The Perspectives of School Management Team in creating a safe learning environment

by

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Supervisor: Dr T.A Ogina

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree   M.Ed. (Education Management and Policy Studies) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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Hlologelo Bridget Letwala

 August 2021

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:
- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
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ETHICS STATEMENT

I, Hlologelo Bridget Letwala, obtained ethical approval for data collection on The perspectives of School Management Teams in creating a safe learning school environment. I declare that I observed the ethical standards and Policy guidelines for responsible research in the Code of Ethics for researchers prescribed by the University of Pretoria.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my partner Thabo Mohamadi and brother, Lesetja Frans Letwala for their full support and encouragement even through the toughest of days when I had lost hope but I had to work for us, just as Isaiah 40:31 says "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint". This research is dedicated to my parents, Mavis and Piet, not forgetting my uncle, Sello, all of whom spoke life into this research through their positive words of encouragement and emphasis on the beauty of education and achievement.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people for enabling me to achieve this milestone in my life:

- Firstly, my greatest gratitude goes to my Heavenly Father, for providing me with the strength, knowledge and perseverance to complete this study;

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- Last, but not the least, the committed staff at the University of Pretoria Research Commons for working tirelessly in assisting and advancing my technical and Computer Literacy skills.

ABSTRACT

Secondary schools in South Africa are facing many challenges one of them being unsafe school environment. Although schools have in place School Management Teams (SMTs) who oversee teaching and learning activities, such are also responsible for ensuring a safe school environment. In some South African schools, there is daily occurrence of violence; bullying; drug and alcohol use; and a growing culture of gangsterism have been reported. Despite these incidences little is known about the perspectives of SMTs regarding creating safe school environment. The aim of this study was to conceptualise safe learning school environment from the views of SMT members. I intended to establish how the SMT members in this study, namely, teachers, go about creating a safe learning environment; the challenges they experience; as well as the support they need in creating and managing a safe learning environment. The research followed a qualitative research approach and a Case Study design. Purposeful Sampling was used to select participants from three secondary schools in Brits, North West. The three schools are non-paying schools under Quintile 1, with more than 1000 learners per school. The participants included Heads of Department, Deputy Principals and School Principals. The findings from this study show the different perspectives of what contributes to unsafe and safe schools; the strategies that the SMTs take to create a safe school environment; as well as the support. Recommendations from the study are made on how to support SMTs in creating safe learning school environment.

Key Terms: School Management Teams, School Safety, Safe-Learning Environment, School Violence, School Culture and School Climate

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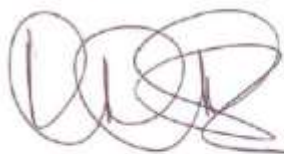
To Whom It May Concern

EDITING CONFIRMATION: Ms HB LETWALA's DISSERTATION

This letter is meant to acknowledge that I, MM Mohlake, as a professional editor, have meticulously edited the main dissertation of Ms Hlologelo Bridget Letwala entitled "The Perspectives of School Management Teams in creating a safe learning school environment".

Thus I confirm that the readability of the work in question is of a high standard.

For any enquiries please contact me.

Regards

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Disclaimer: Subsequent alterations remain the responsibility of the author.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

SMT	School Management Team
HOD	Head of Department
NSSF	National School Safety framework
PSSF	Promoting Safe and Stable Families
CSSF	Comprehensive School Safety Framework
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
DOE	Department of Education
CJCP	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Violence in Schools has become a prominent problem worldwide and gives grounds and motivation for creating a safe learning school environment (Merrill, 2018). The data on school violence in South Africa indicates that each year many learners are affected by school violence (UNESCO, 2017). For most learners in South African schools, the violence in and around the school environment are a threat towards their right to education. Such are also a challenge in terms of roles and responsibilities carried by School Management Teams (SMTs) in order to make schools safe learning environments (NSSF, 2016). The most dominant threats to safety in South African schools and classrooms are gender-based violence, fighting, racial discrimination, sexual offences and harassment, physical and emotional oppression among others (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2013:22). Some of these threats fall under the category of school violence. Grobler (2018) explains that school violence is an extensive concept with very limited restrictions, containing sub-concepts such as provocation, gangsterism, intimidation, emotional abuse and bullying. Such complex concepts may have different definitions and given different meaning.

Leoschut (2012) defines school violence as using force or to cause harm on others within the school environment. Similarly, Joubert and Prinsloo (2013:39) assert that violence in schools can be physical or psychological, violence ranges from assault, suicidal behaviour to verbal and psychological abuse and should not only be thought of as physical harm, but also as verbal aggression and hostility. Violence remains the main threat to safety of learners and teachers at schools. Neglect of school physical structure is also becoming a growing hazard to school safety, with neglected buildings and poorly maintained playgrounds (Swaleha, 2013). Both learners and teachers are constantly at risk of getting hurt by this hazardous poorly maintained infrastructure. Psychological violence is identified as relationship excluding actions by learners, which may include spreading rumours, intimidation and social exclusion (Jacobs et al., 2011).

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The Constitution of the RSA, Act No. 108 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996a) is the supreme law of the country and states, in Section 29 under the Bill of Rights, that every child has a fundamental right to education upon which it stipulates that children should live free of harm in all environments, this includes schools (RSA, 1996). Despite this right, safety in the school environment is a real concern and acts like bullying which is often ignored contributes to unsafe school environment.

Bullying is the deliberate tormenting and intentional use of power to cause physical or psychological harm to others (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). The act of bullying occurs in South African schools on daily basis. For example, recent media reports (learners stabbed at Forest High Gauteng, Tlhabane Technical High School, in North West; Mondeor High School, in Gauteng; and Lentegeur High School, in Western Cape, all in 2019 (Grobler, 2019; *News24*)). These media reports shows a growing culture of violence and bullying in schools such includes offensive behaviour, stabbing and physical aggression (Vakalisa & Gawe, 2011). The SMT has a duty of creating safe learning environments to nurture quality education and avoid such violence in schools (Swaleha, 2013), yet little is known about what the SMT are doing in their schools to create and maintain safety.

The South African constitution is the highest law of the country and supersedes every other law in the country, social values of South Africa and the structure of government as well as rights of citizens and powers and authority of government are highlighted within the country's constitution, within which the bill of rights go hand-in-hand with responsibilities, RSA, (1996), Section 12 of the Bill of Rights states that (1)– everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person (b)) to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources, the bill of rights tells us that children have rights to be kept from any form of violence are considered even within the school environment, this includes both physical (corporal punishment, hitting, pulling, punching and kicking of others within the school environment, not to be treated or punished in an inhuman humiliating manner) and psychological violence (relationship excluding behaviour, such as hostility and aggression). In cases where schools are regarded as unsafe, such rights are automatically in violation.

Apart from the right to a safe environment as stated in the Bill of Rights, safe learning environment is important to help in creation of a positive culture with the school environment. Such school culture may encompass values and norms of a school and school climate that is conducive to teaching and learning, as well as promoting acceptable teachers and learners' behaviour (MacNeil, 2009). A safe learning environment is an environment where physical infrastructure does not threaten the safety of learners. A clear mindful social environment enables proper communication between learners and teachers in a safe school environment. In such environments, psychological support helps learners to achieve greater educational goals (Swaleha & Sindhi, 2013). It is therefore important to strive to create and sustain a safe school environment.

1.2 Problem Statement

Due to current school violence media reports such as the following:

> Learners stabbed at Forest High, in Gauteng; Tlhabane Technical High School, in North West; Mondeor High school, in Gauteng; and Lentegeur High School, in Western Cape all in 2019. A Grade 12 learner stabbed an 8 year old learner outside school premises in a confrontation, a 14 year old Grade 10 learner at Freedom Park Secondary schools stabbed by fellow Grade 10 learner to death; assault of learner by teacher at Ngaka Modiri Secondary School in Ga-rankuwa; 33 learners hospitalised for eating spice cakes at Lofentse Girls Secondary school in Soweto.
>
> (Grobler, 2019; *News24*)

This study focuses on the views of the main role players regarding creating safe learning school environment which are the SMTs and what they do to create learning environments conducive to teaching and learning (Gill, 2003), the challenges they face in creating safer school environment and their expectation of the type of assistance needed to be able to create safer learning environments. School safety is the problem upon which this study takes the root, and the views about creating a safe learning environment by SMTs is the main concern due to the increasing cases

of violence in schools reported in the media (Maree, 2009) and lack of knowledge on how SMTs deal with the issue of school safety.

Reports of poor safety measures put in place by School Management Teams include, Deputy principal locked four learners in a schools strong room at Kwena ya Madiba High school in Jericho, Brits North West and went home forgetting to take them out (*Grobler; News24*, 05 Mar 2020). An article in *The Citizen newspaper by CNS Reporter* (2018), reports that there has been 593 cases of corporal punishment in schools reported nation-wide. These media reports shows that in some schools there are poor school-safety measures put in place by the School Management Teams and such acts further creates hostile school environment. Efforts should be put in place to educate the surrounding community about the importance of a healthy positive learning environment and what learners can benefit from keeping the school environment safe (Läänemets & Rostovtseva, 2015). Literature also suggest that SMTs should develop a sense of community which comes from team work between School Management Teams, Teachers Learners and the community this may then assist with improved curriculum implementation in schools, professional development of teachers and learners, and, lastly, the district should continue to upgrade, revise and introduce policies that hold the SMT and both teachers and learners accountable for ensuring school safety (Esliger, 2017).

The gap in knowledge about all the SMTs' (i.e., Principal, Deputy Principal and HODs and senior teachers') perspectives on creating a safe learning school environment exists, and most of the literature consulted speaks about one SMT member which is the Principals perspectives. It seems that there is a gap in literature regarding the role of other SMT members in creating safe school environment (Astor, 2009). Research by MacNeil (2009), Swaleha (2013), Netshitangani (2018), as well as Bloom, Lemos, Sadun, & Van Reenen, (2014), focuses greatly on school safety, school violence and unsafe learning environments, while the roles of the SMT, except occasionally of the School Principal, are rarely spoken about. Literature on school-safety management, such as that of Astor (2009), refers mostly to the School Principal and not the other SMT members and what they think about school safety. Such studies give incomplete impression of the duty of the other SMT members in creating and maintaining school safety given that

the principal does not manage the school alone but works with the SMT members such as Deputy Principals, Heads of Department and senior teachers in the school.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

This study involved three high schools in Brits North West where school safety is a prevalent concern. The views of SMT members examined relative to the environment in which school-safety concerns arise. In this study, 'school safety' includes measures that are put in place to curb violence at schools. School violence is a broad concept with very limited boundaries, containing sub-concepts such as harassment, gangsterism, intimidation, verbal abuse and bullying (Grobler, 2018). This study is motivated by the notion that a safe learning school environment is important for the creation of a positive school culture. Such school culture encompasses the values and norms of a school and school climate that is the behaviour of teachers and learners (MacNeil, 2009). A safe learning environment is an environment where physical infrastructure does not threaten the safety of learners. Psychological support is provided to learners to help them achieve greater educational goals (Swaleha, 2013). The dissertation focuses on the main school role players whom are the SMTS and their outlook on creating a safe learning school environment.

1.4 Aims of the Research

The aim of the study is to gather multiple realities on the perspectives of SMTs on the creation of a safe learning schools environment. The research aims to discover how School Management Teams describe a safe learning environment; the actions taken by SMTs to ensure a safe learning school environment; and the challenges experienced by the SMTs while trying to create a safe learning school environment. The study also explores the type of support the SMTs need to create a safe learning environment where teaching and learning flows without barriers.

1.5 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to examine the School Management Teams' perspectives on creation of a safe and secure learning school environment in three schools located in Brits North West. Part of the research aims was to conceptualize safe learning school environment from the views of SMT members:

The research objectives are intended to;

- Investigate how School Management Teams (SMTs) describe a safe learning environment.
- Explore the actions and steps taken by SMTs to create a safe learning school environment.
- Identify the challenges faced by SMTs in creating safe learning school environment.
- Investigate the kind of support needed by SMTs to create a safe learning school environment.

This study only focuses on the SMTs perspective on school safety, and how they provide a safe learning environment, as well as their roles and responsibilities in promoting safety. Stakeholders such as other teachers, parents and learners were not part of this study.

1.6 Research Questions under Investigation

Primary Research Question

What are the perspectives of the School Management Teams on the creation of a safe learning school environment?

Secondary Research Questions

a) How do School Management Teams (SMTs) describe a safe learning environment?
b) What are the SMTs doing to create a safe learning school environment?
c) What are the challenges identified by SMTs in creating safe learning school environment?
d) What kind of support do the SMTs need to be able to create a safe learning school environment?

1.7 Conceptual Framework

A Conceptual Framework is a graphical representation or definition of main key findings that support research (Maree, 2017; Kivunja, 2018). The conceptual Framework used to guide this study consists of policies pertaining to safe schools under Section 12 of *The Constitution of the RSA, 1996; (amended 20121; 1(c), (d) and (e)* pertaining to freedom; as well as security of the person, school-based safety and security policy, not forgetting the roles of SMTs in ensuring the creation of a school culture supporting teaching and learning in a conducive, safe and secure environment.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework
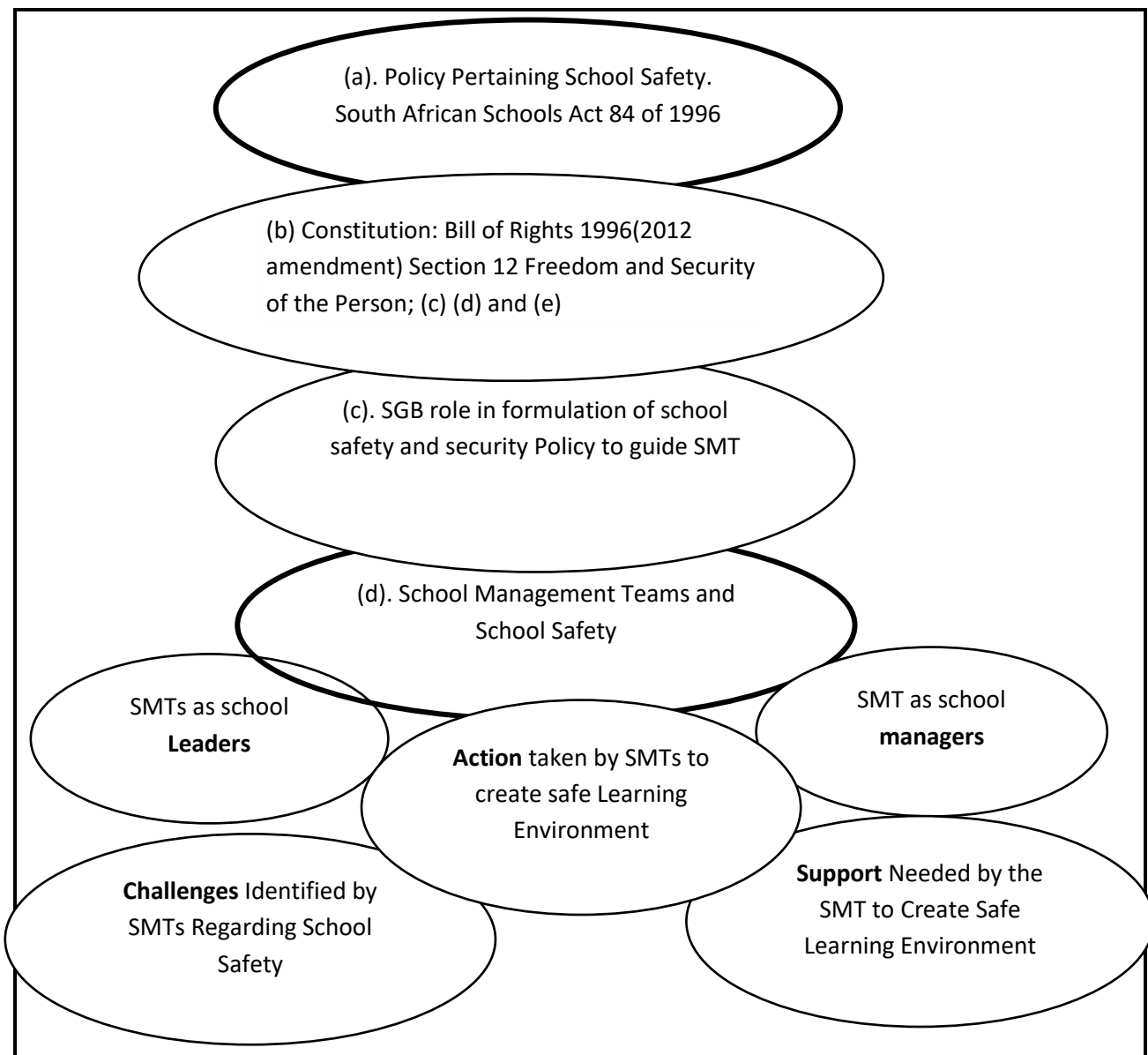
The policy pertaining to school safety is in line with Section 12 of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (2012, amendment).Regulations for safety measures at schools highlight the need to keep schools safe from violence and use of drugs, possession and distribution. The Act also prohibits carrying dangerous and harmful objects into school environment and specifies the conditions for doing searches at school premises.

The policy on school safety is in line with the South African Constitution, under Section 12 which states that every person in South Africa has a right to Freedom of security of person, this applies even in the school environment for learners, and the constitution protects learners from physical and psychological harm (Constitution, Section 12. 1996). Apart from the right of safety as stated in the Bill of Rights and South African School Act, another key component of the Conceptual Framework for this study is the role of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) which is to adopt a code of conduct for learners. The code of conduct guides School Management Teams in ensuring that school policies are fully implemented to create a safe learning school environment. SGB members consist of parents of learners in schools, educators at schools and members of staff that are non-educators, these group of individuals' (i.e., SGBs) set-up safety and security policies within the school environment guarding both physical and psychological safety measures (Ranson, 2003). Mambane (2000) emphasizes that SGBs need to have a vision of what a school should be and accordingly assist SMTs in implementing set policies to reach the set goal of keeping schools safe. SGBs are also empowered to create, and amend a schools Code of Conduct then emphasis the SMTs on advising learners and teachers to adapt to the Code of Conduct to help maintain safety and discipline in schools (Van Wyk, 2007).

It is a legal obligation of the SMTs, as educators, to protect learners from any physical or psychological harm as they act in loco parentis under common law principles on behalf of parents who are entirely absent in the school environment, as this will be to ensure that teachers behave as though they are the learners parent. Acting udder common law as teachers may help to better implement Codes of Conduct that should be adapted to enable a calm environment that enables better achievement of a school's educational goal, which is to impart knowledge and

learning, and keep learners away from either physical or psychological harm (Vakalisa, 2011). The duty of the School Management Team is to oversee proper management and leadership of schools (Nidhi, 2009). SMTs play two important roles in schools, both the role of a leaders and the role of a manager. As Managers, the SMTs plan, organise, direct, control and, lastly, ensure school resources and human capital function effectively to the greater good of a school (Ghitescu, 2006). The roles of the SMT are relevant in the study in that they assist the research in reflecting how safety measures are planned, organised and directed in school, and how school learners and teachers actions are managed on daily basis to ensure school safety.

Figure 2.2: Legal Framework in Schools

The South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 (Act 84 of 1996)

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,1996-Chapter 2: Bill of Rights.

