# STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS EXPERIENCING SCHOOL VIOLENCE

by

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## 26 November 2021

**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of M. Ed 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.

26 November 2021

Signature                                        Date

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# ETHICS STATEMENT

Elaine Yvonne Baxen has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's 'Code of Ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research'.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my late sister, **Cecilia Joan James**. Gone but never forgotten.

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# ABSTRACT

## STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS EXPERIENCING SCHOOL VIOLENCE

School violence is a growing concern globally and schools in South Africa find it difficult to manage the problem of poor learner behaviour. Despite various educational policies and frameworks developed to preventing school violence, the education system continues to fail teachers. Due to violence, schools are no longer safe places for teachers and learners. Research in the past has focused on how to protect learners against this phenomenon, giving little attention to teachers. Many teachers, who are being violated, threatened, and disrespected by learners as the perpetrators of violence, have been ignored. Therefore, violence against teachers at school is a concern with consequences for society, yet it remains an under-researched phenomenon (Pedrazza, Berlanda, De Cordova, & Fraizzoli, 2018; Espelage, Anderman, Brown, Jones, Lane, McMahon, Reddy & Reynolds, 2013).

In South Africa, teachers are regularly exposed to physical violence and verbal attacks by learners. In recent media reports about teachers being attacked by learners, it clearly shows an intent to inflict serious physical harm on the teacher. Most incidents in South Africa are not simply a matter of students expressing their frustration, but it is about the intention to be disruptive and unruly to show others how easy it is to intimidate teachers (Eraslan-Capan, 2014). Learner misbehaviour and aggression can be considered as one of the most serious work-related stress factors in the teaching profession. It is capable of seriously reducing occupational well-being among teachers and prevent them from building positive relationships in the classroom.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify strategies to support teachers on how to manage school violence against them. This study was therefore grounded in the social learning theory from Albert Bandura (1977), which focused on children learning violent behaviour through experience and observation.

The main research question for this study was 'How can teachers be supported to prevent violence against them in schools?' To investigate the primary question, the following secondary questions needed to be addressed:

- What types of violence do teachers experience in schools?

- What strategies can be used to support teachers from being violently abused at school by learners?

This study was guided by an interpretivist paradigm and used a case study methodology. Snowball sampling was used to select teachers as participants for this study. Data were collected from teachers by using semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to allow the researcher to obtain rich descriptive information of their school violence experiences. Teachers shared their own positive and negative experiences associated with school violence. These experiences included the support they received from the schools, the Department of Education and SACE (South African Council for Educators). The teachers provided recommendations on matters where they require more support in order to eradicate school violence. These recommendations would be beneficial to all teachers, School Management Teams (SMTs), the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the South African Council for Educators (SACE), and all other relevant stakeholders who experience this phenomenon across South Africa.

**Key Terms:**

School, violence, misbehaviour, work-related stress, strategies, occupational well-being, SMT (School Management Teams), DBE (Department of Basic Education), SACE (South African Council for Educators).

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## CERTIFICATE OF LANGAUGE EDITING

It is certified that the document/manuscript listed below was edited by the professional editor, **Miss Shashni Harripersadh**, for the accuracy of the language, format and grammar use.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| APA | American Psychological Association |
|------|------------------------------------|
| ASD | Acute Stress Disorder |
| CJCP | Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention |
| DBE | Department of Basic Education |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| GDE | Gauteng Department of Education |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| PTSD | Posttraumatic Stress Disorder |
| RSA | Republic of South Africa |
| SACE | South African Council for Educators |
| SADTU | South African Democratic Teachers' Unions |
| SAHRC | The South African Human Rights Commission |
| SAPS | South African Police Services |
| SGB | School Governing Body |
| SLT | Social Learning Theory |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

## 1.1    INTRODUCTION

This chapter aimed to orientate the reader to the current school violence faced by teachers and how these incidences affect teachers' over-all wellbeing. Violence in schools is a global (Espelage *et al.,* 2013)    phenomenon and South Africa is not exempted from active and passive violence in all schools across the nine provinces. Teachers are repeatedly exposed to physical, verbal attacks, and incessant abuse by learners.  Since teachers are attacked on school property this crisis cannot be ignored or swept under the carpet. Niewenhizen (2016) highlighted in a media report that in Limpopo province there were more than 900 instances of violence against teachers by June 2018. Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) agree that due to an increased culture of violence at schools, the quality of teaching and learning has significantly deteriorated due to the lack of enthusiasm and passion from teachers.

According to Pillay and Ragpot (2010) there were more than 34 cases of school violence in the Gauteng province. Recently, Gauteng's rate of school violence has increased exponentially (Masinga, 2019). The researcher believed that Gauteng province will provide thick data on the teachers experience of violence against them. In 2011, a gruesome incident occurred when a female teacher in Soweto was fatally stabbed by a learner. Since then, several other Gauteng teachers had experienced learner-on-teacher violence. In 2012, a national study on school violence was conducted and the outcomes highlighted that school violence is escalating in all provinces (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Statistics revealed that in 2013, the Western Cape Province had the highest rate of school violence, followed by Limpopo and Free State (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

School violence causes an omnipresent barrier to teaching and learning, and affects teachers' morality and integrity (Espelage *et al.,* 2013). This study focused on teachers who had experienced violence in the school environments, perpetuated by learners. Despite being abused and attached by learners the Department of Education expect teachers to act professionally, behave calmly and not to react to the attacks. The violent situation experienced by most teachers is so exacerbated that they are unable to devote much time to teaching and learning. Teachers are in a key position to identify and report school violence, however, according to Joyce (2013), most teachers are

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reluctant to report incidences of violence due to extreme threats and intimidation by learners. For these reasons this study provided the impetus to focus on teachers' who had experienced violence and the researcher envisaged to provide recommendations and strategies to address and support teachers in all public schools in South Africa.

According to Burton and Leoschut (2013), the result of the 2012 National School Violence Study highlighted that school principals, are under the impression that 84.2% of their teachers are feeling safe at school. In the same study, 30% of teachers, did not agree while 70% of teachers reported that they do feel safe at school. Working under constant conditions of fear, causes teachers to lack in their commitment and focus to their core business – teaching and learning. Research has shown that the relationship between teachers and learners began to deteriorate and teachers becoming apathetic towards promoting quality teaching and learning (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; Daniels, Bradley & Hays, 2007).

Teachers experience many forms of school violence. For the purpose of this study, violence at schools will be limited to passive and active violence that occur within the school environment. Passive violence can be defined as deliberately causing harm to an individual either psychologically or emotionally. Often passive violence is overlooked or 'shrugged off' thus, resulting in a failure to guarantee the well-being of the teacher (Allen & Anderson, 2017; Singh & Steyn, 2014).

Krug (2017) defines physical violence, as the deliberate use of harsh corporeal control, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that can result in a possibility for subsequent injury, loss of lives, emotional, and/or mental harm. Teachers are finding themselves defenseless when exposed to both passive and physical violence at school (Makota & Leoschut, 2016). School violence adds to the deterioration of the culture of learning and teaching due to the apathy from teachers. Violent behavior perpetuated by learners affects the roles and responsibilities of teachers, especially in carry out their daily functions. Furthermore, it impacts on school management and policies that attempt to ensure a safe and conducive teaching and learning environment. This researcher study aimed to focus on school violence against teachers in the Gauteng province.

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## 1.2    RATIONALE

The reason for having embarked on this study stems from a personal encounter with school violence in 1994. As a young teacher on the Cape Flats of Cape Town, I started my teaching career in an Adaptation Class (teaching older learners functioning on a low cognitive level and displaying severe learning disabilities). One day, a girl threatened to stab me with a pair of scissors if I did not leave her boyfriend alone. This was a terrifying and traumatic experience, which caused me to leave the school immediately. Such violence at schools was uncommon in those years in comparison to today's school violence. In our current school situation violence against teachers has become uncontrollable and has manifested itself in different forms such as bullying, stabbing, shootings, and sexual misconduct.

According to Maphosa and Shumba (2010), teachers feel disempowered and unprotected. Many teachers agree that due to the abolishment of corporal punishment and the absence of any form of punishment has increased incidence of violence in schools. Similarly, de Lange, Mitchell and Bhana (2012) reported that teachers feel their authority to guide learners on the correct path when they are guilty of some misdemeanour is diminished since corporal punishment was eradicated (Abolition of Corporal Punishment, Act 33, of 1997, RSA 1997).

The significance of this study is to provide recommendations and strategies to teachers to cope with acts of violence against them. This study also recommended support structures and stricter measures to be taken when learners display violent behaviours in schools.

## 1.3    PROBLEM STATEMENT

Violence committed against teachers is rampant, and it can possibly harm their well-being, effectiveness, and permanency in the education sector (Espelage *et al.,* 2013). Recent media material about teachers being attacked and abused by learners clearly indicates the learner's intention of causing severe bodily harm to their teachers (WHO, 2019). Therefore, this study aimed to examine school violence against teachers, focusing on empowering them with strategies to curb the violence against them. The purpose also sought to provide teachers with the necessary understanding of relevant policies pertaining to their safety, and to make teachers aware of the correct protocol to follow when they report school violence directed at them. Bester and Du Plessis

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(2012) confirm the necessity for further studies on the phenomenon of escalating violence in schools directed at teachers in their study on school violence.

### 1.3.1 Research questions

For this study, the researcher formulated primary and secondary research questions to guide and align the study.

The primary research question was:

- How can teachers be supported to prevent violence against them in schools?

### 1.3.2 Secondary research question

In addition, the following secondary questions were formulated:

- What forms of violence do teachers experience in schools?
- What strategies can be used to support teachers from being violently abused at school by learners?

## 1.4 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

This section provided a clear understanding of the meaning of the words used in the title of the study. This aimed to assist the reader to understand what the study encapsulates.

### 1.4.1 Strategies

Strategies refers to a method worked out in advance to achieve some objective (Merriam Webster, 2021). Mintzberg (1978: 935) defines this concept as, 'a pattern in a stream of decisions' that impacts planning. The definition of the concept emphasises its strategic functions. It refers to 'strategic navigation' to move from one point to another even though the future might be unknown (Hillier, 2011: 503). In this study, the concept refers to the implementation of methods or approaches to support teachers who experienced school violence.

### 1.4.2 Support

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) refer to support as help from schools and all sectors. Furthermore, support refers to any action of holding up, aiding, or serving as a foundation (Dictionary.com LLC, 2017). In this study, support refers to the assistance

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given by the communities, school management, and the Department of Education to teachers who are faced with school-based violence.

### 1.4.3 Teachers

A teacher or educator, as defined by the Educators Employment Act of 1998, is an individual who imparts knowledge to others or who offers specialised scholastic services; and professional and educational psychological services at any educational institution and who is appointed under this Act (Educators Employment Act No. 76 of 1998). The South African Council for Educators (SACE) indicated in the 'Handbook for Teachers' Rights, Responsibilities and Safety' that the teacher is expected to educate and teach learners by following the instructions of the National Minimum Curriculum; and to educate them following the educational requirements, capabilities, and accomplishments of different learners assigned by the principal to their care (SACE, 2018). The primary occupational function of the teacher is to teach. As referred to in the context of this study, teachers have been confronted by an increasing amount of learner-on-teacher violence in the classroom. Teachers have become increasingly concerned about not being respected and working in unsafe environments.

### 1.4.4 Experience

Experience refers to the knowledge and skills an individual gain by actually doing or living through something (Merriam Webster.com, 2020). In addition, it is defined as the skills and knowledge that a person acquires during a certain period through interaction (Mudzielwana & Maphosa, 2014). The concept of experiences forms a crucial part of this study as teachers may obtain different experiences depending on the context of each school environment they find themselves in, as well as the support provided to them. In this study, the term 'experience' refers to teachers' current and past encounters of school violence and the coping mechanisms they have implemented.

### 1.4.5 Violence

Violence can be described as an intentional act to cause harm or injury to another individual (Singh & Steyn, 2014). Often physical force or power is used to cause harm or injury to another (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). According to the World Report on Violence and Health an act of violence is likely to result in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (WHO, 2019). School violence include any deeds of

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forcefulness that occur at an educational institution at any time (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 2016). For this study, 'violence' refers to the various types of viciousness teachers are experiencing for example active and passive violence. Violence or abuse are used to instigate and maintain power and control over another individual, and often reflect an inequality of control between the perpetrator and victim.

### 1.4.6 Schools

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 defines a school as a learning environment where both learners and teachers interact with mutual respect. It is a setting that is beneficial for teaching and learning. Furthermore, SACE reiterates that schools must teach learners to be well-informed, accountable, socially skilled, in good physical shape, caring, and contributing citizens of South Africa (SACE, 2018). In this study, a school is an environment where teachers and learners engage and communicate effectively.

### 1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Maree (2016), a literature review conveys work already done and the knowledge and ideas that have been already recognised in a particular focus area to the reader. Very few studies have been conducted on teachers experiencing violence; furthermore, it has not received adequate media and policy attention nationally or internationally (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). Schools have transformed into places where teachers fear for their lives. Schools are not only places of learning for learners but also workplaces for teachers. Therefore, teachers are experiencing workplace stress due to the violence they are facing. In the following subsection the frequency of violence in South African schools, is discussed.

### 1.5.1 The prevalence of school violence in the South African setting

Many teachers have been subjected to violence during their fight to eradicate and banish apartheid in South Africa. This may be the root cause of violence, in schools and in general (Vally, Dolombisa & Porteus, 1999). Although South Africa has made positive progress in creating a democracy for all and a constitution focusing on citizens' rights, the past experience of violence negatively influenced our schools and communities (Power, 2011).

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Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) further emphasised that in South Africa, crime and violence at schools are a grave concern. Various cases regarding school violence against teachers had been reported in South Africa between 2018 and 2019. Two of these incidents were reported by Grobler (2018); on 16 November 2018, a Commonwealth diplomat visited Albertina Sisulu Special School in Soweto to contribute wheelchairs to the school after a teacher was chased by a learner, who threw stones at him and caused the teacher to suffer minor injuries. The learner was then expelled by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). Similarly, on 13 September 2018 a teacher was fatally stabbed after reprimanding a 17-year-old learner in Zeerust, North West province (Grobler, 2018). Therefore, school violence needs to be addressed as it infringes upon the human rights of the educator. School violence influences a teacher's ability to teach and has a destructive effect on the public. It adversely affects a country's growth and causes widespread expenditures (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

As soon as school violence is addressed, it is imperative to attach value to both the actual crimes of violence, including the fear that accompanies it. Both can cause severe physical and psychological harm to teachers. These will inevitably cause teachers to be less productive, less committed to the profession, and negatively affect their well-being and contribution to teaching and learning. South Africa's national development plan envisaged having safe schools by 2030 where citizens can live without fear in all spheres of life (NDP 2030, 2012). Despite this initiative, school violence against teachers have become so profound and evident daily in the national media centre. School-based violence presents itself in various forms and is multi-dimensional. The way it displays itself will often depend on the environment where it manifested itself.

### 1.5.2 Types of violence

Violence directed against teachers is a major problem globally (Moon, Morash, Jang & Jeong, 2015). Types of violence may include, but are not limited to, verbal abuse, threats, throwing objects, physical assaults, property offences, and sexual harassment. The occurrence of violence and its threat to teachers is influenced by the environmental contexts in which they work. For example, schools located in communities with lower socio-economic conditions and higher residential crowding are

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at a greater risk for teacher-directed violence (Espelage *et al.*, 2013; Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

In a 2008 report, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) reported that school-based violence presents itself in various forms and is multi-dimensional. How it displays itself will often depend on the environment where it exhibits itself (SAHRC, 2002). The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Center for the Prevention of School Violence (2002) defined school violence as behaviour that infringes upon a school's academic responsibility and risks the intention of the school, which is to avoid aggression against an individual's property, drugs, weapons, disruptions, and disorder. Although violence against teachers seem to continue on a daily basis, Espelage et al. (2013) state that there is inadequate support and counselling for teachers who are victims of violence.

In this study, passive violence and active/physical violence will be the core focus for discussion; since most South Africa teachers are exposed or have experienced either one of these violent acts. Acts of passive violence cause the victim to become angry. This anger results in active or physical violence.

### 1.5.2.1 Passive violence

Burton and Leoschut (2013) posit that passive violence is a feeling of powerlessness or helplessness that develops into full-scale anger and frustration. This includes inappropriate speech and disrespectful behaviour, raising your voice in frustration or anger, and making a rude gesture towards an individual are all examples of passive violence. Other examples of passive violence include theft, intimidation, malicious insults, acts of racism, racial profiling, robbery, verbal bullying and making threats swearing, mocking, and clicking tongues, rude facial expressions, bad attitudes, and bad body language (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). According to Singh and Steyn (2014), most South African teachers have experienced at least two or more of these violent acts during their teaching career.

### 1.5.2.2 Active or physical violence

UNESCO (2017:14) states that 'active violence is the manifestation of physical hostility with the aim to injure someone, and it includes physical bullying." Burton and Leoschut (2013) argue that communities where violence is widespread and weapons are freely

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available, stabbings and shootings are very common at schools. Other forms of physical violence include rape, sexual assault, fighting, assault with dangerous weapons, and gangsterism. School violence causes teachers to display symptoms such as anxiety, stress numbing, and dissociation. Over extended time periods, outcomes of school violence can result in marital break-up, fatigue, and career change.

### 1.5.3 Reasons why teachers experience violence against them at school

There are various reasons why learners tend to display acts of violence against teachers. Joyce (2013) highlighted some reasons why teachers are exposed to school violence by learners. She reported that most learners believe that they received unfair conduct from teachers, teachers' unrealistic requirements, and felt provoked by teachers. These findings propose that majority of learner violence against teachers tends to be spontaneous or emotional responses to perceived aggravation, frustration, and unfair treatments. School violence is not caused by a single factor but by multiple factors as stated above. SACE (2000) states that school violence is not an isolated case but is caused by socio-economic problems and inherent behaviour problems displayed by learners.

School violence can be associated to domestic and community violence (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). The way parents, caregivers, and siblings behave in the home environment has an influence on learners' behaviour; especially the manner in which a learner engages with others, and their respect for the morals and values of other individuals (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Research conducted by Martin (2013) has found that learners who have endured mistreatment and abuse at home tend to display such aggressive behaviour towards others at school, and especially people of authority (teachers). Teachers exposed to crime and violence at school must not be ignored, as it negatively affects their professional and personal lives (Joyce, 2013). A high teacher turnover due to violence at schools lead to poor teaching and learning and a weakened bond between pupils and educators (Singh & Steyn, 2014).

### 1.5.4 Reasons why learners use violence against teachers

Research conducted by Espelage *et al.* (2013) and Joyce (2013) revealed that verbal aggression by learners towards teachers was most frequently not reported. Since teachers are not at liberty to administer any form of punishment to learners, learners

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do and say what they want. They are aware that the worst consequence they may face is that their parents will be called in. Should an educator try to punish a learner in the presence of their classmates, the learner might become irate as it is usually embarrassing to them, and a disobedient learner may want to take revenge. According to Bester and du Plessis (2010), other factors such as gangsterism, substance abuse, gambling, and discriminatory activities in the form of xenophobic intimidations at schools also contribute to school violence especially if their teacher is a foreigner. In some instances, boys have no respect for female teachers due to cultural differences (Bester & du Plessis, 2010). According to Santos and Tin (2018), they found that learners are aware that there will be no repercussions for harassing or speaking inappropriately to educators. These learners are fully aware that they are protected by "Children's Rights" and the Constitution. In some schools, teachers are reluctant to teach unruly learners. When learners become aware that a teacher do not want to teach them, these teachers become their target for victimisation and abuse (Moon et al. 2015).

### 1.5.5 Teachers' reactions to passive and active violence

Due to being stressed and depressed, teacher absenteeism can be seen as a short-term effect, leading to no teaching and learning (Santos & Tin, 2018). Over an extended period of time, the emotional impact on teachers may cause them to become frustrated, ill, and even to resign from the education system (Bester & du Plessis, 2010). Since the abolishment of corporal punishment, teachers were never informed about alternative ways of disciplining learners (Xaba, 2014). Teachers are vulnerable and fear working extra hours. Teachers' personal information is known to learners, such as where they live, and this results in teachers being targeted by learners. The disrespect learners show towards teachers leave them feeling apathetic towards the profession (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). Teaching is no longer a calling for many of the teachers and the only reason they stay in the profession is to secure the state pension (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). Traumatised teachers are frustrated, lack confidence, and have low morale. This results in many resignations (Santos & Tin, 2018; Espelage *et al.*, 2013). To cope with the stressful work situation, many teachers, according to Xaba (2014) find alternative ways to deal with the situation. There has been evidence of frequent teacher absenteeism, substance abuse and resignation from the profession.

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### 1.5.6 Strategies to support teachers who experience violence

### 1.5.6.1 Education policies and frameworks that protect teachers

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for monitoring school safety and implementing relevant policies pertaining to this (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention [CJCP], 2016). All South African teachers are compelled to be affiliated with SACE and are obliged to obey the rules set out by SACE (South African Council for Educators, 2017). If a teacher is found guilty of any misdemeanour, SACE will investigate and manage the matter. However, support available to teachers who are victims of school violence is often unavailable and if available it is inadequate. The Department of Basic Education has implemented various policies, discussed below to ensure safety in schools.

- **The National School Safety Framework**

This structure highlights a comprehensive plan to ensure safety and security in the school setting. This framework aims 'to create a learning environment conducive for effective learning and teaching and particularly safe for all learners, teachers and the school management team' (CJCP, 2016: 10). The policy emphasises that all schools must apply school safety policies, codes of conduct for learners and school safety plans (CJCP, 2016). Insufficient follow-up monitoring of how schools are applying this framework is currently a challenge.

