school onwards, have incrementally increased in intensity as they progressed to higher grades. The researcher believes that once disruptive, attention-seeking behaviour has been established in young children, they tend to continue with this attention-seeking behaviour as they advance into adolescence and ultimately, into adulthood. If early interventions are not carried out (and this is currently

a serious problem in state schools because of the absence of school psychological services), the problem has the potential to spiral out of control.

Apart from pointing out the danger of the child exhibiting antisocial and disruptive behaviour at school, the biopsychosocial model proposes that life experiences at home that involve harsh treatment, rejection of the self and academic failure, place a child at a probabilistic risk of developing behavioural problems (Dodge & Pettit 2003:6). Furthermore, the problems of child abuse, violence in families and low socio-economic conditions threaten to undermine the quality of psychosocial development and educational success in many children (Newman & Newman 2006:296). When harsh physical discipline practices cross a boundary and become physical abuse, their effects are especially acute and increase the risk for adolescent behavioural problems (Deater-Deckard & Dodge 1997 in Dodge & Pettit 2003:6). Thus, behavioural problems in school sometimes reflect the existence of deep-seated emotional difficulties arising from factors such as a difficult family background or physical or sexual abuse. Some learners behave in disruptive ways at school because this is the norm in the learner's family or social sub-group and his/her life, both in and out of school, is characterised by acts of anti-social behaviour, violence and aggression (Cooper, Smith & Upton 1994:15).

It follows that a lack of affection and a close relationship between a parent and a child is a critical aspect of parenting that contributes significantly and incrementally to the antisocial behaviour of children (McFadyen-Ketchum, Bates, Dodge & Pettit 1996 in Dodge & Pettit 2003:6). According to the biopsychosocial model, maternal warmth contributes to positive long-term outcomes. Shafer & Kipp (2010: 644) agree with this viewpoint by stating that parents with a firm yet caring demeanour and who appeal to reason in order to enforce their demands, tend to raise highly competent and well-adjusted children. This is consistent with the "nurturing hypothesis" view of Dishion and Bullock (2002, in Dodge & Pettit 2003:6), which postulates that parents' positive attention, emotional investment and behavioural management combine in ways that forecast positive developmental trajectories in children.

This researcher agrees with the viewpoint propounded by the biopsychosocial model and is of the opinion that solid parenting is crucial in establishing a solid foundation for

the child at home. This will equip him/her with the necessary social and emotional skills that enables him/her to cope with the school challenges by avoiding disruptive peer groups who engage in antisocial and disruptive behaviour. Therefore, parents need to develop effective techniques for teaching their children alternative, non-aggressive strategies to handle and respond to insults, threats and frustrations (Newman & Newman 2006:297). It also becomes necessary to develop effective techniques for educating parents and teachers certain socialisation practices that help children develop self-control, empathy and a broader perspective regarding a situation. Importantly, through sound parenting practices, the potential for disruptive behaviour in schools will be minimised.

3.2.1.4 Empirical findings of the biopsychosocial model

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that the biopsychosocial model proposes that a combination of factors and not just a single factor predicts later antisocial adolescent behavioural problems (Dodge & Pettit 2003: 8). In fact, alternate models (such as the additive model and the cumulative model) propose that it is the number of risk factors, rather than any single factor, that incrementally increase the risk. Empirical findings from the Child Development Project (CDP) conducted by the Centre for Child and Family Policy (Duke University, North Carolina) with a random sample of 585 boys and girls from three different geographic sites show the development of those children who displayed anti-social behaviour from pre-school through to early adulthood. In this project, twenty different disposition, context, and life experience risk factors were assessed in pre-school, eighteen of which were found to predict later behavioural problems and were found to account for up to 45% of the variance in conduct problems 5 years later (Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates & Pettit 1998 in Dodge & Pettit 2003:8).

The CDP found that the diversity in risk factors increased the risks. For example, a problematic temperamental predisposition and low socioeconomic status at birth as well as early life experiences of physical abuse and peer rejection in early elementary school, combine to predict clinically significant behaviour problem outcomes (Deater-Deckard *et al.* 1998, in Dodge & Pettit 2003:8). However, in contrast with the low risk for children with none of these factors (a risk of 7%), and the moderate risk for children

with any one of these factors (a risk of 11% to 30%), children experiencing all four these factors have a 57% chance of severe conduct problems in adolescence.

It becomes clear from the above that a combination of factors are responsible for children's antisocial disruptive behaviour from early childhood onwards. Early intervention by implementing a preventative model of behaviour modification through positive reinforcement will assist in minimising disruptive behaviour (Scherer 1990 in Cooper *et al.* 1994:78). If it is found that interventions by the teacher, in the form of praise and reward, are making a positive difference to the child's behaviour, then this action should be reinforced to modify the child's antisocial behaviour (Cooper *et al.* 1994:77). This thinking is in keeping with B.F. Skinner's behaviourist theory of reinforcement, which states that reinforced behaviour tends to be repeated, whereas behaviour that is non-reinforced or punished tends not to be repeated or is extinguished (Hjelle & Ziegler 1987:200). Thus, reinforcement is important not only for the learning of responses but also for the maintenance of behaviour (Cervone & Pervin 2008:396).

However, while the biopsychosocial model emphasises the need for behavioural interventions, the medical model places intervention strategies squarely in the domain of medical science.

3.2.2 The medical model

This model proposes that disruptive behaviour is the result of maladjustment in children who need to be referred to child guidance clinics for therapy (Jones 2003:147). The Underwood Report (United Kingdom: Ministry of Education, 1955) reflected the medical perspective with regard to maladjusted children by classifying their symptoms into categories such as nervous behaviour, organic and psychotic disorders reinforcing the perception that there is something wrong within the difficult child (Cooper *et al.* 1994:33). The treatment of children with ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder), ODD (oppositional defiant disorder) and CD (conduct disorder) requires specialised pharmacological management (Rapport, Chung, Shore & Isaacs 2001:48).

According to this model, disruptive behaviour is understood as "maladjustment," and thus a function of psychopathology, where the child needs to be removed and placed in

a “treatment environment” (Jones 2003:148). Schools seek to resolve problem behaviour by referring a maladjusted child to a more appropriate environment or “milieu” for therapy by trained psychiatrists, paediatricians and general practitioners (Cooper *et al.* 1994: 35-36). It is argued that behavioural problems, by their very nature, disrupt the “normality” of the mainstream environment and that the school has the right and duty to create an environment for quality learning, even if it has to exclude troublesome pupils from its midst.

Thus, the premise of the medical model is that children who display negative behaviour, do so because of a mental illness and should therefore be referred to health agencies for treatment and rehabilitation. This means that the solutions to problems arising from disruptive behaviour are to be found in medical psychology, which is associated with psychiatry and paediatrics and is informed primarily by psychoanalytical thinking (Hersov 1986 in Jones 2003:149).

However, other models such as the biopsychosocial model, the action research model and the educational model present opposing views to those proposed by the medical model. The biopsychosocial model proposes behaviour modification through the involvement of all stakeholders namely mental health professionals, parents, teachers, peers and siblings (Rapport *et al.* 2001:48). The action research model (see section 3.2.4) promotes a similar position regarding consultation and collaboration among administrators, teachers, parents, school staff, human service professionals and other community stakeholders in attempting to modify the conduct of disruptive children (Conwill 2003: 239). The proponents of the educational model (see section 3.2.3) firmly assert that the school is sufficiently equipped to manage children with difficult behaviour without the need for medical intervention (Jones 2003: 155). This critique of the medical model particularly by the proponents of the educational model, purports to discredit the dominance of mental illness that originated in the Freudian paradigm and empowers the rehabilitation of disruptive children by the school rather than through health agencies (Jones 2003:151).

Sociologists of education have pointed out that the vested interests of mental health agencies lead to practices that stigmatise and discriminate against children who, for

various reasons, are regarded as difficult in the classroom and at school (Jones 2003:149). Research findings indicate that because of this discrimination, the medical model effectively marginalises the role of teachers and school practitioners. Since behavioural psychology emphasises the fact that behaviour is learned, teachers are as well equipped as other professionals to assist children with behavioural problems to learn new and more appropriate behaviour (Cooper *et al.* 1994:37). In fact, teachers play a pivotal role in observing and identifying children who display disruptive tendencies in their classrooms as well as employing the various alternatives to corporal punishment and using the school's code of conduct to discipline errant learners and address their disruptive behaviour.

This is in line with the "inclusive education principle" which advocates integration, by asserting firmly that every child, irrespective of his or her disabilities, handicap or disruptive behaviour, has the right to be educated alongside his or her peers in a normal school environment (Ramasut 1989 in Jones 2003:150). The inclusion of children with severe behavioural and learning difficulties within the mainstream educational system, previously described as unsuitable for the education of such children, raises the profile of behavioural psychology in the behaviour modification of the child (Cooper *et al.* 1994:37). "Difficult" children working alongside high achievers can benefit from this positive association by studying together and share class notes and by being encouraged by their more capable counterparts to focus more on academic achievement and less on disruptive behaviour (Shafer & Kipp 2010: 499).

This researcher believes that while inclusive education is necessary, the large class sizes prevalent in South African schools today militate against its effective application. The large class sizes are not ideal for teaching and for maintaining good classroom discipline and then supervising "disruptive children" simultaneously. If the National Department of Education in South Africa builds more schools to accommodate all the children in our country comfortably and implements a teacher-pupil ratio of 32:1, then the possibility of success through inclusivity may be possible. However, in the absence of this ideal, there is an urgent need for school psychological services to intervene in the behaviour modification of disruptive learners at school. .

On the positive side, the anti-medical discourse has emphasised the importance of classroom relationships and communication patterns between teachers and learners in the classroom (Jones 2003:152). On the negative side, it has promoted the sentiment that teachers who claim that a learner has a problem, ought to question their own expectations because some learners are *troubled* and not merely *troublesome* and could benefit from the help that schools and teachers can provide. As Galloway & Goodwin (1987: 31) put it, all teachers in special schools know many children whose disturbing behaviour can reasonably be viewed as a normal or even healthy, reaction to highly abnormal and stressful conditions in their families or even in their previous schools. It follows then, that behavioural problems mainly originate within the child's school and home environment and not only from within the child.

From the above it becomes clear that maladjustment may be judged subjectively, and that the real "pathology" lies in the ecology of the classroom (Jones 2003:150-151). The educational model places responsibility for the identification of disruptive learners and the intervention strategies squarely on the school with teachers playing a pivotal role in the learner's behaviour modification and rehabilitation.

3.2.3 The educational model

The educational model proposes that emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) could be any behaviour that gives cause for concern in school but is not linked to mental illness (Jones 2003:154). Education policies have defined the "disturbed learner" as having emotional and behavioural difficulties and have more recently shifted towards reconstructing such difficulties as disciplinary matters within the school. Importantly, this model posits that controversies about the nature of psychological problems are irrelevant in terms of the practical goals of supporting the pedagogical enterprise. Furthermore, this model emphasises the teaching and application of self-realisation rules, which are viewed as an ideal intervention strategy to improve negative behaviour and improve performance (Block 1978:61).

The educational model is opposed to the medical model and focusses on finding practical solutions to the educational challenges that learners' problems might pose in

the classroom, for example, the incidence of off-task behaviour, disruption of class lessons and opposition to teachers (Bru 2006:23). It is informed by a specifically educational perspective, which emphasises the distinctive qualities of the school/classroom situation, and the existing specialised skills of teachers. The model proposes that it might be possible for teachers to make profitable use of systemic insights and particular intervention techniques to modify the behaviour problems of disruptive learners (Cooper *et al.* 1994:87).

From the above it is clear that the educational model regards it as the responsibility of the teachers to rehabilitate disruptive learners in the school (Jones 2003:150). The argument is that teachers, being the custodians of the children in the classroom, are in the best position to identify problems and provide solutions. Accordingly, teachers can reduce the incidence of disruptive behaviour by implementing multi-component intervention strategies involving teacher movement around the classroom and addressing problems at the point of the disruption, public posting of classroom rules, precision requests, and the consequence of response cost (through positive rewards and demerit point systems), token economy and mystery motivators (Kehle *et al.* 2000:476).

While the researcher agrees with the view that teachers play a crucial role in arresting the incidences of disruptive behaviour among the children in the classroom, this may apply only to the learner's lower levels of disordered behaviour, such as aggressive arguments and power struggles with teachers and other learners (Conwill 2003:239). However, what about learners with extreme behaviour disorders such as ADHD and autism? Are teachers qualified or specialised to manage these children? According to Shinn, Ramsey, Walker, Stieber and O'Neill (1987 in Kehle *et al.* 2000: 475), learners with behavioural disorders are non-compliant, inattentive, and disruptive in the classroom to the extent that instructional efforts and academic engagement time are often compromised. Therefore, the classroom management of learners with behaviour disorders within the least restrictive educational settings is a challenging task that is often not accomplished successfully (Kauffman & Wong 1991:226).

This argument supports the view that children with extreme behavioural disorders should be placed in special education classrooms, for part or all of the school day.

However, while this may seem like the perfect temporary solution to the problem, research has shown that its effectiveness is limited. While learners in self-contained classrooms exhibited a lower incidence in disruptive behaviour than learners taught in mixed classrooms, it is often the case that the level of disruptive behaviour in special education classrooms still remains inappropriately high (Kehle *et al.* 2000:475).

Thus, the current legislation in the USA (IDEA Improvement Act of 1997; Public Law 105-17) requires that effective interventions should be incorporated into the daily class activities of general education. According to Kehle *et al.* (2000:476), this implies that interventions designed for learners with behavioural difficulties should be an integral component of the general education curriculum and should be indistinguishable from competent instruction. A multi-component intervention strategy is inevitable, then, to curb the problem of behavioural disorders and disruptive behaviour, where the teacher takes full control of the classroom discipline by implementing rules and regulations in accordance with the school's code of conduct with sanctions clearly stated for every level of misdemeanour.

The researcher is of the view that in addition to the teacher's efforts to minimise disruptive behaviour in the classroom, school support services should undertake regular visits to schools to assist with behaviour modification of disruptive learners. Furthermore and in conjunction with the expanding role of school psychologists and interventionists, the action-research model of intervention is ideally suited for implementation through consultation with all the stakeholders, including mental health professionals, teachers, parents and school management teams (Kehle *et al.* 2000:480).

3.2.4 The action research model of consultation and collaboration

According to Conwill (2003:239), a growing trend over the past two decades has been to bring needed services into the school rather than treating the health and social needs of children as distinct from their educational needs. This model posits that behavioural consultation and collaboration among administrators, teachers, parents, school staff, human service professionals, mental health consultants, school psychologists and other

community stakeholders are necessary processes involved in helping children with behavioural problems.

Early identification of children “at risk” of academic failure leads to a more timely intervention, thereby addressing problems before they become entrenched and require more expensive and long-term intervention (Crooks & Peters 2005:170). Accordingly, the action research model focusses on investigating and addressing the design of a teacher-friendly, cost-effective treatment for disruptive classroom behaviour (Kehle *et al.* 2000: 476). Careful observation-based analyses are essential to avoid the mistake of underestimating intervention effects and perhaps, as a result, prematurely abandoning fairly simple and cost-effective solutions to a child’s behavioural problems (Conwill 2003:240).

From the above it becomes clear that the action research model of consultation and collaboration attempts to combine the medical model and the educational model instead of each model working in isolation of the other. Importantly, it proposes that considerable involvement by mental health professionals, school psychologists, parents, teachers, peers and siblings is necessary to address problematic behaviour collectively. (Rapport *et al.* 2001: 48).

The classroom management of students with behavioural difficulties within the least restrictive educational settings is a challenging task that is often not successfully accomplished by teachers on their own (Kehle *et al.* 2000:475). Thus, it becomes necessary for behavioural consultants to help school personnel to develop preventative strategies for use with at-risk learners and parents (Holtzman, in Conwill 2003:240). The mental health consultant’s success with solving behavioural problems in school settings can generate a great deal of goodwill among all stakeholders since classroom, family and school-level interventions require collaborative efforts.

According to Conwill (2003: 242), in terms of the action research approach, consultants can focus on the actual problems of the school personnel (with regard to a difficult learner), while grounding themselves in the research-based literature that addresses these predicaments. Working collaboratively to establish the causes of the problems and

examine the setting through functional behavioural assessment, the stakeholders then brainstorm to generate one or more strategies, such as teaching alternative skills or notifying the child of the consequences and to set up evaluation procedures.

The success of the action research model is demonstrated by the following case study by chief psychologist, William Conwill (2003) (University of Tennessee, Knoxville), of an eight-year-old boy's disruptive behaviour in a class setting. His observations of the disruptive child through a 23-minute video recording showed that:

- The child used 41% of the time to gain the teacher's attention through disruptive acts such as making obscene gesture and loud noises, throwing a book down while staring intently at the teacher and shaking his desk forcefully.
- The child complies with general instructions to the class as a whole 14.5% of the time.
- Furthermore, the child complies with individual/ direct instruction from the teacher 6.6% of the time.
- In addition, the child engages in direct noncompliance and resistance 18, 3% of the time.
- The child taunts teaching staff 10, 8% of the time.
- Lastly, the child engages in disruptive behaviour 22, 6% of the time.

Conwill (2003: 244) finds that the child usurped a large amount of the teacher's time through noncompliant, disruptive behaviour. Individualised instruction did not produce as much conformity as receiving a general instruction directed to the class as a whole. Of the total time, he complied with the instructions only 20% of the teaching time. This means that he was likely to continue with his tantrums and high levels of aggressive, and noncompliant behaviour if appropriate interventions were not carried out (Hemmeter *et al.* 2006:594).

Conwill (2003:245) reports working with the teachers and the treatment team subsequently to implement appropriate interventions as follows:

- The child was called to the teacher's desk to receive a token for on-task behaviour - he was rewarded for giving the correct response (Skinner's theory of positive reinforcement). All his positive compliant actions were praised and rewarded, thus increasing the possibility of the response being repeated (Hjelle & Ziegler 1987:200).
- The child was negatively reinforced for non-compliance (time-out) or disruptive behaviour (removed from the audience of teachers and classmates), in other words, he was punished (Skinner's theory of negative reinforcement). All his negative actions including non-compliance were punished, decreasing the probability of that response occurring again (Burger 1993:401).

This consultative and collaborative intervention increased the learner's on-task and compliance rates, his tolerance for working alone by giving him token reinforcements, increased the incidence of following teachers' initial directions without seeking additional attention, without passive non-compliance and without disruptive behaviour (Conwill 2003: 245). The reinforcement of good behaviour through rewards has been proven to assist children with ADHD to reduce instances of disruptive behaviour significantly, with the introduction of the good behaviour game (GBG) and through verbal self-instructions, as expounded in the conceptual model of ADHD.

3.2.5 The conceptual model of ADHD

This model posits the desirability of using a theoretical framework for guiding the design and evaluation of therapeutic interventions for children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, commonly referred to as ADHD (Rapport *et al.* 2001:48). Childhood and adolescent disruptive behavioural disorders are common, disabling and associated with high costs, both societal and in terms of individual suffering (Sondeijker, Ferdinand, Oldehinkel, Veenstra, Winter, Ormel & Verhulst 2005:931). Significantly, ADHD problems are the most frequently found of all disruptive behavioural problems in young children and predicts the early onset of oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and conduct disorder (CD) (Van Lier *et al.* 2004:467).

Importantly, ADHD is characterised by inattention, hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour, ODD is accompanied by recurrent patterns of negativistic, defiant,

disobedient and hostile behaviour towards authority figures and CD is recognised by a repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour that violates the basic rights of others or societal norms or rules. Significantly, individuals who fulfil the criteria for ADHD, ODD, or OD often also have symptoms of one of the other disorders (Sondeijker *et al.* 2005: 932).

Research over four decades substantiate the clinical efficacy of behavioural interventions as a primary, complementary, or alternative treatment for children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (Rapport *et al.* 2001:48). Behavioural interventions focus on academic performance, compliance or rule following, social skills or peer and parent interactions and require considerable involvement by mental health professionals, teachers, parents, peers and siblings to achieve desirable levels of efficacy (in keeping with the educational model and the action research model of consultation and collaboration).

However, despite the growing sophistication in the field of behavioural treatment of ADHD, the conceptual model of ADHD proposes that this method is usually judged to be less potent compared to pharmacological management with stimulants, a view that leans more towards the medical model of managing disruptive behaviour (Rapport *et al.* 2001:48). Recent findings of the National Institute of Mental Health multicenter Multimodal Treatment Study for ADHD (Orlando, Florida. MTA Group, 1999)., which compared intensive behavioural treatment, psychostimulant treatment and combined therapy over a 14-month period for large numbers of children with ADHD, corroborate the superiority of psychostimulant over behavioural intervention (MTA Group in Rapport *et al.* 2001:48).

According to Sondeijker *et al.* (2005: 936), ADHD and ODD symptoms appear to be intertwined, indicating that with respect to treatment, it might not be useful to develop different treatment modules for them. Since these disorders overlap to a considerable extent, a strong possibility exists that they might conceivably share similar favourable drug responses. CD, on the other hand, may require behavioural intervention rather than pharmacological intervention. In other words, ADHD/ODD is considerably less predictive of CD than CD is of ADHD/ODD (Sondeijker *et al.* 2005:936).

An alternative conceptual model of ADHD proposes that this behavioural dysfunction is rooted in cognitive models of recognition and recall processes and working memory in particular (Rapport *et al.* 2001:54). This model emphasises the psychological rather than the biological features of ADHD. Furthermore, it posits that working memory plays a pivotal role in the organisation of behaviour and, as such, may help account for the poorly structured (namely, disorganised) behavioural characteristics of children with ADHD. These characteristics include disorganisation, boredom, inattentiveness and low frustration tolerance. In addition, it postulates that the failure of working memory not only leads to disorganised behaviour but also motivates children to redirect their attention to other aversive stimuli in the environment, a phenomenon described as stimulation seeking (Miltenberger 2008:78).

Children with ADHD demonstrate frequent, rapid shifts in activity, especially under conditions that can be characterised as monotonous or too complex to enable thorough processing of stimuli (Rapport *et al.* 2001:54). Redirecting attention can be conceptualised as a form of escape from monotonous or high task demand conditions and is observed by others as hyperactivity and impulsivity. However, according to Cooper, Smith and Upton (1994:25), this behaviour should not be seen as originating from within the child, but from within the interaction between the child and the teacher. Importantly, this unacceptable behaviour occurs because it is indirectly reinforced, as the teacher has not intervened to correct the behaviour but has actually allowed it to continue.

Research findings indicate that the teacher's frustration with the ADHD child intentionally makes him or her ignore the child's disruptive behaviour (Cooper *et al.* 1994:25). Thus, the child and the teacher are often locked in a cycle of increasingly negative interaction from which neither can readily escape - the more the child misbehaves, the more negative the teacher becomes and the more negative the teacher becomes, the more the child misbehaves (Cooper *et al.* 1994:25). Because ADHD problems are one of the most frequently occurring types of disruptive behaviours in young children, attention is primarily given to the early detection and preventative intervention through concerted behaviour modification of behavioural excesses

(Robinson *et al.* 1999:195). In effect, various strategies may be employed to manage the problems displayed by disruptive children, particularly ADHD children.

3.2.5.1 Good behaviour game (GBG)

The good behaviour game (GBG) is a classroom-based behaviour management strategy that promotes prosocial behaviour and reduces disruptive behaviour (Van Lier *et al.* 2004:469). In this game, class rules are formulated by the teacher in conjunction with the children. The positively formulated rules are accompanied by pictograms that are attached to the blackboard. The children are then put into groups consisting of three to four members, with each group having a fair mix of disruptive and non-disruptive children. Each group is given a number of cards and the teacher takes away a card if the group violates a rule. The group that still has a card or cards remaining at the end of the period is rewarded with compliments or stickers for appropriate behaviour. Winning teams receive tangible rewards at the end of the period, weekly and even monthly according to their cumulative performances (Van Lier *et al.* 2004:469).

This game is based on Skinner's behavioural theory of positive and negative reinforcement, processes that strengthen a specific type of behaviour. Both these processes increase the probability that the compliant behaviour will occur again in the future (Miltenberger 2008:78) and In the game, all the child's positive compliant actions are praised and rewarded by the teacher, increasing the possibility of the response being repeated (Hjelle & Ziegler 1987:200). All of the child's negative actions, including non-compliance, are punished (by the teacher taking away a card) thus decreasing the probability of the response occurring again (Burger 1993:407). This is in keeping with the action research model of William Conwill, who also used praise and reward and positive and negative reinforcement to control the disruptive behaviour.

Thus, it follows that the GBG encourages children to manage their own and their classmates' behaviour through a process of group reinforcement and mutual self-interest by the addition of a stimulus - a reinforcer and by the removal of a stimulus - an aversive stimulus (Miltenberger 2008:78). Gradually, over time, the children learn to

obey the classroom rules even in the absence of the GBG. Once the children are achieving success consistently, the token economy is discontinued, and the natural contingencies of reinforcement (such as praise, good grades and work outcomes) are used to maintain the desirable behaviour (Miltenberger 2008:506). The results of the intervention of the GBG show that teachers frequently report the GBG to be an effective tool in managing children's behaviour in class. The empirical findings of the GBG intervention strategy show that the GBG has a positive effect on children with ADHD and plays a significant role in reducing delinquency and juvenile infractions later on (Van Lier *et al.* 2004:475).

3.2.5.2 Cognitive behaviour modification (CBM).

According to Robinson *et al.* (1999:196), classroom teachers need behavioural change strategies that can be incorporated efficiently into the daily instructional routines to mitigate the negative effects of aberrant classroom behaviour. Early identification of disruptive behaviour can facilitate more timely interventions, thereby addressing problems before they become pervasive and require expensive, long-term intervention (Crooks & Peters 2005:170). Cognitive behaviour modification (CBM) presents a viable alternative for addressing the need to remediate behavioural excesses and deficits. Elements of behaviour therapy (for example, modelling, feedback and reinforcement) are combined with cognitive approaches (for example, cognitive think-alouds) to teach individuals cognitive strategies, such as anger control and self-coping in terms of changing behaviour.

In a study conducted by Meichenbaum and Goodman (in Robinson *et al.* 1999:196), learners exhibiting hyperactive behaviour or poor self-control were taught to use verbal self-instructions to improve attention and performance with regard to cognitive tasks. The teacher would model a cognitive task such as colouring in figures or copying line patterns by using overt self-instructions (that is, talking aloud while colouring or copying) and then prompt learners to do the same by gradually transmuting their self-statements to a covert level (talking in his/her mind while doing the task to guide him/her along). The goal of this instructional sequence was to guide learners to progress from overt to covert self-talk while performing a task, thus improving their attention to

and comprehension of the task at hand and subsequently reducing off-task behaviour (Robinson *et al.* 1999:196).

It becomes clear from the above that various interventions can be undertaken to reduce disruptive behaviour in children and this is further evidenced in the teaching pyramid model where practical suggestions are made with regard to prevention and intervention.

3.2.6 The teaching pyramid: A promotion, prevention and intervention model

The teaching pyramid reflects a three-tiered model of classroom strategies for promoting the social-emotional development of all children and addressing the needs of children who are at-risk for or who already exhibit challenging behaviour (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain 2003: 48). The pyramid framework includes the four levels of practice, namely, relationships, supportive environments, social and emotional teaching strategies and intensive individualised interventions (Fox *et al.* 2003:48).