Section 9: Equality

Section 10: Human dignity

Section 12: Freedom and Security of the person

Section 24: Environment

Section 28: Children

Section 29: Education
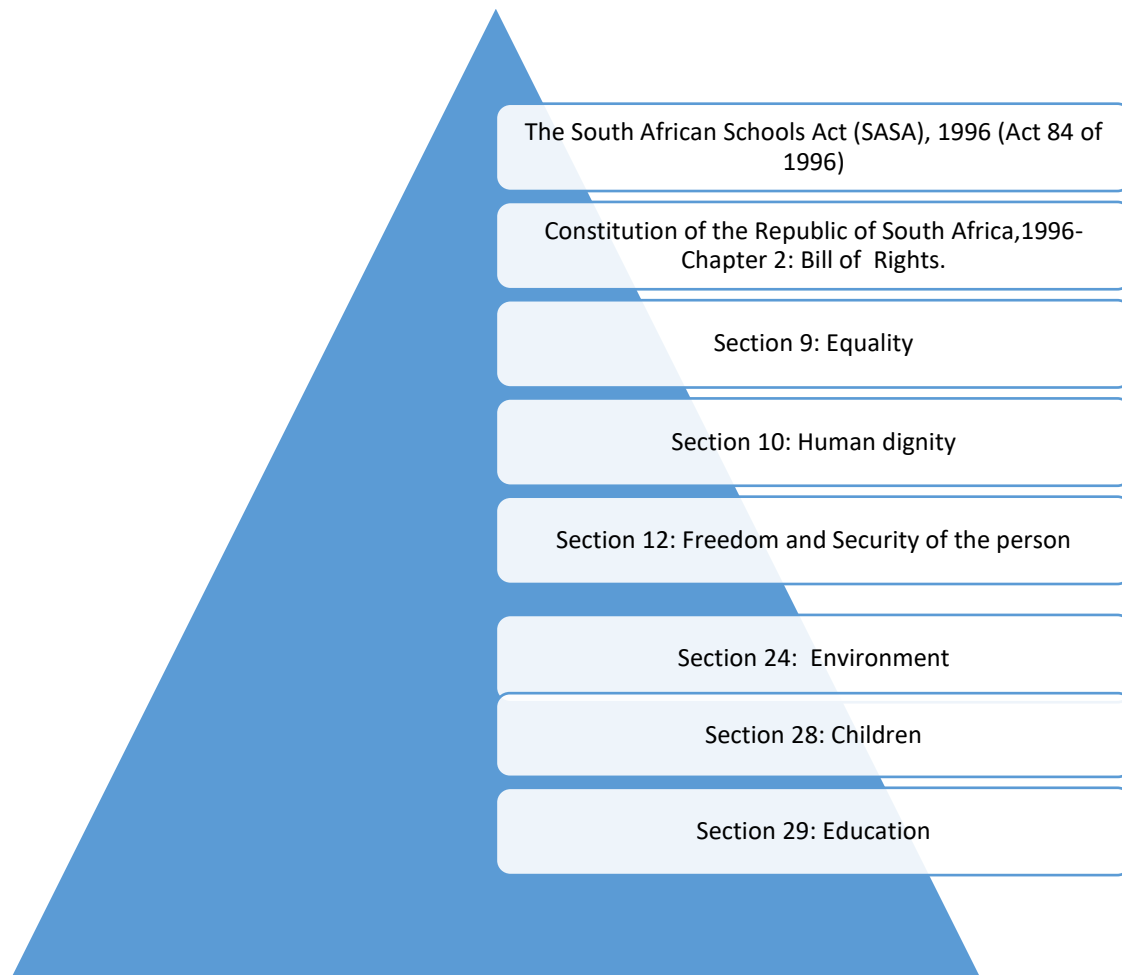
- **The South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 (Act 84 of 1996)**

The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) aims to ensure that all learners have access to high-quality education without prejudice, and promotes education of all children from the ages of seven to fifteen, who are by law required to attend school from grade 1 to grade 9, the act specifies two sorts of schools, namely there are private and government schools. According to the Act school governing bodies (SGBs), have been introduced in public (government) schools nationwide for Democratic School Governance.

- **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996- Chapter 2: Bill of Rights.**

Schools in South Africa are protected by the (Constitution RSA, 1996) - Chapter 2: The Bill of Rights is a foundation of South African democracy. It embodies all people's rights in the country including learners in schools and upholds the democratic principles of human dignity, equality, and freedom. Within the Bill of rights, the government shall respect, defend, advocate, and implement the rights without limits. Like anything, the rights outlined are subject to the limits alluded to in section 36 of the Bill of Rights. The research outlines important sections in the Bill of Rights needed I schools to maintain school safety namely; Section 9; Equality, Section 10: Human dignity, Section 12: Freedom and Security of the person, Section 24: Environment, Section 28; Children, lastly Section 29: Education.

Section 9; Equality

Everyone is equal in the eyes of the law and has the right to equal protection from the law; equality entails complete and equal enjoyment of all freedoms and privileges. To promote equality the government may not discriminate unfairly against anybody, explicitly or implicitly, on one or more grounds, including race, sex, gender, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic origin, colour, sexual preference, age, handicap, religion, belief, culture, language, and origin. The section in the school environment promotes equal treatment of all learners, teachers and support within schools in South Africa.

Section 10: Human dignity

Everyone has fundamental dignity, and they have the right to have it acknowledged and preserved. This section entails that within the context of the school environment,

learners, teachers and all stakeholders should not be degraded or treated in any inhumane manner, but rather their human dignity protected.

Section 12: Freedom and Security of the person

1. Everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right (c) to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources; (d) not to be tortured in any way; and (e) not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way, in the school context this entails that every stakeholder in the school environment gets to enjoy all freedom and security of the person.

Section 24: Environment

Everyone has the right: (a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; this in the school environment speaks about, clean, safe ad protected environment for everyone in the school, and its emphasis is on security and safety.

Section 28; Children

In this section "child" means a person under the age of 18 years.
1. Every child has the right (a) to a name and a nationality from birth; (b) to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment; (c) to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services; (d) to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation; (e) to be protected from exploitative labour practices; (f) not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that (i) are inappropriate for a person of that child's age; or (ii) Place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development; (the section entails that learners in schools should be protected at all cost in accordance with the Bill of rights).

Section 29: Education

1. Everyone has the right (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.
2. Everyone has the right to receive education in the desired language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably

practicable, taking into account (a) equity; (b) practicability; and (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

The Bill of rights under the above quoted sections in the constitution also known as common law highlights the obligations known as the 'loco parentis' rule, this are responsibilities for teachers to act in the place of a parent at school by completing lawful obligations and capacities in accordance with the Fundamental Rights of youngsters in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (CRSA) of 1996.

1.8 Research Methodology

The research paradigm adopted for this research is an interpretivist worldview, sometimes also understood as a subjective worldview. This is whereby the data collected from participants is interpreted as personal understandings of the phenomenon at hand, and does not represent the entire population around the study. The worldview believes that people understand and interpret situations differently; and every interpretation is subjective. Thus the data collected are used to build knowledge concerning the phenomenon (Husam, 2020).

The research approach adopted by the researcher was qualitative which focuses on documentation of individuals lived experiences of certain phenomenon through words rather than numbers (Gonzalez et al., 2020). The research design was case study Morgan, et al. (2017), states that a Case Study designs can be utilised for studies that seeks in-depth information about a phenomenon in its natural setting. In this research design, the researcher goes to the area where the phenomenon is taking place to collect data. The data collection tool for this research was semi-structured interviews, which enabled that researcher to collect data from participants' subjective realities. The collected data are presented in themes aligned with the research questions. An interview schedule is used to help guide the research process (Danaher et al., 2019).

The research population was from three high schools in North West Brits. Convenient and Purposive Sampling techniques were used.   The researcher selected a total of 15 participants who are members of the SMT teams under different positions, namely, Principals, Deputy Principals and HODs.   Chapter 3

provides more detailed explanation of the research paradigm, research approach, research design and sampling technique and other research procedures.

Figure 3: Research Procedures
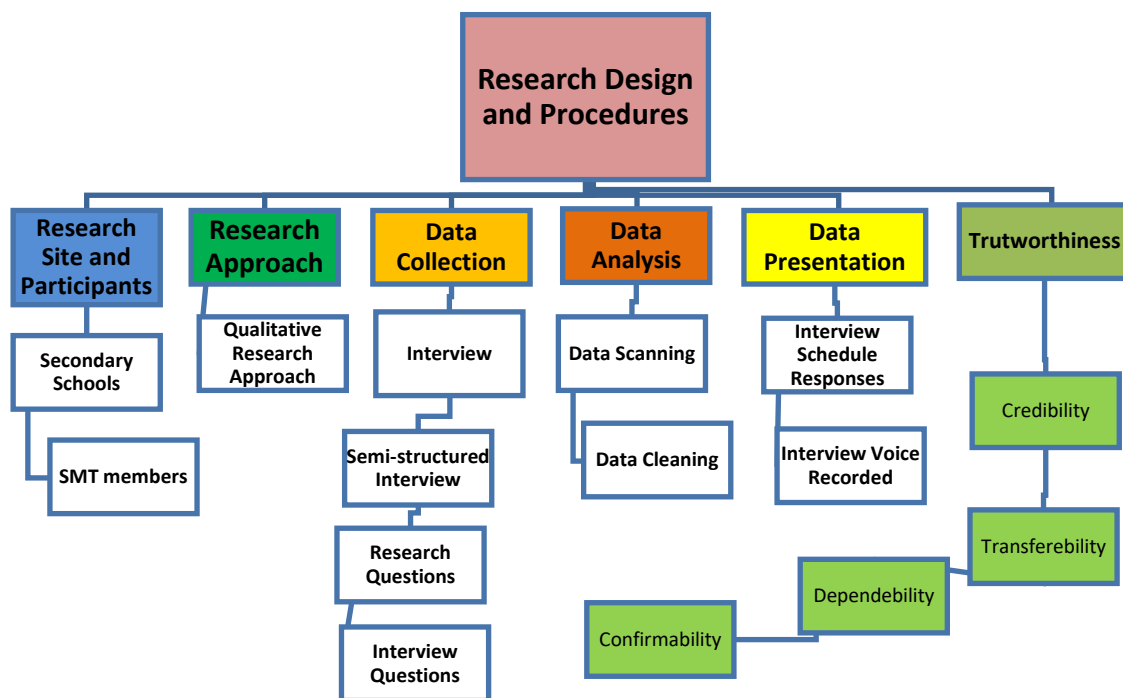
1.9 Value of the Research

The findings from this research could be useful to many stakeholders in schools such as newly appointed members of the SMT, school-based policy makers who are concerned with issues of school safety, the School Principals, members of School Governing Bodies, among other stakeholders, in addressing the matter of school safety;

Newly appointed SMT members may be informed about their roles and responsibilities in creating safe learning school environments from the findings of this study. The South African Department of Education Policy makers may also use the findings of this study as a reference in improving policies concerning school safety. The DBE may be assisted in addressing to issues faced by SMT members in most schools while trying to keep schools safe and conducive for teaching and learning. The research findings may assist researchers in fillings existing gaps in literature on the question of who is responsible for school safety.

1.10 Research Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study

This first chapter of the study discusses the background and purpose of conducting this study. The problem statement is highlighted along with the primary research question and secondary research questions. There is a brief highlight of the theoretical framework used to guide the research, the research design and research methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review on Creating a Safe Learning School Environment

Reviewed literature that guides the basis of the study is presented on the basis of the following: A Safe Learning School Environment; The right to safety for teachers and learners in the school environment; Factors contributing to an unsafe learning school environment; Role players in the creation of a safe learning school environment; and finally different perspectives on school safety from the local and international perspective. Gaps in the literature on the perspectives of School Management Teams on creating a safe learning environment were identified; the literature on school safety includes mostly views from one stakeholder within most School Management Teams which is the School Principal. Finding the gaps in literature for the research helps the researcher in area of concentration so that they can work towards filling the gap.

Chapter 3: Research Approach, Design and Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed plan of how the research was conducted and how the collected data were collected and analysed. The research paradigm and

approach design is also presented and justified. The chapter also explains the trustworthiness and ethical issues.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to examine the qualitative research findings collected from the three research sites which are three high schools with a total of 15 participants five from each school. The research findings are presented in themes that answer the research questions. Excerpts from the participants' responses are used to strengthen the findings. There are sections of discussion of findings in which the findings from this study is compared with the reviewed literature.

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter of the study provides the summary of the research findings; presents the research conclusion and, lastly, makes recommendations from the research findings.

1.11 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the background and purpose of conducting the study. The problem statement is highlighted along with both the main research question and the secondary research questions. There is a brief highlight of the theoretical framework used to guide the research, the research design and research methodology.

The next chapter presents literature review on a School Management Team's role in creating a safe learning school environment.

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature exploring school safety; safe learning school environment; the right to safety for teachers and learners in a school environment; factors contributing to an unsafe learning school environment; role players in the creation of a safe learning school environment; and, lastly, different perspectives on school safety.

In the first aspect, the literature explores is the concept school safety and its importance from different literature both internationally and locally. Secondly, the right to safety for teachers and learners in the school environment, focusing on the South African Schools Act, the South African Bill of Rights and the School Safety framework and how these laws influence school-safety decision making in South Africa schools. Thirdly, factors contributing to an unsafe learning school environment; aspects within and outside the school as stated by literature; and school-safety threat are also explored from an international perspective and then further explored locally. Fourth, literature on role players in the creation of a safe learning school environment, and, lastly, different perspectives of school safety form the international and local perspective.

All these aspects of literature consulted is believed to be beneficial in providing the study with much needed background and guidance in terms of providing literature gaps on SMTs perspectives in creating a safe learning school environment.

2.2 School safety and its importance

Addi-Raccah and Grinshtain (2017) postulate that school safety refers to the creation of an atmosphere in the school environment by school SMTs which helps to prevent manage and respond to incidents of crime and violence in school. The main focus of school safety is prevention and early intervention which serves to help create a learning atmosphere which is emotionally and physically safe and can foster

teaching and learning (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Läänemets and Rostovtseva (2015), along with the South African Police Service (SAPS), Safe School Report of 2012, states that a safe school is characterised as an environment safe from exposure of drugs, examples of drugs found within the school environment include tobacco, Cannabis, dagga, heroin, cocaine and any other substance which individuals use to enhance normal body functions and mental performance (De Waal, 2009).

Legal Frameworks in schools

The legal frameworks for managing safety in South African schools are adopted from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), just as from South African School's Act, South African case law, and common law (Prinsloo,2005). The South African Constitution and Bill of Rights section 2 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), (the Bill of Rights) contains different privileges that are relevant to a safe school environment. Prinsloo, (2005) continues to maintain that the legal framework for safe schools in South Africa that has been set up in an effort to try and provide a safe school environment, the legal framework is characterized by the bill of rights, schools act, and loco parentis to act in common law.

For any school to guarantee successful teaching and learning (section 29 of the Constitution) is vital, South African educators have a significant obligation towards the security and the safety of learners, not just as far as the Constitution and other policies, but additionally as far as their duties in acting in loco parentis status which is to act in place of parents in their absence, this load of obligations incorporate responsibilities regarding the physical and psychological safety of learners in schools (Bray, 2000). As per the legal framework mentioned in chapter 1, the following arrangements of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) are genuine instances of how the bill of rights under the constitution of the country is sufficient in carrying obligation out its obligations of a safe school environment through the following,; Section 9, Section 10, Section 12, Section 24, Section 28 and Section 29: Education.

2.2.1 The role of SMTs in creating a safe learning school environment

Under the SMT the school principals runs the school in accordance with DBE (Basic Education) guidelines and are responsible for all issues related to daily school, teacher and student management. In South Africa, school principals are responsible for leading education and learning in schools, they also responsible for not only shaping the direction and development of the school, but also working with and for the community. Deputy Principals often represent the principals when they are ill or absent, for larger schools, you can also have two deputy principals. Lastly, HODs in large schools, manages the well-being of learners I most high schools the HOD is I charge of all subjects taught in the CAPS curriculum available to learners in their schools (Mathipa, Magano, Mapotse, Tomé & Matlabe & Soane, 2014).

SMTs in schools must make the issue of school safety a great concern by the introduction of school safety policies which will guide learners on behaviour and how to carry themselves in the school environment, policies are a great guidance to learners and failure by SMTs to do so, may be subject to legal action for not fully complying with their duty of care, a school can be found guilty if this duty of care has been violated and this violation has caused harm to learners (Pascale, 2021).

2.2.2   School Climate and Culture

The safely of a school depends on the culture and climate of the school. School culture is believed to be a set on values, norms and beliefs including rituals, uniform, stories and events which build the personality of the school (Osterman, 2000). A sound school culture foster s professional development of teachers and educational success of learners while a poor school culture hinders professionalism and a handful of learners are successful in their education (Wamy, 2014). A sound school climate and culture yields success and improvement in performance of both teachers and learners the set of values and believes foster positivity within the school and encourages teachers to perform their ultimate best through classroom attendance. Teachers in a school which has a sound culture are more likely to be motivated to attend their classes because they have no worries about what bad things might happen in class or what content to teach, they are motivated to do their job with ease because they are professionally trained to do such. In a sound school culture, learners and teachers respect each other equally and work together to achieve desired education outcomes (Hallinger, 2012). Learners within a sound school

climate and culture know very well what the purpose of coming to school and obey school rules and regulations (Miller, 2012). Teachers working in schools with sound school culture believe in the abilities of their learners to succeed in their studies and encourage the learners to perform at their level best (Miller, 2012).

In a school with poor school culture and climate the entire teaching and learning environment is toxic, teacher and management practice poor school culture and do not have faith in meeting their vision. The teachers see professional development as a waste of time and worst of all non-rewarding since people who are developing them are mostly their colleagues (Osterman, 2000). In poor school cultures, workshops are not taken seriously and, worst of all, learners in a negative school culture look up to their teachers: if the teacher does not come to class, the learner does not study, performs poorly and lacks motivation (Posner et al., 2009; Osterman, 2000).

In many South African schools, the principal is in charge of the best interest of teachers and learners as per the requirement by the department of basic education (DBE). They are also responsible for both teachers and learners' well-being in the school environment. The principal takes responsibility in matters involving the school such as lack of resources and learning and teaching support material (LTSM) and goes all out in looking for ways of making the school functional.

2.2.3 Physical School Safely

School should be a place where teachers and learners feel safe physically. A physically safe school is one with safe resources in the school yard and classrooms, serving the well-being of all teachers and learners and everyone else in the school. Baeva (2018) states that there is an association between school size and resource school safely. A packed school or one with an excessive number of learners would be hard to control and this would offer many physical safety issues. Another investigation detailed a noteworthy connection between school climate and culture and their effect on school physical safety. It states that school resources and infrastructure are affected by the culture and climate of the school, thus entailing that learners take care of resources and infrastructure in their schools, based on both

their learned daily behaviour and the behaviour they have adopted within the school environment (Phaneuf, 2009).

In a study on school physical safety factors on learners learning, Mulvaney (2011) found that many schools are spots handily invaded by outcasts thus invasion of schools physical infrastructure, and that a couple of Security Personnel ought to be organized by the school managers just as the school specialists to keep up the physical well-being in the school and safeguard school resources. Physical safety incorporates guaranteeing all stakeholders' security during class periods while teachers are directing lessons and learners are being taught. Furthermore, the safety of the school's physical or gym resources or playground; safety during break time in the playground; and even during Physical Education periods, the security of sports offices and traffic well-being in the school zone are all crucial.

The South African Schools Safety Act of 1994 entails that in terms of classroom safety teachers needs to lead a sensible management for learners they are teaching during the class period. This means that they are responsible for the physical safety of learners during their periods and inability to do so may bring about educators being charged with negligence if the learners are harmed through the failure of lack of 'duty of care' from the teacher. Tie, Mohd, Zuraidah & Chua. (2011). (2004) states that a teacher should ensure that learners are safe by screening them as they enter the teaching and learning environment, this is on the grounds that the school and the educators assume the parts of good and sensible parents or to utilize the term 'in loco parentis' as portrayed in their duties and obligations.

2.2.4 Psychologically School Safety

Psychological well-being at schools implies that all people at school feel good about other learners and colleague's thoughts and activities related with them. Conversely, when a school is not psychologically safe for learners and teachers, there will be incidences of conflict, demonstrates more clashes and less group fulfilment towards the educational goal. In this manner, psychological school safety is a significant part of school environment atmosphere (Pfeifer, 2018).

Learner's psychological well-being is paramount to a safe learning environment, and enables the business of teaching and learning to prevail. Bordovskaia (2015) mentions that psychological well-being of learners and teachers in the school environment are vital for mental prosperity, ordinary character advancement, and development of a self-completing individual. This makes the arrangement of mental security at school a need of the school environment and society in general because the schools social environment shapes the future of learners and may mostly affects many aspects of their future lives. Mental well-being depicts people's judgements about the results of relational dangers in their workplace.

Yunus,Wichmann,Wördenweber,OlafKruse,& Jones, (2018) state that not all the behavioural issues affecting psychological safety of learners in schools are completely brought about by the learner but by understanding learners who have disciplinary issues that are underpinned by mental state of mind of the learner. Moulding the unacceptable behaviour of the learners through involving psychologists is useful as it avoids the breakdown of teacher-learner relationship, which, in turn, could lead to learners being threatened by other learners and the teachers also being threatened by unruly learners.

Cook, (2003) state that mental well-being, firmly identifies with trust and alludes to the climate where individuals are together and understands the psychological safety issues in their environment. Psychological school safety highlights the importance the convention that both teachers and learners can express themselves openly at school unafraid of negative results or stigma which can be connected to them further giving them a negative mental self-portrait, status or vocation which can restrict their learning and teaching.

2.2.5 The Importance of a Safe School

It is important for schools to be safe so that learners and teachers can both respectfully be provided with resources such as good nutrition, physical action, fundamental security, clean settings and water (Clapper, 2010). In a sound and safe secure school, learners receive lessons meant to improve their esteem shaping, thus them to become better functional individuals in society and controlling social violence and threats within the school setting is of outmost significance (Ramesh et al., 2019).

