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EXPLORING SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATOR EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

by

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DECLARATION

“I, Alfred H. du Plessis (91376450) declares that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis (Educational Psychology) 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.”

Alfred Haupt du Plessis

Signed on the _____ day of _____ 2008, Pretoria, South Africa.



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To all my friends, who believed in me and motivated me to continue with “mission impossible”.



SUMMARY

This study intends to explore the very relevant and current issue of violence at school level. Through this case study the experiences of an educator with regard to violence in a secondary school are explored.

Data for this study was collected through observation and unstructured interviews with the participant. Data collected was analysed through several phases of establishing thematic categories. This analysis was done within the parameters of a scientific literature framework. The six main categories were discussed and interpreted in terms of literature to provide the findings portrayed by the study. To ensure the dependability and quality of the data the study incorporated member checking and literature control.

An attempt was made to contribute to, and expand upon, the existing body of knowledge with regard to this very important phenomenon. The results of this study show that the educator experiences violence in school as a very serious reality. This study argues that the causes of school violence should be studied from an integrative perspective and it supports the Bio-Ecological Systems theory as a multi-dimensional approach to understanding school violence.

KEY CONCEPTS

Experience

Violence / School violence

Educator

Learners

Bio-Ecological Systems Theory



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY, RATIONALE, CONCEPTUALISATION AND PLANNED RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 RATIONALE

Few people will argue against the fact that school violence has a devastating effect on a school community system. And there seems, recently, to be an increase in the number of reported serious incidents of school violence in South African schools. According to Burton (2008), 15.3% of all learners between Grades 3 and 12 have experienced violence in some form while attending school. This translates to 1,821,054 learners countrywide. Burton (2008) furthermore states that South African learners are victimised at a rate of 160 learners per 1000; a figure that is significantly higher than, for example, that in the United States, where the latest statistical data yields a rate of 57 learners per 1000 who fall victim to comparative forms of school violence.

Although criticised by the Department of Education (DoE) for having a political agenda, research done by the South African Institute for Racial Relationships indicated that South African schools are the most dangerous schools in the world and that only 23% of learners reported that they feel safe at school (Keppler, 2008). Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006) mention that according to a survey done by the Medical Research Council of South Africa, 32% of students felt unsafe in schools. Research done by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention and the DoE, found that high schools in Gauteng have by far the highest rate of violence in the country (Serrao, 2008).

The media often focuses on the explicit details of violent incidents in schools and capitalise on the sensation these incidents create. Very rarely do they focus on the vulnerability of educators in coping with the overflow of violent symptoms from society into our schools. Educators within some schools have complained since 1999 that the DoE was not supporting their efforts to rid schools of troublemakers, who they attempted to expel on reasonable grounds. This situation even led to a court case against the DoE (Bezuidenhout, 1999). Furthermore, the DoEs seem to focus increasingly on teacher-generated violence prevention and restorative justice practices¹ (Astor, Pitner & Duncan, 1996) that, in practice, keep

¹ Restorative justice has been described as a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implication for the future (Morrison, 2007).

offenders within the school system. Restorative justice is linked to the concept of 'ubuntu'² which, in essence, implies forgiveness (Morrison, 2007). This places a larger responsibility on educators to effectively deal with violent elements in school. In practice, the aforementioned results in taking the policy of inclusion to an extreme level by not permanently removing violent offenders from schools.

Our educators, who are the heart of education, are at the forefront in dealing with violence in our schools, which often is a result of a culture of violence in our society that is 'spilling over' into community schools. These educators are often required to be retrained or to implement new systems of discipline or management where the past processes and procedures are failing the increased needs in society. It is this constant and increased challenge to the education profession, brought about by escalating incidents of violence, which inspired me to focus on the unique experiences³ of the educator with regard to school violence.

Many educators come from a background of violent conflict resolution in the form of corporal punishment, that was, until 1996, a legal form of punishment in South African schools (Morrell, 2001; Sureshrani, 2007). After corporal punishment was declared illegal teachers had to adapt in order to find alternative strategies to cope with discipline of learners. The question should be asked; How were those teachers equipped to adjust their teaching practices?

After being personally involved in various schools as educator and intern psychologist, I have come to the realisation of the importance of ensuring quality education to learners by attending to the needs of the educators, who are the custodians of responsible education within our schools. With the predicted shortages of teachers within the foreseen future (Gilmour, 2001) it is vitally important to take into consideration the views and experiences of educators with regard to violence in schools. This might lead to better management of our schools and empowering our educators with regard to the unique challenges posed by a transforming society, plagued by violence within its schools. The question should thus be asked; What are educators' experiences of school violence?

² South African concept implying that forgiveness is for one's own sake as much as for the larger community (Morrison, 2007). The researcher uses this concept to sketch the context of the educator and acknowledges the potential value of ubuntu.

³ According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary (Thompson, 1995:474) 'Experience: As an event regarded as affecting one, the fact or process of being so affected.' As a verb: 'to have experience of, to undergo, and to feel affected by.' This study however has a broader focus with regard to experiences (see par. 1.3).

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.2.1 PRIMARY QUESTION

This research will be guided by the following primary research question: What are the experiences of an educator with regard to violence in a secondary school?

1.2.2 SUB QUESTIONS

In addition to this question, the following critical sub questions will be addressed during the research project:

- How does school violence impact on an educator?
- What view does an educator hold on his/her⁴ personal safety in a school faced with violence?
- What are the views of an educator on classroom management in a violent school setting?

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of my study is to explore the experiences of an educator with regard to violence in a secondary school. For this study experiences are not limited only to incidents or emotional perceptions by the teacher but will view experience broadly, including the educators perceptions and personalised meaning derived from experience in a violent educational setting. The variety of experiences under exploration will therefore not be limited.

Through consideration of an in-depth case study of a teacher exposed to violence in a secondary school I will attempt to contribute to, and expand upon, the existing body of knowledge with regard to this important phenomenon. I will further seek to create an awareness of teacher experiences of school violence, to raise awareness of the importance and need for more effective strategies for support and training.

1.4 FOCUS OF THE STUDY⁵

During this study I will focus on an educator in a multi-cultural secondary school setting. The emphasis in this research and the description thereof in this dissertation will be on the educator's experiences of violence and violence related incidents within the school setting.

⁴ The male and female forms will be used interchangeably during this study, although the participant chosen for this study was a female and will thus be referred in the female gender.

⁵ The aim of this dissertation is for the novice researcher to demonstrate research skills within a limited field of study. This study therefore only has a limited scope of research as required for completion of a mini-dissertation.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following key concepts are defined to enhance the clarity of the research study.

1.5.1 EXPERIENCE

The APA Dictionary of Psychology defines experience as (1) a conscious event: an event that is lived through, or undergone, as opposed to one that is imagined or thought about. (2) The present contents of consciousness. (3) Events that result in learning (Vandenbos, 2007).

1.5.2 VIOLENCE / SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Some studies (Leary, Kowalski, Smith & Phillips, 2003) reduced school violence for school shooting while others have included incidents of violence on campuses of higher learning (Gale, Furlong, D'Incau & Morrison, 2004). Violence and specifically school violence can be used in a broad or narrower, more specific context. During this study, school is defined as an educational setting consisting of one or more classes of nursery school through to Grade 12, and violence includes not only the crimes of murder, rape, robbery, and assault, but also the action of bullying⁶ and intimidation.

It is important to look at the concept of violence by focusing on its roots as well as on its most violent manifestations. Hazler (2000:109) makes it clear that *violence doesn't begin with gang warfare, rape, murder, and suicide. That is when society becomes afraid of violence. Instead it begins with put downs, insults, threats, harassment, and bullying, where inappropriate lessons of how to deal with others are learned and where frustration, resentment, and anger grow.*

For this study school violence thus implies any form of manifested violence in an educational setting, including intimidation, threats, insults, harassment and bullying.

1.5.3 EDUCATOR

For this study the terms teacher and educator will be used interchangeably; and will refer to a person whose occupation is teaching and therefore someone that teaches (Rundell & Fox, 2002). In education, a teacher is one who assists students or pupils, mostly in a school, but it

⁶ A behaviour that involves coercion by one student to force another student into an action that he/she did not choose for themselves (McCabe & Martin, 2005:11).

may sometimes include other contexts like family, religious or the community setting. A teacher is an acknowledged guide or helper in the processes of learning.

1.5.4 LEARNER

The terms learner and student will also be used interchangeably during this study; and the concept is defined as someone who is learning something and someone going to school (Rundell, 2002). For the purpose of this study I will mostly refer to learners within a secondary school environment (Grades 8 to 12).

1.6 RESEARCH PARADIGM⁷

The proposed research study will be conducted by applying a qualitative approach following the route of constructivism and interpretivism as the underlying philosophy.

Patton (2002) mentions that constructivism is based on the premise that the human world is different from the natural, physical world and therefore must be studied differently. He goes further by stating that its aim is to give constructive knowledge about reality, not constructing reality itself.

In the attempt to give constructive knowledge about reality I will be taking an interpretivistic approach when dealing with the data. Interpretivism assumes that the meaning of human action is inherent in the action itself and the task of the inquirer is to unearth that meaning (Schwandt, 2007). Through the use of interpretive research I plan on exploring first-hand accounts of actual experiences (Effendi & Hamber, 1999). Interpretivism advocates the view that its central endeavour is to understand the subjective world of human experience. To retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to 'get inside' the person's world, to understand that person's experience from within (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002).

Through the interpretivist paradigm I will endeavour to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of an educator teaching in a school environment where violence occurs. Interpretivism as epistemology will also guide me to collect data in an interactive way. I will attempt to understand the selected educator's perceptions of violence in a school environment and hereby hope to obtain a better frame of reference with regard to her experiences.

⁷ See chapter 3 par. 3.3 for a more comprehensive description of the research paradigm.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed research study will be conducted by applying a qualitative methodological approach.

1.7.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study will take the form of an instrumental case study that involves an educator from a secondary school. The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings (Eisenhardt, 2002). This strategy was selected after carefully considering the purpose and outcomes of this study. This type of research design could provide the opportunity for answering the research questions in an explorative and more descriptive manner (Mouton, 2001).

According to Berg (1998), the case study involves a systematic gathering of sufficient information to permit the researcher to effectively understand how a particular person, social setting, event or group operates or functions and seeks to understand and interpret that 'world' in terms of its actors. The aim is to understand the case in depth and in its natural setting, recognising its complexity and its context. It also has a holistic focus, with the aim to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case (Punch, 2005). Punch (2005) further sketches the advantages of a case study as having clear boundaries and having a clear focus in a naturalistic setting.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2002), a case study will: (1) Give a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case. (2) Provide a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case. (3) Blend a description of events with the analysis of those events. (4) Highlight specific events that are relevant to the case. (5) The researcher may be integrally involved in the case. (6) The richness of the case can be portrayed.

The case study as research design could therefore best serve the rich and in-depth perspective I would like to portray through my research.

1.7.2 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANT⁸

In order for me to conduct the research I will be using convenient sampling by selecting a teacher employed at the secondary school where I am currently employed as an intern psychologist (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). And by identifying an educator who has been confronted

⁸ One educator will form part of this case study in terms of the limited scope of this study.

by and has dealt with violence in school over a period of more than five years I will simultaneously be applying purposeful sampling. Creswell (2002) notes that purposeful sampling is most often employed in qualitative research, as it allows for the selection of people who can best help us to understand the phenomenon under investigation. For this study I will be using a sample with a specific purpose (Punch 2005) given my research questions in mind.

To ensure that this study contributes to a greater richness in the specific field of research, the educator will be selected from the senior staff of the school familiar with and experienced in dealing with learners of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, as well as diverse cultures and age groups.

1.7.3 DATA COLLECTION

The following methods of data collection will be used during my study.

1.7.3.1 Interviews

I will conduct face-to-face individual interviews with the participant. This will take place by means of in-depth unstructured interviews, using open-ended questions⁹ to probe the subject. *The unstructured interview is a powerful research tool, widely used in social research and capable of producing rich and valuable data* (Punch, 2005:172).

An unstructured interview can provide a greater depth of data than other types of interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The essence of unstructured interviewing can be further described as the establishment of a personal relation with the respondent and the desire to understand rather than to explain.

The purpose of the application of an unstructured one-to-one interview is to understand the experiences of other people and their interpretation of those experiences (Greef, 2005). The advantage of using this type of interview is that I will be using a very naturalistic way of gathering data, with the full potential to gather more data for an in-depth perspective.

I will record the interviews through taking of notes and may also include video-tape recordings, after considering practical constraints, participant cooperation and approval (Punch, 2005).

⁹ See chapter 3, par. 3.9.1 for general questions prepared for the unstructured interview.

1.7.3.2 Observation and field notes

Through participant observation, I will be both participant and observer during the interviews (Punch, 2005). Recording of participant observations: This will be done through making use of recordings of the actual individual interviews, studying the verbal and non-verbal responses during these individual interviews as perceived.

Field notes in the form of transcribed interviews as well as notes of informal conversations with the participant will also be used as further data source during the data analysis process. In line with Babbie, Mouton, Vorster and Prozesky (2001), notes will be made in two phases. At first only words and phrases will be written. The notes will then be rewritten shortly afterwards to give a more detailed description of what was observed.

1.7.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION¹⁰

Data analysis will consist of identifying emerging themes throughout the data collection process. Emphasis will be on the conceptualisation of the data, and generating conceptually abstract thematic categories from in the data. This approach requires the researcher to analyse the data above an empirical level, and on working towards a condensed, abstract and emerging interpretation of what is central in the data (Punch, 2005).

The conceptual analysis will describe the specific and distinctive recurring qualities, characteristics, discourses and concerns expressed. The researcher will selectively analyse aspects of human actions and events that illustrate recurring themes. This study will go beyond descriptive analysis, to add a theoretical dimension (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The researcher will therefore transcribe the interviews and code the concepts, categorise them into higher order concepts and then, through Axial (or theoretical) coding, discover connections between the thematic concepts.

Data will be interpreted from a constructivist framework. The participant will be encouraged to partake in the data interpretation, and to check that the data interpretation is accurate and in accordance with her experiences (Cohen *et al.*, 2002; Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

1.8 LIMITATIONS

A challenge with regard to this study is to stay aware of and guard against potential bias from the researcher. Although it might be an advantage that I, as the researcher, in the past was

¹⁰ See chapter 3, par. 3.10.

an educator, from a clinical perspective as researcher I should be aware of my own vulnerability with regard to potential bias. I will therefore adopt the following procedures to prevent possible bias: Firstly, member checking will take place; which involves having the participant confirm the findings of my research before final acceptance. Secondly, findings will continuously be verified under the supervision of a senior researcher. And lastly, a thorough literature control will be conducted.

Mouton (2001) mentions the fact that the conducting of a case study can be time consuming, especially when it comes to the data collection and analysis. It is often quite time consuming to transcribe and analyse the data through proper member checking. As stated previously this is a dissertation of limited scope, which implies that I have limited the number of participants for the research. As researcher, I will still, however, experience the challenge of working around the busy schedule of the chosen participant.

The challenge of the participant trying to misrepresent herself, for whatever reason, should have a limited impact due to proper triangulation of data.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.9.1 INFORMED CONSENT

In line with the requirements of ethical practice for psychotherapists and counsellors, as stated by the HPCSA (Allan, 2001), I will ensure that I have the necessary written permission and informed consent from the participating educator (see Appendix A) as well as written permission to conduct the study at the University of Pretoria (see Appendix B). The aforementioned letters will be used to inform all parties with regard to all relevant aspects of the research; i.e. the location for the research, the purpose of the study, as well as the process to be followed to obtain data. This will include the planned discussion of the research findings. The participant may withdraw from the process at any time. The research participant will have the right to choose whether or not to participate in the research study after being informed of all the facts that might influence her decisions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

1.9.2 PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

After ensuring the participant understood the purpose and procedures that will be followed throughout this research study, the participant will be assured that her identity will be protected. Written permission for the visual and audio recordings will also be obtained from the participant. The protection of the participant's identity will be guaranteed through not

linking her name to the research publication or using quotes that may compromise her identity.

The principle of privacy will be applied, therefore the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant will be protected at all times (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2002). In order to ensure this, all transcripts of interviews will be kept safe and the identity of the participant will remain anonymous. Raw data containing the participants' personal details will be securely stored¹¹ (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999).

A further measure that will be taken is that the participant will be interviewed away from her school context, at a mutually agreed venue that insures her anonymity.

1.9.3 PROTECTION FROM HARM

Harm can entail a number of facets: physical harm; harm to participants' development; loss of self-esteem; stress; and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts (Bryman, 2004:509). The participant partaking in this study will not be respondent to any acts of deception, betrayal or any act that may cause harm as stipulated in the above mentioned definition during the research or publication of research findings.

This research study holds potential psychological implications for the participant as she may have experienced the negative and even traumatic impact of violence. Through this study negative feelings that were experienced may be elicited. Being consciously aware of this as a responsible researcher, debriefing will occur after each session, to support the participant. The participant will also be given telephonic access to the researcher and his research supervisor. Should the need arise for any support and intervention which fall outside the scope of the researcher the participant will be provided with a list of possible references who can provide the necessary support.

1.10 STUDY PLAN

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

The first chapter consists of an introduction to the research topic. It will also focus on the purpose and explain the rationale of the study and the paradigmatic perspective. Furthermore the research design and methodology of the study will be outlined briefly.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

¹¹ Safekeeping at the Department of Educational Psychology of the University of Pretoria.

The second chapter outlines the conceptual framework for the study, exploring the concept of school violence and educator experiences. Relevant and authoritative literature on these topics will provide a possible theoretical framework for the chapters to follow.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PROCESS

The third chapter provides the reader with an outline of the research design, research methodology and the research process. Choices made with regard to methods of data collection, data analysis and interpretation are explained and justified.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY, INTERPRETATIONS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

The fourth chapter conveys the results and findings of the research. Analysis of the data and discussion of the findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 5: FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the concluding chapter, where the results of the research will be linked to the research questions as posed in chapter 1. The possible contributions as well as the challenges of the study will be discussed, before recommendations for further research, educational practices and educator training will be suggested. In chapter 5, all interpretations leading to the final result will be discussed and related back to the existing literature.



CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL VIOLENCE, CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

When exploring school violence and, more specifically, the experiences of educators within the context of the school, it is important to consider this phenomenon in a broader societal context. South Africa, with its more than 12 million public and independent school learners, who attend close to 27 000 schools that are served by almost 400 000 educators has a very unique history that is plagued by various forms of violence (Kollapan, 2006). It should be noted that South African's live in a country that was born painfully through conflict, often escalating into violence of war and political struggles. South Africans have indeed come a long way since the first democratic elections in 1994. Although the political goodwill and that of the general public have created a platform for a transition into a more peaceful future, we experience many symptoms of a society that is plagued by a heritage of violence and disruption.

This chapter will provide the reader with an overview of some of the main existing theories with regard to violence. The reader will find a progression from the more traditional theories that mainly address a one- or two-dimensional view on violence, towards more integrative and comprehensive theories, as the researcher reveals the theoretical framework that the researcher regards as most suitable for this study.

2.2 THEORIES ON VIOLENCE

2.2.1 TRADITIONAL / CONVENTIONAL THEORIES ON VIOLENCE

According to DeKeseredy and Perry (2006) traditional or conventional theorists have attempted to explain violent behaviour in a simplistic, one-dimensional way, limiting the dimensions of their theory to one or two factors contributing to violent behaviour. Some of these factors such as, for example, gender-related violence, cultural or ethnic violence or violence relating to inequalities are frequently referred to in existing literature on violence (see Table 2.1). Most of those explanations of violence underscore the behavioural expression of persons to the relative exclusion of the institutional and structural expressions thereof (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006).

Traditional theories or explanations of violence are often found in literature as being causes for violent behaviour and many studies aimed to identify relationships between factors within society and violence, without necessarily the intention of providing a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon of violence. A few of those theories will be highlighted for their possible significance within the educational setting and will be discussed in the following sub section.

TABLE 2.1: An adapted summary of the Traditional / Conventional theories on violence (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006)

	Main theories	Brief assumptions	Manifestations
Traditional¹² / Conventional Theories on violence (one to two dimensional perspective on violence)	Resource	Family member with most power in terms of resources, commands	Family violence
	Sub-cultural	Culture of violence. Use of physical force beyond normative	Xenophobic attacks, racist attacks, cultural dominance
	Socio-biological (Inclusive fitness theory)	Individuals will behave in ways to increase their genes in future generations	Rape, abuse
	Social learning or Socio-cultural theory	Violent behaviour is learned from others and social environment	Gang violence, any form
	Patriarchal	Men use violence to control women	Bullying, family violence
	Exchange	People in the nuclear family violent because they can	Abuse, family violence
	Evolutionary	Less technologically advanced communities place less demand on obedience than high technologically advanced communities	Any form
	Ecological (Bronfenbrenner, 1992)	Development of behaviour sensitive to social milieus such as neighbourhood context, social support networks, poverty and value systems	Any form
	Traditional systems	Optimal levels of violence are needed to maintain or reproduce the system	Any form
	Inequality	Caused by discrepancies in privileges, hierarchies, discriminations and oppressions	Xenophobic attacks, racist attacks, cultural dominance
	Pathological conflict or social conflict	Perceived pattern of aggression/violence	Conduct disorder

2.2.1.1 Abuse and violent behaviour

Supporting the Exchange and Social Learning theories, Wolfe (1999, in Wenar & Kerig, 2006) linked violence with the physical abuse and neglect by parents in terms of deviations

¹² Traditional theories underscore the behavioural expressions of a person to the relative exclusion of the institutional and structural expressions.

from the normal pattern of authoritarian child rearing. van der Kolk (2005) mentions that physical abuse and neglect are associated with very high rates of arrest for violent offences. His research findings suggest that most of the interpersonal trauma on children is perpetuated by victims who grow up to become perpetrators or repeat victims of violence. This causes a cycle of violence in our society that is experienced in our schools. *As shocking as physical abuse of children is, it is even more disturbing to consider that it is just one manifestation of aggression in a society marked by violence* (Wenar & Kerig, 2006:442).

2.2.1.2 Gender and violent behaviour

Patriarchal theorists hold the view that males abuse females to control them (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006). Although this theory isn't dismissible, it would seem that violence does follow a gender pattern. Mills (2001) claims that issues of masculinity are seldom raised in the school context, despite the fact that in the majority of instances the perpetrators of this type of violence are males. Dobson (2001:27) remarks that *although many people think that male- and femaleness are the natural expression of a genetic blueprint, while gender is a product of human thought and culture, a social construction that creates the 'true nature' of all individuals.*

In the classroom a gender prejudiced teacher can easily project his or her view upon the learners. Such a projection might reinforce the socially constructed 'gap' between men and women (boys and girls) and will not be productive in the process of changing social views. Some teachers, for example, do not believe that harassment occurs or they see it as the natural order of things: Boys will be boys (Mills, 2001).

Although the chemical differences in the make-up of the two genders plays a significant role in contributing to males being more prone to acts of violence, according to Lorber and Farrell (1991) society clearly makes a contribution in maintaining the socially constructed roles within communities. In most cases therefore men and boys are the perpetrators of violence and girls, women and younger boys are the victims. Young men between the ages of 16 and 30 are the most likely group in the population of late capitalist countries to be injured in violent attacks or fights (Mills, 2001).

2.2.1.3 Institutional origin of violence (Systemic violence)

As part of the general systems theory approach the focus of this theory is on the managerial practices of the institution that contribute to the occurrence of violence. Gale *et al.* (2004) state that any institutional practice or procedure that adversely impacts on individuals or

groups by burdening them psychologically, mentally, culturally, spiritually, economically, or physically can lead to what is called systemic violence. Applied to education, it means practices and procedures that prevent students from learning, thus harming them (e.g. over-competitive learning environments, toleration of abuse, school disciplinary policies, exclusionary practices).

Osborne (2004) emphasises the fact that in some cases, school systems need to rethink the way they manage schooling, particularly at the secondary level where the academic focus is often over emphasised. This is especially important for those students who are at risk of violent behaviour. Often they are pressured to identify with the schools academic aspirations, yet unable to achieve the expected academic outcomes. It is critical that the faculty and staff at the school assist these students in either improving their performance to meet their goals, through the increased access to resources, remediation and extra practice or they should be guided in forming alternate expectations and more realistic goals.

Osborne (2004) goes on to say that people in positions to effect change are not always well trained in dealing with these issues, and they need to be informed by experts on the ramifications of proposed remedies. For example, many schools contemplate zero-tolerance rules, installation of metal detectors, erosion of student privacy through random locker searches, and the creation of a more restrictive (i.e. jail-like) environment. Researchers and experts in the field need to provide thoughtful and informed comments on the likely ramifications of implementing these rules.

Teachers are often blamed because of their integral role within the institution. Schools as educational institutions are dependant on policy makers and their staff to create a climate that will reduce the occurrence of violence. Osher, VanAcker, Morrison, Gable, Dwyer and Quinn, (2004) feel that few educators intentionally set out to impede student success. Still, unknowingly, schools can encourage or support failure through classroom management. Students often become disruptive when they are unable to perform or are unsure of what is expected within the classroom setting. By becoming disruptive and being removed, the student avoids (at least temporarily) the undesirable task. Thus the student is negatively reinforced for disruptive behaviour. As the student becomes disruptive, this increasingly aversive behaviour is directed toward the teacher. By removing the student, the disruption is removed, and the teacher too is negatively reinforced.

Astor *et al.* (1996) suggests that negative social attribution cycles between peers, school personnel, and highly aggressive children may contribute to the perpetuation of violence in the school setting. It further suggests that research on and observation of the ways in which

classroom and school social hierarchies interact with those children who are involved with youth and school violence can be used to design classroom interventions that are within the teacher's control. Osher *et al.* (2004) gives the example of the teacher, overwhelmed by a large class, who uses a stern or loud voice when calling a child's name. That child is likely to internalise the communication as rejection, criticism, failure, and punishment. This can potentially provoke violence. The institution is therefore often unknowingly contributing to the problem of violence.

Osborne (2004) views schools as restrictive institutional environments that rigidly impose laws on students, leaving them with little choice and freedom. Frustrations build up in some of the students, especially in those who misidentify with the academic identity held dear by those academic institutions.

2.2.1.4 Predisposing factors contributing to violence

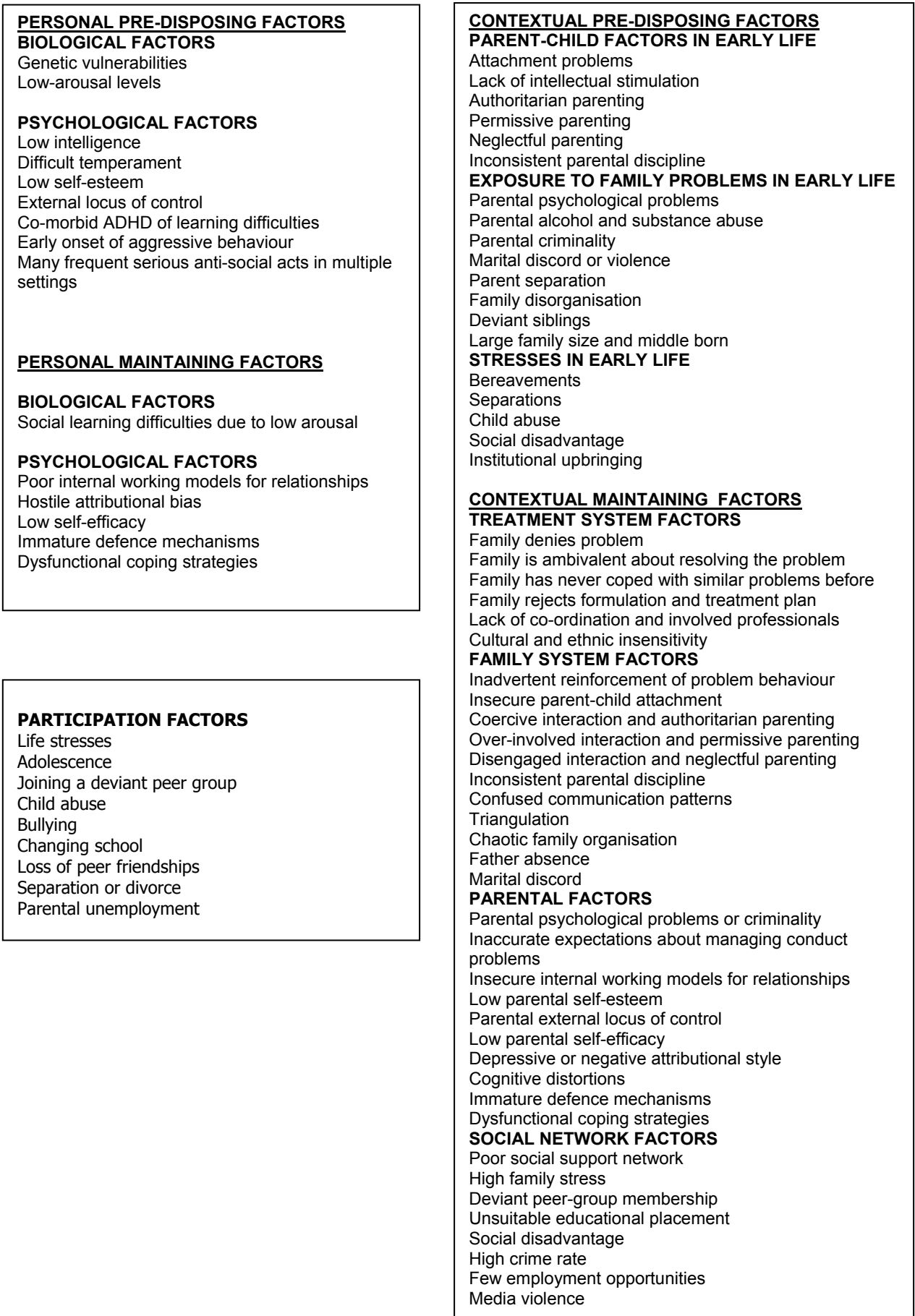
Carr (2006:386-387) gives the following comprehensive list (see Diagram 2.1, p.17) of predisposing factors to consider in the development of conduct problems, including personal biological and psychological factors, contextual factors between parent and child, family problems and early life stresses. He further lists various factors maintaining the development of conduct problems. Within the broad South African social context, many of these disturbing factors are accentuated and maintained.

According to DeKeseredy and Perry (2006) violent behaviour is explained through views on either internally or externally motivated or constrained assumptions on behaviour. Table 2.2 gives a summary of these assumptions.

TABLE 2.2: Assumptions on motivation and behaviour (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006)

		Assumptions
Internal	Motivation	Humans are naturally inclined to act violently and need little motivation.
	Constraint	Violence is caused through failed constraint or control.
External	Motivation	Humans are naturally inclined to conform to the rules of custom and order, requiring much stimulation or motivation.
	Constraint	Violence is a product of unusual or deviant impulses.

DIAGRAM 2.1: Pre-disposing and maintaining factors to consider in the development of conduct problems (Carr, 2006:386-387)



Thus far traditional theories were explored. These theories merely recognise one- or two-dimensional factors contributing to violence. In the following section the focus will shift to exploration of a more integrative perspective on violence.

2.2.2 LIFE-COURSE / DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES ON VIOLENCE

According to DeKeseredy and Perry (2006) superior explanations of violence to that of the traditional theories can, however, be found in theories taking a more integrative perspective on violence¹³. By integrating the contributions made by many of the traditional theories, Life-Course / Developmental Theories view the development of violent behaviour over a life-course, considering the causal influences shaping behaviour over time (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006).

Perry (2005) focusing on the developmental practices of society and its effect on neurodevelopment, especially through early childhood development, states that you don't become human just because you're born into the species but because someone was kind to you, held you, and shared. He found that many children, materially poor as well as wealthy, suffer from forms of neglect, which he defines as failing to provide a pattern of developmental experience required to express a fundamental potential. DeKeseredy and Perry (2006) note that although dynamic theories usually account for internal as well as external motivations and constraints at the interpersonal level, they generally ignore similar interactive, reciprocal, and dialectical relationships involving the structural and at times, the institutional domains of violence.

TABLE 2.3: An adapted summary of the Life-Course / Developmental Theories on violence (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006)

Life-Course ¹⁴ / Developmental Theories on violence (Integrative perspective on violence)	Assumptions		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assume a complexity of human interaction, cutting across behavioural, motivational and cultural constraints existing internally or externally. Conceptually more dynamic, developmental and multi-dimensional in nature. Developmental trajectories of a person towards and away from specific courses of behaviour. Dynamic relationships between external and internal influences towards or away from violent behaviour. 		
	Main theories	Brief assumptions	Manifestations
Moffitt's Two-Pronged Theory of adolescence-limited antisocial behaviour	A temporary maturity gap encourages teens to mimic antisocial behaviour in ways that are normative and adjustive	Temporary antisocial behaviour	

¹³ See Table 2.3 for a brief summary of some of these theories.

¹⁴ Life-course / Developmental Theories systematically examine the multitude of causal influences that shape offensive behaviour over time (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006).

	Moffitt's Theory of Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behaviour	Children's neuropsychological problems interact cumulatively with their environments across development, culminating in a pathological personality	From Oppositional-Defiant disorder to Conduct disorder to Antisocial personality disorder
	Sampson and Laub's Theory of Informal Social Control and Cumulative Disadvantage	There are important events and conditions that alter and redirect deviant pathways. 1. Structural factors (e.g. racism or poverty) 2. Social conditions and labelling. 3. Development of social capital later in life.	Childhood delinquency to adult criminality
	Messerschmidt's Theory of Gender Diversity and Violence	Masculinity and femininity challenges, motivations and opportunities resulting in violence	Violence against a specific gender

2.2.3 BIO-ECOLOGICAL AND SYSTEMIC REALITIES

Although many traditional and integrative theories on violence exist, for purpose of this study violence should be viewed from a Bio-Ecological Systemic perspective. This integrative theory would allow for the consideration of multiple factors that influence the development of violent behaviour over a period of time. The Bio-Ecological Systemic¹⁵ (Bio-Ecological Systems) Theory was a natural development from a combination of theories that were created by various systems theorists and the Ecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1992). It also incorporates the biological factors genetically inherited within individuals and, importantly so, provides for the critical developmental influence of all those factors over a period of time. According to Stead and Watson (2006) the systems perspective conceives a person and the environment as independent entities that dynamically interact. This theory is reflective of the constructivist worldview with its emphasis on holism, personal meaning, subjectivity and recurrence between influences. Astor *et al.* (1996) argue that ecological issues are at the core of concerns about violence, particularly those in low-income urban communities. According to Thomas (2005), Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory consists of four interacting, embedded systems. They are the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems.

Thomas (2005) explains that the **microsystem** consists of the patterns of activities, roles and internal relationships of the home, school and peer settings experienced by the developing person. In each one of the microsystems (e.g. school or home) there is a pattern of perceived activities that the child experiences. The microsystem is the most basic unit of these systems. The internally interpreted or experienced environment plays a much bigger role than the 'real environment' and therefore the way the child interprets his experiences

¹⁵ See Bio-Eco Systemic model layout, Diagram 2.2.

directs his behaviour. The child must be understood through the meanings he assigns to the environmental settings. The microsystem is an integrated system, thus a change in one part of the system (e.g. role, activity) will have a corresponding effect on the other parts of the system. The microsystem is always in a state of change. A child's interactions with people and activities in which the child engages will either promote or have a negative effect on his development.

A **mesosystem** comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more of the microsystems; in other words the interrelations between these systems, for example the family, the school and the neighbourhood (Thomas, 2005).