3.2.6.1 Level 1: Relationships

High quality relationships with children, peers, teachers and families in the school community contribute significantly to the learner's social and emotional development by giving the learner a sense of being valued and cared for by significant others, whom the learner has learnt to trust (Cooper *et al.* 1994:142). These positive relationships provide opportunities for children to learn important social skills and develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and other emotional competencies (Hemmeter, Ostrosky & Fox 2006:590). Furthermore, they provide children with a sense of security and support, which forms an essential basis for addressing personal challenges (Cooper *et al.* 1994:144).

Central to the teaching pyramid model is the importance of building relationships with the family before problem behaviour occurs (Hemmeter *et al.* 2006:590). The family is

the most immediate and perhaps the most influential system affecting the child (Marais & Meier 2010:41). Thus, it becomes important to ensure that interactions relating to a child's challenging behaviour happens within the framework of ongoing supportive family relationships as building family relationships is essential to promoting meaningful, positive and systemic change for young children (Garrison & Reynolds, in Hemmeter *et al.* 2006:590).

Apart from families, relationships between professionals are critical to supporting children's social-emotional development and addressing challenging behaviour (Hemmeter *et al.* 2006:590). Schools that have ongoing relationships with mental health consultants or behaviour specialists or that have professional psychologists on their staff can provide the appropriate support and work together to promote children's social-emotional competence in addition to providing intervention consultations. Because of these supportive relationships, children develop a positive self-concept, confidence and a sense of safety that helps to reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour (Fox *et al.* 2003:49).

3.2.6.2 Level 2: Supportive environments

According to Hemmeter *et al.* (2006:592), this section of the teaching pyramid includes practices that focus on teaching children about routines, giving clear directions and arranging the environment to support engagement and appropriate behaviour. The combination of giving children positive attention for their pro-social behaviour, teaching them about routines and expectations, and making changes to the physical environment, the schedule and materials, may encourage children's engagement in daily activities and prevent or decrease the likelihood of challenging behaviour (Fox *et al.* 203: 49).

This researcher believes that teachers play a crucial role in providing an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Teachers who set up their classrooms in a manner that is warm and inviting, with appropriate, colourful charts that are neatly

presented, creates the enthusiasm necessary for learners to excel. Furthermore, a learner's dignity, self-respect and self-esteem cannot develop in an environment where discipline is not maintained (Marais & Meier 2010:53). Hence, teachers need to employ strategies to manage disruptive children by maintaining discipline without administering corporal punishment. It is important for teachers to teach learners that there is a set of behaviours and communication standards, as well as established classroom rules that need to be adhered to and that there are consequences for not following these rules (Marais & Meier 2010:46). Prominently displaying classroom rules functions as a prompt to students, conveys clear expectations for behaviour, and most importantly, defines the association between learners' behaviours and their consequences (Morgan & Jenson, in Kehle *et al.* 2000:477).

3.2.6.3 Level 3: Social and emotional teaching strategies

The third component of the teaching pyramid focusses on strategies for teaching children appropriate skills to control their anger, solve problems, communicate their emotions effectively and to persevere with difficult tasks. When children are able to do this, they are less likely to engage in problem behaviour (Hemmeter *et al.* 2006:592). Many children need explicit instructions to ensure that they develop competence in emotional literacy, anger and impulse control, interpersonal problem solving and friendship skills (Fox *et al.* 2003:49).

An intentional approach to teaching social skills and supporting emotional development requires the use of a range of strategies that include teaching the concept, modelling, rehearsing, role-playing, prompting children in context and providing feedback and acknowledgement when the behaviour occurs (Hemmeter *et al.* 2006:592). Research findings conclude that teacher-directed activities provide an ideal context for introducing modelling and role-playing skills. Effective teachers reduce disruptive incidents by starting lessons smoothly and promptly, not only getting learners into their places on time but also getting them engaged in the lesson itself. Thus, teachers should

make learners aware of the types of behaviour that enhance or detract from social acceptability (Cooper *et al.* 1994:118-119).

In all areas of instruction, effective teaching requires careful planning, individualisation, provision of many and diverse learning opportunities and attention to children when they are engaged in socially competent behaviour (Fox *et al.* 2003:50).

3.2.6.4 Level 4: Individualised interventions

It needs to be noted that even when teachers establish positive relationships with learners, implement classroom preventative practices and use explicit teaching strategies, a few children are likely to continue to display challenging behaviour (Fox *et al.* 2003: 50). When teachers implement the universal and secondary strategies of the teaching pyramid (Levels 1-3), only a small percentage of the children are likely to need more intensive support. These children require intensive, individualised attention because they may suffer from some behavioural disorders such as autism and ADHD (Rapport *et al.* 2001:48). Hence, individualised, positive behaviour support (PBS) is required and this constitutes the fourth level of the teaching pyramid model (Hemmeter *et al.* 2006:593). The focus of PBS is to help the child develop new social and communication skills, enhance relationships with peers and adults and experience an improved quality of life (Fox *et al.* 2003:51).

It is essential that at this more intensive level of intervention, a plan for addressing a young child's challenging behaviour should be comprehensive, developmentally appropriate and developed in partnership with families and other people relevant to the child's life, including professionals, family members, and other adults who interact with the child on a regular basis (Hemmeter *et al.* 2006:593). This view is in keeping with the action research model of consultation and collaboration where administrators, teachers, parents, school staff, human service professionals and other community stakeholders work together to find solutions to problems presented by the disruptive child (Conwill 2003:239).

3.3 SUMMARY

Research findings indicate that a lack of on-task orientation and disruptive behaviour have become an increasing problem in South African schools. Learners who exhibit behavioural problems frequently engage in behavioural deviancy including aggression, hyperactivity, impulsivity, lack of self-control, inattention and disrespect towards authority. Teachers of learners with significant behavioural problems are faced with considerable challenges on a daily basis. They often report feeling ill equipped with regard to meeting the needs of children with challenging behaviour and frustrated because their attempts to develop safe and nurturing classroom environments are ineffectual. These teachers spend most of their time addressing the behaviour of a few children, leaving little time to support the development and learning of the other children in their care.

It, therefore, becomes imperative to ensure that appropriate intervention strategies are put in place for mediating behavioural excesses and deficits. These interventions must assist teachers with managing disruptive learners so that teaching and learning can proceed in an uninterrupted manner in the classroom. The various models of disruptive behaviour discussed above suggest that the responsibility for intervention falls squarely on specific people or professionals. Accordingly, the medical model and the ADHD conceptual model focusses on the field of medicine (doctors, psychiatrists, paediatricians) to address the problems of the autistic, hyperactive and disruptive learner outside the classroom context. In turn, the educational model posits that the teacher must take responsibility for intervening in the classroom context, where it is proposed that a teacher must manage difficult learners through stringent rules and a disciplinary code.

However, the most recent approach proposes that the managing of disruptive children should not be the responsibility of a particular sector but the responsibility of all the stakeholders involved. Teachers must identify children with oppositional, defiant, disruptive behaviour and work in close consultation and collaboration with parents,

family members, mental health professionals such as doctors, psychologists, therapists, psychiatrists as well as school counsellors and social workers, to arrest and minimise the occurrence of disruptive behaviour among learners at school. Accordingly, the *action research model of consultation and collaboration* as well as *the teaching pyramid model of promotion, prevention and intervention*, both provide practical guidelines for undertaking successful interventions to manage disruptive behaviour, including aggressive behaviour in schools.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters two and three presented an in-depth literature study of the causes and consequences of learner aggression as well as a study of the literature on managing disruptive learners in rural secondary schools. Against this background, this chapter will highlight the research design and research methods used in the empirical investigation phase of this study.

The data collection and analysis techniques and methods as well as the validity and reliability of the data collected together with the measures implemented to ensure trustworthiness will be explained. In addition, the ethical measures considered are highlighted. The main research question guiding this study, as well as the aim of the study, are also stated.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIM

In this chapter, the researcher answered the general research question set out in chapter one (see 1.3) which reads as follows:

How do principals, school management teams and teachers manage learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KZN?

The over-arching aim of the study was to identify the root causes of learner aggression, as well as its manifestation in the classroom and its effect on teachers and learners and to determine applicable strategies to manage learner aggression in rural secondary schools. The following questions were advanced to direct the research:

- What are the causes of learner aggression in rural secondary schools?
- What are the consequences of learner aggression in rural secondary schools?
- What strategies can be employed to address the problem of aggression in rural secondary schools?

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

In conducting this empirical investigation, a qualitative research design was used. The researcher chose this approach because it gives a clear understanding of the participants' views and experiences and it captures participants' perceptions as they occur naturally (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:232) and in their actual words (Johnson & Christensen 2011:18).

A qualitative design allowed the researcher to gather data through face-to-face interviews with selected principals, teachers and learners in their natural settings, which were the five rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:315). The purpose in adopting this approach was to ascertain first hand, the responses of learners and teachers to acts of aggression inflicted upon them by aggressive learners and the principals' perspectives and management strategies employed to contain incidents of learner aggression in their schools.

This design involved an interpretive perspective because it was primarily concerned with meaning and it attempted to ascertain people's understanding of a particular social phenomenon, in this instance learner aggression in rural secondary schools, within a social context, which in this case was the school (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004:20-21). The interpretive paradigm involves taking people's subjective experiences and making sense of these experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they have to say. It involves understanding the research participants' "inner worlds" (that is, their subjective worlds) and requires providing a valid, accurate account of the participants' perspectives (Johnson & Christensen 2011:265-266). In turn, the qualitative approach aims at enriching our understanding of the human experience. Thus, the interpretive paradigm emphasises both experience and interpretation.

The research design was also constructivist because it focussed on the perspectives, feelings and beliefs of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:347). The researcher considered the participants' views, described them within a natural setting or context (that is a school) and explored the meaning participants held with regard to

the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools, this being the central perspective of constructivism or naturalistic inquiry (Creswell 2002: 49). This was achieved through social interaction (interviews and focus group interviews) between the researcher and the participants in a social setting (the school).

An interactive method of data collection, which requires face-to-face interaction between the researcher and selected participants (learners, teachers and principals), was used. The data collected were in the form of text, as quotes of transcripts from interviews (with principals) and focus groups (learners and teachers). The principals', teachers' and learners' perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, opinions and actions were recorded, examined, described and analysed. Non-interactive methods of data collection included the field notes of observations made during the pilot study, during visits made to the school before the interviews, during the interviews themselves and after the interviews with the participants. The expressions and attitudes exhibited when answering questions, how well they interpreted the questions, their contributions to discussions and also when clarity on information was required regarding certain aspects of the tapes, which were not very clear, were duly noted.

The research methods used in this study are now given which includes ethical measures, measures to ensure trustworthiness, data collection and data analysis.

4.4 RESEARCH METHODS

4.4.1 Ethical measures

Regarding the data collection process, the researcher considered certain important issues, such as legal issues, technical accessibility and ethical issues (McMillan & Schumacher 2011:15). The following is a discussion of the ethical measures the researcher took throughout the research process in order to guide and assist the empirical investigation (Johnson & Christensen 2011:100).

4.4.1.1 Informed consent

Before conducting this study, the researcher obtained permission from the Research Directorate of the KZN Department of Education to conduct research in the five rural secondary schools (Appendix C). The researcher also obtained permission from the school principals before entering their premises and collecting data, since obtaining permission from organisational personnel requires contacting them before the start of the study (Creswell 2002:160). Likewise, informed consent from all the prospective participants (principals, teachers and learners (see Appendix A) to participate in the study was obtained, after having informed them of its purpose, the procedure to be followed, the risks, benefits, alternative procedures and the measures implemented to ensure confidentiality (Johnson & Christensen 2011:107). Thus, permission was requested and granted by all the relevant role-players before the commencement of the interviews.

4.4.1.2 Voluntary participation

The researcher informed all participants that their participation in the study was completely voluntary since participants cannot be compelled, coerced or required to participate in a study against their will (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:118). Participants were also informed that the freedom to participate or not to participate is a basic right, and it includes the freedom to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:118). In this way, it was ensured that coercion to participate or to remain a participant was not applied and the participants were not exploited in any way, thereby upholding the highest ethical code. Accordingly, the researcher's thorough understanding of ethical principles and procedures that were applied stringently, helped to prevent any abuses that could have occurred (Johnson & Christensen 2011:99).

4.4.1.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

The participants were assured that all the information provided by them would be held in strict confidence and that their identities would not be revealed in any record or report and that there would be no link between the data and the participants (McMillan

& Schumacher 2010:121). Furthermore, settings (such as schools) and participants would not be identifiable in print to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, the participants were requested not to include their names, addresses nor the names and addresses of their schools. Thus, confidentiality was ensured because the data could not be linked to individual participants by name. Accordingly, code names for people and places were used to ensure anonymity. In this way, neither the names of participants who provided the information, nor their identities, are known to anyone and their privacy is duly protected (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:121).

4.4.1.4 Permission to tape-record interviews

As mentioned before, the researcher used the qualitative interview approach to gather information-rich data about the participants' thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations and feelings about learner aggression (Johnson & Christensen 2011:202). This process allows a researcher to enter into the inner world of another person and to gain an understanding of that person's perspective (Patton 1987 in Johnson & Christensen 2011:202).

In order to capture this without missing any vital information, all the interviews were tape-recorded. All participants were informed before the start of the interviews that their responses would be tape-recorded and that they had the right to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable or intimidated by the presence of the tape recorder. Thus, the taping of the interviews never proceeded without the knowledge and consent of the participants. In this way, the researcher avoided deception and upheld the highest level of professional integrity and objectivity (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:119-123).

4.4.2 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

When qualitative researchers speak of research validity, they are usually referring to qualitative research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy and therefore defensible (Johnson & Christensen 2011:264). In this study, Lincoln and Guba's model for ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data was employed according to the following four criteria (Poggenpoel 1998: 349-351):

- The truth-value (credibility) determines how confident the researcher is that his findings are a true and accurate account of the phenomenon that was studied. To maintain credibility, the researcher ensured that the information gleaned from all the participants was recorded and analysed accurately.
- Applicability (transferability) indicates the extent to which the findings from the study apply to other settings, contexts or groups. To ensure applicability, sufficient descriptive information was presented in this study that may be of use in future research.
- Consistency (dependability) refers to whether the findings will be consistent with future studies of the same kind, using similar contexts and the same subjects. In order to ensure dependability, the researcher accounted for variables, which may possibly cause changes owing to the emergent nature of the design.
- Neutrality (confirmability) refers to the freedom from bias and subjectivity in research procedures and findings. The researcher attempted to remain objective throughout the process, guarding against subjectivity and bias, which could have influenced the interpretation and description of data. In order to achieve this, the researcher engaged in member checking which involved taking the interpretations and descriptions of the data analysis back to the research participants to verify its accuracy and credibility. The transcribed data were submitted to the participants to double-check that all the transcripts were authentic and recorded accurately.

In addition to the above, the following strategies were used to ensure trustworthiness in this research:

4.4.2.1 Prolonged data collection

Since a lengthy data collection period provides opportunities for interim data analysis, preliminary comparisons and corroboration to refine ideas and to ensure a match between evidence-based categories and participant reality (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331), the researcher collected data over a relatively long period of time. The schools were visited before the interviews, during the interviews and again after the

interviews to ensure that the information transcribed from the tapes was correct and to clarify information that appeared vague. This allowed the researcher to engage in continual data analysis and comparison to refine ideas.

4.4.2.2 Participants' language

In order to avoid sophisticated language or abstract social science terms, the interviews were conducted in the participants' language of teaching and learning which in this case was English (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331). Simple language was employed to ensure maximum understanding on the part of the participants. The data were also reported in the participants' own languages.

4.4.2.3 Field research

The interviews took place at the schools, which were the natural settings of the participants in order to reflect their lived experiences (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331). This reflected the reality of their experiences more accurately than contrived or laboratory settings would.

4.4.2.4 Disciplined subjectivity

The researcher has been made aware of researcher bias that is a potential threat to validity, resulting from selective observations and selective recording of information and also from allowing one's personal views and perspectives to affect how data are interpreted and how the research is conducted (Johnson & Christensen 2011:264). The researcher has ensured that the analysis of the interviews was conducted objectively and has monitored himself constantly both for subjectivity and bias throughout the process.

4.4.2.5 Verbatim accounts

Verbatim accounts (the lowest inference descriptors) are used because the participant's exact words are provided in direct quotations (Johnson & Christensen 2011:267). The researcher extracted the verbatim accounts as well as direct quotes from the transcripts to illustrate the sense, intentions, feelings, tone and emotions of participants.

4.4.2.6 Low-inference descriptors

The researcher used concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331). Low inference descriptors (literal descriptors) as opposed to abstract scientific language were used in order to present the participants' actual language, dialect and personal meanings (Johnson & Christensen 2011:267).

4.4.2.7 Mechanically recorded data

Since tape recorders and other audio-visual equipment provide accurate and relatively complete records of conversations between people (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331), for the purposes of this study, a tape recorder was used to record the interviews.

4.4.3 Data collection

The data collection phase involved identifying and selecting individuals for study, obtaining their permission to be studied and gathering information by administering instruments, by asking them questions or observing their behaviour (Creswell 2002:11). The researcher chose the interview method of data collection because it could be done face-to-face and the strength of this method was that it allowed for probing of the participants to clarify responses or gain additional information (Johnson & Christensen 2011:198).

Accordingly, the researcher used semi-structured interviews for this phase of the study and asked open-ended questions so that the participants could voice their experiences the best in an unconstrained manner, thus allowing the participants sufficient opportunities to formulate their responses (Creswell 2002:204-205). Where necessary, answers to questions were probed and follow-up questions were asked to seek clarity and to glean more information from the respondents. The questions asked were based on the themes discussed in the literature study.

4.4.3.1 Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was used in this investigation, where information-rich participants (principals, teachers and learners) were selected for in-depth study since they could provide both the best information as well as first-hand experiences to address the problem under investigation, that is, learner aggression (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:138). Five secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KZN were chosen as sites to conduct the investigation. The sample consisted of the following participants:

- Five principals from each of the five secondary schools were interviewed individually (the management perspective).
- Eight teachers from each of the five secondary schools were interviewed as a focus group (the teacher perspective).
- Eight learners from the representative council of learners RCL selected from each of the five secondary schools were interviewed as a focus group (the learner perspective).

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the principal of each of the schools, focus group interviews with eight teachers from each of the schools, and focus group interviews with eight elected members of the RCL from each of the schools.

The principal from each of the schools assisted in selecting the participants for the focus group interviews for teachers and for the RCL. The teachers were selected in terms of different age groups, tenure, gender and most importantly, based on their first-hand experience of learner aggression (three young teachers, three middle-aged teachers and two senior teachers). The RCL consisted of eight democratically elected learners from each of the five schools who were proportionately represented in terms of gender and race.

The interviews were conducted at a convenient time and place and were negotiated with the respondents well in advance. The interviews with the principals were conducted in the principal's office and those with the teachers and RCL focus groups

were conducted in each of the school libraries. The researcher ensured that the settings for the interviews were warm and inviting, easily accessible to participants and suitably quiet. The researcher established a good rapport with the participants by outlining the purpose and aims of the research and by thanking them for their time and involvement. Participants were reassured that strict confidentiality of their details would be maintained and gave their permission for this research by signing consent forms (see Appendix A). The interviews were tape-recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed verbatim.

4.4.3.2 Researcher as instrument

The researcher served as an instrument in this study since all the responses of participants were collected and analysed by him. As a researcher, he understood the need to ensure that he was competent, skilled and adequately prepared to undertake the proposed investigation (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:12) and to avoid researcher bias by not engaging in selective observations and selective recording of information (Johnson & Christensen 2011:264). In order to ensure competency and avoid researcher bias, the researcher undertook to:

- Observe the ethical code of conduct required when undertaking this empirical investigation.
- Pay attention to the participants' own words and to transcribe the interviews verbatim.
- Remain sensitive to the needs, emotions and feelings of the participants at all times since the population sample being studied came from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and varying age groups, experiences and ideologies;
- Avoid bias and subjectivity with regard to achieving rapport with the participants and the interpretation of their data by maintaining a neutral stance during the entire interview process.

- Maintain objectivity with reference to the participants at all times by not influencing their perceptions and not making value judgements that might bias the research findings.
- Familiarise himself with the interview guide (wording, format, recording procedures and allowable probes).
- Conduct practice interviews several times until the desired level of objectivity and reliability were reached.
- Train himself to conduct the interview in a courteous and professional manner throughout the interview process (Creswell 2002:208).

In addition, with regard to the researcher's competence, at the time this research was conducted, the researcher had a Bachelor of Arts degree, a Bachelor of Education degree as well as a Human Resource Management certificate, all from the University of South Africa. In addition, the researcher was a principal of a primary school, had extensive interviewing experience and was supervised by a highly experienced and competent university professor.

4.4.3.3 Pilot study

In order to test whether the questions to be asked in the study were clear and unambiguous before using them in the actual research interviews, a pilot study was conducted (Johnson & Christensen 2011: 183). This pilot study was conducted informally with two secondary school teachers to test whether the questions asked were relevant, appropriate and in line with the problem being investigated. Furthermore, the aim of the pilot test was to find answers to the following questions:

- Are the questions easy to follow?
- Are the questions relevant to what the research aims to accomplish?
- Is there a good flow of questions in the interview guide?
- How long does it take to answer the questions?

From the responses received from the teachers that participated in the pilot study, it was confirmed that the questions were regarded as relevant, easy to understand and precise and that they covered the aspects adequately that were important to this study. Their responses assisted in confirming the questions for the interview schedules for the principals (interviews), teachers (focus groups) and learners (focus groups).

4.4.3.4 Interview schedule

It was decided to use interviews to collect the relevant data. Accordingly, an interview schedule with a list of questions to be asked during the interview was compiled (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:206). The pilot study guided the types of questions that were to appear in the interview schedule that consisted of:

- Seven questions for the principals.
- Six questions for the teachers.
- Five questions for the learners.

All the questions were related directly to the objectives of the study and followed a given sequence that was adhered to during each interview. The main written questions appearing in the interview schedule were asked orally in exactly the same order and wording with appropriate probing questions where it was deemed necessary (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:206).

4.4.3.5 Field notes

Field notes (recordings of observations and reflections on them) were kept throughout the empirical phase of the research with regard to the observations made, during the pilot study as well as the information pertaining to the focus group interviews (McMillan & Schumacher 2010: 350). Descriptive field notes included a description of the interview process and how it unfolded while reflective field notes included the researcher's thoughts, insights and hunches as the interview proceeded (Creswell 2002: 203). Apart from transcribing all the focus group recordings, field notes were made after each focus group concerning whether learners and teachers focussed on the questions asked, how

well they participated and contributed to the group discussion and their expressions and attitudes when responding to questions. Other field notes included participants' comments and tentative interpretations made by the researcher during the data collection and analysis procedures.

4.4.4 Data analysis

After organising and preparing the data, the researcher engaged in the data analysis process (Creswell 2002: 226). All the interviews were transcribed before analysing the data. In addition, a descriptive narrative was given, followed by an interpretation. When conducting an inductive data analysis, a broad bottom-up strategy was adopted, which involved beginning with the lowest level categories closest to the data (Johnson & Christensen 2011:520), as follows:

4.4.4.1 Segmenting

Segmenting involves dividing the data into meaningful analytical units. The researcher segmented the data by reading through the text line-by-line and determining: Is there a segment of text, which is important for this research? Does it differ in any way from the texts before or after it? Where does the segment begin and end? These segments (words, single sentences or paragraphs) were then bracketed to indicate where they began and where they ended.

4.4.4.2 Coding

The segments of data were identified by means of symbols and category names. For example, verbal aggression was indicated by VA, physical aggression by PA, single-parent families by SPF.

Apart from this, face-sheet codes, which applied to single complete transcripts, were also used to enable the researcher to search for group differences. For example, groups one, two and three were coded as G1, G2 and G3 respectively.

4.4.4.3 Compiling a master list

After developing all the category names, they were placed on a master list together with their symbolic codes. This master list included each code followed by the full code name and a brief description of the code. The codes on the master list were then reapplied to new segments of the text every time new appropriate sections were found. These new categories and codes were added to the master list as and when it was required.

4.4.4.4 External coder

The raw data was sent to the study's supervisor who was the external coder and who checked the analysis for inter-coder reliability (for consistency in the appropriate codes between the researcher and his supervisor) and intra-coder reliability (to ensure that the researcher's own coding was consistent).

4.5 SUMMARY

Chapter four outlined the research design and research methods used in the empirical phase of this study. The research questions and aim, the research method and design, the ethical measures, the data collection and the data analysis methods used, were explained. The results and findings of the empirical investigation will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter four, the research design and methodology used in this study were clearly outlined. Various ethical considerations in conducting the research as stated in section 1.6.6 as well as measures to ensure trustworthiness as cited in section 4.4.2 were explained in detail.

In-depth interviews were conducted at five rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KZN. This chapter analyses the findings of the interviews and provides a detailed interpretation. The findings were guided by the theoretical framework outlined in section 1.5 as well as the literature study conducted in chapters two and three. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. At each of the five secondary schools, detailed interviews were conducted separately with principals, teachers and members of LRCs. A more detailed profile of the participants of the five secondary schools appears in the following section.

5.2 THE PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

At each of the five rural secondary schools, interviews were conducted with:

- The principal (as an individual)
- Eight teachers (as members of focus groups)
- Eight learners (RCL- as members of focus groups)

In order to ensure that the principle of confidentiality was executed clinically, each of the schools was coded as follows: school A, school B, school C, school D and school E. Each of the principals was coded as follows: the principal of school A, the principal of school B, the principal of school C, the principal of school D and the principal of school E. In each school, the eight teachers consisted of a fair combination of males and females and their responses were coded as school A (T1-T8), school B (T1-T8), school C (T1-T8) and so on. Similarly, the eight learners consisted of a fair mixture of male and female

participants and their responses were coded as those from school A (L1-L8), school B (L1-L8), school C (L1-L8) and so on. However, in one school (school D), there were fewer than eight teachers that participated (See table 5.1). This was due to the non-availability of the participants and the circumstances of the school on the day of the interview. In total, five principals, thirty-eight teachers and forty learners participated in the interview. The system of coding used ensured that there was no link between the data and the participants, neither between the data and the settings, thereby ensuring the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the data (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:121). Table 5.1 depicts the participant profile in specific detail.

TABLE 5.1 PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND CODING

SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL(P) INTERVIEW (INDIVIDUAL)	TEACHER(T) INTERVIEW (FOCUS GROUP)	NUMBER OF TEACHER PARTICIPANTS	LEARNER (L) INTERVIEW (FOCUS GROUP: RCL)	NUMBER OF LEARNER PARTICIPANTS
A	P	T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6 T7 T8	8	L1 L2 L3 L4 L5 L6 L7 L8	8
B	P	T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6 T7 T8	8	L1 L2 L3 L4 L5 L6 L7 L8	8

TABLE 5.1 PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND CODING (CONTINUED)

SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL(P) INTERVIEW (INDIVIDUAL)	TEACHER(T) INTERVIEW (FOCUS GROUP)	NUMBER OF TEACHER PARTICIPANTS	LEARNER (L) INTERVIEW (FOCUS GROUP: RCL)	NUMBER OF LEARNER PARTICIPANTS
C	P	T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6 T7 T8	8	L1 L2 L3 L4 L5 L5 L7 L8	8
D	P	T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6	6	L1 L2 L3 L4 L5 L6 L7 L8	8
E	P	T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6 T7 T8	8	L1 L2 L3 L4 L5 L6 L7 L8	8

5.3 IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES AND CATEGORIES

In order to analyse and interpret the large volume of raw data collected through the process of consulting written records and conducting interviews, a qualitative data analysis process was conducted. During the first scanning the information was read through carefully, during the second scanning, it was coded or categorised and during the third scanning, the main themes were generated (Creswell 2002:258). The development of these themes, categories and sub-categories were based on the guidelines for data analysis and interpretation in sections 1.6.5 and 4.4.4. Furthermore, the aims and objectives of the study as stated in section 1.4, guided the development of the main themes, categories and sub-categories. This process of categorising the information assisted the researcher in content analysis and interpretation (Wiersma & Jurs 2005:216). The main themes identified in the study were as follows:

- Forms of learner aggression
- Factors contributing to learner aggression
- Psychological effects of learner aggression
- Consequences of learner aggression
- Management of learner aggression in schools

Table 5.2 clearly outlines the main themes, categories and sub-categories, which guided the analysis and findings of the study.