As safe and secure learning environment is an enabling factor to learner success, giving them the opportunity to educate themselves and accomplish greater intake of knowledge. In a secure and nurturing environment school, security is increased and sound teaching and learning takes place (Akanle et al., 2020).

A safe school is important, according to Gregory et al. (2011), because initiatives are put in place to keep schools physically and psychologically safe for teachers and learners. The learners and teachers performance is improved, communication and relationships is sound and safety measure continuously maintained. It is important for schools to be safe because safe school environments foster learner development, and enriches learners with the necessary skills needed to survive in the modern society.   Safe schools uphold individuals towards feeling socially, psychologically, and physically protected.   Individuals learners, families and educators cooperate to grow, live, and add to the achievement of a mutually agreed-upon school vision (Kingston, 2018).

2.2.6   Learner Academic Achievement and Social Upliftment

The first concern in education is generally excellent learner achievement and this is influenced by the school climate as well as its set culture. Any school that has positive school climate and culture will in return produce good learner performance, thus school safety is vital for proper learner performance (Watson, 2001). Devine and Cohen (2007) state that the well-being of a school is vital if learning and good achievement are to be achieved. In order for learner achievement to be sound, the class atmosphere must be accompanied by safety and security measures as well as in the entire school (MacNeil et al., 2009; Louka, 2007).   In schools whose atmosphere is positive and every person is included and welcome, there are higher chances of producing better academic achievement and a good social atmosphere (Maslowski, 2001).

It is understood that academic performance and social skills of learners suffer when learners do not feel safe at school. The everyday issues which learners face such as bullying, violence and poor discipline, when learners feel threatened tend to have negative influence on their academics and social skills (Grover, 2015). Community

violence may influence learners psychologically and academically in that violence around the community may bring out learners vulnerability in the school environment which then influences their performance and relation to one another and their teachers (Borofsky et al., 2014). In a school comprised of bullies and victims of bullying, the self-esteem of the learners is affected and this has negative influence of their performance because the victims of bullying feel unsafe in the school environment (Espelage & Swearer, 2009). It is therefore important to design strategies that bring about social upliftment for learners in unsafe schools. Social uplifting is brought about through positive interaction and proper communication skills as well as good interaction of all stakeholders in the school thus leading to the realisation of the educational goal in most schools which is academic achievement (Beddoe, 2019).

2.2.7   Teacher Satisfaction

There is a great connection to school safety and teachers' well-being and satisfaction. To ensure that safety and security of teachers is guarded in the school environment, it is important that the school environment is well furnished with resources, have well-kept security in place to protect the well-being of teachers (Song & Han, 2019). A safe learning environment nurtures quality teachers who are committed to their work and adopt different means of imparting knowledge through educating themselves about accommodating different learning styles and behaviour of learners. When teachers feel safe and secure, they are able to work hand-in-hand with other teachers and most importantly they have love and passion for children (Carl, 2017). Teachers work within a school environment and therefore the school management need to provide a common vision and values of the school and share with the teachers (Hopkins, 1996). Teaching and learning has to be organised, a working relationship with the community established and at most teacher occupational health safety knowledge to be provided to improve the teacher's outlook on education.

Continuing to support educators' well-being is essential to make schools functional and built a healthy relationship between teachers and learners and other stakeholders in schools (Mestry, 2009). Moreover, Chisholm (2004) found that poor results in learners in Grade 12 and the increase in learner dropout rate in neglected

rural schools in South Africa was as a result of lack of professional development of teachers and violence surrounding schools. Mestry (2009) further asserts that school safety needs professional development for teachers which will enhance their aptitudes and knowledge to provide legitimate quality educating and learning environment that is free of any violence and harm.

Internationally, a safe leaning environment ensures that learners are secure, safe and in good health conditions during normal school hours. In case of emergency, such safe schools are surrounded by a safety conscious community and have school supporting stuff that ensures the school is safe for teaching and learning (UNISDR, 2010). Fletcher and Bullock (2015) state that in the USA, school buildings have the ability to change community perspectives, especially in poverty stricken areas, the community link safety and learner achievement with the quality of buildings of the school, physically safe learning environment as well as good interpersonal relationships that creates psychological safety. Learning spaces are linked with learner behaviour and community behaviour and when new spaces are provided violence in schools and around the schools reduces (Fischer, 2005:35).

Klem and Connell (2004:112) state that a positive learning environment includes parental and community involvement and a strong emphasis on academic achievement. A strong management system is also needed to link decision making in schools and academic achievement (Marishane 2013). Blackmore and Kamp (2008) provide evidence that learners are affected negatively if they are not engaged in learning and would instead get involved in violence, discrimination and bullying.

Within the South African context, Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007:210) affirm the importance of education in a safe learning school environment as it has the potential of learners with the ability to contributing to the country's economy. In South Africa, the option to get basic education is ensured in the country's constitution, suggesting that basic education is compulsory just like the safety for all citizens of a country is a constitutional right. Sugai (2009) describes a safe learning environment as an area with a positive social culture that motivates positive academic engagement and outcomes. Safe learning school environment focuses on emotional and physical well-being of learners (Swaleha, 2013). It is an environment influenced by school

culture; the existing school culture nurtures the need to create such safe learning environment (Astor, 2009). A learner and teacher friendly environment is considered an atmosphere conducive enough for teaching and learning to take place. It is therefore, an environment wherein safety needs of both teachers and learners are recognised irrespective of their gender, social status, abilities and disabilities (Abdullahi, 2017). This study adopts the definition of a safe learning environment by Kutsyuruba (2015) and describes a safe learning school environment as a space where learners flourish academically and socially, and are emotionally supported by teachers, parents, and the community and SMT members without any exposure to harm, abuse or violence.

2.3 The Right to Safety for Teachers and Learners in the School Environment International

Internationally, the perception of a safe school encompasses key words of physically and emotionally safe whereby teachers, learners and the school support staff feel physical and emotionally protected. The feeling of being physically protected in a school environment is observed through safe and secure school buildings and infrastructure, and that there is safe access to the school that is controlled with security, thus safe guarding learners and teachers for flawless teaching and learning in order to achieve the greater educational goal of academic prosperity. On the emotional side, school safety is realised through respect, tolerance and working together (Jolliffe & Snaith, 2017). Ekeke & Telu (2017) emphasize that, internationally, school safety is one of the provisions for classification safe education, stating that school-safety perspectives around the world are complex but very important factors which the teacher and learner should work towards.

The Mexican education system is divided in terms of the different religions but the right to education of learners is protected by the Secretariat of Public Education and this right enables the provision of quality education from lower grades all the way through to high school as per the constitutional regulation (Guerra, 2016). Pakistani realised that even though the right to education of leaners is emphasised in their constitution, schools still experienced disturbances due to violence and war. The solution the government came with was to create an outsourcing programme where

government schools where converted to private education making private investors mostly responsible for the educational system of the country. This keeps more schools open as there is competition amongst private school investors making education affordable and safe for most families in Pakistan, as well as upholding the citizens right to education in a safe and secure environment (PSSF, 2001; CSSF Model, 2017). The constitution of Brazil holds the right to education of learners as a standard measurement to improve performance and match international standards of education (Adam & Scotuzzi, 2015).

School safety in South African schools concerns teachers, learners and teaching support staff because an unsafe School may not be functional thus creating a negative climate which may be dysfunctional. In South African schools, safety issues are experienced within the school and outside the school but most occurrences are in the classroom within the schools. These safety issues may come in a form of both teacher and learner exposure to violent behaviour from peers, being surrounded by unsafe resources and teacher negligence may also lead to a threat in the school environment (Hanaya et al., 2020). School-Safety Policies also influence school safety in South African schools. Initially put in place, the policies were formulated to guide School Governing Bodies into the path of creating safe environment. But, recently, School-Safety Policies implementation has been the responsibility of a School Principal, with the assistance of SMTs (Myende, & Bhengu 2020).

School-Safety Policies are put in place to avoid violence in the school environment and to monitor the climate of the school. Section 14 of the constitution highlights the importance of a safe learning school environment free from harm and that every individual has the right to freedom and security of person. This implies that very individual in the school environment has the right to a safe environment. The fundamental rights to teachers and learners in South African Schools include but not limited to: South Africans Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) under the common law, Section 8, which stipulates the Code of Conduct for learners in the school environment as a guideline to learners responsibilities and ways to uphold themselves with discipline in schools. Section 10 stipulates the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools; this law is put in place for the protection of learners

from injury or abuse in the school environment. Section 20 and Section 21 emphasis SGBs' roles in the schools, on monitoring school grounds and maintaining safe schools, as a responsibility. Under the Legislation, there is mention of the Occupational Health and Safety (Act 85 of 1993).

The National School Safety Frameworks (Constitution RSA, 1996), a policy developed by the CJCP South Africa, stipulates that the purpose of the policy is to help the guide the National Department of Education and the provincial Department of Education in addressing violence occurring in the school environment, the aim of the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention is to make schools safer and emphasis on safer school structures and the importance of emotional support to teachers and learners, that will in turn result in SMTs heading onwards the goal of prevention and early intervention (CJCP, 2012).

As indicated by Maslow's Motivation Theory Needs Levels, human needs can be ordered as per five levels of needs, the first level identifies with the physical requirement for food, water and shelter, followed on by a necessity for well-being or a sheltered domain which focuses on safety and security Evans &Yuan (2018). Just once these requirements have been attended to, it can produce the feeling of belongingness and team building in the school environment (Okafor & Abraham, 2021). The above theory highlights important aspects of research which indicates if the main research objectives are working towards creation of the mentioned ideal school environment. Prinsloo (2013) states that the South African Occupational health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993, withdraws guidelines for the health and safety of people in the work environment, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of (1993), also protects the rights of teachers to work in a safe and secure school of environment for provision of safety within the work space. The teacher is expected to maintain and oversee the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of learners (Oosthuizen et al., 2004:3). The need to do research in creating a safe learning environment is motivated by the notion that safe school environments enable learners' physical and psychological well-being, as well as to becoming ethical members of society (Heaton, 2016).

2.4 Factors Contributing to an Unsafe Learning School Environment

Internationally, China has in recent times reported that an increased level of bullying between learners contributes to a negative school climate, which seems to lead to violence coordinated towards educators, furthermore, educators regularly assess learners and may be included in rebuffing learners bullying behaviour, which may make struggle and a negative teacher-learner relationship, especially in case the criticism is cruel, negative, or not gotten well by the learners (Bradshaw et al., 2009, 2010). China, as a country, has experienced fast, social and economic changes in the past decades, and violence against educators has picked up expanded media attention as learners' behaviour has become more violent because of the changing social and economic environment in the country with exposure to more violence, shooting, drugs and oppression of self-expression (Wang, 2014). In major cities in China, violence in and around the school is major concern, because it harms learners' physical, psychological and behavioural well-being, thus leading to absenteeism (Hagborg et al., 2017). School absenteeism is also common and may happen for numerous reasons; amongst which poor school safety and security are main reasons (Havik et al., 2015a, 2015b; Kearney, 2008 ;).

In Mexico, many public schools lack running water and ablution facilities this leads to many health challenges faced by teachers and learners, such schools also face the problem of lack of infrastructure, which results in shortage of classrooms and education is disturbed because learners drop out mostly because of such issues (Santibañez, 2005). In addition, unstable communities surrounding schools affect learner education as teachers and learners are sometimes unable to attend school due to unrest in their communities (Santibañez, 2005). Such issues fall under the category of schools that are physically as well as emotionally unsafe.

In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a challenge that exists in the educational system is mainly school violence, which is heighten up by drug dealers who control certain territories such that some learners are unable to attend school in fear of being caught in the drugs wars (Ersilia & Salmivalli, 2017). Many schools around the world use technology which has given learners a new form of bullying platform (Meyers & Cowie, 2019).

Within the past decade, cyber bullying has raised making school cyber bullying a threat to safety. Cyber bullying contrasts from conventional bullying in that it can attack the targets day and night, at home or at school with control. Moreover, the culprits can choose to camouflage their character, thus increasing the targeted learner's uncertainty, and affecting the quality of their relationships since they may not know which individuals of their peers are included in the cyber bullying (Cilliers & Chinyamurindi, 2020). According to Bauman et al. (2017), cyber bullying can further create an event wherein a hurtful message "goes viral" through the activities of bystanders who forward the messages to others in their systems. In that way, the cyber victim's troubles get compounded. Cyber bullying is one of the factors that contribute to a school's lack of safety internationally.

In South Africa, there are several factors contributing to unsafe learning environments. The culture and norms of the surrounding community is one of the factors. According to Astor (2009), schools in violent communities tend to adopt the norms and culture of their communities leading to a negative and dysfunctional school climate for teaching and learning. The socio-economic status of the communities seems to impact the school atmosphere, which greatly affects learner achievement. McCoy (2013) states that communities influenced by high crime rates and violence frequently neglect to protect their school atmosphere, leaving schools exposed to violence. This finding shows that the school is part of the community and the school culture and climate reflects relates to the nature of the community in which the school is located.

Communication skills within the school environment may also influence the learning culture of a school which may lead to unsafe schools. Matthew (2012) points out that poor interpersonal communication skill is a major block to creating safe learning environments. In his study, Matthew (2012) found that when the SMT do not communicate well enough with staff members and learners, there is lack of monitoring and control of the behaviours of the learners of the different stakeholders in such situations also blame each other, which all leads to safety threats in the school.

Other organisational practices like uneven distribution of workload can also negatively influence the safety of the school. A study done by Hauseman (2017) revealed that principals who have heavy workloads have limited time to ensure order to maintain smooth running of the school due to limited time. Ayeni (2018) states that poor distribution of workload by a School Principal may be due to lack of trust in the Deputy Principal and the HoDs. This may result in safety being threatened when the school leaders are not given power and authority to manage the teachers, hence bullying and violence that occur in classrooms and in the school. School Principals tend to be sceptical about distributing their workload among other management members and end-up doing more administrative work than managing interpersonal relationships and school safely (Mestry, 2013). Principals who resist sharing responsibilities of implementing policies, rules and regulations with their SMTs in managing school safety, are likely to end-up with schools that exhibit learner behaviour that includes thefts, assault, sexual pestering, intimidation, bullying, shootings, stabbings, gangsterism, medicate trafficking, robbery of property and vandalism, racially motivated violence among others (SACE, 2011). Harber and Muthukrishna (2000:424) found that, in some schools, especially among those in townships, there is totally lack of control on drug trafficking and gang activities, which includes the rape of teachers and learners.

2.5 Role Players in the Creation of a Safe Learning School Environment

School Principals in many countries, such as the UK, USA and Israel, have adapted to the decentralisation process of unequal division of power and responsibilities in the school environment (Nir, 2009). Barr and Saltmarsh (2014:493) indicate that in Australia, the 21st century principal is required to be a skilled manager with a positive vision for their school; the manager should produce positive academic achievement and a positive social environment for both teachers and learners. Sagy and Tal (2015) also reported that, in Israel, School Principals takes the responsibility of making sustainable decisions that mainly benefit learners, their parents and the larger community. In India, due to rise of certain safety threats and security worries particularly among parents' and their increased concerns approximately the effect of hazardous environment in schools upon their children, Swaleha, (2013) found that,

to solve the school-safety problem, capacity building of School Principals was needed to equip them with strategies that could promote school safely.

Around the world, School Principals influence the school climate in most cases through nurturing school-safety practices in many ways principals in schools deal with disciplinary issues for learners (Printy, 2008). The main concern for most principals in the school environment is to reach the educational goal, which is teaching and learning. And it is understood that, in order for this to occur, principals in many school around the world have found ways of ensuring that learners are disciplined. The induction process of teachers should include school-safety measures and the security in the school environment for the achievement of the educational goals (Goldring et al., 2008).

The position of the School Principal in many countries is multifaceted with the essential centre of being a director and pioneer at a school. The position of principalship oversees teachers, school assist staff, athletic or physical activity coaches, and other staff individuals including the learners (Ramesh et al., 2019). The role of the School Principal includes mostly taking care of learner's education, extracurricular exercises and good school performance (Martin, 2012). The goal of creating safe learning environment by principals is made possible by collaboration with the school community (Sindhi, 2013). The school administration needs to be given direction by the principal in the same way in which the principal directs the activities of the teachers and learners in the school environment. Reese (2013) states that a School Principal ought to acknowledge obligation for creating a safe working environment for staff, learners and school community within the collaborative development of a vision of a secure and safe school.

From the South African perspectives, there are several stakeholders that can be held accountable for a safe learning school environment. According to Mafora (2016), the main stakeholder in schools that plays a central role in ensuring school safety is SMT members. Astor et al., (2009) highlight the importance of the SMT members in relation to creating conducive learning environment, focusing on the principal in particular. The principal being a member of the SMT should take leadership on role and responsibilities of other SMT members. In another study, McNeil (2009)

indicated that the principal is central to creating a positive school culture which cultivates a positive school environment that in turn yield better educational achievements. Schools in South Africa have long had a history of excessive violence. And of the literature existing on violence and safety, very few highlight the roles and responsibilities of the SMT in keeping schools safe (Burton, 2012). SMTs in schools play an important role in keeping the schools safe through the implementation of the School Safety Framework. A SMT has a significant effect on the safety of both learners and teachers in a school, with guidance of policies set in place for promotion of safety in schools, the roles and responsibilities of the SMT in creating safe learning environments.

In South African schools, despite the continued provision of support material and policy documents to the School Management Teams (SMTs), to guide them in creating safe learning environments, violence still prevails and threatens school safety as well as teaching and learning (PSASP 2015, DOE, 2016; NSSF, 2016). Epstein (2018) states that parental association with learners school work enhances school safety, stating that parents who are regularly motivating, communicating, volunteering, learning at domestic, decision-making, and collaborating with the community help schools to become safer.

When schools collaborate with families to support learning, children are more likely to succeed in achieving their educational goals. Avvisati et al., (2010) contends that parental non-involvement is worsened by an overarching lack of parental interest in education and poverty threatens the maintained of safe schools. Sapungan, (2014) found that children whose guardians are included in their lessons are more likely to create a solid, positive sense of adequacy for effectively accomplishing school-related work, including keeping school rules. In support of this finding, Meier & Lemmer, (2015). also reported that the absence of most guardians in provincial communities who spend most of their time away from their children nurture violent behaviour of learners who are bitter and bully others at school thus creating an unsafe school environment.

In some schools, the SMTs works in collaboration with the community to ensure safety at school while in other schools, it is not clear who is responsible for ensuring

creating a safe school environment (Astor, 2009). Communities take part in schools through actions of the betterment of learners' education, such as electing School Governing Bodies from within the communities to stand in place and govern the school. Community police forums are made up of individuals from within the community to take care and maintain safety around the schools and, most importantly, values and norms of communities usually influence learner behaviour and further can be used as a safety guide (Ferreira, 2012: Mohapi, 2018).

Apart from the school community members, learners also play an important role in making sure that schools are safe through creating a positive school climate and adopting a positive school culture (Lenzi, 2017). Parents can also play a role in creating safe learning environments by showing concern and taking initiative to communicate with their children and teachers about their daily school activities (Somech, 2009). Community surrounding schools are expected to reflect friendliness, respect and warmth, honesty and sincerity, geniuses and spontaneity, consistency and concreteness. In order to say a school community is conducive and possesses sound interpersonal relationships, all members of the school community should feel secure, happy and safe in the school and be treated equally with respect, and, ultimately, the school leaders need to show evidence of valuing all learners and teachers equally (Miller, 2012).

2.6 Different Perspectives on School Safety

Internationally, studies have indicated that the roles of the SMT in creating safe learning environments are undertaken mostly by the School Principal (Swaleha, 2013). School Principals in countries such as USA, Canada and Israel take the responsibility in formulating schools' Code of Conduct alongside the school representatives, for the promotion of safe physical and psychological learning environments (Astor, 2009). Varnham (2008) also found that the School Principal takes on a key responsibility in restoring justice in schools in Australian and New Zealand alike, through connecting schools and families; building strong support networks; and employing restorative practices to resolve conflicts between learners, with the support of teachers, social workers and community members at large. In this study, conflict between learners was perceived to threaten school safety. Based

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on the high expectation of the principal to take a leading role in ensuring school safety, Carlton (2017) asserted the need for School Principals to receive sufficient training in maintaining and keeping schools safe since they might not have sufficient knowledge about school safety.