- **Safety in Education Partnership Protocol**

The DBE and the South African Police Services (SAPS) produced this protocol in 2011 (RSA, 2002; DBE, 2013). It highlights the responsibility these two government stakeholders had in making sure schools are safe (CJCP, 2016; RSA, 2013; DBE, 2016). This protocol ensures that each school has a functional safety committee and that each school is linked with a police station in the area (DBE, 2016). It aims to prevent illegal acts among learners and improve school safety (CJCP, 2016; DBE, RSA, & SAPS, 2011). This protocol further necessitates that all schools produce instruments to report incidents of violence and ensure that no hazardous items enter the school premises (SAPS, 2011).

- **Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools**

This policy specifies no illegal substance, liquor and harmful objects are allowed on any school's premises. This includes individuals who have consumed alcohol or any other illegal substances or are in possession of a dangerous weapon.

- **National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy**

The Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster (JCPS) ratified the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (NAGS) on 2 June 2016 and was accepted by Provincial Cabinet in 2017. It must be noted that this strategy supports the National Development Plan (NDP) to make sure that all South Africans enjoy safety within their communities (Viltoft, 2020). The government legalised this strategy that recognises the vicious influence that gangsterism has on schools located in communities dominated by gangs (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). The strategy echoes the importance of eradicating crime at schools and within communities.

- **Schools-based Crime Prevention Programme**

The 2016/17 SAPS Annual Report accentuates the prioritisation of school safety. SAPS and DBE were also responsible for developing a schools-based Crime Prevention Programme. The programme aims to reinforce Safe School Committees to manage violence and crime at schools, linking schools with police stations in the area; and motivating schools towards creating awareness of the prevention of violence in schools.

The South African laws and policies place a considerable responsibility and legal duty on school management teams and teachers to report school violence at schools. Contrary to this, Joyce (2013) indicates that violence in schools is prolonged by those in power such as school principals and teachers. In her study, she found that when learners report violence to the principal or teachers, they ignore it, and no steps were taken to stop or punish the offenders.

## 1.6    THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ferreira (2012: 34) posits that the theoretical framework aims to 'provide an overview of perspectives and research results with reference to the proposed topic.' Simon and Goes (2011) further argue that the theoretical framework highlights to the reader that

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the research is grounded in known theory contributed by trustworthy and valid studies and not the personal understandings of the author. The theoretical framework used in this study is the Social Learning Theory (SLT) developed by Albert Bandura. According to Navabi (2012), this theory is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. The theory accepts that children learn violence from others directly (experience) or indirectly (observation) (Bandura, 1977). There are three factors that Nabavi (2012) points out, which people follow to learn from others: observation, imitation, and modelling.

If school violence directed at teachers is to be effectively eradicated, the positive behaviour change in learners must be prioritised. To bring about this positive behaviour change in learners, the SLT is considered an applicable approach. This will ensure a long-term interventionist approach to changing learner behaviour and in doing so, minimise and perhaps eradicate the increasing phenomenon of school violence directed towards teachers. Teachers and learners interact at school and it is within this environment that teachers experience violence against them by learners. Therefore, learners recreate the violent behaviour they have learnt and observed in their surroundings, at school.

## 1.7    RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section the researcher aimed to clarify the specific process, which was applied to this research.

### 1.7.1  Research design

A research design is a general guideline for linking the research problems to appropriate pragmatic studies (Creswell, 2014). The research design outlines the information that must be collected, the processes which will be applied to gather and examine the information, and how this will respond to the research question. This study followed a qualitative research design. The methods that have been applied in this study are discussed below.

#### 1.7.1.1        An interpretivist paradigm

The interpretivist or social constructivism paradigm allows the researcher a chance to produce a comprehensive understanding of the data and to communicate the understanding appropriately (Mouton, 2012). The methodology used will allow the

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researcher to better understand how teachers experience violence against them in schools, what kind of violence they endure, and what support strategies are available to minimise or eradicate violence against teachers in schools. This research was conducted from a social constructivist paradigm because the researcher was eager to gain an understanding of the participants' opinions on the violence teachers' face. In social constructivism, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018), individuals try to understand the world that they inhabit. They develop personal meanings of their experiences. The researcher depended on the participants' views of the situation. My reasons for choosing social constructivism for this study was because it allowed for the interpretation and understanding of the participants' world and I believe that multiple realities of this phenomena exist, which may differ across time and place.

For this study, the researcher worked from the stance that teachers will have different experiences regarding school violence (as a social reality) and different experiences regarding the perpetrators' behaviour. Teachers who have been victims of school violence will also have different viewpoints of their own behaviour and reaction towards school-based violence incidents.

In this study open-ended questions were used when interviewing the participants. Open-ended questions allow the participants to share their opinions without inhibitions. Creswell (2014) encourages the researcher to pose open-ended questions to allow the researcher to listen attentively to what participants are saying about their experiences of school violence.

### 1.7.1.2    Qualitative research approach

The study applied a qualitative research approach because it aimed to explore the strategies to support teachers experiencing violence in schools.

The researcher used qualitative research, because it allows for data collection in its natural location, where the participants deal with the issues of school violence that are being researched (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used several methods of collecting data such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, which will include participants' reflective journals, school safety policies, and punishment registers.

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### 1.7.1.3    Research type

A case study was used as it assists with highlighting a specific issue within each school (Creswell, 2014). The 'case' will be the manner of handling the violence in each school, which formed a sequence of activities. It gives the reader a view of real people in real situations as opposed to writing on theories. Case study research explores one entity restricted by time and action, and accumulates descriptive data by using different methods of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A Case study research type had been carefully chosen for this study to gain information from teachers, experiencing violence against them.

### 1.7.2  Research methods

The procedures which follow, has been used in support of this study.

### 1.7.2.1    The role of the researcher

Apart from establishing a cooperative relationship with the participants, the researcher had a bigger role to play in gaining the trust of the participants so that they could discuss their experiences without fear and inhibition. The researcher first obtained informed consent from the Ethical Committee of the University of Pretoria, and informed consent from the participants. The researcher planned to conduct interviews with a maximum of 15 selected participants in the Gauteng province, by relying on the snowball sampling technique. The researcher ensured that a a warm, secure, and conducive atmosphere was created during meetings so that participants could feel relaxed and free to respond to the interview question Participants were informed about what the researcher expected from them during the time of the research. They were assured of transparency and the progress of the research. The researcher provided an accurate account of the data; and guarded against violating the rights of the participants, as indicated in the Letter of Consent.

### 1.7.2.2    Participants research site and sampling

In qualitative research, "the importance is on choosing participants or locations that can optimally help in understanding the central phenomenon. Such understanding comes from an in-depth knowledge of the people or site" (Creswell, 2014: 213). This study was limited to the Gauteng province only, and the researcher made use of snowball sampling as this study comprises of participants who are hard to locate

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(Maree & Pietersen, 2016). Snowball sampling, also called network sampling, is a strategy in which each participant is referred to by a former participant or group. Participant referrals are the source for choosing a sample. The starting point with this method is contacting one or more teachers who were experiencing school violence. They were interviewed and handed a questionnaire, and then asked for information about other teachers who had the same experiences and challenges and who could be contacted next. Based on the sample of participants who participated in the study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews so that participants were encouraged to communicate their attitudes, challenges, and experiences as a central purpose of such interviews.

### 1.7.2.3     Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted because the researcher wanted to understand the intricate character or core of school violence against teachers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

- **Interviews**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) is of the opinion that with a semi-structured interview, questions are open-ended; therefore, the researcher may phrase and sequence the questions to suit the needs to participants by following prompts. To understand the phenomenon, interviews would help the researcher comprehend and determine an individual's situation; check various hypotheses; collect data; and gather a small representation of participants' thoughts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher compiled a questioning plan, which was followed by additional questions as the interview took place (Rule & John, 2011). This study used semi-structured interviews as it enabled the researcher to obtain rich descriptive information of teachers' experiences of school violence directed at them, as well as identify the support needed from stakeholders when addressing this challenge. Open-ended questions were asked, followed by further probing questions for clarification purposes. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed at a later stage. Also, the researcher kept a notepad for writing should the recording equipment fail (Creswell, 2014).

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- **Document analysis**

For the purpose of crystallisation of data, documents could serve to verify the evidence from other sources (Niewenhuis, 2016a). Documents that the researcher accessed included the schools code of conduct, school safety policies and school incidents registers, disciplinary committee agendas, and other relevant school documents.

### 1.7.2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis, as explained by Bertram and Christiansen (2014), is a procedure of organising and reducing large amount of data to make meaning of them. In order to do this, the researcher intended to follow a thematic analysis of the collected data for this study. Thematic analysis of qualitative data allows the findings to arise from central themes (Niewenhuis, 2016b). The table below depicts the phases, as described by Braun and Clarke (2014), to be followed in the data examination process.

**Table 1: Phases for data analysis**

| Phase | Description |
|---|---|
| Familiarise oneself with the data. | Reread the data and transcribe the data from the audio recordings of the interviews, document initial ideas. |
| Create codes for collected data | Generate initial codes from the data. |
| Finding themes | Identify themes and organize coded data into the appropriate theme. |
| Revise themes | Review and refine the themes with reference to the coded extracts. |
| Define and name themes | Name and further refine the theme (into sub-themes) and analyse data within the theme. |
| Reporting on findings (Interpretation) | Analysis (write-up and data extract) is logical, coherent, and concise, as well as relate to the research questions and literature. |

### 1.7.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria are defined as the fundamental structures of the ear-marked participants that the researcher will use to answer the research question. Typical inclusion criteria include demographic and geographic features. Exclusion criteria are explained as features of the participants who meet the inclusion criteria but have added features that could affect the realisation of the study or intensify the risk for an adverse result. Exclusion criteria include characteristics of the participants that could make them guilty of missing follow-up or scheduled appointments to collect data or provide incorrect data that could skew the results of the study (Patino & Ferreira, 2018).

**Table 2: The inclusion and exclusion criteria**

| Design | Inclusion Criteria | Exclusion Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| Qualitative Research Design | Prospective participants must be qualified teachers. Must be 18 years and older | The researcher has no control over baseline levels of school violence in the analysis. |
| Participants | Participants must have experienced school violence directed at them. Onset of school violence identified. | Young children and young people aged 0 – 18 years |
| Exposure | Physical and passive violence only. | Sexual violence. |
| Outcome | All forms of school violence experienced inside and outside the school (community violence, parents bullying). Corporal punishment in schools and families. | Sexual violence, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. |

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### 1.7.4 Trustworthiness

Rule and John (2011) define trustworthiness as a concept that fosters scholarly rigour, transparency, and professional beliefs used to obtain trust in the research community. There are four criteria that need to be considered in relation to trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Niewenhuis, 2016).

The participants were selected to represent teachers that are typically found at schools. In other words, teachers with a variety of experiences, both male and female, teaching different subjects, and of different nationalities and backgrounds will be nominated. The participants were expected to reflect on their experiences throughout their teaching careers.

The credibility or consistency of the study, the transferability, dependability, and confirmability are trustworthiness issues that the researcher will further address in chapter 3 to make the study credible. This implies that this qualitative research can be seen as reliable because the same results would be consistently produced if the research was repeated. The findings are the result of the conducted research and not simply figments of the researcher's suppositions and predeterminations, and therefore, conformable. The research outcomes can be applied to other circumstances because it is transferable (Maree, 2016).

### 1.7.4.1 Dependability

The concept of dependability refers to the assurance that the initial research design and data gathering techniques remain consistent and can be repeated (Niewenhuis, 2016).

Dependability is usually illustrated through the research design, the application (how it is implemented), and the operational data (how the data was collected). The researcher tried to keep a journal to keep track of what and why, and changes that were made to the original research design (Maree *et al.*, 2017).

### 1.7.4.2 Confirmability

Confirmability has to do with the neutrality of the researcher, and the extent to which participants' information shaped the findings (Maree *et al.*, 2017). The more a

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researcher gets involved with the participants, the more likely the chance of the researcher becoming biased and the greater the risk of 'missing' information.

Each interview was transcribed by the researcher after which the typed interviews were handed back to the relevant participant to comment and check on the accuracy of each transcription (member checking).

### 1.7.4.3 Credibility

Guba (as cited in Rule & John, 2011) explains that credibility states the richness and quality to which the case study has been described.

The consistency and relevancy of the study can be determined by looking at the research design. Participants' experiences were collected during interviews. During informal conversations prior to the interviews, the participants' initial understanding of workplace violence was discussed. After the interviews, the researcher reflected on field notes taken during the interviews. The participants received a copy of the transcription in order to verify the information or correct errors, and add information where necessary. The aim was to ensure that the transcribed text reflected a rich description of school violence experienced by teachers.

### 1.7.4.4 Transferability

Transferability highlights the extent to which the enquiry can be applied to additional settings. Findings need to be confirmed by participants and not based on a researcher's opinion or interest (Niewenhuis, 2016).

With transferability, other readers and researchers are invited to make connections with their experiences or studies (Maree *et al.*, 2017). Transferability will be greater for this qualitative study by selecting participants who are representative of the context being studied; that is school violence experienced by teachers.

### 1.7.5 Ethical considerations

Ethically, the researcher is liable to safeguard the identities, rights, and welfare of each participant. Confidentiality of the gathered data and the secrecy of each participant are essential considerations and rules are in place to ensure this (McMillan & Schumacher 2014). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), research ethics are principles that the researcher will abide by. These include being responsible to the participants,

accountable for quality research outcomes, and being liable to the participants in response to the research study. Seedhouse (1998) shares his views on the importance of ethics and illustrates a four-layered pyramid to explain research ethics. The base level of this pyramid emphasises that participants and their sovereignty should be appreciated by scholars. The second layer is called the deontological layer and focusses on how the research is conducted by the researcher; e.g., researchers should be always truthful. The third layer is the consequential layer, which highlights the consequences of the researcher's actions. The external layer refers to legality matters (the law), codes of practice, and the use of available resources. For this study, the researcher obtained permission from the University of Pretoria, DBE, schools and the participants; and ensured to guard against forceful participation and creating a trusting relationship with participants and guaranteeing anonymity and privacy.

The researcher received letters of permission from all stakeholders involved in the study. The participants' dignity, privacy, and confidentiality were always respected.

## 1.8   SUMMARY

This study aimed to explore teachers' experiences of school violence directed towards them and how these experiences impact on their teaching and overall wellbeing. The reason for selecting teachers in a township was because these teachers are mostly exposed to violence perpetrated by learners (Espelage *et al.,* 2013). School violence against teachers is a growing concern and according to Bounds and Jenkins (2016), teachers are more exposed to verbal violence than other types of teacher directed violence. This study was underpinned by the theoretical framework of Albert Bandura (1977), on social learning. This theory reinforces the notion that children learn violence directly (experience) or indirectly (observation) (Bandura, 1977). Semi-structured interview took place for each teacher and in addition to this, document analysis contributed to the data collection process. Chapter One also provided an outline of the data analysis process and the ethical aspects that were followed in this study. Chapter Two discusses the literature that assisted in selecting the theoretical framework in order to answer the research questions.

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# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1    INTRODUCTION

An overview of the study was presented in chapter one. This chapter presents a literature review based on school violence directed at teachers. According to Maree (2016), a literature review conveys the work already done and the ideas that have already been recognised on a topic to the reader. An explanation of the Social Learning Theory, which underpins this study, concludes this chapter.

Very few studies have been conducted on teachers experiencing violence and have not received adequate media and policy attention both nationally and internationally (Espelage *et al.*, 2013; Eraslan-Capan, 2014). Despite schools being places of learning, it is also a workplace for teachers, but has become a place where teachers fear for their lives. De Wet and Jacobs (2014) shows that teachers are experiencing workplace stress because of a rise in violence at schools.

The literature reviewed in this chapter includes a comprehensive explanation of school violence towards teachers, both internationally and nationally. Types of violence and how teachers react to the different types of violence has been discussed. A closer look at the reasons why learners resort to violence against teachers, and how teachers are protected by relevant education authorities, policies, guidelines, and frameworks will also be discussed.
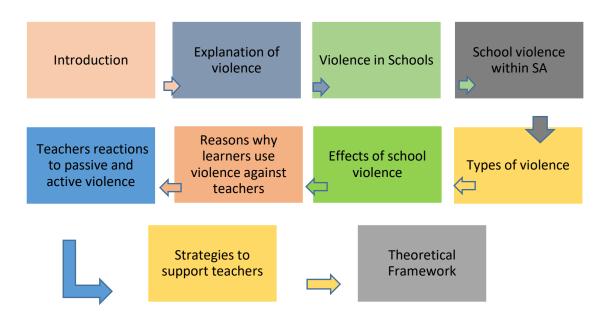


**Figure 1: An outline of Chapter Two**

## 2.2    EXPLANATION OF VIOLENCE

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2014) violence is described as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. Anderman *et al.* (2018) provides a more school specific explanation. They see violence inflicted on educators in schools, communities, and via social networks as multi-systemic actions. American Psychological Association (APA) website explains that violence is an extreme form of aggression, such as assault, rape or murder (APA, 2013). DeWall, Anderson and Bushman (2011:387) adds onto this definition, and explain aggression "as any behaviour intended to harm another person who does not want to be harmed." Koolhaas, de Boer and Buwalda (2010:387) agree and define violence as "a pathological form of aggressive behaviour that is not subjected to inhibitory control mechanisms." In this study, violence refers to the current phenomenon of violent learner behaviour towards teachers that takes place in primary and secondary schools. A learner who fails to comply with a school's code of conduct can be considered violent (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). These learners contribute to the erosion of the value of the human rights culture in schools and violate the overall well-being of teachers (Espelage *et al.*, 2013).

## 2.3    VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

There has been a considerable increase in violence against teachers by learners globally, which is causing teachers to fear for their general well-being and lives (Eraslan-Capan, 2014; Anderman, *et al.*, 2018; Masinga, 2019). As stated by Thompson (2013), insufficient international work has been done by experts to improve the understanding of learner-on-teacher violence or to prevent occurrences of school violence. Likewise, SACE (2011) published a report on school-based violence and reported a change from a conventional learning environment to an environment characterised by widespread violence.

School shootings have become a common phenomenon at American schools (Duplechain & Morris, 2015). Duplechain and Morris (2015) further indicated that often school shootings are done by learners or an intruder who has a connection to the

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school. According to Thompson (2013), 4% of American educators in a public school said they were physically attacked between the 2007-2008 school year. Contrary to this, 12.4% of South African teachers were reported to have suffered physical violence from learners (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In an article released by the APA (2013), 80% of the participating teachers were victimised at school at least once. According to Walker (2013), half of these teachers reported that they experienced harassment and about 25% indicated that they were physically attacked. In response to this, the APA (2020) initiated a Classroom Violence against Teachers Task Force, which offers teachers the necessary support when faced with violence perpetuated by learners. A National School Violence study in South Africa was conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013). The study revealed that teachers experienced verbal abuse (52.1%), physical violence (12.4%), and even sexual violence (3.3%). Only 70% of the same sample of teachers, said they felt safe. The remaining 30% of teachers felt vulnerable but this does not in any way suggest that school violence is not a serious concern. Unlike victimised teachers in America that have been support by organisations, such as the APA (2013), South African teachers who have been exposed to learner-on-teacher violence has not received much support from authorities in the South African education system (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

According to research conducted by the Education Union in Turkey (2009) (cited by Ozdemir, 2012), it was reported that 53.6% of the chosen teachers indicated that their learners had insulted them while 26% stated that they have received threats from outside the school. Furthermore, 20.3% teachers indicated that there had been a physical threat or assault from learners and 15.7% of teachers answered 'yes' to the question 'Have you ever been subjected to a serious assault by learners or learner relatives in your career?' Despite the growing number of studies conducted in Turkey, the issue of violence against teachers has not been addressed adequately (Mehmet, 2012); similar trends exist in the South African education system, this is reinforced by the results of the 2012 National School Violence study, which was conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013).

A study by Kaupii and Porhola (2012) revealed that 25.6% of educators have experienced violence; from which 3.3% experienced it every week and 3.7% almost every day. However, 67.4% teachers indicated they have never experienced any form of school violence. The statistics are very close to the South African statistics, which

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was provided by Burton and Leoschut (2013) that indicated 70% of teachers felt safe at schools and have never experienced violence directed at them. Contrary to these statistics, the circumstances in Australia seem the worst with approximately 99% of teachers indicating that they have experienced some form of bullying by learners during their teaching career (Kõiv, 2015).

A study done by Walker (2013:2), "Violence directed against teachers is a national crisis with extensive implications and deserves inclusion in the school violence equation." This study revealed that learners in primary schools are also capable of violence, following an incident of a 12-year-old learner who shot and killed an educator.

Siphepho, Dlamini and Nxumalo (2013) reported that due to the alcohol and drug abuse amongst learners in Swaziland, students' scholastic performance was deteriorating while violence and disrespect towards teachers escalated. Swazis brew alcoholic drinks using the marula fruits. These drinks are also given to children. Dlamini and Makondo (2017) posit that the Swazis believe that the drink is beneficial as it cleans the body. Therefore, many Swazis are encouraged to drink it, including the children. The abuse of this alcohol among Swazis is shocking. On the other hand, the large production of marijuana in Swaziland is causing a serious problem because the youth partakes in it and this ultimately contributes to the school violence against teachers in Swaziland (Gugu & Davison, 2017; Dlamini & Makondo, 2017). According to Siphepho, Dlamini and Nxumalo (2013), students openly make shameful and offensive comments about teachers. The escalating rate of violence against teachers and their parents is a major concern in Swaziland. This has resulted in poor relationships between teachers and learners and is negatively impacting teaching and learning (Mafumbate, 2019). Killings of teachers by some learners in several schools have been reported (Gugu & Davison, 2017).

Gugu and Davison (2017) recommended that the Swaziland government develop and implement a national policy on drugs and substance abuse to be applied at schools. In this regard, the South African government has made great progress in developing and implementing relevant policies that assist with matters such as using illegal substances. The South African Department of Education together with the Provincial Education Departments developed the National Strategy for the Prevention and

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Management of Alcohol and Drug Use amongst learners. The strategy aimed to create an environment to support addicted learners to receive treatment for their addiction. Some of the addictions cited in this policy are drugs and alcohol. By doing so, teachers are protected from violent learners. However, the existence of such policies does not mean that the burden teachers and parents face has been made lighter. This problem, which contributes to school violence towards teachers, persists and grows at an alarming rate (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Njuho & Davids, 2012).