Donald *et al.* (2006) mention that the level of the **exosystem** includes other systems in which the child is not directly involved, but which may influence the people who have proximal relationships with the child in her microsystem, e.g. a parent's workplace.

Thomas (2005) states that the **macrosystem** is composed of the cultural milieu and encompasses the micro-, meso- and exosystems of the child's (adolescent's) environment. It involves dominant social and economic structures; as well as values, beliefs, and practices that influence all other social systems. For example, a cultural value may include obeying authority and respecting senior members of the community (Donald *et al.*, 2006).

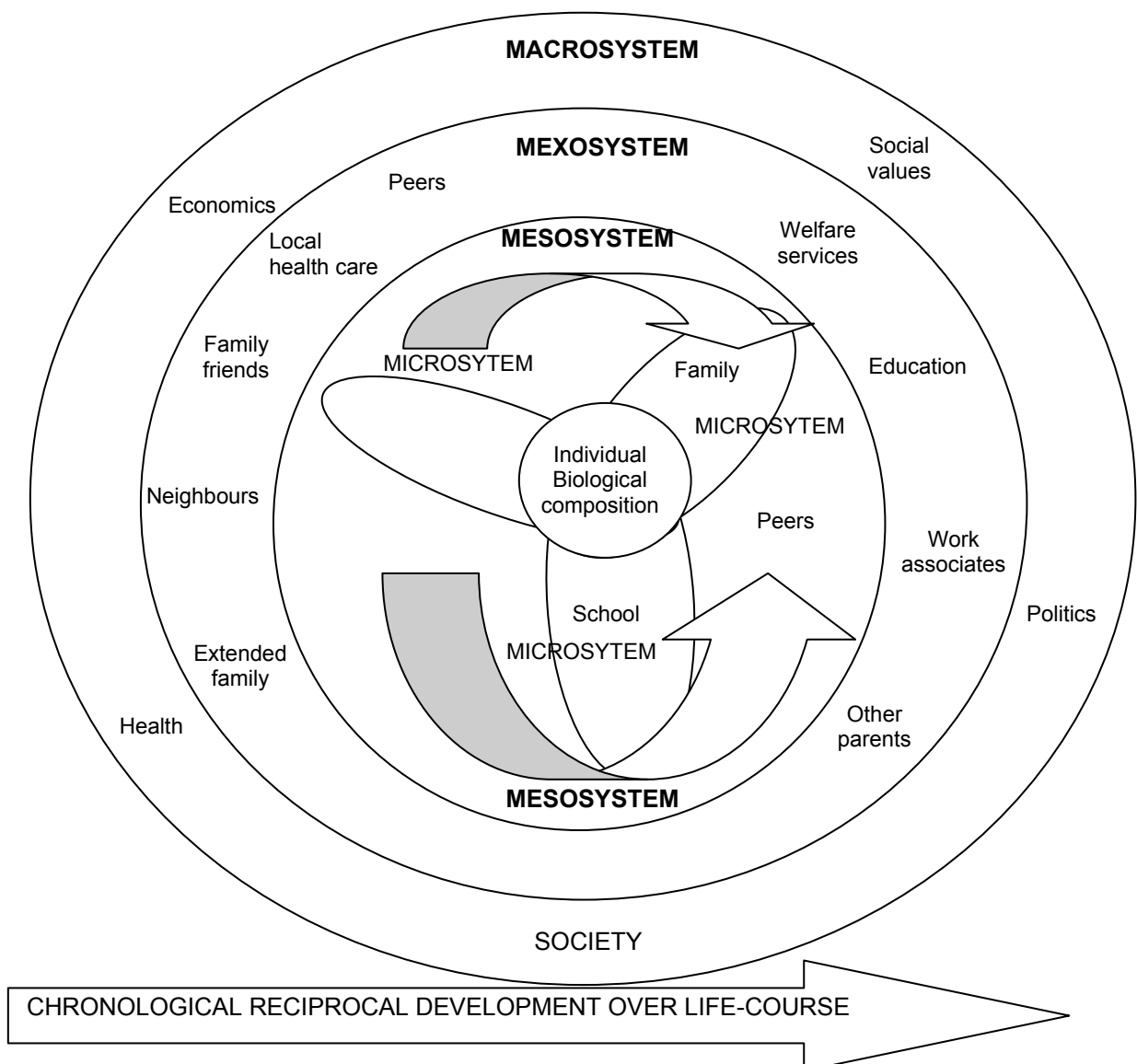
Another system that is excluded in some literature is the **chronosystem**. This system refers to the developmental time frames, which cross through the interactions between these systems and their influences on individual development. An example of this would be the developmental process which a family undergoes in which there might also be a child who is in a process of development (families with babies and toddlers experience different interactions and processes from a family with teenagers and children leaving home) (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

In terms of a child displaying violent behaviour at school, it is important to consider this comprehensive view of interrelated factors influencing both the perpetrator and the victim of violence. The bio-eco systemic environment of the specific educator will also influence the experience of the educator. Astor *et al.* (1996) sees this theory as an important tool for mental health consultants in helping teachers generate effective school-based responses to school violence. They state that through this perspective, having detailed knowledge of both students' and teachers' microsystems are essential for effective health consultation, particularly as it relates to the prevention of school violence. The conceptualisation of school violence as environmentally mediated also has implications for the practice of psychology in

schools. This view encourages us to adopt ecological and systemic interventions, in addition to targeting individual children and families. A more thorough understanding of the causal mechanisms mediating the expression of violence at school also permits prescriptive interventions for children and school staff (Baker, 1998).

The Bio-Eco Systemic Theory is linked in many ways with Barak’s Reciprocal Theory of Violence, in that it offers a comprehensive explanation of violence; arguing that there are both properties and pathways to violence or non-violence, across the interpersonal and institutional spheres. Furthermore the structural relations and the domains of the family, sub-culture and culture are accumulative, mutually reinforcing, and inversely related (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006). The spheres mentioned in this theory relate to the spheres of the micro-, meso- and exosystem. It also includes the chronological influence and the fact that these spheres or systems function reciprocally.

DIAGRAM 2.2: Bio-Eco Systemic Model (Adapted from Swart & Pettipher, 2005)



The Bio-Ecological Systems theory is viewed to be a very comprehensive theory and therefore suitable to use as reference during this specific study, acting as a point of reference when the experiences of a secondary school educator with regard to violence at school is explored.

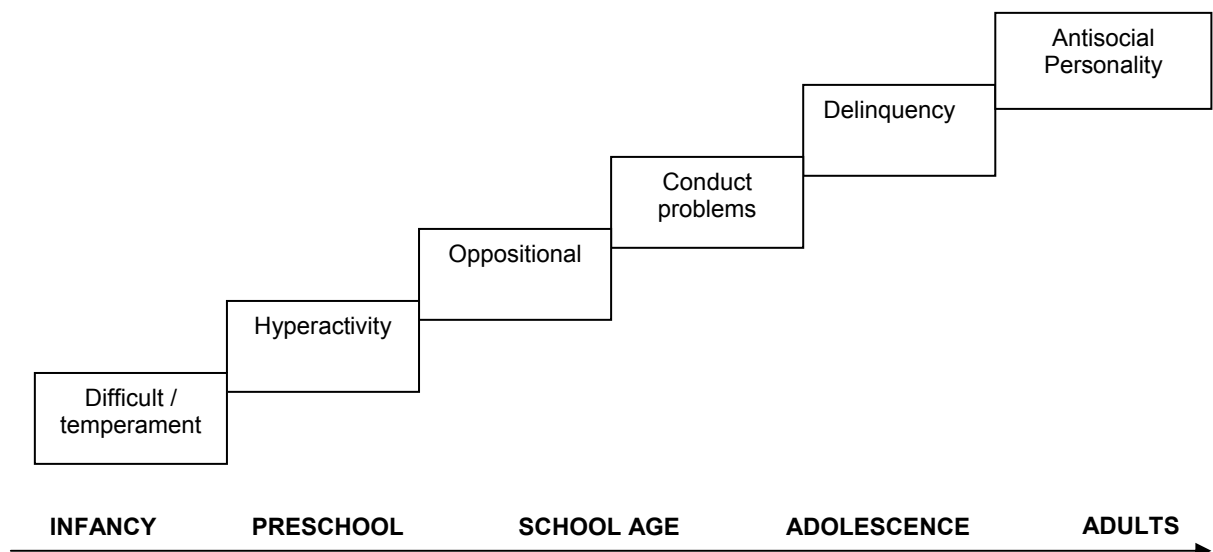
2.2.4 DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY OF PATHOLOGICAL VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

This theory, previously referred to as Moffitt's Theory of Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behaviour (DeKeseredy & Perry, 2006), fits into the Bio-Ecological Systems way of thinking, as it acknowledges the influence of the biological (nature) as well as the social environment (nurture) in the development of behaviour.

In line with Moffitt's theory, Wenar and Kerig (2006) propose a developmental transformation in antisocial behaviour from infancy to adulthood (see Diagram 2.3). During late childhood and adolescence it can be diagnosed as Conduct Disorder (CD).

It is perhaps relevant to this research to identify the different developmental pathways leading to Conduct Disorder (CD) that might lead to violent behaviour and is often experienced in some violent form in our schools. According to Cavell (2000), highly aggressive children, on average, meet the diagnostic criteria for CD as stated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Text Revision (4th edition). CD is defined as *a repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour in which either the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated* (DSM-IV-TR, 2000:93).

DIAGRAM 2.3: The developmental transformation in antisocial behaviour from infancy to adulthood (Wenar & Kerig, 2006:310)



According to the DSM-IV-TR (2000), the onset of CD can be either from childhood, prior to the age of 10 years or as an adolescent. The severity can also vary between mild, moderate and severe, and can be displayed overtly or covertly.

Wenar and Kerig (2006) describe the development pathways to CD in the following steps of onset:

(a) Childhood onset: (1) Stubborn Behaviour (authority conflict), (2) Defiance/Disobedience and (3) Authority Avoidance (truancy, running away, staying out late).

(b) Adolescence Overt pathway: (1) Minor Aggression (bullying, annoying others), (2) Physical Fighting/Gang Fighting, (3) Violence (rape, attack).

(c) Adolescence Covert Pathway: (1) Minor Covert Behaviour (shoplifting, frequent lying), (2) Property Damage (vandalism, fire setting), (3) Moderate to Serious Delinquency (fraud, burglary, serious theft) (Wenar & Kerig, 2006).

2.3 CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

According to Donald *et al.* (2006) it is important to distinguish between the different kinds of violence, as it can easily be looked at as a single or general problem in society. They claim that although they sometimes overlap, a clear distinction can be drawn between political violence, gang violence, general criminal violence, and violence in relationships. All of these types of violence are in some way affecting many of our South African schools and are often interrelated.

2.3.1 POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Political violence was at the very heart of the parenting generation of our current students at school. These parents were often caught up in the struggles of an unjust apartheid system. Data obtained from a study done by Dawes, Tredoux and Feinstein (1989) indicated that children of families brutally evicted from their homes during the apartheid era displayed emotional, conduct, and physical disorders not present before the attacks but evident two months thereafter.

It would be naïve to think that political violence belongs only in the past, as some political parties even today maintain the practice of making indiscrete violent threats in the form of public statements (Njwabane, 2008).

2.3.2 CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

Apartheid criminalized any form of politics, but the liberation struggle politicized crime (Simpson, 2003).

These words coming from the executive director from the Centre for Studying Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) depicts the serious realities currently experienced in South Africa with concern to violence used in criminal activities. According to the CSVR the major forms of violence (that is estimated to be more than two thirds of violence) are: Assaults, rape and sexual assault, robbery and other violent property crime (CSVR, 2008).

2.3.3 GANG VIOLENCE

Gang violence is often born out of needs and a social disadvantaged situation (Donald *et al.*, 2006) to which, due to the influence of a free market democracy, our schools might unwittingly be contributing. Gangs often engage in criminal violence to maintain power and control. According to Kodluboy (2004) school systems are prone to ambivalence about or outright denial of gang presence or the significance of gang presence in schools. We often find this to be true within South African schools. Gang-related activity is sometimes broadly defined as any antisocial behaviour committed by or among gang members, and sometimes more restrictively defined as antisocial behaviour occurring as a discernible function of gang membership or for a discernible benefit to the gang itself (Kodluboy, 2004).

2.3.4 VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

As clearly seen in those theories, violence has no boundaries when it comes to relationships. Here especially, reference can be made to the family setting where abuse is both a trigger to and a result of acts of violence (see par. 2.2.1.1).

2.4 VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL CONTEXT

According to Osborne (2004) school violence is being considered broadly as a group of undesirable behaviours that result in a significantly negative outcome for another student or entity (such as the school building itself). These behaviours can include:

1. Acts against objects, such as theft, vandalism, and arson;
2. Acts against same-sex peers, such as intimidation, bullying, assault, battery, and homicide;

3. Acts against opposite-sex peers, such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, intimidation, bullying and rape;
4. Acts against staff and faculty, such as intimidation, bullying, assault, battery, theft, sexual offences of various types, and homicide; and
5. Other deviant or undesirable behaviour that is 'victimless', such as truancy, and skipping classes.

Gale *et al.* argue that school safety is more than just the absence of violence.

The meaning of safety needs exploration and application to professional perspectives that are familiar to educators in the schooling process. 'Safety' is defined as freedom from danger, harm, or loss. The close companion term 'security' is defined as freedom from anxiety or apprehension of danger or risk (Gale et al., 2004:259).

They hereby contribute to the understanding of the safety by not only associating it with the physical harm resulting from violence, but by noting that harm is also caused by anxiety or apprehension about impending harm, constituting psychological harm. Teachers in schools are familiar with the disruption and harm caused on the school ground.

The South African Human Rights Commission reports in their inquiry into School Based Violence in South Africa that such violence takes the following forms and patterns within that country (Nel, 2006:6):

1. Physical violence and fighting.
2. Racially motivated violence.
3. Verbal abuse.
4. Bullying and intimidation.
5. Gang violence.
6. Drug and alcohol abuse related violence.
7. Theft of property and vandalism.
8. Student protests that turn violent.
9. Sexual violence in schools and Gender-based violence.
10. Violence undermining the education of girls by forcing them out of school.

Experiencing those manifestations of violence, while labouring as a responsible educator whose aim is that of facilitating learning, should be explored as it can provide a crucial and often unique insight into the way in which teachers perceive their own safety and role as professionals. The challenge many educators face is following the expected or ideal response to violence. They are faced with their own human nature and upbringing, often

having been shaped through primarily violent responses to stressors. This contributes to their experience of school related violence.

2.5 RESPONSES TO SCHOOL VIOLENCE

2.5.1 EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

Gale *et al.* (2004) state that intimidation and other forms of violence cause psychological harm not only to victims but also to bystanders. In addition to the psychological harm caused through violence or situations in which there is a threat of violence, developmental harm may also occur in the form of anxiety about the threats of harm. This happens because the anxiety can disrupt the educational process. Developmental harm has been defined as *harm that occurs due to events or conditions that prevent or inhibit children from achieving their maximum physical, social or academic potential* (Gale *et al.*, 2004:13).

Again, this places an above average demand on educators. Literature often disregards the effect of the violent and unsafe working conditions on educators, only advising them on how to assist the learner who experiences emotional trauma due to violence in the school context. Educators cannot ignore the violent disruption of education and should respond in ways to ensure that learning processes continue, by understanding and acting in a way that reduces the presence of such threats (Gale *et al.*). Teachers are expected to provide learners with a positive climate that has a protective influence in a violent situation.

Research shows that the education profession is currently seen as a profession with high levels of stress (Milstein & Golaszewski, 1985). Elkin (1999:24) defines stress as *what you experience when you believe you cannot cope effectively with a threatening situation*.

2.5.2 PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE

Any individual within a context of violence will respond to the violence as to any other threat, by experiencing hyper arousal or an acute stress response which is known to bring on the fight or flight response. The flight response is characterised through social withdrawal, substance abuse and other forms of escapism, even including television viewing (Friedman & Silver, 2007). The fight response has the potential of fuelling violence and the potential escalation thereof.

According to Taylor, Klein, Lewis, Gruenewald, Gurung, and Updegraff (2000) men are more likely to cope with stress via social withdrawal, substance abuse, and aggression. Some

researchers believe that these aspects of the fight or flight response in men contribute to their earlier mortality, relative to women. Women again are more likely to cope with stress through social support, that is, by turning to others to both give and receive instrumental and emotional aid. This pattern of responding has been called *tend and befriend*, and refers to the fact that during stressful times, women are especially likely to show protective responses toward their offspring and to affiliate with others for shared social responses to threat.

2.5.3 ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL VIOLENCE

2.5.3.1 School safety project

The Gauteng Provincial Government views violence as a serious societal problem, especially in public schools, as making it difficult for effective teaching and learning to take place (Motshekga, 2008; GDE, 2008a). Violence is indeed experienced at various levels. Government, through the National Department of Education, doesn't stand neutral on the issue of violence and because the increase of school violence is undermining the ability of schools to achieve their developmental and educational objectives (Nel, 2006), the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has identified approximately 240 schools for the implementation of the *Hlayiseka* (Early Warning) *Be Safe* project (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2008). This project was developed by the Centre for Justice and Crime prevention and was recommended by the National Department of Education. It enables schools to detect and respond to safety threats and incidents through the development and maintenance of a comprehensive and actionable safety plan to address specific needs. This is done by engaging educators, learners, principals and parents. It also provides opportunities for local government agencies such as law enforcement, social services and other structures concerned with community issues, to participate (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2008a).

A similar safe schools programme that was successfully implemented in the U.S.A. and Canada has been modified to address issues within the South African context and is currently being conducted as a pilot study in seven schools in the Western Cape. The pilot project is aimed at encouraging a sense of collective ownership, responsibility and self-reliance in the process of reducing the incidence and prevalence of violence. The project involves surveillance and monitoring of violence, developing behaviour/conduct/discipline codes, staff/learner training and evaluation, learner safety promoting/crisis management teams, broader community involvement, and environmental changes to the school, to prevent and reduce violence and injury (UNISA, 2008).