In South Africa school safety is associated with crime-free schools; unfortunately, there are many schools that experience a high volume of crime and violence threatening the safety of teachers and learners (Barnes, 2012). The responsibility of keeping schools safe is the role of the School Management Team. A school in South Africa comprises SMT members whose duty, amongst others, is to maintain order in and around schools (Grobler, 2018). The SMTs initiate policies which guide teachers and learners on the promotion of safety in school, positive reinforcement of teachers and learners also plays as well as maintaining safe learning environments (Grobler, 2018). Although the SMT members develop school-based safety policies, the School Principals need to ensure that teaching and learning is of good quality through attaining best possible school-safety measures (Xaba, 2012). While School Principals create, circulate, device and supervise safety policies in schools, there are continued reports of school violence in schools, which then begs the question of the extent to which School Principals implement safety policies in schools (Eberlein, 2016). Ncontsa (2013) postulates that bullying in the South African schools has become such a huge problem and this leads to its visibility in mainstream media emanating in public concern about school safety in the South African schools.

2.7 Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 2 reviewed literature that guides the basis of the study. The review included discussion on the following: safe school, safe learning school environment, the right to safety for teachers and learners in the school environment, factors contributing to an unsafe learning school environment, role players in the creation of a safe learning school environment, and, finally, different perspectives of school safety from local and international experiences. Gaps in the literature were also highlighted. Chapter Three discusses the research paradigm, approach, and design and data collection methods used in this research. Other methodological aspects such as ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the research are also included.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH PARADIGM, APPROACH, DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION METHOD

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study is to investigate School Management Teams Perspectives on creating a safe learning environment.   The study explores the reasons taken by SMTs on the importance of creation of a safe learning school environment for both teachers and learners. The perspectives of the SMT members were examined in light of a set of theoretical framework containing sections of the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution; the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996; the role of SGB in formulation of School-Safety Policy; and the roles and responsibilities of School Management Teams in maintaining school safety. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology of this study. The chapter focuses on research paradigm, approach, design and data collection methods. The research methods are examined in relation to the research site, sampling process and the participants, as well as the procedures of data collection and analysis. The chapter further deals with issues of ethical considerations, and quality aspects of the study such as strategies employed to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Research paradigms are based on the philosophical believes about reality (i.e, ontology), creation of knowledge (i.e., epistemology) and methodology. Ontology denotes the nature of the study and what the researcher believes about the reality of phenomenon under study (Lather, 2016; Sefotho, 2018).   In this study, the researcher seeks different versions of reality as explained by the participants thus embracing the ontology of multiple realities (Creswel, 2007). Safety in schools is a great concern and the reality is that, without measures put in place to promote safety, a school may become unrully and unfavourable environment for teaching and learning. An Epistomology stand of the researcher in this study is that of subjective meaning of information and comprehension of the experiences of the participants

involved in the study. Epistemology is about what is involved in knowing and speaks to how we commonly understand what we know and present the knowledge (Mukhles, 2020; Potter 2017). In this study, the researcher works on providing information about the nature of the study though conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants involved in the study. The subjective realities are taken as common understanding and views about the phenomenon. Lastly, the data collection methods are the tools and procedures used in the research process to generate data. Babbie and Mouton (2005) are of the opinion that a researcher utilises qualitative research procedures like semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth data to answer research questions.

The aim of this study was to gather multiple realities of SMTs about creating a safe learning schools environment utilising an interpretivist paradigm which is a philosophical believe about subjective realities from the participants experiencing or who had experienced the phenomenon understudy (Creswell, 2009). Interpretive specialists believe that the truth comprises an individual's subjective encounters with the real world, along these lines, they may receive a between subjective believe and conviction that the truth is socially developed. Alharahsheh & Pius, (2020) contends that in the interpretive convention of the truth there are no 'right' or 'wrong' hypotheses. The reality is what the participants share with the researcher.

Interpretivist paradigm mainly uses qualitative methods. Willis (2007) states that interpretivists' researchers often use Case Study design in qualitative research to produce rich research findings. Such studies use a small set of sample such that the findings from the study are not generalize to population outside the perimeters of the study. Interpretivist paradigm has its advantages and disadvantages. An advantage of an interpretivist worldview is that diverse associations and issues of morals can be examined from different views leading to different insights being produced (Lan. 2018).The main disadvantage of an interpretivist study is that the collected research data will not be possible to be summed up since information is strongly affected by individual perspective such findings are difficult to generalize (Snowman, 2013). Cohen and Morison (2011) state that, like any other worldview, this worldview has a few disadvantages, firstly the researcher intends to pay attention to data which is more relatable to them rather than to sum-up the findings of all participants

(Snowman, 2013). To address the disadvantage and avoid leaving out a hole in checking legitimacy and helpfulness of examination results, useful logical strategies such as triangulation of the collected data can be done during the analysis. The second disadvantage is that interpretivist ontological view overall may be sensitive as opposed to neutral (Lan, 2018). Therefore, the researcher needs to ensure that they do not influence the findings of the study through own personal views that cause too many biases. Thirdly, another disadvantage of interpretivism is lack of administrative and ethical effect and connection on research data and public knowledge. This functions to study current phenomenon and not social realities. Lan, (2010) claims that, to resolve the disadvantage of the worldview, issues of politics, including philosophy, need to be considered because the general public is interested in that.

3.3 Research Approach

The research approach can be qualitative (words), quantitative research (numbers) or mixed method (Ansari, 2016; Burgees, 2002). Qualitative research serves to expand as well as extend our comprehension of how things came to be and how they are in our social space. Furthermore, qualitative research method involves the clarifications of social wonders, it plans to assist in providing understanding of the social world in which we live and why things are how they are. In qualitative approach, the researcher is concerned with social reality and tries to respond to inquiries concerning the social world (Hancock et al., 2016). Teherani (2015) further alludes to the fact that qualitative research is the efficient investigation into social phenomenon in natural settings. These phenomena are about how individuals experience parts of their lives and what makes them do what they do.

The research approach in this study is qualitative and it is suitable for the study because it involves both the researcher and participants as active co-producers of knowledge. Thus making a better understanding of how school safety affects behaviours of learners and teachers in the school environment from the perspectives of the SMTs. Qualitative research does not overrule the views of the participants or the researchers understanding of the phenomenon. Both the participants and the researcher are involved in knowledge production.

In this study, the researcher decided to utilise qualitative approach because of its nature, which is explorative. Qualitative research is used to show difference in thoughts and opinions of others and gives in-depth data.

Qualitative research uses different data collect strategies which can be unstructured or semi-organized; one of the commonly used data collection methods is interviews which can be un-structured, semi-structure or structured Braun, Clarke, Boulton, Davey & McEvoy (2020). Interviews can be on individual bases of group interviews. In this study, the researcher used semi-structure individual interviews. The researcher chose this method because they are interested in understanding the perspectives of SMT members in North West Secondary schools specifically in villages and wanted to explore how they view school safety; the challenges they experience; and how they can address the identified challenges.

The advantage of qualitative research is that it gives way to exploration rich information through contact and direct communication with the participants (Rahman, 2017). Qualitative research methods provide rich and detailed overview of the thoughts, views and perspectives of participants, and interpret the meanings of their actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (2008) argue that interpritivist qualitative approach to research recognizes the holistic experiences of the participants. The qualitative research approach may involve interpretivism analysis of data in individual cases or events and the capacity to comprehend the voices increases. Qualitative research approach helps researchers to explore and work out the inner perspective of the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The disadvantage, on the other hand, could be that contextual factors (environmental factors) are, in most cases, left out, and the focus of the study may be limited to experiences and emotions, thus making the research less reliable. A smaller sample size can make the research less generalizable beyond the context of the study. Participant sampling, such as Convenient and Purposeful Sampling, often used in qualitative research could add to research bias (Silverman, 2010). In addition, qualitative research sometimes omits contextual sensitivities and relies on definitions and perspectives. For example, the Phenomenological method aims to

discover, analyse and comprehend the experiences of the participants (Silverman, 2010; Fendt, 2014). A small sample size, in terms of study method raises the problem of generalizability to the whole population of the research community (Harry & Lipsky, 2014). Chreng, (2015) acknowledged that, due to the small sample size; the study findings do not want to appeal to other contexts for broader generalization. Qualitative data analysis also requires a significant amount of time, and the results can only be applied to the wider population in a very restricted way (Schreier, 2018). Scholars who use case studies are often tempted to use contextualised details to give the reader the opportunity to relate the findings to their own context.

3.4 Research Design

The research design for this study is case study. A case study research design falls under qualitative research approach in which detailed analysis or investigation of a phenomenon takes place within the natural environment (Ridder, 2017). When a researcher uses a case study research design, the researcher should not focus only on the phenomenon or case being studied but should take into consideration the relationship between the case and context (Yin, 2013). Yazan (2014) states that, in a case study design, it is important to always remember context plays an important role in analysing the phenomenon. The phenomenon being investigated in this study is the perspectives of SMTs in creating safe learning environment. A multisite case study design was used for this research. The goal of a multisite qualitative research case study design is to collect research data that contains common characteristics from different research sites with common research problems (Audet & d'Amboise, 2001). Seemingly Merriam & Tisdell, (2015) state that multisite case studies entails gathering and analysing data from a number of cases, each of which shares common characteristics or conditions. A multisite case study design is suitable for the study because it requires contact with the environment and allows multiple understanding and therefore different views may be taken into consideration. Choosing a case Study design allowed the researcher to get in-depth responses from the different members of the SMT in the environment which the phenomenon occurs which is the school. Using the Case Study design, the researcher was able to make a profound understanding of how individual member of the SMTs worked and their encounters and perspectives of the research phenomenon which enabled

me to generate rich data (Yin, 2013). Mariano, (2000) states that Case Study research may be exploratory, graphic, interpretive or exploratory. In this study, the case is to explore the multiple views from SMTs on creating a safe learning school environment.

3.5 Research Methodology

3.5.1 Research Site

The research site was three high schools in North West Brits. The area in which the research took place is known for agricultural activities, mining and factories. The population of the area is mostly Basotho, but the language popularly spoken in the area is Setswana. There are many primary and secondary schools in Brits, some of which have highly populated classrooms, with learners from communities wherein there is high crime rates and a very low level of safety in schools, especially in the rural parts and township locations of Brits. The three schools were located in three villages. The villagers mostly work in the mines, factories and farms in and around the city. Some of the research locations were closer to the city and were also densely populated, which means that there is a need for addressing safety issues.

3.5.2 Sampling

The researcher intended to sample three schools from the area with a total of 15 participants who were members of the SMT teams. The sample from each school consisted of Head of Department, Deputy Principal and the Principal. The reason for choosing SMT members for the research is because, in a school environment, the SMT members are deemed as the overseers of school safety, and in order for me to collect rich and useful data the information needed to come from individuals directly dealing with school-safety issues at a managerial level.

Convenient Sampling is a method of choosing research participants through non-probability or non-random testing. Convenient Sampling is used because it is easy, inexpensive, and appropriate. Sampling of participants is easy to do through Convenient Sampling because it needs relatively little preparation. Researchers simply use participants to who are available at the moment of sampling. The method, compared to Random Sampling, is casual and simple which is why the

researcher in this study chose to utilise it. Gentles (2015) states that Purposive Sampling on the hand is a research technique under qualitative research methods used in most cases to select from a group of individuals who may have enough insight to provide the data required by the researcher. Such participants are assumed to be well informed, experienced and well-educated about the research topic.

Tansey (2007) mentions that the Purposive Sampling strategy mostly works through personal judgement. In such an instance, researchers choose research participants based on certain characteristics the potential participant may exhibit. The sampling method is a non-random method of sampling participants and therefore a hypotheses is not essential or a set number of members. A researcher selects the main research focus and takes on the task to define individuals who can and are happy to contribute the research data needed voluntarily on their experience. In this study, the sample from each school comprises the School Principal, the Deputy Principal and one HoDs. HODs and Deputy Principals were chosen through snowballing techniques in which one greater source of information gives recommendation or leads to other sources of information (Duraman, 2015). The principals were asked to make recommendations on members of the SMTs to be interview within the school environment, especially in schools with more than one HoD.

3.5.3 Research Methods

In undertaking this research, the researcher utilised interviews to collected data. An interview is a question-answer method of collecting data in which the interviewer asks questions and participants answer the questions during the interview process. The research interviews are viewed as conversations between two people or a focus group (Svend, 2018). Maree (2016) postulates that a phenomenon can be viewed through the eyes of the sample of participants such that when qualitative interview methods are employed, the participants can contribute in a collective manner. Maree (2016) goes further to state that there are three types of interviews, Structure, Semi-Structured and Unstructured interviews. Structured interview seek direct answers and do not leave room for open ended answers, semi-structured interviews allows room for open ended questions and answers while unstructured interviews

are unplanned and questions and answers are made up on the go (Williams, 2011). Semi-Structure interviews are conducted conversationally with the researcher interviewing one participant at a time, where the researcher uses a mixture of closed and open-ended questions, often followed by follow-up questions. Semi-structured interviews can be more interactive than telephone surveys, while they only last as long as focus groups (Higson & Smith, 2000).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were utilised because unlike survey questionnaires, it has potential to yield more response because it is interactive. Semi-structured interviews are known to be suitable for the exploration of participants' beliefs and values. When semi-structured interviews are conducted, an opportunity to evaluate trustworthiness of respondents comes through observation of non-verbal actions of the participants during the interview process. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher can persuade the participants to answer all questions through interactive conversation (Creswell, 2012). The reason for using semi-structured interviews is that the researcher wanted to give the participants the opportunity to make sense of the interview questions in their own terms and answer the questions through their own experiences and understandings, without any restrictions and fear of overlapping the structure of the interview (Coughlan, 2009). The method also gives the researcher a chance to guide the participants in answering the questions during the interview so that they may contribute positively to the research (Coughlan, 2009). Coughlan (2009) further states that the interview schedule prepared by the researcher is used as a guide and framework and helps the researcher in collecting richer data for the research.

Advantages of semi-structured Interviews are that they are ideally suited to a variety of important tasks, particularly when more than a few open-ended questions are answered helping to broaden the research. Semi-structured interviews encourage respondents to communicate with the researcher. It shows the worldviews and social structures of the respondents that the researcher knows nothing about. Semi-structures interviews allow follow-up queries which are needed for clarification and avoidance of misconceptions (Mouton, 2005).

The disadvantage of semi-structured interviews is that they are time-consuming, labour intensive and very complex (Allen, 2017). The limitation of using semi-structured interviews is that it's not nearly as fast and easy to plan for the interviews, set up the interviews, administer the interviews, and review the interviews. The time and commitment taken to get semi-structured interviews right is substantial. It is a daunting job to review a large amount of notes and occasionally several hours of writing transcripts of the recorded interviews is daunting task (Given, 2008).

3.5.4 Research Procedures

Figure 4: Research Procedures the Study Underwent
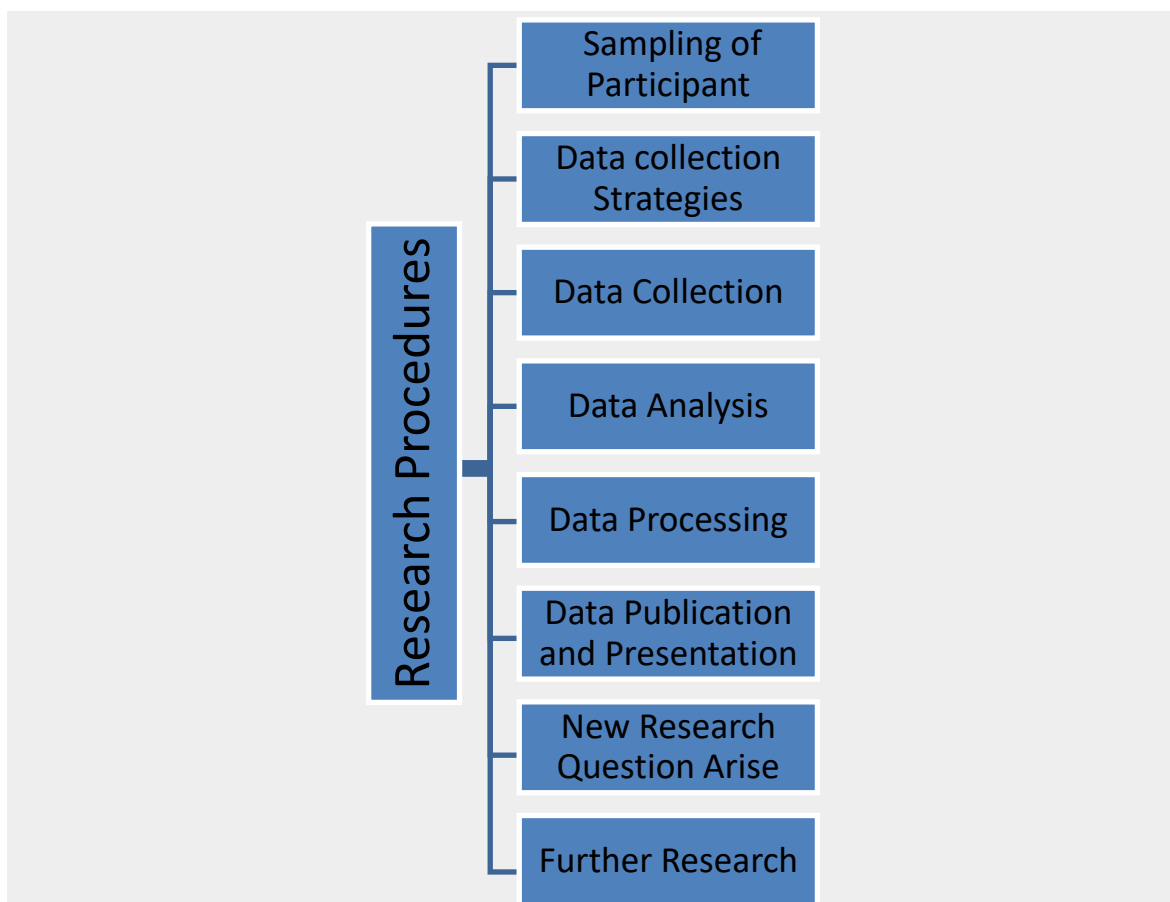
Research Procedures

1. Sampling of Participant – in order to conduct the research and collect research data, participants were chosen according to a set criteria. These participants are a specific group of individuals purposefully sampled in the school environment responsible for managing all aspects of the school environment.

2. Data collection Strategies – Interviews is used as a tool to collect data for the research.

3. Data Collection – interviews will are conducted with sampled individuals and data is being collected.

4. Data Analysis – the data collected from sampled individuals are the put into themes and checked for relevancy in relation to the research.

5. Data Processing – The data that are collected are then transformed into useful information where meaning is extracted.

6. Data Publication and Presentation – sharing of relevant research data to individuals who have interest through different mediums.

7. New Research Question Arise – when research data are collected, further research question will arise leading to the need to conduct further research.

8. Further Research – to answer research questions that have risen from the conducted research further research will have to be conducted.

3.5.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is on-going and not a straight-forward process, all aspects of qualitative data analysis are intertwined. Data analysis includes three steps that happen after data collection. Jansen (2016) describes the three processes as scanning and cleaning the data, organising the data and presentation of data. The type of data analysis in this study was Thematic Analysis. This type of data analysis is done when interview transcripts are analysed and presented in order to identify themes contained from the gathered data that answers the research questions (Burnard, 2008).

Steps undertaken in thematic data analysis as per Kristina, Scharp &Sanders (2019) are as follows:

Step 1: The researcher needed to become very familiar with the data collected through reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and making memo notes from the interview carried out.

Step 2: This stage involves discovering key points in the collected data which may help the researcher in answering research questions. It is done when the researcher makes notes to sum up key ideas. This is known as open

coding, focusing on the response of the participant on account of what is being asked.

Step 3: Categorising is a process in which codes are grouped together according to related ideas that appear repeatedly in the interview transcripts. To make categories even shorter, the categories with similar key ideas are grouped together.

Step 4: Colour coding categories helps in identifying and grouping the data. Different interview categories are divided using different colours.

Step 5: The categories are merged to creating themes. Data categories are then put together to create themes. Themes are big ideas which occur in the interview transcripts indicating what the interview is about.

Step 6: Quotes are created to relate themes to the interview transcripts; quotes are words which indicate the essence or meaning of themes (Crowe, 2015). The researcher followed these steps in doing data analysis in this study.

3.6 Ethical Issues

Research ethics are characterized as good rules or morals that fill in as leading principles and social rules regarding the correct direct conduct towards research members (Bayens, 2011). This researcher has moral obligations to guarantee protection of participants and warrant the worthiness of the research. The goal of the research is to attain the most valid results from respondents. Ethical considerations entails taking into consideration the feelings and rights of people who are involved in my study (Marshall & Rossman 2008).