Fareo (2015) states that school violence is a grave issue for young adults and Nigerian teachers. School violence in Nigeria includes gang activity, locker theft, bullying, intimidation, gun use and that it is rampant now than ever before. Another author, Aluede (2011), states that Nigerian schools have turned to school therapists and leadership to assist with establishing policies regarding school safety. Similarly, the South African Department of Education together with the assistance of the South African Police produced school safety policies in an attempt to eradicate crime (DBE, 2013). Examples of these policies are Safety in Education Partnership Protocol and the School-based Crime Prevention Programme. Martin (2013) also cited that the Nigerian Education Department lacks the capacity to manage this growing phenomenon of school violence towards teachers. Furthermore, Martin (2013) reported an increase of violent primary learners and affirms that 40 teachers were attacked every day in Nigeria. On the same point of view, Akpochafo (2014) highlighted that primary school learners in rural Nigerian areas revealed more violent behaviours than those in the urban areas of Nigeria. This could be a result of the gradual abandonment of corporal punishment in Nigerian schools (Adedigba, Folasade, 2020), when learners no longer show respect for teachers. Bester and du Plessis (2010) concur that the same was noted in South Africa since the abolishment of corporal punishment in 1996 when the South African Schools Act, under Section 10, forbade the use of corporal punishment administered to learners.

Referring to the international and national literature above, the researcher can safely say that school violence is a problem that involves African and international countries. Although most cases are alike, there are differences in the most common types of violence displayed. For example, shootings are common in the USA (Kalesan, Lagast, Villarreal, Pino, Fagan & Galea, 2017), but this phenomenon is not prevalent in South African schools. The aggressive behaviour of learners in Swaziland, is caused by

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substance abuse. Similarly, the violence in South Africa stems from an apartheid era characterised by political turmoil, which caused the rise of gangsterism, substance abuse, and poverty (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014).

## 2.4    SCHOOL VIOLENCE WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA

Scholars who studied the school violence phenomenon concurred that schools are no longer a learning environment but are dangerous environments where effective teaching and learning is undermined (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). The high levels of violence in South Africa, which are reported in the media on a daily basis (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014; Joyce, 2013), is indicative of the lack of support teachers are receiving from higher authorities.

Apartheid and segregation signal a period of South African history that was characterised by violence. Racial supremacy and the racially prejudiced beliefs that followed are also to blame for the rise of the apartheid era in South Africa (South African News Agency, 2010). Therefore, the origin of school violence can be found in the long history of apartheid when many have been exposed to violence in their fight to eradicate and expel apartheid (Davids & Waghid, 2016). Studies have shown that the ruthlessness and discriminations of apartheid and the demoralising influence of racism are among reasons why South Africans experience violent crimes (Thomas, 2018). In view of what has been mentioned so far, it may be considered that one of the persistent consequences that racism contributed to was feelings of inferiority amongst the disadvantaged and marginalised race groups of colour. Coupled with this, former government policies exposed millions of boys and young men to degrading police harassment and a violent prison system during the apartheid years (South African News Agency, 2010). The Bantu Education Act of 1952 guaranteed that learners of colour, particularly Blacks, receive an education that would limit educational opportunities for them and ensured that they remain in the working-class group (McKeever, 2017).

As much as South Africa has made good progress in creating a democracy for all after the apartheid years and establishing a constitution focussing on human rights, the experience of past violence has a negative influence on our schools and communities (SACE, 2011). More and more learners are involved in drug abuse, drug dealing, stabbings, sexual assault, and gang-linked deeds; 30% of teachers stated that they

feel unsafe because of this (Burton & Leoschut 2013). Ngqela and Lewis (2012) mentioned that the major risk causes for school violence in South Africa are easy access to weapons and high rates of violence in the surrounding communities. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2017) recognised the South African Government including businesses and the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sectors for engaging in collaborative efforts to implement violence prevention programmes in the country. Despite these tributes, the rate of violence in schools across the country has not dropped (Masinga, 2019).

Various cases of school violence against teachers have been reported in South Africa between 2018 and 2019. Examples of violence against teachers were reported by Grobler (2018). On 16 November 2018, a teacher at Albertina Sisulu Special School in Soweto was physically chased by a learner who threw stones at him. The teacher suffered injuries and the learner was expelled. The second incident occurred at a school in the North West Province, where a teacher was stabbed by a learner. The teacher succumbed to the wounds and died (Grobler, 2018). According to Molosankew (2014), a grade 9 learner shot a teacher at Sasolburg High School and a grade 8 learner physically abused a teacher at Glenvista High School.

Burton and Leoschut (2013) provided a gloomy image regarding South African school violence and the conclusion of ever having safe schools, when they reported on a variety of incidents that occurred between 2010 and 2013. Zuma *et al.* (2016) authored The Health of Educators in Public Schools in South Africa 2016, in which a survey of 20 000 teachers from 1380 schools participated. The survey showed that 20% of these teachers felt that schools are not safe and that violent incidents occur there. This is an indication that school violence in South African schools have not improved in the past 19 years. The general secretary, Mugwena Malukele, of the South African Democratic Teachers' Unions (SADTU) added that teachers were unsafe at school and requested additional security (SADTU, 2018); therefore, a national violence against teachers' registry be established.

School violence needs to be addressed as it encroaches upon the human rights of the teacher. It negatively influences the teacher's ability to teach and has a destructive effect on the public. It adversely influences a country's growth; and has widespread expenditures (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Since school violence is being addressed, it

is imperative to attach value to both the actual crimes of violence as well as the fear that accompanies it. Both can cause severe physical and psychological damage for teachers. These will inevitably cause teachers to be less productive, less committed to the profession, and their overall well-being is negatively affected. In 2009, President Jacob Zuma constituted The National Planning Commission, which is a special ministerial body tasked to draft The National Development Plan 2030. This important policy document of the South African government was drafted in August 2012 and envisaged to have safe schools by 2030 when citizens can live without fear in all circles of life (NDP 2030, 2013).

## 2.5    TYPES OF VIOLENCE

The South African Human Rights Commission in 2008 said that school-based violence presents itself in various forms and is multi-dimensional. The way it displays itself will often depend on the environment where it manifests itself (SAHRC, 2002). Estévez, Jiménez and Musitu (2008:4) cited in Wallace and Rosales, (2019), note that "school violence is a kind of behaviour that includes the general characteristics of violent behaviour, with the difference that the actors are kids and adolescents and that it takes place in primary and secondary schools: in places where they are together for several hours a day all year." These acts of violence can cause physical or emotional harm to learners and educators in any such combination. These acts disrupt the routine functioning of the school and individuals question their safety.

Many teachers who have been victimised do not receive adequate counselling after such violent incidents occur.

A detailed description of each form of violence is provided below:

### 2.5.1  Passive violence

Passive violence or passive aggressive attitudes are the cause of failure to resolve conflict, in one or numerous of its different appearances, or within a hostile situation. There is a feeling of powerlessness or vulnerability that becomes full-blown anger and frustration. This will eventually be displayed in some form (Singh & Steyn, 2014). According to Allen and Anderson (2017), passive violence consists of failing to employ helpful behaviour. For example, purposefully 'forgetting' to invite someone to a party

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or purposefully withholding help from someone who is drowning, can be seen as acts of passive violence.

Passive violence harms the other person through non-physical means. This includes language used in a conversation. When a learner speaks disrespectfully to a teacher, it is an example of passive violence. Disrespectful behaviour includes a learner raising his/her voice in frustration or anger and making a rude gesture towards a teacher (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Poling, Smith, Taylor & Worth, 2019). Other examples of passive violence are theft, intimidation, malicious insults, acts of racism, racial profiling, robbery, verbal bullying and making threats, swearing, mocking, clicking tongues, rude facial expressions, bad attitudes, and bad body language (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). Passive violence directed at teachers by learners causes teachers to feel humiliated and damages their confidence and self-worth (Singh & Steyn, 2014). Psychological intimidation, patronising and humiliating teachers, sexual advances, and verbal threats perpetrated against teachers by learners are the most common violent instances experienced by teachers (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Passive violence may not be physically harmful, but it can result in long-term psychological damage. Therefore, it can lead to teacher absenteeism and depression (Espelage *et al*, 2013). Thus, the study investigated the degree of passive violence teachers are exposed to at school.

## 2.5.2  Active or physical violence

'Active violence is the manifestation of physical hostility with the aim to injure someone, and it includes physical bullying' (UNESCO, 2017:14). Carroll-Lind, Chapman and Raskauskas (2011) define physical violence as being punched, kicked, and beaten. In communities where violence is rife and where weapons are readily accessible, stabbings and shootings are very common at schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Other forms of physical violence include rape, sexual assault, fighting, assault with dangerous weapons, and gangsterism against teachers (Burton & Leoschut, 2013 Teachers display symptoms such as anxiety, numbing, dissociation, depersonalisation, and dissociative amnesia in response to school violence. Over extended time periods, outcomes of school violence include symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and sickness, marital break-up, fatigue, and career change (Sifo & Masango, 2014). According to Espelage *et al*. (2013), teachers do not

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complete their work successfully as they feel endangered. This study strived to highlight the dire psychological and emotional consequences teachers suffer when faced with physical violence by learners.

## 2.6    EFFECTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Violence at school has a detrimental effect on young individuals, teachers, and parents; it also effects learning and teaching (Carroll-Lind, Chapman & Raskauskas, 2011). This is supported by Mkhize, Gopal and Collins, (2012) who indicated that teachers and learners who are affected by school violence experience depression, social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and nervousness. In addition to this, violence has severe threats to our democracy, peace, and the economic steadiness in South Africa (Singh & Steyn, 2014). When teachers are exposed to violence over extended periods of time, the outcomes include symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as well as sickness, marital break-up, fatigue, and career change (Sifo & Masango, 2014). This study sought to explore the possible interventions and strategies, which can be implemented to reduce social and psychological distress, as well as school violence suffered by teachers.

### 2.6.1    Workplace stress for teachers

Stress is one of the main factors that causes concern for education stakeholders. In Israel a survey was done to determine how much stress educators experience. The survey revealed that 91.3% of educators experience stress (Zedan, 2012). Stress can be caused by an increased workload, problematic learners, lack of motivation among learners, lack of resources and teaching facilities, and school violence (Zedan, 2012).

Carroll-Lind, Chapman and Raskauskas (2011) indicated that post an incident of violence at schools, victims are likely to suffer physical to psychological stress (Carroll-Lind, Chapman & Raskauskas, 2011). A qualitative study by Wet (2010) has suggested that learners' violent behaviour towards teachers may lead to increased distress among teachers. Wet (2010) further stated that the experience of being belittled and disempowered by learners made teachers feel helpless.

Another study by Klassen and Chui (2010) revealed that teachers are not as efficient in their job when they are experiencing stress. Emotional exhaustion is a usual indication of exhaustion due to stress from work (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Maslach

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(2017) identified that individuals who experience exhaustion have chronic health problems such as: sleeplessness, tension, headaches, high blood pressure, ulcers, and a potential for a greater susceptibility to colds and flu. Teachers in the exhaustion stage may display reduced amounts of self-esteem (Maslach, 2017), and lack of self-confidence (Farber, 2015). Maslach (2017) explained that the teacher who is in the exhaustion stage will no longer go the extra mile when doing their job and will also stay away from work. Teachers will pull back both physically and mentally (Bounds & Jenkins, 2018). Dworkin and Tobe (2014) confirmed that the link between teacher stress and troublesome learner behaviours relates openly to educator exhaustion.

I believe that for a positive impact to be made on teacher well-being, it must be noted that the factors highlighted above can harm our educators. It is vital to make teachers aware of the symptoms of stress and give them resources to cope.

## 2.7    REASONS WHY LEARNERS USE VIOLENCE AGAINST TEACHERS

De Wet and Jacobs (2014: 567) state that 'compared to the abstaining teenager, the drinking, smoking, and drug taking teen is much more likely to be getting into fights, stealing, hurting other people, and committing other delinquencies.' This means that learners who drink alcohol and consume drugs are more likely to be violent to other colleagues and teachers.

Cangelosi cited in Bester & Du Plessis,(2010) has identified four factors that may cause a learner to abuse an educator: i) the learners may feel they are pushed into a corner and attacking the educator may save their reputation in front of their peers; ii) the educator may pose to be an easy target when the learner is angry; iii) the learner may carry out a prank that can be harmful to the teacher; and iv) the learner may feel obligated to defend themselves.

Research conducted by Espelage *et al.* (2013) indicated that verbal aggression displayed by learners towards teachers was most frequently reported. A few learners have said they are aware that there will be no repercussions for harassing or speaking inappropriately to educators (Santos & Tin, 2018). Due to these challenges, many educators select certain classrooms to teach, which they know will not cause any challenges. This impacts the 'disturbed' learners negatively as they feel neglected and causes frustration, thus resulting in an escalation in violence. According to Bester and du Plessis (2010), other factors such as gangsterism, substance abuse, gambling, and

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discriminatory activities in the form of xenophobic intimidations at schools also contribute to school violence. In some instances, boys have no respect for female teachers because different cultures treat women differently (Bester & du Plessis, 2010). This agrees with Spilt, Hughes, Wu and Kwok (2012), who claim that learners who have conflicting relationships with their teachers experience feelings of distress and insecurity, which hamper their ability to concentrate on learning.

## 2.8    TEACHERS' REACTIONS TO PASSIVE AND ACTIVE VIOLENCE

Teachers have the right to a safe environment where they are treated with dignity, respected, and valued for their contribution; where they may support learners without them (teachers) feeling a fear, threat or harm (Singh & Steyn, 2014). However, violence at schools has a devastating effect on the confidence of teachers (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). It appears that teachers feel they are alone and unsupported by the DBE and school management teams (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

Teacher absenteeism due to being stressed and depressed can be seen as a short-term effect, which leads to no teaching and learning (Santos & Tin, 2018). Over an extended period of time the emotional impact on teachers may cause them to become frustrated, ill, lose their jobs or leave the teaching profession (Bester & du Plessis, 2010). Corporal punishment was put to an end and teachers were never informed about alternative ways of disciplining learners (Xaba, 2014). Teachers are vulnerable and fear working extra hours as learners could possibly attack them after school hours (Masinga, 2019). Teachers' personal information is known to learners, such as where they live, and this results in teachers being targeted at their homes by learners (Davids & Waghid, 2016). The disrespect learners show towards teachers leave them feeling uninterested in the profession of teaching (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). Traumatised teachers are frustrated, lack confidence, and have low morale. This results in many resignations (Santos & Tin, 2018; Espelage *et al.*, 2013; SACE, 2011). Teachers start drinking liquor to cope with the situation.

## 2.9    STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE.

Bester and Du Plessis (2010) show worry that media often emphasises the explicit details of violent occurrences in schools and take advantage of the sensation these events create. They seldom focus on the helplessness of teachers. Authors, such as de Wet and Jacobs (2014), believe there is partial knowledge on the consequences of

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high levels of violence on teachers. The subsections which follow, will focus on education policies pertaining to the protection of teachers.

### 2.9.1 Education policies and frameworks that protect teachers

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) carries a responsibility of ensuring the sufficient monitoring of school safety and the implementation of relevant policies pertaining to this (CJCP, 2016). All South African teachers are compelled to be affiliated with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and are obliged to obey the rules set out by SACE (SACE, 2017). What is lacking though, is the inadequate support available to teachers who are victims of school violence.

Crucial policies, which guide and drive school safety in South Africa, will now be discussed.

### 2.9.1.1 The national school safety framework

This structure highlights an all-inclusive strategy to safety and security in the school setting. The aim of this framework is 'to create a learning environment conducive for effective learning and teaching and particularly safe for all learners, teachers, and the school management team' (CJCP, 2016:10). The policy emphasises that all schools must apply school safety policies, codes of conduct for learners, and school safety plans (CJCP, 2016).

The APA (2013) mentions that implementing class educational and management strategies enables the instructor to directly manipulate at teacher stage by way of making sure that the educator is in a role to manipulate the classroom. According to the APA (2013), the use of high-quality class management practices is important, for example, stating the rules, being consistent, model and reward positive behaviour, and identify any changes in learners' moods or behaviour. In South Africa the National School Safety Framework has been developed to assist as a management tool for Provincial and District Officials responsible for college safety, principals, Senior Management Teams (SMTs), the School Governing Body (SGB) members, instructors, and learners to identify and manipulate danger and threats of violence in and around schools (Makota & Leoschut, 2016). The framework as nicely as the counselled points by the study, are quintessential in empowering applicable

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stakeholders and instructors in considering their responsibilities to ensure safety at school (SACE, 2018).

### 2.9.1.2    Safety in education partnership protocol

The DBE and the SAPS produced this protocol in 2011 (DBE, 2016). It highlights the responsibility these two government stakeholders have in making sure schools are safe (CJCP, 2016; DBE, 2016). This protocol ensures that each school has a functional safety committee and that each school is linked with a police station in the area (DBE, 2016). It calls for the prevention of illegal acts among learners and improved school safety (CJCP, 2016; DBE, 2016). The protocol further necessitates that all schools produce instruments to report incidents of violence and ensures that no hazardous items enter the school premises (DBE, 2013). Tintswalo (2014) suggested that the community, the SAPS, and parents help schools to deal with violence at schools.

### 2.9.1.3    Regulations for safety measures at public schools

This policy ensures the safety of educators and learners at the school and helps reduce a risk of violence in the school by giving the mandate that a School Safety Committee be established at each school. This is a sub-committee of the SGB and is representative of all stakeholders, such as teachers, learners, community organisations, and senior management. They are the 'eyes and ears' on the ground and should play a vital role in identifying risks and preventions. These risk and prevention activities include conducting a safety audit, establish a School Safety Plan that relates to all other policies, format programmes connected to faculty safety, bring together month-to-month security reports, and promote a local climate of safety and security inside the school. This committee needs to file and check out all incidents and take all realistic steps to rectify recognised hazards. This policy specifies no drugs, alcohol, and unsafe objects are allowed on any school premises. This includes individuals who have consumed alcohol or any other illegal substances or are in possession of a dangerous weapon.

The regulations for safety measures at public schools as contained in Government Notice 22754 (No. 1040) (Department of Education, 2001), suggests there should be one safety representative (the school-based Safety Officer) at every school.

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### 2.9.1.4 National strategy for the prevention and management of alcohol and drugs

Cavicchioli, Movalli and Maffei (2018) agree that the most widespread disorder among young people are alcohol and drug abuse. This is prevalent in South Africa and internationally. The South African DBE has developed a strategy to monitor and manage the use of drugs and alcohol amongst learners. This is an attempt to curb the use of drugs in schools and to create safer communities and a safe school environment. To manage and ensure that drug use is stopped, the DBE provided all schools with a guideline to drug testing.

### 2.9.1.5 National anti-gangsterism strategy

Gangsterism is a main cause of school violence in the many provinces of South Africa (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). Gangsterism is an external element causing violence in schools, but internal school factors also play a role in why learners join gangs (Mncube & Harber, 2012). The South African Cabinet legalised the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy, which recognises the damaging influence gangsterism has on schools located in communities which are dominated by gangs. The strategy echoes the importance of removing crime at schools and within communities.

### 2.9.1.6 Schools-based crime prevention programme

The 2016/17 SAPS Annual Report emphasises the prioritising of safety at schools. The SAPS and the DBE was also responsible for developing a Schools-Based Crime Prevention Programme. The laws and policies in South Africa place a huge responsibility and legal duty on SMTs and teachers to report school violence at schools. Contrary to this, Joyce (2013) indicates in the findings of a study she undertook that violence in schools is prolonged by those in power, such as school principals and teachers. In her study she found learners indicated that when they report violence to the principal or teachers, they ignore it, and no steps are taken to stop or to punish the offenders.

## 2.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework 'provides an overview of perspectives and research results with reference to the proposed topic' (Ferreira, 2012:34). According to Simon and

Goes (2011), a theoretical framework strengthens the argument for the study. They further argue that the theoretical framework emphasises to the reader that the research is based on recognised theory gathered via reliable and valid studies and not the personal views of the author (Simon & Goes, 2011).

This study was underpinned by the Social Learning Theory (SLT) developed by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1977. This theory is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context (Nabavi, 2012). This study focused on violence against teachers by learners in schools (social environment). Therefore, it appropriate that this study was anchored within the SLT. Teachers and learners engage with one another within a pre-determined environment – in this instance the school. It is within this environment that teachers experience violence against then by learners.
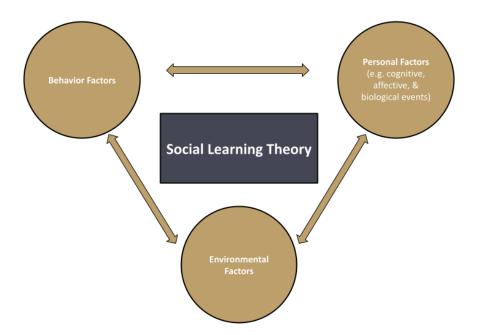


**Figure 2: Representation of the Social Learning Theory (Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/30wf4OS)**

This theory highlights the importance of the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others and studies how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behaviour (Bandura, 1977). In this study, the

researcher investigated violence against teachers, the behaviour of learners, and how teachers react (attitudes) towards the violence against them.

The theory further states that an individual displays behaviour they have learnt by observing (Bandura, 1977). According to Nabavi (2012), if a school is surrounded by a community that regularly engages in violence, learners begin to imitate the same behaviour at school. Collins (2013) suggests that the SLT posits learning as a cognitive process that occurs in a social context and can take place through observation and direct instruction (learned behaviour). The social learning principle is structured around three important guiding and effective means of communication, learners experience, and observed violence systems in which behaviour is acquired, maintained, and modified (Bandura, 1977). In their study, Griffin and Botvin (2011) found that learners often behave violently or aggressively in their school environment due to suffering an inferiority complex, coming from broken homes, or producing poor academic results. Parents see violence as an essential means in raising children; and in the past, a convenient disciplinary method in educational institutions (corporal punishment). Learners are often influenced and emulate violent behaviours through observation and modelling. Below is a discussion of learning by experience and modelling to enhance this study.

