



# **Teachers' experiences of violence from learners in three high schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Pinetown district**

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## **DECLARATION**

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“Believers never stop believing”

S.T Mcobothi

## ABSTRACT

Learner-to-teacher violence is a global issue that affects teaching and learning worldwide. Although many studies focus on school violence in general, this study focused particularly on learner-to-teacher violence. This study aimed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of learner-to-teacher violence of teachers at three selected schools in the Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu townships in the KwaZulu-Natal Pinetown district in South Africa. The specific areas were chosen because of the reputation for violence in general, which affects the school culture in the abovementioned townships.

Qualitative research methodology was used because it allows participants to share their feelings and perceptions about the chosen topic. The research method used semi-structured interviews, allowing me to have face-to-face discussions with the participants to gather deep information. Two teachers were selected in each of the chosen schools, which resulted in a total number of twelve participants. The criteria that were used to select suitable teachers consisted of gender, number of years in the teaching profession, research site, and grades of the teachers. Teachers were interviewed about the violence from learners that they face in their teaching profession.

Data were analysed using the theoretical framework of the socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979). The socio-ecological model comprises a microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem, all of which were relevant to the study. The following themes are discussed: Forms of learner-to-teacher violence faced by teachers; Factors contributing to learner-to-teacher violence; Teacher emotions; Short-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools; and Long-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools.

The findings show that the school is not just an educational facility, but also exists within a broader social structure that can contribute to shaping the character and behaviour of a child. Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu communities are impoverished townships that are faced with various challenges like crime, unemployment and violence. The majority of residents are faced with poverty, and some choose to use violent actions to earn a living. Circumstances such as these may drive young people to adopt the violent behaviour that they observe from their households, peers and community culture, and portray it against teachers.

The study provides several recommendations to address the issue of learner-to-teacher violence in schools. These recommendations are aimed at the Department of Basic Education, School Management Teams, Non-Profit Organisations and Government Agencies, and Community Ward Committee and the Community Policing Forum.

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# Chapter 1

## Background and Rationale

### 1.1 Introduction and motivation

The purpose of this study was to investigate the types of violent actions committed by learners against township-based teachers in the Pinetown district in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. This study focused on schools in the townships of Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu, commonly grouped and referred to as the 'INK' townships.

According to the World Health Organization (2023, p. 1), "violence is defined as the intentional use of physical force or power whether threatened or used against oneself, another person, a group of people, or a community that causes or is highly likely to cause harm, such as injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." In this study, violence included destruction of property and physical, verbal, sexual and psychological violence.

The study took place against a backdrop of concerns about school violence in many parts of the world. Majong (2023) points out that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is rising alarmingly worldwide, yet it remains a complex topic. When considering school violence from a global standpoint, De Wet (2021) asserts that there are numerous nations where school violence occurs and that there are different types of violence at different levels.

De Wet (2021) highlights statistics by the American Psychological Association regarding learner-to-teacher violence in the United States of America (USA) schools. In descending order, the following prevalent types of learner-on-teacher violence were found in this meta-analysis: obscene gestures (44%), offensive/objective remarks (29%), aggressive language (29%), damage or theft of private assets (17%), harassment (10%), physical attacks (3%) and sexual violence (3%).

Furthermore, in the USA, school gun violence is still a problem that makes the school atmosphere unfriendly (Katsiyannis et al. 2023). Regarding the issue of school violence, Fox and Fridel (2018) note that, with 235 incidents of school violence documented in a single year, the USA is one of the nation's dealing with this problem. Similarly, Flannery et al. (2021) argue that the problem of school shootings in the United States is caused by a higher percentage of gun ownership than in other nations. Even Asian nations, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, have seen and continue to see school violence, according to cross-national research (Chen and Chen, 2019).

Igu and Ogba (2019) point out that because of political differences and a long history of mistrust, Nigeria continues to be the most dangerous nation in Africa. Furthermore, according to Igbu and Ogba (2019), violence that occurs in Nigerian communities has major effects on schools.

Teachers in South Africa are not immune to threats and acts of violence in schools, whether physical or psychological abuse (van Nieuwenhuizen, 2018). According to De Wet (2021), South African teachers frequently endure verbal and physical violence as well as ongoing mistreatment from learners both within and outside of the classroom. According to van Nieuwenhuizen (2018), violence against teachers is on the rise in South Africa, as reported in the *City Press Newspaper* on 20 November 2018.

Furthermore, Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) state that the increase in violence in South African schools has led scholars to conclude that many schools have turned into hotspots for violence. In addition, a different article by Burton & Leoschut (2013) on the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention's (CJCP) 2012 National School Violence Study (NSVS) report, revealed that the Western Cape Province had the highest rate of school violence (28.7%), followed by the Limpopo (25.2%) and Free State (13.2%) provinces.

A study by Woudstra et al. (2018), consisting of a sample of 153 public high school teachers in the Tshwane region, revealed that 62.1% of them had experienced verbal bullying, 34.6% had experienced physical bullying, 27% had experienced indirect bullying, and 6.6% had experienced cyberbullying. Woudstra et al. (2018) further elaborated that teachers may experience unpleasant feelings, disempowerment, low morale, and low motivation as a result of learner-teacher bullying.

According to Sibisi (2021), school safety and teachers' mental health are both impacted by the growing problem of learner-to-teacher violence in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). High crime rates, socioeconomic hardships, and socio-social challenges all influence classroom behaviours (Lumadi, 2024). Teachers' capacity to successfully manage classrooms is hampered by this intimidating environment, which also disrupts learning and increases stress and turnover rates (Sambo and Govender, 2023). Incidents of learner ill-discipline in South African schools are, according to Wolhuter and van der Walt (2020) significantly influenced when there is dysfunctionality in the community surrounding the parental home.

## **1.2 Location of the study**

The sites of this research were the townships of Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu (known collectively as INK) in the KwaZulu-Natal Pinetown district. These three townships are located in the city of

Durban, about 25 kilometres north of the Durban town centre. The INK township area covers up to 9 340 hectares of land and is home to a population of 580,000 residents (Dlamini & Mbonambi, 2009).

Figure 1.1 below illustrates the geographical location of the Pinetown district and the township areas used as research sites to conduct this study.



Figure 1.1: Geographical map location of Pinetown district (source: KZN annual education report, 2020)

Inanda was formed in the nineteenth century as an ‘African reserve’ and makes up 50% of INK’s population. Kwamashu used to be a township in the previous KwaZulu Bantustan homeland. It was built between 1955 and 1966 to shelter Africans who were forcibly removed from Cato Manor (Umkhumbane). Kwamashu makes up 32% of INK’s population. The Durban local authorities constructed Ntuzuma in the 1970s as a deliberate development of a black township. The communities within Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu are made up of predominantly African communities with a majority of isiZulu and a small number of isiXhosa speakers.

High levels of crime and violence, including gang violence, taxi-related violence, and political violence, are common in the neighbourhood (Ngcobo, 2019). According to the Police Recorded Crime Statistics (South African Police Service, 2023), these townships are a ‘hot spot’ for criminal and violent activities. Various studies conducted in the KZN Pinetown district have also revealed that the schools in the INK area are frequent sites of learners performing violent actions against teachers (Maphumulo, 2018; Shangase, 2018; Sibisi, 2021).

### **1.3 Background to the study**

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province has a history of violence in townships which emanated in part from political violence and tribe differences (Makonye, 2022). According to Krelekrele (2018), violence in KZN townships was more dominant when the indigenous tribal political organisation 'Inkatha', more commonly known as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), had an intense rival conflict with the African National Congress (ANC) before 1994. Townships were created during Apartheid using the Group Areas Act (1950), where people were placed according to their racial group (Brookes, 2022). A township is usually a community of people who are faced with many social issues, namely crime, unemployment, poverty and violence. The historical violence in the townships of KZN is still visible, an example even now being the KZN unrest and looting that took place in July 2021 (Makonye, 2022).

In South African schools, research has identified many ways in which teachers experience violence. The leading type of violence in township schools comes from learners carrying dangerous weapons (Gonzalez Molina et al., 2021). In schools, there is also growing physical violence among politically motivated teachers, leading to several assassinations in competition for leadership roles through cadre deployment practices (Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). Violence from parents to teachers constantly takes place in the form of disagreements, leading to escalated verbal attacks or, in some instances, physical violence (Sannadan et al., 2020). Furthermore, violence from the leaders of the school management team also victimises the teachers. This includes acts like sexual harassment in the form of sexual favours, autocratic leadership, nepotism and favouritism (Banks, 2023). The social surrounding in the township, like the high crime rate, impacts the teachers, and some schools do not have proper school boundaries or security responses, which exposes teachers to violence (Turanovic et al., 2022).

Access to drugs is one of the contributing factors to violence in township schools. Learners perform risky behaviours under the influence of drugs that are easily accessible in the area. Furthermore, learners are easily capable of acquiring illegal dangerous weapons found in their homes (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). In light of the above, it is important to gather information to better understand how teachers deal with these violent actions. The study's main aim was to explore the different types of violent actions by learners against township-based teachers in the Pinetown district.

### **1.4 Problem statement**

A study by McMahan et al. (2024) reveals that teachers who have experienced violence often feel disempowered, which increases the likelihood that they may leave their jobs. According to Moon et al. (2020), the relationship between students and teachers, safety concerns and teachers' job performance all suffer as a result of teacher victimisation. There is a growing number of teachers who

have died from the hostile environment in the township schools (Khumalo, 2019). The violence that township schools face harms education and leads to negative consequences in both teachers' and learners' lives.

Violence in schools' cripples teaching and learning by decreasing teacher morale and motivation to teach willingly (Mahome, 2019). This affects the learners' performance and leads to school dropout (Whylken et al., 2022). As a result, learners who have dropped out may join the ranks of South Africa's unemployed youth. In addition, teachers suffer from chronic stress after facing or witnessing violence, which affects their psychological and emotional well-being (Agyapong et al., 2022).

Other studies have mostly focused on the learners' perspective of how they experience bullying in the form of verbal and physical violence. A study by Qwabe et al. (2022) revealed that physical violence involves beating, kicking, sexual harassment, spitting, pushing, and deprivation of personal belongings. On the other hand, Kallman et al. (2021) defines verbal bullying as name-calling, teasing, making threats, taunting, or making inappropriate sexual comments.

Previous studies in Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu have focused on violence in schools in general or learner-to-learner and teacher-to-learner violence (Maphumulo, 2018; Ngidi and Moletsane, 2018; Maphanga, 2004) or disputes between pupils in the form of bullying and gangsterism (Maphumulo, 2018). Furthermore, in INK schools there is information that covers teachers violating learners in the form of sexual harassment and teachers using corporal punishment as a classroom management method (Ntuli, 2020).

The specific contribution of this study was to investigate the teachers' perspectives about the violence that they face in the teaching profession, in particular from learners. In addition, based on teachers' perspectives and experience, this study aimed to make recommendations to the education stakeholders to address the learner-to-teacher violence issue in the INK schools

### **1.5 Theoretical framework**

This study adopted the socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). More recently, this model was revised and named the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; Guy-Evans, 2024). The revised version of the model incorporates both elements of the social system as well as the characteristics and developmental processes of individuals. This study preferred the earlier version of the model, since the data does not explore elements of human personality and development but rather places emphasis on the social factors that impinge on learner behaviour. Thus, the concept of the socio-ecological model is deemed more appropriate for analysing the data of this study.

The socio-ecological model argues a complex interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors (Tudge & Rosa, 2019). As it relates to this study, the theory suggests that there are intertwined ecological factors that may contribute to violence against teachers. External influences as well as internal school dynamics are integrated in the way in which the socio-ecological model can help us understand the phenomenon of school violence. The schools are situated within communities and districts, and each district exists within a broader area, province, state, and global context, as this model recognises. Whether it be cultural, religious, or political, each of these ecological layers impacts the school's functioning (Guy-Evans, 2024).

This ecological framework helps us to understand how learner violence in schools may be influenced by various aspects of their lives. As an example, the microsystem in households would highlight a situation where a learner might be exposed to a family that practises abuse. This aspect of the model is followed by the mesosystem that looks at situations where parents and teachers could be seen to not have a good relationship or where they share verbal/physical violence, followed by the exosystem where young people may become influenced by community social issues like crime and gangsterism, all of which can result in learners practising violence in educational institutions (Benbenishty and Astor 2008b; Benbenishty and Astor, 2011)

According to Benbenishty et al. (2008a), this model of a school in context also argues that different staff members, parents, and learners all have individual behaviours that impact the school's overall safety. Mampane et al. (2014, p. 10) argue that “school environments are interwoven with their surrounding communities. Therefore, values and social attitudes within the school are often reflected in the community”. Furthermore, as can be shown in *Figure 1.2*, there is a connection between schools and the surrounding community. As an example, violence that takes place in a community at large may have an effect on the school.



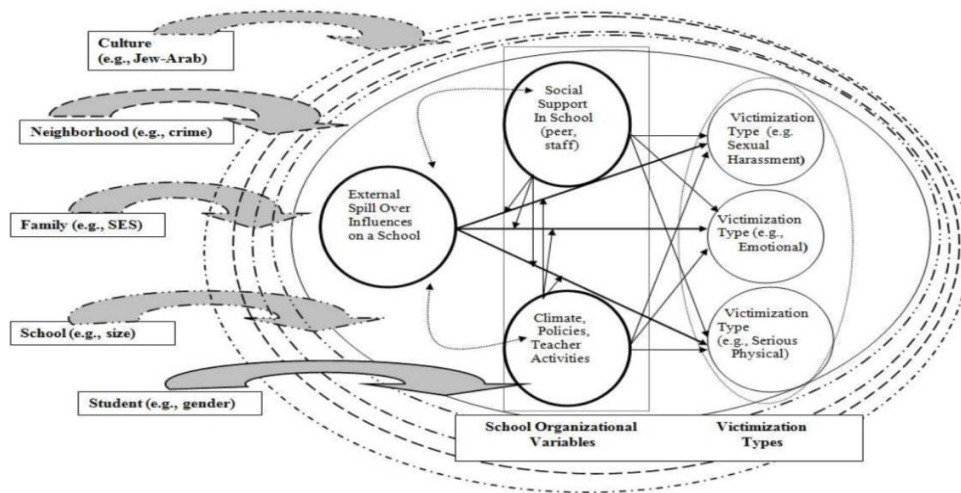


Figure 0.2: Socio-ecological model illustration showing the interrelationship of different environments contributing to violence in schools (Benbenishty & Astor, 2008b, p. 7)

## 1.6 Research aims and objectives of the study

### 1.6.1 Central research question

What forms of violence from learners do teachers in the Pinetown district face?

### 1.6.2 Research sub-questions

- What are the specific violent actions by learners faced by teachers in the Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu schools in the Pinetown district?
- How do these teachers deal with these violent actions?
- What short- and long-term strategies do these teachers suggest to address the problem of learner to teacher violence?

### 1.6.3 Research objectives

- To identify the different types of violent actions by learners faced by township-based teachers in the Pinetown district.
- To understand how these teachers deal with these violent actions.
- To explore these teachers' views on how the problem can be addressed.

## 1.7 Research design and methodology

### 1.7.1 Research approach

The study adopted a qualitative research approach because it aimed to investigate township teachers' personal experiences of violence in schools. This research approach allowed the teachers in the



sample to share their views, ideas, and opinions about the ways in which they had experienced violent incidents in their schools. Qualitative research is appropriate because this research method enables us to comprehend social phenomena in settings that are as close to nature as possible, as opposed to laboratory settings, to comprehend the experiences, perceptions, and actions of those people involved, and the meanings associated with them (Agius, 2013).

According to Gentles et al. (2015), qualitative research is also used to explore a problem more deeply and identify trends in opinions and perspectives. It is for the above reasons that the qualitative approach was suitable for this study because the researcher was able to gather raw primary-source data from the teachers who were direct participants in the schools in the study. Through allowing teachers to express their personal experiences, it was possible to explore the ways in which they were physically and emotionally impacted by the phenomenon of learner to teacher violence.

### **1.7.2 Sampling method**

This study used a purposive sampling technique to select schools in areas where violence against teachers is relatively widespread and is known to be prevalent in the community (Kgang, 2018; Maphumulo, 2018). According to Etikan et al. (2016), the purpose of a purposive sampling technique is to select study-relevant individuals from a variety of participant categories. In this study, purposive sampling allowed for the selection of a specific sample consisting of teachers who have indicated that they have some experience of learner-to-teacher violence. This may be their personal experience of learner-to-teacher violence, or knowledge of such violence at their or surrounding schools. Three schools were selected from Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu, one school from each area. Two teachers from each of the junior and senior secondary grades respectively constituted the sample. Teachers from different grades were chosen because of the different age ranges of their learners, which could offer different perspectives. My experience of living in Inanda and interacting with teachers has shown that many learners in the junior secondary grades manifest discipline problems, possibly due to their stage of early adolescence. On the other hand, my experience has also been that senior secondary grade learners are considered young adults and sometimes feel like they are independent and do not want to be corrected or controlled.

Teachers were also chosen according to gender because different genders experience violence differently, and the selected teachers could share their views and opinions. Two male teachers and two female teachers were selected from each of the three schools so that the total number of teachers selected for interviews was twelve.

### **1.7.3 Data collection**

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews of twelve teachers served as the primary approach for gathering data. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were deemed appropriate because they are able to offer detailed information regarding thoughts, feelings, and attitudes (Opdenakker, 2006). They also present opportunities for probing of information and thoughts of interviewees if needed. Anonymity and confidentiality were applied to protect the interviewees' identities as well as the names of the schools that were selected for this study.

### **1.7.4 Data analysis**

Taherdoost (2022) defines data analysis as the process of transforming gathered data into useful information. Raw data was recorded and transcribed followed by thematic analysis to identify key themes emerging from the data. Both deductive and inductive analysis took place: deductive in the sense of drawing on themes from the literature (such as external factors and internal characteristics and dynamics of the schools) and inductive to allow themes to emerge from the data. The themes that were identified were: Forms of learner-to-teacher violence faced by teachers; Factors contributing to learner-to-teacher violence; Teacher emotions; Short-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools; Long-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools.

### **1.7.5 Ethical considerations**

Stellenbosch University's guidelines for the ethical conduct of human population research was followed in the conduct of this study. The research ethics also followed the code of ethics of the KZN Department of Basic Education (DBE), and permission was obtained from the KZN DBE to conduct the study. Respondents gave informed consent to engage willingly in the study. To assist participants in making an informed decision about whether they wished to engage in this research, the goal and benefits of the study were explained. Participants were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants from the selected schools was guaranteed. Pseudonyms were used to protect anonymity. To protect each participant's anonymity, I am the only one with access to the recordings and transcripts of their statements.

### **1.7.6 Trustworthiness of the study**

According to Cope (2014), trustworthiness in a qualitative study is determined by four indicators: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Trustworthiness was established through a thorough and consistent recording and presentation of data and member checks of data

collected (Shenton, 2004). This took place through sharing the transcripts and preliminary analysis with the teachers who were interviewed.