TABLE 5.2 MAIN THEMES, CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

THEME 1	5.4.1 FORMS OF LEARNER AGGRESSION
Category 1	5.4.1.1 Verbal aggression
Category 2	5.4.1.2 Physical aggression
Category 3	5.4.1.3 Bullying

TABLE 5.2 MAIN THEMES, CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES (CONTINUED)

THEME 2	5.4.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LEARNER AGGRESSION
Category 1	5.4.2.1 Family factors
Sub-category 1	(a) Broken families
Sub-category 2	(b) Poverty
Sub-category 3	(c) Poor parenting
Category 2	5.4.2.2 Environmental factors
Sub-category 1	(a) Drugs & alcohol abuse
Sub-category 2	(b) Peer pressure
Sub-category 3	(c) Gangsterism
Sub-category 4	(d) Racism
Category 3	5.4.2.3 School factors
Sub-category 1	(a) Age cohort
Sub- category 2	(b) Corporal punishment
Sub-category 3	(c) Teenage pregnancy
Sub-category 4	(d) Teasing, gossiping and jealousy
Sub-category 5	(e) Poor management structures
THEME 3	5.4.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF LEARNER AGGRESSION
Category 1	5.4.3.1 Low self-esteem
Sub-category 1	(a) Low morale
Sub-category 2	(b) Lack of confidence
Category 2	5.4.3.2 Fear & anxiety
Sub-category 1	(a) Nervousness & tension
Sub-category 2	(b) Feelings of humiliation
Category 3	5.4.3.3 Depression
Category 4	5.4.3.4 Stress & Ill-health

TABLE 5.2 MAIN THEMES, CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES (CONTINUED)

THEME 4	5.4.4 CONSEQUENCES OF LEARNER AGGRESSION
Category 1	5.4.4.1 Absenteeism, transfer, resignation
Category 2	5.4.4.2 Poor performance
Category 3	5.4.4.3 Vandalism
Category 4	5.4.4.4 Anger and bitterness
Category 5	5.4.4.5 Suicide
THEME 5	5.4.5 MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER AGGRESSION IN SCHOOLS
Category 1	5.4.5.1 Code of conduct policy
Category 2	5.4.5.2 Disciplinary committees
Category 3	5.4.5.3 The role of the Department of Education
Sub-category 1	(a) Counselling services
Sub-category 2	(b) Support centres
Category 4	5.4.5.4 The role of outside agencies
Category 5	5.4.5.5 The role of the school governing body (SGB)
Category 6	5.4.5.6 The role of teachers
Category 7	5.4.5.7 The role of parents
Category 8	5.4.5.8 The role of learners (RCL)

Table 5.2 focussed on the main themes that emerged from the reading of the verbatim transcripts. Some categories or sub-categories have been omitted owing to the low frequency of responses from the participants. This is in keeping with the view held by Gay and Airasian (2003:245) who confirm that the task of interpreting data is to identify the important themes or meanings in data and not necessarily *every* theme. A detailed discussion of the research results will follow in the next section.

5.4 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

As can be seen in Table 5.2 above, five main themes are highlighted with each main theme consisting of various categories and sub-categories. These themes and categories will now be discussed in detail to present the major findings of this research. In addition, applicable verbatim quotes from the raw data obtained will be used to confirm and justify important findings.

5.4.1 Forms of learner aggression

The most common forms of learner aggression experienced in schools are verbal aggression, physical aggression and bullying. This view is confirmed by the various principals, teachers and learners who participated in the research.

5.4.1.1 Physical aggression

Fighting and physical assaults were confirmed by the principals of schools A, B, C and D, the teachers from schools B, C and D as well as the learners from schools A, B, C, D and E to be the main forms of learner aggression in secondary schools. This aggression took place in the form of learners-on-teachers as well as learners-on-learners.

The principal of school A highlighted an incident relating to learner-on-teacher aggression at his school as follows:

The first case was one of a boy (I will not mention his name)...who had a fight with a subject teacher....apparently the boy stole the paper from the teachers bag while he was out and the learners came back to inform the teacher that one of the papers was missing and they mentioned the name of the boy that had actually stolen the paper. Now when the teacher...went back to the boy to ask him to hand him the paper, the boy refused to give the paper back to the teacher. Instead, he wanted a fight!

In turn, the principal of school B complained about learner-on-learner aggression at his school, citing the following example:

The second case was a physical one that was a physical kind of an aggression whereby you are having a learner that was...continuously, on several occasions being referred to the office of the principal for actually fighting, for hitting certain learners in the classroom. Same class on a weekly basis, all the time. When you call in that particular learner, she will fail to take instructions from the principal...will actually be arrogant and fail to actually take advice.

The above findings confirmed Buss's *theory of aggression* as cited in section 1.5, which emphasises that behaviour is considered aggressive when one individual is responsible for providing noxious stimuli to another person. Physical aggression entails one person inflicting pain on another person. Fraczek and Zumkley (1992:4) validate this theory by asserting that aggressive behaviour is directed towards causing harm to others, as stated in section 1.7.4.

The physical violence exhibited by adolescents and young adults is a major concern in modern societies and in schools in particular (Tremblay 2008:1). Often physical fighting occurs after heated verbal exchanges, when learners are extremely verbally aggressive.

5.4.1.2 Verbal aggression

As mentioned above, verbal aggression is another common form of aggression in rural secondary schools. This is evident from the responses from the participants from schools A, B, C and D.

Teacher 7 from school A contended, *"...he did not have any books, he would scream and swear and pass remarks the entire time."* A similar story was told by teacher 4 from school D, *"Worst of all...worst of all he wouldn't hesitate to insult you in the local language."* Learners from schools A and C also highlighted the frequency of verbal aggression in their schools with comments such as, *"they'll push you out, insult you, they'll talk all kinds of stuff. This was corroborated by the principal of school B:*

In my school the issue of a verbal kind of an aggression is the one that is leading as compared to all the other signs of aggression in the school....the learners who come late...when you actually begin to write their names in the late-comers

register...you will find that they will not co-operate and they will state it unapologetically that they don't want their names to be entered and they don't care even if they can be chased out of the school.

The above expositions confirm Buss's *theory of aggression* (section 1.5), which highlights verbal aggression as a vocal response that provides malicious stimuli in terms of rejection, threats and insults. This is in keeping with the views espoused by Moeller (2001:5) as discussed in section 2.3.4.2 who explain that verbal aggression involves the use of words to harm another. Marsh, Williams and McGee (2009:256), as cited in section 2.3.4.2, agree that verbal insults are also seen by secondary school teachers in the USA as the biggest problem.

Bullies, who are the chief perpetrators of aggressive behaviour, often use both forms of aggression (physical and verbal aggression) as discussed in sections 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.1.2 above, as well as indirect and relational bullying (such as spreading nasty rumours) and social exclusion in threatening and harassing victims into submission. Recent research has highlighted cyberbullying via mobile phones and the internet (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell & Tippett 2008:376).

5.4.1.3 Bullying

The data from the interview transcripts confirmed that the majority of the bullying took place on the school playground, in the classroom, or on the corridors. However, bullying also took place before and after school, in the bus and other forms of learner transport. An incident was related by learner 2 from school A regarding how the big boys bullied smaller children in the bus:

People will fight in the bus just for a seat, and the small children will be told by the high school children "no, stand" and the high school learners who want to come and sit and that bullies the children...you'll find them crying.

This is in keeping with the bullying experienced by learner 3 from school A, *"This guy pushed me to the back of the class, took an elastic band and he wanted to strangle me*

with an elastic band...he only just came to the school and he already started bullying me and threatening me.”

The use of modern technology by learners to bully their more submissive counterparts was highlighted by teacher 2 from school B, *“And there’s something new I forgot to mention earlier eh...that is now common in school...it’s called cell phone bullying...the learners are getting threatening messages from other learners in school.”* This concurs with the views expressed by Keeton (2010:25) in chapter one (see section 1.2) who states that cyber-bullying or electronic aggression involves aggressive behaviour communicated over a computer or cell phone.

The above findings confirmed Buss’s *theory of aggression* as cited in section 1.5 where he emphasises the use of instrumental aggression, which includes direct aggression that occurs in the presence of and is aimed at the victim and active aggression, which requires an instrumental response that delivers noxious stimulation to the victim. This concurs with the views espoused by Moeller (2001:220) that bullying occurs when a more powerful person repeatedly imposes aggression on a less powerful person. Olweus (2005:9) also confirms that negative actions caused by bullying may be carried out by threatening, taunting and teasing and by physical contact like hitting, pushing, kicking and strangling, as cited in section 1.2

With the various forms of learner aggression playing itself out in the school and the playgrounds, it became imperative to identify the factors contributing to aggression among learners in rural secondary schools and to establish the views held by principals, learners and teachers in this regard.

5.4.2 Factors contributing to learner aggression

Data from the interviews with principals, teachers and learners from the five secondary schools revealed that there were various factors responsible for learner aggression in rural secondary schools. In expanding on the main causes of aggression put forward by

the various participants, the researcher focussed on the following core areas: family factors, environmental factors and school factors.

5.4.2.1 Family factors

According to most participants in the survey, one of the key factors contributing to learner aggression in schools stems directly from the learners' family background: broken homes, poverty and poor parenting.

(a) Broken homes

Data from the interviews revealed that most learners who displayed aggressive tendencies came from broken homes. The principals from all of the five schools studied confirmed that most aggressive learners came from broken homes where single parenting had proven to be ineffective. The following statements from principals from schools A and C confirm this.

...most of our learners come from very broken families...most of the parents are single parents and mainly it's the mothers that are still alive. So you will find that u...these boys will then take the responsibilities of being the main man in the house...have this bossy character that they display everywhere (The principal of school A).

And my school is made up of majority indigent learners. And they come from broken homes. They also live with grannies, most of them are living without parents and they live with grannies who are probably senile (The principal of school C).

Similar comments from teachers and learners suggest that learners coming from broken homes are more susceptible to aggressive behaviour. *"The fact that these learners are coming from unstable, broken homes that has contributed much...they come with their own issues and they do act out their frustrations..."* (Teacher 3 from school B). *"She experienced a problem...her parents [were]... her parents got separated - they divorced... her behaviour changed...then she thought the solution is to use drugs"* (Learner 4 from school E).

The above findings are in keeping with *the behavioural theory* as discussed in section 1.5, which emphasises the learning of aggression within a social context. The environmental stimulus (broken homes, in this case) becomes the conditioning stimulus for the conditioned response of aggression. Delfos (2004: 138) validates this theory in section 2.2.2.3 when he points out that divorce or separation can lead to behaviour difficulties in secondary school learners, leading to aggressive anti-social behaviour.

While broken families played a critical role in promoting learner aggressive behaviour, poverty was another key element that contributed significantly to anti-social learner behaviour.

(b) Poverty

Teacher 1 from school B summed up the effect poverty can have on poor schoolchildren thus: *"...about 60% of our kids here come hungry to school...it is a serious point...many of our kids are hungry and ... and that is a ...could be a cause of aggression as well...when a child is hungry"*. This view was shared by the principal of school D who stated, *"And I think perhaps, hunger, both at home and at school, could have contributed to these problems."* Learner 4 from school D agreed that poverty contributed to anti-social behaviour: *"So because he lives under poverty, he drinks, he smokes. So the primary reason is poverty. So what makes him do all these things is poverty. So when you maybe talk to him, he...he will become angry for no reason."*

Many rural children come from poor homes and cannot afford proper meals or good clothes and when they compare themselves to their more affluent counterparts, they become frustrated, disillusioned and angry. The principal of school E maintained:

Most of them are coming from poor background families and then there are things they could not afford to have and once they come to school, they come with that anger. They look at other children who are "the haves" and they are not ones who are said to be aggressive, it is "the have not", then he would like to have ...to be in that situation of "the haves." Then he becomes a bully to those who are well to do.

These research findings, therefore, confirm Dollard's *frustration-aggression theory* as discussed in section 1.5, which propounds that frustration produces aggressive energy, which activates aggressive behaviour. When learners are frustrated by their personal negative circumstances, aggressive energy is created and that energy activates dominant aggressive responses. Robbins (2000:61), as discussed in section 2.2.3.1, confirms that poorer children are more likely to experience greater stress due to life events and in their neighbourhoods, which are linked to various behavioural problems in secondary schools. Berkowitz (1993:262) agrees that, when learners are bothered by their inability to afford the things they need, and disturbed by the failure of their self-esteem, "their nerves are raw, and they may easily become violent."

Apart from poverty, which has been shown to play a critical role in a learners' aggressive behaviour, poor parenting by parents who are unable to instil proper discipline in their children also contributes to disruptive anti-social behaviour.

(c) Poor parenting

Ineffective parents tend to have a very narrow repertoire of discipline strategies, often limited to either verbal or physical aggression as cited in section 2.2.2.1. Poor parenting is characterised by harsh, inconsistent discipline, poor supervision, inappropriate parent modelling and overall poor management of the child at home (Bemak & Keys 2000:17). The responses contained in the interview transcripts substantiated this view. The poor parenting practices with regard to domineering and submissive parents is described by teacher 1 from school A as follows:

Domineering parents are [the] one [ones] who take charge in a home and uses violence.....violent means against the child or learner. That's... so aggression builds up in the child and then the child comes to school...so that aggression is transferred onto other learners. Then on the other hand we have the docile parent, where the learner bosses the parent around and they sort of submit to their aggressive behaviour."

The lack of co-operation and support from parents was pointed out by the principal of school D, "I don't get the support I'm expecting from the parents. And I'm beginning to

believe that the behaviour I'm observing on the premises... it might be because parents might not be responsible enough in their different households." In addition, learner 8 from school A explained:

Some learners are grown up by parents who take alcohol and once they are drunk, anything they think of doing is about fighting... they solve the problem with fighting. And some of them even come to school intoxicated and when they are in school they tend to behave anyhow and they want the respect from other learners... [for others to think] that they are tough.

These findings support Bandura's *social learning theory*, discussed in section 1.5, which demonstrates how a modelling process is responsible for learning aggressive behaviour. The continued exposure to acts of violence is likely to induce a process of learning and imitation, culminating in the acceptance of violent conduct as a dominant and normal mode of conflict resolution (Govender & Killian 2001:1). This concurs with the views of Bemak and Keys (2000: 17) who speak of "inappropriate parent modelling" which means that the child's experiences at home is reflected in his/ her behaviour at school. Some learners behave in disruptive ways in school because that is the norm in the learner's family, as discussed in section 3.2.1.3.

While family factors played a major role in the child's aggressive behaviour, the child's exposure to the environment in which he/ she was brought up, also played a critical role in shaping his/her behaviour and attitudes.

5.4.2.2 Environmental factors

The views expressed by the participants in the interviews strongly suggest that environmental factors play a key role in learner aggression in rural secondary schools. Research findings have indicated that most secondary school learners residing in rural areas do not have before and after school programmes that help to prevent them from adopting the antisocial lifestyles that surround them and thus indulge in aggressive behaviour, in order to be accepted by the gangsters operating in the community (as cited in section 2.2.3.2).

(a) Drug and alcohol abuse

The principals of all five secondary schools (schools A to E) stressed the serious impact that the use of drugs and alcohol had in their schools. When describing the presence of drugs in their schools, principals used expressions such as, “...also you know, peer pressure, gangsters, you know there’s this business of whoonga that is freely available, there’s this business of dagga that is freely available...” (The principal of school C), “drug trafficking is prevalent in this school... I’ve suspended learners who got drugs on the premises, which could be alcohol and drugs” (the principal of school D). Lastly, the principal of school B asserted, “there are drug-lords and they will actually use the very same learners as their agents so that they can broaden the market.”

In concurrence with the above, similar sentiments were expressed by both teachers and learners from the five secondary schools. “The use of illegal substances such as marijuana...the child is so addicted to that substance that when the craving arises they need to have a smoke or two” (Teacher 2 from school A). Learner 7 from school B confirmed that drugs are used on the school premises, “It does take place on the school premises like dagga...I’ve seen it and alcohol...consuming alcohol... I’ve seen it.”

The above findings concur with Bandura’s *social learning theory* as discussed in section 1.5 that emphasises external environmental cues as elicitors of aggression. He suggests that aggressive behaviour is learned and maintained through environmental experiences.

Valois *et al.* (2002:459), as discussed in section 2.2.3.1, support this theory by stating that low neighbourhood attachments, community disorganisation, the availability of drugs and alcohol and community norms favourable towards violence all influence a culture of aggression and violence among children living in a particular community. De Wet (2006:20) expresses similar views when he states that the use of and trade in drugs, as well as the carrying of weapons to school are the most widespread violence-related behaviour amongst secondary school learners in South Africa.

The abuse of drugs and alcohol in rural secondary schools is widespread and poses a serious challenge to school management teams (Maluleka 2010:1). However, data from the interviews revealed that peer pressure was one of the chief causes of drug and alcohol abuse, which contributed significantly to learner aggression.

(b) Peer pressure

Behavioural problems are caused by life experiences, especially with peers, as discussed in section 3.2.1.3. Peer pressure can result in learners adopting an aggressive approach to situations, as cited in section 1.2. Both teachers and learners confirmed the impact that peer pressure had on learners who exhibited aggressive behaviour in order to belong to a group.

This view was substantiated by teacher 2 from school A, *"The problem starts with the friends that he has. His friends are quite influential on him and his behaviour 'cos he's got quite badly behaved friends - so that's where it all boils down to - that his friends encourages him to do such things."* Learner 1 from school B expressed the following opinion, "I think the causes are peer pressure... mainly peer pressure as they want to fit in. So they fight with the other learners, then they fit in." Learner 3 from school D concurred with this standpoint, *"It might be peer pressure from friends in school, you know, you come in a gang and you say you want to do something that you will fit in with them. So that's why you could end up using aggression to end... to taking out the anger outside of you."* The principal of school C added, "...also you know, peer pressure, gangsters, you know there's this business of whoonga that is freely available, there's this business of dagga that's freely available...and if you don't do it, you not identified as one of their cliques."

From the participants' responses reported above, it is evident that their perceptions concurred with *the behavioural theory* (as discussed in section 1.5) that aggression can be learned, and maintained through the processes of classical and operant conditioning and through rewards and punishment. In order to impress his friends or the gang, the learner behaves aggressively towards his victims and his reward is acceptance into the

group and his punishment for non-compliance (for not behaving aggressively) would be peer rejection, which translates into exclusion from the group or gang. This theory is in keeping with the *biopsychosocial model of aggression*, as cited in 3.2.1.3, which proposes that the amount of exposure that a child has to aggressive peers in a school is predictive of disruptive behaviour, perhaps because of modelling effects. It is therefore confirmed that children can learn aggression through positive and negative reinforcement (Moeller 2001:29).

From the above it is evident that peer pressure leads to learner disruptive behaviour where aggressive acts are committed through affiliation with deviant peers in order to be accepted into a group or gang.

(c) Gangsterism

Research findings indicate that although gang members account for at most 30% of the youth population, they are responsible for 68%-89% of all adolescent offences (Moeller 2001:216-217).

The data from the interviews highlight the influence gangsters have on learners, both from within the school and from outside. Teacher 2 from school B intimated:

Besides drugs, we also have the problem of gangsterism. We find outsiders loitering and trying to target learners from the school or there are groups that have formed and they want to meet their mates from school during lunch breaks and pedal drugs and whatever.

A similar view was expressed by learner 5 from school C, *“Some of the other learners are like chased from other schools so they come here and they spoil other learners in our school. So if the next person does it.... like from the other school, in our school they also want to be part of the gang.”* In addition, learner 8 from school D revealed:

...there’s this guy...he behaves very badly. I call him “tiger”...everyone calls him “tiger.” He belongs to a gang...he’s like the gang...every time when he drinks, he’ll come back to class, chasing girls, beating them breaking desks or even doors and windows.

The principal of school C also stressed the existence of gangsters in the community that influence learners to abuse drugs and become violent:

...he was smelling of dagga. So I gave him a suspension letter to go home and call his parents. This youngster came back to the school, you know, with this gun in his hand with a full view of the teachers and learners. So, peer pressure... gangsterism, you know is rife.

As can be seen from the above discussions, it is clear that the participants' responses are in keeping with Bandura's *social learning theory* as discussed in section 1.5 which focusses primarily on observational learning (also called imitation or modelling) and which demonstrates how children learn aggressive behaviour by observing others. Bandura believes that once someone has witnessed another's behaviour, they may be inclined to adopt this behaviour as their own. Gangs often have a violent culture, infiltrate schools and are involved in drug trafficking and alcohol trade (Robbins 2000:56). Children observe these gangs and model their behaviour on that of gangsters. Their aggression will increase when they are exposed to aggressive role models. Carter (2006:27) as discussed in section 2.2.3.2 agrees that, because of this, gangsterism is becoming endemic and behind much of the violence experienced by youth.

Apart from the influence of drugs and alcohol, peer pressure and the existence of gangs in the school environment, another critical factor mentioned by respondents that had a direct bearing on the increased levels of aggression among learners in schools was the problem of racism.

(d) Racism

Since 1994, all schools in South Africa have become multiracial institutions allowing access to learners from all races. However, the problem of racism persists even to this day.

The data from the interview transcripts revealed that racism is still a critical factor in schools as teacher 7 from school B testified, *"I'd like to add the racial factor. We as Indians have to teach a large number of black pupils and because of that, you find that*

they tend to be aggressive towards us. They do not want to take instructions from us.” Similar sentiments were expressed by the principal of school C, *“There’s also a race thing in our school, and I’m going to say this point blank: if there’s an Indian principal, the higher authorities would now try to [hesitates] fight on the side of the learner especially if the learner is not your race...”*

Teacher 3 from school D touched on this problem as follows, *“And another thing is that they are not used to...be met with different cultures because when one comes, he’s from another race or whatever, they discriminate a person [sic] by maybe disrespecting that person.”*

This concurs with *Buss’s theory of aggression* as cited in section 1.5 that relates aggressive behaviour to antecedent experiences specifically related to past frustrations. The theory emphasises the past experiences of the individual as the primary cause of the behaviour elicited by the individual at that time. This view is supported by Gasa (2005:29) who asserts that the people of South Africa are exposed to aggressive episodes on a fairly regular basis and are involved in different forms of aggression because some feel that they were treated unfairly during the apartheid years. As a result, some learners have a tendency to categorise people rigidly according to their skin colour and to exhibit a strong preference for the group to which they belong, as discussed in section 2.2.4.5. In keeping with the latter view, Maree (2000:4) states that the intolerance of learners towards people of other races can contribute significantly to learner aggression in schools.

While it is evident from the above that environmental factors contribute considerably to learner aggression, the factors prevalent in the school itself must also be given due attention.

5.4.2.3 School factors

Various factors at school, such as corporal punishment, teenage pregnancy, teasing, gossip and jealousy, poor management structures within the school and the age cohort

of the learners, play a major role in promoting aggressive anti-social behaviour in schools.

(a) Age cohort

According to an overwhelming majority of teachers, principals and learners interviewed, it was evident that *“many learners [who display aggression] are above the age cohort, in other words they are much older than other learners in the grade”* (Teacher 4 from school B). In fact, some learners are bigger than their teachers are as teacher 7 from school E pointed out, *“The other thing is that they are having this tendency of undermining us as we look the same age as theirs... so I could see that age matters.”* In turn, the principal of school A maintained that failure adds to the problem of aggression:

Another case was that of a boy who has been with us for the past three years... he’s failed all the three years, so he is doing grade eight for the fourth time this year. Now, he picks up fights with almost everyone in the school. He’s big size, he’s bigger than his own classmates as it were...as a result he ends up being bossy most of the time.

Learner 2 from school A made the same point as her principal, *“I think failing leads to aggression. Once a person fails a couple of times, you can see it in their personality... their personality changes... they become quite aggressive.”*

The above findings confirm *Dollard’s frustration-aggression theory* as discussed in section 1.5, which posits that frustration, which is an aversive stimulus, produces aggressive energy. The inability of older learners to pass and move onto the next grade causes considerable frustration for the learner, which is then expressed in hostile aggressive outbursts against younger, vulnerable learners. Negative bullying actions may either take the form of verbal abuse or physical violence (Olweus 2005:9) as stated in section 1.2.

It is clear from the foregoing that older learners dominate their younger counterparts by being aggressive towards them. However, learners also develop aggressive attitudes in reaction to the punishment meted out to them by their teachers.

(b) Corporal punishment

According to the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, “No person may administer corporal punishment at school to a learner.” However, research findings indicate that corporal punishment continues to be administered in many schools around the country, as cited in section 2.2.4.3.

Teacher 1 from school E declared:

According to my experience, learners tend to be aggressive because of this corporal punishment. Especially in the rural areas, they still give corporal punishment to learners. So the learners tend to be aggressive knowing that some schools especially private schools, schools in townships... where they do not get corporal punishment anymore...so they ask ‘why am I still being punished?’

Accordingly, learner 1 from school E spoke out strongly against corporal punishment and the negative impact it has on learners, “...as the member of the RCL, I also notice that corporal...corporal...corporal punishment also contribute to the aggression. And we decided to organise a meeting with the teaching staff. Then we decided to explore corporal punishment.”

The foregoing supports *Bandura’s social learning theory*, discussed in section 1.5 that views external environmental cues as elicitors of aggression. He believes that children’s aggression increases when they are exposed to aggressive role models. When parents or teachers punish their children physically, they often serve as negative role models for future aggression in children. Moeller (2001:106) concurs with *Bandura’s social learning theory* when he states, “When teachers administer corporal punishment to their learners, their punishment often increases their coercive behaviour.”

While it is confirmed from the above statements that corporal punishment causes learner aggression, the researcher also found that many teachers and learners highlighted teenage pregnancy as another significant cause of learner aggression in schools.

(c) Teenage pregnancy

Findings from the interviews confirmed that teenage pregnancy was a serious problem in KwaZulu-Natal schools especially in rural areas. In one school alone, namely school D, the principal reported that there had been ten pregnancies in his school during 2011.

With regard to how pregnancy can cause aggression in female learners, teacher 3 from school A explained:

...one of the parents told me her daughter is pregnant and she's in grade eight...and then she's very difficult...she's like become very difficult to correct...her whole character has changed. She asked me to talk to her and when I did, the attitude was absolutely wrong- it was scary basically...her face showed it all she's like "I don't care! This is my life. Get-on-with-yours' attitude."

Learners from school A also expressed concern about the impact pregnancy has had on other learners in school. Learner 2 from school A declared:

I mean you have mothers, fathers in school, you have pregnant ladies in school, you have that kind of a situation where you have to come to school and there would be rumours...this person is pregnant, this person is sleeping with this and this person...girls fighting girls because 'you took my boyfriend'...and that alone causes friction because that 'pregnant somebody' is gonna be aggressive...is gonna want to fight.