### 2.10.1 Learning by experience or observation

According to the SLT developed by Bandura (1977), behaviour can be learnt through direct observation or experience. Collins (2013) reasons that learners observe and experience violence, but they suppress the emotions they feel. Stress and fear may cause these emotions to surface; thus, they commit acts of violence. Learners may observe these acts from family, friends, and even famous people (Nabhavi, 2013).

The SLT is administered through rewards such as toys or games, and punishment of consequences (Bandura, 1977). Reinforcing the implementation of the code of conduct for learners at school, and all other relevant policies relating to school safety, is of utmost importance to convey a clear message to all learners of what kind of behaviour will be tolerated and what behaviour will not be tolerated by school authorities.

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### 2.10.2 Modelling

All behaviours are learned behaviours according to the Social Learning Theory. These behaviours can either be positive or negative, depending on the environment and circumstances under which it is learnt (Bandura, 1977). Bandura suggested that modelling is composed of four conditions that must be met (Nabavi, 2012): attention; retention; reproduction; and motivation.

Figure 3 below explains the stages involved in the modelling process (modified from Nabavi, 2013:10).



**(1) Attention**
We must first pay attention to the *model*.

**(2) Retention**
We must be able to remember the observed behavior.

**SLT Modeling Process**

**(3) Reproduction**
We must be able to replicate the behavior demonstrated.

**(4) Motivation**
We must be motivated to demonstrate what we have learned.
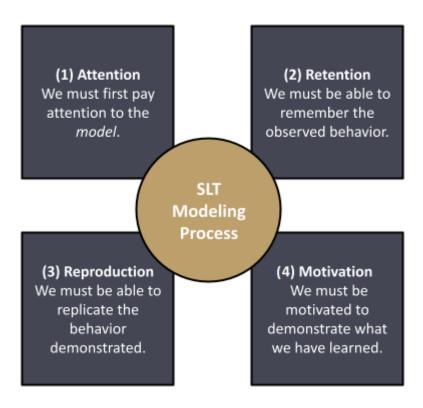
**Figure 3: Stages of the modelling process**

Young learners often exhibit violent behaviour through observation from their immediate environment. Collins (2013) also explains that violence is understood to be a tool of broader social denial. For instance, most people believe that strikes are powerful if they incorporate violence. The Marikana August 2012 bloodbath indicated how power can be used to incite social violence and fuel conflict. Collins (2013) explains violence as a means, which is commonly utilised to mobilise governmental agenda, as shown in the 'Kill for Zuma' and 'Kill the Boer' sayings by Julius Malema to remove the threat of political rivals. Learners see these political figures as role

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models - it is through this judgment that learners become aggressive in schools in an attempt to emulate their role models. Similarly, the 'Fees Must Fall' movement was under the same influence, where learners demanded the drop of universities fees. Although the primary intention was in favour of peaceful means, it did not take long for violence to follow.

Children who grow up in violent families do not have acceptable behaviours to model. When a parent physically harms a person in front of a learner, the learner may think that it is acceptable to resort to violence as it solves the problem. This behaviour is then extended to the school environment and can result in learner-on-learner violence, and most specifically, learner-on-teacher violence as related to this study.

One of the most relevant strengths of the SLT is its adaptability in explaining the discrepancies in a person's behaviour or learning; that is to say, when there is a change in a person's environment, the person's behaviour may change (Collins, 2013).

## 2.11   SUMMARY

This chapter included a review of the existing literature on the prevalence of school violence internationally and locally. A detailed discussion followed on the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The theoretical framework of social learning by Albert Bandura (1977) on how children learn violent behaviour by means of experience and observation. The next chapter will address the methodology of this study. This comprises a description of the epistemological assumptions guiding the purpose and research questions of this study. The sampling and selection methods, preparation for the collection of the data, capturing the data, as well as the analysis of the collected data will be discussed in Chapter Three.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter two, the researcher presented a comprehensive review of literature and theoretical framework regarding violence against teachers perpetuated by learners. Furthermore, the effects of school violence, emphasising workplace stresses teachers endure, was discussed. In addition, the researcher also examined the current educational policies and frameworks that are in schools to protect teachers against violence.

The research methodology applied is addressed in this chapter. Moreover, the research design, the research approach, participants, sites, data collection, and analysis are elaborated on. Finally, the researcher discussed the ethical principles that were observed for this study. This chapter gives more information on the measures that were used to ensure validity and reliability of the study. The research methods discussed in this chapter ensure that the research questions are answered, and the study achieved its objective.
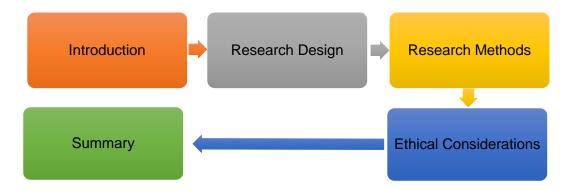


**Figure 4: An outline of Chapter Three**

## 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Nieuwenhuis (2016a) describes a research design as 'a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data gathering methods, and the data analysis to be used.' In other words, the research design identifies what information is needed, the approaches that are going to be used to gather and examine this information, and how the research question will be answered. A research design is a guideline for how the conceptual research problems and empirical research are linked (Creswell, 2014). The researcher employed a case study as research design in this study.

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### 3.2.1 Research Paradigm

Nieuwenhuis (2016a) and Creswell (2015) state that a paradigm is a lens that offers a particular worldview about important aspects of reality. Nieuwenhuis (2016a) further asserts that a paradigm refers to the fundamental assumptions about how reality is formed (ontology) and the underlying association that exists between the researcher and the knowledge discussed (epistemology).

Glesne (2016:5) states that a paradigm is the "philosophy of science that makes assumptions about the nature of reality and truth, the kinds of questions to explore and how to go about doing so." Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2012:11) see a paradigm as how reality is viewed versus how it actually is and that they are 'the frames of reference we use to organise our observations and reasoning.'

This qualitative research was governed by the interpretive paradigm so that the objective of this study, which was to support teachers to prevent learner-on-teacher violence against them in schools, could be achieved. Creswell (2014) states that the qualitative research approach is used to explore and understand the meaning that individuals assign to a social problem. Ritchie, Lewis, Ormston and Nicholls (2013) explain that the interpretivist paradigm adheres to a constructivist philosophical epistemology and regards reality as subjective. Glesne (2016) states that only individuals who are involved in knowledge assimilation, can give meaning to reality; in this study the teachers were the participants who provided their experiences regarding violence against them. Phothongsunan (2010) concurs that interpretivists believe that social reality is constructed by the individuals who experience it.

To comprehend the truths of the participants, the researcher engages with the participants and probe into their views pertaining to the teacher violence they endure by learners. This is confirmed by Maree (2014) who states that when you listen to a person who is in their social environment, it allows you to better understand why they have certain beliefs. For this study, the researcher worked from the viewpoint that teachers will have different experiences regarding school violence (as a social reality) and different experiences regarding the perpetrators' (learners') behaviour. Teachers who have been victims of school violence will also have different viewpoints of their own behaviour and reaction towards school-based violence. The researcher contacted several participants who shared their different experiences of violence against them.

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This paradigm suggests that is not one but multiple realities (Maree, 2014). This study allowed participants to provide their own understanding of the challenges associated with violence against them. The participants provided insight on what they experienced and identified factors that triggered learners to display violent behaviours against them. From their teaching experience, the participants identified the types of violence, which exist in the classroom that most challenged their daily teaching and made recommendations on the kind of support they needed. The selection of the different schools in the Tshwane South district ensured both racial and socio-economic diversity of school contexts; therefore, a rich collection of related cultural, contextual, and social factors contributed positively.

### 3.2.2  Research type: Multiple case study

According to Yin (2014) a case study is used to describe a phenomenon within its own contexts. This study employed a multiple case study approach. A multiple case study involves a study of several cases, which are interconnected, to be compared. Therefore, it can be referred to as comparative case studies (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012). For this study, the researcher involved teachers from four different schools as part of the case study to produce rich information pertaining to teacher violence perpetrated by learners. For this study, teachers were specifically selected from four schools.

### 3.2.3  Advantages and disadvantages of case studies

Maree (2014); Rossman and Rallis (2016) claim that case studies enable the researcher to use and apply different sources and techniques for data generation. These methods can include interviews, observation, document review, reports, and collection of artefacts. This method augments data trustworthiness and crucial information on the phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Using a variety of methods in a study consequently assists in the validation of the data through triangulation. Multiple case studies can either forecast conflicting results for expected reasons or forecast comparable outcomes in the studies (Yin, 2014). Other advantages of multiple case studies are that they create a more substantial theory as the recommendations are more deeply grounded in numerous pragmatic data (Gustafsson, 2017).

Although an in-depth description and analysis of the data are anticipated, there are three limitations of case studies: reliability, validity, and generalisability (Babbie, 2013).

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Babbie (2013) further suggested that these limitations are reduced by using multiple case studies. Therefore, the researcher used more than one case study to produce a comparative analysis between the cases of school violence against teachers.

## 3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

There are two methods (qualitative and quantitative) used to investigate data that is collected. Both these methods are used to investigate and explore knowledge, which is used to answer the research questions. Quantitative analysis is used to measure reality, whilst the qualitative methods helps the researcher understand the phenomenon in question. Open-ended questions or interviews are used to gather information (Creswell, 2014). There are various methods for conducting qualitative research: case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, content analysis, and phenomenological (Creswell, 2014). For this study, the case study approach was used to achieve a deeper understanding of how educators experience learner-on-teacher violence at four different schools in the Tshwane South district. Therefore, research methods refer to the selection of an appropriate approach to guide the research. The chosen qualitative research method for this study allowed the researcher to dig deeper into teacher perspectives and experiences relating to violent learner behaviour and was able to gather important evidence from this school-based research.

### 3.3.1 Research sites and participants

Below is a description of the research site and the selection process of participants.

#### 3.3.1.1 Research site

The schools selected for the study are in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. All the schools are in a Coloured township with 50% Coloured learners and 50% Black learners. According to Mampane and Bouwer (2011), townships in South Africa came around as racially separated, and low-cost-housing developments for black employees to stay closer to places of work within cities and towns. Today crime, poverty, and violence are associated with townships where the safety of the people is compromised (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011). The National School Violence Study of 2012 highlighted that the violence at schools is driven by community factors.

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### 3.3.1.2    The selection of participants

An important aspect for conducting research is choosing the participants. Choosing participants is a tedious process (Maree, 2014). In addition to identifying the number of participants, researchers need to have the appropriate participants needed for the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). According to Sargeant (2012), in qualitative research the number of participants selected depends on the number necessary to collect the data for the study. Bryman (2016) states that participants and places are chosen based on their ability to answer the research questions.

For this study, participants were nominated using the snowball or network sampling technique (Maree, 2014). This technique was used because participants were not readily available and willing to participate on a sensitive issue. For this reason, the researcher decided on snowball sampling, also called network sampling, which is a strategy whereby each participant is referred to by a former participant or group (Maree, 2014). The researcher began by contacting one or more teachers who had experienced violence against them. They were consulted and asked to refer the researcher to other teachers who had suffered similar experiences. Through the snowball sampling, the researcher was referred to 11 participants from four schools in the Tshwane South district. The criteria used to select each of the participants were as follows:

- They must be a qualified teacher with a minimum teaching qualification
- The teacher must be teaching in a school in the Tshwane South district
- The teacher must have experienced violence against then by learners in their school; and
- The teacher must have reported the act of violence to the school principal.

Once the researcher received the above information, the researcher sent out the consent letters to each of the participants to agree or disagree to participate in the study.

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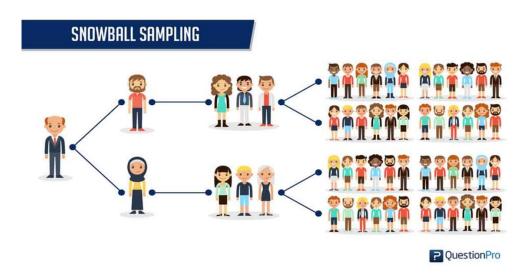
**Figure 5: A representation of the snowball sampling technique. Retrieved from**
**https://www.questionpro.com/blog/snowball-sampling/**

### 3.3.1.3      The research instruments

Kumar (2018:24) describes a research instrument as "anything that becomes a means of collecting information for your study is called a 'research tool' or a 'research instrument', for example observation forms, interview schedules, questionnaires and interview guides." The researcher used in-depth interviews, informal observation, and document analysis to determine how teachers in the Tshwane South district managed and dealt with violent behaviour. These documents were made available by the principals of the four participating schools. These documents consisted of disciplinary committee records, learner disciplinary code of conduct, and school safety policies. Using the integration of several sources and techniques will strengthen the case study (Rossman & Rallis, 2016).

### 3.3.1.4      Semi-structured interview

Based on the participants in the study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews so that participants were encouraged to communicate their attitudes, challenges, and experiences as a central purpose of such interviews (Creswell, 2014). Leedy (2014) postulates that semi-structured interviews result in information beyond what the interviewer intended since the questions are adaptable to the participant. Semi-structured interviews consist of open-ended questions based on the research topic. Since the questions are open-ended, it allows the researcher to further delve into the

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topic by probing. The current study used open-ended questions since the researcher wanted to hear the lived experiences of teachers. Open-ended questionnaires allowed the researcher to probe for further discussion.

In this study, information regarding teachers' experiences of learner violence against them was required. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 teachers from four schools in the Tshwane South district. The duration of interviews ranged between 15 and 20 minutes each. These interviews were face-to-face and one participant at a time to ensure that the participants' anonymity and confidentiality were upheld.

### 3.3.1.5 Documentation

Nieuwenhuis (2016) assert that documents (textual data) collected in qualitative research focus on written communication that bring insight into the phenomenon. Creswell (2014: 82) concur that textual data may contain 'published and unpublished documents, memoranda, agendas, administrative documents, company reports, email messages, faxes, newspaper articles, or any documents that is connected to the investigation.' For this study, the researcher consulted unpublished documents, including learners' code of conduct, school safety and security policies, and incident registers, which contributed to the findings to the study. These documents were requested from the principals of the participating schools and especially the records of past violent incidents were examined. Proof of disciplinary committee meetings was also requested by the researcher. Each school produced school safety and security policies, as well as learner codes of conduct. This information was useful in Chapters 4 and 5 where the data was analysed and recommendations are provided by the researcher.

### 3.3.1.6 Informal observation

Creswell (2014) posits that observation is the course of collecting open-ended, direct data by witnessing participants' behaviours and activities at the research sites. Nieuwenhuis (2016) reiterates that observation is the systematic process where researchers take field notes of occurrences by using their five senses. Observation allows the researcher to get a greater comprehension and perception of the phenomenon in the study by viewing the participants' body language and tapping into the emotions they expressed. In this study, informal observation was used to collect

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data. The researcher envisaged to observe participants body language, facial expression, gestures etc. when responding to issues of violence against them. During the informal observation of participants, the researcher made use of field notes to record important observations. Some participants became emotional while others expressed anger and disappointment in the education system. O'Hara *et al.* (2011) assert that when an observation takes place, the researcher visits the site and makes notes without engaging in the activities of the participant.

### 3.3.2  The role of the researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to access the thoughts and feelings of participants. The researcher's bias is considered as something that cannot be detached and the researcher is seen as a 'research instrument' when collecting data (Nieuwenhuis, 2013). The researcher also becomes part of the research as a meaning creator engaging with other meaning creators (Ritchie *et al.,* 2013). According to Cronin (2014:20), the researcher must become 'immersed in a situation, present or past and the phenomenon being studied.'

The researcher played a dynamic role in collecting data. The researcher tried not to be biased (Maree, 2014), as she acted as a researcher and not an educator. My role was to conduct the interviews by asking predetermined questions as a researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). I made sure to note any physical changes the participant may have displayed. If the participant did not understand a question, the question was then rephrased by the researcher (Maree, 2016). As a researcher, I conducted, audio recorded and transcribed the interviews. The researcher encouraged honest participation from teachers and assured them of their confidentiality with which their responses will be analysed and managed (Maree, 2014). Interview questions were open-ended and allowed for open engagement by the participants.

I was aware that the way I acted while conducting the interviews could influence the findings as some participants may detect my changes and respond differently. Creswell (2014) refers to the relationship between researcher and participants as a 'trusting' relationship as participants are relied on as much as possible. The researcher analysed the data to establish if there were any trends or common themes that emerged from the findings.

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### 3.3.3 Data collection

Data collection indicates the measures used by the researcher to gain information from the research participants (Maree & Pietersen, 2016). I made use of several data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews, formal school policies and guideline documents, and informal observations. According to Creswell (2014:240), textual data may include 'published and unpublished documents, memoranda, agendas, administrative documents, company reports, email messages, faxes, newspaper articles, or any documents that is connected to the investigation.' Unpublished documents were provided by the principals upon request. The purpose of this activity was to gain insight into how schools supported and managed violence against teachers.

Since this research was based on the interpretive paradigm it focused on semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and document analysis. Interviews were used as I wanted to see things the way the participants did (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Interviews allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of violence against them (Creswell, 2014). All the interviews were voice recorded. Through this interview process, the researcher aimed to get a thorough insight and understanding of this phenomenon. The data generated by qualitative research is descriptive as it comes directly from the participants and are not in the form of numbers and statistics (Brynad & Hanekom, 2014). To understand the realities of the participants, the researcher engages with the participants and probe into their views pertaining to the teacher violence they endure by learners. This is confirmed by Maree (2014), who states that listening to people in their social environment provides a better opportunity to understand their viewpoints. For the purpose of this study, the researcher worked from the viewpoint that teachers had different experiences regarding school violence (as a social reality) and different experiences regarding the perpetrators' (learners') behaviour. Teachers who have been victims of school violence will also have different viewpoints of their behaviour and reaction towards school-based violence. The researcher contacted several participants who shared their different experiences of violence against them.

In order to understand the experiences of violence against teachers, the researcher visited schools and teachers who experienced this phenomenon. Creswell (2014)

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recommends that the data should be collected at the participants' workplace, which is the site where the phenomenon was experienced. This qualitative research design depended on data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews, informal observation, and document analysis. The researcher collected data from the participants through one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with the teachers and analysing relevant documents. Various data collecting methods enhances triangulation (Patton, 2012), and allows for data validation and confirms research credibility and rigour (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Sargeant, 2012).

Creswell (2014:87) defined an interview as 'two-way conversation by which the interviewer asks participants questions to collect data and to learn about ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, and behaviours of the participants.' Kumar (2018:144) further states that 'any person-to-person interaction, either face to face or otherwise, between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind is called an interview.' In this study 11 educators from various schools in the Tshwane South district were interviewed. Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher compiled a questioning plan, which was followed by additional questions as the interview took place (Rule & John, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were used as it enabled the researcher to obtain rich descriptive information of teachers' experiences of school violence directed at them, as well as identify the support needed from stakeholders when addressing this challenge. The types of questions that were asked were open-ended questions and was followed by further probing questions for clarification purposes.

Semi-structured interviews are flexible and usually gives more information than expected (Leedy, 2014). The interviewer could conduct a follow-up on issues teachers felt important to share (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). These scholars further state that in comparison to unstructured interviews, in a semi- structured interview the interviewer has a great say in directing the interview on issues that are important on the study. The participants of this study had both knowledge and had experienced violent behaviour at school.

### 3.3.4  Data analysis

Data analysis, as explained by Bertram and Christiansen (2014), is a procedure of organising and reducing large amounts of data to make meaning of them. In order to do this, the researcher followed a thematic analysis approach of the analysed data.

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The main purpose of thematic analysis of qualitative data is to allow the findings to arise from central themes (Niewenhuis, 2016). Thereafter, the coding process began. Once the data was coded, themes and subthemes emerged, which were used in the discussion chapter of this study. The table below depicts the phases for data analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2014), to be followed in the data analysis process.

**Table 3: Application of Braun and Clarke (2014: 297) phases for data analysis in this study**

| Braun and Clarke's phase of data analysis (2014) | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Familiarise oneself with the data. | Reread the data and transcribe the data from the audio recordings of the interviews, document initial ideas. |
| Create codes for collected data | Generate initial codes from the data. |
| Finding themes | Sort codes into potential themes and organise all relevant coded data extracts within the corresponding themes. |
| Revise themes | Review and refine the themes with reference to the coded extracts. |
| Define and name themes | Name and further refine the theme (into sub-themes) and analyse data within the theme. |
| Reporting on findings (Interpretation) | Analysis (write-up and data extract) is logical, coherent, and concise, as well as relates to the research questions and literature. |

The purpose of analysing the data in this study was to answer the research question. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) assert that inductive data analysis entails a procedure where data is initially organised into groups. Thereafter, patterns are identified and the relationships between these groupings surface. This process

allowed the researcher to develop themes in order to develop conclusions. The researcher followed the steps explained by Braun and Clarke (2014) regarding thematic analysis, and in so doing, the researcher was able to identify emerging themes in the study. Firstly, the researcher familiarised herself with the collected data by looking at the interview transcripts, field notes of the observations, the assessor's assessments and participants' reflection notes, assignments, and lesson plans (Step 1). Secondly, the researcher prearranged the collected data in order to start with the coding. Before using symbols, names, and words to identify codes, the researcher identified the codes with colours (Step 2). With this, the researcher was able to identify comparisons and contradictions in the data. Next, the researcher generated codes and sorted the codes into themes (Step 3). A thematic map was set up to review the identified themes (Step 4). Lastly, the themes were used to answer the research question by forming clear definitions and suggestions for the themes. The data analysis process is represented visually in Table 5.

### 3.3.5  Validation of the findings

The researcher used different methods to validate the data. This was done to make sure that the findings were credible and accurate (Creswell, 2014).