### **1.8 Outline of chapters**

This first chapter has provided the background and rationale for the study. Chapter Two presents the literature review of the study by examining existing research on a similar topic. Chapter Three provides information about the socio-ecological model, or theoretical framework that was adopted to support the idea that learners learn behaviour from different systems within the society. Chapter Four explores the research methodological steps that were applied to gather the data. Chapter Five is the presentation and discussion of the findings. Chapter Six provides the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

*“Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution.*

*Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages.”*

-Thomas Edison-

#### 2.1 Introduction

The goal of Chapter One was to discuss the problem statement, objectives, research technique, and research design, which covered an overview of the entire research project. This chapter focuses on how teachers become exposed to learner violence. It explores the different factors that trigger and contribute to learner-to-teacher violence in schools. The incorporation of information was achieved by looking at and reviewing other research studies that have been published before.

The step mentioned above was followed by the introduction of the factors that led youngsters to adopt violent behaviour. According to Ramdhani et al. (2014), evaluating the literature is to highlight similarities and differences among a collection of data on the same subject to highlight the importance of earlier research and how the present study is connected to it. Gathering and arranging what has already been found, collecting knowledge from others, and incorporating research findings are the main concerns of the literature review.

Snyder (2019) identifies significant factors that are pertinent to the topic, synthesises and stimulates fresh perspectives, specifies the subject’s context, and clarifies the theory that should be used. This study focuses on the problem of learner-to-teacher school violence while also examining the psychological and physical consequences of this violence on teachers in KZN township schools in the Pinetown district. The literature builds on earlier research that concentrated mostly on how teachers are faced with various challenges in township schools, including violence (Mcobothi, 2022), with just a small number of studies examining how school violence has affected teachers (Nicho et al., 2021).

#### 2.2 Violence faced by teachers

Research conducted by Khumalo (2019) shows that school violence against teachers has risen sharply in South Africa over the past few years. There are commonly known cases that have been published in South African news reports where the teachers have been brutally killed by learners within the school gates. *News24* published a headline report of a teacher who was stabbed by a learner on the school premises during an exam (Seleka, 2019). Moreover, Seleka (2019) adds that the colleagues of the teacher confirmed that the culprit attacked without any provocation.

Another murder case was published by Gounden (2022) in the Eyewitness News article in which a learner fatally stabbed a teacher to death during an exam. Colleagues reported that the accused showed no signs of violence and was a good performer. A 35-year-old female teacher was stabbed to death by a learner in her home after a heated argument at school earlier (Pillay, 2022). One case was reported by News24 in which a teacher was stabbed and chased by a learner; the teacher drew a gun and fatally shot the learner on the spot (Mthethwa, 2023).

The bar graph below (Figure 2.1) represents the findings by Moon et al. (2020) of a study conducted in the Southwest region of the United States. The study by Moon et al. (2020) revealed that teacher victimisation occurs frequently in schools and harms the victims. Additional research is required to examine the extent, predictors, and detrimental effects of teacher victimisation, as there is a dearth of literature on the subject (Moon et al, 2020).

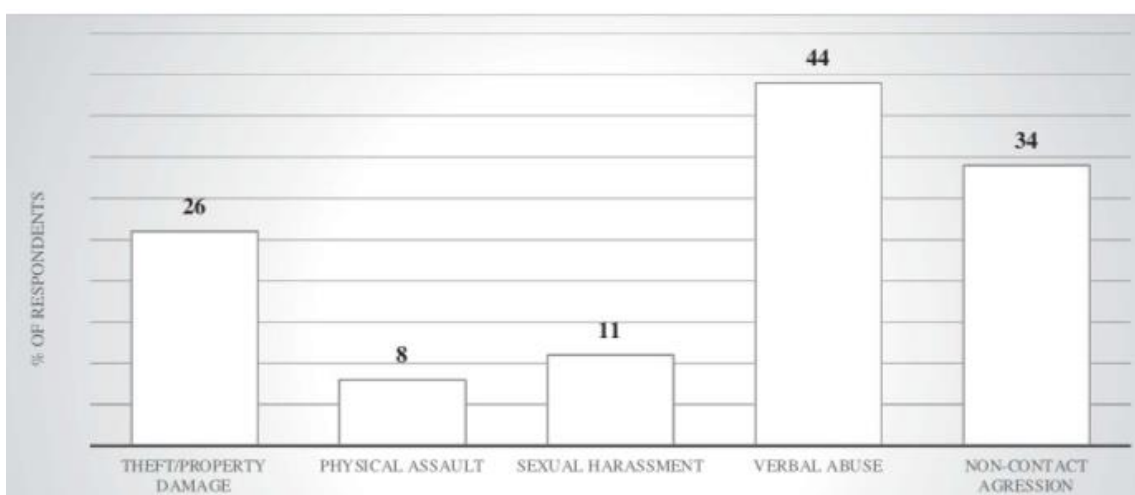


Figure 2.1: Prevalence of teacher victimisation (Moon et al. 2020)

According to the World Health Organization (2023, p. 1), “violence is defined as the intentional use of physical force or power whether threatened or used against oneself, another person, a group of people, or a community that causes or is highly likely to cause harm, such as injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation”. Nine different types of violence take place within a society which are “physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, psychological violence, spiritual violence, cultural violence, verbal violence, financial violence, and neglect violence” (Violence Prevention Initiative, 2014, p. 1). The violent act is a social issue that negatively affects people’s physical and mental well-being (Bester and Du Plessis, 2010).

Violence in schools has become a global crisis over the years as schools are becoming more like battlefields rather than a place of hope (Masath et al., 2023). The violence that takes place in schools creates a hostile environment for all key role-players, namely the teachers, learners, and parents. News

reports and headlines of Seleka (2019) reveal that teachers in South Africa face the most fatal attacks in schools. Attacks include shootings, stabbings, and the use of other deadly weapons. According to Levine and McKnight (2021), between 1995 and 2019, 302 people were killed in 176 shootings that occurred in public schools in the USA while classes were in session.

According to Moon et al. (2020, p. 1), “teacher victimization at school is highly prevalent with detrimental impacts on victims’ job performance, physical/emotional wellbeing, and connectedness to students”. Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) have explained how some teachers say it is difficult to enforce student discipline because they lack the power or means to deal with disruptive and violent learners. According to SACE (2020), the president of the South African Principal Association (SAPA), Daya Chetty, mentioned that nearly 13% of teachers say they encounter gangs in their school, and 17% of teachers have said there have been gun-wielding conflicts at their institution. Twenty percent of teachers in South Africa perceive that schools are hostile environments and that their students and colleagues are armed. The statistics that Mthanti (2023) recorded highlight that township-based schools are a centre of physical and gun violence.

Figure 2.2 below reveals the intertwined relationship between all the different forms of violence in the school environment in different parts of the world. The various types of violence that take place in school, physical, psychological and sexual, are shown in the illustration.

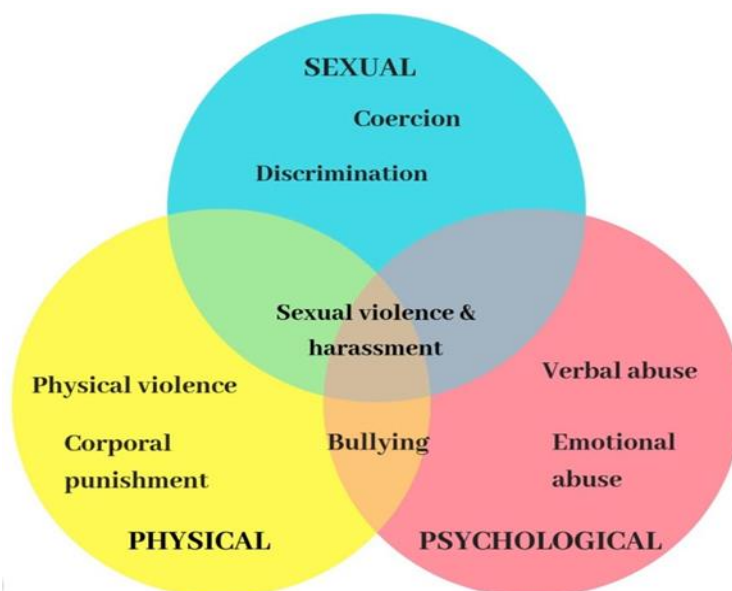


Figure 2.2: Different forms of violence that take place in schools (Source: Global Working Group, 2015)

The above section focused on introducing the different types of violent actions that teachers face. According to findings by De Wet (2021), learner-to-teacher violence is portrayed in newspapers, journals and publication as humiliation, physical, verbal, sexual, and psychological abuse of South

African teachers. The section below explores the factors contributing to learner-to-teacher violence in South African schools.

### **2.3 Factors that influence learner-to-teacher violence in township-based schools**

This section explores different factors that have been identified as playing a role in learner to teacher violence in township schools. These factors include family structure and practices at home, negative peer relationships, and geographical location (Khanyile and Mpuangnan, 2024). This section also examines different forms of violence faced by teachers in the education sector.

According to a DBE (2021b) report, violence, drug use or misuse, sexual harassment, and other criminal actions have no place in educational environments since they hinder students' ability to learn. Moral values and lessons about living in a just and loving community are heavily emphasised in both schools and communities. To this end, the DBE (2021b) has established a National School Safety Framework as a management tool for principals, teachers, students, members of the School Governing Body (SGB), senior management team (SMT) members, provincial and district officials responsible for school safety, to identify and manage risk and threats of violence in and around schools. The Framework is essential to assist all responsible officials in understanding their roles with regard to school safety (DBE, 2021b).

In support of strengthening the National School Safety Framework in schools, even teacher unions are initiating violence-awareness interventions. The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), which is deeply concerned about the rise of violence in and around schools, started the "I Am a School Fan" campaign against school violence in 2019 (SADTU, 2021). The campaign aims to organise all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and governmental organisations, to address school-related violence in all its forms. According to SADTU (2021), it partnered with Old Mutual, Brand South Africa, and UNICEF from 30 August 2021 to 30 September 2021 to expand its presence and raise awareness throughout South Africa.

#### **2.3.1 The impact of dysfunctional families**

According to Minullina (2018) unbalanced parenting is a common characteristic of dysfunctional families. Learners who grow up in dysfunctional families are more likely to experience violence. A study by Gallego et al. (2019) found that children who were victimised by their parents had a 71% higher chance of developing child to parent violence than children who were not victims of parental abuse. The World Health Organization (2022) has shown that maltreatment (including violent punishment) includes physical, sexual, and psychological/emotional abuse that takes place within dysfunctional households.

A study by Sitoyi (2020) reveals that there is an interrelationship between how a child is treated at home and how the child behaves in the classroom. According to Gonzalez Molina et al.'s (2021) research findings, aggressive behaviour with weapons may result from poor parental treatment of a child or insecure home environments. In addition, Gonzalez Molina et al. (2021) stated that learner and adult attitudes toward teachers could lead to victimisation of teachers. Gonzalez Molina et al.'s (2021) findings revealed three key themes that foster violence against teachers in schools: first, the home situation is unstable second, the parent encourages aggressive conduct; and third, the parent uses violence for selfish purposes. These elements contribute in that they influence the learner to learn brutal violent activities and perform them against teachers in schools.

### **2.3.2 Township conditions as a triggering factor for learner-to-teacher violence**

A factor that has been identified as contributing to learner violence against teachers is the geographical location of the schools in townships. According to the Situation Analysis Report (2020), township residents face challenges including high population density, high levels of unemployment, inadequate public facilities, low-income housing estates, poor economic infrastructure, low levels of investment, unsupportive economic institutions, and high levels of financial leakage. Therefore, these circumstances can easily influence the child to behave in a particular manner (Frankenhuis & Nettle, 2020).

Wolhuter and van der Walt (2020) describe how life is characterised in many areas by a lack of social capital, moral bankruptcy (looking out for one's interests, often at the expense of others), high unemployment, and other anti-social behaviours like loitering, gambling, stealing, looting, violence, and drug use. All these social issues may lead the learners to practise various risky behaviours such as committing crime, joining gangs, and doing drugs. According to Nawi et al. (2021), global drug abuse is a problem; in 2016, 5.6% of persons between the ages of 15 and 64 used drugs at least once, with younger users having higher rates of use.

While drug use is definitely not confined to township schools, Mamabolo, (2020) has noted that in numerous South African township schools, substances like '*nyaope*', '*kataza*', or '*whoonga*' were found to be the most popular drugs used by students. The narcotic known as '*nyaope*' is a combination of heroin and marijuana (Mamabolo, 2020). According to Nzama and Ajani (2021), the misbehaviour of learners who use drugs or alcohol includes inattention, disregard for the authority of the school, vandalism, physical violence, rejection, stealing, spray-painting graffiti, and physical and verbal abuse. According to Bala and Kang'ethe (2021), learners under the influence of drugs pose great



danger to teachers and there are various reported instances where teachers have been killed by learners on the school premises (Moon et al. 2020; Pillay, 2022; Gounden, 2022; Mthethwa, 2023).

Learners from dysfunctional families without proper guidance and those who start taking drugs are more likely to join gangs (Alleyne & Wood, 2014). A study by Densley (2018) revealed that most learners are recruited into gangs because they want a sense of belonging after facing neglect by their parents or families. Wu et al. (2022) argue that ‘pressures’ and ‘pulls’ play a role in the decision to join a gang. Pull factors are those that “attract individuals to join gangs”, as opposed to push factors, which “compel individuals to join gangs” Wu et al. (2022). Examples of pull forces include opportunities to make money, advance in status, fun, and fitting in more with peers. The need for security, especially defence against rival gangs, and having relatives or close friends who are already members of gangs are common push factors (Wu et al., 2022).

Learners who join gangs can more easily access and possess dangerous weapons (Goodrum et al., 2022). The majority purchase weapons like guns and okapi knives on the township black market, which normally sells pre-owned illegal guns (Roberto et al., 2018). Alternatively, they steal guns from home, which are not kept safely hidden away out of their reach. In some cases, they steal these weapons, normally from individuals who work in safety and protection (e.g., SAPS). Gangs collect these weapons to forcefully commit crimes such as burglary, drug smuggling, hijacking, and mugging, and for protection from other gangs or police department personnel (Roberto et al., 2018). During the school day, they bring these dangerous weapons to school to show off and earn fearful respect from other learners. Thus, these learners’ behaviour becomes undisciplined and disrespectful of teachers until they end up using these weapons against teachers (Moon et al. 2020).

In light of the above, there is a strong link between the culture of the township and the assimilation of violence by learners from the environment. Thus, the violent culture of the township affects the structural setting of the school, resulting in the victimisation of teachers. The following section will highlight the impact of learner-to-teacher violence on teaching and learning in the INK township schools.

#### **2.4 The impact of violence on teaching and learning in the INK township schools**

Violence in schools is a major contributor to an environment inconducive to learning, which leads to different consequences like a high dropout rate from school. According to Avitabile et al. (2019), one of the main issues affecting the education sector in nations around the world is the dropout rate. The DBE estimates that between 42% and 56% of South African students drop out of school each year (Winny & Muchesia, 2023). Another consequence of violence in schools is poor learner performance.

Khuzwayo (2021) revealed that learners who commit violence and engage in gang activity frequently neglect their studies, which harms their performance and academic results. This impacts on the level of education of these learners.

According to Mngadi (2013), 12% of people in the INK area have no proper formal school education. Only a minimal amount of secondary education was available to 38% of the population. Due to the low level of education, interventions to enhance literacy in the area are required, including skills-development programmes and even adult basic education. Only 3% of people have access to higher education outside of the classroom. The table below reveals the education level of the people in the INK townships.

*Table 2.1: A table percentage showing the education rate of INK residents (Source: Mngadi, 2013)*

<b>EDUCATION LEVELS</b>	<b>INK %</b>
None	12.4
Primary	23.9
Some secondary	38.0
Grade 12	22.0
Higher than grade 12	3.7
Total	100

#### **2.4.1 The impact of violence on teachers’ emotions in township-based schools**

Learner violence against teachers not only interferes with the education functionality of the school but also affects teachers’ emotional, physical, and psychological well-being. Many teachers who have experienced or witnessed violence from learners are commonly faced with fears and trauma on the school premises. Some teachers become dissatisfied with the teaching profession after experiencing learner-to-teacher violence. Violence reduces teachers’ passion and enthusiasm for teaching some teachers want to resign from the teaching profession (Grobler, 2018).

Teachers are the victims of, witnesses to, or culprits of aggression in schools, all of which will have an influence on the teacher in some way (De Cordova et al., 2019). School violence tends to have a negative impact on teachers’ well-being (McMahon et al., 2024) and lowers their level of personal life satisfaction. Generally speaking, burnout and professional disconnection are major concerns for teachers. According to Grobler (2018), literature that includes studies from numerous industrialised nations shows that violence is a global phenomenon.

Numerous research studies (Bester and Du Plessis, 2010; Shields et al., 2008; Taole and Ramorola, 2014) have demonstrated that school violence harms South African teachers on both an emotional or personal level and a professional level. Reckson and Becker (2005) state that one of the emotional demands of teaching is responsiveness to learners' affective and academic requirements, and violence increases teachers' stress levels. A teacher faces more stressors when they work in a school where gang violence is prevalent (Reckson and Becker, 2005).

When teachers are exposed to violent actions such as occurrences of shooting or stabbing, learner attacks, and hearing or seeing the traumatic experiences of colleagues and learners, many teachers experience trauma symptoms and psychological discomfort (Katic et al., 2020). Trauma is an event that challenges the individual's adaptation process (Farmer, 2020). These occurrences are frequently unanticipated and harmful and give people the impression that they have no influence or control over what happens.

As Espelage et al. (2013) show, these encounters can affect several aspects of a person's psychological functioning because they are exceptional and not a typical part of life. When people try to adjust to what has happened to them, normal reactions to trauma may include anxiety and moderate depression, as well as troubling thoughts and memories of the traumatic incident, trouble falling asleep, and heightened vigilance for any indicators of danger.

Many people will refrain from discussing their experiences in trying to control these unpleasant emotions and events. They might isolate themselves from social interactions and feel nothing when they reflect on the experience. According to Shields et al. (2008), many teachers experience social isolation following an incident of school violence, which negatively affects their interactions with their families and peers. However, these symptoms may finally gradually subside without having a significant negative effect on the person's capacity to operate, lasting anywhere from a few days to weeks or months (Susanto et al., 2019).

Student violence or victimisation of teachers is a severe global problem that has been shown to significantly influence teachers' decisions to change schools or quit teaching altogether (Li et al. 2023). Recent studies have focused on the psychological trauma endured by educators who have been impacted by school-based violence worldwide, either directly or indirectly (Berkowitz et al., 2022; Moreroa, 2022; Grobler, 2018; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Research on school-based violence suggests that it has a negative effect on teachers' job performance, sense of belonging to students, and choice to quit teaching (Moon & McCluskey, 2020).