The empirical findings confirmed *Dollard's frustration-aggression theory* as discussed in section 1.5 that describes aggression as a reactive form of behaviour. The theory emphasises that frustration is an aversive stimulus that produced aggressive energy. This concurs with *Buss's theory of aggression*, which stated that frustration produced instigations to a number of different types of responses, one of which was instigation to aggression (Buss 1961:27-28). Shaffer and Kipp (2010: 234) confirm that pregnant teens

often came from dysfunctional families and are more likely to be involved in incidences of violence than non-pregnant teens.

The anger experienced by pregnant schoolgirls and their aggressive attitudes towards their peers and teachers as a result, were exacerbated by teasing, gossiping and jealousy.

(d) Teasing, gossiping and jealousy

The teachers from schools A and B, a learner from school A and the principal of school E were all in agreement that teasing does indeed lead to aggression. Accordingly, teacher 5 from school A summed this problem up as follows, “...teasing is one of the main problems-they start teasing each other and then they start fighting.”

Rumours and gossiping led to learners displaying aggressive attitudes towards their peers. This was confirmed when learner 3 from school B explained how rumours caused fights:

And this older girl accused my friend of spreading rumours about her. My friend didn't spread the rumours, it was another guy that spread all the rumours. This girl just brought her friends and started arguing with my friend. I tried to tell them to stop, but they didn't listen and the fight just went on and on and on.

The majority of learners from schools A, D and E focussed on the issue pertaining to jealousy that caused aggression among learners. Learner 7 from school D explained, “My experience is about a boy who likes to discriminate with [against] other learners. When you get better...when you get better results than him, he likes to become jealous.” In addition, learner 4 from school D spoke about jealousy arising out of material needs:

And maybe jealousy...if maybe someone bought maybe a trousers or T-shirt...so I don't have a T-shirt, so I like the T-shirt but I don't have money to buy it because of my condition. So I end up hating that person because of what he bought...that I'm unable to buy...so maybe I become aggressive towards that person.

The empirical findings confirm *Berkowitz's reactive aggression theory* in which he emphasises that aversive stimuli are responsible for the negative affect (Berkowitz 1993: 44). Teasing, gossiping and jealousy represented the negative stimuli, which instigated aggression in the form of an "urge to hurt." The instigation to act aggressively causes aggressive behaviour (Berkowitz 1993:45). The findings are also in keeping with *Dollard's frustration-aggression theory* where he emphasises that frustration produces aggressive energy, which, in turn, activates aggressive behaviour. Dollard argues that if a person is constantly frustrated by aversive stimuli (in this case, teasing, gossiping and jealousy); this self-reinforcement increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviour (Felson & Tedeschi 1993:41).

Apart from the above causes, many participants expressed serious reservations about the ability of the various structures in the schools to manage the problems pertaining to aggression.

(e) Poor management structures

The data from the interviews strongly suggested that poor management structures within the school system contributed significantly to learner aggression. Some participants acknowledged the existence of structures in their schools to deal with aggressive learners, but complained about their ineffectiveness.

Teacher 2 from school E explained:

In school there are these things that we call DCC...it's a committee that looks after the discipline of the learners. This committee is supposed to be working hand in glove with the community, it is supposed to work hand in glove with the parents...with the police, with the social workers and every aspect of the community. If we can make use of committees like this, we can be more effective. Yes...yes structures need to be more effective to be able to manage the problem.

Furthermore, learner 2 from school A came out strongly against the poor management structures and the functioning of the disciplinary committee:

I think it's important that the disciplinary committee of the school have a way of doing things. In this school they talk about detention-there's never been detention, I've been here for couple of years now- they never had detention but they talk about how to detain learners. I think the structures and the manner of doing things are very distorted and that's why we don't see order in any way.

These empirical findings confirm *Bandura's social learning theory* as discussed in section 1.5. This theory is based on the results of experiments demonstrating how children can learn specific types of behaviour by observing others. Importantly, Bandura stresses that a modelling process is responsible for learning specific types of behaviour (Feist & Feist 2009:483). Accordingly, the above expositions confirm that poor management structures do not provide a coherent and logical platform for addressing learner aggression problems at school effectively. However, management structures founded on strong policies and operational principles can create a platform for aggression problems to be addressed appropriately and resolved professionally, thus providing a model for both teachers and learners to emulate in resolving discipline problems at school. It follows that the social learning approach to understanding aggression emphasises how aggression can be acquired and maintained when poor management structures are allowed to exist in a school (Renfrew 1997:152).

Participants from each of the five rural secondary schools gave their candid opinions about the causes of learner aggression in their schools. Aggression has the potential to leave deep psychological scars on victims, which remain with them for many years of their lives.

5.4.3 The psychological effects of learner aggression

This researcher holds the firm belief that learner aggression affects the stakeholders of the school, namely, teachers, learners and parents. Accordingly, an act of aggression on a teacher by a learner can be traumatic and can lead to heightened tension, anxiety, depression and ill-health, as discussed in section 1.2. In turn, learners who are victims of aggression have a limited concentration span as well as serious numeracy and literacy problems, exhibit a poor performance in tests and examinations and this problem leads

to high absentee and dropout rates. For the parent whose child is an aggressor, the ensuing humiliation and embarrassment can lead to depression and substance abuse as cited in section 1.2.

Learners and teachers who are victims of aggression, suffer from a low morale, lack confidence in themselves and experience low self-esteem when humiliated.

5.4.3.1 Low self-esteem

Learners who are victims of aggression tend to have certain characteristics in common, such as they often have low self-esteem, may be anxious and passive, and struggle to assert themselves (Ancer 2009:7).

The principal of school A explained how the victims of aggression were affected psychologically, *“They suffer low self-esteem and their confidence is dented in a huge way.....they are just not the same you know, those bright faces that you probably witness before the incident just goes away after that.”* Similar sentiments were expressed by the principal of school E:

...how teachers are affected by aggression...well, they feel very small and they feel not to continue...sometimes with that class. Once a teacher is offended by a very small boy, small girl- he doesn't feel proud of being the class teacher...when the learner becomes aggressive with the teacher, other learners simply laugh and the teacher's image is now damaged.

Data from the interviews in the five rural secondary schools indicated that victims of aggression suffered from a low morale and lacked confidence in themselves.

(a) Low morale

The Empangeni District of KwaZulu-Natal has rural schools mainly and both teachers and learners have become targets of intimidation by the aggressive youth. Consequently, teacher morale has been reduced, while learners are affected negatively and the

school's overall performance drops (Balt 2008:8). Teachers expressed concern about the effect the problem of aggression has had on teacher morale.

In this regard, teacher 2 from school B expressed the following opinion, *"aggression has affected teachers in such a way that our morale is at an all time low."* This is in keeping with the view espoused by Balt (2008:8) who maintains that aggression and violence perpetrated by learners at school contributed to the low staff morale. In turn, discipline problems and violence in schools were caused by stress and the low morale of the staff (section 1.2). Teacher 7 from school B agreed with the view held by teacher 2 from school B when she declared, *"... [the] low morale has led to low productivity in the classroom and I think that is a severe...serious cause of...learner aggression at our school."* Teacher 4 from school D contended that the learners' attitude to work is most disappointing:

I abandoned my family in the house...I come to school and see I have lesser learners and the few that are here are drunk. Then I become demoralised...how do I come back the next time? You become disappointed in your learners and disappointed in your efforts.

(b) Lack of confidence

The low morale has led to a lack of confidence in teachers. The principal of school E declared, *"Well...they feel very small. Once a teacher is offended by a very small boy, small girl...his image is now damaged."* The principal of school A expressed a similar view when he asserted, *"...their confidence is way down...and it then becomes difficult to work with them...even the concentration levels in class becomes so low."*

Teacher 5 from school C concurred with this viewpoint, *"Well, it demotivates the educator because when an educator is now going to witness an incident of a learner abusing an educator, this is definitely going to de-motivate the educator."* This view was echoed by teacher 2 from school D, *"I also think it kind of de-motivates a teacher to like go back to the class and teach that class."*

The above expressions with regard to low self-esteem, the low morale and lack of confidence exhibited by victims of aggression support *Carl Rogers's person-centred theory*, which postulates that individuals behave in ways that are congruent with their self-concepts (Pervin & Cervone: 2010:177). The theory contends that people who have a high opinion of themselves are likely to behave in ways that reflect their self-respect, whereas people with a low opinion of themselves, are likely to behave in ways that are consistent with that self-image. People with low self-esteem seem resigned to maintaining a poor self-image and to experiencing negative emotions. Ancer (2009:7) agrees with the above theory by stating that victims of aggression tended to have certain characteristics in common; often they had low self-esteem, may be anxious and passive, and struggle to assert themselves.

Low self-esteem, low morale and a lack of confidence in oneself can result in feelings of insecurity, which ultimately leads to fear and anxiety.

5.4.3.2 Fear and anxiety

According to Dellasega and Nixon (2003:8), the victims of aggressive behaviour suffered feelings of anxiety, insecurity and fear. This is confirmed by the principal of school A:

...one other thing-what other effects that one has witnessed...on learner aggression again is that of fear. They become afraid-they become scared and when you ask them they will tell you that waking up in the morning becomes a daunting task.

In addition, the principal of school D also highlighted the fear caused by aggressive learners in the school and community, *"...coming to school becomes fearful...they fear coming to school because we also have cases of intimidation...yes...so learners who are aggressive will intimidate those who want to come to school. So it results in fear and intimidation."*

Teachers and learners also mentioned experiencing fear because of the threatening attitudes and behaviour of aggressive learners. The consequences of teachers being fearful of learners was explained by teacher 8 from school A, *"...another thing is about a*

teacher who decided to quit because of the learners- decided to leave because she was frightened of the learners.” Learner 1 from school A, expressed similar views about being afraid:

This boy stood up and said ‘If anyone submits their homework, right now he will hit everyone’...because he didn’t do his homework. Then the teacher said whoever does not submit their homework, she’s gonna take them to the office and I was scared to go to the office and I was also scared of being beaten by the boy.

Data from the interview transcripts confirmed that being fearful and anxious continually led to a state of nervousness and heightened tension on the part of the victims of aggression.

(a) Nervousness and tension

Learner 4 from school E emphasised the nervousness and tension of teachers and learners:

...I think teachers as well as the learners, they may be discouraged in doing their work and they will be afraid to commit themselves with a learner that is aggressive. It will be...it will be impossible to work together in groups with such a learner and they will feel nervous, they will become tensed in that the learner will do bad things towards them.

The principal of school A concurred with the viewpoint expressed by learner 4 from school E by saying, *“...well the whole atmosphere changes, it becomes much more tense after this whole exercise. You find that nobody is at ease, the teacher is not able to do his duties in a way that would please everyone.”*

It follows that because learners and teachers are nervous and tense, because of being victims of aggression, they will inevitably experience feelings of sadness, helplessness and humiliation.

(b) Feelings of humiliation

The data from the interview transcripts prove conclusively that feelings of humiliation and hopelessness in the victims surfaced after an aggressive act was committed. The following explanation was given by principal of school A:

...in terms of performance that is largely affected...that is both the teacher and the learner em...the teacher just gets fed up and you know his professionalism...in one way or the other is then compromised because the tears will then take over because...I mean we are all human beings at the end of the day.

In the same vain, teacher 8 from school C related an incident involving the humiliation of a teacher by a learner:

I remember one incident where a learner slapped...imagine an educator being slapped by a learner...it's quite embarrassing and then you find severe assault on the educator...traumatised, refused to come to work...as I mentioned three years the educator didn't come.

Accordingly, learner 4 from school A related a similar incident of assault on a teacher:

And there was this guy...where the teacher told him he must stop making noise and start doing his work. He started having a mouth with the teacher and the teacher began getting offended by the words because he started using offensive words and he started swearing. So this boy in grade nine actually started fighting with the teacher physically and took the teacher down on the floor and started hitting him... he was affected dramatically.

Teacher 5 from school C also highlighted the effect aggressive learners had on teachers:

Ya...what they also do is that they say now "Oh...we can make this teacher cry now," so every time now if you don't want a certain subject, "Let's make her cry and let's make her feel uncomfortable and then we got our free period." Just to disrupt, stop the lesson.

The research findings above are in keeping with the *behavioural theory* discussed in section 1.5, which focusses on Pavlov's classical conditioning theory of fear acquisition where a simple exposure to cues associated with an intensely aversive event, can cause a person to become fearful, nervous and anxious of those cues. Mowrer's (1960) *two factor theory of phobia development* also suggests that excessive fear is the result of a

direct conditioning experience and its maintenance by avoidant behaviour (Du, Jaaniste, Champion & Yap 2008:13). A psychological disturbance results when either feelings of threat or fear persistently prevent a person from feeling secure and when evidence of the untrustworthiness of others becomes overwhelming, the result is a relatively permanent and debilitating feeling of anxiety and tension (Feist & Feist 2009:562-563). In terms of *Kelly's construct theory*, which concurs with the above, fear occurs when a new construct is about to enter the person's construct system (see section 1.5). According to Kelly, a person who cannot manage threatening events experiences great distress. From the above expositions, it is clear that aggressive behaviour on the part of aggressors provides the stimulus for a conditioned response of avoidant behaviour in victims who react by being fearful and anxious to the extent that they avoid the aggressors by absenting themselves from school or by quitting school altogether.

These feelings of humiliation experienced teachers and learners who are victims of aggression often lead to depression as the incidences are extremely traumatic for the victims.

5.4.3.3 Depression

Coon & Mitterer (2010:443) regard depression as one of the most widespread emotional problems experienced by people worldwide and is marked by feelings of despondency, powerlessness and hopelessness.

The principal of school B contended:

Learner aggression can actually result in absenteeism... teachers will opt for taking leave and number two obviously it will result in depression on the part of educators. You will find that educators will need counselling from the psychologist, time and again.

Similar views were expressed by the principal of school C:

..it will remain like a scary thing and learners tend to stay at home, you know, there will be absence of learners, learners will remain at home, teachers might

stay at home...or they might just put in sick leave, not really sick leave but psychological leave- like what you call this...depression leave. And recently in the teaching fraternity, there a lot of teacher's that take depression leave because they can't handle the discipline in high schools.

In turn, the principal of school D expanded on the issue of leave taking because of depression:

I think that the mere fact that the learners are not performing up to the expected standard is a result of depression because we do have learners who absent themselves because of this depression...with educators it's clear because I've got a lot of medical certificates which says this educator cannot work because of depression.

From the above, it is evident that teachers are too scared to teach in these schools. Because of this fear, many suffer from stress and depression and absent themselves from school for long periods (see section 1.3). Teacher 1 from school B elaborated on this topic, *"...it led to educators taking leave from school because of ...pressure in the class, trauma, suffering from depression etc. As far as pupils are concerned...these acts have depressed many of our learners and have made our learners scared."*

The above expressions support Bandura's *social cognitive theory*, which contends that failure frequently leads to depression and depressed people often undervalue their own accomplishments (Feist & Feist 2009:499). This theory states that depressed people not only judge themselves harshly, but are also inclined to treat themselves badly because of their perceived shortcomings (in this instance, their inability to manage aggressive learner behaviour). The result is chronic misery, feelings of worthlessness, lack of purposefulness and pervasive depression (Feist & Feist 2009:499). The above theory is in line with *Beck's cognitive model of depression* which emphasises that a depressed person systematically misevaluates ongoing and past experiences, leading to a view of the self as a loser, the view of the world as frustrating, and the view of the future as bleak (Pervin & Cervone 2010:370). Delfos (2004:201) agrees with the above theories stating that intense and pervasive unhappiness coupled with irritable behaviour in learners and teachers can be an indication that anxiety or depression is present.

Depressive episodes of the nature and severity experienced by the teachers and learners referred to above often lead to severe stress and ill health. Feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness are usually accompanied by self-critical or negative thoughts which weaken the immune system, thereby increasing the individual's stress levels and rendering the individual vulnerable to illness (Coon & Mitterer 2010:446).

5.4.3.4 Stress and ill health

Victims of aggressive acts often cannot cope with the stress, anguish and humiliation (Carter 2006:27). According to Pervin & Cervone (2010:367), the greater the reported levels of stress and efforts to cope, the poorer the physical health and the greater the likelihood of psychological symptoms.

The principal of school D highlighted this problem when he remarked:

I can tell you every year I've got an educator...one or two educators who will be on leave for 3-6 months. Now, therefore, this absenteeism, ill health among educators, ill health among the learners, it is becoming a problem. Most of my educators have become sickly; I don't have normal people anymore.

In addition, the principal of school E concurred with the views expressed by the principal of school A by commenting:

...once a teacher is stressed, definitely he's not going to perform very well. And that will involve many things as stress is accompanied by sickness. Taking leave now and again, he's in today, tomorrow reporting now and again...so this sickness and absenteeism becomes very common to...to...to... the school.

The reasons for the ill-health among teachers, were raised by teacher 4 from school B):

...there were occasions where educators were so demotivated and depressed that psychological services had to be enlisted to try and help these educators to cope. Okay, you find that the self-esteem of many of our educators at this school have been damaged. Okay, besides that, as has been mentioned already...people have been suffering from ill health.

The findings concur with *Bandura's social-cognitive theory*, which suggests that psychological stress depended on cognitions related to the person and the environment (Lazarus 1990, in Pervin & Cervone 2010:366). According to this cognitive approach to stress and coping, stress is viewed as occurring when the person viewed circumstances as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering well-being. Coon and Mitterer (2010:445) agree with the above theory by confirming that psychologists have now firmly established that stress affects health as stressful events reduce the body's natural defences against disease. Rigby (2002:123) concurs with the above viewpoint when he points out that victims may suffer from poor health because of their inability to cope with the harassment, nastiness and constant victimisation, as discussed in section 2.3.9.

Apart from the psychological trauma learner aggression can instil in its victims, its consequences for learners, teachers and the school in general, can be serious.

5.4.4 The consequences of learner aggression

Research findings indicate that for every aggressive act there is a consequence, which adversely affects the individual concerned as well as the school and its community as discussed in section 2.3. Teachers who are concerned for their safety are less able to concentrate and succeed academically. Victims of learner aggression may express an inability to experience emotion, fear that the aggressive act may occur again, experience anxiety, difficulty sleeping, disinterest in schoolwork or social activities, feelings of guilt, and difficulty paying attention (Bemak & Keys 2000:9).

The data from the interview transcripts reveal that the consequences of learner aggression are many and varied. Victims of aggression have been found to indulge in drugs and alcohol abuse, get involved in vandalism in expressing their frustrations and helplessness, perform poorly in examinations and tests, have suicidal tendencies and absent themselves from school for long periods.

5.4.4.1 Absenteeism, transfers, resignations

Prolonged absenteeism on the part of both teachers and learners affects the learner's academic progress at school. Teachers take long periods of leave from school because of stress related problems and this prolonged absenteeism affects teaching and learning at school adversely, as described in section 2.3.8.

In a similar vein, the principal of school A confirmed the problem of absenteeism on the part of both learners and teachers at his school:

...the rate of absenteeism...does increase because especially after a fight, with a blue-eye or a bruise on the face, learners tend to take days off. When somebody intervenes after a teacher has been humiliated by a child in class, the next possible thing that you normally see would be for the teacher to sob like a baby eh...and it therefore becomes difficult the next day for the teacher to stand right up with your head held high in the same class where you were humiliated. So absenteeism happens in both learners and teachers after an act of aggression was witnessed.

Teachers and learners expressed their concerns about the problem aggression had on regular school attendance. As teacher 2 from school B put it, "Yes, it has led to educators absenting themselves quite frequently, it has led to pupils taking leave very often, it has led to educators even going on long leave, you know, I mean like the entire term." Learners 4 and 6 from school D agreed that aggression towards innocent teachers and learners had a definite effect on their attendance at school, "the teacher will be afraid to come to school. It will affect the attendance by learners."

Aggression can have such a drastic effect on the victims that they may actually ask to be transferred to another school. The principal of school C) explained:

So learners and teachers have been affected psychologically- I know of one teacher who took a transfer...that Miss... that lady that was assaulted. She stayed at home for a year and then finally we found a position for her in another school. So, she's transferred but still has that trauma.

Frustration, anxiety and depression arising out of learner aggression can drive teachers to tendering their resignation from the profession. As the principal of school C explained,

There's the other teacher that prior to my being here, also resigned from the teaching fraternity- he took his package and went into business because he spent close on thirty years and that is what he got as a result because he was trying to discipline the learners.

Learner 6 from school E asserted that difficult learners were causing young teachers, especially student teachers, to change careers because they could not handle the humiliation at the hands of aggressive learners and this dissuaded interested learners who wanted to become teachers to join the profession:

All I can say is that a teacher who has a learner who is aggressive in school can quit the job and the learners who are still thinking of being teachers can change their careers because they see this life of the aggressive learners.

The research findings confirm *Steers and Rhodes' absenteeism model*. This model emphasises that attendance is highly influenced by the practices of the organisation, an absence of a school culture, learner attitudes and behaviour, values, and goals (Jacob & Kritsonis 2007:2-3). Bruno (2002: 1) agrees with this model stating that when there is a high level of teacher absence, it tends to lower the morale of the remaining teachers resulting in high teacher turnover. On the same point, Bemak and Keys (2000:11) contend that prolonged absenteeism is detrimental to the learner's progress as he falls farther and farther behind academically.

As the above findings suggest, learner aggression imposes career changes on teachers with many resigning from the profession altogether. This is in line with the views espoused by Balt (2008:10) as discussed in section 1.2 where he states, "The characterization of the school as a dangerous and unsafe environment is unlikely to assist in recruiting new members to the profession." Dibetle (2008:7) cited in section 1.3 concurs by stating that teachers from rural and township schools are resigning from their jobs because they are victims of psychological and physical violence perpetrated by learners.

Prolonged absenteeism, caused by aggression, on the part of both teachers and learners can affect their performance adversely and can lead to underachievement and even failure.

5.4.4.2 Poor performance

A large number of participants (principals, teachers and learners) indicated that one of the chief consequences of learner aggression was poor performance. Bemak and Keys (2000: 8) discussed in section 2.3.7, declare, "Learners who are victims of aggression, suffer psychological trauma, are concerned about their safety and are less able to concentrate and succeed academically." They experience constant fear, anxiety and insecurity; their self-confidence and self-esteem are reduced, making it difficult for them to accomplish their tasks, as cited in section 2.3.7.

The principal of school A shared the same views as those mentioned above, "*...in terms of performance-that is largely affected- they don't perform well, that is both the teacher and the learner.*" The principal of school E agreed, "*And even the performance declines...the performance of the person who's being bullied. Ya...because it goes with the threats.*" Teacher 7 from school B who held similar views, commented, "*...somebody mentioned low morale and low morale has led to low productivity in the classroom and..I think that is a severe...serious cause of learner aggression at our school.*" In addition, a complaint was expressed by learner 5 from school B about the learners who had potential but were being deprived of quality instruction because of aggressive learners:

...there are some learners who are very clever in class...they like gifted...they have got the brains to do things but when somebody who is aggressive in class...always puts him down when they do something, they will like...they won't do it like the way they used to do it before. It will affect their performance in school.

The above views are in keeping with *Bandura's social cognitive theory*, which states that strong emotion ordinarily lowers performance; therefore, when people experience intense fear, acute anxiety, or high levels of stress, they are likely to have lower efficacy

expectancies (Feist & Feist 2009:491). Bandura maintains that emotional arousal may facilitate the successful completion of simple tasks, but it was likely to interfere with the performance of complex activities. This concurs with the views of Bemak and Keys (2000:11) as discussed in section 2.3.6 that being bullied in school leads to underachievement where the learner falls behind in assignments, homework and tests. When victims of aggression absent themselves from school for long periods, this inevitably affects their performance in school as the abovementioned views confirm. On the other hand, aggressive learners themselves become so frustrated and disillusioned with their inability to cope with the academic programme in school that they begin to vandalise the school property to vent their frustrations.

5.4.4.3 Vandalism

Research findings indicate that various types of behaviour play a significant role in promoting disruptive behaviour among learners, as discussed in section 3.1. These include behaviour that is psychologically or physically risky (such as leaning on the back legs of a chair, constant teasing and harassment of classmates) and behaviour that causes the destruction of property (for example, vandalism in the classroom and the school) (Marais & Meier 2010:44). According to Moeller (2001:270), school vandalism levels are not only exceedingly high, but are still growing.

The problem of vandalism in his school was discussed at length by the principal of school 5:

...obviously we had cases of where the school is vandalised eh...because it does not normally end in a normal fight... they would probably use anything they come across eh...and vandalise the school in the process. So what happens in our case is that they become so much uncontrollable such that they would fight with anything they would come across and try and destroy everything that is in front of them because of this aggression, because of this bitterness, because of this anger that brew up within themselves.

Another way for a youngster to break with anonymity and experience power is by damaging a building and by defacing it with graffiti, as discussed in section 2.3.5.

Another problem referred to by the principal of school 5 was the existence of graffiti, for which aggressive learners were responsible:

...well...and its...its...its...again this aggression that leads them to painting walls... you know drawings that you wouldn't expect from a learner you know, which show that- no, the fact of this is way deeper in their systems...well, with the doors and windows- the doors, the windows and the chairs- those then become their weapons-that's what they use to fight.

The research findings above support *Dollard's frustration-aggression theory* discussed in section 1.5, namely that frustration produces aggressive energy, which activates aggressive behaviour. This theory emphasises that if a person is frustrated, aggressive energy is created and transferred to material objects such as public symbols, which the aggressor regards as symbols of power, coldness and authority as demonstrated in section 2.3.5. Delfos (2004:161) agrees with this theory when he states that damaging school property can be an expression of resisting authority. Likewise, Finn and Frone (2003:46) confirm that both interpersonal aggression and vandalism at school were most likely to occur among learners with low levels of school identification and poor school achievement.

Importantly, data from the interview transcripts confirmed that victims of aggression viewed the destructive nature of aggressive learners and their domineering attitude towards innocent teachers and learners with anger and bitterness.

5.4.4.4 Anger and bitterness

Feelings of anger, frustration, resentment and hostility towards the aggressor are but some of the physical symptoms experienced by the victims (Robbins 2000:87) as discussed in section 2.3.9. Data from the interview transcripts confirm that teachers affected by aggression displayed a deep sense of anger and bitterness towards their aggressors.

In this regard, a teacher 2 from school B expressed her frustrations as follows:

I just want to add that psychologically we get so affected that it also angers us. When learners show aggression sometimes it makes the educator aggressive and we do things that we not supposed to do, we engage in corporal punishment, which you not supposed to do because if a learner is showing aggression, and you are merely counselling and nobody is listening, to hell with the law, take out the rod and give the child a couple of hits and he will sit down and keep quiet.

The principal of school A agreed that aggressive incidents caused a lot of anger among teachers:

...because of such an incident em...at the same time you see a lot of anger in the teachers as well because at the end of the day these are human beings you know. To then have to come in between the teacher and the learner trying to probably rectify and put the situation back to normal becomes a problem because of anger that you normally see especially in...in...in the victim.