In this research, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from University of Pretoria Ethics committee before the researcher started my data collection. After getting Ethical Clearance from the Ethics Committee, the researcher applied for permission from the North West Department of Basic Education and the District Office to conduct research at the schools in the district. With the permission from the District Office, the researcher then applied for permission from the School Principals to conduct research at their respective schools and lastly asked for consent from the SMT members to participate in the study. The researcher observed ethical principles such as 'informed consent', 'privacy and anonymity', 'voluntary

participation', 'conflict of interest and 'protection from harm', among others, in order to ensure that the research was done in an ethical manner. A discussion of the ethical principles is presented below.

3.6.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent involves making participants totally aware of the reason for the conducted research, its possible dangers of the research, it is therefore an educated agree record given to the research participants which clarifies the nature and reason for the research. Informed consent indicates the intention of the research and that participants may take an interest to participate or decline to participate at any phase of research (Mafield, 2012). Before data collection for this study, the participants were given Consent Forms to sign to show that they had agreed willingly to take part in the study and that they were not being forced to participate in the research. Before giving the participants Informed Consent Letters, the researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the study and the role that they are expected to play in the study. The researcher then obtained their consent by asking participants to sign the Consent Forms. Participation in this study was voluntary.

3.6.2 Privacy and Anonymity

The participants' privacy, anonymity and protection from harm were maintained in this study. Anonymity is the point at which a researcher cannot link given or collected information with any participant. To ensure privacy and anonymity, the researcher in this study did not require the participants to disclose their identity and any personal information that would expose the identity of the participant were excluded in the data collection process (Babbie, 2012).

3.6.3 Protection from Harm

All possible consequences that could lead to any form of harm during the interviews were taken into consideration when conducting the research. The potential risks of the research must be carefully investigated in order to protect participants from all possible physical and psychological harm.   To protect the participants from psychological harm in this study, the participants were interviewed in a manner that did not make them feel anxious or uncomfortable.   The language used to

communicate was not offensive or demeaning nor had effect on cultural beliefs and morals of the participants (Dilmi, 2012).

3.6.4 Conflict of interest

During research, in order to generate necessary data to answer the research question, the researcher needed to ensure that participants personal interest do not come in between the research conducted, e.g., SMT may not want to give out information about violence occurring in their school to avoid getting in trouble with the department of basic education on accounts of lack of safety in their school. The researcher avoided making follow-up on responses that the participants were reluctant to elaborate on.

3.7 Enhancing Quality of the Research - Trustworthiness

According to Maree (2017), qualitative Research cannot be judged the same way that quantitative research is judged because they have completely different criteria.

Due to the nature of the study being qualitative, trustworthiness is been taken into consideration as this includes assessing the research precision, checking what was expected to be achieved by the research and its success (Babbie, 2012). Jansen (2016) states that trustworthiness in research works to find out if a measure of the study is an accurate reflection of what the research question intents to find out. Trustworthiness is the confidence a researcher puts in the research, the data collected and its interpretation, making the research worthy to be considered by people who are interested in the topic under study (Connelly, 2016). A standard set of criteria put in place to evaluate the trustworthiness of a qualitative study includes: credibility, transferability, dependability and, lastly, confirmability. The researcher aimed at ensuring trustworthiness of this study by using the strategies described in the following sections.

3.7.1 Credibility

Patton (2002) believes the credibility of qualitative research mainly depends on how much effort a researcher puts in their research. In this study, the researcher used this definition to measure the amount of effort I can put into this research to achieve credibility, through ensuring that the collected data come from credible and trusted

sources; recording as much data so as never to omit any information as much as possible in the research; and updating events during the research to remain relevant. Mills et al., (2010) state that, in order for research data to be credible, researchers aim for data saturation to create credibility. In an on-going basis, a researcher collects and review data, continuously comparing it to see if new theories, constructs and patterns emerge or if the same concepts reappear. The researcher in this study asked the participants for permission to record the interviews in order to obtain original records of participants of which the researcher later compared with the transcribed scripts for accuracy and authenticity.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability means that other researchers can still use the research to enable the transferability of the research findings (Creswell, 2009). Coughlan (2015) states that transferability is defined by presenting evidence to readers that the results of the research study could relate to other circumstances, conditions, periods, and populations. It is important to remember that you cannot prove as a researcher that the results of the research study would be applicable. In this study, the researcher provided details of the site and sample, and has kept records of research process because they had to be alert, aware and reflexive at all times when collecting data, ensuring that during interviews they did not have to just record interviews but also take down interview notes that could assist and also supplement the recordings.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability is all about keeping complete records of my work, as it would assist in the dependability of my study. The researcher therefore needed to keep record of my work to ensure that the researcher attained dependability in my study (Fletcher, 2016). Furthermore, Connelly (2016) believes in evidence that can be audited for dependability that its function is not to attain the same research results in through exploring different research techniques but to ensure research consistency. Dependability involves the quality aspect a researcher needs to verify if the method of analysis is in compliance with the agreed criteria for the chosen research design. The researcher kept an audit trail of all the decision they made and the procedures they followed in collecting and analysing data in this study.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Conformability, asks the question of reliability, such as, is the knowledge provided reliable? Can another confirm the findings? and Is it checked and controlled? In addition, the consideration that data are not distorted by anyone who may be biased and prejudice. Confirmability concerns the neutrality component a researcher must guarantee the inter-subjectivity of the data (Shenton, 2004). It is not important to base the interpretation on a researcher's own relevant tastes and opinions, yet it requires for the data to be grounded. In this study, the researcher provides information to the readers and reviewers to use in confirming the findings of this study. The research findings are presented with extracts of the excerpts from the participants' responses. This is reliable as the rechecking of facts is important before putting and writing down using direct quotation.

3.8 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the researcher discussed in detail the research paradigm, research approach, design and data collection method applied in the research. The ethical issues, as well as trustworthiness of the study, are discussed. In the next chapter, the researcher presents the research findings and the meaning given to it.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research paradigm, approach design and data collection method was explored. The research tool which is semi-structured interviews was discussed. In this chapter, the researcher presents the research findings from the data collected through semi-structured interviews with SMTs working in three secondary schools located in Brits, North West. The schools are located in small communities outside of Brits with learner enrolment ranging from 1200-1900. From the sampled schools, data were collected from the SMT members on their views of school safety to bring out a broader understanding of the importance of school safety through the eyes of the SMT members. The challenges they face; their understanding of factors that contribute to a school environment being unsafe; the rights to safety of teachers and learners in the school environment; as well as the role players in keeping schools safe in rural school located in North West are presented. The finding from this study is also compared with literature on school safely.

In the following section, the researcher presents the biographical information of the participants followed through the use of tables that show how the themes are aligned with the research questions.

4.2 Biographical Information of the Participants

Figure 5: Participants Biographgical Table, School A

Research Participant	SMT Position	Gender	Age	Teaching Subjects	Highest Qualification	Years of Teaching Experience
Participant 1	H.O.D	Female	30-35	Accounting	Bachelor's degree in Education	8
Participant 2	H.O.D	Male	35-45	Life Science	Diploma in Education	20

Participant 3	H.O.D	Female	35-45	Mathematical Literacy	Honours Degree in Education	18
Participant 4	H.O.D	Male	45-50	Geography	Diploma in Education	25
Participant 5	H.O.D	Male	45-50	Setswana	Diploma in Education	25

Figure 6: Participants Biographgical Table, School B

Research Participant	SMT Position	Gender	Age	Teaching Subjects	Highest qualification	Years of teaching experience
Participant 6	Principal	Male	50-60	Business	Master's degree in Educational Management	35
Participant 7	Deputy Principal	Male	45-50	History	Bachelor's degree in Education	28
Participant 8	H.O.D	Male	35-45	Geography and Tourism	Bachelor's degree in Education	15
Participant 9	H.O.D	Male	35-45	Mathematics as Physical Science	Bachelor's degree in Education	18
Participant 10	H.O.D	Female	35-45	Setswana	Bachelor's degree in Education	18

Figure 7: Participants Biographical Table, School C

Research Participant	SMT Position	Gender	Age	Teaching Subjects	Highest qualification	Years of teaching experience
Participant 11	Deputy Principal	Male	45-50	Business	Honours degree in Education	28
Participant 12	H.O.D	Female	35-45	Life Orientation	Bachelor's degree in Education	18
Participant 13	H.O.D	Male	35-45	Setswana	Bachelor's degree in Education	16
Participant 14	H.O.D	Male	45-50	Accounting	Honours degree in Education	25

| Participant 15 | H.O.D | Male | 35-45 | Mathematics | Bachelor's degree in Education | 18 |

4.3 Research Questions and Interview Questions

Figure 8: Research and Interview Questions

Biographical questions	How long have you been in this school? How long have you been a teacher? What subjects do you teach What position do you hold in the SMT (Principal? Deputy Principal, HoD?) How long have you been a member of the SMT?	
Research questions	**Interview questions**	**Themes & sub-themess**
How do SMTs describe a safe learning environment?	1. How would you as part of the schools management team describe or define a safe learning environment? 2. In your experience and opinion as an SMT member how would you explain school safety?	**Theme 1: Perception of a safe learning environment** Sub-Theme 1: Characteristics of an Ideal safe learning environment Sub-theme 2: Behavioural patterns affecting school safety sub-theme 3: Push for elimination of internal and external school-safety threats • Involvement of Security Personnel • School culture and atmosphere
What are the SMTs doing to create a safe learning school environment?	3. Based on your experiences of school-safety issues what would you say are the biggest initiatives you have taken in your school to create a safe learning school environment? What actions did you take as SMT members to resolve this safety threat? 4. How does limiting any safety threats in the school environment influence proper functionality of the school and improve learner performance.	**Theme 2: Actions taken by SMTs to create a safe learning school environment** Sub-theme1: Recruitment of social health assistance Sub-theme2: Deployment of Safety Personnel Sub-theme 3:Influence of school safety on learner performance
What are the	5. Personally, what have you	**Theme 3: The challenges**

challenges identified by SMTs in creating safe learning school environment?	experienced as the biggest safety threats towards learners and teachers at your school? 6. What challenges would you say you have identified while trying to resolve safety threats in your school?	**experienced by the SMTs in creating safe learning environment** Sub-theme 1:Learner behaviour Sub-theme 2 : Parental/ community involvement
What kind of support do the SMTs need to be able to create a safe learning school environment?	7. If any, what roles, responsibilities and policies have been put in place for learners, teachers and parents to ensure the safety of everyone in the school environment? What challenges are faced in upholding them? 8. What challenges are brought into the school environment by the surrounding community when issues of school safety are being resolved? 9. What support by the Department of Education do you think is needed by the SMTs to be able to create a safe learning school environment? 10. What additional support do you think the parents of learners and the surrounding community can provide to SMTs to assist them in creating safe learning school environment?	**Theme 4: Support needed by the SMTs in creating a safe learning environment.** Sub-theme1: Policies and Safety Personnel put in place for school safety Sub-theme 2: Role of the department in promoting school safety Sub-theme 3: role of the, parents and the community in school safety
Conclusive Question	Is there anything else that you would like to tell me regarding creating a safe learning school environment?	

4.4 Research Findings

In this section, the researcher presents the findings from this study in the form of themes and sub-themes that are aligned with the research questions. The researcher has used verbatim excerpts from the interviews in order to support the findings.

4.4.1 Theme 1: SMTs' Perception of a Safe Learning Environment

The theme highlights insights of School Management Teams (i.e., participants) perspectives of a safe learning environment. The participants describe their expectation of a safe school environment and the factors that characteristics of an unsafe schools.

4.4.1.1 Sub-Theme 1: Characteristics of an Ideal Safe Learning Environment

From interviews, the participants (i.e., SMTs) seem to understand a safe learning environment as a place where physical safety is evident and there are measures in place for protecting of all stakeholders in school. The participants said:

> *As part of the management team, I would say a safe learning school environment will be expressed as a clean and orderly classroom that allows learners to be openly expressive and encouraging to others.*
>
> (Participant 5)

> *Uhmm* (Sigh) *a safe learning environment would be, one that you don't feel intimidated, you are comfortable, you don't have any fear of any harm that might come to you, such as uhmm, maybe, you know the equipment's, such as the chalkboards, are not loose, what so ever, they are safe and you don't have any intimidation from, maybe the learners, or other staff members.*
>
> **(**Participant 2)

> *…These also include safety from outside influences like gangsterism , safety of the learner in the classroom and the safety of the teacher in the classroom while teaching, also the safety of the learner in the classroom while learning, means that whatever will, will happen in the classroom, will be taken care of. For example, if a learner tries to attack another, there is safety, in the sense or the other will be saved. It's a way of solving such problems, so being in a safe learning environment means the school has many [Ehrr] ways of dealing with various things that may happen. Yes, also it means that the school makes sure they have preventative measures that will make sure that such occurrences do not do anything to them.*
>
> (Participant 3)

From the above excerpts, it seems that there is an understanding of a safe learning environment from a physical perspective that includes safe infrastructure and secure environment wherein there is great care and protection through precautionary safety measures that protect teaching and learning, and every person in the school is free

from harm or potential danger. In this sub-theme, a safe learning environment is perceived as a place without potential physical danger. A safe environment is regarded as a place with safety measures that includes hygiene and psycho-social well-being.

4.4.1.2 Sub-Theme 2: Behavioural Patterns Affecting School Safety

In this sub-theme the participants' view suggests that the behaviour of teachers and learners affect school safety. There seems to be a trend that violent behaviour and poor behavioural relations between teachers and learners, or among the learners themselves or the teachers, can affect school safety and expose both the teachers and learners to an unsafe school environment. Harmonious relationships are perceived contribute to safe learning environment. The participants said:

> *Uhmm…I can say that it's [uhhmm, pause] an environment whereby there are no fights within the school premises, no learners are fighting, you find that everybody is at peace, no teachers are fighting, and there is no bullying around the school or within the school.*
>
> (Participant 1)

> *[Ok] For me a safe learning school environment is a place where teaching and learning is not interrupted or where [Ehrr] no learning disruptions are experienced, in a way where there's no theft, gangsterism, intimidation, drugs and bullying and violence within the school premises and also where discipline is administered to all learners in a fair way.*
>
> (Participant 4)

> *I personally believe that a safe learning school environment is an environment where all components [Ehh], learners, educators, parents, school support staff and everyone else feels safe when they are in such an environment* [paper sound]*. Safety in a way that there will be no bullying, there will be no harassment, in all its forms, and peace and harmony prevails. Educators as well as the management of the institution, work harmoniously together, that is what I could refer to as a safe learning school environment.*
>
> (Participant 6)

Subjectively, there is a common understanding that the behaviour of all stakeholders within the school premises has an influence on school safety, and this is highlighted through teacher and learner violence; bullying; and gangsterism in schools. This finding implies an internal social threat based of the interpersonal relationship

between the different stakeholders. This is also an indication that lack of peace and order in the school environment contribute to an unsafe environment. In this finding, some of the behaviour of teachers was perceived as affecting school safely. This suggests a gap in the awareness and promotion of school safely as the responsibility of the teachers. The teachers also have a deputy of care that includes the safety of the learners.

4.4.1.3 Sub-Theme 3: Push for Elimination of Internal and External School-Safety Threats

This sub-theme highlights the participants' view of school safety, in addition to the general view and perception presented in sub-themes 1 and 2. From experiences of the individual participants there was a belief in being protected by Security Guard to keep the school safe as well as to protect the school environment against external threats and the internal threats within the school premises. Here is what the participants said:

> *Hmm specifically at our school when you enter the gate, we have, there is Security Officers they are there to make it a point or to make sure that everything is going accordingly within the school premises, they are there to help if you need anything, maybe if there are any learners fighting they are there to help…* (Pause) *no…assist you.*
>
> (Participant 1)

> *[Hmm] With regards to school safety, it means safety in security, which means the fencing of the school, is, is it safe? Is it safe [hmm] at the gate? Is it safe and also safe from the community within which…..which the school is in? So for me school safety includes everything that is outside the school, inside the school yard and also inside the classroom. So it is everything that is outside, inside the school yard and inside the classroom safe for learners to [uhmm]I don't know, learn in that environment.*
>
> (Participant 3)

> *School safety means that the school surroundings are not harmful for the learners and teachers. The school is, well, gated. There is enough security and there is also safe space for them to go if there is a need.*
>
> (Participant 10)

The participants in this study seem to believe that school safety needs to cater for all learners and teachers in the school environment through protection from harm, both

internal and external, by employing Security Guards and fencing the school. This finding implies a need to control access to a school and keeping out external threats as a safety measure. The Security Guards seem to also play a role in controlling internal threats. This perception of safely appears to lighten the teacher's workload in dealing with school-safety issues as the threats are passed on to Security Personnel to handle. It is likely that the teachers also perceive the Security Personnel as better trained and capable of handling unsafe situations.

The participants also seem to believe that school climate can influence school safety. The participants give the impression that safety can only occur when no person in the school is exposed to any potential harmful behaviour or act, where the school climate is not threatening to anyone. Here is what the participants said:

> *A school environment that Is free from violence, and any form of harm, such as harassment and bullying, as well as the sale of illegal substances, and criminal acts.*
>
> **(**Participant 12)

> *Well school safety is when teaching and learning takes place, without fear* (long pause)*. Yes, they need to be able to can be free, and without fear, fear, fear of being attacked, without fear of any form of an abuse, so, yes in that case I believe, once, once people are free and relaxed, they are able to can therefore learn properly, so for me it is an area where number 1 people must be free without fear.*
>
> (Participant 7)

> *Yes, where, where, where……. the school safety it is always controlled, in a sense that [Ehrr], it cannot just be done in the open, its either, if this thing are there it must be some things that are done where people are unable to even can see or recognise them, but, normally, it's an environment where, there is safety and that cannot take place.*
>
> (Participant 8)

It seemed as though the participants believe and view school safety in light of the attitudes and behaviour of all stakeholders in the school environment. It appears that the safe school climate is where there are no threats such as fear of being attacked, abuse, bullied, harassed or an encounter with other criminal acts. This finding implies that there are many elements that makes teaching and learning environment to be unsafe. Some of these elements could be beyond what the

teachers are capable of controlling. When teachers and learners feel threatened, the process of teaching and learning is negatively affected.

Considering the literature consulted and the research Conceptual Framework, the findings on this theme are in line with findings from the study done by Watkins, Carnell & Lodge, (2007), which state that school safety is characterized as the capacity of a school to nurture the safety of learners and teachers from a wide range of issues such as tormenting, violence, group-related brutality and attacks, gambling and different sorts of drug and alcohol use and exposure. Watkins, Carnell & Lodge, (2007) states that safety assurance can be applied throughout the school day and incorporates a wide scope of actual proportions of insurance, like surveillance cameras and metal finders that guide in observing learners movement and control readiness to perpetrate wrongdoings. This means that a learning climate should have a sense of security and agreeable to best encourage schooling. Safe school conditions are liberated from dangers to individual's well-being, violence and harassment; thus giving an organized and welcoming air (Mayer, 2010; Mayer & Furlong, 2010).

In this study, the participants talked of feeling safe in the presence of Security Personnel, fenced schools, where there is harmonious teacher - learner relationship and in schools where the tone and climate is relaxing with no internal or external threats. On the contrary, Hutzell and Payne (2012) described the feeling unsafe at school as contributed by factors including sex, race, poor school connectedness, and other dangerous variables. Bachman et al., (2011) further explain unsafe schools as places whereby there is substance-use, weapon-conveying, and physical-fighting practices among learners. In a similar general public view, Slavin et al., (2013) state that consistent utilizing of liquor and drugs as a reliable measure to escape reality create an unsafe school environment.

There are several unsafe features described by the participants in this study that have been previously been identified in other studies. This shows some common understanding of what contributes to safe or unsafe learning environment. The factors identified in this discussion are both internal as well as external treats.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Actions Taken by the SMTs to Create a Safe Learning School Environment

This theme follows up on the first sub-theme and highlights the participants (SMT members) steps and actions taken to resolve the mentioned behavioural patterns of learners in school, the participants mentioned the introduction of school Safety Personnel such as Security Guards, social workers, parental involvement and school safety improved learners disciplinary measures. The participants said the following.

4.4.2.1 Sub-Theme 1: Recruitment of Social Health Assistance

From the conducted interviews, the participants describe one of the initiatives they took in creating a safe learning environment is to bring social health assistance to the schools to provide social support to individuals and groups, school psychologists and social skills programmes.   There is also a mention of involving the police services to maintain safety. These initiatives were employed to resolve issues that contributed to unsafe schools.