The challenges related to teachers well-being and teacher emotions have also been found to be present in South Africa. A study by Mosito and Sitoyi (2024) of teachers who were victims of violence has documented these emotions of anxiety and a worsened condition of health, particularly among female teachers. Mosito and Sitoyi, (2024) further argued that the findings on health and well-being also emphasise the detrimental effects that violence may have on teachers' personal and professional well-being, which can have a profoundly negative effect on students' learning possibilities.

Different strategies have been formulated by various nations to assist teachers in dealing with their emotions and well-being concerning violent issues they face. For example, in the USA, the Hanover Research organisation (2020) has implemented a teacher well-being programme to assist teachers who are faced with the stress of high-stakes exams, large class numbers, responsibility for others, workload, behavioural issues with learners. In South Africa, President Ramaphosa has reported that the Department of Basic Education intends to use a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) strategy to provide 4,800 teachers with training on teacher welfare. Additionally, the Department of Education is working with a partner to offer pre- and post-service teachers training on mental health and psychosocial assistance (DBE, 2021).

All the above-mentioned factors have been shown to be significant contributors to learner-to-teacher violence in township schools. The different factors explored are interconnected, which often has a consequence of learners being aggressive towards teachers in schools, thereby affecting teacher emotions and well-being. To reduce violence in schools, different measures can be implemented. The following section focuses on exploring these different measures to address learner-to-teacher violence.

## **2.5 Strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence**

Different strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence have been identified. This section explores the following strategies: policies that protect teachers from violence, the involvement of safety and security organisations like SAPS, CPF, and NGOs, the encouragement of parental involvement, and the strengthening of security measures on school premises.

### **2.5.1 Implementation of policies that protect teachers' rights**

Several policies exist to minimise the potential of violence in schools. The National School Safety Framework (DBE, 2015) has explored various forms of policies that are concerned with addressing learner-to-teacher violence. According to South African Council of Educators (2020), Chapter Two of South Africa's Constitution (1996) protects human rights and therefore teachers have a right to a secure and comfortable workplace. Everyone has the right, under Section 12 of the Constitution

(1996), to be free from all types of violence and to not be treated or punished in a way that is cruel, inhumane, or humiliating. Teachers have a fundamental right to dignity and life, just like everyone else. Everyone has a right to fair labour practices under Section 23 of the Constitution (1996).

The School Safety Framework (2015) explored the following policies:

- **The Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008):** This national policy reinforces the law against juveniles who are perpetrators of criminal acts in the education environment. This law allows youngsters between the ages of 10 and 18 to be sentenced and detained in juvenile facilities.
- **The Regulations for Safety Measures at all Public Schools:** This act serves as a regulatory obligation that all public schools must be dangerous weapon- and drug-free zones. The possession of dangerous weapons and drugs on the school premises is prohibited. South African Police Services (SAPS) has a right to come to school and confiscate illegal objects.
- **The National Guidelines for the Management and Prevention of Drug Use and Abuse in all Public Schools and Further Education and Training Institutions:** These guidelines assist in executing the aforementioned policy framework. They provide steps on how to address substance abuse in schools establishing 'Learner Support Teams (LST), creating links with community resources, and implementing procedures for incident management'.
- **The Liquor Act (No. 59 of 2003):** This act was formed by the National Liquor Policy Council, which prohibits the distribution or sale of alcoholic beverages to learners (minors). This act forbids alcohol advertising which targets minors.
- **Devices to be Used for Drug Testing and the Procedure to be Followed (2008):** This policy regulates the legal use of drug testing devices on learners by safety officials. The rules of this policy state that the learners can be searched after they test positive on the drug-testing device.
- **The Policy Framework for the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Schools and Public Further Education and Training Institutions:** The last policy deals with help for both teachers and learners who are faced with drug abuse challenges. This policy allows for the provision of treatment, management, and rehabilitation of drug addicts in the education environment.

The policies mentioned above allow protection and safety officers the authority to intervene and restore discipline against learner-to-teacher brutality. Policies similar to the Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008) permit the South African Police Service to detain young perpetrators of violence in juvenile prisons designed for minors. Other policies like the regulatory measures in public schools prohibit the smuggling of dangerous weapons or drugs within the school gates. The Policy Framework for the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Schools is one of the policies that deal with intervention

programmes that are invested in rehabilitating pupils and teachers who are facing drug addiction. All the above-mentioned policies have a significant role in restoring a conducive teaching and learning space for teachers and learners in schools nationally.

### **2.5.2 Involvement of safety and protection services: SAPS, CPF, and NGOs**

The Department of Basic Education has partnered with the South African Police Services and other NGOs like the Community Policing Forum (CPF) (DBE, 2021a). The partnered organisations work together to manage and reduce the increasing rate of any form of violent crimes that occur in South African schools. According to SAPS (2013), guidelines for School-Based Crime Prevention were created and adopted by the South African Police Service in 2009. These regulations clearly define the obligations placed on a police officer. This includes involvement in ‘Adopt-A-Cop’ and ‘Top Cops’ efforts, Safe School Committees (also known as School Safety Teams), and other local safe school projects and programmes (SAPS, 2013).

On the other hand, the (CPF) is a different form of school safety measure in place to address violence in schools. According to SAPS (2017), Section 221(2) of the Constitution (1996) and Section 19(1) of the South African Police Services (SAPS) Act 68 of 1995 both made provision for CPF formation. SAPS and CPF operate by alerting other schools in the cluster about, for example, gang activity or impending crimes; information sharing within the clusters directly contributes to reducing crime (Griggs, 2002). Other NGOs that assist in fighting learner-to-teacher violence are Nicro, Khulisa, and SANCA, which play a vital role in rehabilitating learners faced with various drug addictions (Griggs, 2002).

### **2.5.3 Parental involvement**

Parental involvement intervention is a significant aspect of managing and addressing learner-to-teacher violence in schools. Parents have the advantage of moulding and shaping the learners at a young age to behave accordingly within society. Parents are regarded as one of the key role players in the education sector. In a study by Price and Khubchandani (2019) of 345 parents of high school students, nearly all of them (99%) and almost all (96%) argued that parents and schools were both equally responsible for lowering school violence.

Parents have a significant impact on their children’s values, attitudes, and behaviour. Efforts to reduce violence and boost academic performance can be aided by creating strong and meaningful relationships between schools and parents (World Health Organization, 2019). If children are exposed to violence in their homes, violence prevention programmes at schools may not be effective. The

World Health Organization (2019) states that children may mimic behaviours they see at home when they are in school. Therefore, schools must recognise and handle domestic violence and other hazards to children's well-being. According to Costello and Laub (2020), to prevent violence, parental involvement should be mandatory in schools.

This safety measure requires security within the structural setting of the school. This requires the collaboration of school stakeholders within the school gates to work together to prevent learner-to-teacher violence (DBE, 2015). The cooperation between school leaders like principals, deputy principals, HODs, SGBs, and teacher unions plays a huge role in preventing violence in schools, as stated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2020).

Moreover, the schools must be improved to act as a protective barrier to prevent any form of violent action. This includes employing more than one security guard and introducing cameras inside the school gate and fixing the school fence barriers. Kosar and Ahmed (2000) add that the school needs to install security technology such as cameras, electronic security panels, and video monitoring systems. This will also prevent the smuggling of dangerous weapons and drugs inside the school premises. In addition, the stakeholders mentioned above can make a change by applying awareness and prevention programmes. Even teacher unions are taking part in advocating against violence in schools 'I Am a School Fan campaign' was introduced by the South African Democratic Teachers Union. The figure below shows a whole-school approach to violence prevention. This illustration displays all the significant education stakeholders, organisations, and officials who are affiliated with preventing and combatting violence in schools.





Figure 2.3: A whole school approach to violent prevention (Source: SACE, 2020)

## 2.6 Other forms of violence that victimise teachers in township schools.

Although this study focuses on learner-to-teacher violence, by way of background, this section explores the various other forms of violence that teachers in the KZN township face. The forms of violence that will be discussed include societal crime violence, political violence, School Management Team violence, teacher-to-teacher violence and parent-to-teacher violence. The abovementioned forms of violence affect teachers mainly in township schools. Therefore, discussing these forms of violence in this study is significant because this investigation might recommend solutions even for these types of violence.

### 2.6.1 Societal crime violence affecting township-based teachers

The geographical location of a school might contribute to teacher violence. In KwaZulu-Natal, a province in South Africa, civil unrest in 2021 led to widespread destruction and looting, affecting 139 schools and impacting teaching and learning (Daniel, 2021). The violence included vandalism, burglary, and fires, resulting in the loss of educational equipment and historical memorabilia (Mahaye et al., 2023). Constant incidents of crime in township schools take a toll on teachers' physical and emotional well-being, causing stress and emotional distress (SAPS, 2021). The loss of personal working devices and school property is particularly damaging, as it not only affects the teachers' work but also their sense of identity and attachment to their workplace (Mahaye et al., 2023). According to



Mcobothi’s (2022) findings, this mass destruction prevented teaching and learning from commencing in heavily impacted schools in districts such as Umlazi and Pinetown.

*Table 2.2: Table showing different education districts impacted by 2021 KZN unrest (Source: Mahaye et al., 2023)*

District	No. of Schools affected	Extent of damage		
		Burning	Destruction	Looting
Umlazi	37	1	15	21
Pinetown	27	3	4	20
Ugu	25	0	5	20
King Cetshwayo	13	0	2	11
uThukela	10	0	0	10
UMgungundlovu	6	0	0	6
Amajuba	4	1	1	2
Ilembe	4	1	1	2
Zululand	2	0	2	0
Umzinyathi	1	0	0	1
Umkhanyakude	1	0	0	1
Harry Gwala	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>95</b>

### 2.6.2 Political violence faced by township-based teachers

Teacher redeployment is a practice in which loyal political party members are appointed to school leadership positions. Teacher redeployment is a significant factor in the violence and assassinations that occur in South African schools (Zengele, 2013). This practice creates a power-hungry environment in which teachers are driven to occupy senior management positions, leading to competition between rivals and orchestrated assassinations. According to Geldenhuys (2018), hitmen, known as ‘*izinkabi*’, are often hired by politicians and businessmen to eliminate targets. The resulting violence has led to numerous reported assassinations of teachers, including the murder of a deputy president of the National Teachers Union (Mitchley & Spies, 2018). News reports revealed a deputy principal who was also a ward councillor (Zungu, 2015).

### 2.6.3 School Management Team violence

In schools, senior management often adopts an autocratic leadership style, characterised by unpredictability, coercion, and a lack of inclusivity in decision-making processes (Oyugi & Gogo, 2019). This can lead to teachers being victimised and excluded from important decisions. Furthermore, teachers may face financial exploitation through corruption, such as ‘jobs for cash’ where school management sells or arranges positions in exchange for bribes (Harper, 2015). Additionally, sexual harassment is a common issue in schools, where teachers may be subjected to unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favours, or sexually explicit behaviour (Smit & du Plessis, 2011). These practices are prohibited by the department and can create a toxic work environment for teachers.

#### **2.6.4 Teacher-to-teacher violence in township schools**

A further factor that has been identified as leading to violence in schools is that of teacher-to-teacher conflict. According to Lukman et al. (2022), clique-like behaviour among teachers in schools fosters tribalism, intolerance, prejudice, and stereotypes that are incredibly difficult to resolve. In addition, Melnick and Meister (2008) state that conflict between teachers' results from immature behaviour of new teachers inexperienced in the working environment. A report by SADTU (2022) revealed that teacher-to-teacher violence is sometimes caused by the lack of inclusivity and equal opportunities in terms of gender, age and qualifications to fairly occupy leadership positions in schools.

#### **2.6.5 Parent-to-teacher violence in township schools**

Parent-to-teacher violence has been reported in several instances in local media. *The Citizen News* report published an incident about a parent who went to a primary school with two men who were wielding pangas including an AK47 rifle. The man terrorised the staff and left them in a traumatic state (Mahamba, 2024). In *News24*, Seleka (2022) reported that parents beat up a teacher after their child collapsed at school and the teacher was later accused of being responsible. According to Sukyadi et al. (2017), one factor that impacts on parent-to-teacher violence is a lack of comprehension of the teachers' competence. In a study by Badenes-Ribera et al. (2022) 44% participant teachers revealed that they are harassed by parents and 26% to 29% mentioned that they experience threats and negative remarks. In addition, the study revealed that teachers commonly face violence from parents such as being threatened by weapons (4.4%), being thrown at with objects (1.6%) and physical attacks (1.3%).

#### **2.7 Conclusion**

The literature reviewed reveals that violence in KwaZulu-Natal is a major social issue that needs to be confronted. In KwaZulu-Natal, violence has become a culture that takes place in different forms amongst young and adult township residents. The driving forces causing a range of violent acts emanate from poverty and environmental circumstances. The violent culture of the township affects the operational structure of the school. Although violence in schools takes place in different forms, this study has focused on learner-to-teacher violence. Moreover, research has shown that different factors compel learners to adopt and practise violence against teachers. It has been revealed that family settings, peer pressure, drug abuse, and gangsterism are the major contributors to violence in schools.

Many teachers have been victims of violence and aggression from learners. The violence that teachers experience affects them physically, psychologically, and emotionally. Several teachers have left the teaching profession, while some have died in schools. Nevertheless, different education stakeholders, namely the DBE, teacher unions, and the South African Council are joining hands to fight against violence in schools. The National School Safety Framework (DBE, 2015) is a significant document that explores all the important acts and procedures to keep schools a violence-free environment.

The next chapter explores the theoretical frame of the study. This study adopted a socio-ecological model in its research. The socio-ecological theory was developed by Bronfenbrenner in 1973 (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory argues that behaviour is influenced by the following systems: micro-, meso-, macro-, and chronosystems.

## Chapter 3

# Theoretical Framework

*“Children need people in order to become human”*

-Urie Bronfenbrenner-

### 3.1 Introduction

This study uses a socio-ecological theoretical framework in order to illustrate ideas and theories that are relevant to the research and link to broader fields of knowledge. Peacock (2013) argues that a study is strengthened in three different ways by the theoretical framework. First, a clear assertion of this theory assists the reader in a critical assessment of the theory. A theoretical framework also connects the researcher to knowledge that has already been discovered. As a result, one is given a foundation for a hypothesis and a selection of research methodologies under the guidance of a pertinent theoretical framework.

This chapter focuses on the socio-ecological model and how it links with the aggressive learners' behaviour in the INK township schools. The socio-ecological model provides insight into learner-to-teacher violence in INK township schools by examining the interconnected factors that contribute to this issue. Individual factors include learners' struggles and teachers' coping mechanisms. Interpersonal factors involve relationships between learners, teachers, and peers. Organisational factors include school policies and culture, while community and societal factors include broader social norms and support systems. By understanding these influences, interventions can be applied to address the root causes of violence and promote a safer school environment.

### 3.2 Socio-ecological model

The socio-ecological theory suggests that human development can be understood by considering how environmental interactions affect the forces directly responsible for psychological development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Through the study of the ecology of human development, social scientists describe and comprehend how a person interacts with the interconnected systems in that person's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1983a). This is relevant to this study since different factors have the potential to influence the learners to adopt and practise certain behaviours in schools.

In later years, Bronfenbrenner developed his theory to include a greater focus on the transitions that occur over a lifetime, and his focus shifted from environmental influences to the developmental processes that individuals experience over time (Guy-Evans, 2024). This new focus built upon the foundation of his ecological systems theory but placed additional emphasis on the participation of people in their own development. Rosa and Tudge (2013), explain it as follows:

Bioecological theory in its current or mature form specifies that researchers should study the settings in which a developing individual spends time and the relations with others in the same settings, the personal characteristics of the individual (and those with whom he or she typically interacts), both development over time and the historical time in which these individuals live, and the mechanisms that drive development (Rosa and Tudge, 2013, p. 243)

Bronfenbrenner's earlier theory, namely the socioecological model, was deemed more appropriate for exploring the research questions of this study, since the focus was on the social context of the learners, rather than their individual characteristics or their development over time.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994) and Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000), the ecological systems theory provides a theoretical framework for looking into and understanding the factors that affect human development. In this chapter, ecological systems that have the potential to contribute to learner-to-teacher violence in schools include family, community, and the societal practices of the location where learners grow up.

The individual is at the heart of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) description of several interconnected systems that affect human functioning, with the systems that form the individual's experiences moving outward from the centre. The microsystem, which refers to the person, family, and close social networks in the immediate social context, is the first one of these systems. The macrosystem consists of the general societal and cultural patterns, and the mesosystem, includes the school and community environments that have an impact on an individual. Furthermore, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), different systems interact and develop in different ways across a time chronosystem.

Guy-Evans (2024) shows the interconnectedness of the different ecological systems. The different factors labelled in the diagram have an impact on the holistic development of a person, hence the diagram below shows the intertwined relationship between these factors.

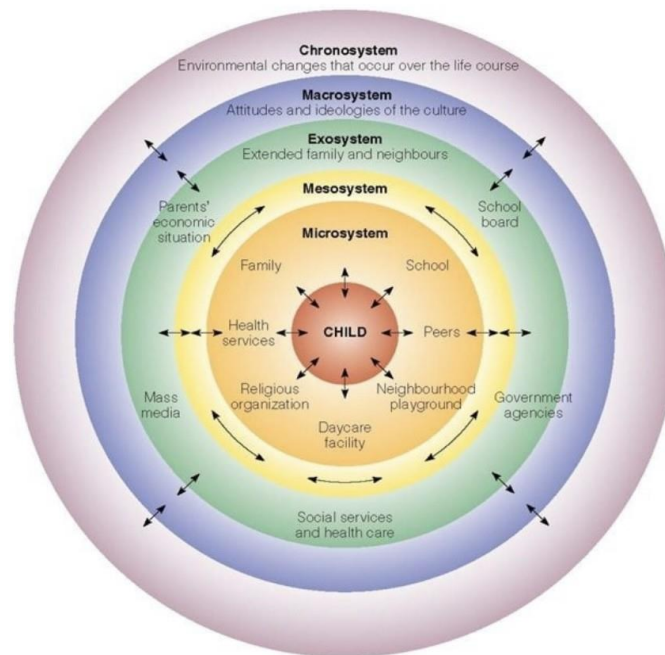


Figure 3.1: Ecological-models illustration showing the interrelationship of different environments (Source: Guy-Evans, 2024, p. 2)

### 3.3 Socio-ecological systems

In this section, I outline the different sub-systems that together make up the socio-ecological system.

#### 3.3.1 Microsystem

The immediate environment of an individual contains a system of influence called the microsystem. A microsystem, in the words of Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 22), is a pattern of roles, activities, and interpersonal connections that a person experiences over time in a particular area with certain material and physical attributes. The interactions between the several micro, meso, and exosystems are modelled by the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the social structure of a particular culture or subculture can be seen as the microsystem.

The evolution of a family's culture inside the boundaries of the family in the microsystem was covered by Bronfenbrenner. Consequently, this has an impact on the mesosystems and exosystems of those family members. All these systems are influenced by the overall society and culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A particular emphasis is focused on the cultures that exist inside the groups, the opportunity structures that are produced by the systems and experienced by people, and the trade patterns that exist both within and across communities (Bronfenbrenner, 1983b).