2.5.3.2 Educational policy and legislation

Much of the literature on education downplays student-initiated violence or avoids the topic altogether and, in any event, generally does not raise the possibility of disapprovingly confronting the student during an act of misbehaviour. A number of disciplinary methods are subjected to legal limits, including suspension and expulsion (GDE, 2008). Suspension refers to temporary exclusion from school; expulsion refers to permanent exclusion (Morrison, 2007). Public embarrassment, grade reduction and locker searches have been successfully challenged in court. Administrators and teachers have become increasingly wary of disciplining students, due to protective constitutional reasons (GDE, 2008).

In order to more effectively address the urgent issue of violence in schools government has, as recently as December 2007, approved an amendment to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, to ensure the rights of the school to protect the school community by randomly searching learners for weapons and legalising random drug tests that are conducted on learners at schools (DoE, Act no. 31, 2007). This empowers the school through legalising their own proactive steps against violence and having zero tolerance. As mentioned, not all literature supports the zero tolerance approach in schools. Morrison (2007) is of the opinion that evidence suggests that not only does zero tolerance make zero sense, but also zero tolerance promotes intolerance, through discriminatory practices that license discrimination. In this way, schools can fail society as the central developmental institution in the promotion of civil society. Exclusion fails to address the deeper issues, build understanding and foster responsibility.

2.6 THE EDUCATOR'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

Despite all the widespread and rather thorough attention that current literature is giving to the pressing issues related to school violence, it is often more focused on intervention strategies (Kingery & Coggeshall, 2001; Speaker & Petersen, 2000). Karcher (2004), when suggesting developmental intervention by educators, feels that central to developmental interventions is the tenet, that by helping youths establish a balance of connectedness to school, family, and friends, they will become less likely to engage in violent behaviour. This model of connectedness is derived from the Ecological Theory, as discussed earlier. Connectedness is also referred to, in some of the literature, as school coherence that is influenced by the teacher's support and perceptions of danger within the school environment (Bowen, Richman, Brewster & Bowen, 1998).

Risk and protective factors for school violence can also be accessed in a vast quantity throughout the literature, such as those found in Lynch and Cicchetti (1997), who suggest that a protective factor is for an adolescent to identify strongly with his parents and teachers; May (2004), who sees it as a risk factor when students bring weapons to school for self protection; and Lupton-Smith (2004), who feels a protective measure at school will be to teach all students how to negotiate, mediate and manage conflict constructively.

Literature further frequently advises teachers how to best handle themselves, the students and their parents, in order to be effective in combating violence at school level and thereby to serve their profession, as it is expected of them. Emphasis is often placed on understanding the context of the learner and on knowing what is reasonably expected of them to do (Watson, Poda, Miller, Rice & West, 1990). And again, Striepling-Goldstein (2004) is clear on what instructional behaviour a teacher should practise in order to keep aggression at a minimum in the classroom, suggesting the following:

1. Teacher with-it-ness: The teacher should stay aware of what is going on, recognising behaviour likely to lead to disruptiveness or more serious aggression.
2. Overlapping: Simultaneously and successfully managing two or more classroom events, be they instructional or disciplinary.
3. Smooth transition without downtime from the one classroom activity to another. Minimising downtime significantly deters boredom-engendered acting-out behaviours.
4. Instructing with momentum is another way to minimise boredom. Maintaining a steady sense of progress.
5. Maintaining group focus.
6. Teacher's communication of consistently optimistic academic expectations. Students live up (or down) to those expectations. Teachers with high expectations are more apt to motivate their students to be more academically successful and less behaviourally disruptive. Significant others' expectations have a powerful influence on anyone's behaviour.

In the same vein of the suggestions mentioned above, there are numerous prescribed functions, actions and responsibilities that teachers should adhere to within current literature. One of the most thorough listings of this is that by Calabrese (2000:17), who provides a list of teacher responsibilities in a safe school environment that includes the following:

- Form instructional groups that fit students' academic and affective needs.
- Make efficient use of learning time.
- Establish smooth, efficient classroom routines.
- Set clear standards for classroom behaviour and apply them fairly and consistently.

- Orientate students to lessons.
- Provide clear and focused instruction.
- Routinely provide feedback to students and reinforcement regarding their learning process.
- Review and teach as necessary to help all students master learning material.
- Use validated strategies to help build students' critical and creative thinking skills.
- Use effective questioning techniques to build basic and higher-level skills.
- Integrate workplace readiness skills into content area instruction.
- Hold high expectations for student learning.
- Provide incentives, recognition, and rewards to promote excellence.
- Interact with students in positive, caring ways.
- Give high-needs students the extra time and instruction they need to succeed.
- Support the social and academic resiliency of high-needs students.
- Promote respect and empathy among students of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- Monitor student progress closely.
- Make use of alternative assessments as well as traditional test.
- Do basic curriculum planning on clear goals and objectives.
- Integrate the curriculum as appropriate.
- Provide computer technology instructional support and workplace simulation.
- Include workplace preparation among school goals.
- Organise students to promote effective instruction.
- Assure that school time is used for learning.
- Establish and enforce clear, consistent discipline policies.
- Provide a pleasant physical environment for teaching and learning.
- Communicate high expectations to students and recognise excellent performance on a school wide basis.
- Provide programs and support to help high-needs students achieve school success.
- Work to achieve equity in learning opportunities and outcomes.
- Work to establish and maintain positive relationships among people of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- Provide multicultural education activities as an integral part of school life.
- Provide challenging academic content and language skills for language minority (second language) students.
- Identify dropout-prone students and implement activities to keep them in school.
- Use validated practices for tobacco, alcohol, and drug prevention.
- Collaborate with community agencies to support families with urgent health and/or social service needs.

- Involve parents and community members in supporting the instructional program.
- Involve parents and community members in school governance.

It is often suggested in the literature that further teacher training take place as a means of equipping them to better perform and to change current teaching strategies. Few of them, however, focus on the ecological systems framework, to view the teacher as an integral, interconnected and responding part of the system within a violent school and community context. One such study that doesn't fail to consider the experiences of teachers, namely that by Astor *et al.* (1996), suggests in its conclusion that mental health consultation services that support teachers, such as those of educational psychologists, should be aware of the complexities and persuasiveness of violence in our society and should systematically explore together with teachers their experiences with regard to school violence.

There remains, in the current literature, a clear gap with regard to the focus on teacher experiences within a violent school context. It is my aim, through the medium of this study, to add value to the broad field of literature, by providing a more in-depth look at the experiences of a teacher within a unique context of an integrated secondary school in South Africa.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The Bill of Rights contains provisions to protect the rights of both learners to learn and educators to teach in a safe environment, free from all forms of violence. These rights have the potential of being infringed upon by the perpetuation of school-based violence (GDE District Memorandum No. 296 of 2008).

Against the backdrop of this theoretical framework the researcher will attempt to move towards exploring the logical arguments and patterns of reasoning (Thomas, 2005) as presented by the information that will be provided as evidence, through the application of effective research methodologies and strategies. The theory allows for the presented data to be interpreted through a bio-eco systemic framework, which considers theories of violence in an integrative way, acknowledging developmental trajectories and institutional influences. By keeping the various categories of violence in mind, the researcher will attempt to monitor the responses of the participant in the study as she describes and expresses her experiences with regard to school violence.

This theoretical framework provides the researcher with a sound scientific base from where the research can be conducted and monitored to ensure data quality and to maximise the dependability of the study.



CHAPTER 3

EXPLORING EDUCATOR EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In order to undertake any research study it is essential to have a clear focus with regard to the way the research topic is viewed. In chapter 3 the research paradigm and methodology will be outlined. There will also be a discussion of the constructivistic and interpretivistic paradigms applied during the course of this study. Contextual information will be given with regard to the participant. Data collection strategies and data analysis will be accentuated, to create further insight into and understanding of the research.

3.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to explore indepth the experiences of an educator with regard to violence in a secondary school. This is to contribute to and expand upon the existing body of knowledge with regard to this important phenomenon and to raise the awareness of the importance of empowering educators with more coping strategies. In accomplishing this an attempt was made to answer the following vital questions:

3.2.1 PRIMARY QUESTION

What are the experiences of an educator regarding violence in a secondary school?

3.2.2 SUB QUESTIONS

- How does school violence impact on an educator?
- What are the views of an educator on her personal safety in a school faced with increased violence and aggression?
- What are the views of an educator on classroom management in a violent school setting?

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A qualitative approach was applied throughout this research study, in the attempt to answer the research question. Qualitative research is typically used to answer complex questions

such as these (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Creswell (2007) describes a research paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that guide the action of the researcher. Throughout this study the researcher focused on the constructivist approach, moving away from the positivistic way of thinking that views reality as objectively measurable (Hatch, 2002). Instead, a subjective reality was constructed through an interactive negotiation between the researcher and the participant. Reality is furthermore contextual and, having bounds within that context, and is accessed by means of an interpretive approach. The unique context of the educator and the context within the school were therefore taken into consideration during the research process.

Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) view interpretive researchers as people who want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as it occurs in the real world. They see it as a central axiom of interpretive research, not to interpret data out of context. A rich description of the unique context of an educator, the school environment, and the different influences of micro- as well as meso- and macro-systems will therefore contribute to the quality of this study. The literature review¹⁶ is aimed at assisting the reader of the study to attain a deeper understanding of violence within the unique South African context. Schwandt (2007) mentions that the epistemology of interpretivism is to know the world of human action, and is to understand the subjective meanings of that action to the actors. He also refers to this as the insider's perspective.

Allowing the participant to talk about her unique experiences with regard to violence in a secondary school setting provided the basic interpretive and descriptive characteristics of qualitative research to unfold throughout the research process. The researcher was interested in understanding how the participant made meaning of her experiences. This meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive. It aims to discover and understand her reported experiences (Merriam, 1998).

3.4 THE CASE STUDY AS RESEARCH DESIGN¹⁷

Babbie (2005:306) defines a case study as a *single instance of some social phenomenon*. This case study, being an individual case study, involves a detailed account of one person (Babbie *et al.*, 2001).

¹⁶ Chapter 2.

¹⁷ See chapter 1, par. 1.7.1.

Although a case study design has traditionally been viewed as a poor research method on the basis that case studies are "unscientific" (Babbie *et al.*, 2001; Yin, 2003), it has gained status as a qualitative research approach. Working from a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm a case study is a suitable form of researching a phenomena (Cohen *et al.*, 2002).

Merriam (1998) points out the following characteristics of a good case study:

- They study a specific phenomenon that is bound by time, place or event;
- They provide 'thick' and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon as well as the context in which the phenomenon occurs;
- They focus on a specific phenomenon;
- They contribute to the readers' understanding of the phenomenon.

According to Merriam (1998:38-39), case studies fall within one of three categories, namely:

- Descriptive cases studies (providing narrative accounts of the phenomenon);
- Interpretive case studies (developing conceptual categories in order to *illustrate, support or challenge theoretical assumptions*);
- Evaluative case studies (explaining and judging the phenomenon).

This study takes the form of an interpretive case study. It focuses on the experiences of a secondary school educator with regards to violence in the school context. An attempt is made to provide the reader with adequate insight into existing theories and literature regarding the topic.

3.4.1 STRENGTHS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design describes the procedure that the researcher uses to conduct the research. This procedure or research plan includes the role of the researcher as well as that of the participant. It also elaborates on the data collection methods used during the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

For this study a single case study with one participant was used. Henning (2004) describes a case study as a format for design that is characterised by the focus on a phenomenon that has identifiable boundaries. Data that is not applicable to the case is not utilised, unless it indirectly reflects the nature of the case. Somekh and Lewin (2006) comment that the boundaries of a case have been assumed to be coterminous with the physical location of the school or the focus of interest.

This case study will pay attention to the social and historical context of the teacher's experience of violence, as well as the experience of violence itself. It will, however, not limit itself to a specific school context, taking the participant to a neutral venue to gain insight into her perception of violence over her entire teaching career, also including her recent experiences. The boundaries are therefore not limited to one specific school setting, but will focus on the expression of the educator's current experiences as she interprets it within her personalised context.

Lindegger (1999:255) states that case studies are *intensive investigations of particular individuals*. They are descriptive in nature and provide rich information about individuals or particular situations. This is exactly what is aimed for when studying the experiences of the educator with regard to violence within the secondary school context. A definite advantage of case studies is that they allow for new ideas and hypotheses to emerge from careful and detailed observation (Lindegger, 1999).

This case study is also seen as a contemporary case study as it will incorporate data collection methods such as video and audio tapes, which provide data that can be re-analysed by other researchers (Lindegger, 1999). All data is therefore stored for these purposes at the University of Pretoria.

Member-checking of the obtained data within the case study will be a further strength of this case study. This will be done in an attempt to address researcher bias and to endeavour to provide a more accurate portrayal of the data.

3.4.2 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher is fully aware of the difficulties of a case study as far as validity and generalization are concerned. The fact that causal links are difficult to test and that generalisations cannot be made from a single case study (Somekh & Lewin, 2006), like this one, are acknowledged and the researcher will rather focus on generating a hypothesis that might be more rigorously tested by other research methods at a later stage (Lindegger, 1999).

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Taking into consideration that validity refers to the degree to which the research conclusions are sound and the fact that this is an interpretive study, the researcher focuses on the interpretive validity of the research, meaning the extent to which the appropriate conclusions

are drawn from the data (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (1998) use credibility as an alternative to internal validity, in which the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. A high level of credibility was obtained through monitoring the exploration process. An audit trail was established throughout the research process, carefully describing the setting in which the research took place as well as the analysing processes followed in obtaining the results.

Reliability is the degree to which the results obtained through the research are repeatable (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). As interpretive researcher the aim is not to duplicate the results, as this is in conflict with the view that the truth is subjective and contextual in nature. The interpretive researcher rather strives to achieve dependability so that the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher subsequently reported. (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999).

The combining of a thorough literature study and the close supervision of an experienced researcher can be seen as attempts to maximize the dependability of the findings by this study. Through involving the participant in a process of thorough member-checking of the data, the credibility of the found results will be enhanced.

During the research process, the researcher relied heavily on the reported experiences of the participant to be credible and dependable. To ensure this every effort was made to establish a good relationship of trust with the participant before the actual interviews were conducted. The participant was also carefully selected to ensure that she would have enough depth of experience and exposure to working in a violent school setting. As this would enhance the trustworthiness of the obtained data.

3.6 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

During this study, to ensure the quality of the research data, the researcher assumed a number of roles. As interviewer the researcher had to ensure the effective establishment of trust, even before the interviews began. The unstructured interview had to be directed so that the proposed research questions could be addressed. In order to accomplish this, the researcher had to become the primary instrument in the data collection process.

Using empathic listening skills the researcher managed to elicit honest and natural responses from the participant. Throughout the interviews the researcher remained aware of his own subjectivity and made every effort to verify the obtained results by a thorough

member-checking, verifying the data with the participant as well as making use of researcher supervision. The participant was also encouraged to contact the researcher's supervisor with concerns or queries at any time during the research process.

3.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

3.7.1 INFORMED CONSENT AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Informed consent was obtained in writing from the educator as well as the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Pretoria where the interviews were conducted. These involved parties were explained the purpose of the study as well as the procedures to be followed during the research process. Throughout the research process I ensured that the respondent participated in the research freely and without unreasonable risk (Cohen *et al.*, 2002).

3.7.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

From the onset of the research the participant was assured verbally and in writing that her privacy and anonymity would be protected. The information acquired throughout the course of the research study would be treated ethically and confidentially. The participant's identity or the identity of any person mentioned during the research would therefore not be disclosed. More honest and open responses can be expected through guaranteeing confidentiality to a participant (Aguinis & Henle, 2002).

The research study was furthermore conducted away from the school environment where the educator was employed. A neutral venue in the form of an interview room at the University of Pretoria's Training Facility was used to conduct the interviews with the educator. This strategy was used to protect the identity of the educator and to ensure that she felt safe to share her most private experiences regarding school violence without running the risk of being exposed by any individual in the school context.

As the participant's verbal reflections would be collected, she would be asked explicitly if she agreed to the use of collected information. The participant would, however, be assured that raw data with the potential of compromising her identity would be safely stored and destroyed as soon as it had been entered into a safe database. None of the information used in the published research document would compromise her identity in any event.

3.7.3 PROTECTION FROM HARM

The research study held potential psychological implications for the participant, as she might have experienced the negative and even traumatic impact of violence. It was possible that negative feelings that were experienced could be elicited. Being consciously aware of this as a responsible researcher, debriefing occurred after each session, to support the participant, if deemed necessary. Contact details of additional professional support in the form of referring to a counsellor or psychologist was readily available should the participant have presented with a need for this. Every effort was therefore made to protect the participant from possible harm.

3.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.8.1 RESEARCH PROCESS

There were a number of important steps involved in the study. Diagram 3.1 indicates these steps in a diagrammatic form.