> *We have also managed to hire a school guidance counsellor for learners and psychologists, for the teachers.*
>
> (Participant 10)

> *The school has safety classes and programs where we engage with our learners to feel free to report any bullying that is taking place within the school community.*
>
> (Participant 14)

> *Safety campaign that we once had uhmm which included uhmm….* (Pause) *maybe it was some sort of a talk on school safety, and we had a police raid, so at least once a year they raid the school for drugs and weapons learners might be carrying so jah.*
>
> (Participant 2)

> *…learners were given a chance to redeem themselves by being given counselling at school and some were referred to social workers.*
>
> (Participant 5)

> *…the actions that we have taken as the school, we usually call parents to come and talk to their kids, jah.*
>
> (Participant 1)

The above excerpts highlight the need for collaboration of the SMT members with other role players in the efforts to create a safe learning environment. The expertise

needed from external role players shows the diverse nature of the factors that makes school unsafe. Some of the factors could require other forms of specialization that are outside the professional training of the SMT members. The hiring of Safety Personnel such as school guidance officers and social workers to assist learners to better cope with safety threats at the school is an example of such expertise. Furthermore, safety programmes were also provided to assist learners to better cope in the schools to help reduce the safety issues in school parental involvement was mentioned as one tool used to assist with school-safety management. Thus, the research highlights that the learners are empowered when given a platform to report cases of bullying, as such Security Personnel, social workers and parents are the biggest pioneers in helping identify school-safety threats and findings ways of resolving them.

4.4.2.2 Sub-Theme 2: Deployment of School Safety Personnel

Another way in which the participants (i.e., SMT members) create safe learning environment is by employing Security Officers at the school gate to control access into the school, thus promoting school safety by keeping threatening elements outside the school premises, as well as maintaining internal security. The participants said:

> *…When they arrive at the gate, they will find the Security Guard where, where they will sign on a form, the form states all the rules of the school, so, when the visitors sign the agreement with the rules of the school and they are there by….*
>
> (Participant 4)

> *…So that's when we decided to attempted to hire a Security Guard to can control the movement in the school.*
>
> (Participant 4)

> *…the other thing that is happening there is that there are some security, [jah] and our security is at the gate and both at the toilets, even at out toilets there are people that watch and take care of those toilets….*
>
> (Participant 7)

> *We have a security at the gate for when people enter and leave the school. We monitor transport. We also have a fire-drill procedure in place for learners and teachers.*
>
> (Participant 15)

…so we have adopted that cop who usually come to school for assistance, who assist us as a school.

<div align="right">(Participant 1)</div>

The participants in this theme highlighted the main deployment of school Safety Personnel in their schools as Security Officers and guards. It seems as though they are positioned mostly in the gates and within the school premises to oversee school safety and control movement into and out the school. Their responsibility of the security official goes beyond gate control as they also ensure safely in places where teachers are not always present. This theme provides an understanding of the role of the deployed Security Guards in the schools and their importance. Hence the findings in this study suggest that SMT members ensure school safety through the introduction of school Safety Personnel, such as security and guards, which keep an eye on entrance into the school and around the school.

4.4.2.3 Sub-Theme 3: Influence of School Safety on Learner Performance

The sub-theme mentions the participants' experiences and point of views on the output of a safe learning environment that claim that the results of great learners performance and better school functionality depends on improved school safety, the participants said:

When threats are limited, we are able to communicate better in the classroom because the school is functional learners grades are improved.

<div align="right">(Participant 8)</div>

….Functionality and performance improved a lot because learners and teachers no longer react aggressively towards one another due to counselling they receive whenever they feel overwhelmed by the situation.

<div align="right">(Participant 10)</div>

It helps in a sense that because everyone is safe then teaching and learning can take place, and then they'll start to understand the importance of education and learning and willingness to do better in their studies.

<div align="right">(Participant 14)</div>

The findings from the conducted interviews informs the research of the effects of the direct impact of resolving school-safety issues on learner performance and functionality of the school, the participants seem to highlight mainly that when school safety is improved, learners become more focused thus perform much better, while also influencing better positive functionality of the school.

In this study, the SMTs narrated how they involved other role players in creating safe learning environment. These findings relate to the study by Barnett (2020) in which the researcher suggests that the social health and security techniques incorporate actual practices like restricting admittance to school grounds and giving troublesome learners extra school hours such as detention are helpful programmes in educating the learners about school safety. The literature of Cornell, Dewey and Mayer (2010) affirm that social health initiative such as the actual presence of well-being and safety efforts in schools as well as security measures like school authorities controlling safely issues. Previous literature (Cook, 2003), supports the ideas of assisting struggling learners in combating, substance-use violence related measures at school through school support groups. Learners who are occupied with gambling and had issues, as a result were bound to participate in substance-use, weapon-conveying, and physical-fighting practices need the support of counsellors to get to the depth of issues (Howe et al., 2011). Slavin et al., (2013) also reported that learners who truly battled had a more prominent likelihood of consistently utilizing liquor as a coping mechanism, thus there is a need more psychological support.

With regards to improvement of learner performance, schools can uphold the prosperity of learners, specifically through a positive school environment (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). Furthermore, the literature of Neuman and Simmons (2000) states that schools with positive environment can likewise improve positive friend cooperation's diminish violence and upgrade educational accomplishments and functionality of a school. The participants' responses in the sub-theme support the above literature in highlighting the actions taken by School Management Teams and the importance of these actions in creating a safe learning school environment. School safety and the challenges brought by the surrounding communities in terms of school safety.

4.4.3 Theme 3: The Challenges Experienced by the SMTs in Creating Safe Learning Environment

This theme serves to provide personal encounters of School Management Teams with regards to the main school-safety threats.

4.4.3.1 Sub-Theme 1: Learner Behaviour as Safety Threats

The sub-theme describes the challenge presented by the behavioural patterns in learners and how it influences school safety. It seems like violent behaviour, bullying, drug use and gambling are the main threats to creating a safe learning environment. The participants said:

> *…they are using drugs, some of them come to school with those drugs even though we can't find them…they are gambling within the school premises, they also bully each other.*
>
> (Participant 1)

> *It is mostly common for learners to be in conflict amongst themselves in a classroom if there's no teacher present, and lately we have experienced scenes of learners and teachers conflicts, which begin as an exchange of words, and then in turn it becomes physical.*
>
> (Participant 5)

> *Well the threat, number 1 is drugs, the drugs is one bigger threat [mo.] [mo.] [here, here] in our area… the other threat that I have seen is the, the free movement of outsiders in to the school….*
>
> (Participant 7)

In light of the provided responses to the interview questions, the participants seem to highlight the main school-safety threats as evident peer-to-peer and peer-to-educator violence; learners are involved in gambling; and, lastly, it seems as though learners then attended school under the influence of drugs, thus leading to threats to school safety. The described behaviour of the learners in this theme seems to have its roots in the community from which the learners come from. Such problems reflect a bigger problem which the teachers alone may not be able to handle. It poses a challenge for the teachers to manage the behaviour of such learners in the interest of creating safe learning environment.

4.4.3.2 Sub-Theme 2: Challenges with Parental/ Community Involvement

The participants in this study seem to describe the main challenges to creating a safe learning environment is the lack of parental and community involvement in ensuring that the schools are safe. The participants said:

> *…But, now, the challenge is that communities are providing drugs to learners, even externally, through and into our school…It is the main source of the problem because they are coming from the community….*
>
> (Participant 13)

> *It becomes difficult to…. To control the movement of people coming in and out of the school and some learners would dodge the school through…through jumping fences and then some community members would come in and go out as they please*
>
> (Participant 4)

> *When you deal with, with a community that has, cull…or has a culture of gangsterism and violence, (hmm) it is a problem for learners, as learners are not reprimanded for fighting and doing drugs from home, so that becomes a problem for them also in the class room as well.*
>
> (Participant 8)

In this theme, school safety seems to be challenged by factors such as a negative community culture and poor parental involvement in the learners' education. The research seems to mention that parents of learners at the school do not reflect any level of concern for the learners' education as they are hardly reprimanded for bad behaviour at school leading to threats to other learners. Poor school-home partnership in managing the behaviour of the learners is evident and there is lack of commonly agreed structures, rules and regulations that are practiced at home and in school to promote safe learning environment. The findings also show the challenges that the community presents and its daily ways of providing learners with drugs that later influence learner-behaviour in school negatively; laxity or inability of the community to control the buying and selling; as well as the use of drugs is evident. Thus implies the absence or inability of drug control unit to play their role in the community. There is clear evidence with lack of control in keeping the learners in school and other characters that threatens safety outside the school premises.

Literature suggests that it is difficult to create a safe environment in a situation where there are profound acts of mass violence preceded by worries with brutality, drug use, and tormenting the well-being of others by (Lynch et al., 2016). Learner

background factors, for example, poor financial conditions of parents and the more widespread poverty in local areas, parents' lack of education and failure to help their kids with school work, and violence at school and locally, contrarily impact on the education framework, as well as school safety (Hansen et al., 2017).

4.4.4 Theme 4: Support Needed by the SMTs in Creating a Safe Learning Environment

This section describes the views of SMT regarding the support and enabling factors they need to be able to create safe learning environment.

4.4.4.1 Sub-Theme1: Policies and Safety Personnel Put in Place for School Safety

From the conducted interviews it seems as if though, the participants need structure and procedure to refer to in the process of keeping the school safe. One of such support measures is School-Safety Policies, as well as other national policies that refer to safety issues. The participants said:

> *We have got school polices, we have got also the classroom rules…. The teachers also make use of SASSA, the South African schools Act as a guideline…. We use the constitution of the country as a baseline; from there we go to SASSA and, now, draw our school policies, based on those national accepted ones.*
>
> (Participant 11)

> *The Constitution; about the conduct of everyone highlights the issues of safety and security for everyone. Furthermore, we are guided by South African Schools Act document and our own school policies that are taken from the South African schools ACT. In our school we have our own policies, but our policies are aligned with the South African Schools Act, as well as the Constitution of South Africa.*
>
> (Participant 14)

> *We have classroom rules in our classes and the South African Schools Act to help guide school safety teachers. Teachers are also in possession of the ELRC for safety tips and measures, but people still fail to implement the rules.*
>
> (Participant 15)

The above excerpts seem to highlight the participant awareness of the national and school-based policies put in place to guide and protect them. What appears missing

is the effective implementation of the policies to enable the SMTs to create a safe learning environment. *The Constitution RSA, 1996*, the South African Schools Act, the ELRC, and, lastly, school-based policies and classroom rules, are all support structures and a point of reference for the actions taken by the SMTs. In light of the participants' views, the mentioned policies guide SMTs in school-safety measures and procedures. The policies also justify the safety efforts taken by the teachers.

4.4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Role of the Department in Promoting School Safety

This sub-theme describes the SMTs perceived expected roles to be played by the department of basic education. This is what the participants said:

> *I feel like the Department of Education should. In a way, provide facilities; give resources and materials that will ensure that the school is safe inside the yard and inside the classroom.*
>
> (Participant 3)

> *Workshops not only for the SMT members on school safety, but also for teachers and learners that is what the department can do.*
>
> (Participant 8)

> *The department can help by putting measures in place whereby learners are held responsible for their behaviours instead of getting a slap on the wrist because they have to, because they have the right to education.*
>
> (Participant 10)

> *…they can provide Security Guards, for every school, if we can solve that issue of gate control then obviously we will know who enters the school, what time and for what reason, we won't just have people moving in and out at their own time.*
>
> (Participant 11)

This sub-theme seems to highlight a level of understanding between participants that the role of the Department of Education in assisting SMTs in creating a safe learning school environment is visible through a pattern of responses that emphasizes the expectation of the Department of Education to support the SMTs by providing physical structures that ensures safety. Such structures should also include engaging Security Personnel to help the SMTs in maintaining school safety. It appears that the SMTs need assistance with School-Safety Workshop to aid their understanding of school safety and the expected roles of all stakeholders. This finding suggests the need to empower teachers to be able to create and manage a

conducive teaching and learning environment, and also to develop learner awareness of the importance of safe schools. The SMTs also needed support from the Department of Education in managing learner-behaviour that threatens school safety through policies that make learners accountable for their behaviour.

4.4.4.3 Sub-Theme3: Support needed from the School Community to be Able to Implement of Safety Measures

Under this sub-theme the participant went on to describe the lack of the needed support from the school community. It seems that the SMTs needed the involvement of the surrounding community, parents and educational bodies in the schools. The participants said:

> *The parents of learners and the community have to start supporting us by creating more clean and proper culture of putting education first before drugs and alcohol that can help them out.*
>
> (Participant 8)

> *[Uhmm] parents who question the schools ability to deal with matters, SACE also and COSAS which is a union for learners, that limits the educator's ability to deal with all matters at hand yes.*
>
> (Participant 12)

> *[Uhmmm], the surrounding communities can help the school by ensuring that they unite with the school management, together with the SGB, to fight this cause, violence and ensuring the safety of learners and teachers presenting a united front this could increase the productivity of the school both on teachers and learners.*
>
> (Participant 10)

The views of the participants in this theme seem to suggest the lack of community support and consideration of promoting a safe learning environment. The SMTs expects collaboration and partnership with parents in creating safe learning environment. It seems that the support needed calls for a shift in the mind-set of the community to start valuing education and reducing other activities in the community like use of drugs that have negative effect on education. The participants seem to further mention that parents of learners in schools, and education bodies like COSAS and SACE, seem to fuel up on school-safety issues because they act as a wall to better realisation of school-safety goals when they act against many teachers and SMT members trying to lay disciplinary measures in the school environment.

Lastly, it seems as though the act of parents pulling their legs in being involved in the learners' education tends to cause even more harm as issues and matters of school safety are discussed in School Meetings. These findings show that schools need external support from both the surrounding community and parents of learners to be able to create a safe learning environment. It also shows the extent to which the internal factors inhibit the internal ability of SMTs to create safe learning environment.

Literature connected to educational policies identified with school safety in South Africa as per the mention of the participants states and identifies as follows. The National School Safety Framework (NSSF) is a good policy to be used in guiding school towards safer environment; it provides good guidelines on methods to be used at school to maintain safer schools in South Africa (DBE, UNICEF and CJCP, 2015:16-19). The link of this policy with the participants responses show an indicates its usage regarding maintain school safety as participants mention actions they undertake to ensure their schools are safe, the methods mentioned align with the police in question. The South African Schools Act of 1996 clarifies that schools need to create and support a set of accepted rules (School policies) which maintains the standards of the Constitution, not just mirroring the Bill of Rights, yet in addition focusing on the obligations of all individuals within the school (SASA 1996:15) as such the participants mention the formulation of in school policies referring to the main national protocol for school safety and many other School-Safety Policies as guidance.

Programmes that assist SMTs need to be developed with the goal of solving the problematic practices by improving the feeling of ability and responsibility in wrongdoing avoidance strategies by the government (Astor et al., 2001; Greene, 2005; Magee, 2011). Moreover, Burton and Leoschut (2013:25-29) state that while instructors showed that most schools have the vital School-Safety Policies and arrangements set up for managing the issue of school-safety threats, most educators revealed that they do not have a security official at school and mentioned that they might need the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to further provide security in schools to improve the well-being of teachers' and learners at school. SMTs need

workshop on School Security Systems, and how to screen and mediate school issues, thus schools safety development workshops as this has shown to lower levels of violence and safety threats and promote more grounded behaviours towards school rules and policies among learners (Cook, 2003). Du Plessis, (2012) also highlights that SMTs should be capacitated with knowledge to handle violence and create a peaceful environment thus the DBE ought to give workshops to SMTs responsible for overseeing relational issues of safety which may emerge at schools.

Beckmann, & Minnaar, (2010) states that School Governing Body along with learners, teachers and individuals from the local area, ought to work together on issues identified with school violence and mediate on solutions to safety threats this will in turn help them to set up a climate helpful for assistance of learners, teachers and the surrounding community. De Wet and Jacobs (2006:69-70) also highlighted that all school role players including the principal, the administering body/SGB, learners, guardians, teachers and school care support staff should be provided with school-safety care strategies to help fight violence and safety threats. Parents can set up trusting and shared associations with school SMT, and furthermore become familiar with school practice and policies (Epstein, 2010; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). This sort of intercession may enable parents to notice school tasks and collaborations in order to address issues that threaten the learning climate.

School works that depend on parent–school associations can diminish paces of mischievous activities, for example, cannabis use, vehicle robbery (Carlson, 2010). Community protective components that can relieve the dangers of violent behaviour by learners in schools include community anti-drugs and zero tolerance to violence; a great connection between teachers and learners; and support and strengthening of learners to realize the educational goal, thus collective safety measures exercises inside the community to decrease wrongdoing and safety violation practices of learners, and to advance a school environment to focus on learning (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

4.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the research findings in themes that were linked to the research questions. The themes were, namely: SMTs' perception of a safe learning

environment; actions taken by SMTs to create a safe learning school environment; the challenges experienced by the SMTs in creating safe learning environment and the perception of SMTs on the support needed by the SMTs in creating a safe learning environment. The findings are compared with literature on school safety.

The next chapter (Chapter 5) focuses summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations made from the findings. Limitations and delimitations of this study are also presented.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter (i.e., Chapter 4), the researcher presented the research findings and discussion as compared with literature on the research topic. In the conclusion to this research study, this final chapter (i.e., Chapter 5) provides brief reflections of my research journey, summary of findings, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, conclusion, and recommendations from the findings, and provides a final word from the study.

The study aims at answering the following research questions:

- How do SMTs describe a safe learning environment?
- What are the SMTs doing to create a safe learning school environment?
- What are the challenges identified by SMTs in creating safe learning school environment?
- What kind of support do the SMTs need to be able to create a safe learning school environment?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data which aided to answer the above questions. This chapter begins with a reflection on the research journey followed by summary of the SMTs contribution to the research focusing on the findings supported by the literature review. The chapter concludes with the formulation of recommendations and provides a final word on the study.

5.2 Reflections of the Research Journey

Throughout my research journey I the researcher have realised that turning into an academic requires a specific persistence with having one's life decisions addressed. It fully requires handling cross examinations from close companions, family, and friends, and the researcher has found this to be very important in her academic

journey. The researcher had to learn to balance her academic life and her social life, making sure that the researcher was up to date in both worlds. Throughout her journey, the researcher had to decline invites, and had to answer what exactly is it that the researcher do with my laptop all day long that the researcher never finish. The researcher had to answer questions like, is that worth all the time you keep wasting on it, why do you invest so much on the research if it is just for degree purposes. All questions lead me to question why the researcher is undertaking the study. Her responses were, if the researcher am to be on my laptop day and night and some months or week with mental block, and no desire to touch my laptop the researcher might as well make it worth her while. And the researcher kept in mind that there is no conclusive response to the research, and some educational enquiries will always be questioned until someone brave decides to research on them in turn attempting to discover different or common views and sentiments around the topics, problematic areas experienced and the much wanted solutions.

The researcher was exceptionally lucky to have discovered experts like Dr Teresa Ogina in Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria, Education Campus, who notably made me realise that research is a never ending process that requires persistence and hard, that you are never fully satisfied because some enquiries will bring along answers and more questions that you will feel the edge to answer leading to adjustments in your research. Hoping to seek after a higher postgraduate qualification in Educational Management, the researcher had no other focus but to work harder on her current study. The researcher have genuinely grown expertly and scholastically, just as the researcher acquired have acquired more research skills than the researcher generally had at the beginning of her study.

The researcher will, without doubt, concede that she was worried about being a year behind on her degree. Having been sick during the research and hence having to complete her degree completely online since the Covid19 pandemic made matters worse, the researcher realized that she had to be self-reliant and technologically advanced. The researcher had to adjust and accept the 'new normal' way of learning really quick. Every email sent to her supervisor was dreadful because she knew in her heart the types of mistakes she had made on her research, yet she still

persevered. Incredibly, the think I really flourished in this climate and, for the most part, it is how the program is planned and executed by the University.

The entirety of SMTs that contributed to the research and the researcher have worked with in the previous year and they were very helpful and obliging. The researcher had to reschedule some interviews, because other participants had other commitments. The researcher missed some of the appointments due to Covid 19 measures in place but everything worked out well at the end. The researcher was dazzled at how she had the option to arrange expertly with such countless different researchers during her research helping her to understand her research journey much better from the University, studying the same degree. The researcher has constructed associations with a portion of fellow researchers even from different countries and we are continually in contact. The researcher has added proficient references to her resume, and the researcher has made contacts with many University of Pretoria affiliates. The researcher could not ever have anticipated this result from finishing an online degree at the University, along with the many unforeseen challenges we faced during the previous two years. The researcher is happy that the program has surpassed my assumptions about online learning.

While the researcher have acquired a huge measure of information on current research methodologies and practices in education, the researcher is generally satisfied with how far she come from with the little knowledge she had about research. This experience is incredibly significant to me on the grounds that while she loves growing in her field of study, she have an eager intend to propel in her profession as an educator as well. Generally, the researcher is extremely satisfied with undertaking the program at the University along other scholars and researchers. And she shall forever be grateful for the perfect scaffolding she has received throughout her research journey in efforts to procure her post graduate degree.