In the Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu townships, it is highly likely to find family settings which are categorised as dysfunctional families (Shangase, 2018). In these households, children are exposed

to different dangers and a lack of proper guidance (Minullina, 2018). Therefore, learners from those family settings experience violent parenting which may cause the learner to adopt and practice violence (Lloyd, 2018). Those learners could be violent against their teachers in schools because as they grow and develop, violent practice might form part of their experience (Minullina, 2018). Enaifoghe et al. (2021) explain that in some households, there is a reputation for gender-based violence practised by male family members in front of children; therefore, children who witness that type of abuse grow up thinking it is a norm to solve disputes with violence.

### **3.3.2 Mesosystem**

The second level is an ecosystem of human development. The mesosystem in a person's life is an interaction between numerous microsystems. Thus, the interconnections involving home and school generate a mesosystem. As already noted, Bronfenbrenner maintained that a person's life might be influenced by the socio-ecological systems in the environment that they are exposed to. According to Bronfenbrenner (1983b), each environment may have either motivating or inhibiting elements or processes. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the interactions between multiple microsystems result in the layers of mesosystems.

The school is an instance of this system where the teacher, the other students, and the education setting all work together to form a microsystem for each learner. In a mesosystem, there is an interconnected relationship between the school staff members and the learners. The person must unavoidably be a part of micro- and mesosystems (Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2000). This system consists of the direct factors that contribute to a child's development, like friends of learners and their teachers (Foell et al., 2021).

A child's behaviour pattern can change from normal to unruly because of the peer influence of the friends that the child spends time with (Chimwamurombe, 2011). Therefore, in schools, some learners adopt negative behaviour from their peers, which can lead to hostile behaviour against teachers. According to Sezer (2021), in some instances, teachers can provoke learners to be violent, often leading learners to be violent towards teachers. For example, some teachers may mistreat learners, until the learner becomes violent towards the teacher. Building from the above discussion, the following section delves into the exosystem and how it relates to this study.

### **3.3.3 Exosystem**

While the exosystem and mesosystem are composed of interconnected microsystems, the exosystem is intertwined with the external influences that indirectly affect the learner (Brim, 1975;

Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). The work environment of a parent serves as an example. Even though the learner is not a part of the labour market, it can nonetheless affect them if the parent works long hours or fails to attend important school functions, or just returns home upset. This cannot be regarded as a part of the child's micro- or mesosystems because they are not a part of the employment environment. As a result, the exosystem level is where this impact affects the learner indirectly.

In the INK townships, some learners' parents work in positions of manual labour and low-paying jobs, which often do not have flexible working hours to accommodate them to do school visits (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Therefore, the learners' discipline is compromised as no parental involvement is involved. Moreover, Chen et al. (2022) explains that when parents face hardships at work, they become stressed and are sometimes under pressure, which can trigger hostile behaviour in their homes. In the process, the child therefore assimilates this behaviour and possibly practises it in class against teachers and fellow learners (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

The paragraph below introduces the macrosystem, which is the fourth layer of the socio-ecological model.

### **3.3.4 Macrosystem**

The macrosystem level refers to the broader societal context. It includes cultural values, laws, and policies that shape individual behaviour. This level influences the social norms and expectations of a community. Macrosystem factors can either support or hinder individual well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Examples include government policies, economic conditions, and social justice. In the context of this study, society is the major contributing factor to learner-to-teacher violence in Pinetown district schools. In Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu some people do violent crimes to earn a living, which can affect the behaviour of the children who live in the area (Khoza, 2021).

In the INK townships, some people perform particular social behaviours like discrimination, for example, xenophobic attacks, that can negatively reinforce learners to learn violence (Mantzaris & Ngcamu, 2019). A study by Tarisayi and Manik (2021) revealed that immigrant teachers who are in South African schools are often subjected to discrimination by their colleagues and learners who use verbally insulting words like 'amakwerekwere'. This example illustrates the how negative behaviour in the community might influence learners. In the township environment, learners get easy access to drugs, and learners who use drugs are more likely to join gangs and own dangerous weapons like guns and military knives (Hlatshwayo, 2018).



### **3.3.5 Chronosystem**

The chronosystem formed part of Bronfenbrenner's later model and was less pertinent to this study. When Bronfenbrenner first developed the ecological systems theory, time was not considered a construct in human evolution. Later on, he added this element, noting that many proponents of the theory of human development had traditionally simply taken time as a factor in the aging process. (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). In other words, as humans age and live longer, their biological conditions change, and they develop and grow. The chronosystem's contribution integrates time into the ecological framework for human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This considers the individual's age, developmental stage, and the time frame in which they live and develop.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1999), the chronosystem is the result of the progression of all the aforementioned systems (micro, meso, exo, and macro) across time. The continuity of all the aforementioned systems results in the construction of the chronosystem, which does not happen on its own but rather develops over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The chronosystem, according to Swart and Greyling (2011) consists of all the events, situations, environmental occurrences, major life transformations, and historical occurrences that take place during a person's childhood.

The chronosystem takes place in the transition of time; a child may grow up in a stable functional loving family, but time may influence negative change within that. As time progresses, the child's parents might pass away or divorce, causing the child to live with extended family who may have a culture of practising violent actions. Thus, this can cause a learner to be exposed to different environments and circumstances such as poverty and violence. These factors can result in a learner's change in character, leading to 'substance abuse, joining gangs, and also adopting violent action.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed how the environment of a child can have a strong impact on shaping the child's holistic development. I have linked the study to the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979), who argues that for a child to assimilate and blend the teachings of their surroundings, the child needs to be exposed to that environment for a longer period. Children who grow up in the township environment are commonly exposed to hostile living conditions. This includes poverty, crime, substance abuse, and the significant social challenge explored in this study, namely, violence. Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological theory provides a way of categorising social factors into systems that represent human interaction. This theory supports the view that learners who engage in violent actions in schools against teachers may have been exposed to and influenced by negative practices within the different ecological systems.

## Chapter 4

### Research Methodology

*“No society can long sustain itself unless its members have learned the sensitivities, motivations, and skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings.”*

-Urie Bronfenbrenner-

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological approaches which were appropriate for the study. This chapter's main objective is to present the research methodology, particularly the design and empirical methods used. The methods for data collection and analysis are described, along with how and sampled. To get the information needed for this study with adequate precision, it was crucial to have a good plan for data collection and processing. Components of the methodology include the research tools, the research process, and the data analysis procedure.

#### 4.2 Interpretivism as paradigm

This study made use of the interpretive paradigm to understand the reality and perspectives of the experiences of individuals. Because humans interpret their environment and then behave in line with that interpretation, the interpretivism paradigm is predicated on the assumption that ways to interpret knowledge in the human and social sciences are not be the same as those used in the physical sciences (Pham, 2018). Interpretivism often aims to gain a deeper understanding of the event and its complexity in its context, as opposed to trying to generalise the basis of understanding for the entire population (Creswell, 2007).

According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), essential instruments for interpretive theory include language, shared consciousness, social construction, and other social interactions. In addition, Pervin and Mokhtar (2022) contend that to accomplish this, interpretive researchers must frame their study questions so that they can answer qualitative questions. Pham (2018) explains that the advantage of interpretivist research is that it allows researchers to describe objects, people, and events from many angles, which helps them better understand phenomena in their social context. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) explain that the interpretivist paradigm allows researchers to use qualitative approaches, which are best suited for gaining a deep understanding depending on a particular situation. Comparatively, a positivism paradigm would not permit the amount of depth and insight.

#### 4.3 Research question and research objectives

The study was underpinned by the following central research question:

What forms of violence from learners do teachers in the Pinetown district face?

The following were the research sub-questions:

- What are the specific violent actions by learners faced by teachers in the Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu schools in the Pinetown district?
- How do these teachers deal with these violent actions?
- What short- and long-term strategies do these teachers suggest to address the problem of learner to teacher violence?

The research objectives were therefore:

- To identify the different types of violent actions by learners faced by township-based teachers in the Pinetown district;
- To understand how these teachers deal with these violent actions;
- To explore these teachers' views on how the problem can be addressed.

#### **4.4 Research design**

Utilising an interpretive framework, I gathered information through semi-structured interviews with individuals who had personally witnessed the phenomena of learner-to-teacher violence. This enabled me to look into the values, emotions, viewpoints, and intentions of the research subjects (Shields et al., 2015). The respondents who had either witnessed or experienced the phenomenon of school violence were chosen because they could provide the richest accounts of what transpired in the schools to them.

#### **4.5 Qualitative research methodology**

Qualitative and quantitative research approaches are the two main favoured approaches for conducting research. Qualitative research focuses on thoughts, feelings, or experiences (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022) which is relevant for this study as the investigation was about exploring experiences of learner-to-teacher violence from the teachers' perspective.

According to Ugwu and Eze Val (2023), qualitative research allows an understanding of how people perceive their surroundings or the environment that they are exposed to. Although there are several methods for conducting qualitative research, they are all flexible and concentrate on keeping rich meaning when analysing data.

#### **4.6 The setting of the study**

This research took place in the areas of Inanda, Ntuzuma and Kwamashu, all of which are in the KwaZulu-Natal Pinetown district. Three township schools, one from each these areas, were invited to participate in the research.

#### **4.7 Data collection instruments**

Through a range of techniques, the researcher can collect data for a qualitative study using a variety of methods, such as field notes, focus groups, in-depth interviews, personal narratives, observation, document analysis, and audio/video recordings (Husband, 2020). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to gather data. After that, these interviews were transcribed, recorded, and examined.

##### **4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews**

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method in which the interviewer can go deeper into specific subjects or responses while also providing a series of open-ended questions that encourage a discussion (Belina, 2023). According to Elhami and Khoshnevisan (2022), open-ended questions are used by the interviewer in semi-structured interviews to discuss some topics in more detail. Open-ended questions provide the interviewer more freedom to get detailed information from the interviewees while also allowing them to express more of their personal sentiments, emotions, and opinions.

In this study, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to engage with the interviewees in depth so they could express themselves and explore their perspectives and experiences about learner-to-teacher violence that takes place in their schools. Semi-structured interviews were very beneficial because the teachers were given a platform to share their past and present encounters with violence. Teachers shared their experiences, views and opinions not only on the aggression they have experienced from learners but also elaborated on different forms of violence that they face regularly in their teaching profession. The interviewees cited real-life events where they experienced or witnessed violent actions. The section below discusses the study's sampling method and sample size.

#### **4.8 Sampling method and sample size**

According to Steyn (2014), sampling is the procedure used to identify the research unit of analysis. In order to select participants for the study based on their ability to provide rich and relevant data on the subject under investigation, purposive sampling was employed. This strategy made sense for the

study since the researcher intended to select participants who had first-hand experience with the events of interest.

The sample that was chosen were teachers in schools in Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu in the Pinetown district. The schools that were purposively selected are known to have various violent occurrences in the chosen areas. Junior and senior secondary school teachers formed part of the selected sample.

Suitable candidates who had the likelihood of previously experiencing learner violence were selected. Teachers were chosen according to gender because different genders experience violence differently. Another selection criterion that was considered was more experienced and newly qualified teachers. The reasoning here was that more experienced teachers would be able to provide information about the gradual change in learners' aggression over the years. Two male teachers and two female teachers were selected in three schools. The number of teachers that were selected for interviews was 12 in total. The interviews and questions were conducted in English. Some of the respondents switched from IsiZulu to English to better express and narrate their responses.

The teachers were selected from the junior and secondary grades of high schools to increase the sample and select teachers who have witnessed or experienced violence from different age groups of learners. The criteria that were used to select suitable respondents consisted of gender and more experience and less experience in teaching.

The profiles of the respondents are shown in Table 4.1. The selected participants' demographic data included gender, number of years teaching at the school at the time of the research, research site, and grades taught.

*Table 4.1: Demographics of the respondents*

Identification of teachers	Gender	Years of experience	Research site	Grade
Teacher A	Male	28 years	Inanda	Grade 8
Teacher B	Female	6 years	Ntuzuma	Grades 8, 9 and 12
Teacher C	Male	4 years	KwaMashu	Grade 11
Teacher D	Female	1 year 8 months	Inanda	Grades 8 and 9
Teacher E	Male	3 years	Ntuzuma	Grades 8 and 12
Teacher F	Female	30 years	KwaMashu	Grades 8 and 10

Teacher G	Male	13 years	Inanda	Grade 12
Teacher H	Female	15 years	Ntuzuma	Grades 8, 9 and 10
Teacher I	Male	14 years	KwaMashu	Grades 8, 9 and 10
Teacher J	Female	1 year	Inanda	Grades 9 and 10
Teacher K	Male	16 Years	Ntuzuma	Grades 10, 11 and 12

#### 4.9 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data (Mezmir, 2020). As a result, data analysis entails reducing the amount of raw data, sorting the important from the unimportant, spotting important patterns, and creating a framework for conveying the key findings of the data (De Vos et al., 2005).

Analysing qualitative data entails arranging, valuing, and interpreting the information. To put it clearly, data analysis involves identifying patterns, themes, categories, and regularities while also making sense of the data about the participants' conceptions of the events. The combination of analysis and interpretation, as well as the combination of data analyses, is what sets qualitative data analysis apart (Gibbs, 2007).

Thematic analysis was used to categorise and classify themes of the collected data. King (2004) defines thematic analysis as the act of analysing data by drawing on themes that appear on their own. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) say it is a technique for “identifying, analyzing, and publishing themes or patterns within the data”. Soon after I finished the interviews, the data processing procedure started as outlined below.

By consulting the transcripts of the interviews and voice recordings again, thematic data analysis was applied. After familiarisation and immersion, I identified codes in order to generate themes and then went on to explain, analyse, and cross-reference the results. Here is a quick explanation of these procedures:

The six phases of theme analysis, as outlined by Clarke and Braun (2014, p. 11):

- **Familiarisation and immersion:** This suggests that by closely examining and paying attention to textual material, one should become more engaged with the facts. Moreover, tape-listening and interview transcriptions are used to confirm the participants' claims.

- **Generating initial codes:** During this stage, I selected and labelled a column of data that is significant to the research question or topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 160). Codes might give an overview of a specific data piece or describe the content of the data as a whole. Codes that explain the meaning of the data may also be derived from participant interpretations.
- **Establishing themes:** During this phase, I looked for themes that reflected an important aspect of the data, were integrated with the research objectives and questions, and which demonstrated significance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage deals with selecting connecting codes, as well as reviewing the coded data, are all included in this phase. The process of producing themes includes clustering codes that have the goal of putting material together to reflect and highlight a consistent and interesting pattern in the data. Throughout the study, I identified themes concerning the research question.
- **Reviewing potential themes/coding:** I reviewed the themes at this point and made any necessary modifications to ensure they were relevant to the entire dataset. Quality control is involved in reviewing potential themes; the researcher has to make sure that the right themes are selected and that the right data are collected. Following this study, I generated a review of the topics and made statements regarding them.
- **Identifying and defining themes:** To describe what makes each theme distinct, the researcher must go into great detail about it. This phase includes the in-depth study needed for thematic analysis. The themes were precisely defined the procedure involved a thorough examination to verify whether the themes aligned with the coded portions and the complete dataset. After the findings were coded, I searched for trends and categorised the information accordingly. Subsequently, I clustered like categories and reorganised them beneath the principal themes that surfaced. A thorough description of the data was guaranteed using thematic analysis.

#### 4.10 Ethical considerations

I began by requesting authorisation from the DBE to interview teachers and students in KZN schools following the ethical guidelines for studies of this kind. Gatekeeper authorisation was given. In addition, I requested ethical approval to carry out the study from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) at Stellenbosch University, which was also granted. The Stellenbosch research committee suggested that this is a medium-risk study and therefore there might be a need to provide the participants with a counsellor if one of the participants experienced emotional distress. The researcher requested assistance from the KwaZulu-Natal Department Pinetown district; counselling service was provided, and a confirmation letter was issued.

After receiving the gatekeeper letter from the KZN DBE and ethical clearance from the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee, I visited the schools and presented the letter of request to the principal to conduct research in their respective schools. The selected schools issued a formal letter of approval to allow me to conduct interviews in their schools.

At the first interaction, the participants were given informed consent documents, which they could go through and make sure they were comfortable enough to move forward with the study. The process entailed not only having potential participants sign the consent form but also explaining to them the protocols and processes involved in participating in this type of study. Cohen et al. (2018) state that there should be no consequences for choosing not to participate in a study and that participation must be completely voluntary. The rationale behind the research, the approach for gathering data, and the protocols for reporting were clarified.

I made it clear that there were no dangers associated with participating and that any that did surface during the process would need to be managed. The participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any moment without facing effects and that their identities would be kept private (Cohen et al., 2018). Included in the informed consent form were the project title, a brief description of the study's objectives, and the affiliation of the research along with contact details and qualifications.

The details sheet and the consent declaration were the two materials used in the consent process. The researcher provided an information sheet that included the study's objectives, data collection tools, data collection length, study risks and benefits, contact information for HSSREC, the principal investigator (PI) or supervisor, and student information. Details of the Pinetown district counsellor who could provide counselling in case the respondents experienced traumatic distress were also provided.

The sheet also contained details on the costs and benefits associated with the project, measures to actively prevent potential risks, confirmation that existing referral patterns and mechanisms were in place, confidentiality and privacy policies, and how the participants' needs would be met. Other factors considered on the form were the study's social significance and the proper way in which the results would be shared with the research participants.

In the declaration of consent, participants were asked to sign on to their understanding of the research methodology and to their rights, which included the freedom to decline participation and/or withdraw from the study at any time without facing repercussions. A request for permission to record an interview on audio was also included. The form had the participants' signatures and the date on it. It



also stated the study's social importance and how the research findings would be properly distributed to its participants.

#### **4.10.1 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Hennick et al. (2011) state that although anonymity and confidentiality are different terms in research ethics, they are used similarly in study literature. According to several studies (Cohen et al., 2018; Hennick et al., 2011; Depoy & Gitlin, 2016), confidentiality is the act of not disclosing to third parties any information obtained from participants that might reveal their identity or connection to the reported information whereas anonymity refers to the ability to identify study participants based only on study data; participants' names are not disclosed in the results published (Hennick et al., 2011; Cohen et al., 2018). Thus, the researcher honoured the participants' right to confidentiality. To maintain confidentiality, the recordings were only accessible to the researcher and those transcribing them.

#### **4.10.2 Protection from harm**

It was the right of research participants to be shielded from damage and distress (Botma et al., 2010). The participant's involvement in the study was completely voluntary, and the researcher promised that they would not experience any negative consequences. The methods used by the researcher to get the data did not threaten the participants' safety. As a result, the researcher made sure that everyone included in the study gave their consent and that no damage came to them. The investigator honoured each participant's dignity.

#### **4.10.3 Trustworthiness of the study**

According to Elo et al. (2014), the significance placed on validity and reliability is one of the key distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research. While concepts like dependability, credibility, applicability, transferability, conformability, and consistency are significant difficulties in qualitative studies, reliability and validity are crucial criteria for quality in quantitative research (Amankwaa, 2016). Four factors affect a study's trustworthiness in a qualitative context: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). According to Mthiyane (2013, p. 125), quality research should be dependable (in preference to reliability) for it to be credible (in preference to internal validity) and transferable (in preference to external validity or generalizability). Accuracy concerns are addressed by trustworthiness while evaluating the researcher's identified proposition through data analysis.