#### 3.3.5.1  Trustworthiness

Rule and John (2011) define trustworthiness as a concept that fosters scholarly rigor, transparency, and professional ethics to obtain the trust of the research community. Four criteria that need to be considered in relation to trustworthiness is credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Niewenhuis, 2016). The participants who were selected represent teachers that would typically be found at schools. In other words, teachers with a variety of experiences, both male and female, teaching different subjects, of different nationalities and backgrounds, were selected. The participants were expected to reflect on their experiences of learner-on-teacher violence, throughout their teaching careers.

#### 3.3.5.2  Credibility

According to Rule and John (2011), credibility is the degree to which a research study measures what it is intended to. The credibility of a study is highly dependent on the ethical values and procedures followed. This was achieved in this study by ensuring

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there was no bias or unfair analysis, by ensuring that all information remained authentic.

### 3.3.5.3 Transferability

Transferability means that there is ample evidence that suggests the findings of this study can be applied to other scenarios (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The transferability of findings are discussed in Chapter 5, where evidence is provided showing that the research outcomes can be applied to other circumstances (Maree, *et al.*, 2017).

### 3.3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability has to do with the neutrality of the researcher and the extent to which participants' information shaped the findings (Maree *et al.*, 2017). The more a researcher gets involved with the participants, the more likely the chance of the researcher becoming biased and the greater the risk of 'missing' information.

Each interview was transcribed by the researcher. The typed interviews were handed back to the relevant participant to comment and check on the accuracy of each transcription (member checking).

### 3.3.5.5 Dependability

The concept of dependability refers to the assurance that the initial research design and data gathering techniques remain consistent and can be repeated (Niewenhuis, 2016). Dependability is normally illustrated through the research design, the application (how it is implemented), and the operational data (how the data was collected). (Maree *et al.*, 2017). Apart from ensuring that the interview questions were clear and relevant, the researcher also prioritised the quality of the transcription of data, documents, and methods, which contributed to the dependability of the data.

### 3.3.5.6 Member checking

This involves sharing the final report of the study with the participants. The participants were given the opportunity to check the themes and categories, which have emerged from the data, to determine if it matched their perceptions (Creswell, 2014)

### 3.3.5.7 Triangulation

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Triangulation means cross checking your data using different methods to ensure the same themes and findings emerge (Houghton *et al.*, 2013). Creswell (2014) further states that using multiple data collection methods adds the validity of the study. In this study, triangulation was done using the interviews and document analysis.

## 3.4    ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) ethics ensure that whatever the researcher is doing, he/she must take into consideration that which is right or wrong, and good or bad. During each stage of the research process, ethical considerations were reviewed and reassessed.

### 3.4.1  Ethical clearance

When studying human beings, there are ethical guidelines that must be abided by (Depoy & Gitlin, 2016). These guidelines include informed consent, full disclosure, confidentiality, voluntary participation, protection from harm, and getting permission from gatekeepers. Cassell and Symon (2012) affirm that consent must first be obtained from the participants of the study, before they contribute to the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) have said that prior to research beginning, the researcher must seek an approval letter from the institutional review board. This approval was granted by the Faculty of Education from University of Pretoria Ethics committee. This letter was used to secure permission from the Gauteng Education Department to conduct the research at schools. A written letter was addressed to the school principals, SGBs, and educators participating in the study, which explained the purpose of the study and the procedures of the research process

### 3.4.2  Informed consent

Informed consent is crucial prior to individuals participating in a study (Shahnazarian, Hagemann, Aburto & Rose, 2017). Depoy and Giltin (2016: 33) define informed consent as 'merely a form that is signed but a process, in which the subject has an understanding of the research and its risks.' According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), all procedures and processes involved in the research must be explained to the participants. Participants have a right to choose to participate or withdraw from the study whenever they wish, without any penalties (Depoy & Gitlin, 2016). Participants were granted a period to consider the information and evaluate their role as a

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participant before consenting (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). In this study, the researcher required consent from all the participants in the study: The School Governing Bodies (SGB), the principals, and the educators from the selected four schools in the Tshwane South district.

### 3.4.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Rossman and Rallis (2017) say that every research must ensure privacy of participants and treat what they say as confidential. To ensure this, Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2012) advise that only the researcher should have access to the transcribed interviews. In this study, the researcher and her supervisor had access to the recordings. The researcher took care in ensuring that there is no link between the individuals and the information they have provided.

### 3.5    SUMMARY

This chapter was based on the research design and methodology. This study used an interpretivist qualitative research design to identify and categorise the perceptions of participants on learner violence using case studies. Interviews and document analysis were used to collect information. This study purposefully selected schools and participants who had experienced school violence. The chapter examined the methods applied in data collection. In Chapter four the results of teachers' school violence experiences will be outlined and discussed through the data analysis process.
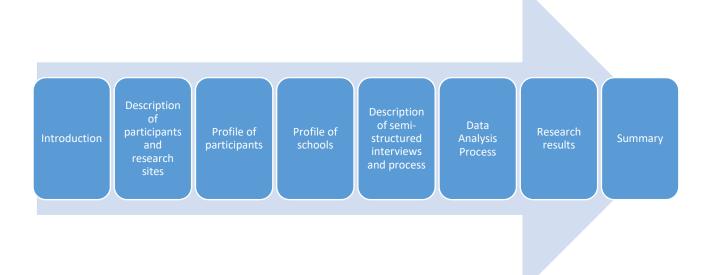
# CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 4.1    INTRODUCTION

Chapter three presented a summary of the research methodology. The researcher argued the relevance and suitability for using an interpretive, qualitative method for this study. The researcher intended to understand the lived experiences of teachers who were victims of violence by learners in their schools. To strengthen the research methodology, the researcher discussed the relevance of the case study design and data collection methods.

Chapter four presents the data findings from the interviews and school observations during visits. The findings of the research study are aligned to the primary and secondary research question: How can teachers be supported to prevent violence against them in schools? The themes and subthemes assisted in addressing the primary and secondary research questions. The sub questions were: What types of violence do educators experience in schools? and What strategies can be used to support teachers from being violently abused at school by learners?

**Figure 6:** An overview of Chapter Four



## 4.2    DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITES

 The research sites comprised of four public schools selected from the Tshwane South district in Gauteng. These schools were chosen due to proximity to the researcher and ease of access. The participants in this study were five (5) teachers. There were three (3)

males and two (2) females who consented to participate in this study voluntarily. The sample of the sites and participants were strictly followed according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria as highlighted in section 1.7.3 in chapter 1. The sample consisted of three ethnic groups namely, whites, coloureds, and blacks. The researcher intended to gain insight into the different perspectives of the participants considering their cultural backgrounds.

### 4.2.1 Participants

Snowball sampling (also referred to as network sampling) was used to nominate five participants. The researcher envisaged a larger sample of teachers; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only five of the nine (9) teachers agreed to participate. Unfortunately, four (4) teachers tested positive for the COVID-19 virus and had to be quarantined for the minimum period. The researcher believes that the number of participants were sufficient to obtain rich and in-depth information on their experiences of school violence. The five (5) participants adhered to the predetermined criteria, as explained in Section 3.3.1.2.

### 4.2.2 Research sites

The four participating schools, which consisting of three primary schools and one high school, are located in a township in the Tshwane South District in Gauteng. The township has a mixed population, and most families are experiencing social and economic difficulties. Many of the parents are employed as 'piece workers' or 'factory workers. The conditions in which families live is mostly abject poverty. The researcher also noted that lack of parental support and care within the community, which has an impact on learners in school. These schools are located in the midst of this community to provide access to schooling for all learners as enshrined in the Bill of Rights, which states that 'every child must have access to schools. The participants in this study also reside within close proximity of the schools; and therefore, were familiar with the community and its circumstances.

### 4.2.3 Coding of participants and research sites

To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and research sites, codes were used to protect their identities. For the purpose of the study, teachers were

referred to as: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 (P for participant), and schools were coded as S-A; S-B; S-C and S-D (S for school).

**Table 4: Coding of participants and research sites**

| Coding of participants | Profile |
| --- | --- |
| P1 | Participant 1 is a 44-year-old white, male teacher. He has previous years teaching experience at so called Ex-model C schools but has been teaching at School A (S-A) for the past six years. |
| P2 | Participant 2 is a 28-year-old coloured, male teacher with three years teaching experience at School B (S-B). He lives in the township and is familiar with many of the grade 7 learners. |
| P3 | Participant 3 is a 27-year old black, male teacher. He has six years teaching experience of which the first three years have been at a very affluent private school in the Free State province. The participant indicated that he would like to see the authorities of the education system do something radical when it comes to protecting teachers against the violent behaviour of learners. He is teaching at school S-C. |
| P4 | Participant 4 is a 30-year-old coloured female teacher who teaches grade 7 learners. She expressed her daily frustrations when struggling to cope with grade 7 learners' poor behaviour and violent outbreaks towards her. She is teaching at school S-D. |
| P5 | Participant 5 is a 27-year old black, female teacher with four years teaching experience at school D (S-D). She currently fulfils the role and responsibility of Acting Head of Department in the senior phase. She has a real passion and drive for teaching but indicated that her current challenges with the grade 7 learners are affecting her work ethic. |

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## 4.4 PROFILE OF SCHOOLS

### 4.4.1 School A

School A (S-A) is located in a township in the Tshwane South district in Gauteng and is a primary school. The learners who attend this school are mainly from the community. There are few learners who travel from neighbouring townships to the school. The school has classes from grades R to 7. There are 33 teachers in this school. Although the school is well maintained and structured, the large classes make it impossible to provide quality teaching and learning. The learner ratio at this school is 1:45. P1 teaches at this school and participated in this study with the consent of the SGB and the principal. The school principal is a black male who has been head of this school for twelve years.

### 4.4.2 School B

The learners who attend this school are mainly from the community. There are few learners who travel from neighbouring townships to the school. The school has classes from grades R to 7. There are 34 teachers in this school. Although the school is well maintained and structured, the large classes make it impossible to provide quality teaching and learning. The learner ratio at this is 1:45. P2 teaches at this school and participated in this study with the consent of the SGB and principal. The school principal is a coloured female who has been head of this school for fifteen years.

### 4.4.3 School C

School C (S-C) is located in a township in Tshwane South district, Gauteng, and is a high school. The learners who attend this school are mainly from the community. There are few learners who travel from neighbouring townships to the school. The school has classes from Grades 8 to 12. There are 33 teachers in this school. Although the school is well maintained and structured, the large classes make it impossible to provide quality teaching and learning. The learner ratio at this is 1:45. P3 teaches at this school and participated in this study with the consent of the SGB and principal. The school principal is a black male who has been head of this school for nine years.

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### 4.4.4  School D

School A (S-A) is located in a township in Tshwane South district, Gauteng, and is a primary school. The learners who attend this school are mainly from the community. There are few learners who travel from neighbouring townships to the school. The school has classes from Grades R to 7. There are 36 teachers in this school. Although the school is well maintained and structured, the large classes make it impossible to provide quality teaching and learning. The learner ratio at this is 1:45. P4 and P5 teach at this school and participated in this study with the consent of the SGB and principal. The school principal is a black male who has been head of this school for thirteen years.

## 4.5     DESCRIPTION OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND THE PROCESS

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in this study. The researcher met the participants three weeks prior to the interview. During this meeting she informed them of the ethical principles that needed to be observed, outlined the purpose of the study, and clearly indicated what is expected of them.  Participants were informed that their identity will not be revealed, nor any information of their schools will be reported in the final stage of this study. To protect the participants and the institutions they come from, pseudonyms are used as specified above.

Each participant was informed again of the interview process and their permission was requested audio recording the interview. The purpose was to ensure that the data was transcribed accurately, and voices were reported without bias. All participants consented and gave permission to the researcher to conduct the study. The interviews were audio-recorded using a smartphone while notes were taken on the prepared interview schedule. The interview lasted between ten and fifteen minutes for each participant. Interviews were arranged telephonically according to convenience time slots indicated by participants. Interview sessions did not impact or disrupt their teaching and learning times. Five participants participated eagerly after the researcher explained the rationale and purpose of the study. All participants provided consent by signing the consent letters (See Annexure A).

As arranged with each participant, the researcher met with them at their respective schools. All principals were very helpful and accommodating. All interviews took place after school to avoid any disruption of teaching and learning time.

The interview questions (Annexure D) were made up of sixteen questions. These questions focused on teachers' experiences of violence, the effects of violence against teachers, and strategies to minimise violence against teachers. The researcher also used probing questions to delve deeper into the issue of violence against teachers and how they experienced these episodes from a social and psychological perspective. The open-ended questionnaire assisted participants to express their personal experiences regarding school violence directed at them and through probing they explained the support they received from the principal, school management, and the Department of Education. The following questions in the semi-structured interview relate to the themes and sub-themes identified and explained in Section 4.7:

- Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 referred to the experience of violence against teachers
- Questions 9 and 11 related to effects of school violence directed towards participants, and
- Questions 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 focused on the strategies used to minimise and support teachers against violence.

## 4.6   DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The data analysis process entails making meaning of the collected data. Nieuwenhuis (2016) suggests that using a qualitative methodology, embedded within an interpretivist paradigm, highlights an inductive data analysis strategy to define multiple realities that may be presented from the data. The following steps were followed to analyse the data (see Section 3.6 and the Table 5 below):

**Table 5: Stages in the data collection process**

The researcher listened to each interview recording several times directly after meeting with the teachers at the schools.

Researcher transcribed the interview and verified whether the transcriptions through member-checking. Transcribed interview were saved on to a password-locked computer.

Each transcribed and printed interview were examined several times by the researcher to gain a broad understanding of the participants' responses.

Themes and subthemes were identified, which provided a general sense of the meaning of the data.

The themes are discussed and presented in Section 4.7

## 4.7    RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Three major themes emerged from the data analysis. Within the major themes, the researcher identified subthemes. These subthemes emanated through the art of probing to generate a complex perception of the lived experiences of the participants as the researcher probed further into the lived experiences of teachers.  These themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Themes and sub-themes**

| MAIN THEMES | SUB-THEMES |
|---|---|
| 1.Teachers' experience of violence | - Causes of violence<br>- Types of violence |

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| | |
|---|---|
| 2. Effects of violence against teachers | - Psychological effects<br>- Social effects<br>- Emotional effect |
| 3. Strategies to minimise violence against teachers | - Roles of relevant stakeholders in minimising violence. The role of the<br>    ○ Department of Education<br>    ○ School leaders<br>    ○ Policies<br>    ○ Parental involvement |

The above table shows the theme and sub-themes that emerged in the study In the presentation of the findings, verbatim quotes are used. In other instances, the researcher summarised the information and presented it as a collective. Verbatim quotes are presented using the 'block quotes' techniques.

### 4.7.1 Theme 1: Teachers experience of violence

Violence is described as an intentional act using physical force or power or going to the extent of causing harm to another individual (WHO, 2002). School violence is defined as 'any behaviour of learners, educators, administrators or non-school persons, attempting to inflict injury on another person or to damage school property (Mncube & Harbor, 2013:3). In the first semi-structured interview question the researcher wanted to gain an understanding of South African teachers' experiences of violence against them. She asked teachers to share their experiences of violence perpetrated against them by learners at school. She wanted to understand the lived experiences of teachers aligning the study to the qualitative research approach as explained in Chapter 3.

All the participants (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5) agreed that they were exposed to violence against them on a daily basis. Learners show no respect, they are arrogant, insolent, and even abusive to them on a daily basis. They all reiterated that they have very little or sometimes no grounds to stand on when these learners are abusive.

Taken directly from the transcripts, P1 said:

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> *'My experience was so bad that a male student started to threaten me verbally. He even said that he knows where I live, and he will come to my house. For this reason, I was too afraid to even report the incident to the principal.'*

According to P2, she stated:

> *'I too, had a similar experience but it was with a female learner. If I report this learner, then I have to come to school every day and face her in my class. How do I do that? She is constantly antagonising me to display some form of anger towards her, then they have their ammunition against me.'*

The WHO (2019) agrees that most teachers are exposed to violence against them on a daily basis; yet they have no grounds to stand because they are seen as adults, and adults can make responsible decisions. Furthermore, according to the Bill of Rights, every child has the right not to be abused in any form by another individual (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). This is a daily experience for most teachers in South Africa and globally. This phenomenon is supported by Eraslan-Capan, (2014) who agrees that teachers across the world experience violence against them and are helpless. The researcher's findings align with the report published by SACE (2011) that teacher violence amongst South African teachers is becoming widespread. Too often teachers who are abused by learners are either too afraid to report the incidents to the principals or authority figures because of the threats from these learners. SACE also found that many teachers are working under constant fear, threat, and anxiety.

Based on the participants' responses on teachers' experience of school violence, it was revealed that teachers are aware that this phenomenon is aggressive and causes them to harm on a physical and emotional level. This is further supported by the scholars, DeWall, Anderson and Bushman (2011:387) who define aggression 'as any behaviour intended to harm another person who does not want to be harmed,' as indicated in section 2.2.

### 4.7.1.1.    Causes of violence

Many factors contribute to the causes of violence in South African schools. Burton (cited in Saferspaces, 2021) argues that are several interconnected reasons that

impact young individuals in different ways, such as executing violent acts against others (especially educators). In a study on the effects of violence against educators, (Singh, 2006) is of the opinion that the main causes of violence in schools are due to academic tension, inappropriate disciplinary measures for poor behaviour, and learned violent behaviours within an individual's immediate environment. It has been noted that learners who are academically inclined are less likely to be violent at school (Khumalo, 2019). Low educational ambition is another reason that can be matched with violent behaviour at school (Mncube & Harbor, 2013).

The researcher probed a further question and asked the participants what they perceived to be the causes of violence against teachers in South African schools. The participants' responses to this question varied.

From the interview transcripts the researcher noted that participants (P1; P3 and P5) agreed that:

> *The primary cause of violence in our society and especially in schools today is 'Children Rights'. Our children have more rights in schools today than the teachers. You cannot even lift a finger or point a finger at a learner. They will throw their rights into your face. They will indicate that they have a right to be in school and to be educated and protected.*

P4 responded to this question by saying:

> *'The main cause according to me is discipline at home. These children are not disciplined at home, they bring that [rubbish] behaviour into our classrooms and we have to tolerate this nonsense.'*

P5 in the interview articulated:

> *'The main cause of violence started when the DBE implemented the policy of non-corporal punishment. This was the beginning of chaos in our schools. Learners know that a teacher cannot spank him or her. They would report the incident to the police.'*

P5 further went on to indicate:

> *'Why should I lose my job because I want to educate these disrespectful children – well I just tolerate them until the end of each day.'*

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Other participants in the study indicated that some of the causes of violence in schools are due to academic tension, poor behaviour, violence learned in society, underperformance in classroom activities, and bullying. These findings are congruent to the findings of Singh (2006). According to SACE (2017); Bester and Du Plessis (2010), the past decade has seen a rapid increase in violence perpetuated against teachers. In section 2.4 of the literature review, the researcher described incidents of learner violence in schools. Examples of violence against teachers were reported by Grobler (2018). On 16 November 2018, a teacher at Albertina Sisulu Special School in Soweto was physically chased by a learner who threw stones at him. The teacher suffered injuries and the learner was expelled. The second incident occurred at a school in the North West Province, where a teacher was stabbed by the learner. The teacher succumbed to the wounds- and died (Grobler, 2018). According to Molosankew (2014), a grade 9 learner shot a teacher at Sasolburg High School and a grade 8 learner physically abused a teacher at Glenvista High School

During the researcher's literature review, she found that learned behaviour is another factor that contributed to violence. Some children grow up in an environment that is violent, and aggressive behaviour is accepted and tolerated. Therefore, these young children come to school thinking that it is normal to behave violently against their teachers and others. According to the Social Learning Theory, Bandura (1977) agrees that young children learn both positive and negative behaviours from their immediate environment. They try to emulate these behaviours in other situations without considering or understanding the consequence of their behaviours. Darling-Hammond, Flook and Cook-Harvey (2020) believe that every environment has a direct influence on how learners behave outside of their immediate environment. The learned behaviours from their immediate environments are practised in the new environment (school against teachers).

When the researcher probed further to the cause of violence against teachers, P2 agreed that:

> 'The cause of violence against them emanates because we teachers want
> to inculcate discipline and accountability in our learners. These learners
> think that we are attacking them, and they become rebellious and violent
> towards us. Learners most often do not want to do their schoolwork, yet

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*they want to be promoted to the next grade. When they fail learners, they [learners] become antagonistic towards teachers – we become the targets of aggression. As teachers we are not allowed to discipline these learners, and if they do, the consequences are dire.'*

Another reason cited by the participant was poor academic performance and inappropriate social skills.

To this comment P5 stated:

*'These learners are mentally retarded academically but are cued up how to become aggressive and violent and then play the victim. It is a nightmare being a teacher in a township school.'*

According to Siphepho, Dlamini and Nxumalo (2013), students openly make shameful and offensive comments about teachers. These learners know that there are no consequences to their irresponsible behaviours. The researcher believes that if these learners are given '*carte blanche'* in schools, then they would become a future generation of 'drop-outs' and will contribute very little or nothing to society or the economy.

### 4.7.1.2    Types of violence

There are several types of violent behaviour targeted against teachers in most schools visited. The most common types of violence directed towards teachers are: verbal harassment - being subjected to derogatory comments and student profanity; physical harassment - students engaging in actual physical attacks against teachers; and theft of school or personal teacher property. In a study conducted by Wilson, Douglas and Lyon (2010) with 731 teachers found that almost 80% of teachers experienced some form of violence at any one point in their careers. Teachers indicated that they were threatened with physical violence by the learners. In their study, female teachers reported higher levels of violence and threats against them in comparison to males (Wilson, Douglas & Lyon, 2010).

During the interview, the researcher asked the participants to share their experiences of the types of violence they were subjected to. In response to this question P1, P3, and P5 indicated that:

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*'They were often verbally abused and subjected to continuous threats. Sometimes the learners will come into their classes and destroy their personal belongings. Often these learners will make paper balls and throw at teachers when their backs were against them. More often, teachers are faced with constant derogatory remarks while on ground duty or walking pass a class.'*

In chapter 2 the researcher highlighted the findings by the SAHRC (YEAR) that school violence can display itself in many ways. Teachers are either subjected to passive or active violence. The verbatim quotes below presents the experiences teachers go through on a daily basis at school.