5.3 Summary of Findings

5.3.1 SMTs' Perception of a Safe Learning Environment

This theme provides insights on how the School Management Teams perceive and describe a safe learning environment. The participants discussed the characteristics of a safe learning environment to include safe and secure school premises focusing on physical safely from safe infrastructure, clean working environment, psycho-social safely measures as well as other safety precautionary measures put in place. The perspectives of a safe school environment also included the behavioural patterns of the different stakeholders. The behaviours of teachers and learners in school that contributes to unsafe school environment identified were violent behaviour, fighting, bullying and gangsterism. The threatening interpersonal behaviours were perceived as fighting between and among the teachers and the learners..

In this theme, an understanding of the participants' insights of school safety was also seen through the need to control access to schools by having Security Guards and proper school fencing. The role of the Security Guards is to also handle threatening matters within the school as much as keeping out external threats to school safety. The participants also described a safe school climate as one that has a relaxing and non-threatening feeling and tone. This finding links to the Conceptual Framework of the research on the aspect of the role of the SGB in formulating School Safety and Security Policy to guide the SMT is in creating safe school environment. In the literature discussion of these findings, there were common factors that were identified as threats to a safe learning environment.

5.3.2 Actions Taken by the SMTs to Create a Safe Learning School Environment

In relation to the second theme that serves to give light on the actions taken by SMTs to create a safe learning environment, the second secondary research question has been answered which asks "What are the SMTs doing to create a safe learning school environment?'' The SMTs detailed fewer than three subthemes; the first is the deployment of social help assistance. This is the help of school social workers, psychologists and, where there is no access to such personnel, the creation of school social groups. SMTs mention that, with the challenges they face, they have come to understand that some learners actually need more than anything professional help, which can only be provided by specialists. The SMTs mention

that acquiring the assistance is very helpful as learners' attitudes towards teachers and learners seen to change drastically. And in places where there is poor access to the professional help, participants mention the use of social groups at school to reinforce and nurture good learner-behaviour. The literature of Kelly et al., (2017) states the role of school social workers as building the capacity and functionality of schools through the delivery of proficient and advanced group exercises to school educators which aids in their delivery of educational practices to learners bringing harmony and peace to the schools.

Additionally, school social workers in schools act as key intermediaries between staff, learners, teachers, and parents situating them to take a lead part in improving a school's management to issues such as to bullying, violence and drug use among learners (Williford, 2015). Lastly, the literature of Kelly et al., (2017) contends that a comprehensive approach at controlling weapon-related violence in schools should incorporate programs that include "school counsellors, nurses, and social workers this will assist in addressing bullying and victimization in schools".

The second commonly agreed-upon action taken by SMTs is the recruitment of Security Personnel in the school premises to monitor the movement of people within the school environment. As per the views of the participants, the need to recruit Security Personnel came about the issue of free movement by people in the school environment, which could be dangerous as teachers and learners are exposed to dangers. SMTs speak of the recruitment as important because teachers had issues of community members coming directly into classrooms to threaten them while teaching. And others came directly to the class to take learners home without permission. Some learners even went home whenever they saw it fit because movement was not controlled. The SMTs also described the importance of Security Personnel as a good shield to protect the school from negative community influences like violence and the introduction of drugs.

Literature by Schneider (2002) states that the role of Security Personnel is to provide protection to school staff, teachers, learners, the buildings and property through the watching of school building(s) and building edges, including parking areas where cars are parked, and to anticipate unauthorized guests or property harm. The third

and final sub-theme generally speaks of the good that comes out of the actions taken by SMTs to ensure school safety in that the theme mentions that when schools are provided with school health officials and Safety Officers, the school therefore functions well and learners consequently perform very well. Holley, Holley and Steiner (2005) expressed that learners detailed that being in a secure classroom changed both what they learned as well as how much they learned, consequently leading to good performance. In support of these, Cowan et al., (2013) expressed that access to school-based mental wellbeing nurses and social workers underpins straight forwardly improvement of students' physical and mental security, which in turn contributes to their willingness to learner, leading to greater positive educational outcomes".

5.3.3 The Challenges Experienced by the SMTs in Creating Safe Learning Environment

The participants in this study identified the main challenge or barriers to creating a safe learning environment as learner behaviour. The participants highlighted drug use as the main threat to safety and a challenge since a number of learners come to school under the influence of drugs and start causing trouble at school. Another challenge caused by learner behaviour is the issue of gambling as more and more learners gamble in the school environment it results in fighting. This frustrates the efforts of the teachers in creating a safe learning environment. The violence is experienced through peer-to-peer conflict as well as learner to teacher conflict. This has a negative effect on interpersonal relationships in the school. The absence of parental involvement was also perceived by the participants as an inhibiting factor. Since some of the behaviours of the learners reflect what is happening in the community and the parenting style at home, the teachers seem to expect partnership with the parents to be able to make the school environment safe. The parents seem to lack interest in attending Parents' Meetings; secondly, the issue of community members selling drugs to learners seems to appear as a main concern to participants; and, lastly, the finding suggests that there is a general culture of violence, crime, gambling and poverty, which makes it a challenge for the teachers to be able to create a safe learning environment.

5.3.4 Support Needed by the SMTs in Creating a Safe Learning Environment

In this study, the participants gave their insight into precautionary measures put in place at their school to create a safe learning school environment. The participants described the policies and Safety Personnel in place at school to maintain a safe learning school environment. In the sub-theme, the participants seem to have a collective presentation of policies put in place in their schools for safety amongst which they have identified the use of policies from the national Department of Education such as the South Africa Schools Act, of which the participants describe as a very useful policy that provides them with guidelines on how to conduct themselves in the school environment and handle different challenges at school. The participants in this study mentioned the ELRC as a policy used to guide them in different ethics and behavioural issues in the school environment. The participants mentioned that school policies are formulated at school level and used to provide leaders with rules on how to conduct themselves and use classroom rules to provide guidelines for learners on how they should conduct themselves. The findings of this theme also show the views of the participants with regards to what they believe to be the roles the Department of Education in creating a safe school environment.

The participants seem to collectively agree that the department should first start by providing SMT members with proper workshops on safely measures to assist them in dealing with safety issues in the school environment. The participants suggested that the Department of Education can assist SMT members in matters of school safety by providing schools with Security Guards at the gate to control movement of people in the school environment. In terms of the government, the participants insisted that the government should have strict regulations on learner discipline and admission to school. The participants have also mentioned that the parents of learners and community can assist the SMTs to create safer learning school environment. They suggested that parents should be opened about the learners' educational and health history to the school's authorities before admission so as to help in identifying struggling learners. The participants also mentioned that parents need to discipline learners from home as that may help with displaying good learner-behaviour at school. The opinion of the participants is that the community can assist

them by starting to foster good community culture of learning that violence, drugs and gangsterism has bad influence on the learner behaviour and well-being.

5.4 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Limitations are likely constraints and shortcomings in a research study that are out of a researcher's control. Delimitations, however, are those qualities that limit the degree and scope of research and aids research success. The research delimitations are within the researcher's control (Simon, 2012).

Predicted Limitations

Limitations of the study may be identified as constraints to research findings such as willingness to participate, time constraints; whereas sample size and sample profile fall under the study's delimitations, which are factors the researcher has control over in trying to make the study a success (Muran, 2004). In this study, there was a possibility that some of the participants might not be willing to participate in the interviews, even after signing Consent Forms. This might be because they may be busy or may feel threatened or think they will be releasing confidential school information. Time constraints might be another limitation in this study because the SMTs might have had a heavy workload, thus leaving limited time to conduct the interview. Interviews needed to be scheduled after school hours, though some of the participants might be in a rush to go home and thus might not have adequate time needed to complete the scheduled interviews (Conway, 2006).

Experienced Research Limitations

For the research, the following limitations were experienced. Firstly, access to the three schools was restricted in terms of safety measures put in place to avoid infections of Covid-19. Secondly, regardless of the limited access to school premises, once access is granted the time accessible to the participants did not permit the researcher to stretch out the interview to fully gather data in a relaxed manner. Thirdly, it seems that some of the participants could have omitted some data and only answered questions in a manner that they thought was favourable to the researcher. This aspect of qualitative interviews is beyond the control of the researcher.

This research was done in one province and a single sub-district and this then implies that the research findings cannot be summed up or be related to other different provinces in the country, or other sub-districts or problems faced by other schools (Merriam, 2009). Considering the fact that the research study took place under strict Covid-19 restrictions, some schools which were sampled were hard to access, and some participants even harder to reach for interviews. The researcher had to reschedule the interviews time and time again. Some of the participants were much undecided on their participation in this research as they were quite hesitant in answering some of the research questions relating to school policies. This could be because most of them had very little knowledge about their School-Safety Policies and did not want to be seen as incompetent as reflected in their responses during the interviews. The participants could have also been doubtful in responding to the issue of safety challenges they face in their different schools respectively where, in some instances, the SMTs were basically one-sided, revealing only a few basic challenges they faced in their schools.

Predicted Research Delimitations

Concerning delimitation of this study, the size of the sample was being small and not all members of the SMT members were interviewed. The sample size comprised of 15 participants, which will include HODs, one Deputy Principal and a Principal from each of the three sampled schools making the total number of participants fifteen. The selected few will not be sufficient be sufficient to generalize findings beyond the context of this study (Akanle et al., 2020).

Experienced Research Delimitations

The literature of Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019) states that delimitations of a research study alludes to the arrangement of enablers that a research comes across in their investigation assisting them to answer set research questions. Firstly, the interviews were limited to about 45 minutes only. Only three schools in the same geographical location were involved in this study, thus making it easy as commonalities were reflected by participants' responses to research questions. Purposeful Sampling was used to identify the participants whereby the participants were already identified by a School Principal as worthy to respond to the then

proposed research interview questions, as such the research interviews were flawless.

Furthermore concerning the delimitation of this study, the size of the sampled participants was limited to only 15, which incorporated HODs, Deputy Principals and one Principal from the three samples schools. Gill (2002) states that, on account of the sampled participants, the research data collected will, however, not be generalizable to the entire province because it will only refer better to the sampled schools and the local areas. Due to the limited sample, the findings of this study have not been generalized beyond the scope of the study.

5.5 Conclusion

School safety, as perceived by SMT members, is described as an environment that enables proper learning and teaching to take place and it is also where everyone feels safe and can freely participate in activities taking place at the school. School-safety initiatives were researched in the three different schools respectively, and what has been common about the safety initiatives has been the allocation of school-safety counsellors or groups where safety issues are discussed. School-safety challenges were also burning issues in which the research participants responded almost in a similar manner. The challenges were identified as drug abuse, socio-economic issues and lack of parental involvement. The SMTs perceived School-Safety Policies as major challenges to school safety as the implementation of the policy was problematic, especially due to lack of parental support in guiding the learners to adhere to the School-Safety Policies. The SMTs as participants further suggested that the government can assist them in providing School-Safety Workshops that nurture safety cautiousness to be practised. Furthermore, the SMTs suggested that the government should provide school-safety resources and personnel to maintain school safety. In addition, the participants suggested that the community and parents of learners can assist SMTs by opening up in providing learners academic and medical history before admission, as this may assist schools in identifying learners with a history of violence.

5.6 Recommendations from the Findings

The research data gathered from interviews with SMT members from the three schools under study provided ample data and contributed dearly to the answering of the research questions, as such the researcher provides the recommendations below.

5.6.1 Recommendations from - SMTs' Perception of a Safe Learning Environment

Through the views of the SMTs, and safe learning environment is mostly in the conducted interviews described as, a protected learning space where teachers and learners are not exposed to any harm, physically and psychologically where all resources are safe and would not pose a threat to the learners, as explained an area where the surrounding community understands the importance of education and ensures that functionality of the school and all people within the school are protected, and, lastly, where the government provides support to ensure physical school safety and psychological support.

The researcher, therefore, according to the research findings linked with the research question, recommends that the Department of Education ought to emphasis to SMT members, along with Life Orientation teachers, to take into account the importance of the subject Life Orientation to learners. The reason being that the subject provides them with important life skills related to school safety, such as the dangers of drug use, alcohol abuse, violence, bullying, gangsterism and many other important life skills. The second recommendation is the introduction of financial management skill to SMT members and SGBs alike. Financial literacy will ensure that public schools receiving Section 21 financial assistance from the department – which is money meant for spending on the school matters, through the buying of stationery and books; paying school's water and electricity accounts; and maintenance of the school – use the money as it is meant. Thus, with the much needed financial education support, the SMTs and SGBs will ensure that school buildings and the surrounding area is safe and secure, as well as well-maintained from any safety hazards. Lastly, to have safer maintained schools, SMTs can talk to

the community during School Meetings on the importance of guarding against any school resource vandalism or theft that can pose safety threats to learners and teachers. The key would be working together.

5.6.2 Recommendations from - Actions Taken by the SMTs to Create a Safe Learning School Environment

School safety is the key to a safe learning environment as indicated by the SMTs. What the SMTs also mention is that a positive school environment cannot be accomplished by individuals but by a collective of stakeholders with a common goal to meet the aims of a school. The researcher therefore recommends that there should be team work at school level that involves assistance by the community, police and psychologists, to ensure that schools are safe and secure for everyone. The researcher also recommends that community members should collectively agree to employ school Security Officers or police patrol to frequently ensure the safety of the schools. The SGB or Parents Body must consider fencing the schools properly and have security at the gates to control access into the school. In public schools, the Department of Education should be providing counsellors or psychologists to help with the mental health matters at school. This may relieve the burden of responsibilities on the teachers and the SMTs regarding addressing the issues of learners' psychological state of mind that could threaten school safety.

5.6.3 Recommendations from - The Challenges Experienced by the SMTs in Creating Safe Learning Environment

The views of the SMTs indicate that violent, uncontrollable learner-behaviour and poor parental and community involvement in school-safety issues are the main challenges to implementation of school-safety measures. The researcher therefore suggests that, since most learners with violent behaviour at schools are either part of gangs, drug addicts mostly dagga and alcohol addicts, the collaboration of the ministries of Health, Social Services and Education to establish rehabilitation centres in communities where the use of drugs, alcohol and violence are a problem. Secondly, gang members around the school and in the community can be limited by constant monitoring of police personnel in and around the schools, as well as

community policing. On the grounds of poor parental involvement in communities with poor socio-economic status, it is often difficult for parents to be fully involved and open about their children's education. Mostly, parents withhold vital information about the learners which hinders the learning and teaching process at school. The researcher recommends that parents need to be actively involved in the learners' education as well as open about the mental and health status of the learners. This will help teachers know how to handle each learner with mental challenges. In extreme cases, a social worker or a psychologist should be involved in monitoring the behaviour of the learner.

5.6.4 Recommendations from - Support Needed by the SMTs in Creating a Safe
        Learning Environment

The view of the SMTs from the conducted interviews suggest that understanding certain educational policies and implementation by SMT member at schools can improve school functionality, while the suggestion is also that the Department of Education needs to assist SMTs with training to facilitate school safety. The researcher suggests that School-Safety Policies should be amended to meet the needs the schools and SMT members. The researcher also recommends school-based policy guidelines for school safety to be used. Another recommendation is that the Department of Basic Education should provide skill development training for SMTs and teachers on dealing with safety matters at schools. The hiring of Security Personnel should be made a priority at public schools along with clinical assistance, nurses of psychologists. The recommendation on the local community and parents' inclusion in learner education and safety through the assistance of SMT members to better handle school safety is additionally essential in creating a school climate which will better the functionality of the school and improve learner performance. Above all, every stakeholder in the school environment should take the responsibility of ensuring school safety through the promotion of good school culture and positive community influence, by instilling good morals in learners and remodelling of the community into a safe place.

5.6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The research findings suggest that more research may be done in secondary schools to better comprehend the perspectives of School Management Teams on creating a safe learning school environment. Future research on the topic may use other data collection methods such as quantitative survey. The perspectives of other participants, like SGB members, parents and even learners, may shed more light on this research topic.

5.7 A Final Word

While there may still be many questions that may not be answered regarding school safety and many other possible truths behind the challenges faced by SMTs in trying to maintain school safety, this study provides insights that trigger more research on this topic. There is a possibility of untold and unnoticed action taken by SMTs to maintain school safety and the cry over the much needed support from the government warrants further research. This research aimed at establishing what SMTs do in their school regarding creating a safe learning environment. This does not minimize what the surrounding community and parents do to maintain school safety, as well as untold challenges in implementation of School-Safety Policies.

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Ethics Committee

23 June 2020

Miss HB Letwala

Dear Miss HB Letwala

REFERENCE: EDU039/20

We received proof that you have met the conditions outlined. Your application is thus **approved**, and you may start with your fieldwork. The decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected. The approval is valid for two years for a Masters and three for Doctorate.

The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.
2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted where relevant.
3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application (Section E), together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void. The changes may include the following but are not limited to:
   - Change of investigator,
   - Research methods any other aspect therefore and,
   - Participants.

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.
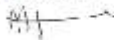
Upon completion of your research you will need to submit the following documentations to the Ethics Committee for your

Clearance Certificate:
   - Integrated Declaration Form (Form D08),
   - Initial Ethics Approval letter and,
   - Approval of Title.

Please quote the reference number EDU039/20 in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes

Prof Funke Omidire
Chair: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

Annexure B: Provincial Department of Education Application Letter

OFFICE OF THE MEC

2nd Floor Garona Building

Private Bag X2044

Rustenburg

Mmabatho

2735

To whom it may Concern: Bojanala District Office

Title of the study: School Management Team's perspectives on creating a safe learning school environment

My name is Hlologelo Bridget Letwala. I am a second year M.Ed. student at University of Pretoria. I am doing research on "School Management Team's Perspectives on creating a safe learning school environment". My supervisor is Dr T.A Ogina, senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria. I am applying for approval to do my research at three schools which fall under your department, (Bojanala, Madibeng sub-District). I request your permission to invite SMT members in schools which are located in Madibeng Sub district to take part in the study. My Ethics approval number is EDU039/20.

The purpose of this study is to explore the Perspectives of School Management Teams with regards to creating a safe learning school environment. The aim of this study is establish an understanding of what "Safe learning school environment" means from the views of the SMTs involved in this study. The research study will further explore how the SMTs in the selected schools create a safe learning environment at their schools, the challenges they experience as well as the support they need in creating and managing a safe teaching and learning environment. I intend to collect information using semi-structured interviews. I will use pre-determined interview questions and allow a discussion during the interview. By using this type of interview format, I will explore the participants' beliefs and values through open ended questions (these are questions which do not require a specific answer). The semi-structured interviews will take approximately 45 minutes. The interviews will be done after schools hours at a date and place that is convenient for the participants

Room 4-1.7, Level 4, Building

University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20

Hatfield 0028, South Africa

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Annexure C: Provincial Department Approval Letter

education
Lefapha la Thuto la Bokone Bophirima
Noordwes Departement van Onderwys
North West Department of Education
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Garona Building, Mmabatho
1st Floor, East Wing,
Private Bag X2044,
Mmabatho 2735
Tel.: (018) 388-3433
Fax.: 086-514-0126
e-mail: sgedu@nwpg.gov.za

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

Enq. : Dr T Phorabatho
Tel. : 018 388 3071/3433

To: Dr T. A Ogina
University of Pretoria
Faculty of Education

From: Ms S M Semaswe
Superintendent-General

Date :   03 August 2020

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MS HLOLOGELO BRIDGET LETWALA

Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research in the department as requested, subject to the following conditions:

- You contact the relevant School Principals for your target schools about your request with this letter of permission;
- Considering that your research will involve both Educators and Learners, the general functionality of the school should not be compromised by the research process.
- The participation in your project will be voluntary.
- The principles of informed consent and confidentiality will be observed in strictest terms, and
- The findings of your research should be made available to the North West Department of Education and Sport Development upon request.

Best wishes

Mrs S M Semaswe
Superintendent-General

04/08/2020
Date

COVID-19   **STAY AT HOME**   **WASH YOU HANDS OFTEN**   **WEAR MASK & GLOVES WHEN GOING OUTSIDE**   **KEEP TO YOUR DISTANCE**

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Annexure D: School Principal Letter

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA   Faculty of Education

Schools Principal:

Title of the study: School Management Team's perspectives on creating a safe learning school environment

My name is Hlologelo Bridget Letwala I am a second year M.Ed. student at University of Pretoria. I am doing a research on School Management Team's Perspectives on Creating a Safe Learning School Environment. My research project is overseen by Dr T.A Ogina, senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria. I have applied with the Department of Education (Bojanala District) for approval to conduct my research and a copy of the application letter is attached to this document. I request that you give me permission to invite SMT members at your school to take part in this study. My Ethics approval number is (EDU039/20)

The purpose of this study is to look into the perspectives of School Management Teams with regard to creating a safe learning school environment. My aim is to create a mental picture of a "Safe learning school environment" from the views of the SMTs. The research intends to establish how the participating SMTs go about creating a safe learning environment at their schools, the challenges they experience as well as the support they need in creating and managing a safe learning environment.