As a result, I made sure that the techniques used to obtain the data were reliable. Relying on the participant's responses rather than my own preconceived notions allowed me to remain trustworthy. This was accomplished by keeping a log of the conversations and interviews as well as by thoroughly recording the data analysis procedure. The study's credibility was enhanced by my efforts to guarantee that participants listened intently during the interviews and that their responses were sincere and truthful.

**Dependability:** Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of research findings over time. It ensures that the results are robust and repeatable, increasing confidence in the study's conclusions. In the context of the learner-to-teacher violence study in INK township schools, dependability was crucial in establishing the trustworthiness of the findings. I employed various techniques to ensure dependability, such as detailed data analysis, to collect and analyse data consistently.

The application of dependability measures in this study enabled me to draw reliable conclusions about the prevalence, causes, and consequences of learner-to-teacher violence in INK township schools. By ensuring the consistency and accuracy of their findings, I was able to identify effective strategies for preventing and addressing violence, ultimately contributing to a safer and more supportive learning environment.

**Transferability:** Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of one study can apply to a larger population or another similar institution. According to Munthe-Kaas et al. (2020), transferability is defined as the extent to which results can be utilised in other situations or with other respondents. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), purposive sampling and extensive descriptions can be used in qualitative research to determine transferability. Since qualitative research projects are environment and person specific, it can be challenging to demonstrate how findings and conclusions apply to different contexts and demographics. However, since violence in schools is still a national epidemic in South Africa, the study's findings might be applied to other regions or provinces with high rates of school violence. As suggested by Stahl and King (2020), transferability was addressed by providing a thorough explanation of the facts relevant to each instance so that readers may form their own opinions regarding the findings' transferability.

**Credibility:** According to Shenton (2004), credibility refers to the trustworthiness and believability of a study's findings. A credible study is one that has been conducted with rigour and attention to detail, using methods that minimise bias and error. This includes using reliable and valid data collection tools, selecting a diverse and representative sample, and transparently reporting results and limitations (Shenton, 2004). A credible study is essential because it provides evidence that can be

relied upon to inform decisions, policies, and practices. When a study is credible, its findings are more likely to be accepted and applied by stakeholders, ultimately contributing to positive outcomes in various fields such as healthcare, education, and social sciences. Therefore, researchers strive to ensure the credibility of their studies by adhering to strict research protocols and guidelines. This study ensured credibility by adopting a qualitative research method, purposive research, and semi-structured interviews to avoid bias of the study, errors and generalisation

**Confirmability:** Confirmability refers to the level to which results are the result of the inquiry's focus and not the researcher's prejudices. Here, actions must be made to guarantee, to the greatest extent feasible, that the conclusions stem from the ideas and experiences of the respondents rather than the traits and inclinations of the researcher. The comprehensive justifications for the data collection and analysis process enhanced the study's confirmability by providing future researchers with the means to examine the researcher's design and methodology and ascertain whether similar data collection techniques would yield comparable results.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

The chapter on research methodology has provided a detailed account of the methodological techniques utilised to accomplish the study's objectives. The chapter explained the selection of the sample and explained that the study used a qualitative methodology. The procedures for gathering and analysing the data were explained, showing that the methodology of employing semi-structured interviews and revealing several sources used in the comprehensive literature study aided in the exploration of the phenomenon being studied. This method of gathering data was used to address the study's goals and provide answers to the research questions. The nature of the research, the study setting's profile, sample and data collection techniques, data analysis protocols, and ethical issues were described. The next chapter will explore the presentation and discussion of the findings.

## Chapter 5

### Presentation and Discussion of Findings

*“The narratives of the teachers based on the impact of learner-to-teacher violence in three selected township schools in the KZN Pinetown district.”*

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the study’s findings to provide information about the views and experiences of different forms of violence committed by learners against teachers. The chapter analyses the teachers’ experiences working in three schools in the Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu townships based on their experiences and encounters with violence from learners. Where relevant, the findings are supported by existing research on the topic.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82), a theme indicates a degree of a pattern of behaviour or significance within the data set. It captures an essential aspect of the data concerning the research topic. Important concepts and information from the participant narratives were summarised into categories, and then clustered into themes. The themes derived from participant information were combined to provide an in-depth understanding of how violence affects the everyday lives of teachers working in the INK area.

A summary of the findings is first presented to guide the reader, with details of teacher responses following.

*Table 5.1: A summary of the findings*

Research questions	Categories	Themes
What forms of violence from learners do teachers in the Pinetown district face?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical violence</li> <li>• Verbal violence</li> <li>• Sexual violence</li> <li>• Destruction of property</li> <li>• Cyber violence</li> </ul>	Forms of learner-to-teacher violence faced by teachers
What are the factors contributing to learner-to-teacher violence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence from home setting</li> <li>• Influence from peers through joining gangs</li> <li>• Influence from drug use</li> <li>• Township culture and social issues</li> <li>• Risky behaviours (gambling, carrying dangerous weapons and theft) in school</li> </ul>	Factors contributing to learner-to-teacher violence

<p>How does violence affect teachers and how do they deal with these violent actions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional effects</li> <li>• Emotional effects</li> <li>• Psychological effects</li> <li>• Physical effects</li> <li>• Safety and security issues</li> </ul>	<p>Teacher emotions</p>
<p>What short-term strategies do these teachers suggest to address the problem?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adding double the number of securities</li> <li>• Installation of technological devices</li> <li>• Offering rehabilitation programmes</li> <li>• Parental involvement</li> <li>• Involvement of CPF and SAPS regularly</li> <li>• Effective school policies</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools</p>
<p>What long-term strategies do these teachers suggest to address the problem?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of awareness programmes which will involve teachers, parents/ community, learners, KZN DoE, Unions, and NGOs</li> <li>• Introduction of alarm armed response and law enforcement services</li> <li>• Government intervention to appoint mobile health assistants in each township school</li> <li>• Development of a collaborative “Social Well-being” programme which includes the collaboration of different entities like the Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development offer free counselling to the INK community.</li> </ul>	<p>Long-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools</p>

## 5.2 Theme 1: Forms of learner-to-teacher violence faced by teachers

During the semi-structured interviews, the participants revealed that they face various types of learner-to-teacher aggression. These violent actions involve physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and psychological attacks. The participants did not only talk about violence related to learner-to-teacher violence but also provided information related to other forms of violent encounters they face in the

working environment that they are exposed to. These other forms of violent actions include crimes from the community that affect them inside the school premises.

Various teachers revealed that schools are now a danger-zone working environment; they feel that their safety is compromised, and they fear for their lives. The teachers revealed numerous types of violence that they face regularly in their teaching profession. These forms of violence are represented in the literature on the topic. Windvoël (2023) mentions that physical violence involves grievous bodily harm, kicking, pushing, slapping, punching, stabbing, and shooting. According to Windvoël (2023), verbal violence involves the use of vulgar language, touting, teasing, bullying comments, backchatting, and verbal threats against the teachers. During the interviews, female teachers mentioned that they experienced sexual violence and being objectified by learners. Sexual violence involves sexualising comments posed to young female teachers and objectifying or belittling female teachers by learners. According to Windvoël (2023), destruction of property takes place in the form of graffiti on the walls, writing of vulgar comments on the subject textbook against a particular teacher, and stealing of personal belongings.

The following quote from teachers illustrates the above-mentioned types of violent actions experienced:

*We face many different violent activities in our profession; I have personally experienced violence from learners in my classroom. I recall this one event when I was teaching on a regular day, one learner started to be disruptive during the lesson. I tried to discipline him, but he started back-chatting and swearing at me. I tried to defend myself, and we exchanged heated words until he withdrew a knife and came towards me aggressively. Luckily enough other learners stopped him. (Teacher C)*

One teacher provided information that differed from the responses of the majority of the interviewees. This respondent had worked in a different school for several years and she had recently transferred to one of the schools where this study was conducted. In her previous school, one of her colleagues was shot within the school boundaries. This shows that the crisis of violence does not only take place in the three selected schools but is an issue that also affects other townships within the entire province of KZN.

*To tell you the truth I have never experienced or witnessed any form of physical violence since this is my first year in this school. However, I have worked for four years in another school situated around this area which shares a similar culture to this school. It happened that one of my previous colleagues had a vulgar exchange of words with a learner in class.*

*On the following day the day commenced as usual. After the break we heard a loud shotgun sound; we came to realise that the learner shot the teacher. The learner came to school carrying his father's gun. (Teacher A)*

Various reports have shown that the experiences of the teachers in this study can be found in other parts of the world as well (Makhasane & Majong, 2023). According to information provided by the teachers through the interviews, it was revealed that several factors contribute to school shootings, such as easy access to firearms, dysfunctional families, a lack of parental supervision, mental issues, and a host of other behavioural issues. Studies in other countries have investigated the main causes of learner-to-teacher violence. In the United States of America, based on the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting incident, Bonanno and Levenson (2014, p.3) revealed that the two most common motives reported by attackers were revenge (61%) and bullying/persecution/being threatened (75%), while 54% reported having multiple motives. The remaining motives included trying to solve a problem (34%), committing suicide or depression (27%), and obtaining attention or recognition (24%) asserted by (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014, p.3).

According to Kgosana (2024), a Grade 6 learner in a Gauteng school came to school with a gun and shot the principal. Moreover, in Kgosana's (2024) news report, the incident happened when the principal told the learners to get out their workbooks and study after noticing them seated in the entryway. The principal allegedly disregarded the Grade 6 learner who murmured something in response (Kgosana, 2024). Subsequently, he encountered the learner once again close to the staff room, which was when the learner fired a gun at the principal.

16 FEBRUARY 2024 1 MIN READ

## Primary school pupil arrested after principal shot, wounded in Primrose

in News / South Africa by Rorisang Kgosana



Figure 5.1: News report by Times Live of a recent armed learner-to-violence case (Source: Kgosana, 2024)

The types of violent actions teachers face in the selected schools at Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu are similar. Out of twelve teachers, ten revealed that the leading types of violence are verbal and physical. According to the teachers' narratives, learner-to-teacher violence normally occurs during class when a teacher tries to reprimand the learner's disruptive behaviour. The learner resists cooperating and that is how the violence is triggered.

One of the teachers said the following:

*As a young female teacher, I commonly face verbal sexual harassment. Some learners feel that I am the same age as them, and some learners are my age and even older. Therefore, you find that some learners will articulate verbal sexual comments which can be very uncomfortable. The older learners see a potential partner and they start to propose dating relationships. When these events happen, I feel that my boundaries are not being respected at all. (Teacher G)*

Some female teachers revealed that they face different types of violence compared to male teachers. The violence they mentioned involves being sexualised and belittled by male learners. One female teacher revealed that the use of cell phone devices is becoming popular in victimising teachers to humiliate and defame them.

Older female teachers revealed that they are disregarded:



*During the times when I started working, there were many issues related to discipline management in class. As time progressed the working environment challenges have become slightly better. Back in the day, we used to have the majority of older students. We also used to have a large number of rollover students in one class; therefore, maintaining discipline in class was very challenging. When you are a female teacher, learners tend to disrespect you. Sometimes they call you names like [Umfazi] a Zulu term that belittles women when it is being said wrongfully manner. (Teacher E)*

One major problem in the teaching profession is when students use abusive language against teachers (Bonanno & Levenson, 2014). Approximately one-third of teachers reported having at least one episode of verbal intimidation or threat of bodily harm from students. In a study conducted in South Africa's Tshwane South District of Gauteng Province by Venketsamy et al. (2023), a poll of teachers revealed that between 41% and 90% had either personally experienced or observed violence directed at them by pupils or parents, with verbal abuse accounting for the majority of incidents. Burton and Leoschut's (2013) study on violence in schools does not specifically address attacks on teachers, but it does reveal that up to three out of five educators have experienced verbal abuse from students, and one out of 10 educators have already experienced sexual assault at the hands of students.

Many teachers claimed that the impact of vandalism by learners indirectly contributes to teacher violation and impacts conducive teaching and learning:

*We once experienced a case related to the destruction of property in our school. It was during the June holidays we came back and realised that they had broken into our school and stolen admin resources equipment. Furthermore, they stripped the wiring system and lights; during that process, my windows were broken to get inside the classes. These criminal acts resulted in our classes not being conducive on sunny and rainy days which put a strain on teaching and learning. The neighbours confirmed that one of our pupils was involved in stealing all the school property worth money with some unknown men. (Teacher K)*

According to De Wet (2004), learners at the school are mostly responsible for vandalism. The collapse of teaching and learning might result from vandalism since educational programmes frequently need to be halted in order to repair damaged infrastructure. According to research by De Wet (2004), acts like graffiti make instructors and students feel helpless, uncertain, and afraid, which consequently results in the collapse of a learning community's foundation.

In the previous section, I discussed the respondents' perspectives based on the different types of learner-to-teacher violence they face in their teaching profession. The following section focuses on the factors contributing to learner-to-teacher violence.

### **5.3 Theme 2: Factors contributing to learner-to-teacher violence**

The respondents identified many different factors that contribute to learners showing aggression toward teachers. Most of the teachers are born and bred inhabitants of Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu townships and they therefore understand the setting of the chosen research site. It was thus easier for the teachers to provide vast information because it forms part of their lived experiences.

The respondents explained that the aggressive behaviour of learners emanates from social issues in the township. The teachers further explained that the culture and lifestyle of the township have a huge influence on the child adopting violent behaviour. Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu townships are faced with social issues like crime, drug abuse, and gender-based violence (Ngongoma, 2012). The last contributor to violence that the teachers mentioned is learners joining gangs for a sense of belonging and safety, and because of peer pressure. During the engagement, it was revealed that after joining gangs, learners gain easier access to dangerous weapons.

The following illustrates the contribution of dysfunctional families, joining gangs, and the negative influence of the community:

*To be honest with you, the root problem which leads to learner-to-teacher violence starts at home. Unfortunately, the majority of the learners that we have in this school come from dysfunctional families that commonly lack care and guidance, which affects the child negatively. Commonly children in the townships are raised by single parents if not their grandparents. Some learners grow up under irresponsible young parents who use drugs, drink in the local community taverns, and practice GBV in front of their children. In other common cases, parents use heavy violence to instil discipline in their children, which affects the learner psychologically in the long run. (Teacher K)*

According to Wolhuter and van der Walt (2020), many South African communities are marked by a shortage of social resources, moral bankruptcy looking out for oneself frequently at the expense of others high unemployment rates, and other anti-social behaviours like drug use, violence, theft, gambling, and looting. Some of the respondents further articulated that the community has a huge influence on shaping the character of the child. Since many people in the townships are unemployed, they engage in violent actions to earn a living (Wolhuter & van der Walt, 2020). Therefore, teenagers and young adults idolise and look up to the people who commit violent crimes. Learners end up

mimicking and performing these violent crimes themselves, like robbery, housebreaking, and selling drugs, to fit in and look cool amongst others. To illustrate this, one of the teachers said the following:

*Well, our schools are allocated in a very disadvantaged community facing many social challenges. This community is faced with a high crime rate and unemployment; hence majority of young and middle-aged men commonly engage in violent crime to earn a living. Hence the learners adapt to the township's negative lifestyle because the people committing violent crimes become their role models. Therefore, learners adopt the negative qualities that they observe from the violent crime ring leaders who negatively run the community. (Teacher F)*

According to the socio-ecological model generated by Bronfenbrenner (1979), a child's behaviour can be influenced by the surrounding culture of the community. The cultural and community influence is built by the macrosystem of the model where the structure of the society shapes the child's acting, knowing, and being. The model established by Bronfenbrenner (1979) considers the complicated interactions that exist between societal, relationship, community, and individual aspects. It enables us to comprehend the variety of elements that raise the possibility of learners adopting violence from their surroundings. In this regard, a teacher reported the following:

*Our learners have a bad tendency to join the wrong crowd. I have noticed that once they progress to senior grades learners want to fit in. Peer pressure pushes learners to join gang groups to look cool to others. Sometimes young people join gangs because they want a sense of belonging or for safety purposes to avoid being bullied. Commonly gang violence takes place in our school where you find learners from Ezimangweni and Newtown B sections fight against one another. In these rivalries, gang fights learners carry dangerous weapons, and they sometimes use these weapons, against teachers. (Teacher A)*

According to Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000), the mesosystem is the second layer of the ecological environment and is the interconnection of the child to factors like peers and teachers. This system is made up of the immediate influences on a child's growth, such as teachers and the friends of students (Foell et al., 2021). Peer pressure from the friends a youngster spends time with can lead a child's behaviour to shift from normal to rebellious (Chimwamurombe, 2011). As a result, some students in schools pick up bad habits from their peers, which turns into aggressive behaviour directed against teachers.

Another teacher added insight into the danger of gangsterism adopted by learners from the community which affects teaching and learning:

*Learners from different schools around INK townships dropped out of school and created a fierce gang group named West gang. The West gang group consists of young people between the ages of 16 to 25 who are unemployed and high school dropouts; this led to this group's growth in numbers. The West gang has been terrorising the community with many activities and crimes like armed house and school break-ins, mass shootings, robberies, and drug abuse and dealing. This also affects us as teachers. The main reason is we teach learners who associate themselves with this group. This led us to be afraid to reprimand some of these learners' actions as one of our teachers has received death threats from a learner. (Teacher G)*

Teachers elaborated that once these learners are recruited as gang members, they start doing drugs. Teachers explained that in the morning they act normally but after the break, they come back with a wild destructive approach in the classroom. The majority of students who join gangs do so to feel like they belong after experiencing parental or familial mistreatment (Dansley, 2018).

In South Africa, gangsterism is pervasive throughout all provinces, and educators deal with it daily. According to Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2014), gangsterism is to blame for the instigation of violence in South African schools. Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya's (2014) investigation showed that gang activity is not limited to Western Cape cities but is equally common in rural KZN and Limpopo schools. Teachers experience psychological stress from gang violence in schools, which lowers their effectiveness as educators (Khuzwayo, 2021). As one teacher in this study recounted:

*In our school, learners tend to sell and use drugs within the school premises. This makes it very difficult to teach learners who are not in their sober senses. They are very difficult to manage because they become resistant to discipline. These learners become dealers within the school premises after being recruited by unknown community members. After being intoxicated, they become involved in risky behaviours like gambling and theft within the school premises and eventually show aggression towards teachers. (Teacher B)*

Learners who begin using drugs and come from dysfunctional homes are more likely to become members of gangster groups (Alleyne & Wood, 2014). According to Mamabolo (2020), a popular drug used in the township is named 'Whoonga', a combination of heroin and marijuana. The narratives of the teachers agree with Nzama and Ajani (2021), who state that misbehaviour by students who use drugs or alcohol includes stealing, spray-painting graffiti, being physically and verbally

abusive, vandalism, physical aggression, rejection, and inattention. Teachers are at serious risk from drug-addled students, as noted by Bala and Kang'ethe (2021), who also cite other documented cases of teacher murder at the hands of students. One of the teachers elaborated:

*Well, learners in our school engage and practise risky behaviours which cause gang fights and endanger both learners and teachers. You find that learners engage in gambling activities which commonly result in feuds amongst learners. Learners bring dice and cards and gamble in exchange for money. I believe they use this money for their needs since they do not receive money to carry to school from home. During these gambling activities, they started fighting and I remember one of my colleagues once tried to stop them and he was hit with a brick at the back of his head he started bleeding on his head.*  
(Teacher C)

As demonstrated above, teachers get caught in the crossfire when they are trying to stop the fights between learners. This means that teachers are not safe in schools when the fights erupt. In a study conducted by Thobane et al. (2023), participants were also asked to explain why they felt that the classroom was safe for students but unsafe for teachers. They said that teachers do not feel safe because fights can break out in the classroom at any time and they are frequently caught in the crossfire because they are outnumbered by students (Thobane et al., 2023). Having dealt with the factors contributing to learner-to-teacher violence the following section delves into the impact of learner-to-teacher violence on teacher emotions.