In the interview P3 stated:

'*I am a young teacher, and these learners know that I have recently completed my studies. They are constantly passing insults and remarks about my clothes. I was told to my face by a female learner that my style of clothing is outdated. This comment really hurt me badly.*'

P4 commented regarding the types of violence by indicating:

*'These learners are so naughty that a boy in my class damaged the charts I have made. When I asked him why he damaged my charts, he stared at me and indicated that he just felt he had to because I reprimanded him.'*

In his response, P1 said:

*"Although my learners are in primary school, they have picked up vulgar words and use them as if it is acceptable in class. They swear and curse each other, and when I intervene, I was often told by these young learners to 'FO'. There were times when I am called the 'a-hole' and 'faggot' behind my back. When I try talking to these learners they just laugh. One learner threatened me by saying that he will bring his big brother to beat me up."*

P2 had his car scratched, his name written on the toilet walls and was threatened to be stabbed or caught after school and beaten up.

From the findings above and the voices of the participants it is evident that teachers are exposed to passive and active violence. Singh and Steyn (2014) concur that

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violent behaviour is usually displayed when learners are faced against the people in authority, for example teachers. Since these learners cannot control the situation, they become passively aggressive and behave against norms of society. In contrast, according to UNESCO (2017), active violence is the manifestation of physical hostility with the aim to injure someone or cause damage or bodily harm to the person or their property.

From the findings, the researcher has noted that violent acts can be physical and/or non-physical. According to Zuma *et al.* (2016) the rate of physical violence directed at teachers by learners, makes teachers afraid to come to school. This results in lack of motivation and loss of focus when working. This was clearly articulated in P2 comment, which said:

> '*I am desperately looking for another job. I am tired of this school. The abuse is going on continuously and I am getting no help from anyone.*'

Teachers feel very threatened and emotionally traumatised on a daily basis. From the interviews there is clear evidence that most teachers are remaining in the profession merely for a salary and nothing more. If they could find a job that is non-threatening, they would definitely take that option.

### 4.7.2 Theme 2: Effects of learner violence on teachers

For an in-depth understanding of the effects of violence against teachers, the researchers posed a question in this regard: how did learner violence affect you? In the probing question, she asked teachers to describe their emotional, psychological, and social effects violence had on them and how it affected them.

Violence against any individual has always had a negative outcome on the victim. In this study teachers were not immune to violence. Teachers experienced negative effects on both an individual level and on the school and society level. In their study, Sinha and Yadav (2017) found that most teachers who experienced violence from their learners start to doubt their own abilities, question their self-concept, and feel as if they are losing control. Most teachers agreed that they felt they could not escape their social and emotional situation. Jacobs and De Wet (2015) also found that most victims (teachers) were afraid to enter the school environment, experienced high levels of stress and anxiety, and dreaded going to class. They became apathetic towards

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teaching and learning due to the violence perpetrated against them. Matsela and Kirsten (2014) found that teachers began to internalise the violence against them, and this affected them psychologically.

Violence is related to many ripple effects, such as stress, fear, and depression. Participants 4 and 5 showed no secret of the fear they experienced by male learners in their classes. P4 is a young female teacher said:

> *"I am in constant fear and anxiety when I enter my class. I do not know what to expect from these learners. If they are not slandering my name on some piece of paper and passing it around, they are mocking at me behind my back. When I question them about their behaviour, I often get the response 'what are you going to do about it?'."*

From a psychological perspective many teachers indicated that they felt mentally retarded, suffered intense anxiety, depression, mood swings, fear, alienation, worthlessness, insomnia, intense anger, and frustration. The findings in this study concurs with Daniels and Bradley (2011) and Bounds and Jenkins (2018) who also found that violence affected teachers psychologically and affected their daily family lives. The anxiety expressed by educators can be described as a complex psychological phenomenon (AsIrasouli & Vahid, 2014).

Analysing the narratives of the two female participants, P4 and P5, it is evident that female teachers feel more vulnerable and challenged when faced with violent behaviour from learners towards them in comparison to male teachers. P1, who is the eldest of the participants, indicated that he has found coping strategies to manage the violent behaviour of learners. The researcher is of the opinion that he does not feel as vulnerable as the other participants who are much younger and new to the profession and experience.

In a study, Woudstra, van Rensburg, Visser and Jordaan (2018) found that the gender of the participants (especially females) has a significant effect on their anxiety levels. According to their study, females are prone to breakdown mentally and psychologically. Their study concurs with the researcher's findings, whereby female teachers suffered higher levels of anxiety and depression in comparison to the male participants.

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Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that there is a relationship between the years of experience and coping mechanisms of teachers who experience violence. The researcher found that all participants with different years of experience and their gender, faced different challenges in the teaching environment. More experienced participants are less anxious than novice teachers. According to Woudstra *et al.* (2018), years of experience has a significant influence on how teachers are able to face threatening situations and manage to cope with difficult learners.

Depression, the fourth leading cause of social instability in the world, is defined as a severe affective mood disorder. People with depression are often at risk for suicide and mental breakdowns (Camacho, Vera, Scardamalia & Phalen, 2018). Since depression is acknowledged and recognised as a major public health problem, Pedrazza, Berlanda, De Cordova, and Fraizzoli, (2018) agree that it causes social damage, enhances mood swings, decreases productivity, loss of initiative, general disinterest, cognitive, psychomotor, and vegetative changes. Teachers are more likely to experience depressive symptoms due to their daily challenges in a toxic learning environment (Will, 2021).

After a violent experience at school, P3, stated:

> *'The experience at school makes me feel angry with everyone around me. It is so unfair that I have to go through this kind of behaviour on a daily basis. Most of the time I am unable to think straight. My family has complained that I am withdrawn and have become irritable and sluggish in my behaviour. I don't look forward to school. School is just a negative space for me at the moment.'*

Another participant, P2, highlighted her experience as:

> '*I am a nervous wreck when I enter the class. The learners refuse to sit and listen to my lesson. They are constantly disrupting, talking to each other and sniggering at me. Most of my time, I just try to focus my attention on those learners who want to learn, but my conscious gets the better of me for neglecting the unruly learners.'*

P5 voiced her opinion saying:

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*'I am depressed most of the time. I hate Mondays to Friday to go to school. I have no choice but am forced to go to school and face daily abuse and ridicule from these learners. I am not sure how long I will be able to sustain this behaviour. I have already been to the psychologist and was diagnosed as depressive. I am on medication just to cope with this job. I sometimes ask myself is this really worth it? If I find another private school with fewer learners, I am definitely going to transfer. I have come to the end of my tethers at this school.'*

Violence against teachers is evident in most South African schools. It can negatively affect teachers' well-being, effectiveness, and endurance to continue in the profession (Anderman *et al.*, 2018). Bounds and Jenkins (2018) are of the opinion that most teachers experience extreme levels of stress due to acts of violence against them. This has impacted the manner in which teachers cope at school level, especially with regards to their teaching, learning, communication, and interpersonal relationship with their learners. Findings in this study agrees with Fox and Stallworth (2010), who highlighted most teachers were psychologically and physiologically affected by acts of violence against them. In her voice, P3 shared her experience:

*'In that moment I definitely felt like this boy is going to physically like fight with me now. And I mean they're more or less my height, so it's not like there's a big height difference; we're more or less like the same and they're boys I'm sure they're physically stronger'*

From the voices of the teachers, it is evident that the morale of teachers is very low and they are completely demotivated (Anderman *et al.*, 2018; Barnes, Brynard & de Wet, 2012). Teachers cannot take any decisive action against troublesome learners because they fear for their own safety (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Studies by Karsenti and Collin (2013) concur with the findings in this study. They too have identified teachers who are apathetic towards schooling and are eager to get out of the education system.

Taken from the transcript, P3 said:

*'I think from my experience I have got to share this with you. On top of the list, it would be the sense of absolute disrespect for teachers'*

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P1 further stated:

> 'Á teacher is just a teacher too stupid to do anything else. Very often that's the public's perception and that filters through to violence because if somebody is not human or sub-human or a very low form of human life; very easy to just assault that individual person they don't really matter, whereas you would think twice before assaulting an attorney.'

In this study the researcher wanted to understand the effect of school violence against teachers and how it affects them. She asked teachers to describe the emotional, psychological, and social effects they endured after incidents of violence.

The view of the participant above is a clear indication that most teachers are suffering psychologically due to violence against them. Teachers lack the enthusiasm and eagerness to go to school due to their experience at the hands of their learners. Bounds and Jenkins (2018) state that stress is reported as a risk factor for the development of depression, affecting the teacher's productivity in the classrooms. A study conducted among university professors in China showed that stress may be related to the presence of symptoms of depression (Rodriques *et al.,* 2020). There is a correlation between violence and stress as a risk factor for depressive symptoms. The researcher believes that stress and depression can affect teachers' daily activities negatively; therefore, decreasing their enthusiasm and passion for the profession. Depression can often lead to psychological consequences that can negatively affect job performance in the school environment. It is important to recognise and find solutions to prevent teachers from becoming depressed or psychologically affected in their work environment. Rodrigues *et al.*, (2020); Bounds and Jenkins (2018) state that the main problems associated with persistent stress includes unwanted physical signs, such as increased blood pressure and increased susceptibility to stroke, infection due to decreased immune system response, eating disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, insomnia, mood swings, excessive weight gain or loss, insulin resistance, decreased sexual desire and temporary impotence in men, inhibition of learning and memory impairment, as well as exacerbation of skin lesions. Insomnia and feelings of dread are real symptoms.

According to P5, she said:

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*'I fear going to school every morning. I am sick with fear and anxiety. I don't know what the learners will be up to another day. Sometimes I wish I could go back to university and just study or find another job that pays as good as teachers. Sadly, my qualification is for teaching only. What makes my situation worse is the financial responsibility I have. I cannot afford to leave my job at this stage. So, can you see and understand my predicament.'*

Most teachers are faced with a similar situation. They have qualified in a specific field and cannot make career changes. According to Salifu, Alagbela and Gyamfi Ofori (2018), teaching is a very attractive option for many young matriculants. They are eager to accept the bursaries made accessible to them. After they qualify, they have to repay the bursaries and loans. This financial situation makes it difficult for many young teachers to leave the system. Older teachers have accepted the housing subsidy, which ties them down to their careers. When teachers are caught within this situation, they become very despondent and angry.

Anger and hostility are other two significant psychological problems, which need to be discussed in the context of the teaching profession. Anger is considered as an important indicator of psychological well-being. Anger is an emotional and affective state resulting in physiological stimulation that may differ from physical and verbal aggression. On the other hand, hostility refers to an internal state characterised by anger, impatience, and bitterness (Gonzálvez *et al.,* 2016).

Based on the interactions during the interviews, all participants expressed anger and hostility at the current, alarming state of violence in schools directed at them. Anger towards the learners', disrespect towards them, and the fact that there is no support for teachers who are victims of this phenomenon was evident when P3 noted that:

*'so, it does have an impact that now even my teaching ability comes to…I lose energy, I become so lethargic and now even at home, even at school I start shouting at kids who are so innocent. I still have that anger. I've just been disrespected and been violated by a school learner, so these are some of the effects that this has on us as educators.'*

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These psychological problems may harm the personal and professional life of teachers. As a result, teachers may not be productive and may not contribute positively to teaching and learning (Umer, Saddiqui & Sadiq, 2020).

### 4.7.2.1 Sub-Theme 2.1: Social effects

Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) further posit that increased teacher absenteeism is the result of fear and anxiety amongst teachers in an unsafe environment. Teachers often feel demotivated to attend school due to the extreme violent experiences at the hands of their learners. Educators feel helpless, demoralised, and disillusioned; Furthermore, the situation is heightened with the increased teacher-learner ratio, overcrowding, unruly discipline, and inappropriate measures to deal with discipline in schools (Daniels & Bradley, 2011).

P3 shared the following:

> *'It doesn't only end within the school premises, we've got lives outside of school, we've got our families to return to and the next thing you're at home sitting there and you remember what happened at school, maybe your partner wants to be nice towards you or your child wants to be nice to you but at the back of your mind you're still disturbed by what happened at school, now you lash out at them.'*

P1 further stated that the violence changes your personality as a teacher:

> *'Then you put methods in place. You don't allow children any lee-ways, any liberties, they should work, you are there to teach. Your primary function is to teach. You cut off a part of your personality. You don't laugh, you don't joke, you don't have fun with them really anymore, you just work. And they just work and because there is just work, there is no room for them to start with nonsense'*

Based on these contributions, it is evident that these violent incidences do not end at school but affect the traumatised teacher at home when interacting with their family members. Teachers no longer want to be a friend to learners, but instead only want to do their expected task of teaching and will not engage in laughter or friendliness with learners.

In a study by Bounds and Jenkins (2016), they found that teachers often turned to their colleagues for social support. Similarly, the researcher found that the participants also found support amongst their colleagues rather than in school management or the Department of Education. In their study, Bounds and Jenkins (2016) also found that teachers sought support from their families and psychologist.

### 4.7.2.2 Sub-Theme 2.2: Emotional effect

Educational contexts are emotionally demanding (Pedrazza *et al.*, 2018). Gregory, Cornell and Fan (2012) stated that everyday learner misconduct, repeated verbal abuse and increased violence could hurt teachers and lead to emotional exhaustion.

Chang and Won (2019) stated that most teachers who experienced violence are affected daily and cannot carry out their professional duties appropriately. They are emotional wrecks after being continuously victimised by learners; therefore, these teachers need support from professional staff and others.

Participant 3 gives his account of his emotional trauma:

> *'These violent acts they have an impact on you both emotionally and psychologically. When a learner threatens and attack you it's traumatising'*

He further added to his narrative explaining that novice teachers feel intimidated by older male learners:

> *'I think with us, some of us, we really have young teachers at our school, many of us are so young and some of our students are bigger than us, so they've got that perception, that I but this one, you know, I can really beat this one up and everything, so those are very central observations that I've made at this particular point in time, so it is sheer disrespect for teachers.'*

Based on the preceding contributions, it became clear that the young teachers are finding it difficult to cope in the teaching-learning environment due to violence in their school environment. This is one of the reasons why many schools in South Africa lose good teachers to schools in other countries. This statement was supported by both female participants, P4 and P5, who indicated that they want to leave the teaching profession as soon as they find other jobs.

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These violent behaviours and attitudes make the teaching environment an unsafe workplace for many teachers. This has a devastating impact if the teaching profession cannot recruit more teachers. Those teachers who are above the age of 65 and retiring need to be replaced by young energetic teachers who will be able to cope in a hostile environment. If there is a shortage of teachers, classes will be overcrowded; thus, increasing the teacher-learner ratio; which is an invitation for poor discipline and acts of violence. Marais (2016) also found that large classrooms affected classroom management and discipline.

One can deduce that if a teacher is functioning under working conditions, where the environment is disrespectful, violent, or disheartening, it would be stressful on the teacher and effect personal health, performance, and attitude towards their work. This sub-theme focussed on how school violence causes daily stress for teachers and how that daily stress impacts teacher performance, attitudes, and well-being and merits further research. In connection to the findings, school management should provide access to the mental health services for its staff members in order to promote a healthy and productive environment.

### 4.7.3  Theme 3: Strategies to minimise violence against teachers

Positive relationships with learners, parents, colleagues, and school management raises a positive attitude toward the profession (Buonomo, Fatigante & Fiovilli, 2017), and it improves teachers' level of motivation and commitment to their work and attitudes towards teaching and learning. In the current schooling situation, teachers find themselves more dependent on the support of parents and need to maintain a positive relationship with them (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Furthermore, forming positive professional relationships with co-workers and school management helps in establishing systems of emotional support. Social support from colleagues and staff members can nurture teachers' well-being and protect them against the negative effects of violence (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). Acton & Glasgow (2015) opined that mutually supportive reciprocal relationships between teachers and school management are worthwhile in developing a functioning community where problems can be discussed and shared, and potential resolutions can be considered collaboratively.

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## 4.7.3.1 Sub-Theme 3.1: Roles of relevant stakeholders in minimising violence – Department of Education

School safety and security continue to be an urgent need in most South African schools due to the frequent events of violence, which describe schools as unsafe environments. These incidences defy the generally accepted standard that supports school safety and security as a state that advances the constitutional right of every individual 'to an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being' and 'to be protected from neglect, abuse or degradation' (Xaba, 2014:490). This right to safety and security includes all people linked to the school, such as teachers and support staff members. Masitsa (2011:167) argues that 'since the learner and the teacher operate in the same school environment, what applies to the learner with regards to safety also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the teacher' and further points out that 'it is unequivocal logic that the teacher cannot provide adequate safety and security for the learner if he/she is not safe at school.'

In addition to the above, the Department of Basic Education has developed and implemented several structures and policies to assist schools to minimise school violence. However, during the interviews it became evident that participants felt strongly that they do not receive the necessary support from the Department of Education. Alluding to this statement, the participants highlighted that they need the support of the Department of Education to assist in eradicating the problem of violent learner behaviour. The participants felt that the Department of Education (DoE) does not assist them much in curbing violent learner behaviour. This feeling resonated with all participants and they contributed the following disappointing laments:

> P3 of school C expressed his disappointment with the DoE, saying that the DoE does not respond appropriately and promptly to cases reported to them. He furthered expressed his frustration with the SACE who also failed to respond timeously to his reported case and only contacted him a year later. P4 and P5 both agreed with P3 comment by stating:

> *'Another problem with the Department of Education that I've experienced in my eight years of teaching now….everything that goes to the Department, it gets like put under the carpet, they'll respond to you maybe after a year or get back to you or get back to you about your case or…..so,*

*it's like there's nothing immediate, nothing effective, nothing, nothing being done, so, that's why I'm saying, teachers are just not protected at all.'*

Both female participants highlighted that the Department of Basic Education tends to be on the side of the learner, in most cases, when there is the confrontation between the teacher and the learner. The teachers always stand a chance of losing their jobs but the learners will only be suspended for a few days and then allowed to return to the school. This resulted in P4 indicating that she is willing to leave the profession and contributed the following:

*'Well to be honest, I think as a teacher I don't wanna even be a teacher anymore actually and I haven't even been teaching that long…so, ja…I'm really considering leaving the teaching profession…uhm… ja, and I'm a Maths teacher so it's like I am not willing to put up with this at all".*

Participant 1 added that the Department of Basic Education has so many processes and paperwork to be completed that it really discourages the principals to report incidents. Participant 4 concurred and said*:*

*'When it comes to the department, I think it's because they have so many processes they've got so many documentations that needs to be completed and I think all these things it makes the principals almost despondent to respond because it's like you want me to respond but now it's gonna be such a long tedious process'*

This statement was further supported by P1 who affirmed that the amount of paperwork attached to reporting is discouraging:

*'The problem is that the procedure is sooo laborious, the amount of paperwork and the number of checks and balances that you have to do before you get to that point, makes it almost an impossible task to do it within an hour'*

The participants are urging the Department of Basic Education to prioritise their safety at schools and act promptly to reported cases. The urgent implementation of stringent processes and policies, which protect teachers should also be considered as the current structures are ineffective when dealing with the problem of violent learner behaviour towards teachers. The DBE carries the responsibility of ensuring the

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sufficient monitoring of school safety and the implementation of relevant policies pertaining to this (CJCP, 2016). Xaba (2014) reiterates that safety and security measures are a must for every school and that it is important for schools to adhere to this legislation because doing so ensures best practices in school safety and security. It is suggested by Tintswalo (2014) that the police, parents, and community leaders become involved in assisting schools to deal with violence.

### 4.7.3.2    Sub-Theme 3.2: School leaders

School management plays an integral role in dealing with violent situations that teachers are confronted with. Poor management skills can lead to the failure of any attempt to eradicate violence and places additional strain and stress on the teacher. This will eventually result in poor discipline at the school. Bounds and Jenkins (2018) indicate that colleagues and management staff can provide practical support to teachers who are victims of violence, fostering emotional well-being and protecting against violent events.

This is supported by Participant 3, who says:

> *'in the event that a teacher has been subjected to violence by a learner, I think our principal, he's such an amazing guy in terms of really attending to that as immediately as possible without any delays whatsoever. In essence, of course, he will call a teacher in and request that ok, listen, this is the situation, right, and we've got to look at the many ways to address it.'*

The positive support from the principal and the school management is further emphasised by participant 1 who comments:

> *'Luckily at our school it hasn't happen very often the response is usually quite swift and effective. The SMT immediately sweeps in … also your Grade Heads and you are compensated for, you are supported and usually they either give you a half a day off or a day off'*

The statements above allude to the vital role of the school principal in supporting victimised teachers. Sadly, some principals do not attend to serious matters accordingly. Participant 2 added that there is no form of discipline at his school.

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Learners can be found guilty of poor conduct and there is no disciplinary action from the principal.

Participant 4 and Participant 5 confirmed that teachers do not receive the necessary support from the principal or the DBE. Furthermore, they feel that as female teachers, they are viewed by the principal as being unable to maintain discipline as a teacher. To this attitude and feelings participant 4 stated:

> *'Nothing, I mean they [the principal and school management] don't do anything. It's reported to the principal, but like I said, in most cases they expect it to be like a physical violence before they respond to it. I think as a teacher reporting violence, you know it's a challenge is that now you're reporting this problem to the principal, but it doesn't get better, so is it worth reporting it, so as a result you just keep quiet which is a problem. Another challenge is that now you're reporting a case to the principal but now it's been seen as if oh, you are a teacher, you cannot discipline the learner'*

According to P5:

> *'There's no protection for teachers. There's none not at all there's not even a disciplinary hearing or if it's there, it's like I feel like the learners are used to it the only thing that you are given, it's like…I feel like we given more paperwork. They will give us books…we have to just record whatever bad behaviour, if somebody is rude, just record it. We record, record, fill in this form.'*

Teachers feel hesitant to go to the principal when they experience problems because they are afraid to look incompetent (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). Therefore, according to the researcher, it was probably a lack of trust between the principal and the teacher that prevented them from seeking support. Kauppi & Pörhölä, (2012) argue that the school management structure that favors teamwork and participative decision-making can help teachers cope with the emotional and psychological trauma caused by violent events. Apart from the support from the principal and school management, the school relies on the disciplinary committee on managing learner violence. Each school has a disciplinary committee, which comprises of teachers, learner representatives, school governing body members, the principal, and the deputy principal. Serious issues such

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as fighting, bullying, and engaging in learner-on-teacher violence, warrants the attention of the disciplinary committee.