At the same time, learners who have been on the receiving end of aggression from both aggressive teachers and learners reacted angrily to the aggressive acts inflicted upon them. As learner 1 from school D declared, *"...and the teacher will just maybe hit him. I will then ask myself "What did I do wrong sir? What did I do wrong? I will be angry with the teacher."*

The above expressions confirm *Becks cognitive theory of anger* and related conditions (Olatunji & Lohr 2004:1). The cognitive theory describes anger and bitterness as negative phenomenological experiences that exist on a continuum in which the frequency, intensity and duration of the experience, along with expressive characteristics, often leads to significant impairment. Deffenbacher, Huff, Lynch, Oetting and Natalie (2000:167) agree with the above findings by explaining that anger co-occurs with Type A behaviour as well as aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour on the part of the victims. Robbins (2000:87), as discussed in section 2.2.8, expresses similar sentiments, namely, that feelings of anger, frustration, resentment and hostility towards the aggressor are some of the physical symptoms experienced by the victims.

The victims of aggression feel humiliated, disappointed and bitter and suffer from a low morale because of the aggression inflicted upon them to the extent that some resort to suicide because of their highly depressed states.

5.4.4.5 Suicide

As discussed in section 2.3.10, depression is a psychiatric disorder accompanied by symptoms such as persistent feelings of hopelessness, dejection, poor concentration, a lack of energy, inability to concentrate and sleep and sometimes even suicidal tendencies. According to Shafer and Kipp (2010:433), elevated levels of stress (of many kinds) are major contributors to the negative effects on adolescents who become seriously depressed. These learners are constantly in a state of depression and despondency and their depressed state may eventually lead to suicide, as discussed in section 2.3.9.

Evidence from the interview transcripts reveal that learner aggression in schools led to victims resorting to suicide because of their inability to cope with the constant humiliation and harassment meted out to them by their aggressors. Accordingly, the principal of school A confirmed the incidence of suicide at his school arising from aggression:

...you will find that...that some...some children as well...would resort to suicide because this works with your mind- psychologically it affects you...in the past two years we've had two cases of suicide and in the letters that the learners wrote...they actually said that it was just too much for them- they couldn't take it anymore and they've resorted to taking their own lives.

The learners from school B also highlighted the effect learner aggression had on victims to the extent that they resorted to taking their own lives. Learner 1 from school B substantiated this fact, *"Aggression also causes learners to have low self-esteem, those are being bullied and if they have a low self-esteem, it leads to depression and if they get depressed it can also lead to them committing suicide."*

The research findings confirm *Durkheim's theory of suicide* that views suicide as a phenomenon that arises from societal pressures and influences (Holmes & Holmes 2005:27). Durkheim pointed out that social forces increased a person's probability of committing suicide. Coon and Mitterer (2010:491) validate this theory by asserting that the school community and family are major risk factors for suicide. Feelings of worthlessness; antisocial, impulsive and aggressive behaviour; shame, humiliation, failure or rejection racism and discrimination were all contributory factors to student suicides. Moeller (2001:55) confirms this and points out that depressed learners exhibited signs of intense and pervasive unhappiness.

With the consequences of learner aggression being so drastic that it affects victims to the extent that they become emotionally unstable, suffer ill health and sometimes even resort to suicide, urgent interventions need to be made in order to manage the problem.

5.4.5 Management of learner aggression in schools

Concerns about aggressive and disruptive behaviour in schools have increased in recent years (Farmer 2000:299) and this continues to be the most discussed problem in South African schools (Marais & Meier 2010:41). According to Bru (2006:23), studies indicate that a lack of on-task orientation and troublesome behaviour have become an increasing problem in many schools in western societies and urgent interventions are required to manage the problem as demonstrated in section 3.1. These interventions must assist teachers in managing learner aggression so that teaching and learning can proceed uninterruptedly in the classroom.

Various management strategies, which include a code of conduct, disciplinary committees and the role of various stakeholders of the school, need to be explored. From the interview transcripts, it became clear that while schools did have various committees in place for the management of learner aggression, these committees were not functioning effectively. The school policies with regard to learner conduct bestowed limited powers on teachers and management teams to act with regard to disruptive

children with the result that the behaviour of aggressors continued unabated. The stakeholders of the school provided minimal support and in some cases, no support at all making the problem of aggression in schools an extremely serious one indeed.

5.4.5.1 Code of conduct

A code of conduct guides teachers and management staff regarding the specific sanctions that need to be meted out to learners for specific misdemeanours. However, data from the interviews confirmed that while these policies were available in schools, they were not implemented effectively, while those principals who were implementing them complained of their ineffectiveness.

The principal of school B explained the legal requirements for drawing up the school code of conduct and expressed the need for the code of conduct to be communicated to all stakeholders so that they are clearly understood:

...the school is a ... kind of an organ of the state, that is actually run in accordance with certain laws and policies...the code of conduct must be in line with the dictates of the South African School's Act as well as chapter two of the constitution of the country that actually speaks of the Bill of Rights and so on...as well as learners rights and so on. And the only way to deal with this particular aggression is to make sure that there is a code of conduct at the school, that is actually well communicated to all stakeholders in the school, communicated properly even to the parents in particular...in that particular school because even if you have a learner code of conduct that is so good but if it is not clearly communicated so that the learners can begin to know 'if I do 1,2,3...it's tantamount to misconduct' then obviously it will be very difficult for you as a principal to make sure that learner aggression is being controlled.

Concern was expressed by the principal of school A about the fact that even though a code of conduct is in place at his school, it is not effective enough:

Now the code of conduct clearly highlights the rules, the regulations of the school, how these learners should carry themselves out and what we have as a school should they break the rules and regulations but even that is not sufficient because em...we see these things happening almost every day and at times, we

throw them aside as the school and we act physically ourselves, you know, in trying to curb...these things.

The principal went on to complain about the code of conduct being too lenient regarding its sanctions:

Our code of conduct gives far too many limitations to those who are trying to put things right. It gives far too many...it draws...it actually draws too many boundaries, it draws too many lines eh...to those who are serious about stopping this in schools and until such time such boundaries are lifted, we are always going to have learner aggression as one of the biggest concerns in schools.

Teacher 3 from school E expressed concern about the fact that the school had a code of conduct in place but that it was not being implemented:

As a school, we have to implement the code of conduct, just a draft code of conduct just to stay there for the officials to come but we don't implement it. When we say vulgar languages are not allowed, that you will be expelled when you do that, this measures will be taken if it's just on the warning but we do not do anything. We have to implement the code of conduct.

Learner 1 from school A felt strongly that the code of conduct was ineffective and needed serious overhauling since even the highest level of sanction, which was suspension, was ineffective:

Now suspending a learner because he hit you is not enough because the learner will come back...like if this boy comes and hits me the first time, he'll get suspended, the second time and then he'll tell me 'I'll get suspended but I'll come back again and I'll keep hitting you.' There's nothing you can do....I'm gonna be traumatised; I'm not gonna go and report him again. No, because I know, he's gonna come back and he's gonna hit me again.

According to Joubert and Bray (2007:80), the school governing body (SGB) played an important role in the establishment and maintenance of sound discipline. Because of this, the South African School's Act (Republic of South Africa:1996a) mandated the SGBs to adopt a code of conduct for learners as a way of establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to improving the quality of the learning

process (Mestry & Khumalo 2012:97). In this regard, the *action-research model of consultation and collaboration* as discussed in section 1.5 encourages the involvement of all stakeholders of the school, particularly SGBs in curbing learner aggression through a conduct policy. In keeping with this view of consultation, Rossouw (2007:82), makes the point that a code of conduct is a consensus document and its drafting process should be characterised by the involvement of parents, learners, teachers and non-teachers at the school. Mestry and Khumalo (2012:98) maintain that an important condition for the effectiveness of the learner code of conduct lies in its fair and consistent enforcement where code violations were appropriately sanctioned.

Apart from having a code of conduct for learners, every school must have a disciplinary committee (DC) which looked at the more serious misdemeanours committed by learners. These are referred to the DC by the principal for consideration and sanction. The DC assists the school in sorting out problems committed by aggressive offenders.

5.4.5.2 Disciplinary committees

The principals and teachers from schools A, B, C and E confirmed that their schools had elected disciplinary committees in place to handle discipline issues. In this regard, the principal of school A confirmed the existence of a disciplinary committee in his school by saying “...we have a disciplinary committee which handles cases like this, from the teachers, from the learners... and if they are not in a position to resolve them, then such cases are referred to the school governing body.”

The principal of school C explained the procedure he followed in disciplining aggressive learners at his school:

I think first of all...you know in terms of discipline we have to apply the school code of conduct. We have to notify parents, if the learner aggression is serious, then what I do is, I temporarily suspend the learner. Within seven days, we call for a tribunal, call the meeting and the learner is represented legally if he wishes or by his parents. The school then places the misdemeanours on the Board and the Governing Body Disciplinary committee takes decisions and makes recommendations to the superintendent general for either transfer or expulsion

of the learner from the school. So, the best ammunition that I got in the school is the code of conduct and the disciplinary committee.

Teacher 2 from school E confirmed the existence of a disciplinary committee at his school. *“In school there is this thing that we call disciplinary committee...it’s a committee that looks after the discipline of the learners.”* However, he complained about the ineffective functioning of this committee in his school:

The committee is supposed to be working hand in glove with the community...it supposed to work hand in glove with the parents eh...with the police, with social workers and every aspect of the community...but maybe we don’t do much research on this committees, so we not able to master the discipline of the learners. If we can make use of these committees, we can be more effective.

The disciplinary committee is responsible for disciplining learners for serious transgressions such as:

- Conduct that endangers and violates the safety of others.
- Possession or use of weapons.
- Possession or use of unauthorised drugs or alcohol.
- Fighting.
- Assault or battery.
- Theft or possession of stolen property.
- Criminal behaviour such as rape, bullying and intimidation of other learners (Mestry & Khumalo 2012:100).

However, Rossouw (2007:80) advises that the formulation of a code of conduct should be positive and preventative, in order to facilitate constructive learning. He maintains that the disciplinary committees should ensure that what should be promoted is positive discipline and self-discipline and that exemplary conduct should be rewarded to the same extent as or largely than the reaction to or punishment of misconduct. This view is in keeping with the *behavioural theory* cited in section 1.5, which emphasises that aggressive behaviour can be learned and unlearned through the process of classical and operant conditioning and through rewards and punishments. It is therefore, confirmed

that children can learn and unlearn aggressive behaviour through the implementation of positive and negative reinforcement techniques (Moeller 2001:29).

Apart from the school policies and disciplinary structures that need to be in place, the role of the various stakeholders in education, particularly the Department of Education in providing effective support to the schools, is critical if any impact is to be made regarding reducing the problem of learner aggression in schools.

5.4.5.3 The role of the Department of Education

According to Marais and Meier (2010:41), as discussed in section 3.1, teachers are becoming increasingly distressed about disciplinary problems in school as corporal punishment has been outlawed by legislation such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) and the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). Furthermore, teachers are required to ensure that the “inclusive education principle” is applied, according to which, integration asserts has to be implemented and in terms of which, every child, irrespective of his or her disability or handicap, has the right to be educated alongside his peers in a normal school environment, as discussed in section 3.2.2.1. This is in line with the *medical model* of disruptive behaviour as outlined in section 3.2.2.1.

However, many participants interviewed in the five rural schools emphasised the need for support from all the stakeholders of the school, particularly the Department of Education with regard to managing the problem of learner aggression in schools. Teacher 4 from school B asserted:

And so far we didn't get the desired assistance, in my view, from the Department of Education...we hope that..if I may mention this that in due course...a little harsher measures are employed where errant learners are actually expelled. Some of them would be better off out of the system than in it, in my view.

A teacher from school A continued:

...department intervention has been lacking, let's put it at zero. When a specific recommendation is made to department, the parents basically go to the circuit office, and next thing a letter comes from the ward manager telling you 'You have no rights. Please take this child back.

For effective teaching and learning to take place, teachers need to be supported by the Department of Education that needs to recommend specialists in the field of psychology and remedial education as well as specialists who are qualified to deal with learners with disruptive and aggressive tendencies. The data from the interview transcripts revealed that there was an urgent need for school counselling services to be re-instated in schools as well for psychological support centres to be provided in every ward to which learners could be referred for specialist attention.

(a) Counselling services

The role of counselling services to deal with emotionally unstable and aggressive learners cannot be overemphasised. However, the principal of school B disagreed with the “principle of inclusivity” as discussed in section 3.2.2.1 when he remarked, “...teachers ...when you look at their load, their teaching load, it is such that they don't find time to be able to do their work, to do the counselling and make sure that... a learner receives counselling.” He went on to highlight the need for social services and psychological services to be increased in terms of more staff to cater for the increased school population post 1994:

...the Department to make sure that it increases...staffing on the side of the social workers- let me say of the psychologists that are actually based in the department- we know that there is such a section at the districts but we are saying these people are not enough. You will find that in one circuit, a circuit that is made up of more than 450 schools, there is only one psychologist...and we are saying...every school must have a lay counsellor...who will be an educator also teaching at the school and there will also be a post allocated for a specialist psychologist in that particular school...all what we are saying...we are saying that the department does not have enough psychologists, does not have enough people who are specialists who can assist these learners..

In addition, the principal of school C agreed with the principal of school A when he expressed similar sentiments about counselling services at his school:

And then we also have counsellors but I think some of them try their level best but the amount of cases they must handle is beyond them. Previously in schools, we had guidance counsellors which...as soon as you got a problem, you refer it to him and his job is only to deal with it. Now we don't have that situation because all teachers are busy teaching content...there's no time to deal now with...visit your child at home and we looking at what...post 40 in each class, it's difficult.

The interview responses revealed that in addition to the teacher's efforts to minimise disruptive behaviour in the classroom, school support services should make regular visits to schools to assist in behaviour modification of disruptive learners, as discussed in section 3.2.3.1. In this regard, and together with the expanding role of school psychologists and interventionists, the *action-research model of consultation and collaboration* as cited in section 1.5 is ideally suited to be delivered through consultation with all the stakeholders, including mental health professionals, teachers, parents and school management teams. Conwill (2003:239) points out that a growing trend over the past two decades has been to bring needed services into the school rather than to treat the health and social needs of children as distinct from their educational needs. Thus, it becomes necessary for behavioural consultants and psychologists to help school personnel to develop preventative strategies for use with at-risk learners and parents (Holtzman, in Conwill 2003:240).

Apart from re-instating counselling services, schools also need support centres established by the Department of Education in every ward that are easily accessible to the schools, so that learners can be referred to the centre on certain days and on a rotational basis.

(b) Support centres

With the annual budgetary constraints experienced by the Department of Education and because of the large number of schools that need to be serviced, it may be difficult for

every school to have its own psychologist. Thus, it becomes necessary for every ward to have a fully equipped support centre with qualified psychologists and social workers to service the schools within its boundaries. When a school in the ward needs to refer learners with severe behavioural problems, the support centre should be easily accessible for the school.

One of the principals, namely the principal of school B suggested:

We know that the government is always talking about the issue of the budget and so on, but it can even be better maybe to say, in a particular ward of thirty schools, this is the formula that we're going to use so that we can have these people available to assist.

However, while the Department of Education has started the process of setting up these structures, this process is very slow with few centres being built to cater for hundreds of schools at a time, thus creating limited access to these services and leaving the problem to be handled by the schools themselves.

From the foregoing exposition, the participants' response support the *medical model of disruptive behaviour* as discussed in section 1.5. The model purports that disruptive behaviour is understood as a maladjustment, where the child needs to be removed and placed in a "treatment environment" by trained psychologists and social workers (Jones 2003:148). This view is in keeping with the views held by Cooper *et al.* (1994:35-36) as discussed in section 3.2.2 that schools seek to resolve problem behaviour by referring disruptive children to a more appropriate environment or "milieu" for therapy by trained professionals. However, this is in stark contrast with the *action-research model of consultation and collaboration*, which seeks behaviour modification by the involvement of all stakeholders namely, mental health professionals, parents, teachers, peers and siblings (Rapport *et al.* 2001:48).

Apart from the support and assistance required from school psychologists and learner support centres, other outside agencies such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), South African Council (SANCA), religious bodies and other community organisations

need to play a supportive role in addressing the ills of the community particularly, learner aggression.

5.4.5.4 The role of outside agencies

Since the school is the heartbeat of a community, its existence and continued sustainability depends largely on the involvement of all stakeholders of the school community.

All five principals of the five rural secondary schools surveyed, commented on the involvement of the various stakeholders of their communities at their schools. The principal of school A stated:

...we have our sister department of course that would have much more skilled...people in handling some of...of...the problems that we experience at our school.... we have a very close relationship with SAPS- the South African Police Service...well they do random searches at our school...they do motivational talks...they do campaigns. We also work hand-in-hand with SANCA... they do individual and group sessions with both the teachers and the learners. We have again a very close relationship with our social workers...they assist in whatever way they can. We are also contacted to a pastor, a local pastor that is, who comes in every Thursday to have sessions with...our learners.

Apart from the involvement of the Department of Health and the SAPS, which was in agreement with what other principals had said, the principal of school D spoke about how he involved the Indunas (headman) and the Inkosi (chief) of the area:

I am fortunate that I am having the support of the headman...Induna and the Nkosi of the area. So, when we treat these aggression problems, I'm involving the Indunas (headman). As I've said if there is a case, for example, if it is from this part of the community, we've got to call all the Indunas because each area has got its own Induna which is the headman. We've got four headmen. You need to involve them. But, that is not helping because these people are away from school most of the time... even the Nkosi of the area is also involved but we are not going anywhere because you can see that these things emanate from home.

However, unlike the principal of school A who received the full support of the local pastor, the principal of school D expressed concern about the absence of religious leaders to guide the learners and help the school, *“In addition to that...to the community structures, I dunno what the churches are doing! If these other institutions...churches can come together and focus on this aggression, perhaps we might be helped as a school.”*

When children commit disruptive, aggressive acts, a plan for addressing their challenging behaviour should be comprehensive, developmentally appropriate and developed in partnership with families and other relevant people in their lives, including professionals, family members, and other adults who interact with them on a regular basis (Hemmeter, Ostrosky & Fox 2006:593) as discussed in section 3.2.6.4. This view is in keeping with the *action-research model of consultation and collaboration* as cited in section 1.5 where administrators, teachers, parents, school staff, human service professionals, and other community stakeholders work together to find solutions to problems presented by the disruptive child (Conwill 2003:239).

From the above, it is clear that principals of rural schools are trying to maximise the use of outside agencies to help with problems pertaining to aggression. However, while they do receive support at certain times, they also experience disappointment at other times and they then try to seek help and support from the SGB.

5.4.5.5 The role of the school governing body (SGB)

The school governing body (SGB) plays an important role in providing support to the principal and management of the school by ensuring the smooth running of the school. According to Joubert and Squelch (2005:23), the SGB can and should play an important role in the establishment and maintenance of sound discipline. When learners are involved in serious offences including aggression, the SGB members have an important responsibility, since they live in the same community, to make house visits and gain the support of the parents to help address the problems.

Regarding dealing with aggression, the principal from school A explained:

...we have a disciplinary committee, which handles cases like this, from the teachers, from the learners em...and if they are not in a position to resolve them, then such cases are referred to the SGB. Like I mentioned earlier, parents play... a crucial role again in assisting us with learner aggression.

The principal of school B agreed with the principal of school A with respect to the important role the SGB plays in addressing the problems of discipline in schools and emphasised the need for the SGB policy on discipline to be clearly outlined so that there is no confusion regarding interpreting the policy:

Then also the role that is to be played by the SGB....when it comes to learner discipline, to make sure that all the aggressive learners are dealt with accordingly. It should also be indicated clearly in the constitution of the SGB as it is the case with the South African School's Act 94 Of 1996, the clear role that is to be played by the SGB...how the disciplinary procedures and processes are going to take place in the school.

Teacher 4 concurred with the principals of schools A and B by stating:

And often we do, when occasions necessitates we do enlist the assistance of the governing body and the governing body does play quite a substantial role in assisting in particular because they are members of the community and they know where these learners come from. So, the trouble-causers do receive treatment from all levels...the educators, the managers, the governing body.

The above expositions supported the *action-research model of consultation and collaboration* as discussed in section 1.5, which posits that behavioural consultation and collaboration among administrators, teachers, parents, school governing bodies, school psychologists and other community stakeholders are necessary processes in the endeavour to help children with disordered conduct. Morrell (2001:294) agrees with the above model when he indicates that the transformation of education in South Africa defines the role of parents as key partners in education. The election of parents to SGBs allows them the opportunity to be involved in issues regarding to the misconduct of learners in schools and to participate in disciplinary proceedings as set out in the learner code of conduct.

While SGBs play a pivotal role in learner discipline at school, teachers being the custodians of the child in the absence of the parent, and under whose supervision learners function for much of the school day, also have an equally important responsibility to address the problems of learner aggression as they unfold in their classrooms.

5.4.5.6 The role of teachers

The role of the teacher in terms of supporting and assisting the management of the school in managing the problem of learner aggression is evident from the various responses from teachers and learners as presented in the interview data. Teacher 1 from school A recounted how he supported the management:

Ya...I probably had the fortunate position because of my counselling background...in that I've been called in from time to time to attend to problems especially in terms of one of aggressive nature where we called in the parents, we called in the teachers involved, child involved- learner involved and we try to for a reasonable solution in order to contain the problem.

The use of reverse psychology to manage aggressive learners is explained by teacher 4 from school D:

Most of the time these learners also need attention...ya...they need attention, so you give them the special attention and everybody is safe. Personally, that is the strategy...I get to class...those that are aggressive, I give them special attention. Questions go to them to answer.

Another teacher proposed a novel way to make learners feel wanted and in so doing avoid aggression:

One other manner that we used...we were using this adopt-a-child principle. We distribute the learners, especially the matrics amongst us teachers and then I would tell those children in my group, "You know now, you are my children. Whatever you do implicates me. So, if you do something that is good it promotes my learning, it makes me known to be famous among the teachers but if you do something that is insulting, that thing makes me look like I'm failing you guys" So in that way, learners are connected and it helps them to be disciplined.

Learners from schools B and D indicated that teachers play a helpful role when acts of aggression are reported to them. Learner 5 from school B heaped praise on a particular teacher in his school who can be relied on to assist with aggressive learners:

...there is a teacher in the school who is very good in counselling, who is very good in helping learners that got those problems, can talk to the learners, like make them understand- they will see that what they are doing is very wrong. We have a teacher who supports us.

One learner from school D referred to teachers helping with solving problems created by aggressive learners, *“Yes, sir. I think they are very helpful. I’ve observed that if someone is at fault...a boy he’s done something wrong...he get suspended or disciplined. I think that they are very helpful.”*

Since behavioural psychology emphasises the fact that behaviour is learned, teachers are as well equipped as other professionals to help disturbed children learn new and more appropriate behaviour (Cooper *et al.* 1994:37). In fact, teachers play a pivotal role in observing and identifying children in their classrooms who have deviant, disruptive tendencies and use the various alternatives to corporal punishment and the school’s code of conduct to discipline errant learners and improve their disruptive behaviour, as cited in section 3.2.2.1. This is in line with the *educational model* cited in section 3.2.2.1 which places the identification of disruptive learners and the intervention strategies squarely on the school with teachers playing a pivotal role in the learner’s behaviour modification and rehabilitation.

Equally important in assisting the school in addressing the problem of learner aggression is the involvement of parents since “the family is the most immediate and perhaps the most influential system affecting the child” (Marais & Meier 2010:41) discussed in section 3.2.6.1.

5.4.5.7 The role of parents

Many teachers held the view that parents are a vitally important part of the school system and have an important responsibility to assist principals and teachers to reduce the incidence of disciplinary problems in the school through their active involvement. Some teachers spoke glowingly of the parental involvement in their schools.

Teacher 1 from school A expressed appreciation for the support he received from parents:

Generally, parents are called, they come to school at their earliest convenience...when parents come here they are very corporative, whatever decision we come to we in agreements, all the parties agree that this is the solution. So generally speaking, I think it's quite positive from the parent side.

Teacher 2 from school A expressed agreement with her colleague:

...with parents, they give us so much more respect and they give so much of support on how to handle their child knowing that the behaviour of the child is at a certain point. So they know their children much better and they give us an insight on how they handle their kids when they do particular things.

While some teachers expressed their appreciation for the support they received from parents, others complained bitterly of the non-involvement of parents in school related matters. Teacher 4 from school B commented:

... the actual parent support is lacking, they either refuse, they will make a phone call to say 'I'm not available, I'm at work' or some place ...the apathy, the tremendous apathy among the majority of our parents...you find that parents are simply just not available and this compounds the problem. And also the learners know the fact that their parents are not available...they have the levity or the freedom to do whatever they please with the hope that they will get away with it. And in most cases, they do get away...sadly.

Teacher 8 from school C expressed similar sentiments:

In our school, you will find that there's not much interaction between the school and the parents. Whenever we call a meeting...we have a roll of 730 to 740

learners, we get a turnout of 20 to 30 parents. And that itself will show you the lack of interest amongst our parents with regards to this.

The above findings support *Bandura's social cognitive theory* as discussed in section 1.5, that posits that parents are influential in ensuring either positive or negative outcomes for their children in school. This theory emphasises that parents who raise their children in a caring, supportive environment can certainly contribute to their children's abilities to develop good feeling of self-esteem, enabling their children to deal with outside situations and influences better. However, the opposite is also true when parents lack interest in their children; accordingly, they may imprint negative behaviour in them, which may subsequently lead to them adopting a negative way of life, as discussed in section 2.2.2.2. Mestry and Khumalo (2012:106) agree with the above, emphasising that when parents fail to discipline their children at home, the child can display that same undisciplined attitude at school. Bemak and Keys (2000:17) as discussed in section 2.2.2.1, concur with the above theory by maintaining that learner aggression continues amongst learners because of inconsistent discipline, poor supervision, inappropriate parent modelling and overall poor management of the child's overall aggressive behaviour.

It is evident from the above that the role of the parent in supporting the school on aggression related matters, is critically important. Where there is parental involvement, the likelihood of addressing aggression problems successfully is high; whereas a lack of it only compounds the problem for teachers and school management teams. However, another important component of the school system is the RCL that has the ability to assist the management team to reduce the problem of aggression in schools.

5.4.5.8 The role of the representative council of learners (RCL)

The RCL is a democratically elected structure in secondary schools whose chief responsibility is to assist the teachers and principal in managing learner problems in schools. While some learners, principals and teachers have alluded to the corporation and support given to them by the RCL members, others stated categorically that while

the election process was democratic, learners were voted in on because of their popularity rather than their ability.

Learners in all five schools gave a positive account of the involvement of the RCL's in their schools regarding combating learner aggression. Learner 1 from school A substantiated this point when she revealed:

You know sir, what I really appreciate about the RCL's, [is] the way they handle learner aggression at school. First of all, they understand it far better than the teachers. They put themselves there because they are in that age group. One thing I like about them sir, is that they got reasoning. Instead of running to the office whenever there's a fight in class, they take these two people and talk to them."

While the above learner had positive opinion of the involvement of RCL members regarding the solving of aggression problems, other members of the RCL's of the five schools differed completely in their opinions of the RCL as a structure. They complained bitterly about not knowing what to do when problems arose because of a lack of training, indicating that they were scared to take the matter up for fear of victimisation and also expressing their reservations about the wrong people being elected onto the committee because they could not deliver what was expected of them.

Learner 1 from school B asserted:

There's never been a case where RCL's are helping or assisting the learners that were involved in fights. What is common is that you find the RCL's becoming the spectators, they like...they're watching the fight...everyone is watching the fight. So the RCL's are not much help to learners I think.