#### **5.4 Theme 3: Teacher emotions**

The teachers alluded to various concerns about learner-to-teacher violence. Most teachers revealed they no longer feel safe because of the learner violence in the teaching profession as their emotional well-being is not being prioritised by the Department of Education. The respondents indicated that they feel that they want to leave the teaching profession because they live with traumatic experiences that affect their psychosocial well-being. During the interviews, it was revealed that the violence experienced by teachers not only affects them physically but also has professional effects, emotional effects, psychological effects, and security reassurance. This includes a lack of teaching enthusiasm and the development of fears and post-traumatic disorder. Learner violence causes low self-esteem in teachers and teachers feel vulnerable to learner aggression without any form of protection. The respondents revealed that the department does not provide adequate intervention to resolve the violence that they face. The policies and programmes that exist in the education field do not protect or regulate safety measures within the school premises.

The following quote from one of the teachers illustrates the above-mentioned impact of learner-to-teacher violence on teacher emotions:

*Mmmm, to be honest with you, back in the day we never had so much violence in our profession as we are facing now. Not to only speak about learner-to-teacher violence but in this profession, we face various forms of violence in general. With all the violent incidents that constantly happen in our school, being disrespected by a child who is young enough to be your child is emotionally draining. I do not feel safe whenever I walk out on the school premises. I am afraid of what might happen to me that might endanger my life after I receive death threats from the learner in the classroom. (Teacher H)*

The experiences of the teachers in this study are echoed by findings from several other researchers. When teachers are exposed to violent actions, such as shooting or stabbing occurrences, student attacks, and hearing or seeing the traumatic experiences of colleagues and students, many teachers experience trauma symptoms or psychological discomfort (Katic et al., 2020). These occurrences are frequently unanticipated and harmful and give people the impression that they have no influence or control over what happens (Farmer, 2020). According to the data of this study, one of the teachers briefly explained that their fear of the violence posed by learners does not only bring fear to teachers within schools, but this trauma haunts them even beyond school gates. It is common for learners to attack teachers beyond the school gates. Pillay (2022) reported that a teacher was attacked and stabbed by a learner inside the teacher's home. One teacher expressed her emotions as follows:

*To tell you the truth I used to love the teaching profession but my love for it is gradually fading away. We are always striving to survive in this profession. When I am inside the school gates, I have courage because my colleagues are around as well as other learners. I am even more afraid of these uncontrollable learners beyond school gates because they pose death threats to us as teachers. The most common phrase they say is *Izotholana ngok'phuma kweskole thisha*, which means 'We will meet beyond school gates, sir'. I feel most vulnerable outside the school gates because I stay within their community. (Teacher F)*

A study conducted by Thobane et al. (2023) showed that teachers indicated that students occasionally wait for teachers outside the school gate to assault them over an incident that occurred inside. Teachers are the victims of, witnesses to, or culprits of aggression in schools, all of which will have an influence on the teacher in some way (De Cordova et al., 2019). School violence tends to harm teachers' well-

being (McMahon et al., 2024) and lowers their level of personal life satisfaction. Generally speaking, burnout and professional disconnection are major concerns for teachers.

One of the teachers who was interviewed spoke about a traumatic experience that took place within their school gates. The school was invaded by unknown outsiders who were carrying guns and robbed the teachers.

*As I am having this interview with you, I am still emotionally and physically not well since we were robbed inside the staff room at gunpoint. Last week Friday, four men came to our school pretending to enquire about a learner's report. I attended to them since it was early in the morning, and I was by the administration office. One man withdrew a gun and pointed it at my head. They instructed us to sleep on the floor, they took our belongings and administrative equipment and they left. We assume that one of our learners was involved by giving out the information these unknown men knew about where to find valuable equipment in which room. (Teacher F)*

The geographical location of the school (the macro system) can be a major contributor to teacher violence and can have an impact on teacher emotions. During the interviews, the respondents revealed that they have experienced traumatic events from the learners who partner with community criminals. The teachers revealed that there are several events where notorious learners who drop out of their school come back with unknown men to steal school property. During the process of school break-ins or robbery, teachers experience emotional post-traumatic stress disorder.

In this section, I have presented the episodes of learner-to-teacher violence that are prevalent in the INK township schools in the Pinetown district. Based on the above episodes, the teachers gave suggestions to address school violence and thus the following section will offer short-term strategies suggested by the teachers to address violence in schools.

#### **5.5 Theme 4: Short-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools**

The teachers provided significant and helpful short-term strategies to increase safety and conduciveness in schools. The most common response that they provided was strong collaboration between all education stakeholders. Collaboration between stakeholders consists of cooperation between teachers, learners, and parents. Teachers revealed that there is neglect by the parents over their children's education. To reinforce safety in schools, the teachers emphasised that there is a need to increase the number of security guards within the school gates. This must be followed by the introduction of technological and telecom devices to regulate supervision even beyond the teachers' observation. The teachers further recommended the introduction of rehabilitation and psychological



services to monitor both learners and teachers who have been exposed to any traumatic experiences. The last significant safety regulatory measure that the teachers emphasised was effective policies and the return of corporal punishment.

One of the teachers said the following:

*Having one security guard to look after a large number of people within a school is an issue for both learners and staff members. It is prevalent for fights to happen without the security guard's supervision because the guard is normally stationed by the school gate. Hence, whenever a verbal or physically violent action between a teacher and a learner takes place, the guard arrives after the incident. Therefore, it would be best to have at least five trained security guards who will patrol within the school premises and carry walkie-talkies. (Teacher K)*

Security guards give parents, teachers, and students the assurance that they are secure and shielded from outside threats (Mubita, 2021). Furthermore, on-site security is frequently regarded as a beneficial asset. In a school setting, a physical security presence alone can assist in giving employees and students a trustworthy initial point of contact in case of an emergency (Mubita, 2021). The DBE does not provide any funding to assist schools in covering the cost of the security company's services. According to a study conducted by Caluza (2019), participants disputed the notion that public schools could afford security services. Schools are left on their own to make sure that their safety and security are secure for students and teachers (Caluza, 2019).

One teacher reiterated the point:

*To increase safety and security within the township's schools, there is a need to install protective technological devices. In my view, the KZN DOE needs to prioritize the introduction of technological devices in public schools so the school can be under surveillance by cameras 24/7. These devices include the installation of cameras and telecom communication machines. In that way, the school management team and the security guards can monitor all violent actions that might take place in all sections of the school during teaching and learning. (Teacher A)*

In schools, cameras can help prevent, identify, and looking into criminal activity as well as other unwelcome or unapproved behaviour in school (Warnick, 2007). Cameras assist teachers to recognise danger and possible threats by being aware of their surroundings. According to Fisher et al. (2021), the purpose of surveillance cameras in schools is to keep an eye on the pupils, administration, and school property. These systems also serve as a means of visitor identification, crime prevention, and



keeping track of any form of violent activities in a school (Warnick, 2007). Instead of assigning staff members to watch over particular entry points and high-risk locations like stairwells and corridors, surveillance cameras are frequently seen to be a more cost-effective option (Warnick, 2007). One security camera can yield important information in the event of an incident.

Another teacher gave insight into the importance of introducing counselling sessions for the learners. The majority of the teachers revealed that aggressive learner behaviour is not within their nature. The teachers furthermore explained that in most cases these behaviours are influenced by regular emotional hardships that they face in their daily life.

*Having a chance to work for this school, I realised that the aggressive behaviour of students is driven by many personal and psychological issues. Sometimes when a learner misbehaves and shows aggressiveness towards me, I make some time to call a learner alone and speak with them privately. I conduct private counselling sessions; I always learn that these learners face hardships at home like abuse, neglect, and poverty. I always speak to them with comfort. Normally they become emotionally distressed but once we are done with our conversation, they normally leave our conversation with a smile. With those encounters, I usually say the Department of Education needs to employ psychologists or counsellors to provide students and learners with free counselling services. (Teacher B)*

Counselling is an essential educational strategy that helps shape a learner's direction away from negative ideas that they experience from the environment (Cowie & Pecherek, 2017). Therefore, there is a need for a school counsellor who can use counselling treatment to assist a young person in shaping their future (Dallos, 2023). The school counsellor is highly regarded by learners as a role model. Neuenschwander et al. (2018) revealed that to help school learners become the best versions of themselves for their chosen careers, counsellors are trained to establish friendships with students, listen to their issues and problems, and provide therapy.

The teachers suggested that the KZN DBE must collaborate with the KZN Department of Health to ensure first aid for emergencies within schools. This would be very effective because whenever an attack happens within the school a life can be saved with urgency.

*There is a need for the KZN DBE to work hand in hand with the KZN Department of Health and deploy mobile nurses who will help in a state of emergency. As teachers, we are not trained, and provided with enough health materials to help if a need arises; we just have painkillers stored in our staff rooms. Furthermore, we are not allowed to use our private cars to rush an injured learner or teacher to the hospital and ambulances take*

*very long to arrive where our school is situated. So well-trained stationed nurses in our school would serve as an important strategy to minimise the damage and the injuries when violence takes place. (Teacher F)*

The teachers gave insight into the importance of introducing mobile health nurses within the school premises. According to Ramalepa (2023), health nurses are very important because they can foresee an emergency very quickly if the teacher or a learner is injured at the school gates. In this study, teachers raised points that in schools they do not have enough emergency first aid kits; they normally have only painkillers. Hence whenever a teacher or a learner is injured, there are no other professional measures in line to attend the emergency. Moreover, in an educational context, a school nurse provides care for possible critical injuries and sicknesses that arise (Hoskote et al., 2023). Pupils and staff who are sick or hurt at school usually report to the school nurse so they may be evaluated

One of the teachers interviewed provided detailed suggestions about how to mitigate learner-to-teacher violence:

*To address the issue of violence in our school, the school management team annually hosts school safety educational programmes. In these programmes, usually, NGOs are invited, and they bring a guest to speak, commonly a person who has been a former inmate or drug addiction survivor. They come and raise awareness of the implications of being involved in criminal activities, they educate about their negative experiences. Sometimes the school organises a programme where senior secondary grade learners are taken to visit Westville prison where they are told about the hardships of being in prison. If you have noticed, we have in our walls we have prohibitive signs mounted on our school walls to serve as a daily reminder about the safety regulations. (Teacher F)*

Strategies to address violence in schools have also been identified by the DBE. The 2011 agreement between the DBE and the SAPS, known as the School Safety Protocol, serves as the framework for the execution of the School Safety Programme (DBE, 2021a). To fulfil the protocol's goals, the SAPS establishes a connection between local police stations and schools, as well as educates children and early learners about the effects of crime and violence on families, individuals, and education (DBE, 2021b).

Some of the teachers revealed that NGOs play a significant role in addressing and educating learners about the impact and implications of learner-to-teacher violence:

*Non-profit organisations play a huge role in assisting us to educate our learners not to engage in violent actions. One of the most helpful NGOs that we usually work with is*

*named Edufundi. They normally come to visit the selected schools and host a violence prevention campaign named 'The Premier's Office Campaign Against Violence in Schools'. The interventions from the NGO have an impact because they usually introduce anti-violent educative entertainment games where learners win prizes. In this way, learners became educated while having fun, which makes it easier for them to grasp the information. (Teacher G)*

In addition to the above, NGOs play a huge role in assisting schools to overcome teacher-to-teacher violence by introducing programmes that will educate learners (Parenzee, 2019). Local NGOs have the ability to take a more active role in the formulation of public policy (Bozic & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2023).

Teachers raised concerns that the policies do not serve their purpose to protect teachers' rights from any possible violence. Therefore, teachers called on policymakers to adjust the already existing regulatory school policies on violence by consulting the teachers on the ground for possible solutions.

One of the teachers elaborated:

*I feel that the Department and government are prioritising the learners' rights over our rights. After the abolishment of corporal punishment, we were left with no effective method to maintain classroom management. All the classroom policies are not very effective. The policy documents are just papers that cannot protect us during the moment when we are being attacked by a learner or experiencing any form of violence. As the classroom teaching staff, who face day-to-day learner aggression we are not included in policy-making decisions. A bottom-down strategy is applied without consulting the teaching staff thus hindering the effectiveness of the passed policies. (Teacher J)*

The majority of the teachers interviewed felt that there is a disconnect between theory and practice when it comes to policies. Manamela (2021) states that when it comes to disciplining students, responsible staff members follow the student code of conduct and the school safety policy. Similarly, Mohlala (2021) found that, out of the acknowledged policy roadblocks, the main one had to do with execution due to a number of factors, including limited authority. According to Hanslo (2020), learners commonly get away with misbehaving because there are insufficient systems in place to impose sanctions in accordance with the learners' code of conduct. Therefore, efforts to eliminate learner-on-teacher violence are hindered by a gap between policy and execution (Makhasane & Majong, 2023).

An illustration of School Safety and Regulation Application Acts posted on the school walls to regulate safety measures within the school is replicated here. Teachers criticise the national and school policies, stating that these documents fail to regulate violence that takes place in schools.

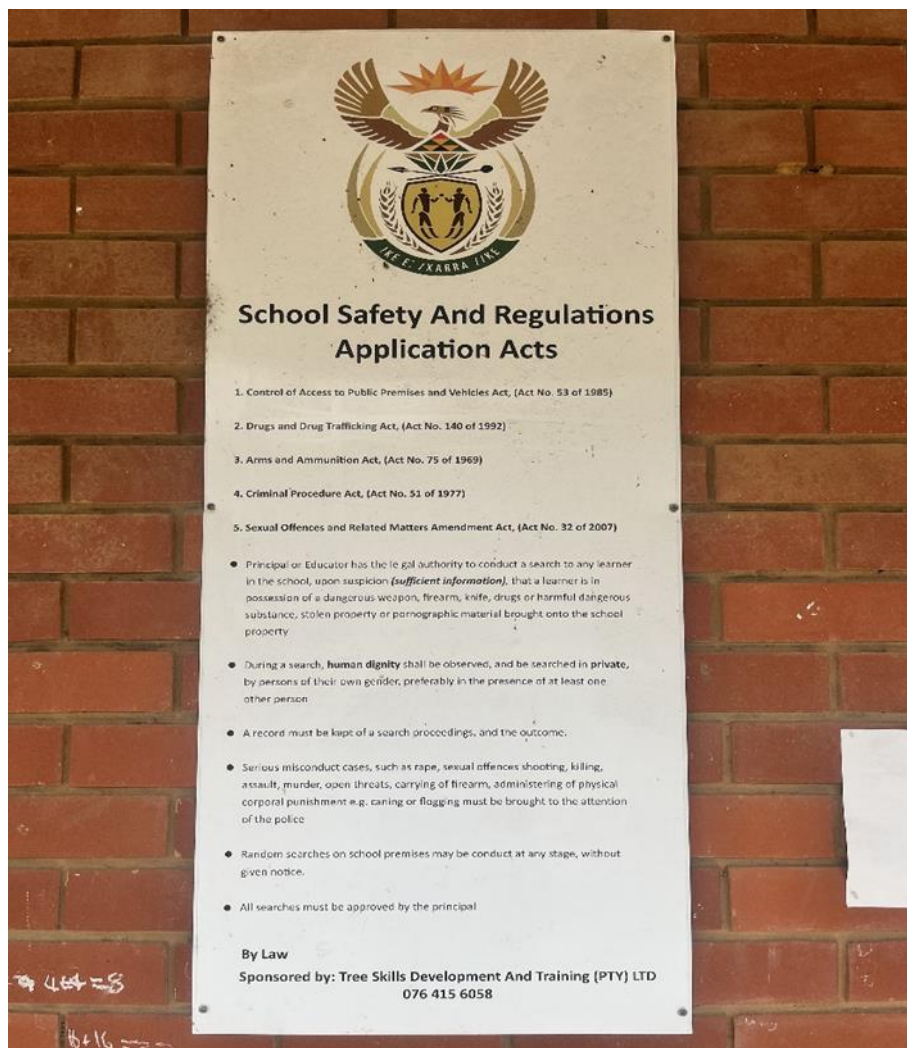


Figure 5.2: Image captured by the researcher in one of the schools selected

Long-term and short-term strategies are sections that integrate with one another with almost similar meanings. However, the above section focused on providing strategies that can be achieved quickly with a cost-efficient budget. The next section focuses on discussing the strategies that might take time to achieve and require a bigger budget.

### 5.6 Theme 5: Long-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools

Teachers provided vast and significant information and suggestions for long-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools. The information they generated entails the development of awareness programmes involving all stakeholders, including teachers, parents/community, learners, KZN DBE unions, and NGOs. They also mentioned the development of a collaborative ‘Social Well-

being' programme which includes the collaboration of different entities like the Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development, South African Depression and Anxiety Group, and World Health Organization to offer free counselling to the INK community.

The following two quotes from teachers illustrate the long-term strategies on how to address learner-to-teacher violence:

*The long-term strategy to solve learner-to-teacher violence in schools – the problem needs to be solved from the root cause. You see, as teachers we spend only eight hours with learners and the rest of the hours the learners spend their time in their communities. Meaning there is a limited impact we can contribute during the time we spend with them. Hence the government should corroborate with other stakeholders. By inventing the 'Social Well-being' programme which includes the collaboration of different entities like the Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development, South Africa Depression and Anxiety Group, and World Health Organization to offer free counselling to the INK community. In that way learner to teacher violence will be resolved from the root cause. (Teacher D)*

Exposure to traumatic events is a persistent risk to public health in South Africa. 73.8% of adults in South Africa had experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime, according to the Stress and Health Survey (Henning-Pugh et al., 2023). Many people have gone through multiple traumatic events, such as being physically abused (20.9%), witnessing violence (20.5%), being in an accident (19.6%), or losing a loved one unexpectedly (19.6%) (Henning-Pugh et al., 2023). According to Seedat et al. (2009), exposure to such occurrences is linked to the development of serious mental illnesses in South Africans. There is a clear need for psychological help, yet there is a lack of access to psychological treatments in South Africa (Ngobeni et al., 2020, p. 3).