Participant 3 stated they encourage teachers to forward issues of learner misconduct to the disciplinary committee as this committee is very productive and efficient. The participant said:

> 'I do think from my observation that it is effective in such a way that the students that have been to the disciplinary committee, the way in which they behave after that, you get to see, that ok, there is a change.'

Participant 1 agreed and contributed the following:

> "Yes, we have a Disciplinary Committee and yes, effective. … uhm…. Committee consists of members of the school governing body, parents as well as teachers and then of course members of the SMT as well…. Uhm… and then one or two outside stakeholders as well… ehh… action is usually swift and decisive and is usually quite final. The problem is that the law is against you. The child's given thousands of opportunities to redeem him or herself…. So even though the procedure is followed and the committee is effective, the whole process once again slows everything down… so we have a committee and very effective and I can quite honestly say, I've seen them in action…. They are top-notch.'

On the contrary, the following participants from two of the participating schools, affirmed that the disciplinary committees are not effective at all.

P2 said:

> 'To my understanding I think there is one, but I have never actually experienced it, like I said we don't have a form of discipline…'

P4 mentioned:

> 'There is a disciplinary committee as far as I'm aware, but it's not active, it's not working, it's not functional, it's not, it's just redundant, it's just there for like compliance.'

P5 said:

*'the disciplinary committee, we don't have that it's not very effective, …I haven't seen anyone into a disciplinary committee, maybe there is a structure. I don't know, but it's (laugh), it's not effective, maybe it's there because sometimes you have things on paper but practically, they're not effective.'*

Moreover, supportive principals and colleagues sustain emotional well-being and professional engagement, even when exposed  to school violence is controlled, but do not seem to adequately reduce the impact of exposure to violence (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). The responsibility of these disciplinary committees, as stated by the participants, is for conducting hearing on serious learner delinquencies. This statement is further supported by Mestry and Khumalo (2012), who stated that the duty of the disciplinary committee has to make sure that the school's code of conduct is enforced. Participants 4 and 5 also strongly agreed that management needs to take a stand and be steadfast in their decision-making as this can discourage learners from reacting violently towards their teachers. Participant 5 found that management was not effective when dealing with the situation and that left her feeling alone without any support from the management team. These participants felt that management had failed them; and therefore, they have been placed in circumstances beyond their control.

### 4.7.3.3    Sub-Theme 3.3: Policies

School policies are developed to make sure that schools are functioning appropriately and effectively. These policies include the School Code of Conduct, the Learner Code of Conduct, and the Offences or Punishment Registers. If teachers, management, and learners do not adhere and respect these policies then there are possibilities for an undisciplined environment. This creates the perception that anyone can do and behave in an inappropriate manner without facing disciplinary actions.

According to The Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (2016), the school management is responsible for ensuring there is the discipline in their schools. Schools need to ensure that the code of conduct is disseminated to all learners, parents, SGB, and other stakeholders. If all stakeholders adhere to the code of conduct, there will be little or no resistance to its implementation at school. Although the participants mentioned that the school code of conduct is issued to the learners

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when they come to the school, it is not effective due to management not following up on the levels of disciplinary actions. Participant D felt that there was no joy from the School Governing Body (SGB) because the learner who was aggressive towards him was still in school and not expelled for his violent and aggressive behaviour. Without effective school management policies in place schools cannot handle discipline efficiently and effectively (Xaba, 2014).
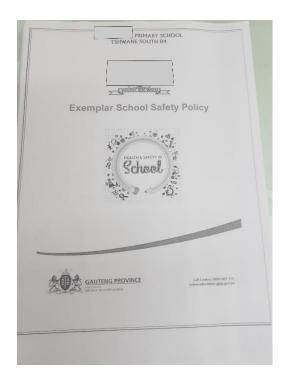


**Figure 7: Examples of school safety and security policies**

P3 is of the opinion that management can be more effective by keeping to what is stipulated in the code of conduct. If the disciplinary action is not carried out, then children feel they can get away with their aggressive behaviour. They tend to take advantage of the lack of commitment on the part of management. She also mentions that children seem to enjoy the punishment they receive. When children know they can take advantage of the situation, they can become manipulative. She also suggested that if management took firm decisions and stood by them, learners will feel more sanctioned by this and avoid being aggressive towards the teacher. The DBE and the South African Police Service (SAPS) produced the Safety in Education Partnership Protocol in 2011 (DBE, 2016). It highlights the responsibility these two government stakeholders have in making sure schools are safe (CJCP, 2016; DBE,

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2016). This protocol ensures that each school has a functional safety committee and that each school is linked with a local police station (DBE, 2016). It calls for the prevention of illegal acts among learners and improves school safety (CJCP, 2016; DBE, 2016).
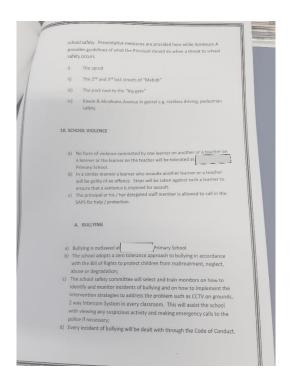


**Figure 8: School violence highlighted within the school safety policy**

All schools have a learner's code of conduct that relates to learner safety and serious misconduct like bullying, fighting, and verbal abuse. However, the researcher noticed that none of the participating schools could produce a policy based on teacher safety. This immediately indicated to the researcher that the safety of teachers is not a priority to the school or the department of education. To verify the data for triangulation purposes, the researcher collected the learner code of conduct policies and the safety policies from the four participating schools. All schools were compliant with the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 in terms of section 8 and subsection 1(RSA, 1996) that requires every school to have a learner code of conduct.
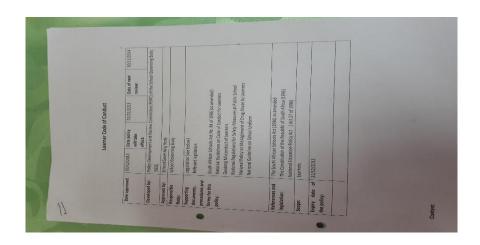
**Figure 9: Example of learners' code of conduct**

In developing a learner's code of conduct all schools consulted the parents, learners, teachers, and SGB members during the process resulting in the final approval of the policy. The process that the schools carry out are aligned to the South African School Act 84 of 1996 subsection 2 (RSA, 1996). In analysing the policies, the researcher noted that all policies on learner's code of conduct included different misdemeanours and various forms of punishment for wrongdoings. Level three and level four misdemeanours are serious offences. These misdemeanours include assault, intentionally using a dangerous weapon, possession or use of alcohol or any narcotic substance, and intentionally causing physical injury to somebody; these warrant expulsion or suspension after a disciplinary hearing.

Participant 4 indicated that, the Department of Education must formulate policies on learner discipline that can be easily implemented and that yields positive results. The participant said:

*'I don't think we're protected; I don't think the Department of Education is protecting us…I don't think the law is protecting us, because everything is in the favour of the learner…it's in the best interest of the learner, so even if a learner is wrong, even if a learner is provoking a teacher, even if a learner… is trying to be guided by a teacher….like you are so limited, you can't do anything, so it basically expect teachers to just not respond or not retaliate or not …. But I mean if you don't retaliate and you don't respond, the other learners that are watching everything happening, they get the wrong impression because they are like …. ok, we can do this because*

*nothing's happening…so I think on the side of the teacher, there is just nothing that protects the teacher at all.'*
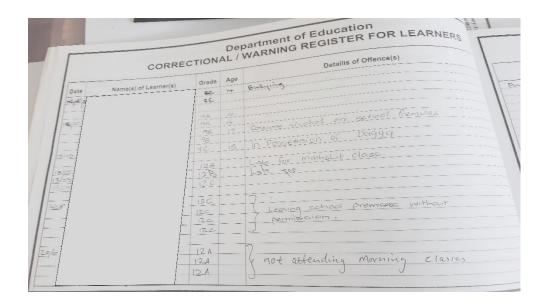


**Figure 10: Extract from incidence register indicating learners use of alcohol and drugs**

P3 reported that even if students are taught about the contents of the learner's code of conduct they do not give it due respect. Participant 3 further explained how little the learners respected the learner code of conduct:

> *'…no, they don't adhere to it … they do not adhere to that which is also, you know, a contributing factor to this diabolical behaviour that we experience at our schools.'*

Participants 4 and 5 concurred and indicated that the learner's code of conduct at their school is not implemented in the expected manner. Contrary to these contributions, participant 1 shared his sentiments:

> *'In my case they do. I don't offer them the opportunity of not doing it… … but the older the children are, the grade 7's are problematic…. they bring their phones to school, they try and take over "tees", which is part and parcel of being a teenager and why I don't want to ever teach grade 7's again in my life.'*

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Participant 2 also acknowledged that there are some learners who do adhere to the learner's code of conduct, but most of the learners do not show any respect towards it.

The researcher believes that when school management ignores disciplinary policies, teachers will lose faith in the system and learners will take advantage of the lack of support by management. All the participants agreed that when learners do not show respect for the policies, rules, and procedures it becomes very difficult to enforce them onto learners. The policies become a 'mockery' in the system. Despite the learner's code of conduct and school safety policy, schools are inundated with different forms of violence. The learners and parents resisted disciplinary procedures, such as suspension and expulsion. The participants felt that the policies, such as the learner's code of conduct were not very effective in managing learner violent behaviour. Policies need to be implemented, as well as revised if something in the policy is found lacking. The participants are urging the Department of Basic Education to formulate policies that will help the schools to manage the problem of learner violent behaviour more efficiently and effectively. The participants hold a view that the policies formulated by the DoE are ineffective when dealing with the problem of violent learner behaviour towards teachers.

### 4.7.3.4     Sub-Theme 3.4: Parental involvement

Schools are finding it difficult to instil discipline in learners since they lack parental support. Parents are not playing their roles effectively (Espelage *et al.*, 2013). Parents are expected to teach their children values and morals at home. These values and morals must equip the learners to be good citizens who respect all other people, such as teachers and community members. The parents are not monitoring their children and do not assist teachers with difficult and violent learner behaviour (Budd, Herron & Sartin, 2020). Participant 2 said:

> '*I would say, for me, my opinion would be their home situation, a lot of parents don't really give attention to their children… they don't give time or effort to sit with them to explain to them how they should, approach a situation in class…just general manners as well, that would be one of the aspects I would say.*'

He also indicated:

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*'…that's when we try and reach out to the parents but then the parents also don't make any effort, so that would be another one of the problems…'*

Dysfunctional family structures also play a contributing role in bad parental support (Rathert, Pederson, Fite, Stoppelbein & Greening, 2015). Factors, such as single parenting, orphanages, or learners being raised by grandparents, play a huge role (Budd *et al.*, 2020). Participant 4 shared:

*'…many of the learners come from very disadvantaged backgrounds… broken families, raising by single mum, some of them are living with grandparents they don't know their parents or…you know…so most of them are actually raising themselves and they are exposed to like they're exposed to whatever happens in the community like these learners are exposed to … I think things or situations that children are not necessarily be exposed to, but they are exposed at a young age…so they have all this aggression and anger and confusion and emotional issues happening inside of them…. conflict…'*

P5 said:

*'Most of our learners if you can check, they are raised maybe by a single parent who are hardly at home also because they have to work, so they just do as they wish, they don't have a strong background from home where they teach them about manners, how to respect the next person or how to respect yourself, so, that also place a very….'*

Some parents do respond to teachers requests to come to school. The parents do not see the fault of their children, but instead they find fault with the teachers. Participant 4 shared the following:

*'In rare cases you'll find teachers reporting it to the parents directly but in some cases even if its reported to the parent…I've had instances where the parent has told me 'mam, I will first listen to my child's side of the story'….so even if you contact the parent, or you involve the parent, there's nothing…there's no discipline coming from the parent's side to the learner. As a teacher you can't discipline the child because there's so much red tape around it.'*

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P1 concurred:

*'I think a lot of problems is the disbelieve that parents and guardians have…. The little angel can't possibly be the violent child at school that the teacher portrays. The child is then always asked "is this true…" as though the teacher would be lying about it. If the child denies it, it's your word against his.'*

The family's economic status influences violent learner behaviour (McGrath and Elgar, 2015). All the schools interviewed are located in Black-African communities. Such communities are associated with low socio-economic status (Rathert *et al.*, 2015). Many people are unemployed and they depend on support grants that are paid by the state. Some people do not have proper accommodation, they live in shacks and some learners are fortunate to live in houses built by the South African government through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Participant 2 contributed the following:

*'…it's hard to…. to blame the learners for a lot of the mistakes they make because you know a lot of it is sometimes it's not their fault…. It's their home situation, it's the environment, their conditions. A lot of learners come to school hungry… our school does have a feeding scheme but then they'll come to school hungry because the parents didn't pack lunch and then they will refuse to go to the feeding scheme because it will be a sense of pride…'*

The socio-economic status of the community or family contributes to the learner's behaviour, especially violent behaviour, and this concurs with the literature. McGrath and Elgar (2015) indicate that children from poverty-stricken families are strongly associated with behaviour disorders, such as defiant disorders or attention hyperactivity disorder. Furthermore, they consider poverty as a risk factor for many problems experienced by children and youth.

## 4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter provided the research findings in order to answer the primary research question: 'How can teachers be supported to prevent violence against them in

schools?' Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the participants' responses during the interviews were presented and discussed.

In the next chapter, the results presented in Chapter Four are related and aligned to existing literature. Chapter Five will emphasise the comparisons and contradictions found in the data in relation to the literature, as well as highlight new knowledge that arose from this study.

# CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 the analysis of the data was presented. The researched included the data analysis strategies and research findings as they emerged. The research findings were presented according to the themes and sub-themes. The responses of participants were provided, with relevant evidence from the literature review to support the findings. Chapter 5 presents an interpretation of the research finding with reference to the purpose of the study (see Section 1.3), the relevant literature on learner violent behaviour against teachers (see Chapter 2), and the theoretical framework (see Chapter 2). In addition, Chapter 5 uses the findings to answer the research questions which guided the study (see Chapter 1). This chapter also emphasises the limitations experienced and provides recommendations for future research. Figure 11 demonstrates the outline of Chapter Five.
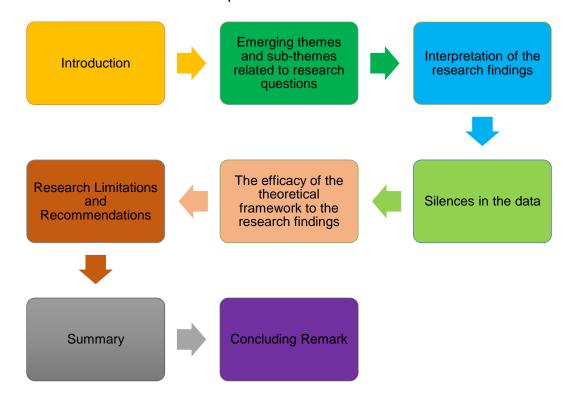


**Figure 11: Layout of Chapter Five**

### 5.1.1 Primary research question

How can teachers be supported to prevent violence against them in schools? [RQ1]

### 5.1.2 Secondary research questions

- What types of violence do teachers experience in schools? [RQ2]

- What strategies can be used to support teachers from being violently abused at school by learners? [RQ3]

To form a complete understanding of the research findings and to fully appreciate the subject under investigation, the researcher used the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research finding (see Chapter 4). Moreover, in conjunction with the Social Learning Theory (SLT) (Chapter 2), which aims to link whatever mediations that are possible to support violent learner behaviour against teachers, the researcher provided an all-inclusive summary, concluding remarks, and also made recommendations.

In Chapter Two the literature review, which was presented, offering international and national perspectives and necessities for the effective implementation of strategies to support teachers who have been faced with violent learner behaviour at school. By comparing the literature review with the findings from the study, it is clear that the implementation of effective strategies to curb violence against teachers, together with the support from all stakeholders, violent learner behaviour at schools can be minimised if not completely eradicated.

### 5.2    EMERGING THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The accurate interpretation of the research findings is imperative. Therefore, the emerging themes and sub-themes from the data analysis should be reflected upon. The themes allow for the research findings to be structured in a way that makes recommendations for each of the themes, possible. Table 7 below, indicates the emerging themes and sub-themes

**Table 7: Emerging themes and sub-themes**

| Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|---|
| Theme 1: Teachers' experiences of violence | a)  Causes of violence |
|  | b)  Types of violence |

| Theme 2: Effects of violence against teachers | a) Psychological effects |
| | b) Social effects |
| | c) Emotional effects |
| Theme 5: Strategies to minimise violence again teachers | Roles of relevant stakeholders in minimisi violence – <br><br> a) Department of Education |
| | b) School leaders |
| | c) Policies |
| | d) Parental involvement |

## 5.3 INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 5.3.1 Teachers' experiences of violence

#### 5.3.1.1 Causes of violence

The findings of the research confirmed that all participants experience severe stress at work, and this jeopardises their overall wellbeing. Stress can be thought of as a feature of the external environment that acts on an individual; the individual's responses (psychological, physiological, and behavioural) to environmental demands, threats, and challenges; or the interaction of the two (Ganster & Perrewé, 2011). All participants were teaching at schools that are located in areas where violence is very high and therefore, learners' violent behaviour is emulated in the school context. Teachers felt that learners' aggressive behaviour is seen as the norm to them and the community as the environment they find themselves in, has a direct influence on their behaviour. It is evident from the findings that teachers do not receive respect from learners and their parents. Learners do not hesitate to openly make shameful and offensive comments about teachers. Learners would leave and enter the classroom when they wanted to. They showed disregard for school rules, participate in unruly behaviours, and are found transgressing all school rules. Teachers feel helpless, vulnerable, and victimised by learners (Espelage *et al.*, 2013).

Participants demonstrated a belief that the abolition of corporal punishment worsened violence at schools (Xaba, 2014). Learners know that they cannot be reprimanded by the teachers and that allows them [learners] the freedom to do as they please in the

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classroom and towards the teachers. This was supported by P5 who believes that schools have become chaotic places because the learners know that teachers cannot punish them when they transgress. Most participants further showed that they are afraid to discipline learners because they do not want to be attacked by learners, since most participants reside in the same community as the learners.

Some of the participants indicated that the causes of violence in schools are due to academic tension, poor behaviour, and violence learned in society and bullying. Participant 4 shared that those learners who struggle academically are the ones who display the worst behaviour. According to Mncube and Harbor (2013), factors such as low educational ambition are also associated with violence. The literature further states that behaviour can be prompted by socio-economic status, poverty, and violence within the community and their family (Dhlamini, 2014). All participants agreed that most families are living in poverty, have abnormal and dysfunctional structures and express high levels of violence.

These causes merit further investigation in order to gain a deeper understanding of it to formulate approaches to curb learners' violent behaviour.

### 5.3.1.2    Types of violence

Participants demonstrated an understanding of the different types of violence, inter alia passive and active violence. The findings of the study indicated that passive violence is more prominent than active violence in participating schools. Passive violence generally takes the form of verbal harassment, and active or physical violence refers to learners engaging in physical attacks against teachers. The general perception of participants is that passive violence causes more damage than physical violence.

The study also highlighted that female teachers seem more strongly affected by aggressive behaviours as compared to their male counterparts. This would appear to be in line with findings supported by validated data that, in comparison to men, women report a larger number of incidents of aggression (Berg & Cornell, 2016; De Cordova *et al.,* 2019).

### 5.3.2  Effects of violence against teachers

To date, there are no studies and no documentation on what effects witnessing a severe incident of school violence has on a teacher's career (Daniels & Bradley, 2011). An understanding of how a teacher is affected by school violence can assist in the development of a teacher trauma incident management system, and perhaps an institution to serve as a central resource for teachers and schools struggling with school violence in the future to prevent the decline in learning post-incident.

In this study, both male and female teachers showed a high level of tension in their jobs (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014).

### 5.3.2.1      Psychological effects

The study also highlighted that psychological effects suffered by all participants included intense anxiety, depression, fear, worthlessness, intense anger, and frustration. This statement is supported by scholars Daniels, and Bradley (2011) and Bounds and Jenkins (2016), who reported in their studies that teachers who suffered violence are severely affected psychologically and display signs of stress, depression, anxiety, and tension at school and at home. According to Anderman *et al.* (2018), violence perpetrated against teachers has the potential to adversely affect teachers' well-being, efficacy, and longevity in the profession. Participants in this study raised that the stress they experienced affected their work ethic immensely (Bounds & Jenkins, 2016). This confirms the statement by scholars Zuma *et al.* (2016) that schools are not safe and that violent incidents occur within these environments.

### 5.3.2.2      Social effects

The findings of the research confirmed that the psychological effects suffered by teachers result in social effects. Teachers who are depressed and stressed are usually not attending school regularly due to them feeling demotivated. In addition to this, overcrowded classes are a normal phenomenon in townships and the participating schools are no exception. These conditions result in misbehaviour by learners (Daniels & Bradley, 2011). Participants indicated their fear of interacting with learners. Participants showed that in most cases, these interactions will result in altercations with the learners and will eventually spiral out of control. Participants have resorted to only focussing on doing their jobs and no longer joking or being too friendly with

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learners. Job security is ultimately their main concern and therefore, focus on getting the academic work done and no longer taking up the role of acting as a parent at school. Furthermore, some of the participants suffered theft and damage to personal property by learners, which added to the frustration and demotivation they are experiencing.