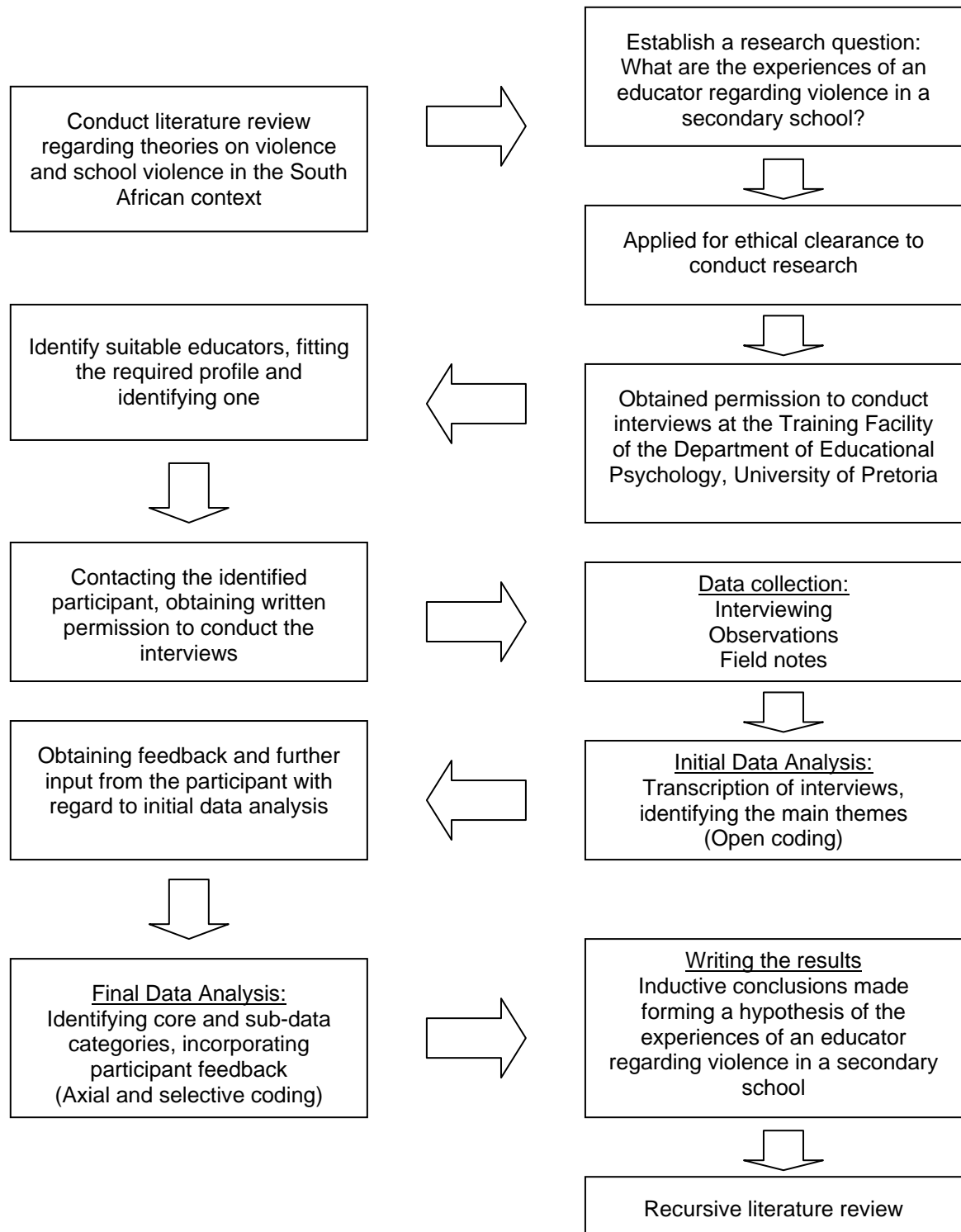
3.8.2 RESEARCH SETTING

In order for the participant to feel free and share ideas openly the ideal setting had to be found (Creswell, 1998). The participant agreed that the interviews take place away from her school environment at the Training Facility of the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Pretoria, where she could feel more at ease in expressing herself. This venue offered a private interview room which could enhance the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participant. To further ensure anonymity and confidentiality neither the Department of Education, nor the school of the participant were to be involved or implied during the research process.

3.8.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANT

To address the goal of my research more effectively, I made use of both convenient and purposeful sampling. Convenient sampling is when a case is taken on the basis of it being available (Kelly, 1999). The selection of the participant for this study can be regarded as a form of the aforementioned sampling, as I selected a teacher from the secondary school at which I was involved with during my internship year as a student of educational psychology. However, careful consideration was given to the unique purpose of my study when a participant was selected.

DIAGRAM 3.1: Research process



Purposeful sampling was used because, as the researcher, I was looking for the necessary understanding and insight, and therefore chose the participant carefully from a population group from which I believed most could be learned (Merriam, 1998).

The participant that was selected for this study was chosen with the following criteria in mind: The participant works in a culturally diverse secondary school environment, where incidents

of violence have occurred frequently within the past year. The participant was chosen for her direct and indirect experience of school violence. The researcher furthermore decided on choosing a female participant due to the fact that perpetrators of violence often see females as easy targets and are more easily intimidated than their male colleagues. Mills (2001) mentions that in most cases men and boys were the perpetrators of violence based on gender, and girls, women and younger boys were their victims. The participant also had to be an experienced educator (i.e. 5 years + teaching experience).

The selection criteria included female teachers experienced in teaching secondary school learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12, who had been exposed to the influence of violence in secondary schools in some way. This study has been limited to one case, as it is viewed as sufficient for the completion of the M.Ed.-dissertation of limited scope.

A letter of agreement to participate and informed consent¹⁸ was signed by the selected participant after clearly explaining the procedures that would take place while conducting the research.

3.8.3.1 Contextual description of participant in this study

Teacher X is a coloured female educator, who has been teaching for the past eight years, within the context of English medium at a former Model C¹⁹ secondary school. The school where she is currently teaching has, throughout its more than sixty years of existence, been established as a school that caters for the middle class citizen, providing academic excellence as well as a balanced cultural and sport programme. Despite changes within the cultural and racial make-up of the school since the new democratic dispensation in South Africa, it maintains service provision in all these areas and is maintaining its status with regard to academic excellence. The school makes every effort to establish high academic and disciplinary standards for the future. Short circuit television cameras were recently installed in various locations of the school building, to monitor general discipline during the school day. Often feeder schools provide the school with learners who are not used to academically challenging work in terms of standard and work load. This results in a high drop-out rate between the Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) school phases. The educator is teaching in a multi-cultured school society, made up of approximately 70% Black, 15% Coloured, 5% Indian, 9% White and 1% Oriental students. Teaching staff currently comprises of 13% Black, 5% Coloured, 7% Indian and 75% White educators.

¹⁸ See Appendix A.

¹⁹ Model C or state-aided schools. These schools would have received 75% of their budgets via state funding, and would have been responsible for supplying the remaining 25% of their operating budgets.

Teacher X is approximately 60 years old and her teaching career spans over a period of more than 40 years, having started as a teacher during the Apartheid²⁰ era, when she taught mainly in 'Coloured' schools. She was part of the teacher representative forum and made valuable contributions to the educational system through her services.

As an Afrikaans teacher she has worked with all secondary school grades, but is currently working mainly with the Grade 8 to 11 classes. She is generally known for her love and dedication to the teaching profession and has good relationships with the learners and her fellow staff members.

- *I'm just a teacher and I love my job* (Transcription 1).

After retirement at the age of fifty-eight she started teaching again only six months later. She firmly believes that she was born to teach and that it is her purpose in life.

- *As ek oor al my jare (in die onderwys) nou dink en ek weet, ek is 'n gebore onderwyseres. Ek het onder die moeilikste omstandighede, as gevolg van dit wat die land vir ons gegee het (Apartheid), het ek onderwys gegee. Ek is lief vir die onderwys*²¹ (Transcription 1).

3.9 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

3.9.1 INTERVIEWS

The researcher personally conducted interviews with the selected participant, in the form of face-to-face unstructured interviews that were conducted outside of the school context, at the Training Facility of the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Pretoria. Although the researcher, while being fully aware of the purpose of the study, planned general research questions in advance, an attempt was made to keep the interview unstructured. Posing open-ended questions during the interview shielded the participant from feeling pressurised through the presumption of any specific answer (Terre Blance & Kelly, 1999). The researcher did, however, make use of questions for verification, as well as rephrasing techniques, in order to check for understanding.

The following general questions were prepared to be asked during the interview in order to provide direction to the interview process:

- What are your experiences with regard to violence as a secondary school teacher?
- How often do you experience incidents of violence in your school environment?

²⁰ Apartheid – Former political regime in South Africa, promoting segregation on the basis of race.

²¹ No translation of the Afrikaans language often used by the participant was made, to ensure the intended meaning and to enhance data quality.

- To whom is the violence usually directed?
- In what way do you feel personally affected by school violence?
- How do you perceive the effect of violent incidents in the school on your colleagues?
- How do these violent incidents affect the classroom dynamics?
- How has school violence affected you with regard to personal safety?
- How did your experiences of violence influence the way you handle conflict in the school environment?
- In your experience as a teacher over many years, what is your perception on the current disciplinary system in addressing school violence?
- How do you think school violence is influencing the way you manage your classroom?
- What are the challenges you have to deal with at school that can be linked to the increased school violence?
- What professional training have you received to deal with the violence that you are experiencing at school?
- What was the nature of this training that you received?

Taking the participant away from the context of the school was beneficial to the research process in that the participant's mindset was not limited to her current school setting. The Training Facility offers unique facilities such as video and private interview rooms, which was an enhancing factor with regard to the quality of the research information gathered.

Information required from the participant included sharing her personal experiences of school violence with the researcher. The educator was also asked to share her observed experiences of colleagues with regard to school violence. She was requested to comment on the impact it had on her with regard to various aspects of her profession.

The interview procedure was as follows:

Session 1:

During this session the participant discussed her experiences regarding school violence. The discussion resulted from applying open-ended questions.

Session 2:

The facilitator discussed the findings of the research with the participant to ensure the credibility of the study and to ensure that the participant could indicate her satisfaction with the level of anonymity promised to her.

3.9.2 OBSERVATION

Observation took place while the interviews were actually being conducted. The participant observation took place in a naturalistic way, through the interaction of the researcher during the interview. *Interacting with people in a naturalistic way makes it possible to understand their world 'from the inside out'* (Terre Blance & Kelly, 1999:134).

Henning (2004) mentions that while interviews are being conducted the researcher takes notes, or employs the help of an assistant to do so, making “meta-notes” about how the interview develops structurally. These notes are intended to harness some of the contextual factors that are not verbalised, such as gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, change in tempo of speech and general body language. The researcher used this strategy of note taking or making field notes. With the aid of video and audio tapes the researcher could analyze the interview in more detail, by revisiting some of the reactions to the interview questions and analysing non-verbal gestures made by the participant.

The recording of observations was done throughout the individual interviews. Studying the observed responses of the participant during these interviews guided the data analysis that followed.

3.9.3 FIELD NOTES²²

The transcribed interviews, as well as notes made during informal conversations and during the feedback session were used as field notes during the data-analysis process. Notes were made unobtrusively, since Babbie *et al.* (2001) remark that people are likely to behave differently if they see you are taking down everything they say or do. The visual and audio recordings also came in very handy and could be studied to confirm or reject initial observations. As the personal experiences of the researcher played an integral part of the research process (Ezzy, 2002) the field notes recorded both what has happened as well as what was thought to have happened (Babbie, 2005). It was possible to verify these observations during member-checking.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Interpretive qualitative data analysis implies that data is interpreted from a position of empathic understanding (Terre Blance & Kelly, 1999:139). Mouton (2001:108) refers to the fact that *analysis involves 'breaking up' the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends*

²² See chapter 1, par. 1.7.3.2.

and relationships to understand the various constitutive elements of data through an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables and identifiable patterns. Coding the data from the interview represents the operation by which data is broken down, conceptualised and put back together in new ways (De Vos *et al.*, 1998).

For this study a thematic concept analysis was applied. This method of data analysis requires constant comparison between identified themes. Themes are then grouped together into conceptual thematic categories. Schwandt (2007) states that empirical indicators from the data (actions and events observed, recorded, or described in documents in the words of interviewees and respondents) are compared by looking for similarities and differences.

Three approaches to the data mentioned by De Vos *et al.* (1998) were utilised in order to analyse the data. Firstly a process of **open coding** (the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising the data). After this the researcher applied procedures whereby data is reconstructed in new ways, making connections between them. This is known as **axial coding**. The core categories are then selected through systematically relating them with other categories. This is known as **selective coding**.

All interviews were transcribed and coded into themes derived from the interviews. Themes were compared, examined and broken down into categories after finding connections between them. Core thematic categories were then identified and interpreted in terms of current literature as well as the contextual settings. The researcher will now, from the data obtained through the research process, construct or infer. *Interpretation involves the synthesis of one's data into larger coherent wholes. One interprets (and explains) observations or data by formulating hypotheses or theories that account for the observed patterns and trends in the data* (Mouton, 2001:109).

Through explaining what the researcher observed from the results after analysis of the data, he will attempt to form a hypothesis that provides a descriptive and plausible account of what the teacher experienced with regard to violence in a secondary school (Mouton, 2001). These explanations were subjected to a process of member-checking, whereby the identified themes could be confirmed or rejected by the participant during follow-up interviews. This was done to ensure an unbiased approach to dealing with the research data.

3.11 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Chapter 3 provided a more detailed description of the research design, paradigm and research methodology applied during this study. The results of the data analysis and an explanation of the evidence trail will be presented in chapter 4. While an interpretation of the data will be discussed in chapter 5.



CHAPTER 4

THEMATIC DISCUSSION FROM EDUCATOR EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL VIOLENCE

4.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

Chapter 4 presents a detailed discussion of the results from the theme analysis of the data gleaned from my research. The discussion of the analysis will be presented against the unique contextual background of the participant, which, within the interpretivistic research framework, is viewed as being indispensable. After stating the context of the participant, the results will be presented in table format. Thereafter a detailed discussion will follow to enhance the reader's insight into the research. The experiences of the secondary school educator with regard to school violence will be represented in various identifiable themes that will be grouped under sub-categories to be discussed under six main categories. Throughout the discussion of the data-analysis, supporting evidence from the transcribed interviews will be presented, to provide an effective data trail.

4.2 THE DATA-ANALYSIS PROCESS

The data-analysis unfolded as a continuous process, starting from the first time the educator was met as a potential participant in these research processes. Other potential participants were eliminated from the research due to the depth of their experience not being equal to that of the chosen participant, as was revealed during informal conversations we had leading up to the start of the research process.

All interviews were transcribed and then studied repeatedly in conjunction with the corresponding non-verbal clues given by the participant. My field notes provided further guidance during the data-analysis process, supporting the process of dividing the data into identifiable themes. During the process the researcher could verify the obtained results continuously by having access to audio and visual recordings of the interviews, which proved very helpful as a means of ensuring data quality. This also provided the opportunity to follow a process by which the different themes could be compared and relations between the different themes could be studied, to become aware of patterns that could be categorised. In this way the data could be synthesised in new ways, to make interpretation substantive within the unique research context.

To ensure effective data control three processes were followed. Firstly, the participant verified the data results to prevent misinterpretation of meaning or misrepresentation of the content or context of the collected data. Secondly, data results were compared with existing literature, to identify similarities or discrepancies that might call for further verification, including the possibility of further research in future. Lastly, data verification took place by following a process whereby data results were monitored by a senior researcher through a process of supervision.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE DATA-ANALYSIS

Fifty themes with regard to school violence were identified as forming part of the experiences of the secondary school educator. Through the data analysis process those themes were grouped under main categories. Table 4.1 on the following page presents the analysis. Table 4.1 also gives an indication of the perceived frequency with which the specific theme presented itself during the data-collection process. A case discussion including each one of the categories and the identified themes will follow.

4.4 CASE DISCUSSION

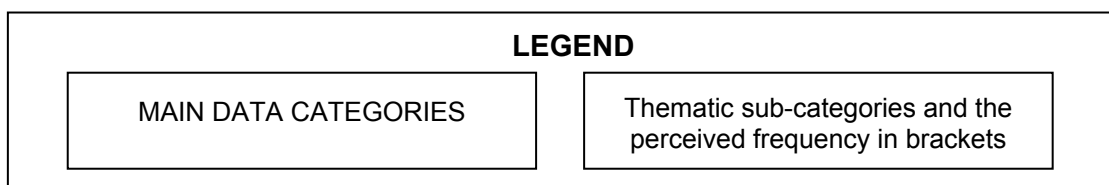
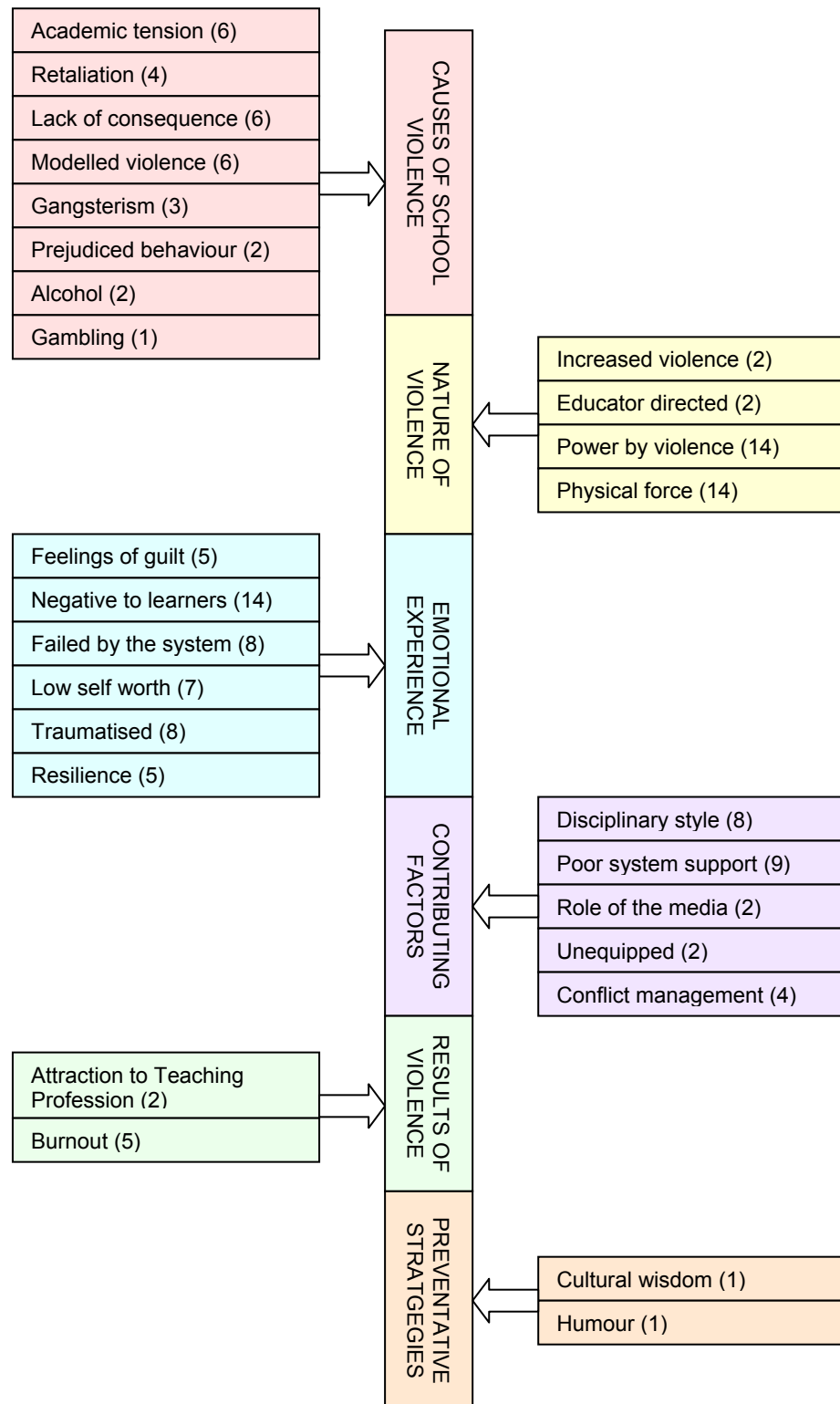
Although the interview was started in English, it soon became clear that the participant would often feel more at ease expressing herself in her mother tongue, Afrikaans. We therefore often reverted to Afrikaans and found ourselves switching languages in order to find the best way to express ourselves.