The teachers suggested that parental involvement should be strongly encouraged to manage learner aggression in their schools. The teachers revealed that the majority of the parents in schools in the Pinetown district, especially in the INK communities, are not hands-on with their children's schoolwork.

One of the teachers said:

*In our school, parents are not hands-on in their children's education; hence we do not get an opportunity to report any wrongful behaviour of the child. Our learners live with their grandparents, uncles, and older siblings who do not take accountability for keeping track of their schoolwork. Hence whenever a learner does misconduct and we send a letter*



*his/her with a letter to call their parent, no one shows up. Even when we call parent meetings few parents and guardians come to the meetings. So, to address learner-to-teacher violence in our school, parents need to be actively involved in their children's education. (Teacher H)*

Parental involvement is crucial in addressing learner-to-teacher violence, as it helps to identify underlying causes and develop solutions (Wilder, 2014). Parents can work with teachers to create a supportive learning environment, fostering positive relationships between learners and teachers. By engaging with parents, schools can better understand the root causes of violence and develop targeted interventions (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023). Parental involvement also helps to promote a culture of respect and empathy, reducing the likelihood of violence. Furthermore, parents can reinforce positive behaviour at home, reinforcing the efforts of teachers. The National School Safety Framework (DBE, 2015) attested that by working together, parents and teachers can create a safe and supportive learning environment. Ultimately, parental involvement is essential in addressing learner-to-teacher violence and promoting a culture of respect and understanding (SACE, 2020).

The teachers revealed that the learners are controllable when law enforcement authorities and community policing forums constantly make unexpected visits to confiscate. In this case, the police can use their authority to legally search the bags and pockets of the learners and confiscate all illegal objects that can be used to harm teachers. The CPF bridges the gap of preventing violence inside and outside the school gates since they can report the learners who are known to perform criminal activities within their communities to the SAPS as the entrusted neighbourhood watch.

One of the teachers said:

*To successfully contain learner-to-teacher violence in schools, the school management team needs to work hand-in-hand with the local government members. This involves the ward councillors, the ward committee, and the CPF constantly coming to our school and monitoring the smuggling of illegal objects and substances. If the schools constantly invite community leaders, they will involve the members of the society who are also the parents of the learners. Therefore, learners will be tolerant and willing to abide by the school rules. (Teacher C)*

The teachers revealed that professional education bodies and Non-Profit Organisations are very important in addressing the violence in the education sector. Various organisations were discussed but one of the most effective NGOs in supporting teachers is the South African Council for Educators

(SACE). Teachers revealed that SACE is an important organisation because it advocates for and promotes both learner's and teachers' rights in teaching and learning.

*Professional education bodies like SACE are very significant in Education because they do not only provide us with teaching licence documents but also offer us teacher development interventions. There are other forms of interventions that we receive from our teacher unions and other correctional service learners and teachers' awareness programmes. These programmes are very effective because they educate us with knowledge on how to deal with learner violence. (Teacher L)*

A further long-term strategy is the involvement of professional associations in supporting teachers and combatting violence. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) hosted a 2024 campaign named #HandsOff Our Teachers (SACE, 2024). The main purpose of this campaign is to raise awareness against various violent actions against teachers, especially learner-to-teacher violence.

The teachers furthermore emphasised the importance of introducing private security and mobile health nurses within the school premises:

*To increase security in INK schools, the government needs to renew integrated strategies. Introducing mobile health practitioners and armed response within the school premises who will foresee injury emergencies within schools. It is a norm that if ever there is an injured person within the school premises. Emergency help takes time to come and attend to the injury because they do not have enough resources like ambulances. As teachers, we are not allowed to use our private cars to assist an injured person which delays the help process. Introducing armed response in township-based schools can help by creating a strong security atmosphere within the school premises. (Teacher D)*

During the interviews, the teachers suggested that there is a need for the Department of Education to introduce private security services or armed response. Furthermore, the respondents claimed that the introduction of security companies would increase safety and security in township schools to prevent armed learners from attacking teachers. The benefit of introducing armed response in schools is that these teams can often react more quickly than SAPS (Caluza, 2019). The quick response of private security frequently reaches the scene before a criminal has had a chance to flee or do more harm. Moreover, Caluza (2019) mentions that private armed response security is usually well-trained and qualified with policing skills and is also registered with the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority PSiRA (Caluza, 2019). Hence the introduction of private security will ensure both the safety of the learners and staff within the school premises.

The above section focused on outlining the long-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence. The following section focuses on concluding the findings of this study by highlighting the important data generated by the teachers on learner aggression.

### **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the findings of the study and has linked these findings to existing research on the topic of learner-to-teacher violence. According to the data provided by respondents, it was revealed that learner-to-teacher violence is influenced by social issues in the townships in which these schools are allocated. The data provided by the teachers showed that the social circumstances of the INK townships influences the learners' behaviour. Furthermore, this study revealed that the INK townships are infiltrated by high crime rates, violence, and GBV, poor family structures and poverty. Young people in the INK townships therefore may learn, adopt and practice violence for survival. The next chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations of the study in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework.



## Chapter 6

# Conclusions and Recommendations

*“Non-violence is a weapon of the strong.”*

-Mahatma Gandhi-

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter covered the data analysis and discussion of the study as per the findings gathered from the semi-structured interviews. This chapter includes the conclusions and recommendations based on the key findings of the study. This study focused on investigating the perspectives of teachers concerning learner-to-teacher violence in three INK schools in the KZN Pinetown district. The discussion in Chapter Five outlined the challenges faced by teachers in these schools. It furthermore revealed that important stakeholders like the Department of Basic Education, NGOs, SACE, teacher unions, and other education stakeholders are working together to combat the issue of violence in schools.

Through the interventions of the abovementioned bodies, different methods to address violence faced by teachers have been generated in the form of a range of programmes and guides for teachers. Despite all the interventions by these education structures, this study revealed that learner-to-teacher violence remains one of the leading issues in INK township schools. Therefore, the chapter will highlight the categories gathered from the data, link them to the theoretical framework, present recommendations for the study, discuss limitations, and provide conclusions.

### 6.2 Types of violent actions that teachers in the INK township schools face

According to the information provided by the teachers highlighted in Theme One, it was revealed that the most common types of violent actions they face from learners are physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and psychological attacks. The different ages and genders of the participants revealed different perspectives of teachers in relation to learner-to-teacher violence. The majority of the female teachers revealed that the most common violent acts they face are sexual, verbal, and psychological attacks. On the other hand, the majority of the male teachers revealed that the most common violent acts they face are physical and verbal.

### 6.3 Factors contributing to violent actions from learners to teachers

This study explored the different factors that are the root causes of learner-to-teacher violence in the chosen INK schools. The factors that the teachers outlined in the interviews include township culture, poverty, dysfunctional families, drug abuse, gangsterism, criminal activities, exposure to violence, and gender-based violence. The data gathered and discussed in Theme Two proved that the

combination of these factors has a significant impact on shaping a child's mind to adopt violence and use it as a form of defence mechanism or survival instinct. Hence, it becomes a norm that learners from Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu engage in violent actions within their communities and against the teachers in schools. The information provided by the teachers revealed that in the INK townships, the community lives in impoverished conditions which forces learners to join gangs and engage in criminal activities.

#### **6.4 The impact of learner-to-teacher violence on teacher emotions**

In Theme Three teachers reported feeling unsafe and traumatised due to learner-to-teacher violence, which affects their emotional well-being, causing them to lose interest in their profession, and even leading to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They feel that the DBE does not prioritise their safety and well-being, leaving them feeling vulnerable and exposed to student aggression. The teachers are not only physically harmed but also emotionally affected, leading to low self-esteem and a sense of insecurity. They believe that the Department of Basic Education does not provide sufficient intervention to address the violence and that safety measures on school property are lacking.

#### **6.5 Short-term strategies to address violence against teachers from learners in schools**

Several short-term strategies to address violence were identified by the teachers. Teachers in the study indicated that there is parental neglect of their children's education. Hence, they recommended that there should be collaboration between stakeholders, consisting of cooperation between teachers, learners, and parents. In Theme Four the teachers stressed that more security guards at the school gates are necessary to encourage safety in education. For supervision even beyond the teachers' observation, technology and telecom devices must be introduced. Furthermore, the introduction of school nurses, and psychiatric and rehabilitative services was suggested, to keep an eye on students and teachers who may have experienced any kind of traumatic event. The teachers stressed the importance of effective policies and the reinstatement of corporal punishment as the final major safety regulatory action.

#### **6.6 Long-term strategies to address learner-to-teacher violence in schools**

The data in Theme Five revealed that for learner-to-teacher violence to be resolved, there is a need to solve the issue from its root cause, which is the culture and circumstances of the community. The data revealed that the teachers are unable to influence permanent change in learners' violent behaviour because they spend few hours with them during the day. Teachers stated that the learners spend the majority of their time within their communities where they are regularly exposed to violent activities. This causes learners to relapse from the positive counselling they receive from teachers.

The long-term strategies proposed by the participants include the development of awareness programmes that will involve all stakeholders (teachers, parents and community, learners, KZN DBE, the unions, and NGOs), the introduction of armed response and law enforcement services, government intervention to appoint mobile health assistants in each township school, the development of a collaborative ‘Social Well-being’ programme which includes the collaboration of different entities like the Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development, and offering free counselling to the INK community.

The section below covers how the data gathered connects with the socio-ecological theory which informed this study.

### 6.7 Links to the theoretical framework

In Chapter Three, the theoretical framework was discussed in detail. In this section, the theoretical framework is used to show the links between the data collected with Bronfenbrenner’s socio-ecological model.

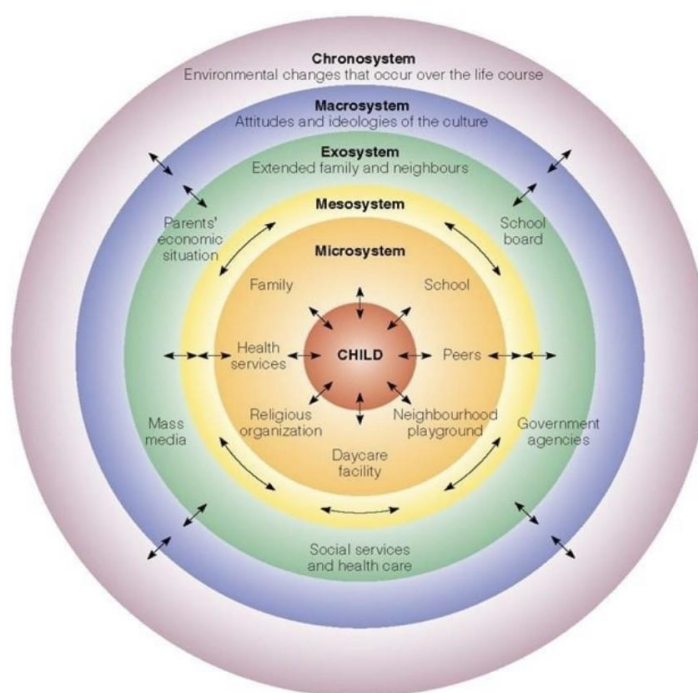


Figure 6.1: Socio-ecological systems theory (Source: Guy-Evans, 2024).

As discussed in Chapter Three, Bronfenbrenner’s socio-ecological systems theory explains how children’s development is influenced by their social settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to the socio-ecological notion, the child and many levels of environmental systems interact with one another. The family, the neighbourhood, the school, the media, culture, and society are some examples

of these systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory highlights the value of observing children in a variety of settings and the reciprocal effects that exist between the environment and the child.

The findings of this study support the position of the socio-ecological theory. The socio-ecological model argues that the behaviours of a child are influenced by different ecological systems that the child or learner grows up in. During the interviews, the feedback from the teachers supported the idea that the factors that cause learner-to-teacher violence are linked with the socio-ecological theory. The feedback provided by the participants directly covered the four socio-ecological systems, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem. These links are discussed below.

### **6.7.1 Findings linked to the microsystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1986), a child's microsystem is their immediate and smallest environment. Accordingly, the children's microsystem consists of their household, school or crèche, peer group, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Personal interactions with family, friends, teachers, and carers typically occur within the microsystem. The way these people or groups interact with the kids will affect how they develop. Stronger relationships and interactions for development are likely to be fostered in a more loving and supportive environment. Many of these interactions, in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's theory, are two-way: how adults approach children in their microsystem affects how children respond to adults in return.

During the engagement with the teachers, it was discovered that the root cause of learner-to-teacher violence starts in the household and family where the child grows up. The study highlighted that the majority of the households in the INK communities have dysfunctional family structures. This study found that in the INK township community, the most common type of family arrangement is a single-parent family. These types of families sometimes lack proper guidance and a lack of mother and father parental figures for the child's growth.

### **6.7.2 Findings linked to the mesosystem**

The mesosystem absorbs the interactions among the different microsystems that children belong to (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). With links between the home and the school, the family and the community, and the peer group and the family, it is basically a system of microsystems. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, if a child's parents actively engage in their child's friendships, then harmony and like-mindedness will have a favourable impact on the child's growth.

According to the study's findings, it was revealed that the circle of the child can influence their behaviour. The teachers explained that when learners arrive in the junior grades, like Grade 8, they

are much more disciplined and very civil. However, as time progresses, their behaviour changes gradually because they mix with the learners who are repeating grades. Furthermore, younger learners attach themselves to older boys and to ones who are transferred from other schools. The danger of not doing a background check on learners who have transferred always backfires because most of the learners are expelled for misconduct reasons from one school to another.

The teachers mentioned that the class repeaters, transferred learners, and older learners from senior grades recruit young boys to join their groups. Peer pressure plays a major role in the mesosystem where the learners interact with other learners and end up learning their negative behaviour. This is where they are introduced to drug use and other violent behaviours. Hence learners start mimicking the negative behaviour of their friends; they therefore end up showing aggressive behaviour toward the teachers that are teaching them. Reverting to the discussion covered in Chapter Five, it was revealed that in one of the chosen schools, the school SMT accepted transfers without doing a misconduct background check of the new learner. These unrevised transfer practices of learners who have a reputation for violent misconduct in schools promote the mixing of troublesome learners with young learners.

### **6.7.3 Findings linked to the exosystem**

The word "exosystem" in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model describes relationships that may exist between two or more settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), one of which may not contain growing children but nevertheless has an indirect effect on them. Bronfenbrenner's research indicates that environments and other people can still have an effect on children, even if they are not directly in contact with them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These places and people might be the parents' workplaces, the children's neighbourhood, or relatives living abroad.

In the INK townships, there is an employment issue. This study revealed that a very small percentage of people are working. The highest percentage of the individuals who work in the INK township have manual labour jobs where they work excessive hours. Thus, the data collected showed that the parents in the INK community do not attend school meetings because they do not commonly receive flexible days off. The majority of the parents therefore do not know how their child is doing in school and they are unable to keep track of their children's grades and behaviour. Effectively, the lack of parental involvement has an impact on the learner's education because whenever a learner behaves badly there is no older person who is available to take accountability for the learner's negative behaviour in school.

Furthermore, the work environment of a parent can negatively impact the learner indirectly. The hardships that are faced by parents in the working environment might cause stress to build up. The result of the harsh working environment might cause a parent to be moody and become either verbally or physically violent to their children at home. Hence, there are stimuli beyond the household or away from the child's circle that might affect the child even though the child is not directly involved in the cause of the issue. That is why the exosystem is referred to as the interrelation of all systems because it connects all other systems to the first one. This is revealed in Chapter Five by the participants where the child learns violent behaviour from home and peers in the neighbourhood or at school.

#### **6.7.4 Findings linked to the macrosystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, the macrosystem is the biggest and most distant collection of people and places that still significantly affects children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This ecological system is made up of the political and economic institutions as well as the children's cultural norms and values, especially their dominant concepts and worldviews.

This study explored the different factors that are the root causes of learner-to-teacher violence in the chosen INK schools. The factors that the teachers outlined in the interviews include poverty, dysfunctional families, drug abuse, gangsterism, criminal activities, exposure to violence, and gender-based violence.

The combination of these factors has a huge impact on shaping a child's mind to adopt violence and use it as a defence mechanism or survival instinct. Hence, it becomes the norm that learners from Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu practise violent actions within their communities and against the teachers in schools. The information provided by the teachers revealed that in the INK townships, the community lives in impoverished conditions. There are several social factors impacting learners, and the information collected from the teachers' highlighted two factors that are major contributors to learner-to-teacher violence. The teachers explored other community factors that are contributors to learner-to-teacher violence, namely poverty and social issues.

#### **6.7.5 Findings linked to the chronosystem**

The chronosystem is the last system that was part of Bronfenbrenner's later version of the ecological model. The idea of this system is that a child's change in behaviour can be influenced by his or her development over time. Most of the data from the interviews related to the other systems, and teachers did not refer much to factors relating to the chronosystem, such as how the time factor might have influenced learner behaviour.

During the interviews, I noted that the respondents know their learners as individuals but have limited knowledge about the upbringing and background of their learners. Hence the limited knowledge they have resulted in the teachers not knowing what transpired throughout their learners' upbringing or their presence beyond the school gates. In light of the above, there was little information provided by the teachers that related or gave insight into the influence of the chrono system on learners' development. This is an area that could usefully be followed up in further research.

The above section discussed how the collected data links with the socio-ecological theoretical frameworks by Bronfenbrenner as referred to in this study. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), human development is influenced by socio-ecological models which are made up of family, friends, school, cultures, and values of the society and time. Therefore, the data collected corresponded with the ideas of the socio-ecological model. The next section focuses on the recommendations of the study to address learner-to-teacher violence. This section provides recommendations to the Department of Basic Education, school leadership, Non-Profit Organisations, government agencies, community ward committees, and the Community Policing Forum.

## **6.8 Recommendations of the study**

Several recommendations can be identified in response to the issues raised by the participants. Each of these is outlined in the next section of the chapter. A vital requirement for proficient teaching and learning is a school setting that facilitates educational activities. This, however, cannot take place in a setting where there is a lot of violence and a lack of discipline among the learners. Despite plenty of studies on school discipline, a lot of principals and teachers continue to struggle with learner-to-teacher indiscipline. Teachers simply cannot support learning and teaching in a chaotic, dangerous, and disruptive atmosphere. The results show that the ecological models provide the connection that schools are a site of internal and external forces combined to cause school violence. If violence in schools is to be reduced and, preferably, eliminated, several role-players must join forces due to the complicated connections among these issues. The DBE, school administrators, and pertinent government agencies are the three groups of role-players who are targeted by the proposals.

### **6.8.1 Recommendations directed to the Department of Basic Education**

#### ***Implementation of emotional well-being support workshops for teachers and learners***

Based on the results, it is suggested that the township schools look for the assistance of a variety of professional services to enhance the work being done by teaching experts and to stop the trend of school violence. Violence in schools is caused by a wide range of socioeconomic factors that take



place in the INK townships, some of which are outside the control of teachers and, as such, they should work alongside experts in related fields like social work and psychology.