All participants are extremely young between the age of 26 and 44 with very few years of teaching experience. Young teachers are finding it difficult to survive in the teaching profession due to the violent nature of the learners. Therefore, schools end up losing good teachers due to the behaviour of learners. This has a devastating impact if the teaching field cannot recruit more teachers (De Wet & Jacobs, 2014).

### 5.3.2.3 Emotional effects

The increasing state of violence in schools can be emotionally draining and exhausting for teachers (De Wet & Jacobs, 2014). The negative emotions experienced by teachers can influence their motivation to teach negatively (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010). The participants showed emotion during the interviews by either getting furious or sad when they relived the traumatic incidents. The disrespect shown towards them by learners is something that they cannot accept.

In addition to this, teachers are burdened with lots of paperwork when they report violent incidents. The daily preparations for lessons seem to be an added burden. These result in teachers feeling they want to leave the profession (Santos & Tin, 2018). Therefore, there were also requests for specific teaching conditions, such as a lighter workload, and more time for daily preparation; especially for new teachers as they are more commonly exposed to school violence.

### 5.3.3 Strategies to minimise violence against teachers – Roles of relevant stakeholders

The goal of prevention and intervention strategies is to stop school violence against teachers from occurring. Despite initiatives implemented to address the serious issue of violence in schools, it remains an emerging concern. This leads to the conclusion that strategies designed to prevent violence have not yet proven entirely effective, leaving education professionals at risk to some form of aggression.

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### 5.3.3.1    Department of Education

Participants in this study raised that dealing with violent learner behaviour and not having support from parents, their only hope for assistance is from the Department of Education (DoE). However, it was a general concern that teachers do not feel protected and inadequate support is forthcoming from the DoE. Although policies have been constructed and implemented by the DoE in conjunction with other important stakeholders, such as the SAPS, the increasing rate of violence perpetrated against teachers is alarming. Participants revealed that no further investigation or resolution comes from the DoE after incidents have been reported by them. Another institution, SACE (South African Council for Educator), has also failed. One participant reported that after he reported his case, SACE contacted him a year later to resolve the matter.

The general consensus amongst all participants is that they are being let down by the DoE. There's too much being put on paper, but nothing practical and helpful is done. The amount of paperwork attached to reporting cases seems to be ridiculous and often the reason why principals do not bother to report cases. Participants felt helpless and unprotected by authorities, which are contrary to what Xaba (2014) reiterates that safety and security measures are a must for every school. Participants are urging the DoE to prioritise their safety at schools and act promptly to report cases.

### 5.3.3.2    School leaders

It remains the responsibility of school management to deal with violent situations that teachers are confronted with. The responsibility of the principal and school management team is to provide support for teaching and learning in various forms:

- Ensuring that the school context is a healthy, safe environment conducive for teaching and learning, for both teachers and learners; and
- Engaging parents regularly and formally on issues related to school violence.

These statements are further supported by Bounds and Jenkins (2018), who reiterate that colleagues and management staff can provide practical support to teachers who are victims of violence, fostering emotional well-being and protection against violent events. Unfortunately, this is not the case at most of the participating schools. Participants indicated that the School Management Team (SMT) often turn a blind eye to incidents occurring at school as the paperwork attached to reporting these cases

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are just too laborious. The SMT are slow to act to take disciplinary action against learners who are displaying inappropriate, violent behaviour.

### 5.3.3.3 Policies

School policies such as the school code of conduct and the learner code of conduct, ensure the effective functioning of the school. Participants in this study attached great value to these policies. The concern was that these policies are not being implemented as they ought to be. Both learners and school management ignore the rules and this result in the teachers feeling let down by the system. Participants felt that these policies are there to protect them but due to the lack of implementation thereof, they are not protected in any way.

In spite of initiatives implemented to address the serious issue of violence at schools, it remains an alarming concern. This leads to the conclusion that strategies and policies designed to prevent violence have not yet proven entirely effective, leaving education professionals at risk of some form of aggression (Espelage *et al.*, 2013).

### 5.3.3.4 Parental Involvement

Participants stated that they inherit learners who are brought up poorly. They lay the blame on the structure of some families, which they refer to as dysfunctional. They blame the families for failing to instil good morals in the children. According to Espelage *et al.* (2013), parents are not playing their roles effectively. Participants also criticised the behaviour of some of the parents, which influences learners to be violent.

Harsh parental discipline is associated with higher levels of aggressiveness in youth. Parental corporal punishment increases the risk of aggressive conduct in children and adolescents. (Budd, Herron & Sartin, 2020). According to McGrath and Elgar (2015), a family's economic status influences violent learner behaviour. As many of these learners find themselves in so-called Black-African communities, these communities are associated with low socio-economic status (Rathert *et al.*, 2015).

## 5.4 THE EFFICACY OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The literature found elements and information that were grounded in the theoretical framework of the Social Learning Theory (SLT) of Albert Bandura (1977), which

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underpinned this study. The SLT identified areas that should be addressed with regards to supporting teachers who fall victim to school violence against them; and to enable teachers to cope with the phenomenon of school violence and improve their teaching quality and overall well-being. The SLT strongly focuses on the notion that the behaviour of an individual is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning (Bandura, 1977).

The concepts of 'learning by experience or observation' and 'modelling' (Bandura, 1977), were highlighted to explain the value of the theoretical framework in this study.

### 5.4.1  Learning by experience or observation

Upon reflecting on the participants' responses, the conclusion is that learners follow the examples of their parents and other members of the community. Growing up in a community or household, which is characterised by violence, the learners have no other choice but to be violent. This statement is supported by Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which believes that children learn patterns of behaviour whilst observing their parents and other members of the community. When violent behaviour is observed, violence is what the learners will display when interacting with their peers and teachers. Collins (2013) believes that learners do not only observe violence, but also experience it directly and suppress the traumatic emotions that follow.

On a more positive note, new patterns of behaviour can be learnt through direct observation or experience (Bandura, 1977). The social learning theory is administered by the rewarding and punishing consequences that follow every given action (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, should the strict adherence of discipline policies, such as the learner code of conduct and school safety policies be implemented by school management and supported by parents, chances of the learners learning a more positive pattern of behaviour are guaranteed and minimising school violence can become a reality.

### 5.4.2  Modelling

The findings of this study contributed valuable insight as to why learners caused participants' experiences of school violence. Modelling is particularly problematic for children who grow up in violent families. These learners are not only the victims of aggression, but they also see violence being inflicted on their parents and siblings.

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Through modelling, learners, unaware, imitate their peers, parents, and other members of the community. In the case of this study, the learners find themselves in communities that are characterised by violence and gangsterism. Therefore, participants complained that learners think their behaviour is acceptable and the norm. They see nothing wrong in saying and doing the socially unacceptable. Participants emphasise the support from parents and the community to guard against this behaviour perpetuating. One of the positives of the SLT is that the environment can change the learner's behaviour. Therefore, should all parents and members of the community display acceptable behaviour, the learner can easily make positive changes to their behaviour (Collins, 2013).

## 5.5    RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.5.1   Limitations of the study

By employing a qualitative research study, both strengths and weaknesses surfaced (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research brings unavoidable limitations; and therefore, some challenges that limit this study are noted.

Firstly, it involved a small number of schools, which makes it difficult to draw general conclusions from the data (Rule & John, 2011). However, the data are aligned with existing literature, and there is no evidence that the situation is different in other schools. The purpose of this study was not to generalise the findings, but instead to interpret and gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences of school violence directed at them. The study was limited to only one district, so the results might not be applicable to other districts in South Africa. Further research could extend to capture the perceptions of teachers on violence from other districts or provinces in South Africa.

Secondly, due to COVID-19 the original sample of ten participants were significantly reduced to only five participants. Therefore, this study focused only on five teachers; therefore, the results are only true for these five participants. As with any social and phenomenological study, the research findings relied heavily on the human experience. Although five different cases were studied, the participants all had the same teaching circumstances. To create a comprehensive understanding of how teacher's experience school violence, it is recommended that further investigations be undertaken with participants from different educational contexts.

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Thirdly, only one researcher conducted this research study. The case studies may therefore be selective, biased, and subjective to the researcher's views.

Fourthly, the use of a variety of data collection methods to ensure triangulation strengthened the trustworthiness of the study. An additional data collection tool, such as a questionnaire, could have been used together with the interviews in order to gather more comprehensive data from participants on their answers in the questionnaires. This would have provided participants with more aspects to focus on in the discussion of their experiences on learner-on-teacher violence, as language differences between the participants and the researcher may have been a possible limitation. This language difference may have influenced the manner in which the researcher interpreted the results. However, the researcher included member checking in order to confirm the emerging themes and thus reflect participants' responses as true.

Furthermore, the limitations of the study refer to the exclusiveness of the data collection sites that were limited to public schools, which may limit part of the interpretations to the public context of education and can either corroborate or contrast information from previous studies in other domains of education. Transferability is possible granted that more participants from other contextual backgrounds contribute the same experiences regarding school violence.

Finally, as already suggested, these challenges would merit further investigation. Possible future research on violence against teachers is discussed as recommendations in the following section.

### 5.5.2 Recommendations

For this study to produce significant awareness, the researcher provided recommendations for further research on curbing school violence directed towards teachers. The following recommendations are derived from the research findings (Chapter Four) and the literature review (Chapter Two). The recommendations were aimed at the Department of Basic Education in South Africa, policy designers, schools, parents, and other stakeholders.

## 5.5.2.1 Recommendations for limiting teacher experiences of violence

- The participants require support from the Department of Basic Education and parents. Participants in this study highlighted that the Department of Basic Education must assist schools in designing and implementing policies that will help to curb violent learner behaviour. Participants perceived that the Department of Education must devise programmes that are preventative and therapeutic. Participants want the DBE to be more involved by offering professional support to the school. The participants echoed that new teachers entering the teaching field are not coping with the situation at schools; therefore, they felt that teacher-training institutions must prepare their students on coping with violent learner behaviour at schools. The participants highlighted that schools must prepare the new teachers and equip them with strategies for curbing violent learner behaviour.

## 5.5.2.2 Recommendations for supporting teachers when facing the effects of violence against them

The findings of the study showed that although structures are in place to support teachers who fall victim to school violence, there is still inadequate support provided.

- Therefore, the study recommends that the DoE must employ social workers, psychologists, and counsellors at schools who will support teachers that face incidents of aggressive learner behaviour. These professionals must be positioned at schools, working hand-in-hand with the teachers. The services of psychologists, counsellors and social workers should also be easily accessible to learners. Learners are encountering many social issues, which drives them to be violent. Some of the problems teachers encounter with learners are beyond their capacity to handle. The presence of counsellors, psychologists, and social workers will alleviate the burden teachers have on dealing with learners' social issues. The counsellors, psychologists, and social workers could easily identify learners who are a risk to other learners and teachers. Upon identifying such learners, they can offer the necessary help before these learners can kill or injure other learners or teachers.

- An understanding of how a teacher is affected by school violence can be assisted in the development of a teacher trauma incident management system,

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and perhaps an institute to serve as a central resource for teachers and schools struggling with school violence in the future to prevent the escalation thereof (Duffy & Mooney, 2014). In South Africa, there is no such association that only focuses on the school safety of teachers and this may be a worthwhile initiative our government could consider. Therefore, it is recommended that an association that focuses on school safety be established.

### 5.5.2.3 Recommendations for reinforcing the strategies to minimise violence against teachers

The schools are furnished with the learners' code of conduct, safety policies, and the disciplinary committee. Despite having learners' code of conduct, safety policies and the disciplinary committee schools are still haunted by incidents of violence. There is a need to adopt a new policy on learner discipline that incorporates psychological and psycho-educational support systems.

- Schools must have a solid partnership with parents, community, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders, such as the law enforcement agencies. This can help parents nurture children who have morals and values.
- The DoE must initiate the process of creating an effective curriculum that focuses on teaching values such as tolerance, mutual respect, fairness, and good citizenship. An example of such a curriculum is the character education curriculum, which was formed in 1992 by the Joseph Institute (Peter, O'Connor & Fluke, 2014).

### 5.6 SUMMARY

Chapter Five provided an interpretation of the outcomes of this study that are supported by existing literature and the social learning theoretical framework. The emerging themes and sub-themes gave a more organised presentation of the interpretations and were discussed. The researcher undertook to answer the fundamental research questions of this study. The data analysis, supported by the experiences and responses from participants in Chapter 4, was reflected upon to articulate important recommendations for the strengthening of strategies to support teachers experiencing school violence directed at them. This chapter was completed by providing limitations and recommendations to all interested parties.

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## 5.7    CONCLUDING REMARK

To conclude, it is noteworthy that schools find it difficult to deal with the violence of learners. Due to violence, the learning environment is no longer safe for teachers and learners. Although schools are secured with the school policies on learner discipline, they are proving to be ineffective in managing violence at schools. The study contributes to other approaches the Department of Basic Education could adopt on handling learner violence. The solution lies in correcting the environment to produce a respectable citizen. To manage learner violence, there is a need to involve parents and various stakeholders. In order to create a conducive environment for learning, schools should adopt a psychosocial support system for its teachers.

Although the research findings of this study cannot be generalised, the study supports the value of strengthening the support available to teachers when facing traumatic acts of violence perpetrated by learners.

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## APPENDIX A: Teacher's letter of consent

**Faculty of Education**
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

June 2020

Dear Teacher,

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Elaine Baxen and I am currently registered as a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Early Childhood Education. The title of study is ***Strategies to support teachers experiencing school violence directed at them***. The aim of this study is to minimise and support teachers who experience violence in schools.

I am working under the supervision of Drs Roy Venketsamy and Makwalete Malatji from the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria.

As part of my study, I am required to collect data, interpret the findings and make appropriate recommendations. You are kindly requested to participate in the data collection phase of this study which will include face-to-face interviews and document analysis of school safety policies, guidelines on safety in the environment and code of conduct for both teachers and learners. The interview will be scheduled according to your availability and will take place at a venue convenient for you. The interview should not take longer than 60 minutes. In the event that interviews cannot be conducted, alternative forms of data collection methods will take place, for example interviews through the use of technology or interview questions answered in writing by the participants. For the purpose of document analysis, copies of these will be requested from the participating schools.

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Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you accept to participate in this study willingly, your anonymity will be guaranteed. The responses you give will be treated as highly confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to avoid identification to any participant or their school. Since your participation is voluntary, you may request to withdraw from the interview process at any time, without explanation.

In the event that a face-to-face interview is not be possible, the questionnaire will be emailed to you to complete.  It would be appreciated if you would kindly return the completed questionnaire within 3 weeks via email.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and you will receive a summary of the findings.  Member checking will be applied to the study. This means that all participants will be get an opportunity to member-check the transcriptions to avoid misinterpretations and misinformation.

The interviews and observation will not disturb or affect your teaching activities; in particular, no tuition time will be lost.

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to give consent that audio recordings may be used during the face-to-face interviews. These recordings will only be used for transcription of the data to ensure accuracy. The audio recordings will be kept safe and stored in a secure and password protected laptop at the University Of Pretoria. Only my supervisor and I will be able to access the audio recordings. Anonymity will be ensured and participant's identity will be protected. Pseudonyms will be used during the reporting phase of the study.

You are more than welcome to ask questions before or during the time of participation. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to notify my supervisor or me. You as the participant will have the opportunity to verify my expressed views and findings as well as the transcriptions of interviews.

We would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentiality and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis

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using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Should you agree to participate in this study, please complete the consent form below and return to me.

Thank you in advance for your time and insight.

Kind regards,

_____                    _____
Mrs Elaine Baxen                                                   Dr Roy Venketsamy
Academic Implementation Manager                          Supervisor
SANTS Private Higher Education Institution             University of Pretoria
Email: elainebaxen05@gmail.com_____ Email: roy.venketsamy@up.ac.za

**Faculty of Education**
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

| **PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH** |
|---|
| I, _____, hereby give permission to Elaine Baxen to include me as a participant in her research study entitled ***Strategies to support teachers experiencing violence in schools directed at them***. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, that my anonymity and confidentiality will be protected, that interviews will be audio-recorded, and that I may withdraw at any moment from this study.<br><br>Signature: _____<br><br>Date:_____ |

## APPENDIX B: Principals letter of consent



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

June 2020

Dear Principal,

**REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA FROM TEACHER(S) IN YOUR SCHOOL**

My name is Elaine Baxen and I am currently registered as a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Early Childhood Education. The title of study is ***Strategies to support teachers experiencing school violence directed at them***. The aim of this study is to minimise and support teachers who experience violence in schools.

This research study will be conducted under the supervision of Drs Roy Venketsamy and Makwalete Malatji in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria.

As part of my study, I am required to collect data, interpret the findings and make appropriate recommendations.

You are kindly requested to give your permission for teachers at your school to participate in the research study. This data collection phase will include face-to-face interviews and document analysis of school safety policies, guidelines on safety in the environment and code of conduct for both teachers and learners. The interview will be scheduled according to the availability of your staff. Interviews will be scheduled to accommodate the staff. The interviews will not affect teaching time at your school. The interview should not take longer than 60 minutes. In the event that interviews cannot be conducted, alternative forms of data collection methods will take place, for example interviews through the use of technology or interview questions answered in

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writing by the participants. For the purpose of document analysis, copies of these will be requested from the participating schools.

The participation of all teachers in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. Anonymity will be ensured and participant's identity will be protected. Pseudonyms will be used during the reporting phase of the study.

The process requires that the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) give permission to conduct the research study in a selected number of schools. Attached find a letter from the GDE granting their permission to conduct semi-structured interviews with the teachers.

We would also 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 using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Your favourable consideration of this request will be greatly appreciated.

Please sign to indicate full comprehension of the nature and procedure of the research and to give your consent to participate.

Thank you in advance for your time and insight.
Kind regards,

_____         _____
Mrs Elaine Baxen                               Dr Roy Venketsamy
Academic Implementation Manager                Supervisor
SANTS Private Higher Education Institution      University of Pretoria
Email: elainebaxen05@gmail.com                  Email: roy.venketsamy@up.ac.za

**Faculty of Education**

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

| PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH |
|---|
| I, _____, hereby give permission to Elaine Baxen to include selected teachers at my school to participate in her research entitled ***Strategies to support teachers experiencing school violence directed at them.***<br><br><br>Signature: _____<br><br>Date:_____ |

# APPENDIX C: SGB letter of consent



**Faculty of Education**
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

June 2020

The Chair of the SGB,

**REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA FROM TEACHER(S)**

My name is Elaine Baxen and I am currently registered as a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Early Childhood Education. The title of study is ***Strategies to support teachers experiencing school violence directed at them***. The aim of this study is to minimise and support teachers who experience violence in schools.

I am working under the supervision of Drs Roy Venketsamy and Makwalete Malatji in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria.

As part of my study, I am required to collect data, interpret the findings and make appropriate recommendations.

You are kindly requested to give permission to contact the principal and teachers at the school to participate in this study. Teachers are requested to participate in an interview which will take approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will be scheduled at a convenient time for the teacher. The data collection process will not affect classroom-teaching time. . In the event that interviews cannot be conducted, alternative forms of data collection methods will take place, for example interviews through the use of technology or interview questions answered in writing by the

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participants. For the purpose of document analysis, copies of these will be requested from the participating schools.

The participation of all teachers in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. Anonymity will be ensured and participant's identity will be protected. Pseudonyms will be used during the reporting phase of the study.

The process requires that the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) give permission to conduct the research study in a selected number of schools. Attached find a letter from the GDE granting their permission to conduct semi-structured interviews with the teachers.

We would also 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 using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Please sign to indicate full comprehension of the nature and procedure of the research and to give your consent for me to contact the school principal.

Thank you in advance for your time and insight.

Kind regards,

_____                    _____
Mrs Elaine Baxen                                    Dr Roy Venketsamy
Academic Implementation Manager                     Supervisor
SANTS Private Higher Education Institution           University of Pretoria
Email: elainebaxen05@gmail.com_____          Email: roy.venketsamy@up.ac.za

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### PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, hereby give permission to Elaine Baxen to include selected teachers to participate in her research entitled ***Strategies to support teachers experiencing school violence***.


Signature: _____


Date:_____

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# APPENDIX D: Teacher interview schedule

**Interview questions/prompts (the questions are only guidelines and the researcher will further be guided by the responses and engagement by educators.**

*Dear Teacher*

*Thank you for your willingness to participate in the interview.*

*Your response to the questionnaire is voluntary and will be treated confidentially at all times.*

*Questions may be asked before and during the interview. Should you have any concerns regarding the data collection procedures, please notify me or my supervisor. Each participant will have the opportunity to verify the expressed views and the transcriptions of interviews.*

*Thank you, your participation is highly appreciated.*

*Elaine Baxen*

**Semi-structured interview questions for teachers**

Participant 1

| A | (Questions asked by researcher) | (Answers given by teacher) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | In your own words, explain what you understand by the term violence in schools. | |
| 2 | How often do you think teachers are exposed to violence against them by learners? | |
| 3 | What type of violence do teachers mainly experience from learners? | |

| 4 | What do you think are some of the causes of violence against teachers by learners? | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | How often have you experienced violence against you? | |
| 6 | How are teachers protected against violence by learners? | |
| 7 | What support structures are in place at your school to protect teachers against violence? | |
| 8 | How often do teachers report violence against them to the:<br>   a. School principal<br>   b. Department of Education<br><br>Why do they prefer to keep quiet? | |
| 9 | What are the challenges you experienced in reporting violence against you in school? | |
| 10 | How do you think teachers can be protected from being harmed at school? | |
| 11 | How did the acts of violence against you affect you? | |
| 12 | How does the school support teachers who have been affected by violence? | |

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| 13 | What professional training have you received in order to be able to deal with the violence at school? | |
|---|---|---|
| 14 | Are principals reporting violent incidences towards teachers to the department and the police immediately, or is there a delay in doing this? | |
| 15 | Do you have a Disciplinary Committee and how effective is it? | |
| 16 | Do learners adhere to the Learner Code of Conduct? | |