- *Die leerlinge is intelligent genoeg om te weet, I can do as I please...* (Transcription 1).
- *Ek sou ook vir hom gevra het om aan te gaan, for the sake of those few* (Transcription 2).

Throughout the interviews she would sit still and would remain composed. Only now and then would she show hand gestures or rub over her face. Her hand gestures would coincide with times when she was excited about something or when she would re-enact a situation.

- *But Mam, but you never told us this, you never said that...* (making a hand movement to emphasise the intensity of the situation) (Transcription 1).

TABLE 4.1: Results of the data analysis indicating the experiences of school violence by a secondary school educator



She also rubbed over her face at times when she showed exhaustion or talked about distressing or disturbing incidents.

- *Some of our children, 80% of our children that you will normally find in our public schools have been exposed to violence, and attacks, in the home and in the community (she says rubbing her face).*

During the first interview it became clear to me that the participant was willing to share her thoughts and feelings with regard to her experience of school violence and that she was viewing the interviews as an opportunity to voice some of her frustrations. It was clear to me that she didn't get many opportunities to talk about her frustrations as a teacher, teaching within a violent community. She furthermore brought me under the impression that she wanted to make a contribution to education through her participation in the research. After thanking her for her participation she replied by remarking:

- *Dis vir my 'n voorreg (Transcription 1).*

During this first interview an attempt was made to explore the full extent of the participant's experience with regard to violence within the school context. This was done by exploring the field of study using the general direction of the main interview questions during an unstructured interview.

Various themes were identified during the course of the data analysis process which were then grouped into categories of data as the themes presented themselves. The following six main theme categories were identified and will be discussed: The perceived causes of school violence, the experienced nature of violence, the emotional experience of violence, factors contributing to the perceptions of violence and the experienced results of violence.

4.5 RESULTS OF THE DATA-ANALYSIS DISCUSSING THE PERCEIVED CAUSES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

4.5.1 ACADEMIC TENSION

TABLE 4.2: Academic tension

Sub-category	Related themes
Academic tension	Caused by academic failure at school
	Poor academic self-concept
	Over emphasis of academic orientation by the school (achievement at all cost)
	Lack a culture of learning
	Teaming up against the teacher

The participant felt very strongly about the fact that academic pressure on the learners was one of the main causes contributing to violent behaviour. The academic tension caused incidents of violence to occur more often around the academic pressure times, such as when learners were faced with an exam, awaiting their reports or receiving their marks.

- *Depending on the time frame, for instance now we are waiting on our results - Did I do OK, Did I do alright, am I failing? - and then they start, especially those who know, I didn't do what I should have done (Transcription 1).*

It seems that many violent prone learners are faced with a weak academic self concept and often poor work ethics when it comes to academic related tasks. Violent attacks seem to take place due to academic jealousy between learners, and often the diligent learner is terrorised and victimised by those with a weak academic self concept.

- *It (intimidation, terrorisation, bullying) happens ... Do you know which learners it is directed at? The respectable learner, the intelligent learner, the one who does his work, not necessarily sucking up to the teacher but he has a purpose in life. I need to get these marks, I need to do this work, I need to do this work, this is my aim further down the line and this is how I'm going to get to that. Those are the ones that are victimized (Transcript 1).*

The jealousy is further instigated by the behaviour of teachers who often pay more attention to those learners who are academic achievers, making it hard for learners struggling with the academic challenges to identify with the academic demands placed on them by the teacher and school as an academic institution.

- *You have a 80 percenter and a 30 percenter, and immediately there is a jealousy there, and unfortunately it happens that teachers give more attention to the learners that is sharper than to those who are not so sharp and being not his or her fault, but what adds to that is that the not so sharp learners they are terribly, terribly rude (Transcript 1).*
- *One learner with the better mark will laugh at the other saying, Hey, I have got better marks than you! And then it will start an argument (Transcript 1).*

The participant reports experiencing the learners as rivals against her in the class by teaming up against her in defiance of her attempts to do her work.

- *But mam, but you never told us this, you never said that, then I would just call on one of their classmates, please when did I say this? Or when did I ask you to do this piece of homework, and then their friends tell them - and I hate it when they are calling me **she** - She said we must do this, that and the other. Then I have never said it and then they stick to what they say... (Transcript 1).*

- *Jy het vir hulle huiswerk gegee, ses net die huiswerk gedoen. Die sewende een sê NEE! Dan chain almal in, Jo, dis om van te skree of 'n moord te pleeg, soos wat hulle nou aangaan en vir jou die leerkrag as die swakkeling voorstel. As die hordes eers met hulle geluide begin (Transcript 2).*

4.5.2 RETALIATION

TABLE 4.3: Retaliation

Sub-category	Related themes
Retaliation	Victimisation/Targeting the well behaved
	Intimidation

Retaliation by victims of school violence and intimidation results in reciprocated violence. Referring to a specific incident where a learner of her school attacked and seriously injured another, she commented that it was an example of retaliation after a long period of victimisation and intimidation.

- *Unfortunately the one who was assaulted, I don't really want to mention it but he deserved it, he had it coming to him (Transcript 1).*

There seem to be many students that are victimised for standing out as diligent learners. Sometimes the tension in such learners builds up to a point where they then retaliate with acts of irresponsible violence. It seems to some that being academically diligent is to be interpreted as a weakness.

4.5.3 LACK OF CONSEQUENCES

TABLE 4.4: Lack of consequences

Sub-category	Related themes
Lack of consequences	Get away with
	Can do what they want
	Nothing will happen

Strong views about the lack of consequences for violent offenders were voiced in frustration as a definite cause of further and continued violence at school. It seems that current measures to combat violence and the spread of violence at school are inadequate and are often not used by educators, due to its perceived limited value. This links up with a perception that there is little support from the educational system with regard to maintaining discipline and order in schools and more specifically in the classroom environment.

After inquiring about the reason why she didn't report an incident in which she was physically assaulted in the classroom by a sixteen year old boy in front of other learners, the participant replied:

- *I will not report it because I know nothing will come from it and I will be the big fool because the learners also know, Aag you can go report me, nothing will come of it (Transcript 1).*
- *Dit (dissipline stelsel) is glad nie effektief nie. Dit spreek glad nie die geweld aan nie, die leerlinge is intelligent genoeg om te weet, I can do as I please, nothing will come of it. Hulle kan nie eers expel word nie. They can suspend me, but they cannot expel me, if I come back, I'm still a star for the wrongs that I have done (Transcript 1).*
- *Die onderwysers se hande is afgekap, en daarmee wil ek nie sê ons wil net voor die voet die kinders streepsuiker (pakslae) gee nie, maar êrens moet daar 'n afskrikmiddel wees, wat die kinders gaan keer om te ver vorentoe te beur. Hulle moet weet hulle kan net so ver, want sou hulle verder vorentoe beur, sal dit, dat of die ander met hulle gebeur.*

4.5.4 MODELLED VIOLENCE

As a result of the perceived lack of consequences for acts of violence, the participant believes further acts of violence take place. Learners see other learners use violence successfully against fellow learners and teachers. They therefore believe it is the best way to achieve what they want and model the violent behaviour.

- *Because nothing happens to those perpetrators, our young people would just go. Oh, he did that and that and nothing happened, I am also going to go that way. (The way of violence) Then nothing will happen to me either (Transcript 1).*
- *I don't know whether they think that because he came away with it they may too, I don't know. There is a terrible vibe in the class (Transcript 1).*

Violence is further modelled by the community and at home.

- *But now I also blame the life outside school (for violence). The things they have to deal with... if I cannot get it right, some people will hold you, torture, that is what is imprinted in them (Transcript 1).*
- *Our children that you will normally find in our public schools have been exposed to violence, and attacks, in the home and in the community (Transcript 1).*

The participant also proclaimed, during a conversation in-between the transcribed interviews, that statements by politicians promoting violence as a means of settling conflict, contributed

to the violent examples learners follow. Add to this the message from the community it is that it is acceptable to use violence as a means to pursue your causes. The participant felt that the fact that political leaders can get away with statements promoting violence sets a negative precedent contributing to future school violence.

4.5.5 GANGSTERISM

- *I wouldn't say that we have gangsters at school. They may have connections, but we don't really have gangsters like in the earlier days. And yes it does contribute to the violence at the school, because you bump me, I will bump you back, then I go and I tell my brothers about you and tomorrow they come and wait at the bus terminal and they frighten you a little (Transcript 1).*

Although the participant at first didn't identify gangsters in the school where she is working at present, she acknowledged the effect of learners being connected to gangsters/gangs and its potential contribution to violence.

- *They are connected yes. Weet jy en daar is nie nou nie, maar by skool C en ook by die skool G was daar kinders met gang connections. Onthou jy aan die begin van die jaar het hulle Mrs. W se kar gesteel. En dis kinders wat daar skool gegaan het, hulle het geweet wat afgaan, hulle het presies geweet waar is die personeelkamer (Transcript 1).*

The participant also identified the reality of gangsters from outside the school who join gangsters still at school during some school days.

- *In the first place, because they (gangsters) are not such sharp learners, they are not working; they are not studying any further some of them left school, mid-term, mid-year, mid-curriculum, they cannot find a job, and they pitch up at school. I tell them we don't have sport, but I am so afraid of Friday at school (civvies day) when we have the fun day, because I know the gangsters are going to pitch up. Like last Friday when we had the soccer (Transcript 1).*
- *I told them (outside gangsters) they were older than the learners, you have to sit on that side (Transcript 1).*

4.5.6 PREJUDICED BEHAVIOUR

TABLE 4.5: Prejudiced behaviour

Sub-category	Related themes
Prejudiced behaviour	Xenophobia ²³
	Chauvinism ²⁴

During the interview the participant was very adamant that racism didn't contribute to violence in her experience.

- *No racism has ever led to any violence that I can think of, because we are so brainwashed to not to say the wrong things. Here and there you will find a flair-up, but there were other reasons behind it (Transcript 1).*

The participant was very outspoken about her experience of prejudice towards the female teachers by black male students. She contributed this to a culture of viewing females as inferior to males.

- *...want vernaam waar jy 'n onderwyseres is. Vir die swart man beteken die vrou absoluut niks. Hierdie kinders kan dit nie verstaan dat ons verwag dat hulle ons met respek moet behandel nie (Transcript 2).*

Xenophobic related incidents of violence were limited to her experience of threats and insults made in an isolated case.

- *We have Mrs. M there (at school), she is from Zambia, when she started teaching at the school, she told me: Especially the younger learners, the Gr. 9 and Gr.10 learners, they wrote on her desk, Xenophobic insults She mentioned to me that she is so afraid of these learners (Transcript 1).*

4.5.7 ALCOHOL

Some learners presenting with aggressive and mocking behaviour have been reported to smell of liquor. The participant referred to two cases that she was involved in within the past year, where learners had been using liquor while busy with their school day. Only one of these cases had, in her experience, led to violent behaviour.

- *Aan sy houding het ek gesien hy wag net vir my om iets verkeerd te sê, dan sou hy iets aan my doen waaroor ek vandag spyt sou gewees het. Ek kon sien aan sy*

²³ Fear projected as hate towards people that are perceived as being different.

²⁴ Belief that men are superior to women.

houding, dit was uitersam, so jy het iets...so so een kind vir hom, jy moet ophou om so te swip. Juffrou ruik net die drank aan sy asem (Transcript 2).

4.5.8 GAMBLING

- *Vandag se kinders sal voor jou dobbel. Hulle sal nie omgee nie, jy kan vir hulle niks maak nie. Hulle kan baklei, hulle sal eerder vir jou aanrand, jy kan nie vir hulle sê boe of baa nie (Transcript 1).*

This was said in the light of a recent fight that occurred on the school premises that was caused by a gambling feud between two boys. In this specific incident the female teacher who was in the classroom at the time was also injured due to a blow to the head. Gambling is illegal under the age of 18 years. It is, however, extremely difficult to monitor. This hampers law enforcement at school.

4.6 RESULTS OF THE DATA-ANALYSIS WITH REGARD TO THE EXPERIENCED NATURE OF VIOLENCE

4.6.1 INCREASED VIOLENCE

During an informal conversation prior to the interview the participant reported a definite increase in the recent number of violent incidents. She furthermore confirmed this during all our interviews.

- *In all my teaching years something like this never really happened. No they didn't happen, but now... (Transcript 1).*

4.6.2 VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT EDUCATOR

Whereas previously the participant was confronted with violence in which learners would fight amongst themselves or with other (less experienced) teachers, violence was now being directed towards her as well.

- *Up to a few months ago the violence was never directed at me as an educator and I would only have to intervene when there was violence of learner upon learner or of a learner on another teacher, but it has changed now. The learners have started violence against me now (displaying signs of tension, wringing her hands together) (Transcript 1).*

4.7 RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS WITH REGARD TO THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE BY THE EDUCATOR

4.7.1 GUILT

TABLE 4.8: Guilt

Sub-category	Related themes
Guilt	Personal
	Religion related guilt

The participant often refers to herself, feeling guilty about her own actions and reactions that might be contributing to violence. Evidence of this can be seen in the following statements:

- *But I am I guess to blame in a way, I am still of the old school and I am very strict (Transcript 1).*
- *Kyk ek voel baie skuldig dat ek nie doen, wat ek geleer is wat die regte ding is om te doen nie (Transcript 1).*
- *I must take the blame because I am not too sympathetic with them anymore (Transcript 1).*
- *Ek het vir die Here sorry gevra. Elke oggend as ek bid vra ek vir die Here help my dat ek nie weer awe-regs is met die kinders nie. Jo, dan is ek nou eers awe-regs. Dan is ek sommer te rof met die kinders (Transcript 2).*

4.7.2 NEGATIVITY TOWARDS LEARNERS

TABLE 4.9: Negativity towards learners

Sub-category	Related themes
Negativity towards learners	Labelling
	Suppressed anger towards learners
	Violent thoughts
	Shock/disgust
	Sceptical, unforgiving towards violators

- *I don't really want to mention it but he deserved it, he had it coming to him, if I had my way I would punch him with another scissors (Transcript 1).*
- *In Afrikaans praat ons van Ingeslukte woede (repressed anger), ek moet my in toom hou (Transcript 1).*
- *Daar is van hulle wat op 'n dag sal jy sien, o, die een is sommer baie kwaad. Wat het gebeur en dan is dit nou asof jy 'n prop uitgetrek het, spoeg alles net so uit (Transcript 1).*

- *I was so mad, I just went to sit (Transcript 1).*
- *I'm so disgusted, about their attitude on the way forward in life (Transcript 1).*
- *I feel at a loss ... and I'm very disappointed actually that our learners should act like this, because ... (Transcript 1).*

It is understandable that the teacher is sceptical and unforgiving when any form of apology is given by the violent learner.

- *I don't mind the personal apology, because it's just a mumbling of words, there is no meaning behind it. I said; 'don't tell me you are sorry, you know you don't mean it.' This is now the very same guy who smacked that teacher (Transcript 1).*
- *She (the teacher) didn't see it and fell over it and broke her shoulder. (Did he do it on purpose?) Yes, he did it on purpose! (Transcript 1).*

4.7.3 FAILED BY THE SYSTEM

TABLE 4.10: Failed by the system

Sub-category	Related themes
Failed by the system	No help from the system
	Don't trust the system
	No support from the system or powers that be

The participant doesn't always clearly distinguish between support by the Department of Education and the School Management. It seems that she was disappointed in both and had no trust in them to support teachers who had to teach in an atmosphere of violence. Yet she refers to an incident where the Department of Education overruled the actions of the School Management indicating that the two systems did not function in support of each other. She calls any authority in the educational system 'the powers that be.