During the research, I intend to collect information using 15 minutes semi-structured interviews for each participant (these interview simply entails that I will prepare interview questions but will not strictly ask the formalised list of questions to allow a discussion format with open ended answers). The interview method was chosen because it has the potential to yield more response due to its interactive nature. Semi structured interviews, are also known to be suitable for exploration of the participants' beliefs and values.

The Information collected from this research will be kept strictly confidential; the name of the participants or the school where the research will take place will not be identified in the report. The SMT members who are partaking in the research may withdraw anytime during the research process without any penalty.

Room 4-1.7, Level 4, Building

University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20

Hatfield 0028, South Africa

Upon receiving approval to approach SMT members at your school to participate in this study, I will:

- Ask for your referral to SMT members I could potentially include in the study

- Brief potential participants about the research

- Obtain informed consent from participants

- Arrange with the participants and your office the time to collect information at your school

I anticipate that the findings from this research could be useful to many stakeholders in schools such as newly appointed members of the SMT, school-based policy makers who are concerned with issues of school safety, the school principals, and members of school governing bodies among other stakeholders in addressing the matter of school safety. Newly appointed SMT members who are already in position may be informed about their roles and responsibilities in creating safe learning school environments from the findings of this study. The South African Department of Education Policy makers may also use the findings of this study as a reference in improving policies concerning school safety and addressing to issues faced by SMT members in most schools while trying to keep schools safe and conducive for teaching and learning.

If you need further clarification about this research, please feel free to contact me on (0734465505) or my supervisor Dr Ogina on (teresa.ogina@up.ac.za)

Thank you for taking time to read this letter, I hope to get approval to conduct this research and I am looking forward to working together with your SMT members at your school.

Regards: H.B Letwala

Annexure E: Letter to Participants and Consent Form

Participant Letter
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM'S PERSPECTIVES ON CREATING A SAFE LEARNING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Dear Participant,

My name is Hlologelo Bridget Letwala. I am a second year M.Ed. student at University of Pretoria. I am doing research on "School Management Team's Perspectives on creating a safe learning school environment". My supervisor is Dr T.A Ogina, senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria. I hereby invite you as a SMT member in schools to participate in this study. My Ethics approval number is EDU039/20. The purpose of this study is to explore the Perspectives of School Management Teams with regards to creating a safe learning school environment. The aim of this study is establish an understanding of what "Safe learning school environment" means from the views of the SMTs involved in this study. The research study will further explore how you as a SMT member create a safe learning environment, the challenges you experience as well as the support you need in creating and managing a safe teaching and learning environment. I intend to collect information from you using semi-structured interviews. I will use pre-determined interview questions and allow a discussion during the interview. By using this type of interview format, I will explore your beliefs and values through open ended questions (these are questions which do not require a specific answer). The semi-structured interviews will take approximately 45 minutes. The interviews will be done after schools hours at a date and place that is convenient for you.

Consent

I___ Name & Surname: _____ voluntarily agree to take part in this research. The researcher; Hlologelo Letwala (14288240) has informed me about the nature of the research and that my rights regarding participating in this research is as follows:

- I understand that by signing the consent letter I am agreeing to take part in this study.
- I understand that the information I will give in this study will be used primarily for a M.Ed. dissertation.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any penalties...
- I understand that I can cancel the permission that I have given to use information from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in such a case, the material will be deleted.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation, I can in my own right access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further explanation and information regarding the research.

I understand that if I consent to participate in this project I will:

- Not benefit directly from my participation in this research.
- Be audio-recorded during the interview which will take approximately 45 minutes. The interviews will be done after school hours.

"We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies."

For more information and questions, you may contact:

The researcher Hlologelo Letwala at 0734465505 or email her at u14288240@tuks.co.za

The supervisor, Dr Ogina at teresa.ogina@up.ac.za

Name: _____ Date: _____ Signature: _____

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Tel +27 (0)12 420 1234

Annexure F: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: EDU039/20

Research Questions

1. **Primary Research Question**

What are the school management teams' perspectives on the creation of a safe learning school environment?

2. **Secondary Research Questions**

a) How do School Management Teams (SMTs) describe safe learning environment?

b) What are the SMTs doing to create a safe learning school environment?

c) What are the challenges identified by SMTs in creating safe learning school environment?

d) What kind of support do the SMTs need to be able to create a safe learning school environment?

Below is an interview schedule of 10 questions based on the above research questions as the main themes.

Research Questions

1. **Primary Research Question**

What are the school management teams' perspectives on the creation of a safe learning school environment?

2. **Secondary Research Questions**

a) How do School Management Teams (SMTs) describe safe learning environment?

b) What are the SMTs doing to create a safe learning school environment?

c) What are the challenges identified by SMTs in creating safe learning school environment?

d) What kind of support do the SMTs need to be able to create a safe learning school environment?

Below is an interview schedule of 10 questions based on the above research questions as the main themes.

Q1: How would you as part of the schools SMT define or describe a safe learning school environment?

Q2: In your experience and opinion as an SMT member, how would you explain school safety?

Q3: Based on your experiences of school safety issues, what would you say is the biggest initiative you have taken in your school to create a safe learning school environment?

Q4: In your experience, what have you experienced as a safety threat towards learners and teachers at your school? What actions did you take as an SMT member to resolve the threat?

Q5: How does limiting any safety threat in the school environment influence proper functionality of a school, and improve learner performance?

Q6: What challenges would you say you have identified while trying to eliminate safety threats to school safety?

Q7: If any, what roles, responsibilities or policies have been put in place for learners, teachers and parents to ensure the safety of everyone in the school environment?

 What challenges do they face in upholding to these rules?

Q8: What challenges are brought by the surrounding communities into the school environment when the issue of school safety is being resolved by SMT members within the school environment?

Q9: What support by the Department of Education do you think is needed by the SMTs to successfully create a safe learning school environment?

Q10: what additional support do you think the parents of learners and the surrounding communities can provide to SMTs to assist them in creating a safe learning school environment?
Is there anything else that you would like to tell me regarding safe school environments?

Annexure G: Interview Transcript Example
<u>**Letwala HB: 14288240**</u>

Interview transcript from School A
The five interviews were conducted with Five members in a high school in the village of Kgabalatsane just outside of Brits, one is newly appointed, Commercial HOD, one is a Science HOD, the other is a Maths and Maths Literacy HOD, one is a Humanities HOD, lastly, the other is a Home Language HOD, the school has a roll of over 1300 learners, 36 educators and 5 support staff. (Two interview transcripts sample provided)

The SMT members are referred to as participants A, B, C, D and E

> **Interview at School A with Participant A**

Researcher
Good, morning ma'am, thank you again for borrowing me your time, initially we had spoken and discussed the research purpose and the Consent Form, what would you as a newly appointed SMT say has been your biggest challenge holding the position at the school, regarding school safety?

Participant A (Commerce H.O.D)
Good morning, [please do not grill me, laughing], no ma'am I am joking. This far, being an HOD of an almost dying faculty (Commerce) has been a challenge, because we have recently noticed that the learners academic performance influences their behaviour and most learners have a very negative behaviour towards their learning and others at school, which leads to safety threats such as fighting and bullying.

Researcher
[Background noise]...thank you ma'am, ok, Question 1, how would you as part of the schools SMT personally describe a safe learning school environment in your school?

Participant A
Uhmm…I can say that it's [uhhmm, pause] an environment whereby there are no fights within the school premises, no learners are fighting, you find that everybody is at peace, no teachers are fighting, and there is no bullying around the school or within the school.

Researcher
Thank you very much for that, Question 2, in your experience and opinion as an SMT member, how would you explain school safety generally? [Pause] (Because of noise, explaining further)…. ([Now this question is a follow-up question to question 1, but in-depth into your experience as an SMT member).

Participant A
Hmm specifically at our school when you enter the gate, we have, there is Security Officers they are there to make it a point or to make sure that everything is going

accordingly within the school premises, they are there to help if you need anything, maybe if there are any learners fighting they are there to help…[Pause] no… assist you.

Researcher
Ok, Security Officers, that's the schools intervention!

Participant A
Yes, Yes

Researcher
Ok, question 3 based on your experiences of school safety issues, [would you, clears throat], what would you say is the biggest initiative you have taken in your school to create a safe learning school environment?

Participant A
Ehh……. as a school we have….. we have called [someone walked into the office by mistake], [laughs…] police officers and hmmm to come and talk to learners, we have also adopted a cop who comes to school once in a week to…. to…to take complains from teachers if there are any learners who are giving them problems [kappa-Sotho language/or] giving us problems, so we have adopted that cop who usually come to school for assistance, who assist us as a school.

Researcher
Ok ma'am, thank you for that, [*we are really moving fast*].
Question 4, what have you personally as an SMT noticed to be the biggest safety threats towards learners and teachers at your school? What actions did you take as an SMT member to resolve the threat?

Participant A
Uhmm…Uhmm…Uhmm…[pauses checking time] our learners are using drugs, they are using drugs, some of them come to school with those drugs even though we can't find them, but then it seems like during break time they do use drugs, they are gambling within the school premises, in class they do gamble and then they also bully each other, they bully each other and that the actions that we have taken as the school, we usually call parents to come and talk to their kids, jah.

Researcher
Ok so when these safety threats occur are leaners only affected of influenced by the behaviour or are teachers also affected by this learners taking drugs?....[response comes in the middle of the question].

Participant A
The teachers are also influenced, they are also influenced because once they take drugs they end-up being unruly in class, and yes they become very rude.

Researcher
Yes, yes, Ok, now, Question 5, how does limiting any safety threats mention in Question 4, how does limiting them in the school environment influence proper functionality of a school, and improve learner performance?

Participant A

Hmmmm, if like you…. You…. You…. [pause] have caught them today using the drugs and gambling they will say to you sorry ma'am, then tomorrow in class they will be behaving and stuff, so but then if you can take, where you can compare this week where they were gambling and that other week where they were not, you see that this other week where they are not gambling and using the drugs they are performing much better, so they do pass, they do better than when they are under the influence of drug abuse. You even feel much safer because they are now sober and they are cooperating in class.

Researcher

Ok so you relate much better with them when they are not under any drug influence and they cooperate better in class?

Participant A

Yes, yes, they cooperate well in class.

Researcher

Ok, Question 6, what challenges would you say, you have identified while trying to eliminate safety threats to school safety? [Explaining further, 'now once you try to solve the mentioned issues, there are challenges that come before you, when you try to say to the learners don't take drugs'…response come in again]

Participant A

They, they take those things to their parents at home, and then once you tell them to never do some things, some of them, I think they even lie when they get at home, because you find that in the morning when you get here e parents are here, they are being rude they are mad for no reason calling for you because they say you abuse the learner in class, you did that to their learner….[pause] so parents are very rude at times, then they also attack you hmmm.

Researcher

So there are attacks also?

Participant A

Yes there are attacks from parents and the learners, because some of these learners are bitter and their parents are even bitter.

Researcher

But isn't it that most of the time media reports actually show sides where teachers are always at fault.

Participant A

Yes they do almost all the time, and then the community and everyone takes the side of the learner and not the teacher.

Researcher

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Ok, Question 7, if any, what roles, responsibilities or policies have been put in place for learners, teachers and parents to ensure the safety of everyone in the school environment?

Participant A

Hmm, clears throat [phone vibrates and is quickly dropped…], within the school we have what we call uhmm…..[pause]….it's the policy, within the school, so in class we have placed classroom rules within the walls, on the walls, we place them there, especially uhmm we utilise them every day yes, but then when the year starts, that is whereby we start emphasising more so that they can know what is it that you need them to do in class, don't wear you a cap in class, don't make noise, listen to me when I am talking, such things, it controls their behaviour in class.

Researcher

Ok, then you has what policies as well?

Participant A

The school policy is there as well yes.

Researcher

Is the school policy helpful in terms of maintaining school safety?

Participant A

Yes, yes, it's very helpful; learners know what is expected of them and what is not, so they behave much better.

Researcher

Ok, ma'am thank you for that again.
Now Question 8, what challenges are brought by the surrounding communities into the school environment when the issue of school safety is being resolved by the SMT members within the school environment?

Participant A

Uhmm….. we can talk about the social factors or the economic factors, whereby you get that this learners come from very poor backgrounds, the parents are illiterate, so, now, if as a parent a child comes to you after school and tells you that teacher A did this to them, they take their story more than they take the teachers story because they don't know anything, especially what is happening within the school, so... the background it plays a very huge role.

Researcher

Would you say the parent's behaviour as well at home influences their behaviour, because I have seen reports where children living in abusive households where the father abuses the mother, in front of the kids and it affects them psychologically?

Participant A

Yes and when they come to school, they start bullying others as well because they think it is a proper thing to do.

Researcher

So the community's social and economic background plays a role, thank you ma'am I am very grateful for that.

Researcher

Question 9, what support by the Department of Education does you thinks is needed by the SMTs to successfully create a safe learning school environment?

Participant A

Hmm……. we have learners who are very notorious, it's like they are even mentally disturbed a bit, so if the department can try and help us with giving us psychologists, hiring us psychologists or nurses within the school and also...[Pause] or maybe hiring us a cop permanently as well, because there are many [laughs] police officers who are currently certifying papers all day [laughing], so if they can give us one police then psychologist or nurse yes it would be much better.

Researcher

Ok, ma'am, Question 10, now, what additional support do you think the parents of learners and the surrounding communities can provide to SMTs to assist them in creating a safe learning school environment?

Participant A

Can you elaborate a bit on this?

Researcher

Now when we……we have safety issues at school, as much as we want the department to assist us in resolving these issues, we expect the department to deploy police officials in our school to help us with drug issues and violence and bring us nurses and psychologists to better understand learner-behaviour and health, But now, the community, the parents of this learners at school, what is it that they can do themselves as parents at home to groom learners which then will be brought into the school environment and benefit the school, Yes…Yes.

Participant A

As parents back at home? I think it starts back at home, that's true……. because [wena (Sotho)-you] as a parent you can become a bit strict your child and tell them that, ok you are saying a teacher did this to you but what is it that you did? That made the teacher reacts the way, if parents can stand their ground and speak to learners.

Researcher

Ok, is there any other thing you would like to add regarding school safety?

Participant A

No ma'am…. [Points at the recording phone pulling the chair]

Researcher

Ok, thank you very much for your time ma'am and input into this research interview. That was our last question and I wish you nothing but success on your journey as an SMT.

Participant A
Pleasure!

Annexure H: Data Analysis Table Example

Main Research Questions	Interview Questions/ Sub-questions	Responses	Segments	Comments/Codes	Themes/ Sub themes
How do SMTs describe a safe learning environment?	**Participant A Q1** How would you as part of the schools management team describe or define a safe learning school environment?	Uhmm…… I can say that it's [uhhmm, pause] an environment whereby there are no fights within the school premises, no learners are fighting, you find that everybody is at peace, no teachers are fighting, and there is no bullying around the school or within the school.	no fights within the school premises everybody is at peace No bullying around the school or within the school.	No fighting Everybody is at peace No bullying	**Theme 1: Perception of a safe learning environment Sub-Theme 1: Characteristics of an Ideal safe learning environment** • *Everybody is at peace* **Sub-theme 2: Behavioural patterns affecting school safety** • *No fighting* • *No bullying*
Is there anything else that you would like to tell me regarding creating a safe learning school environment?	No, ma'am.				
How do SMTs describe a safe learning environment?	**Participant B Q1** How would you as part of the schools management team describe or define a safe learning school	Uhmm…… [Sigh] a safe learning environment would be, one that you don't feel intimidated, you are comfortable,	you don't feel intimidated you don't have any fear of any harm equipment's, such as the	No intimidation No fear of harm Classroom equipment is safe	**Theme 1: Perception of a safe learning environment Sub-Theme 1: Characteristics of an Ideal safe learning environment** • *Classroom*

	environment?	you don't have any fear of any harm that might come to you, such as uhmm, you know maybe, you know the equipment's, such as the chalkboards are not so loose...... [Uhmm] what so ever.... they are safe and you don't have maybe any intimidation from maybe the learners, or other staff members.	chalkboards are not so loose	No intimidation from learners of teachers	*equipment is safe* **Sub-theme 2: Behavioural patterns affecting school safety** • *No intimidation* • *No fear of harm*

Annexure I: Title Approval Letter

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20 July 2021

Student no: 14288240

Ms Hlologelo Letwala
u14288240@tuks.co.za

Dear Ms Letwala

APPROVED TITLE AND SUPERVISOR

I have pleasure in informing you that your approved title and supervisor for the MEd is:

Title: The perspectives of School Management Team in creating a safe learning environment

Supervisor: Dr Teresa Ogina
Contact details: (012) 420 2445, teresa.ogina@up.ac.za

You are advised to acquaint yourself with Regulations in the publication 'General Regulations and information'.
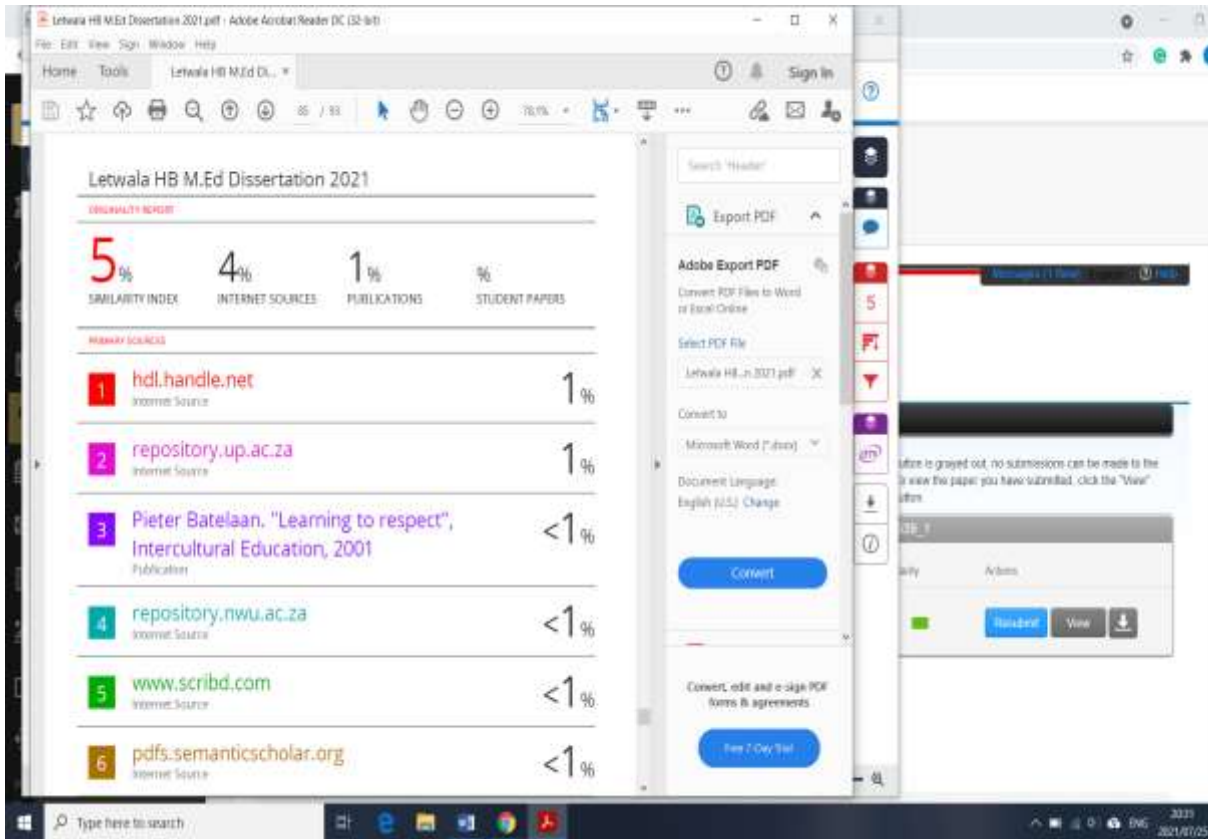
Your registration as a student must be renewed annually before 28 February until you have complied with all the requirements for the degree. You will only be entitled to the guidance of your supervisor if annual proof of registration is submitted.

Yours sincerely

Pulane Tau

Ms Pulane Tau
for Dean

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