Furthermore, learner 4 from school A complained about not knowing what to do when confronted with specific problems:

As [a member of the] RCL, I don't think we are actually informed...that you need to do this and this and this if someone's being fighting, or learners have been swearing teachers and stuff like that. They weren't informed what to do...because we aren't being

taught what to do in certain situations- if we were, these situations won't be happening...they wouldn't happen.

In turn, the principal of school D expressed deep concern about the negative effects democratic elections for the RCLs had on the school:

Within the premises, we have got an RCL and this is where you start as a principal of the school. Most unfortunately, when these RCL members are elected, there's no fairness because what the learners do, they would give you people that will cause problems in your management. You never get responsible people who will be there with the purpose of assisting the other learners. In 2007, I had a president of the RCL who was so chaotic, that he was even robbing learners of their money. He was the one who was encouraging learners to go to the nearby shebeens. We don't get responsible people in these RCLs but most unfortunately, as an electoral officer, or as the principal, there's nothing you can say because you take the results as they are from the learners.

Even though the above views gave a mixed response regarding the functioning of and the need for a RCL in schools, the South African Schools Act, Act No 84 of 1996, prescribes that secondary school learners from the eighth grade onwards must be represented on the SGB and must establish a RCL, elected by school learners and who, by virtue of a democratic election process, therefore have a legitimate role to play in school governance. The inclusion of learners in decision-making processes on matters pertaining to school governance is in keeping with Conwill's *action-research model of consultation and collaboration* as cited in section 1.5. This model proposes that consultation and collaboration amongst all stakeholders of the school system, teachers, parents, learners and other community stakeholders are necessary processes in the endeavour to help children with conduct difficulties. Rapport *et al.* (2001:48) support the above model by stating that considerable involvement by mental health professionals, school psychologists, parents, teachers, peers and siblings is necessary to address oppositional behaviour collectively.

The responses from the principals, teachers and learners with regard to the five emerging themes may be described in the form of a model, which commences with the various forms of aggression and how they are caused, the psychological effects and

consequences thereof and finally the management of these acts of aggression by various stakeholders.

5.5 A MODEL TO MANAGE LEARNER AGGRESSION

The following model represents the various stages of learner aggression based on the findings obtained from the interviews and explains how the different aspects of the findings are linked. Figure 5.1 depicts learner aggression as a cyclical process commencing with the understanding of the various forms of aggression, identifying its causes, understanding its psychological effects and consequences on victims, and culminating on the role of various stakeholders of the school in managing it. This model also describes the different aspects of the findings, showing how each stage flows from one to the other and how each relates to and is linked to the problem of learner aggression.

5.5.1 Forms of aggression

In terms of stage one of the model, physical aggression, verbal aggression and bullying represent the main forms of aggression identified by the various participants in the five rural secondary schools. This is in keeping with the view espoused by Carter (2006:27), who refers to an extremely high rate of verbal, physical and sexual bullying perpetrated by learners in secondary schools as discussed in section 2.3.4,. These aggressive tendencies are caused by various factors as indicated in stage 2 of the model.

5.5.2 Factors contributing to aggression

Stage two of the model points to the various factors that contribute to learner aggression in rural secondary schools particularly at the level of the family, the environment and the school. This was highlighted by the various participants in the interviews and is in keeping with the discussions as they appear in section 2.2.2, in which family factors such as, parental role models, divorce, separation and single-parent homes; environmental factors (as discussed in section 2.2.3) play a contributory role in

causing aggression among learners. Other factors leading to aggression are poverty, drugs and alcohol abuse, peer pressure and gangsterism as well as school factors (as cited in section 2.2.4) such as age cohort, corporal punishment, pregnancy, curriculum and language problems, racism and intolerance. As the interview transcripts have confirmed, the psychological effects caused by aggression can be devastating for the victims.

5.5.3 Psychological effects of aggression

The various factors contributing to learner aggression as discussed in stage 2, result in severe psychological and emotional trauma on the part of the victims. This is depicted in stage 3 of the model, which highlights the psychological effects experienced by victims, namely, low self-esteem, fear and anxiety, depression, stress and ill health. This is in keeping with the discussions appearing in section 2.3. The psychological effects of aggression may lead to the victims suffering drastic consequences, which may require an urgent intervention to prevent suicidal tendencies and even death.

5.5.4 Consequences of aggression

Stage 4 highlights the dire consequences of aggression as a result of physical aggression, verbal aggression and bullying (as indicated in stage 1) and the psychological and emotional trauma experienced by victims of aggressive acts (as depicted in stage 3) as a result of the various causes of aggression (as highlighted in stage 2) of the model. Victims of aggression often engage in prolonged absenteeism, perform poorly in tests and examinations as a result, drop out of school and sometimes even resort to suicide, as cited in section 2.3. As the consequences of aggression are drastic, solutions need to be sought to manage the problem.

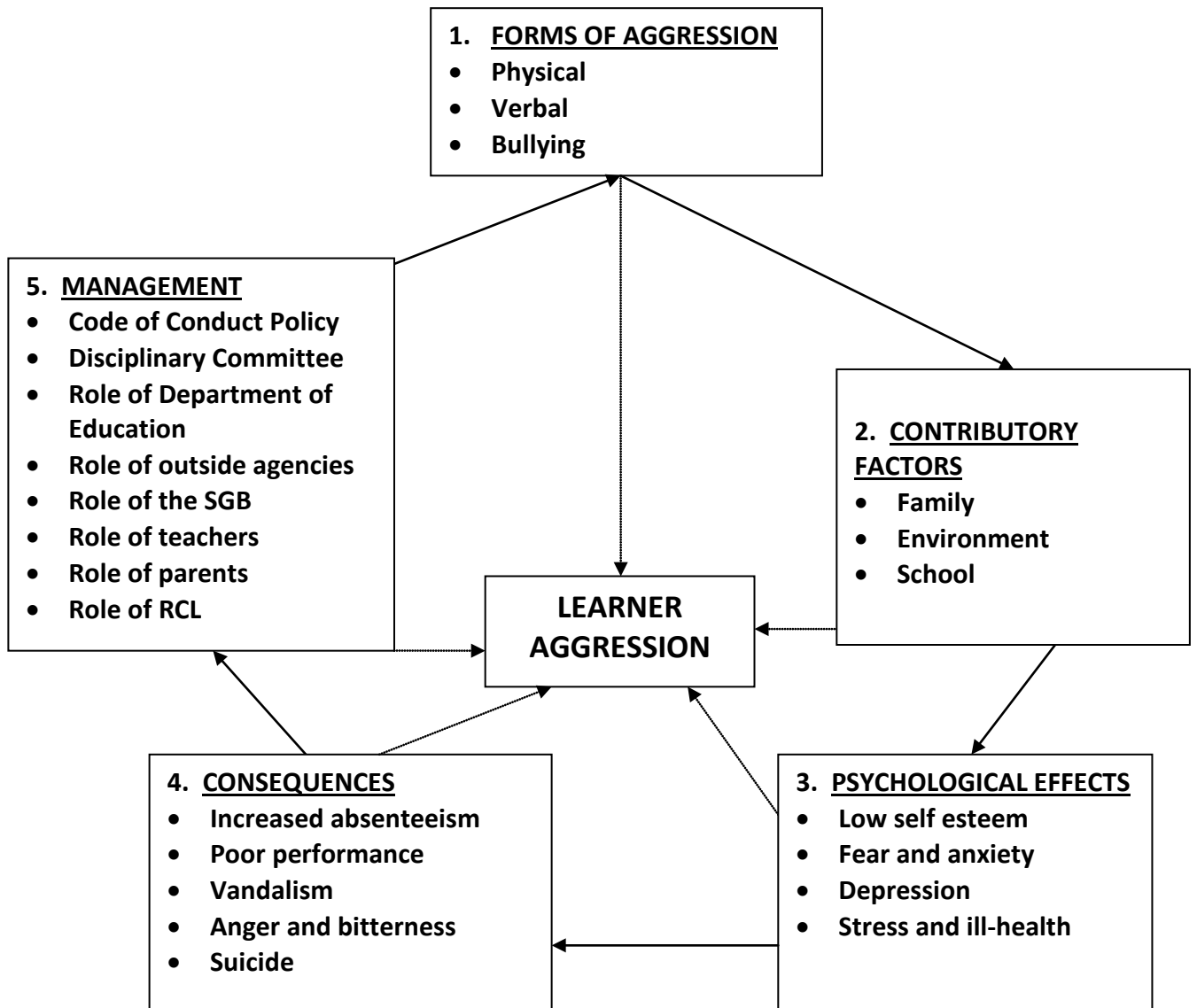


FIGURE 5.1: A MODEL TO MANAGE LEARNER AGGRESSION

5.5.5 Management of aggression

Stage 5 deals with the management of aggression after the forms of aggression (stage 1), the causes of aggression (stage 2), the psychological effects (stage 3) and the consequences of aggression (stage 4) have been identified and understood. The data from the interviews confirm that all stakeholders of the school system share the responsibility of managing the problem of aggression in rural secondary schools. This includes the disciplinary committees, the Department of Education, counselling and support services, outside agencies such as SANCA, SAPS and clinics, teachers, parents and learners. This is in keeping with the *action-research model of consultation and collaboration* where administrators, teachers, parents, school staff, human service professionals, and other community stakeholders work together to find solutions to problems presented by aggressive learners (Conwill 2003:239), as discussed in section 3.2.6.4.

5.6 SUMMARY

In chapter 5, this researcher presented the findings of the empirical investigation. The chapter entailed the analysis of the research findings after in-depth interviews were conducted in five rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District of KZN with principals, teachers and learners with regard to the problem of learner aggression in secondary schools. The researcher indicated how data from the interview transcripts and field notes were analysed by identifying the main themes, categories and sub-categories. In addition, the research findings resulting from the emergent themes were discussed using the participant's verbatim accounts. Furthermore, appropriate models and theories, as well as relevant evidence from the literature study conducted in chapters two and three were used to support the findings. The research findings were then used to develop a model to manage aggressive behaviour in schools.

The following chapter, which is the final chapter, will provide recommendations to address the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools, outline the limitations of the study and demarcate areas for further research.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem investigated in this study was managing learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KZN. This study sought to achieve the following specific objectives as stated in section 1.4:

- To determine the underlying causes of learner aggression in rural secondary schools,
- To determine the consequences of learner aggression in rural secondary schools,
- To establish the levels of involvement of all the relevant stakeholders in education with respect to the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools.
- To formulate possible management strategies/ recommendations to address the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools.

Hence, the aims of the research were to undertake a study of the relevant literature to establish the causes of learner aggression, determine the consequences and provide recommendations with regard to the management of learner aggression in rural secondary schools based on the literature reviews of chapters two and three and the research findings of chapter five. In chapter four the qualitative research design and methodology were described.

In this chapter, conclusions are made from the literature study and from the empirical investigation, as well as recommendations made for the management of learner aggression, and for further study. The limitations of the study are also highlighted.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE STUDY

Chapter one highlighted the impact learner aggression has on the learners and parents of rural secondary schools (section 1.1). Aggressive acts perpetrated by learners impact negatively on the ethos of the school and have a profoundly adverse affect on the teaching and learning process (section 1.3). Teachers and learners have become targets

of intimidation by aggressive youth resulting in them becoming victims of physical and psychological trauma, which resulted in victims suffering from low morale, stress, anxiety and depression thereby absenting themselves from school for long periods. Consequently, the progress and functionality of the school has become seriously compromised (section 1.2).

Various theories were considered (section 1.5) to confirm the findings of the empirical investigation in chapter five. These theories included Bandura's *social learning theory*, Bandura's *social cognitive theory*, Skinner's *behavioural theory*, Buss's theory of aggression, Dollard's *frustration-aggression theory*, Carl Rogers *person centred theory* and Durkheim's *theory of suicide*.

An in-depth literature study was conducted in chapter two to determine the causes and consequences of learner aggression in rural secondary schools. Various factors that played a significant role in causing learner aggression were explored accordingly (section 2.1). The literature study concluded that at least four factors contribute significantly to aggressive behaviour amongst secondary school learners, namely, biological factors (section 2.1.1), family factors (2.2.2), environmental factors (2.2.3) and school factors (2.2.4).

Chapter two also dealt with a comprehensive literature review on the consequences of learner aggression in rural secondary schools (section 2.2). In this chapter, it was established that victims of learner aggression, which included learners, teachers and management staff, expressed an inability to experience emotion, were extremely fearful of the aggressive act recurring, experience anxiety and difficulty sleeping, display disinterest in schoolwork or social activities, express feelings of guilt and have difficulty with paying attention (section 2.2). It was further established that the effects of aggression were so severe that teachers who were concerned for their safety were unable to focus on their teaching and the students' learning and learners who worried about their safety, were less able to concentrate and succeed academically (section 2.2).

Chapter three dealt with an in-depth investigation into the various models designed to explain disruptive behaviour amongst secondary school learners (section 3.2). Six

models were studied with each model providing a particular perspective on what needed consideration when managing learners guilty of disorderly conduct, namely, the *biopsychosocial model* (section 3.2.1), the *medical model* (section 3.2.2), the *educational model* (section 3.2.3), the *action research model of consultation and collaboration* (section 3.2.4), the *conceptual model of ADHD* (section 3.2.5) and the *teaching pyramid model* (section 3.2.6).

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

Data from the literature study (chapters one, two and three) provided a theoretical framework for the direction of the empirical investigation (chapters four and five) which were conducted to determine the impact of the main research problem within the qualitative paradigm from a phenomenological perspective and which involved an interpretive and constructivist approach as discussed in section 4.3. The data were collected by means of social interaction (interviews and focus group interviews) between the researcher and the participants in the school setting (section 4.3) with one-on-one interviews with the principal of each of the five secondary schools. In addition, focus group interviews were conducted with eight teachers from each of the schools, while focus group interviews were held with eight elected members of the RCL from each of the schools (section 4.4.3.1).

Various ethical measures such as informed consent, voluntary participation, permission to tape-record interviews, anonymity and confidentiality were considered to ensure that the participants' rights were protected and not violated in any way (section 4.4.1). Accordingly, the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim (section 4.4.1.4). The data were then analysed in terms of Lincoln and Guba's model and four criteria (truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality) were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the empirical findings (section 4.4.2).

The interview transcripts were then analysed and emerging themes, categories and sub-categories were identified and developed (section 5.3). This process assisted the researcher with content analysis and interpretation. The main themes identified in the empirical investigation were as follows:

- Forms of learner aggression.
- Factors contributing to learner aggression.
- Psychological effects of learner aggression.
- Consequences of learner aggression.
- Management of learner aggression in schools.

After consideration of the research results of each theme, category and sub-category, certain conclusions were reached (see section 6.5).

6.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY

6.4.1 Causes of learner aggression

The literature study conducted in section 2.1, confirmed that various factors were responsible for learners exhibiting aggressive behaviour in secondary schools. The biological factors, as discussed in section 2.1.1 emphasised the role played by genetics and neurology in the acquisition of aggressive, antisocial behaviour. After discussing the various family factors responsible for learner aggression (section 2.1.2), it was concluded that parental role models, divorce and single parent homes, trauma, parental substance abuse and puberty, were the chief causes of learner aggression. The environmental factors (section 2.1.3) leading to aggression focussed mainly on community characteristics, television and media influences, gangsterism and drug and alcohol abuse. In addition, the school factors (section 2.1.4) that played a critical role in advancing the problem of aggression were school rules and discipline, curriculum and language problems, racism and intolerance, inadequate schools and school ethos and antisocial classroom communication. The literature study confirmed that the four factors discussed above caused learner aggression in rural secondary schools.

6.4.2 Consequences of learner aggression

Irrespective of its origin, nature or progression, the violence emanating from learner aggression has had catastrophic and dire consequences for victims who become depressed, lacked self-esteem, disliked school, suffered anxiety and developed an array of psychological problems (section 1.2). Because of the violent and aggressive episodes

displayed by aggressive learners, prolonged absenteeism among teachers and learners had become a norm in schools, as a result of the fear, intimidation and torment imposed on them (see section 2.2.1). The literature in chapter two confirmed that both teachers and learners took long periods of leave because of stress related problems and this adversely affected teaching and learning at school and ultimately led to underachievement on the part of the victims (section 2.2.2). In effect, the harsh treatment meted out to teachers by aggressive learners has resulted in various applications for transfers to other schools and in many cases, resignations from the profession altogether (section 2.2.1).

Because of their inability to cope with the harassment, nastiness and constant victimisation, victims suffered from poor health (2.2.8) and erratic temperaments, which makes them prone to maladaptive behaviour (2.2.10). This behaviour had a serious effect on their mental health to the extent that they experienced unusually high levels of stress, anxiety and depression (2.3). It was further established that the inability of the victims to cope with the incessant and chronic harassment from their tormentors, resulted in them becoming socially withdrawn, sedentary, physically weak, prone to alcoholism and substance abuse and becoming depressed, which eventually led to them resorting to suicide (section 2.2.7). The literature study confirmed that the consequences of learner aggression were not only extremely serious but also detrimental to the health and well-being of victims. It then became necessary to investigate the management strategies required to manage the problem of aggression in schools.

6.4.3 Managing learner aggression in schools

In order to find solutions to address the problem of learner aggression, six models of disruptive behaviour were studied (section 3.2). From the literature review of these models, it was found that in the *biopsychosocial model*, research has revealed a moderate degree of heritability for delinquency, disruptive and antisocial behaviour (section 3.2.1.1). In turn, the *medical model* and the *conceptual model of ADHD* focus on maladjustment or mental illness in children, which are responsible for negative behaviour and propose that these children be referred to health agencies for treatment

and rehabilitation (section 3.2.2) since they require pharmacological management with stimulants (section 3.2.5).

This view was found to be in opposition with the *educational model*, which proposed that emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) are the domain of teachers who can make profitable use of systemic insights and particular intervention techniques to modify behaviour of disruptive learners (3.2.3). The *teaching pyramid model* concurs with the *educational model* in that it proposed a three-tiered model of classroom strategies for promoting the social-emotional development of all children particularly children with challenging behaviour (section 3.2.6).

However, while the protagonists of the above models provide medical and educational insights into managing aggressive behaviour, William Conwill's *action research model of consultation and collaboration* (section 3.2.4) proved to be the most suited model to address aggressive, disruptive behaviour in schools. This model posits that behavioural consultation and collaboration among all stakeholders of the school system (administrators, teachers, parents, school staff, human service professionals, mental health consultants, school psychologists, and other community stakeholders) are necessary processes in the endeavour to help children with disordered conduct (section 3.2.4). Data from the empirical investigation (as discussed in chapter five) also supported this view of the involvement of all stakeholders in addressing discipline problems in schools.

6.5 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The five main themes that surfaced in the empirical investigation (table 5.2) were, namely, the forms of learner aggression, the factors contributing to learner aggression, the psychological effects of learner aggression, the consequences of learner aggression and the management of learner aggression in schools.

6.5.1 Forms of learner aggression

The data from the interviews with principals, teachers and learners confirmed that the most common forms of learner aggression in schools were verbal aggression, physical

aggression and bullying (see table 5.2). Physical aggression was displayed in the form of physical fighting, hitting, slapping and banging and kicking of victims (section 5.4.1.1), verbal aggression took the form of screaming, swearing and insulting (section 5.4.1.2) whereas bullying involved the combination of the two- physical acts such as hitting, pushing, kicking and strangling and verbal acts such as threatening, taunting and teasing (section 5.4.1.3).

6.5.2 Factors contributing to learner aggression

The interview transcripts proved that three main factors (family factors, environmental factors and school factors) played a major role in learner aggression (see table 5.2). The family factors that contributed significantly to learner aggression included broken homes, poverty and poor parenting (section 5.4.2.1). The environmental factors included drug and alcohol abuse, peer pressure, gangsterism and racism (section 5.4.2.3) and school factors that played a critical role in promoting aggressive behaviour were age cohort, corporal punishment, teenage pregnancy, teasing, gossip and jealousy and poor management structures (section 5.4.2.3).

6.5.3 Psychological effects of learner aggression

The interviews with principals, teachers and learners conclusively proved that acts of aggression committed with regard to teachers and learners led to heightened tension, anxiety, depression and ill-health (section 5.4.3). Importantly, the factors that played a crucial role in terms of affecting victims psychologically, were low self-esteem (low morale, lack of confidence), fear and anxiety (nervousness and tension, feelings of humiliation), depression, stress and ill-health (see table 5.2).

6.5.4 Consequences of learner aggression

The empirical findings confirmed that victims of aggression have been found to indulge in drugs and alcohol, got involved in vandalism to express their frustrations and helplessness, performed poorly in school and displayed suicidal tendencies (section 5.4.4). The result of this was absenteeism, transfers and resignations (5.4.4.1), poor performance at school by both teachers and learners (5.4.4.2), vandalism by aggressive

learners expressing their frustrations (5.4.4.3), expression of anger and bitterness towards the aggressor (section 5.4.4.4) and ultimately committing suicide because of persistent feelings of hopelessness, dejection and depression (5.4.4.5).

6.5.5 Management of learner aggression in schools

Data from the interview transcripts proved conclusively that structures to manage aggression in schools were inadequate, ineffective or non-existent (5.4.5). In this regard, participants highlighted the need for the code of conduct policy (5.4.5.1) and disciplinary committees (5.4.5.2) to function effectively and in tandem with one another. The role of the various stakeholders of the school in supporting the school in arresting the problem of aggression also featured strongly in the interviews. Participants emphasised the pivotal role that should be played by the Department of Education in providing counselling services and support centres for schools (5.4.5.3). Apart from the role of the Department of Education, the role of outside agencies, such as the SANCA, the SAPS, clinics, doctors, social workers (5.4.5.4), the role of the SGB (5.4.5.5), the role of teachers (5.4.5.6), the role of parents (5.4.5.7) and the role of the representative council of learners were critical if the problem of aggression were to be seriously addressed and minimised effectively.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings and conclusions derived from the views of the participants in the study, the following recommendations were made to manage learner aggression in rural secondary schools.

6.6.1 The role of the Department of Education in addressing learner aggression in rural secondary schools

The Department of Education has a pivotal role to play in giving schools direction in terms of policy formulation (code of conduct for learners, disciplinary committees) and support (psychological services and support centres) with difficult learners. The Department of Education should:

6.6.1.1 Review and monitor the implementation of the school code of conduct for learners

According to the South African's Schools Act, Act 66 of 1994 section 8(3), the Governing Body of every school must develop a code of conduct policy for learners in consultation with parents, learners, teachers and non-teachers. The nature of misconduct and the relevant sanctions should be outlined clearly and there should be consistency in the application of sanctions. School policies on learner conduct, in the current form, bestow limited powers on teachers and management teams to act with regard to disruptive children with the result that their behaviour continues unabated (section 5.4.5). For example, a learner who is suspended for seven days is fully aware that when the seven days are up, he will be back at school and can continue with his disruptive ways. Hence, there is an urgent need to review the school's code of conduct policy to include tougher sanctions (section 5.4.5.1) even though the South African's Schools Act insists that the code of conduct must promote positive discipline, must not be punitive and punishment-orientated but facilitate constructive learning.

The researcher is of the view that since suspension is ineffective, expulsion should be the norm for learners with serious behaviour problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, stabbing, assaulting teachers, vandalism of school property and so on. The learner should only be allowed three suspensions after which transfer or expulsion should be seriously considered. This hard line approach will caution other learners with similar intentions to desist from engaging in these extreme behaviours. Even though expulsion, according to SASA, is a function of the Head of the provincial Department of Education, the researcher recommends that the powers of the disciplinary committee of the school be extended to include decisions on transfer of learners and expulsion so that a more hard line approach is adopted.

6.6.1.2 Ensure that disciplinary committees are properly constituted and functional

The school governing body (SGB) has to appoint a disciplinary committee to conduct disciplinary inquiries (DoE, 2003:25). The committee should be responsible for disciplining learners for serious transgressions such as possession or use of drugs or

alcohol, fighting, theft or possession of stolen property, criminal behaviour such as rape, bullying and intimidation of other learners (Mestry & Khumalo 2012: 100). The school should then refer these serious misdemeanours to the disciplinary committee, which then examines each case and recommends either the transfer or expulsion of the learner (section 5.4.5.2). However, during the interviews, the participants confirmed the existence of structures in the school, but complained about its non-functionality and ineffectiveness. The researcher recommends that for the committees in the school (RCL, TLO and SMT) to be effective and to be seen to be serious about their work, that the committee meets at least once a month to address problems related to aggressive learners at school. It is further suggested that the disciplinary committee, which is made up of the parent component, should also meet regularly to attend to and take decisions regarding aggressive learners recommended to them by the school. These meetings need to be closely monitored by the school principal to ensure that they do take place according to the set dates and timeframes.

6.6.1.3 Make psychological services available to all schools

Data from the interviews confirmed that teachers could not manage the problem of disorderly conduct on their own particularly in the absence of corporal punishment. The researcher recommends that the Department of Education should make the services of qualified psychologists available to schools to help counter aggression and discipline related problems in schools since the classroom management of learners with behavioural difficulties is a challenging task and is often not accomplished by teachers on their own (section 3.2.4). At the school level, the researcher strongly recommends that a lay counsellor should be appointed in every school (section 5.4.5.3) over and above the post-provisioning norm (PPN) of the school. This counsellor will be responsible for all discipline related problems at school level and will liaise directly with the school psychological services in an attempt to combat the more serious discipline problems encountered at school.

6.6.1.4 Ensure the availability of support centres in every ward

The Department of Education has only just commenced with the process of establishing support centres in every ward of every circuit to provide support to schools but the process is very slow (section 5.4.5.3). The lay counsellor at school needs to work closely with the school psychologist and the social worker based at the support centre to support learners with disordered conduct. Jones (2003: 148) concurs with this view that a disruptive child needs to be removed and placed in treatment environment by trained psychologists and social workers. The researcher recommends that referrals to the support centre must only be made once all local avenues of consultation and collaboration have been exhausted. The school psychologist should then work in consultation with all the stakeholders of the school, namely, parents, teachers, peers, siblings and mental health professionals to address the problem at hand (Rapport *et al.* 2001: 48). Since this is a new concept that is being introduced by the Department of Education and has been welcomed by schools, its effectiveness is yet to be established.

6.6.2 The role of the teacher in addressing learner aggression in rural secondary schools

The role of the teacher in supporting and assisting the management of the school in managing the problem of learner aggression cannot be overemphasized. Teachers play a pivotal role in observing and identifying children in their classrooms who exhibit deviant conduct by using the various alternatives to corporal punishment and the school's code of conduct to discipline errant learners and improve their behaviour (section 3.2.2.1). Over and above this, the following recommendations are made with regard to teachers to help reduce and manage the problem of aggressive learners in rural secondary schools. Accordingly, teachers should

- Observe and identify learners who persistently exhibit disorderly conduct and engage with them on a one-to-one basis to try to establish the underlying causes of the aggression. This can be achieved during intervals and lunch breaks at school when the teacher can diplomatically persuade the learner to talk about the home circumstances.

- Request the parent or caregiver to come to school and even make home visits when necessary to address the problem of aggression.
- Provide the school management team (SMT), the disciplinary committee, psychologists, social workers and other relevant stakeholders with first hand information relating to the learner from their personal record of information.
- Engage aggressive learners in class by getting them involved in class lessons instead of isolating them altogether. Give them an opportunity to answer questions- give them attention.
- Adopt-a-learner with discipline problems and make that learner your responsibility for rehabilitation through a mentorship programme.
- Reward good behaviour or any behaviour displayed by an aggressive learner that shows a positive step towards rehabilitation.
- Involve learners engaging in aggressive behaviour in extra and co-curricular activities at school. Participating in sport not only reduces their frustration levels but also gives them the attention they may be seeking. Engaging in mental games such as chess, can keep them purposefully occupied and away from trouble.