- *I don't feel I can take it to the powers that be (school management/Department of Education), because I knew nothing will come of it, they would rather ask me what did you do to provoke this child (Transcript 1).*
- *I don't have trust in the system at all (Transcript 1).*
- *It is very disheartening, because we all know the system (Transcript 1).*
- *Verlede jaar het skool Y 'n hofbevel gekry om 'n kind uit die skool te sit. Die Onderwys Departement het daardie hofbevel laat omkeer. Die hoof is gedwing om daai kind terug te neem in die skool in. In die ou dae as jy iemand skors, het jy by geen ander skool ingekom nie. Vandag moet hulle jou maar net terugneem en hulle maak van jou 'n held (Transcript 1).*
- *I know I don't feel safe, I know I don't have the backing (Transcript 1).*

- *Kyk nou in die nuus vandag en raai omgevee rapporteer, maar die Onderwys Departement hulle wil nie beskuldig word nie. Hulle kan 'n groot lawaai opskop, maar hulle gaan eerder aandag gee aan netelige sake as wat hulle die groot goed aanspreek. Hulle sien net daai swart kolletjie op die wit laken (Transcript 2).*

4.7.4 LOW SELF WORTH

TABLE 4.11: Low self worth

Sub-category	Related themes
Low self worth	Hurt feelings
	Disillusioned
	Hands tied, can't help (defend) themselves
	Victims

The participant would from time to time portray the teachers as suffering, disabled victims of violence, within an unsupportive system.

- *Ek weet van my kollegas trek swaar, baie swaar, deur hulle optrede, hulle is nie violent deur vuus te slaan nie, maar deur hulle insolence, the arrogance the way they are talking to you, dit alles maak die leerkragte seer (Transcript 1).*
- *Nee, die onderwysers se hande is afgekap, en ek herhaal weer, ons wil nie die kinders doodslaan nie, maar ons moet êrens vir hulle kan sê, oor hierdie streep kom jy nie (Transcript 1).*
- *I'm just there to do a job. I don't know what I feel like! I'm very disillusioned and I haven't given it thought, What do I feel like? I know I don't feel safe, I know I don't have the backing, like this thing that happened last Thursday (assault on her) (Transcript 1).*
- *I will not report it because I know nothing will come from it and I will be the big fool because the learners also know, Aag you can go report me, nothing will come of it (Transcript 1).*
- *Ons is magteloos (Transcript 2).*
- *Ja, dis hartverskeurend, hulle jou, jou uit. Hulle maak van jou 'n swakkeling in die groep as jy nie maak soos wat hulle sê nie. As jy (as leerder) nie doen wat hulle sê nie, maak hulle van jou 'n randeier (Transcript 2).*

4.7.5 TRAUMATISED

TABLE 4.12: Traumatized

Sub-category	Related themes
Traumatized	Fear / Unsafe
	At a loss
	Unnerved
	Detached from violent learner (Ignore)

The participant displayed many symptoms of a person that has been traumatised and was unsettled by the violence she experienced at school.

- *No! No! Not since that boy. No, I don't feel safe, I don't know who to turn to, I don't even think I want to turn to anybody, because this is what happens throughout the whole country* (Transcript 1).
- *I know I don't feel safe...*(Transcript 1).
- *I was unnerved, I went to Mr. Ferreira, At first I wanted to get a male teacher to take that child out of my class* (Transcript 1).

Being traumatised by the violent incident the participant followed a natural defence mechanism by ignoring the learner.

- *At the end of the period he came up to me, I didn't even look at him. Trying to do what is right, Friday (next day) I walked into my class, I didn't do anything. Monday I was in my class, Tuesday Monday he came up to me and he brought me his book, because I was signing all the books. He put his book here next to me, I didn't even look at him, I didn't look at the book* (Transcript 1).
- *I think, let me ignore them, I don't even look at them* (Transcript 1).

4.7.6 RESILIENCE

TABLE 4.13: Resilience

Sub-category	Related themes
Resilience	See teaching as a higher calling
	Born to teach
	Overcome
	I am stronger
	I will get back

The participant, although severely traumatised by the violence she experiences at school, still has the belief that she is able to overcome the difficult circumstances. She displays this through statements such as:

- *But I am sure the person in me is much stronger than I am acting out now, and is going to overcome this horrible feeling that I have now, because I must be fair to that child, I must teach that child (Transcript 1).*
- *I know I will get my management (conflict management) back, and I am going to teach that boy, the learners in that class by my actions, I have already done the wrong thing, this afternoon I didn't let them pray when they left. I will be able to manage this conflict. I know with the help of God I am going to manage this conflict, because God won't let me down. I want to be there, because I want to be a light to shine for Thee, and I cannot be that light while I'm in this conflict, this turmoil, this horrible feeling that I have (Transcript 1).*
- *As ek oor my jare (in die onderwys) nou dink en ek weet ek is 'n gebore onderwyseres, ek het onder die moeilikste omstandighede, as gevolg van dit wat die land vir ons gegee het ek onderwys gegee (Transcript 1).*
- *Ek is lief vir die onderwys. Ek sê vir 'n leerder (presteerder) ek glo jy het potensiaal en ek wil hê jy moet iets maak van daardie potensiaal (Transcript 1).*
- *Weet jy apartheid het van my 'n sterker mens gemaak, maar ons het altyd so aan die agter-speen gesuig. As ek daardie huisies kyk wat in Krugersdorp gebou is ... armoede ... uit daai swart modder het die mooiste lelies gegroei, nou sê jy maar net vir die kinders as jy êrens wil kom, moet jy 'n beter geleerdheid hê (Transcript 1).*

4.8 RESULTS OF THE DATA-ANALYSIS WITH REGARD TO THE EDUCATOR'S PERCEPTION OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VIOLENCE

4.8.1 DISCIPLINARY STYLE IN THE CLASSROOM

TABLE 4.14: Disciplinary style in classroom

Sub-category	Related themes
Disciplinary style in the classroom	Bending over too far
	Too liberal

The participant often admits to being very strict when it comes to discipline; she blames some of the other educators for allowing too much in the class; she also admits that she sometimes gives up on her discipline style.

- *Our learners are too liberal and there are some people, I told some teachers at my school they are to blame because they lean over too far. Bend over too far and they*

(learners) expect all of us to bend over. Bend over so far and we are sending a very poor citizen into this world (Transcript 1).

- *Even in the whole set-up of the New South Africa, I still believe there are people who have the say, and you just have to nod and do what is required of you (Transcript 1).*

4.8.2 POOR SYSTEM SUPPORT

Although this was also included in the emotional experience of the educator as being failed by the system (see par. 4.7.3), it is also seen by the participant as contributing to violence, due to the message it sends out to the educators and learners. The message is that of no consequences for violence (see par. 4.5.3).

- *Nothing can come of it, nothing will come of it! It's a waste of time, I don't know. Yes it's a waste of time reporting it (Transcript 1).*
- *I don't have trust in the system at all (Transcript 1).*
- *Ag man I can do what I like, I can throw that teacher into her chair, I can actually hit her, nothing will come of it. I will still come out smelling right like a rose. So there were two or three that took advantage of it... (Transcript 1).*

The inadequate feedback from the disciplinary system, as part of the system, is contributing to the persistence of violence.

- *It is very disheartening, because we all know the system. One of my colleagues wanted to lay a charge against a boy who slapped her. That chappy had to go to court and everything. I can't remember what the ruling was in the court, but I know that they said, if you make one more mistake we are going to expel you. Up till now that very same chap, at one stage I confiscated a form from him. The form had a question on it to fill in: What should I have done? He wrote, I should have raped Mrs. E. That I reported..., I didn't get any feedback (Transcript 1).*

4.8.3 ROLE OF THE MEDIA

TABLE 4.15: Role of media

Sub-category	Related themes
Role of the media	Schools want to keep violence out of the media
	Violence in the media discourages teachers

The following statements underline the fact that the participant is influenced by the important role that the media plays with regard to school violence. She, however, doesn't refer to its possible role in instilling violent behaviour in students.

- *Because they want to keep it out of the newspapers, while I was advised to lay a charge or claim against this guy. And then I thought, I am just another cog in this big wheel, let me not bother (Transcript 1).*
- *I get the Beeld (newspaper) everyday and when I open, jislaak, dis net bloedvergieting, as jy die koerant klaar gelees het voel jy magteloos, ek voel so magteloos (Transcript 1).*
- *Ja, kyk nou net weer gister se geval. 'n Outjie is by die skool met 'n rewolwer gekry. Daar was ook 'n ander een waar die een die ander een te lyf gegaan het en gesteek het. Wanneer was daardie swaard moord? (Participant referring to media reports) (Transcript 2).*

4.8.4 UNEQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH VIOLENCE

TABLE 4.16: Unequipped to deal with violence

Sub-category	Related themes
Unequipped to deal with violence	Lack of training
	Unsure of how to react

The following statements clearly show that the participant experiences herself as unequipped to deal with violence.

- *I, as a teacher, don't know how to react (Transcript 1).*
- *Absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing. I just react as what experience has taught me (Transcript 1).*
- *We were just taken and jumped in at the deep end, and had to swim and get out, this works for me, this doesn't work (Transcript 1).*

4.8.5 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT (DESTRUCTIVE)

TABLE 4.17: Conflict management

Sub-category	Related themes
Conflict management	Sin-bin
	Spitefulness
	Swearing to voice frustration

The participant doesn't believe in the way she handles conflict. She experiences personal conflict in the preferred sin-bin method used by many educators to resolve conflict with learners. She refers to the sin-bin to which learners are sent, without explanation, in order to restore order in the classroom.

- *I see someone like Mrs. M. they just pick them up and send them to the sin-bin, which I don't think I want to do, but for some of the learners since Monday, I just decided hey sin-bin. Go to the sin-bin, go to the sin-bin, I am now taking the easy way out instead of being constructive, trying to teach these students something about their attitude, not about the work (academic) (Transcript 1).*
- *Go to the sin-bin, go to the sin-bin, I don't have to deal with you, which is wrong. Which I feel is not right, but for my sanity, that is what I have to do (Transcript 1).*
- *I use to be a very good conflict manager, and at this stage I don't know what went wrong that I cannot manage my own conflict with some of the learners (Transcript 1).*
- *Its so much less hassle, you don't say anything that can eventually be used against you, you just send them to the sin-bin. She makes horribly good use of the sin-bin (Transcript 1).*

The following are examples where swearing and labelling of learners, as outlet to frustration, take place:

- *And we have to realize, I don't want the child to have 80% and then he is a rotter, I want him to be a person worthy of that 80%. Unfortunately it doesn't happen. Those who are 80 percenters are really worthy persons, but these other little rotters, hell. You see every time, I have Gr. 9, I have Gr. 10, I have Gr. 11 and you find in every one of those classes the poor performers are the ones who are most disruptive. They are the most arrogant, they are the most insolent (Transcript 1).*

The participant made it very clear that no labelling takes place based on academic performance, but purely on behaviour.

- *Ek kan ook vloek, kan ek dit nie help nie, partykeer kom hul na my toe dan sê ek Hey vitsek ek bedoel nie regtig voertsek nie, net om uiting te gee aan wat ek op daardie oomblik voel. Ja, maar ek weet, ek kan in groot moeilikheid land vir dit wat ek uitlaat en niemand gaan in die moeilikheid beland vir dit wat opgebou het dat ek dit gesê het nie. En ek voel nie daar is so woord nie, want ek sê nie soos hy gestel word nie, ek maak my eie woord en dit is kort en kragtig. Ek glo nie ek vloek hulle nie, dit is net 'n uitdrukking (Transcript 1).*

4.9 RESULTS OF THE PARTICIPANTS WITH REGARD TO THE EXPERIENCED RESULTS OF VIOLENCE BY THE EDUCATOR

4.9.1 TEACHING CAREER NOT ATTRACTIVE ANY MORE

Experience shows that the youth look down on teaching as a profession and as a result of this fewer people are interested in teaching as a career.

- *Hulle (jongmense) weet dat die onderwyser se outoriteit wat ons gehad het bestaan nie meer nie, daarom is daar so min van ons jong mense wat in die onderwys wil kom. Want hulle (jong mense) voel, die juffrou, kyk hoe takel hulle haar af, nee ek kan dit nie vat nie. Of jy kry iemand wat sê ek is baie kort van draad, ek sal elke dag moet tronk toe gaan as ek moet onderwys gee (Transcript 1).*
- *Aan die begin van die jaar het ek beurse kon reël vir onderwysstudente wat nie geld gehad het vir studies nie. Met die klomp wat ons gesien het vir onderwysstudies het net twee kom aansoek doen. Vir die afgelope 4 tot 5 jaar het ons geen aansoeke gehad nie (Transcript 1).*

4.9.2 QUITTING / BURNOUT

TABLE 4.18: Burnout

Sub-category	Related themes
Burnout	Quitting
	Tired
	Illness

This is the experience of the participant that many of her fellow teachers, like herself, feel overburdened by the increasing demand of teaching due to violence and, from time to time, they have considered quitting.

- *I will tell a friend of mine, that if I didn't think so much of myself, I will just take my bag and go, I don't need to teach (Transcript 1).*

Teacher absences also result from the intimidation and victimisation.

- *Kyk net 'n bietjie na mev. L, as jy nou net vir haar bestudeer kan jy alles sien wat jy nou genoem is. Even in haar stemtoon: Sy is moeg... Weet jy die kinders gaan so ver ... (Transcript 2).*

The following are references made with regard to illnesses:

- *I am a diabetic, my blood sugar was 25 point something, at that point I can easily burst an artery, because it is a danger to me also (Transcript 1).*

- *Yes, en nou sluk jy jou woorde in en dit veroorsaak daai spastiese kolon (Transcript 2).*

4.10 RESULTS FROM THE DATA-ANALYSIS WITH REGARD TO PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

4.10.1 CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING AS A MEANS TO COMBAT VIOLENCE

It seems that there are some teachers who find it possible to cope within the violent teaching environment. To their advantage, they have the knowledge and understanding of the culture of most of the difficult children.

- *And they (these teachers) don't have problems, because they know how these learners should be. They (the learners) are taught, their culture is to respect elderly people, which they don't. Now these two ladies they are not afraid to act and to react (Transcript 1).*

4.10.2 HUMOUR

It is very easy to underestimate the role that humour might play to discharge a tense moment, which might have the potential to lead to violence. Here is one such an example:

- *Toe hulle gaan sit toe gryp ek die enetjie en toe sê ek vir hom Mr. Z gaan more weg, ek gaan volgende week jou nek omdraai, so dan gaan nobody wees, where you can report me to. Ons het lekker gelag. Want hy het my eendag gaan aankla by Mr. Z nadat hy my so mal kwaad gemaak het (Transcript 1).*

4.11 FEEDBACK SESSION WITH PARTICIPANT

Feedback with the participant was necessary in order to ensure the quality of the data through effective member-checking. This was done after the initial data analysis²⁵. After the transcription of interviews, identifying the main themes through a process of open coding it was verified with the participant. The participant verified most of the themes without reserve, only changing one of the identified themes and elaborating on many of the identified thematic categories in support of the research findings.

²⁵ See chapter 3, diagram 3.1.

4.12 REFLECTION

The data-analysis process was done after not only grasping the content of the transcribed interviews and studying the visual and audio recordings thereof, but after understanding the heart of the participant, with regard to this particularly serious topic. The participant was given the opportunity to voice her experiences in a way that enabled her not only to contribute to our knowledge thereof, but also to give her a chance to release some of the tension and frustration related to working in this environment.

The participant was concentrated on giving well-thought-through answers, yet felt at ease to be honest and to voice concerns, frustrations and personal perceptions. It seemed that many aspects surrounding the participant's experience of violence were in some way related to literature. This gave the researcher freedom to feel confident that the research process was accurately focussed. During the feedback interview with the participant, good use was made of identified themes to confirm, reject and elaborate on the experiences of the participant.

In chapter 4 the teacher's experiences of violence was discussed in detail. The six main data categories provide ordered structure and logical understanding to the sub-categories and many themes that were presented during this study. In chapter 5 a thorough literature control discussion be presented, as well as a discussion of the impact of the data-analysis and its interpreted meaning on professional teaching practices and the educational system as a whole.



CHAPTER 5

SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS, LITERATURE CONTROL, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 5, a summary of the results obtained through the research is presented along with a literature control for the results obtained during this research study. That is followed by a discussion of the conclusions drawn from the results, after which reference is made to the research questions. The perceived contribution of this study and recommendations with regard to research and practice, while acknowledging the limitations inherent in this study are also discussed.

5.2 SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

The primary findings in this study are that the experiences of an educator with regard to violence in a secondary school could be divided into six thematic categories. These categories consist of: the perceived causes of violence, the experienced nature of violence, the emotional experience of the educator resulting from the perceived violence, factors perceived as contributing to violence, the experienced result of violence and the experienced prevention strategies reported to work against violent conduct. These categories were stipulated in the previous chapter and linked to various sub-categories and themes. The main categories will now be discussed as findings from the research, with reference to related literature.

5.2.1 CAUSES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

The results of this study indicate that academic tension, lack of consequence for behaviour and violence modelled by society can be seen as the main causes of violence. This is linked to the traditional perception that violence might have an institutional origin (see par.2.2.1.3). According to Keller and Tapasak (2004) the relationship between academic underachievement and antisocial behaviour, particularly aggression, is well established. The research of Sullivan and Conoley (2004) suggests that students with emotional or behavioural problems are likely to experience concurrent difficulties in academic areas. This likelihood increases, as do the number of co-morbid conditions experienced by low academic performance. Low educational aspirations are associated with violence in adolescence.

However, communicating consistently optimistic academic expectations to students reduces disruptive behaviour and increases academic success as learners live up to expectations (Striepling-Goldstein, 2004). Calabrese (2000) is of the opinion that the teacher who wants to establish safety in the school context should provide challenging academic content and language skills for language minority (second language) students. He also advises that teachers should identify dropout-prone students and implement activities to keep them in school.

This might be seen by some as being a discrepancy in literature. There is, however, a shift in focus from seeing the learner as a possible under-achiever to the communication of potential to the learner. It would seem that, due to a lack of training in this regard, teachers might be failing in identifying and supporting potential in learners. Osher *et al.* (2004) are of the opinion that effective schools have high positive academic expectations; supported by effective instructional strategies, a focus on skill acquisition, appropriate monitoring of student progress, and parent and community involvement. An absence of these expectations and the support given for academic achievement is a warning sign.

Retaliation against provocation and bullying at school are further contributing factors leading to violence. This result is also clearly supported by literature. Gerler (2004) views physical violence at school often to be the product of irrational, overblown retaliation to verbal abuse. The media also recently reported an alleged perpetrator of violence as being the victim of bullying over an extended period of time (Beeld, 23 August 2008).

Other factors such as gangsterism (see par. 2.3.3), alcohol use, gambling and prejudiced behaviour in the form of xenophobic threats and sexism at school also play a role in causing school violence. The participant was not able to identify gangs in the school setting with certainty, although she was able to confirm connectivity between certain learners. Kodluboy (2004) remarks that school systems are prone to ambivalence about or outright denial of gang presence or the significance of gang presence in the schools. In his view the primary significance of gang membership for schools is that gang members represent a significant subgroup of students, who are more likely to be at risk and to present risk to other students, than the general adolescent population. The rate of violent offences for gang members is three times as high as for non-gang delinquents (Kodluboy, 2004).

Reddington (2007) suggests that the alcohol, drugs, and delinquency connection runs through all categories of crimes. The majority of youth arrested for either violent crimes or property crimes were involved in the use of some substance at the time of the crime. This

would also seem to hold true for situations reported on in this study when it comes to violence in secondary schools.

There would seem to be a gap in the current literature when considering the influence of gambling on school related violence; no clear evidence of this was found in literature.

As far as gender related violence (see par. 2.2.2.1) is concerned Mills (2001) acknowledges the fact in his study, claiming that for many boys being 'tough' was their understanding of what it was to be male. In a patriarchal society aggressive play by boys towards girls was often described as 'typical' or 'boys will be boys' behaviour and such behaviour were even encouraged. It was the acceptance of this behaviour as being normal which was most damaging in the school environment. It was this use by boys of aggression to gain power and dominate, which was intimidating and threatening to girls and undermined their whole experience of school. The results of this study suggest that it is also a culture specific phenomenon that might call for further research. A study conducted at the University of Jerusalem indicated that having a higher percentage of girls in class lowers the level of class disruption and violence (S.A. Jewish Report).

South Africa has been the centre of recent xenophobic attacks. It is therefore not surprising that this is also mentioned as a possible contributor to school violence. Fredericks (2008) confirms this view by reporting on similarly disturbing xenophobic attacks on teachers in schools in the Western Cape. Van Zyl (2008) reports on the link between xenophobia and a lack of emphasis on South Africa's history in schools, and thus not cultivating a sense of pride in learners. The theory of inequality is but one possible way of explaining this type of violence (see Table 2.1).

5.2.2 NATURE OF VIOLENCE

The nature of violence at school is first and foremost experienced as a struggle for power that is gained through physical force, including intimidation, threats and violation of rules. According to Mills (2001), petty violence and jockeying for position, in the form of pushing and shoving, makes the lives of many teachers in schools miserable.

Violence is perceived to be on the increase and evermore directed at the teacher, as authority figure, than before. Cangelosi (1988) suggests four reasons a student may choose to physically abuse a teacher. Firstly, students may feel backed into a corner and may feel that striking out at the teacher is the only way to maintain 'face' with peers. Secondly, the teacher may be in a position of being an accessible target for the student at a moment when

the student is reacting angrily. Finally, the student attempts to experience control over authorities, win favour with peers, seek revenge on the one in authority, or relieve boredom, by carrying out a prank that endangers the well-being of a teacher. Lastly, the student feels obliged to defend himself against a perceived danger that the teacher poses. According to the reported results the educator experienced violence as occurring in order to experience control over authorities, as well as to win favour with peers as being the most common reasons for the violence.

5.2.3 EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

On the emotional level teachers are reacting with an overwhelming sense of negativity towards the learners, especially those who are seen as perpetrators of violence. The negativity takes the form of ignoring the learners. There is also a lack of motivation to assist learners within the learning environment. As also mentioned in the literature review (chapter 2) Astor *et al.* (1996) mentioned that negative social attribution cycles between peers, teachers, and highly aggressive children may contribute to the perpetuation of violence in the school setting. Feeling overwhelmed by this might in fact contribute to violence. Osher *et al.* (2004) remarks that if the teacher, when feeling overwhelmed by a large class, uses a stern or loud voice when calling a child's name, that child is likely to internalise the communication as rejection, criticism, failure, and punishment. This might then contribute to them reacting violently.

Symptoms of trauma are clearly seen in the analysed data. The following emotional responses can be linked to the traumatising effect of the school violence: A perception of fear, a low self worth and a feeling of immense guilt in the way they are responding to the violence. Walsh (1998) warns that a traumatic incident like school violence can cause major organisational disruption and individual distress in the workplace and that comprehensive management is required to maintain the function of both the organisation and the individual.

The results have further shown that the educator experiences a general inability of the educational support systems to support the teachers. This perceived failure is specifically with regard to discipline and the enforcement of acceptable practices in the classroom and on the school grounds.

It was found that despite the many negative perceptions, the educator perceived teaching as a calling and experienced it as a life mission, attributing to personal purpose as being connected to a deeper, spiritual meaning. The expressed resilience contributed to perseverance in the teaching profession, despite difficult circumstances.

5.2.4 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VIOLENCE

The poor support from school as well as community systems, together with an inconsistent inconsequential disciplinary style that teachers use in the classroom, are perceived as the main contributing factors to the escalating violence in the school context. This influences the way conflict is managed and further contributes to violence. Rademeyer (2008c) remarks that the general perception of educators is that there is a lack of support from the provincial educational departments, mentioning a recent incident wherein the provincial governments refusal to expel learners from a school was overturned in the high court. Mahlangu (Rademeyer, 2008c) mentions that the inconsistency within the disciplinary system can be seen in that some schools negotiate with misbehaving learners, while others try to expel them.

The media influences teachers in two ways that contribute to their increased experience of violence:

Firstly, it makes them reluctant to act on or expose violence, as many schools are afraid they may end up on the front page of the news. Teachers who do stand up against violators are often regarded in the media as violators of children's rights; when, often, such a teacher was only doing a job enforcing school rules and acting against violators (Rademeyer, 2008b). As a result of this teachers do not act, and this can be perceived as an even worse scenario.

Secondly, the media has contributed to making more teachers aware of violence at schools. It would seem that such reporting contributes to teachers collaboratively sharing the similar experiences, magnifying the perception of increased violence more rapidly.

Poor conflict management strategies are reported and a feeling of not being adequately equipped to deal with violence at school. Keller and Tapasak (2004) remark that the application of effective teaching skills, which will include conflict management, serves a dual purpose. It prevents feelings of frustration with learning, fear of failure and other possible academically related antecedents to aggression and violence.

Striepling-Goldstein (2004) views times of transition and change as highly stressful contributing to potential conflict, for example, during the first weeks of school. He recommends that in anticipation of this stress, teachers who desire to create a low-aggression classroom must do as much of their planning as possible for the first weeks of school before school opens. By organising not only materials and supplies but also the classroom itself ahead of the time a teacher can look carefully at safety and academic needs.

A teacher who is well organized will be much better equipped to deal calmly with the inevitable confusion, disruption, and even chaos that can occur as everyone learns new routines (Striepling-Goldstein 2004:29).

Conflict management should, therefore, start long before it has a time to present itself. Keller, and Tapasak (2004) motivate that since problems associated with violence and teaching can be highly complex, teachers must be flexible and creative problem solvers.

One of the poor conflict management strategies reported in the results is the time-out system, whereby a learner is removed after becoming disruptive or violent. By becoming disruptive and being removed, the student avoids (at least temporarily) the undesirable task. Thus the student is negatively reinforced for disruptive behaviour (Osher *et al.*, 2004) (see par. 2.2.1.3).

5.2.5 RESULTS OF VIOLENCE

Teacher burnout and the disinterest among young people to pursue a teaching career directly result from the violence experienced at school. Oosthuizen (Rademeyer, 2008a) is of the opinion that, due to the extent of discipline problems in our schools, teachers are in dire need of help.

5.2.6 PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

It is experienced that cultural awareness, knowledge and understanding, referred to in this study as cultural wisdom, may contribute to the prevention of violence at school and, more specifically, in the class environment.

Humour can ‘funnily enough’ also make its contribution in preventing violence from escalating, as it serves to release tension. Some teachers might be able to use this as an effective strategy for preventing violence. Rademeyer (2008c) mentions that although humour can prevent a difficult situation from getting out of hand, teachers must avoid sarcasm as that has a direct opposite effect on a situation.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to obtain insight into the experiences of a secondary school educator with regard to violence at school; the result of this study revealed that the secondary educator experienced violence in school as a very serious reality. The situation, it

would seem, contributes to the depletion of the emotional capacity of the teacher to cope with her work. The extremely important task of educating the youth that teachers have, which often stems from a sense of calling, of wanting to contribute to building the character of South Africa's learners, has become threatened. The threat of violence and a decline in the quality of education that occurs at school, as experienced people leave the educational sphere, would seem to be caused by a combination of various symptoms rooted, amongst other things, in past inequalities that led to huge gaps between social classes. Coupled to that is an inability of society to adapt rapidly enough from coping with an unjust/unequal culture, to become a culture of individuals who take disciplined responsibility for themselves.

It would seem that the inability of one generation (the adults) to unite into a culture of responsible education might be taking away the opportunity from the next generation (learners) to know the benefits of discipline and respect in a responsible supportive learning environment.

The very nature of the experienced violence at school would seem to have escalated to the extent that those responsible for learning are disempowered through intimidation and physical force to conform to the rule of the empowered learner. It would seem that the rights of children have gone to an unintended extreme, where a few uncontrolled, violence-prone learners have hi-jacked the education-vehicle that was intended to bring about positive change.

This has left schools in the undesired position where teachers are either leaving the profession or they experience serious professional burnout symptoms, that hampers their capacity to provide effective teaching. Few of the youths having the potential to become teachers see themselves entering into an environment where unruliness is the rule and emotional and physical abuse instils fear into the profession.

Indeed it is a time where system alienation needs to be addressed, in support of our educators and learners. Effective teacher training is needed to enhance cultural understanding and skill teaching in a cultural diverse environment. We further need high-level governmental and judicial support to break the devastating effect of a zero-consequence perception and to promote discipline at school level.

When comparing the results on teacher experiences of violence in a secondary school to the existing literature, the results show that teachers experience violence on a very personal level, often explaining it in terms of one- or two-dimensional traditional ways. However, to have an overly simplistic view of the causes of violence is, according to the theoretical

grounding of violence, highly irresponsible and inadequate. This study therefore promotes an integrative approach to explain violence, in that it supports the Bio-Ecological Systems Theory that incorporates biological, ecological and systems theoretical approaches to violence and moves away from one- or two- dimensional approaches. This places emphasis on the need to equip educators with effective training with regard to the roots of violence experienced at school level.

5.4 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5.4.1 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the experiences of an educator regarding violence in a secondary school?

The results obtained through this study indicate that the educator experiences violence as a very serious reality. The educator experiences the complex nature of violence by being able to identify the causes, nature and results of violence in school. The educator is in contact with the emotional experiences caused through violence and remains aware of factors contributing to violence. The educator experiences an increased violence, which is directed toward the teacher more than ever before. The perceived purpose of violence is to attain power within the school context and often takes the form of force (physical or other intimidation).

In the main, the educator experiences the following causes of violence:

- Academic tension of learners.
- Retaliation of learner against intimidation and bullying.
- Lack of consequence for violent acts at school.
- Violence modelled in society and culprits of violence at school.
- Gangster connections of some learners.
- Prejudiced behaviour against others at school.
- Alcohol use at school.
- Gambling.

Lastly, the educator's experience contributed to the identification of preventative strategies against violence escalation and pointed to further research opportunities.

5.4.2 SUB QUESTIONS

How does school violence impact on an educator?

The educator experiences various emotional reactions as a result of the violence such as:

- Feeling guilty about her contributions to and inabilities towards dealing with violence.
- A general negativity towards culprits of violence.
- Feeling of being failed by the educational system.
- Experiencing a low self worth.
- Trauma reaction.
- Resilience despite atrocities.

What views does an educator hold on her personal safety in a school faced with increased violence and aggression?

The educator does not feel safe at all. Fear and trauma is experienced and, although she doesn't feel supported by the educational disciplinary system, she expresses a need for support and guidance.

What are the views of an educator on classroom management in a violent school setting?

The educator has the resilient belief that she will gain back the ability to manage the class in future. Currently, however, she experiences a failure to address and manage conflict in the classroom effectively. She relies on defence mechanisms to protect herself from the straining effect of violence. Defence mechanisms such as ignoring the culprits of violence or even reacting in aggression don't seem to be effective in contributing to classroom management. Due to the lack of support from the system, she does, however, experience this as an only resort available to her.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of this study lies in the limited number of participants. This, together with the existing challenges with regard to the generalization of a case study, implies that further testing through other methods of research should be considered, to more clearly understand the value of the results obtained during this case study (Lindegger, 1999). The unique contextual setting of the participant as well as her emotional state with regard to her experiences of violence might contrast with that of teachers from different contexts. The limited scope of this study might fail to expose data discrepancies that might occur during a comparative case study.

However, as stated earlier, the qualitative, interpretivistic and constructivist nature of this study aims at reporting the subjective experiences of an educator within the context of a secondary school.

5.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the field of educational psychology in contributing to the understanding of the complexities with regard to the experiences of violence of secondary educators within the school context. As a case study it allows for an in-depth understanding of teacher experiences of violence in various categories within the school context.

The study extends the existing literature by providing insight into the perceived causes of school violence by the educator. The experienced nature of violence at school is explored. It provides further insight into the emotional experiences and reactions of an educator to violence at school and links that to the various factors she perceives as contributing to school violence. An exploration of the results of violence, as experienced by the educator, takes place. Lastly it gives an indication of possible preventative strategies to counter violence escalation.

These results support recent media trends/reports on experiences of educators and might be used by educational authorities to improve their support to teachers, with regard to training and emotional support strategies.

The study creates awareness for those who work in the field of educational psychology of the contributing factors to teachers experiencing stress and burnout. It also provides them with insight into the nature of the educator's experiences with regard to violence at school. This could help them to have more insight into the much needed support and the interrelatedness of the experiences across different spheres of the educator's life.

A further contribution of this study may be seen in the ideas generated to prevent violence from escalating and the challenges it places on the field of educational management and educational psychology for further research. This study leans itself towards forming a platform from where numerous quantitative studies can be launched in further exploration of the experiences of teachers on a broader level.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.7.1 RESEARCH

As previously mentioned, this study emphasises the existing need for quantification of the current experiences of teachers with regard to violence within a secondary school. The need

exists to enlarge the sample of study in order to verify the findings of this study through quantitative as well as further qualitative measures.

The following further research is recommended:

- Comparative case studies of various educators within various school contexts.
- Survey to be conducted amongst secondary school educators representative of the South African population with regard to the identified main categories of this study, to gain a fuller understanding of their experiences of violence at school.
- A study to explore the relationship between school violence and teacher disciplinary style.
- A study to explore the experiences of adolescents with regard to violence in a secondary school setting and the role teachers play in their experience. Bowen *et al.* (1998) remark that as adults, teachers may play an important role in helping students make sense out of confusing, and potentially dangerous, situations at school. Relatively little research has been conducted on the role that teachers may play in helping adolescents cope with specific challenges, like danger in school.
- A study to determine the relationship between school gambling and school violence.
- A study exploring the possibilities and effectiveness of various preventative measures used to limit or contain school violence.

5.7.2 PRACTICE

The findings of this study hold potentially serious implications as far as the practice of education is concerned. It paints the portrait of a system in crisis, lacking support for those who are dependant upon that.

The importance of changing the perception that the culprits of violence in our schools have become untouchable should be addressed and clarity need be given on the rights and responsibilities of teachers and the educational management in this regard. The introduction of disciplinary support mechanisms from the side of the Department of Education is crucial to achieve this.

It also potentially points to de-motivated and seriously burnt-out educators, who are, due to the hampering effect of unruly and violent learners, unable to deliver unbiased positive learning experiences for learners within the classroom.

Measures should be explored on how to improve the emotional and physical protection of learners and teachers within violent school settings.

The urgent need to equip educators through more effective training methods would seem to be an issue that cannot be ignored. This should include training on classroom conflict management and effective disciplinary strategies, knowledge on the best preventative practices for violence, as well as procedures to protect teachers and learners from becoming victims. Teachers/Educators should also be taught how to enforce proper discipline in a potentially violent school setting. Clear channels and guidelines should be provided whereby teachers will be empowered to act effectively on school violence and any threats of violence.

Schools should be involved in the training process in order to create a more educated and responsible society. Because violence is often modelled within society the school must be able to provide localised on site support for learners and teachers with regards to violence. They should, however, also work collaboratively with the community structures such as churches and social services to bring about change.

5.8 CLOSING REMARKS

Teachers play such an integrated role in the learning that takes place in our schools that it is essential that the parental community as well as the educational authorities remain aware of their unique experiences. A de-motivated corps of teachers will be detrimental to the building up of South Africa as a new democratic nation.

Teachers, more than ever, are in need of effective support to cope in the increasingly challenging field prone to violence. This support should come from the educational authorities, in the form of emotional support as well as clearly stipulated disciplinary support that empowers the teacher as the responsible adult in the school environment.

Drastic measures should be taken to ensure school safety and to restore the teaching profession to its rightful level of esteem. To be able to attain this, society as a whole should be re-educated. Educators must be carefully selected, well-trained and properly remunerated. A well-co-ordinated multi-faceted approach, including all spheres of society, would be necessary to succeed in this challenge.

As the researcher of this case study, I express the hope that this case study will contribute positively to a clearer perspective in approaching this formidable challenge.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Template of the consent letter from the participating educator

Appendix B

Template of the permission letter to conduct the study at the University of Pretoria

Appendix C

Example of transcribed interview

Appendix D

Ethical clearance certificate