The above recommendations are in line with the *educational model* (section 3.2.2.1) which places the identification of disruptive learners and the intervention strategies squarely on the school with teachers playing a pivotal role in the learner's behaviour and rehabilitation.

6.6.3 The role of parents in addressing learner aggression in rural secondary schools

The researcher believes that parents play a pivotal role in their children's upbringing and the shaping of their attitudes and behaviour. Parents' failure to supervise and monitor their children's behaviour is one of the best predictors of their children's later aggressiveness and delinquency (Moeller 2001:109). Participants in this study highlighted the urgent need for parental involvement in their children's education particularly in assisting the school with conduct problems. The following recommendations were made in this regard:

- Parents need to respond positively to calls from the school in respect of their children's discipline problems and work with the school in a corporative spirit to help minimise aggressive behaviour in their children.
- Parents need to talk to the learner openly and sincerely about the problem at hand and highlight the effect the learner's behaviour has on others.
- When the school refers the aggressive learner to a psychologist or psychiatrist for evaluation and assessment, the parents must make time from their busy schedules to take the learner for referral and provide feedback to the school after the conclusion of these visits.
- In addition to the counselling efforts by the school, parents also need to refer the learner to local religious institutions for counselling from a religious perspective.
- Parents need to supervise their children at home so that they do not fall prey to antisocial peers in the neighbourhood. This monitoring enhances the youngsters' ability to resist peer pressure to perform delinquent acts (Moeller 2001:110).
- Parents have a responsibility to report drug dealers and illegal shebeens that operate in their neighbourhood to the South African Police Service for the arrest and prosecution of offenders.

6.6.4 The role of the learner in addressing learner aggression in rural secondary schools

Conwill's *action research model of consultation and collaboration* (section 3.2.4) requires that all stakeholders become involved with the management of the aggressive learner. To this end, the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 (section 11) makes provision for the establishment of a RCL which underlines the principles of co-operative governance and participative management. One of the key objectives of the RCL is to create a sound and healthy relationship between learners, educators, non-educators and parents and its main responsibility is to promote and maintain discipline among learners and foster a spirit of mutual respect, good manners and morality among learners.

While some participants in the interview applauded the RCL for the work that they were doing at school, others expressed concern about the disinterest and non-functionality of this critical structure in the school (section 5.4.5.8). The following suggestions are made with respect of the role of members of the RCL:

- As peers, learners are in the best position to gain first hand information on learners who are troubled. Once an aggressive learner has been identified by a member of the RCL, a one-on-one interaction as peers must follow to solve the problem. However, if this is not forthcoming, the RCL (as a legitimate school structure) should attend to the problem as a matter of urgency before referring it to the School Management Team (SMT).
- The RCL must be involved in organising effective awareness campaigns to highlight the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol abuse, which has proven to be one of the chief causes of aggression among secondary school learners (section 2.1.3.4).
- Address the problem of vandalism, arson, graffiti and drug dealing by working closely with the SMT of the school and other social partners like the SAPS, social workers and school psychologist (section 2.2.4)
- Reach out to troubled learners. Learners who are in a better position academically and financially should be encouraged by the RCL to befriend the aggressive learner with the intention of providing psychological and material support.
- Have meetings regularly to address discipline problems at school and provide timeous and appropriate feedback to the SMT and SGB on the progress made in addressing pertinent issues of learner discipline.

6.6.5 The role of outside agencies in addressing aggression in rural secondary schools

From the analysis of the literature study and empirical findings, it is evident that the involvement of all stakeholders of the school system contributes significantly to minimising aggression problems in schools. The *action research model of consultation and collaboration* posits that behavioural consultation and collaboration among

administrators, teachers, peers, siblings, parents, school staff, human service professionals, mental health consultants, school psychologists and other community stakeholders (such as the SAPS, SANCA, social workers, religious organisations, ward councillors, chiefs, Indunas and headman of rural communities) are necessary processes in the endeavour to help children with disorderly conduct (section 3.2.4). Teamwork and concerted efforts by all the stakeholders of the school, working with each other in constant consultation and collaboration, will not only bring about a wider pool of strategies to address aggression problems but can also generate a great deal of goodwill among all stakeholders since classroom, family and school-level interventions require collaborative efforts (see sections 3,2,4).

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made for further study:

- Since only principals, teachers and LRC's were part of the study, further studies should incorporate the viewpoints of parents as well, to add to the literature currently available.
- Further study on the phenomenon of learner aggression in schools should include private, ex-model C and independent schools so that similarities and differences of opinion regarding the occurrence of the phenomenon in public and private schools, can be established.
- This study was conducted specifically in rural schools. Further study on the same phenomenon could be researched in urban schools as well.

6.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study include the following:

- This study entailed eliciting the viewpoints of principals, teachers and RCL members regarding the problem of learner aggression in rural secondary schools and as such, only the viewpoints of these participants were included in this study.

- Furthermore, this study focussed on the problem of learner aggression in rural schools. Accordingly, urban, independent and private schools were not part of the study and the findings can therefore, not be generalised to all schools.
- Qualitative studies often use a homogeneous group of participants. This study included a group consisting predominantly of Indian and Black participants in the specific rural area that was studied. Qualitative studies that include other racial groups may therefore, reveal findings that differ from those described in this study.

6.9 SUMMARY

This study set out to determine the causes and consequences of learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal. It further sought to establish the management strategies that were required to manage learner aggression in rural schools. A qualitative research design and methodology was adopted to investigate the phenomenon of learner aggression through an interview process with participants from rural secondary schools. The principal (as an individual), eight teachers (as part of the focus group) and eight members of the RCL (as part of the focus group) from each school participated in the study. The research adhered strictly to ethical principles and was also evaluated for trustworthiness.

This study found that the causes of learner aggression were rooted in the family, the environment and the school. The findings from the empirical investigation largely concurred with the findings of the literature study in this regard. This study further established that the consequences of learner aggression with regard to teachers and learners were so drastic that it resulted in victims experiencing intense fear, anxiety, tension, depression and ill-health to the extent that victims absented themselves from school for long periods, thereby affecting the ethos and effective functioning of the school. In some instances, the effect of the aggression was so intense that victims applied for a transfer to other schools, handed in their resignations from the profession and some even went to the extent of committing suicide.

In order to address the problem, various models of disruptive behaviour were explored and strategies recommended for implementation in schools. These recommendations

are intended to reduce the incidence of learner aggression in schools so that teaching and learning can be pursued without interruption in the classrooms. The limitations of the study were also recorded and recommendations for further study were outlined.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM: 1

LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL REQUESTING PARTICIPATION OF TEACHERS IN M.ED RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby grant permission to *Gunam Dolan Singh*, student at the University of South Africa, to involve teachers from my school in the following study:

Managing learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the research is for study purposes only, and the identities of all participants, the school, as well as the information supplied will be kept in strict confidence, and not divulged to anyone.

I understand also that my teachers agree to participate voluntarily, and may withdraw participation from the research at any time without prejudice or penalty.

I understand further that I will not receive any cash benefits for involving my educators in the study, but I will have access to the findings, upon request. I am also free to contact the researcher to clarify any issues that may arise from the study and *Gunam Dolan Singh* may be reached on 0784112366 at any time.

PRINCIPAL'S SIGNATURE

DATE

WITNESS

DATE

CONSENT FORM: 2

LETTER TO TEACHERS REQUESTING THEIR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN M.ED RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby agree to participate in the M.Ed Research project conducted by *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student at the University of South Africa, which is titled:

Managing learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the interview forms the final part of the study and that my participation in the study shall in no way compromise or prejudice me in any way, and that my name personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever.

I also understand that my participation in the study is voluntary, and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage, without fear or prejudice.

I understand that I will not receive any cash benefits by my involvement in the study. I am also aware that the interviews will be taped-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries related to the study.

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE

DATE

WITNESS

DATE

CONSENT FORM: 3

LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S REQUESTING PERMISSION FOR PARTICIPATION OF LEARNERS IN INTERVIEWING PROCESS OF M.ED RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby authorise *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student at the University of South Africa to interview learners at my school, as part of his M.ED research study which is titled:

Managing learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the interview forms the final part of the study involving learners of my school. I understand that participation of my learners in the study shall in no way compromise or prejudice them, and that their names, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever.

I also understand that my learner's participation in the study is voluntary, and that they may withdraw from the study at any stage, without fear or prejudice.

I understand that neither I will receive any cash benefits from being involved in the study, nor will my learners expect any compensation in lieu of their participation. I am aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be contacted on 0784112366, to answer any queries relating to the study.

PRINCIPAL'S SIGNATURE

DATE

WITNESS

DATE

CONSENT FORM: 4

LETTER TO PARENTS REQUESTING PARTICIPATION OF LEARNERS IN INTERVIEWING PROCESS OF M.ED RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby authorise Gunam Dolan Singh, a student at the University of South Africa to interview my child/ ward _____ at school as part of his M.ED research study which is titled:

Managing learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the interview forms the final part of the study involving learners of the school. I understand that participation of my child/ ward in the study shall in no way compromise or prejudice my child/ ward, and that their names, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever.

I also understand that my child's/ ward's participation in the study is voluntary, and that he/ she may withdraw from the study at any stage, without fear or prejudice.

I understand that neither I will receive any cash benefits from being involved in the study, nor will my child/ ward expect any compensation in lieu of their participation. I am aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries relating to the study.

SIGNATURE

DATE

WITNESS

DATE

CONSENT FORM: 5

LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL REQUESTING HIS/ HER PARTICIPATION IN INTERVIEW FOR M.ED RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby agree to participate in the M.ED Research project conducted by *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student at the University of South Africa, which is titled:

Managing learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the interview forms part of the final part of the study and that my name, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever.

I also understand that my participation in the study is voluntary, and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage, without fear or prejudice.

I understand that I will not receive any cash benefits by my involvement in the study. I am also aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries related to the study.

PRINCIPALS SIGNATURE

DATE

WITNESS

DATE

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL A

INTERVIEW: PRINCIPAL

CODES: INTERVIEWER (I); PRINCIPAL (P)

I : Okay sir, good day to you.

P: Good day to you too.

I: I want to take this opportunity to thank you for giving me this opportunity to do a short interview with you and for the precious time you have given me to conduct this interview.

P: You're welcome.

I: Your first question sir. What is your experience of learner aggression in your school? It doesn't have to be only this year, it can be previous years as well.

P: Eh...thank you so much. Em...well learner aggression is everywhere. Eh...there is no school eh... that does not experience learner aggression. I am going to cite a few cases of eh... just recently. We've actually had four cases of learner aggression at our school. Eh...the first one was that of the boy (I will not mention his name) eh... who had a fight with a subject teacher. Em...apparently the boy stole the paper from the teachers bag while he was out and the learners came back to inform the teacher that eh... one of his papers was missing and they mentioned the name of the boy that had actually stolen the paper. Now when the teacher eh...went back to the boy eh... to ask him to hand him the paper the boy refused to give the paper back to the teacher. Instead, he wanted a fight. Eh...well, probably one of the things that contributed to that was that eh... the teacher himself is relatively young. So the boy thought that he could eh...fight the teacher based on his age. Eh...fortunately, the head of department and other teachers had to intervene just before the fight could..could really start. Em...another case was that of a boy eh... who has been with us for the past three years- eh...he's failed all the three years, so he is doing grade eight for the fourth time this year. Now, he picks up fights with almost everyone in the school. Em...he's big size, he's bigger than his own classmates as it were eh... as a result he ends up being bossy most of the time. He's younger brother joined us this year, now he's playing bodyguard to the younger brother. So whatever happens to the younger one, he will always come up and stand for his brother and catch up fights with whoever touches his younger brother irrespective of eh... what the argument was based on. Can I now move onto the third case of a grade eleven boy em... who was just recently suspended and eh...his case is with our SGB as we speak. Eh...now this boy had a fight with a grade eight boy. The teachers intervened,

the two boys were brought up to the office, they were both suspended and on their way to the gate... eh...the school gate that is, in full view of the staff, this boy from grade eleven continued with the fight after getting the suspension note and eh...when he was asked why he actually did that his reply was that he was only disciplining the young one, that is the one in grade eight, which means the whole fight was eh... a junior versus a senior boy to probably state or say clearly to everyone that eh... "don't mess with the senior guys of the school because you might just end up being disciplined". The last case...eh... just a recent case again was that of a boy eh...who according to the statement has a girlfriend in grade nine. The boy himself is in grade eight. Now he was actually suspecting that his girlfriend as it were was dating another boy, again in grade eight. So he picked up a fight with him, he was very aggressive, only to find that eh... the boy is actually related to the girl. That's why they are now spending more time together- ya, so this other one thought there was something going on when really there was nothing going on. So they end up eh...ended up fighting for that. Thanks.

I: Ok thank you for that. If I just have to ask you, when you speak about these fights can you explain the extent of the fights?

P: Em...well they are physical and honestly speaking they can be very ugly at times because there is bloodshed in the process. Eh...what we normally say as, as a school is that we normally make recommendations to parents to take the matter up with SAPS because it then converts into an assault charge- assault case yes but they are very serious- eh... you get them with blue eyes and such that they don't even (the victims that is) they don't come to school the next day.

I: Thank you for that. We will now proceed to question two. What factors do you think contributes to learner aggression at your school?

P: Well there are so many factors that contribute to these aggressions as it were. The main one is that of uh...the background. Um... most of our learners come from very broken families uh... most of the parents are single parents and mainly it's the mothers that are still alive. So you will find that uh... these boys will then take the responsibilities of... of... being the main man in the house- man of the house that is. Now they actually take that attitude and they then bring it to school and they would then uh... have this bossy character that they display everywhere and in most cases such displays will always end up in fights. Eh... another factor that contributes to probably learner aggression at our school is the fact that uh... because of the age factor um... these boys mainly are looking for some sense of belonging and then have to show their muscular powers and things like that. And for boys the most dominant way of showing that you more powerful than the other one would be to pick up a fight and emerge victorious at the end of the fight. That's probably one of the factors that contribute to that- that issue of...of...belonging. Um... even though the next one is not too much in terms of the rating

but eh... we do have one or two cases of drugs eh... well drugs is an issue almost everywhere eh... everyone is complaining about the whoonga and apparently there's a new one that is in the market and you know, even though we are not at liberty as a school to do tests and all of that but it's highly evident eh... in that in most cases they don't do these acts- you know they don't show these, these aggression in their sober senses... it's it's it's..it is always evident that they are under the influence of something which in this case would not be alcohol but mainly would be drugs. So after taking the drugs they are on high- they are on top of the world and they can do anything and in most cases it results in them taking up fights with teachers, taking up fights with their fellow um... learners. One other contributing factor to learner aggression is television. Eh... you know we have so many John Senor's- we have so many of these role models that they come to school and try to imitate and eh... you see when they fight all these moves- and I'll just cite wrestling as an example- all these moves that you will see the Senor's and the Randy's doing on television, they do exactly that in their fights within the school. So television, in one way or the other, does contribute- in the sense that the school gives them a platform where they can perform or display these acts which they actually see on television. Eh... one other factor probably would that be of um... security. You will find that in one way or the other, they feel so much insecure eh... in terms of life, eh...in terms of challenges, eh... in terms of how they carry themselves out and to win the others, they would then resort to fighting because, you know, people like winners. Now if you are not given an opportunity to probably do that in the right way, they will then resort to all these other things eh... like fighting. I thank you so much.

I: Thank you for that. We'll proceed now to question three. How have acts of aggression committed by learners at your school affected the teachers and learners psychologically? (pause by respondent because not sure of question)...How has it affected... the innocent victims?

P: Well, mostly eh... like I did put it forward eh... previously the rate of absenteeism eh... does increase because especially after the fight, with a blue-eye or a bruise on the face, learners tend to take days off, that is in the process of healing. And in terms of the staff- the educators em... when you are there eh... about to pick up a fight with a learner em... you somehow tend to lose respect from learners- being a teacher now. The next possible move that I have seen teachers taking is also absenting themselves because em... especially with the female staff they resort to tears and they don't really wait to be in a place where nobody will see them. When somebody intervenes after a teacher has been humiliated by a child in a class, the next possible thing that you normally see would be for a teacher to sob like a baby eh... and it becomes therefore difficult the next day for the teacher to stand right up with your head held up high in the same class where you were humiliated. So absenteeism happens in both learners and teachers after an act of aggression was witnessed. Em... with the victims especially, you see a lot of the

change in character in in the sense that they become more reserved and eh... would then portray a much more sad face as it were eh... that's one of the facts that you would probably see eh... to the victims. (I: Maybe are you trying to say that they suffer low self esteem?)... They suffer low self esteem and their confidence is dented in a huge way... eh... they're just not the same you know, those bright faces that you would probably witness before the incident just goes away after that. So their low self ... their their much lower self esteem, their confidence is way down eh... and it then becomes difficult to work with them as it were. Their interest in their schoolwork is dented a lot eh... they don't do work after that and when you ask them why the work was not done, em...they would then say but sir I can't concentrate, that this has affected me a lot so even the concentration levels in class becomes so low that it becomes a problem to work with the victims. Em...one other thing- what other effects that one has witnessed eh... on learner aggression again is that of fear. They become afraid- they become scared and when you ask them they even tell you that waking up in the morning becomes a daunting task because they know that they go back to the same place and they are going to be meeting the same people who have probably have wrong on them or something like that. So the effects are there. Thank you.

I: Thanking for answering that question in a very professional manner and we will now proceed to the next question and that is um... what are the consequences of learner aggression at your school?

P: Em... well the whole atmosphere changes, it becomes much more tense after this whole exercise. You find that nobody is at ease, the teacher is not able to do his duties in a way that would please everyone eh... because of such an incident em... at the same time you see a lot of anger in the teachers as well because at the end of the day these are human beings- you know to then have to come in between the teacher and the learner trying to probably rectify and put the situation back to normal becomes a problem because of the anger that you see especially in... in... in... the victim. Em... in terms of the performance that is largely affected- they don't perform well, that is both the teacher and the learner em... the teacher just gets fed up and you know his professionalism eh... in one way or the other is then compromised because the tears will then take over because ... I mean we are all human beings at the end of the day and to then have to try and... and... and work under such conditions becomes eh... eh... a problem. Em... you will find that eh... that some... some children as well- even though we have not had too many cases of the next point eh... would resort to suicide because this works with your mind- psychologically it affects you eh... in the past two years we've had two cases of suicide and in the letters that the learners wrote eh... they actually said that it was just too much for them- they couldn't take it anymore and they've resorted to taking their own lives. Now the incident from the class resulting from the child taking his own life is something to write home about. Eh...obviously we've had cases where the

school is vandalised eh... because it does not really end in a normal fight eh... in a case where you would have boxing ring... no em... they would probably use anything they come across eh... and vandalise the school in the process and obviously it then goes back to eh... the school and to rectify all of that...

I: Don't you think that perhaps the vandalism is an expression of their mental state, their anger?

P: Yes, yes. Eh... because you know when they start this fights em... their.. their thinking ability eh.. will be affected. And its...its...its...its... its really when you stop thinking that you do you know anything or everything as it were. So what happens in our case is that hey they become so much uncontrollable such that they would fight with anything they would come across and try and destroy everything that is in front of them because of this aggression, because of this bitterness, because of this anger that brew up within themselves. Em... well... and its... its... its... again this aggression that leads them to painting walls....

I: Are you talking about graffiti?

P: Grafitti... eh... em... you know drawings that you wouldn't expect from a learner you know, which show that- no the fact of this is way deeper in their systems em... well with the doors and windows- the doors, the windows and the chairs- those then become their weapons- that's what they use to fight. Em...you know again in terms of and again I would say that this is the main one... ah... in terms of coming to school, their absenteeism becomes prolonged- they are at home and they are trying to come to terms with their aggression that they are actually feeling or they/re coming to terms with the incident that took place in...in... in class. Eh... I thank you.

I: Thank you very much for that. We go on to question five: eh... how have you managed learner aggression at your school?... what structures are in place to manage it?

P: Em... First and foremost, we have policies in place. Eh... obviously we try and curb such incidences before they take place and also policies which informs us as to how we are suppose to handle such eh... cases if they have taken place. Now one main document that we have, or any school for that matter has is that of the code of conduct. Now the code of conduct clearly highlights the rules, the regulations of the school, how these learners should carry themselves out and what we have as a school should they break the rules and regulations. But even that is not sufficient because em... we see these things happening almost every day and at times we throw them aside as the school and we act physically ourselves you know in trying to curb eh... eh... these things. Em... now on top of the code of conduct with all the disciplinary measures eh.. the type of cases that we have eh... the levels and so on... we also have or we are also lucky enough to have a school counsellor within the school. Now his main duty is do his own

analysis of the whole situation and make recommendations to the SGB, eh ... to the SMT, to the principal himself eh.. so that if we can assist the learner we then take it from there. Eh... we also have other structures that we use from within the school in the form of committees that we have in place, again to curb this problem eh... we have a disciplinary committee which handles cases like this, from the teachers, from the learners em... and if they are not in a position to resolve them, then such cases are then referred to the school governing body. We also have sessions from different eh... figures from the eh... the.. the public who every now and again visit the school to give talks em... and also have one-on-one sessions with uh... learners that are affected by this. We are also contacted to a pastor, a local pastor that is, who comes in every Thursday to again have sessions with uh... our learners em... dealing with again issues of interest and I'm happy to say that one of the issues that have been extensively dealt with this year, is that of learner aggression. Eh... we also bring in counsellors to... to... to school to give talks on how these learners should handle themselves.

I: I think you may have partly answered the next question but if you have left anything out maybe you can answer this one. Can you explain the involvement of other stakeholders in assisting your school in managing aggressive learners?

P: Em... yes there are other stakeholders that we work hand- in- hand with eh... who come in to assist us whenever we shout. Em... we have our sister department of course that would have much more skilled eh... people in handling some of.. of... the problems that we experience at our school. Eh... we have a very good and a close relationship with our SAPS- the South African Police Services em... well they do random searches at our school. They come in- they do motivational talks eh... they do campaigns like eh... drugs eh... HIV & Aids and all of that from the SAPS. We also work hand-in-hand with SANCA eh... SANCA comes in here once a month eh... they too do individual sessions and also group sessions with both the teachers and the learners- again trying to curb eh... eh... some of the problems that we have in terms of drug eh...abuse. We have again a very close and working relationship with our social workers eh... again they come in very handy at times when these learners are affected by this em... they... we refer such learners to them and eh... they assist in whatever way they can- in fact they go out of their way in trying to assist these learners.

I: Do they work closely with the counsellor of the school?

P: Yes, they work very closely with the counsellor of the school, they work very closely with eh... the management team as it were, they work very closely with eh... the school governing body because eh... like I said with the expertise that they have eh... we normally refer eh... serious cases to them. And also again we have a very close and a good relationship with the whole Department em... our learners get eh... preference when they go to the local clinic eh... because you know, after these fights there is blood

that is shed or there is blue-eye eh... one of the teachers would then have to drive the victim to the local eh... clinic and the kind of help or the kind of assistance eh... the .. the kind of reception that we get from our local clinic is unbelievable. Its not only when we send eh... learners... eh...having being involved in a fight or any other thing that they are able to assist. They also come in and do talks on some of the things I have indeed mentioned earlier like the issue of drugs, the issue of HIV& AIDS, eh... the stage...you know the changes- the physical changes that they experience some leading to fights like this, eh... so they come in and they do a lot of that. Like I have mentioned earlier parents play eh... a crucial role again in assisting us with learner aggression eh... the municipality also plays its role again trying to help us to fight this problem.

I: Alright. Your final question. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

P: Eh... my take on learner aggression is simple. This is not really our problem alone as a school. This is something that em... the Department obviously with our government need to take seriously. They need to probably develop a plan or a policy that we as schools collectively with our sister departments would have to implement. As it is now, the way ... you know the way we handle this relies on our thinking, on our impromptu responses, but we don't really have something in place that is working and that comes in handy every time you are faced with an incident of learner aggression. Not only do we need assistance as teachers from the government and the department as an employer our learners will also need eh... a clear direction from the department as to what they as the department have in place should a learner treat the other learner in a way that would infringe the right of the other one. Our.. em.. our ... our rules our regulations that we have in place do not give us the full power, the full control to try and fight this. The limited that has been put forward by both the government and the department is more advantage to the perpetrator of learner aggression than for us who are trying to fight it, who are trying to stop this.

I: Are you saying then that the current eh...code of conduct is too lenient?

P: Exactly. Our code of conduct em... gives far too many limitations to those who are trying to put things right. It gives far too many... it draws... it actually draws too many boundaries, it draws too many lines eh... to those who are serious about stopping this in schools and until such time such boundaries are lifted we are always going to have learner aggression as one of the biggest concerns in schools.

I: Sir, I want to take this opportunity of thanking you most sincerely for a very candid presentation in this interview and I really want to thank you for your time.

R: My pleasure.

SCHOOL A

INTERVIEW: FOCUS GROUP: TEACHERS

CODES: INTERVIEWER (I); TEACHER (T1-T8)

I: Alright, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank you for making yourselves available for this interview and I want to wish you well and I do hope that the information that you give me will be able to assist us as secondary schools to provide solutions to the problems regarding learner aggression.

T: You're welcome.

I: I'll go on to the first question. What is your experience of learner aggression at your school?

T1: Ya, it could be varied, that is , there are so many attributable factors that contribute to aggression and if you are looking at rural schools, so you have to look at the children coming from that particular kind of background as juxtaposed to children coming from urban areas. Now if you look at the rural area, let's look at one person at a time, there is what you call survival of the fittest because of their situation that they display , they live in abject poverty. So in view of that children now come from violent backgrounds where even the father gets frustrated because he's poor, he cannot make ends meet. Children now will try to go out of their way to help the family but still, all these things will invariably lead to aggression. And then they come from there they come armed because they also prone to attacks . So they bring that violence now and then that becomes right. So that violence now comes from that environment and then it instils on the learners at school. That's one. Now let's look at school in total. You find that in the class, I thought I'll mention the age gap, where the bigger boys use force so they don't succumb to the younger ones. So that is what you call verbal aggression as against physical aggression.

I: Sir, could you perhaps give us your personal experience of an aggressive act?

T1: Ya. One is children screaming, swearing each other, then we might have a... then we have a systemic failure, that's one when one starts the other, then they come to fisticuffs. Then there's jealousy in terms of performance. If you are good, they don't like you, they will steal your money and if you are caught, then fight starts. I think I'll give others a chance.

I: Your experience?

T2: My experience with learner aggression was one instance not so long ago in this term. I had an experience with a certain learner from grade nine where he was continuously

speaking while I was speaking and I had to continuously tell him to keep quiet. I asked him each time please keep quiet- the rules are that if the learner gets out of hand, you use the defaulters book. So I wrote his name down that his behaviour was disruptive in class and I told him to sign and instead of signing what he did was he wrote down that I will get you. And then I had to take the matter up with my HOD so when that matter was raised in the office, he was suspended immediately. He came back with his parents so we had a case where we talked with the parents on a one-on-one session and the learner as well in his presence. At first he tried to deny it, then my HOD asked him but how could you possibly say that two teachers would lie about something like that. Whereas it happened in the presence of the whole class and they saw that you continuously argued with the teacher concerned and the class is a witness and then he eventually agreed that he did do that. And he was quite apologetic thereafter and eventually we found out that the problem starts with the friends that he has. His friends are quite influential on him and his behaviour 'cos he's got quite badly behaved friends- so that's where it all boils down to –that his friends encourages him to do such things. And thereafter he was very nice- he learnt his lesson from that.

T3: Em... I think the aggression also comes from what is happening at the home...change of...one's parents... most of the parents are single parents and we don't really have time for our children at home and they come to school expecting the teachers obviously to be teachers and parents to them and they express their frustrations to the teachers. Um... aggression really comes from, in my opinion, a lack of love and attention basically an attention seeking act in most cases and they just want to be... they want to reach out in a destructive way to a person they know who will pay attention to them and um... eventually we have to, you know, make sure that somehow we counsel them and as well as try and get away code and punishment before he acts and also to find out exactly what was the , you know, the cause because if we actually sit down with these kids you will find that you have lots of cases – there's a lot of stuff happening at home which they bring as a baggage to school and then they express it through violence and through fighting or through eh... just being rude in general.

I: Let's relate a personal experience that you may have had at school.

T3: Um. But eh... Ok I'll give you an example of um... it wasn't direct a question but if you put it that way but you could see the attitude of the child. You have a child um... like every term we have parents coming into school to look at the reports and all that and one of the... one of the children's parents told me that their daughter was pregnant and she's in grade eight.. and then she's very difficult.. she's like become very difficult to correct and she says she's something else- her whole character has changed and she asked me to speak to the child concerned and when I did the attitude was absolutely wrong- it was scary basically- her face showed it all like she's like I don't care, this is my

life.. get on with your own type attitude... um...but eventually like when the other teachers also came in just, you know, to speak to her as parents and as teachers but eventually when the other teachers had gone I sat down with her one-on-one and I actually told them there's nothing you can do now but you looking at a way forward and you just want to make sure that your whole situation is looked after right now. Um... basically she started opening up and she told me how it happened and , you know, the whole story and ya.

I: So that's your experience. Thank you very much. Your experience, sir?

T4: Okay, what I experienced about this learner aggression. This is a case in which um...uh... I was in a classroom teaching and after the lesson I set to check on the work...whether the work was done by the learners. I was checking on the learners work one back of each other and one learner managed to get out of the class and he locked the rest of us in the classroom closing the door from outside. So I had to call in a passing by guys to get rid of him in order for us to get out of the class. And he decided to fight those learners so after calling the teacher but actually there wasn't any teacher around because it was the last period. So we were caught up in the class and then later I don't know what came to him and he decided to open the door. So I confronted that guy and he was actually trying to fight me back- he was very aggressive on me. Mostly he never did his work, took somebody's book so as I was setting the work I never check the name so the learner reported this incident that's why he was trying to be the first person out of the class.. and I had to sort of call him back and sit him down... talk to him several times on several occasions in order to align towards come back to his senses and see to it that what he did was wrong- I shouldn't do that to any teacher.

I: Your experience?

T5: I teach grade eights and nines. Over there is a whole lot of aggression especially in the grade eights. For them it's like everything is about competition. Uh... teasing is one of the main problems- they start teasing each other and then they start fighting and other thing is- they steal each others' books and they'll give it one of the higher grades to keep their book and when you ask them for their books their work is not done and they argue with you that no they didn't understand the work and when you ask them why they didn't come to you- like why you didn't come to me when...if you didn't understand, ... oh miss...no we were doing this, we were doing another teachers homework- that is why we didn't understand. So ya the bullying between the grades and stuff- the higher grades will bully the lower grades.

I: Yes, sir.

T6: I set papers recently and I was in my form class and two of my students told me that a certain learner had stolen my test paper. So I confronted the learner and he was

adamant that he did not and I asked him to come out of the class and he said no... arrogantly and he started banging the desk and said no... then I... it was about ten times that I asked him to come out and he said no. So I asked my colleague to come and help me. He came in and he still said no. The other teacher went to get someone else, the HOD, to come and speak to him- he started getting more aggressive- he started acting aggressive and eh... experience that I got- and very arrogant. At the moment I think he is suspended- he was unrepentant.

I: Your experience, maam.

T7: Um...I think that one of the most impactful experiences I've had with learner aggression was in my first week of school. Um... I teach grades eight, eleven and twelve and I think some of them look at me as a very young teacher at that they seeing pupils that were along the same age as I am and in terms of physical appearance, much stronger and older and bigger looking than I am. I had an experience in a grade eight class where there was this pupil who refused to listen to anything I had to say- he refused to be in my class- he would walk in and walk out the whole time- he refused to take off his accessories from his hand and his leg – he did not have any books- would scream and swear and pass remarks the entire time and eh... in my class.. and when I confronted him, he was extremely rebellious and he tried to physically intimidate me- stands next to me and tries to intimidate me and eh... a lot of the other children were also really afraid of him and his group of friends were also very aggressive and people were scared of him- in terms of the other children- the children were scared to stand up against him or to bear witness to what was going on in the class and I had approached my HOD, Mr Ngcobo, and he actually suspended him, he suspended him calling his parents- when his parents came in that is when he actually spoke of all that stuff and we actually found out that he was going through an extremely um... difficult family situation- his background was one that really influenced him...so that is what we discussed- we put on a plan to sort of rehabilitate him in a way and to offer him that support he needed. And ever since he has been actually very responsive in classroom and is behaving.

T8: Ya. One of my experiences just recently was a learner, it's a lady, talking to the teacher in a very uncalled for manner, in a very rude way and when I confronted the learner trying to tell her to mind the word- she was like out of hand and you find that she was very aggressive and when we tried to suspend the lady – she was like she- she don't see why she's suspended, she's right, she's not drunk, misbehaving why she is suspended, teachers who are misbehaving are not suspended- she's like she is better off than everybody.

T1: Thank you. I will just touch on two aspects, that is, domineering parents as opposed to docile parents, I'm going to talk about both. Domineering parents are one who takes

charge in a home and uses violence...eh...violent means against the child or learner. That's so aggression builds up in the child and then the child comes to school. So that aggression now is transferred onto other learners- so it has a rippling effect as it were. Then on the other hand we have the docile parent, were the learner bosses the parent around and they sort of submit to their aggressive behaviour and when they come to school they want to now show their authority in terms of their authority at home and they now transfer that authority onto other learners in the school. So that's another form of aggression that comes from the parents and the learners as well. The second aspect is about pressure as seen from an education perspective. Now in schools especially in the current education policy eh... one of the requirements in the act... So the teacher or the educator is pressurised from above- from the education department- comes to the principal- to the HOD's- demands have to be met and the teacher in turn now being pressurised from the top – so he exerts the pressure now onto the learner and the learner tends to dodge and dive and brings about frustration on the part of the teacher and also anger and then also invariably you'll find that anger will come from the child because now he...he wants to retaliate. When you force him to do something he will try to retort you know, also be angry he says... why you bossing me and so on. So then now there becomes hatred for each other that frustration now turns to hatred because of the requirements. An also that has a rippling effect- one child you give him a break then the other child behaves in the same manner. And if you are a weak teacher then they know that they can push you around. I think that's all.

I: Thank you for that.

T2: Another thing that could lead to learner aggression is the use of illegal substances such as marijuana because it also has an impact of psychological impairments and those things can tend to be.. to a child being aggressive in class under that influence. Maybe that child is so addicted to that substance that when the craving arises, then once you busy with that learner then they start getting all this aggro attitude towards you because they find that they need to have a smoke or two. So that may also lead to the child being aggressive in class.

I: Thank you for that.

T3: Another thing that can possibly be an impact is... just a general eh... personality. Not everybody's the same, not everybody handles pressure in the same way. Some people will handle pressure by fighting back and some people try to handle pressure by calming down. Some people... even they under pressure you find that they work even slower, you know, when we expect them to at least go faster...or slower.. and then some people work extra quick...so in the anger or aggression, some people will handle whatever precious they have around them and give vent to their anger in different ways um... being aggression as a result.

T4: Okay, what I've noticed is eh... mostly what causes this aggression...these learners want attention and as such some of them want to be a leader and some will do anything to bring attention on them. So they cause chaos in the class so that... so that everybody look at them... then lack parental affection... most of them are living with their grannies...most of the time they don't get attention at home. In order to bring in attention on them so they come to the class to sort of chaos in order to have attention on them.

I: Thank you.

T5: Okay, since ... so they will have to... they will have to eh... adjust to the ways of the school...so they all start joining their different types of friends. Now in order to fit in with these friends, they are influenced by their friends to do this and one of the things they do... they wanna fight with each other and they wanna show that no... they not scared of anyone. So the only way to do this is by being aggressive towards a learner or another teacher. To fit in with their friends, they will do anything.

I: Are you saying peer pressure?

T5: Peer pressure is one of the reasons to fit in.

T6: I think most of the aggressive learners are the older ones- some of them are a bit old to be in the grade they are in. Because of that they bully the other kids- it's easier for them to bully young kids because they failed - they aggressive in that way- it doesn't take much for them to be aggressive because they know the young kids won't fight back.

I: So are you saying that age plays a critical role (T5: yes) as being one of the causes of aggression.?

T6: Some of them are much too old to be in certain grades. If they say something in grade ten we know nothing about it.

T7: I think that the major causes of learner aggression all stems from the home and family how they being brought up and everything by their situation. You see that... you notice that there's a pattern that children tend to act out most are the ones who are affected by such conditions the most in terms of divorce, not living with the parents or losing their parents, not being financially stable or being abused. They come into school... the school environment and uh... it's a kind of attention at the same time it's a defence mechanism trying to take themselves back to actually being open to see that part of him. So a lot of times that you see a child um... actually becoming aggressive there is a root to it. I think this causes it.

I: Thank you.

T8: Ya...um... I think its..its mostly drugs that leads them being aggressive and eh... especially when they take drugs... they don't have money... so they have to get money from other kids by bullying them... they get money and they use it for drugs. Sometimes when they in class they think of those drugs and they don't get them...some of them even take the drugs and like feeling like they want to have sex in class. Where are they taking these drugs...I mean I've just seen it in the media where there is the drug... eh... normally they take this whoonga they take it for long and after that they wanna have sex now so when they take it they become active even they call a fight with other kids... and they very arrogant and when they don't get a chance to do what they wanna do then they want to fight teachers... they wanna fight the parents . So I think that's what it does.

I: Ok. We now proceed to question three. How have acts of aggression committed by learners at your school affected learners and teachers psychologically? And here I refer to the victims... innocent victims.

T1: I will go back to the few points I mentioned earlier on where we talk of the aggressive parents and also the docile parents. Now, what happens is when a child is found guilty of aggression in school, and then it depends on the nature of the aggression or offence, then he's suspended, he's given a note or a letter and he's suspended and the parents are called for. Now, one could look at the rippling effects of that, the parent now has to come to school- so he's a dominant parent, he is an aggressive parent so the aggression now increases psychologically- he gets annoyed and then he invariably takes it out on the child. Right... so now let's look at the child now- go right into the child- because he's suspended right... the school comes to know that he's suspended- he feels now that he's unwanted, that he's unloved, that he's singled out right... so crying out for assistance. Then he becomes isolated... right...and what happen then all these things now impinge on his schoolwork- his performance- so he now becomes stressed and if he becomes stressed and that stress increases it has to go to another level- becomes a schitzo- so that's as far as the aggressive parent. Now let's look at the docile parent- he'll come to school- he's called also because of the aggressive child but because he's docile, the child now tries to, you know, talk with authority and tries to again, shut him to submission. So that also... so he now.. the parent now becomes disturbed- becomes very quiet- becomes aloof from his family- so that is the impact from the docile parent. Now let's go to the CASS... I think that has serious implications as far as the psychological aspects are concerned. Now because the learner cannot meet demands, he becomes very stressed and in the process it affects him because he's required to focus on requirements. And then he plays sick, then at home parent- he's playing sick- that means financial implications, now you know what finance means these days- he has to take him to the doctor, he has to take time off, it affects his work so... and then what happens- the child now, right-the school..teacher can isolate him, the teacher can ignore

him because he's not doing his work and then it has other impacts- from time to time the teacher will report to his superiors. (Side 1 of tape ends).

T1: Right may I continue. Let's look at the teacher- now because he has to also make demands- demands from the child- so what happens to him now- so he's pressurised by his superiors, his HOD's- so what he does now- he cannot cope- he becomes frustrated so he absents himself, and when he absents himself, it disturbs the whole school environment- so people in school now also get aggressive because when one teacher gets absent you what an effect it has on others and teachers...other teachers now become frustrated.... because "I have to serve relief for him now when I got other things to do"... so all these have psychological implications on this system of education that we have.

T8: Ya... one other thing that I have noticed that is affecting the learners is the situation where the learner was like absent for the whole week- by being threatened by the boy- the boy wanting the money from him- no he is supposed to be absent from school because he's afraid of the boy because it was reported that the boy is going to fight him later. So that affects the learner in terms of the schoolwork- and he's not coming to school- the parent visited complaining when he asked the boy why did you do this- he denies that- another thing is about a teacher who decided to quit because of the learners. Now that teacher was like... the other one was a student teacher- decided to leave because she was frightened of the learners; another one was a teacher who was just for a week and decide to go because of the learners- the kids are bullying the teachers and also the learners and so they decide to quit.

T4: Now an incident...only this incident is happening in the classroom, this has a psychological effect on all the learners. This is a case a teacher has prepared a lesson and the learners sort of started disrupting the class- all the learners will just look at the teacher- he take action against each learner, the teacher has to stop everything he does for this discipline, write down some notes and probably if the learners keep on disturbing the class, he has to take action- go out of the class, call the HOD to sort of help a psychological effort- the whole sort of lesson which he has to do on a one-on-one.

T3: And... it also affects everybody... it affects one child just um... for example...in the cases whereby kids are stabbing each other, one child stabbing another child um... the kind of – it throws you as a teacher and we are teachers also like parents. Personally, I always tell them I'm their mum in school- your mum at home is your mum at home, here I'm your mum, you live according to what I dish out to you with the laws. So as a parent you look at that a child is being affected by the other child and you think what is going to happen to them- are there any other kids at threat because of this one child. Is this child... is this other child that he's being fighting with the only child or does he have

like a gangster or something- it close you emotionally because psychologically you have all these questions that you cannot answer and you really can't tell what their next step is gonna be, what's gonna happen outside- 'cos even if it's outside as long as it is in school uniform they still represent the school. So it affects the victim and the person who's actually the guilty party psychologically as well as you who has to deal with the case- the teacher.

T7: I think overall, the most important thing about this when it comes to learner aggression as a teacher and a pupil is that as a learner and a teacher, in order to promote a healthier- a good learning environment you have to be willing, you have to enjoy the classroom be it the teacher or the learner and as soon as you have this type of situations that take place in terms of aggression and bullying and that sort, the teacher doesn't like going to the class and the child doesn't like being in the class and that stunts the growth of both the teacher and the learner.

T2: And looking at the case where I'm going to issue one, my own personal experience was that the learner had the audacity of disrespecting me because he was under the influence of smoking marijuana. So that gave him the strength and psychologically it affected him, it made him do something wrong without knowing that it is wrong. Once the substance was out of his system, he then realised later that what he had done was wrong. So it's things like that- going into the class under the influence also affects you psychologically and it makes you... it gives you powers to do the wrong things and only realise you did the wrong but it got yourself into maybe trouble. So those things affect and have a bad effect on the learner.

I: How did that particular incident have an effect on you as a teacher?

T2: For me, personally I started to have a bit of problem where I was traumatised by this learner and I feared walking out since I do not even have my own car. I had to walk out of the school going to my transport at the time. So on the way, I had to constantly like look back...where is he? Is he going to come after me? So that for me was quite a challenge but eventually I worked on it and came round it and he also came round it and we got it back together.

I: Alright. Thank you for that. We now proceed to question four. How have you as teachers assisted the management of your school in managing learner aggression? Could you please explain.

T1: Ya...I probably had the fortunate position because of my counselling background...in that I've been called in from time to time to attend to problems especially in terms of one of aggressive nature where we called in the parents; we called the teachers involved; child involved- learner involved and we try to a reasonable solution in order to contain the problem... and when children are suspended or when there's tension at the

school, in assisting the management is to try to get the child to school as soon as possible so that he doesn't lose time as far as education is concerned. So that's one way that we assist the management. We also... in school we have a system in place where a teacher has to keep a record of learners who present problems and from time to time to assist the management, the teacher has to inform the management of the problem they having especially those of an aggressive nature.

I: Thank you for that.

T5: Ok, over here quite serious, if it's fighting or those that are under the influence of alcohol we only get them suspended. Now with that they only return back to school with their parents. In that way we are able to talk with the parent and find out if there's anything contributing to the child's behaviour from home... or if there isn't then we tell the parent that this is your child's behaviour, this is what's wrong and we give solutions because not only is the child disrupting lessons but he's also going to other learners as well and disturb other learners.

T8: Ya... one of the things that one needs to do is...of cause we need to suspend the learner but before you suspend you normally check with the learner what is actually the cause and you try to talk to the learner... then if you see that the learner is not changing then you start to relay it to the management so that they can try to talk to the learner to. If that doesn't change then you also involve the parent- you call the parent. Some of the learners will come here having changed their behaviour, which they're not at home and the parent will then be surprised. Through that, when the parent is involved, the teacher is involved and you as a teacher again, I mean the SMT is involved, you as a teacher is also involved- I mean if three of you work on the child- sometimes you do know you get there.

T4: Ok, yesterday I ... was one learner sort of aggressive. Later I went out of the class and this learner decided to follow me... he apologised. So I sat him down, spoke to him..almost for thirty minutes and he came back to his senses again and he says it's not going to happen again. Sometimes they are being affected... they are being influenced by these drugs and when they come back to their senses they apologise.

I: So you saying that from a teacher perspective, you try as a teacher first to assist the child and if you can't then you go progressively to management.

T4: Yes.

I: Thank you so much for that sir. We will now proceed to question five and question five reads: Have you received any support from parents in managing the problem? Please explain.

T1: I think we can look at this from a positive point of view. Generally, parents are called, they come to school at their earliest convenience but we must understand that parents also have commitments. Sometimes they are working, they may not get time-off so the process is delayed but when parents come here they're very co-operative. We have of course exceptions to the rule- some of them you know are very protective of their children and try to defend them at all cost knowing that the child is at fault but generally speaking I think parents give us a better insight into that... but parents...they agree and whatever conclusion we come to, whatever decision we come to...that we in agreement, all the parties agree that this is the solution. So generally speaking, I think it's quite positive from the parent side.

I: Your perspective on that.

T3: I actually, personally have a relationship with other parents whereby they'll call me and they'll ask me what's his behaviour...what's his behaviour now and so they do try and do follow ups just to see if things are still going... the kids are still on track or they're not so they will even call you even in the weekends but you still have to accommodate them and just tell them the truth. By telling them the truth these parents are able to work on the child like on the parents level, hand-in-hand with the teachers at school, so it does help.

I: Thank you for that.

T2: Eh... with the parents they also give you much more respect and they give so much of support on how to handle their child knowing that the behaviour of the child is at a certain point. So they know their children much better and they give us an insight on how they handle their kids when they do particular things. They go out of their way, even if they see you in the town, they stop you and ask you how is the learner progressing in the class, their behaviour and how could they help to see their child..em... performing much better in class and out of class.

I: Thank you.

T7: I think at our school we have policy in terms of the parents coming to fetch the reports for their children because it opens the doors of communication... actually in terms of the child's progress and in terms of the child's behaviour. And we also have close relationships with the pupils- our form classes and the classes that we teach because at times it is very difficult for the child to approach the parents, to speak to their parents about an issue they may be having as it were in the same way as the parents. So as the teachers we serve as middleman in terms of communication.

T8: Ya right. I'll say sometimes it's fifty-fifty. You do have parents with complaints-some will not, some will. I just want to quote two incidents where a parent did not want to

cooperate- then the learner was suspended, he constantly disturbed the class. And when we called the parent, the parent was saying that we as teachers are failing to keep the learners in the right direction; if he was a teacher he would not have suspended an innocent child. He has a group of people fitting under his supervision and he then said take the child out of the school – he couldn't... and he doesn't understand why the child is suspended- disturbing the class for not writing the work. So some parents will not cooperate. And another one- where a parent was co-operative and the learner was like adamant to tell the parent what actually happened in school. But when we called the parent you could see the face of the kid- on the child the parent will come and will sort it out. Then when the parent came the learner was like..."I was afraid, I was afraid" and the parent was told and she helped us...we worked together and the parent now is in...I mean the child is in right order now. So, some parents do assist, some do not. Thank you.

I: Is there anything else anyone wants to add? (no response). Alright, we'll now proceed to the final question and that is: What else do you think can be done to manage the problem of learner aggression at your school?

T1: I just want to touch on these three approaches. Firstly, I think home visits, you know, where you get one-to-one correspondence, sometimes the child behaves in a particular manner in school, we talk about aggression in this case, when we visit the home you begin to pick up some things you didn't think about. And then by seeing the parents at home they, you know, they become moved by that because they concerned and they also will show concern for the child. So it's a kind of a friendly approach and then I think, following up on that, I don't think the school will deny us- it is not only when a problem arises then we call the parent to school. Sometimes if you, during breaks, if you call a parent "you know if you can come to school, I will quickly discuss your child with you." I think that kind of an approach will probably minimise the problems much more than what we probably envisage at this moment. The other one is a bit far-fetched but I think it s the one that we have to look for in future. Looking at outside resources, we have all the resources probably in the community- police- senior police officer eh... an independent person- a person with vast experience from your knowledge- get them here so that we can have now what we call a multi-directional approach. So each one now will be able to look at that child from a different angle and that child now will feel a certain kind of importance, that you know, that he has to come now meeting new people, new faces, and probably people he didn't see before- people with vast experience. So it can bring about great change in the child.

T6: There are many ways to support the learner- one of them is getting them involved in sports eh... mainly sports teaches them discipline so it will keep them away from drugs

and alcohol- giving them something else to do instead of alcohol and drugs to get their high – to get involved in sports and some kind of activities that will stand in the area.

I: Can you explain further on that... sports...when can you have that?

T6: Well, we said that drugs and alcohol are one of the reasons for the aggression and by playing sports it will keep them away from the areas like... the areas where they play sports and activities will be further away from the area where they obtain drugs. Therefore, keeping away from those areas, keep them away from the drugs... ya I mean extra-curricular activities after school will keep them away from bad hangouts and bad friends. Generally the healthier people are the ones that participate in sport as well- so it should keep them away from the bad influences in life.

I: Thank you.

T7: Ah... just to add onto that. Not everybody is a sports person so sports is a bit difficult to narrow in terms of your options but overall it's all about positive reinforcements. You got to find the aspects that the child is good in and the child actually enjoys and use that as a eh... base to actually promote their growth because lot of these children tend to act out to be aggressive, they actually haven't had the opportunity to be made to feel like they worth much more and as soon as you do that they expect more of themselves and that's what they don't do.

T8: Ya...I think...

I: What else can be done?

T8: It begins with us actually. When we see the learners, we must show them love, we must chat about their problems, they must open to us so that we know exactly their...their background is. Once we know their background they will say that "anything that I do, I have to do it for my teacher, that's why I'm positive". Number two: I think if you can have people from the department, social workers make them available to us especially in school, saying every school has got a social worker that will deal with those problems with the learners. I think that will solve the problems.

T4: Now it is also possible to invite stakeholders to give a pep-talk to these learners in connection with this drug abuse, the process of HIV/ AIDS- I think this will do a lot.

I: Any final comments?

T1: I just want to touch on two things that has been said. Firstly, in connection with sports, now if you look at the youngsters, they have a lot of energy, and not only sports but other activities as well. Some children are not sports orientated, so we can look at other activities to keep the child occupied- keep his mind away from evil things- from

wrong-doings. So we must think of activities in the school where a child can be gainfully occupied or meaningfully occupied so that his energy is diverted in the right direction. Right and ya... and then important also, you know, children you can be hard on children but if you show them true love, show them that you are concerned about their welfare and their well being, that you are doing what you are doing not because you hate them, but you hate what they are doing as a person. That's it. So as educators I think this is how we should move forward in order to curb aggression or aggressive behaviour.

T4: Maybe each and every institution needs a psychologist it will be sort of...ya aids in the school so that in case of this nature the psychologist comes in to speak to the learner so as to sort out the problem.

T1: I was also in a fortunate position to be in the psychological services. Eh... at one time it was well structured where we used to go to school on a regular basis to attend to learner aggression. But now there is psychological services in the education department but we hardly see them coming to schools and sometimes maybe one psychologist attached to so many schools, that is, they target the high risk areas where problems are rife. So as a school we can approach psychological services to assist, because they are qualified people in that particular field. So they can be of assistance but to get them is a problem.

T3: Getting down to the learners' levels, sometimes if you speak their language, somehow they connect with you. Not that they use slang or anything but if you show them that you are... you were once young... but trying to see that you do understand.. that they do have problems but we overcome those problems that they are experiencing or you've skipped or you have chosen not to involve yourself in those problems but speaking in a manner that is... comforting to them if you put it that way, they do kind of connect with you and they'll open up and you'll actually see or they'll actually be vulnerable to you and you'll actually understand them better but some time if you are a scary adult... they don't want a scary adult. They want you to be human, if you try to be human, they will connect with you. Maybe that way they will be able to be assisted.

I: Okay, ladies and gentlemen we have come to the end of the interview and I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the teachers for making the time and to contribute to this very important topic and I want to thank you again and wish you everything of the best for the holiday.

T1-8: Thank you.

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KZN INSTITUTIONS



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.: 2/4/8/79

Mr. Gunam Dolan Singh
P.O. Box 1630
Stanger
4450

Dear Mr. Singh

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZND_oE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Managing learner aggression in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District of KwaZulu-Natal**, in the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, educators, schools and institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Head of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period: From 01 August 2011 to 31 August 2012.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Superintendent General. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners **are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.**
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION


POSTAL: Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G 25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, Pietermaritzburg, 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/11 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | email: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za

9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Address to: The Director: Resource Planning; Private Bag X9137; Pietermaritzburg; 3200

The Department of Education in KwaZulu Natal fully supports your commitment toward research and wishes you well in your endeavours. It is hoped that you will find the above in order.


Nkosinathi SP Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education


Date

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

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APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PRINCIPAL

TOPIC : LEARNER AGGRESSION IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1. What is your experience of learner aggression in your school?
2. What factors do you think contribute to learner aggression at your school?
3. How have acts of aggression committed by learners at your school affected teachers and learner psychologically?
4. What are the consequences of learner aggression at your school?
5. How have you managed learner aggression at your school?
6. Can you explain the involvement of other stakeholders in assisting your school to manage aggressive learners?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

TEACHERS

TOPIC: LEARNER AGGRESSION IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1. What is your experience of learner aggression at your school?
2. What would you say are the causes of learner aggression at your school?
3. How have acts of aggression committed by learners at your school affected learners and teachers psychologically?
4. What are the consequences of learner aggression at your school?
5. How have parents assisted the school in managing learner aggression of their children?
6. What else do you think can be done to manage the problem of learner aggression at your school?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

LEARNERS

TOPIC: LEARNER AGGRESSION IN RUREAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1. What is your experience of learner aggression at your school?
2. What would you say are the causes of learner aggression at your school?
3. How has learner aggression affected learners and teachers at your school?
4. Do your teachers assist you when you report cases of learner aggression at your school? Can you explain please?
5. In what ways has the RCL assisted the management of the school to manage learner aggression?