Social workers and educational psychologists are trained professionals who may offer teachers and learners appropriate therapeutic services at the individual, family, and group levels of intervention. Educational psychologists possess the ability to determine the particular programmes that a certain school needs. Therefore, DBE employment is required for social workers, psychologists, and counsellors. These experts need to work alongside teachers at the schools where they are stationed. Psychologists, counsellors, and social workers must be easily accessible to learners.

There are certain problems that teachers cannot resolve with their learners as teachers mentioned that they spend few hours with their learners to influence change. Therefore, conflict resolution initiatives that address substance addiction, anger management, and classroom management techniques may be made available in schools troubled by violence, depending on the needs of the institution. Teachers may find it easier to focus on teaching with these kinds of interventions, while psychologists and social workers engage with students who are either victims of violence or who commit violent crimes regularly.

According to Crothers et al. (2020), school-based psychologists should support the restoration of schools as caring communities because they have a thorough understanding of children's psychological development, the unique culture of a school, and their role as organisational consultants and child advocates for mental health.

### ***Establish training programmes on school safety and security***

During the interviews, it was discovered that none of the teachers had received any training on school safety and security. They therefore frequently lacked trust in their capacity to uphold security and safety procedures. Teachers, principals, and members of the school governing body should participate in these programs in order to contribute to the creation of a comprehensive handbook on school safety and security. Subsequently, as professionals in their domain, they ought to communicate with social welfare agencies, the South African Police Services, and psychologists. The Department of Basic Education should be in charge of creating and funding these initiatives in each of KwaZulu-Natal province's districts.

In addition, all government agencies need to collaborate to protect teachers' interests and safety against learner violence. It is necessary to promote cooperation between the social, health, criminal justice, and educational sectors. Each service must have a representative on the multidisciplinary team that represents the interests of the teaching staff. Few educators stated that they had attended SADTU



and SACE prevention training, they mentioned that these programmes are very insightful but lack practicality. The relatively new female teachers in the teaching field reported that they had encountered challenges when attempting to work with violent students. Both more experienced and less experienced female teachers must be ready for any violent outburst and have the tools necessary to handle the situation.

### ***Improve security measures in the INK township schools***

The results clearly showed that the schools lacked appropriate security measures, as had been the case with numerous prior research (Moon et al., 2020; Pillay, 2022; Gounden 2022; Mthethwa, 2023). For instance, only one security guard monitored the main entrance gate of each of the three schools, while other gates were left unsupervised. As a result, it is advised that schools hire a minimum of two security guards to staff the gate and patrol the property alternately. A study by Sinthumule and Tsanwani (2017) emphasized the importance of guards within the premises to ensure safe and conducive teaching and learning in schools. Most schools hire a security company using money from parent-paid school fees; the DBE does not supply financing for school security. Consequently, the DBE should update this policy and employ reliable private security firms to guard schools, as doing so will undoubtedly lower the number of violent incidents that occur there.

Since no security focuses on searching learners, the majority of them manage to enter school grounds with drugs and weapons. Random searches at schools could be a useful tool in stopping the unchecked flow of illegal and harmful goods. CCTV cameras proved to be quite efficient in documenting instances of violence within one of the schools. This tactic would also help the school management team to stay up to date on everything that was happening in the school. However, such a system is costly and INK township schools frequently cannot afford it. Nevertheless, all schools ought to at the very least lock their outer gates to keep intruders out.

### ***Implement different disciplinary measures from corporal punishment***

The majority of the study's participants said that they continued to use corporal punishment widely even after it was outlawed in schools because they thought it was the only way to stop school-related violence. It was unsettling that some educators continued to think that physically harming students was the best way to deal with and reduce indiscipline. Since there has already been a lot of violence in these schools, I believe the previous studies mostly supports the idea that other measures should be used by schools to impose discipline and reduce violence.

However, because their adherence to the proverb 'spare the rod and spoil the child' was rooted in their cultural and religious beliefs, some teachers were unwilling to seek alternative means of dealing with

violent and rebellious learners. To reduce violence, the DBE must consequently give the SMT and all teaching staff members training on alternate forms of discipline when handling troublesome students. During the interviews, the participants mentioned that corporal punishment was the best disciplinary measure and after the abolishment of corporal punishment, aggressiveness and violence grew in the INK township schools. The emphasis on self-discipline and good discipline in schools should be promoted since they introduce students to constructive conflict resolution techniques that steer clear of violence.

### ***Modify the curriculum by adding violence prevention to the subject Life Orientation***

The results showed that learners need to be more thoroughly made aware of topics included in the Life Orientation syllabus across all grade levels about learner-to-teacher violence, including bullying, violence, hostility, and substance addiction. Violence prevention content topics would focus on learners' well-being and self-awareness development on the social, psychological, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical levels. Thus, the curriculum's delivery should centre on violence to raise students' awareness of its causes, impacts, prevention techniques, and conflict resolution techniques.

Introducing violence prevention content topics will change learners' attitudes to become more positive, which will lead to better, more socially acceptable behaviours and a decrease in violence in schools. The study advises DBE curriculum developers to incorporate lessons on how to deal with emotions in a suitable manner and at an early age through the Life Orientation programme. The Life Orientation curriculum should be amended to meet the problems that teachers are currently encountering because doing so could help teach the learners not to engage in teacher aggression.

Learners need to be aware of the implications of their aggressive and violent behaviours since the accepted norm of violence and aggression in schools has reduced their empathy and respect for other teachers. It is only at that point that learners will begin to understand that they have obligations in addition to their rights and learn to take responsibility for their actions. The principles of Ubuntu are what make us deserving human beings, hence the DBE must make sure that these ideals are instilled once more.

## **6.8.2 Recommendations for the School Management Team**

### ***Encourage parental involvement***

Parental involvement is significant in a learner's education so that the parent can monitor and influence positive progress. The results of the interviews demonstrated that very few, if any, parents

took an active role in their children's education. Parents must act quickly to support their children's education by taking proactive steps and adopting a positive attitude. When teachers are not supported, parents frequently transfer the burden of disciplining their children to the teaching staff. By analysing the empirical evidence, it was revealed that some parents in the INK townships do not take responsibility for their children's education.

One advantage of parental participation is that it allows parents to show that they care about their children's wellbeing by staying in touch with the school to enquire about their behaviour and academic progress. When a parent enrolls their child, they ought to be asked to sign a consent form committing them to be actively involved in every facet of their education. To build a comprehensive database of students' contact information, schools should also make sure that they obtain all relevant personal information from parents, guardians, and students at the time of enrolling.

The results also showed that a large number of community members and parents exposed their children to violence both at home and in the neighbourhood by serving as violent role models. As a result, parents are encouraged to control their hostility and set an example of calm, harmonious behaviour for their children to follow. According to the socio-ecological model theory, parents and community members should be the models of constructive and nonviolent conflict resolution techniques since behaviour is learned from society.

Parents and community members should be included in school programming that targets school-based violence because they are role models for children's behaviour. Educating parents and community people about school violence can help to model and correct behaviour, and keep learners' behaviour from being compromised by sources of school-based violence, which include families and the community. To involve the community and parents in school-based activities, one of the schools under investigation started such an initiative. Because a large number of students struggled with drug usage, the programme concentrated on drug awareness. To support parents and community members in staying informed about the latest developments regarding school violence, all township schools ought to implement this kind of programme.

### ***Encourage sport and recreation in the INK township schools***

Based on the results and my observations, sports, and recreation were either non-existent or very limited in the study's participating schools. Effective educational and recreational programmes are crucial components that may reduce learner-to-teacher violence, bullying, gangsterism, crime, and violence. Therefore, this study suggests that schools start and maintain healthy sports programmes so that students can use their free time wisely. Playing sports helps students develop self-control,

tenacity, and a healthy lifestyle. Students who participate in sports also typically refrain from abusing drugs or alcohol and stay out of gangs. Sports are intended to foster an environment where young people can learn polite habits that are valued and accepted in society. Teachers who double as coaches can instil in their students moral principles and social standards that are appropriate both in society and on the sports field during these athletic sessions.

The socio-ecological theory suggests that children acquire the ability to understand the world through the observation and imitation of adult behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). When someone observes someone acting in a way that is appropriate, responsible, and generally positive, they will try to emulate that positive behaviour. This would allow coaches to model positive behaviour patterns for children to see and follow. Additionally, extracurricular activities like drama, chess, and debating should be offered in schools so that students who are not athletes can participate.

### ***Create strong, positive learner-to-teacher relationships in the township schools***

Mentorship programmes should foster positive interactions between teachers and learners. To guarantee staff cooperation during rule implementation, positive relationships between teachers should also be established. Eliminating bias and implementing fair disciplinary actions for every student are important goals because teachers' favouritism among learners can spark violence against teachers. Teachers, students, and parents should all feel free to step in when there are disciplinary concerns in the classroom. To make sure that violence does not get out of control, school management teams should also respond quickly to complaints about inappropriate behaviour on the part of both teachers and learners.

### ***Monitor the transfer of learners between schools***

Monitoring misbehaving learners will cut down on the number of unofficial transfers or expulsions of troublesome students. Additionally, principals will be able to discover more about the history of troublesome students who are enrolled in their schools because of this. The results of this study showed that disobedient students were frequently sent to different schools, but this did not stop school-based violence, which worried the participating teachers greatly. Instead, it just made delinquency worse. Transferring troublesome students across schools does not resolve the issue, so the DBE should devise other approaches.

One of the participants mentioned that in their school there are troublesome male learners because their principal accepts any learner to increase the number of learners in school. In one of the chosen schools, there are different violent gangs because they reunite and continue to cause havoc in a different school. The study also found that misbehaving students were frequently older than other

students in their grades because they had struggled and were unable to advance without failing at least twice or three times during their academic careers. Learners who are not academically gifted find it difficult to succeed in the traditional educational system and often turn to criminal activity (Kasim et al., 2021). These learners will have greater opportunities for the future if they are sent to a technical or vocational educational institution for skills development rather than staying in school. Schools ought to recognise these students and inform their parents about these resources and how they can support their children.

### **6.8.3 Recommendations for Non-Profit Organisations and Government Agencies**

#### ***Involve stakeholders***

The study concluded that different stakeholders should work together to address school-based violence. According to the ecosystem theory, a multi-stakeholder strategy should be implemented to address the issue of violence in schools, as it is caused by various systems. To resolve disciplinary issues, the government, parents, community members, and schools should decide how best to step in. When it comes to handling learners' violence, multiple viewpoints from diverse groups of individuals may assist the schools in making the proper decisions. This tactic makes it clear to the general public that everyone is concerned about school.

The KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Education emphasised the value of cooperation among various stakeholders by restating that installing cutting-edge security in schools will not solve school violence; instead, parents and community members need to step up and take accountability for helping their children develop a moral compass (Nhambura, 2019). Since the school is a component of the community at large, numerous government agencies and non-governmental organisations should coordinate their efforts to lower crime and violence in local communities.

Everyone in the community has a responsibility to look out for the children. According to an African saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child', which means that communities, parents, educators, and different government agencies must work together to be accountable for the behaviour of their children. Motivating stakeholders to come up with a shared solution to the issue of school-based violence is essential. It is necessary to promote cooperation between the SAPS, the DBE, the Department of Correctional Services, the Department of Health, and the Department of Social Development.

School safety committees must include representatives from the community and a member of the Community Policing Forum. This study suggests that educational institutions create an interdisciplinary team or committee with members from each of these departments. To better serve

the needs of educators and students, these individuals will need to collaborate. The parents, community leaders, stakeholders' students and teachers of a range of subjects related to health and safety need to be actively involved in collaborating with the safety committees.

The South African Council for Educators (SACE) and teacher unions play an important role in protecting the rights of teachers. SACE has made available their organisation contact details which will assist both teachers and learners in any type of exposure to violence within the school. This study recommends that such significant information be available to the public to help teachers who are facing learner aggression.



*Figure 6.2: SACE helpline contact details for teachers who are experiencing traumatic experiences (Source: SACE, 2021)*

### ***Implement substance abuse prevention programmes***

The research supports past findings from studies on drug and alcohol misuse, criminal behaviour, and the National Schools Violence Study by Mokwena and Setshego (2021) and SACE (2011), which found that physical altercations and substance abuse are the most frequent causes of violence in schools. Therefore, it is advised that drug usage prevention programmes be implemented in all schools, to determine the root causes of violence and develop preventative measures. Including these activities in the academic calendar can help address the high rate of drug and alcohol abuse that numerous schools are currently dealing with. Such initiatives should have the active support of organisations like the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA). These activities should involve law enforcement authorities as well since drug usage is a social issue. A comprehensive approach should be taken to fight substance misuse in schools, and partnerships including many stakeholders should be formed. Law enforcement should make sure that individuals who commit criminal acts, such as selling alcohol to minors, are subject to harsh penalties.

## **6.8.4 Recommendation for the Community Ward Committee and the Community Policing Forum**

### ***Involve community leaders and the CPF***

The involvement of community leaders can be very effective in combatting the issue of learner-to-teacher violence in township schools. In every community, there is a group of leaders named the ward committee which is democratically elected by community members. These ward committees consist of ten members who are led by a ward councillor. The purpose of the ward committee is to oversee and address the day-to-day challenges of the community. Key members who can be actively involved in resolving learner-to-teacher violence include the ward councillor member, education portfolio member, and safety and security portfolio member.

The abovementioned community ward members can coordinate communication and violence prevention amongst the community members, different INK schools, and the Durban municipality. The ward committee must work hand-in-hand with the Community Policing Forum to keep the INK township school a violence-free environment. The CPF has the authority to work with SAPS and keep the community a safe place to stay. The policing forum has permission and do unexpected school visits and confiscate drugs and dangerous weapons. Therefore, this study encourages the policing forum to do school check-ups every week to ensure that the smuggling of illegal drugs and dangerous weapons is monitored. The section below will briefly discuss reflections of the study and briefly explain the details of what the researcher learned throughout the whole project.

### **6.9 Contribution of the study**

This study has investigated the prevalence, causes, and consequences of learner-to-teacher violence in three INK township schools in the KZN Pinetown district. The findings of this study have generated recommendations and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on school violence, informing evidence-based interventions and policies to address this pressing issue. By exploring the experiences and perspectives of the teachers in the INK township schools in the Pinetown district, this study provides a broad understanding of the complex factors that contribute to learner-to-teacher violence in these schools. Ultimately, this research aims to inform strategies that promote safe and supportive learning environments, improve teacher well-being, and enhance the quality of education in INK township schools.

### **6.10 Reflections of the researcher**

In this section, I outline some of my personal experiences as a researcher engaged in this study. Undertaking this research was a fulfilling educational experience that enhanced my research abilities



and comprehension of the subject matter. I met with the principals of the sampled schools before starting the fieldwork. They were enthusiastic about the project, and one of the principals I first consulted with looked forward to this project. He was the first one to volunteer to be a participant because he said he has dealt with resolving these matters regularly for the past 28 years in the teaching profession.

Planning and organising to have individual meetings with teachers were very difficult because it was approaching the school holidays. Therefore, I had a week to visit the different schools and conduct my interviews. We concluded that I would interview the first group on Tuesday, the second group on Wednesday and the last group on Friday. I had private transportation which made things easier, saved time, and kept me safe from possible exposure to danger because if you are not from that area, gangsters tend to notice and might attempt to attack you. The limited period of one week I had to interview the teachers became complex because some teachers were not able to arrive according to the time slots they chose to be interviewed. This caused some of the other interviews to be postponed which inconvenienced my whole data collection process. The three chosen schools are situated several kilometres apart which made it difficult to drive from one school to another and conduct additional interviews.

During the interview, some participants did not answer the questions properly; they swerved from the topic and spoke about different forms of violence. I constantly created follow-up guiding questions that would keep the respondent on the main topic. One of the more experienced female teachers explored the different forms of violent encounters she faced throughout her teaching period. She started crying during the interview so I opted to stop the interview as noted in the consent form, but she insisted on continuing with the interview. The participant calmed down and continued with the interview. The attachment of the counsellor's contact details became very significant as she promised to contact the counsellor for a session during her free time. Based on the above discussion, the study presented some limitations. Thus, the section below lists the limitations of this study and how the limitations can be developed for future research purposes.

### **6.11 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research**

One of the limitations of this study is that it focused on three selected schools in the INK townships and in the Pinetown district only. As the issue is a provincial problem which commonly takes place in many other districts, it would be worth extending the study to other sites.

Although this study focused on learner-to-teacher violence, the learners were not given a platform to express themselves. This study did not gather primary-source data from the learners as to the driving



factors that force learners to attack teachers. It would be interesting to know from learners if some teachers provoke learners, which results in violence.

This study proved to be a societal issue rather than a school issue and therefore there was a need to gather data from community residents as well. Involving influential community leaders would have been beneficial for this study to gather information from the root cause. Moreover, involving community members would have linked the study more deeply with the theoretical framework implemented in this study, namely the socio-ecological model.

The language barrier added to the limitations of this study. The interview questions were written in the language of instruction at the school, which is English. This resulted in some participants providing surface-limited information because they could not express themselves fully in English. During the interviews, I informed the participants that they could code-switch to Zulu so they could better express themselves. This proved to be an effective strategy in providing deeper responses.

## **6.12 Conclusion**

It is hoped that the findings of the study can contribute to knowledge by recommending solutions that are based on an understanding of factors leading to learner-to-teacher violence. This study has offered evidence to support the conclusion that violence and crime are prevalent in KZN schools. The rich, real perspectives of teachers concerning learner-to-teacher violence in three different schools in the KZN Pinetown district attest to the fact that learners' behaviours have reached intolerable levels of violence and criminality in these schools. The research provides data that indicates a connection between school-based violence and community conditions in three INK high schools. Since schools are an essential component of the community at large, external factors have a significant impact on how well schools operate, with negative socio-economic factors playing a significant role in learner behaviour.

The results demonstrate how important it is for different agencies and stakeholders to collaborate to reduce school-related violence. To control and lower school violence, school leadership and teaching staff teams must possess the necessary strategies to protect themselves and build a safe environment for all. It is hoped that the findings of this study can contribute to building the kind of relationships needed to combat the very real problems that teachers in KZN face concerning learner-to-teacher violence.

*“Township life alone makes it a miracle for anyone to live up to adulthood”*

-Steve Bantu Biko-

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## APPENDIX A: Letters of permission



education

Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL



Telephone 031-509-4005 Date 23/08/2023

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

This is to confirm that Mr Sibiniso Mcobothi a masters student no [REDACTED], has come to our institution of learning requesting to interview 4 educators. There was an agreement with the educators to be interviewed on a topic of his research which is as follows: "Teachers experience of violence from learners in three high schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Pinetown District.

The school has allowed him to conduct the interviews with teacher who have agreed to do so, this is pending the written agreement with the Department of Education.

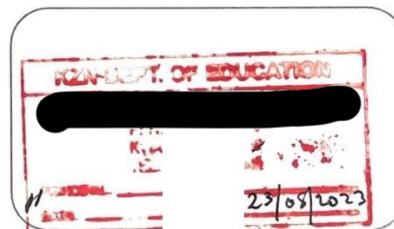
Thanking you in advance

Yours Faithfully

[REDACTED]

Deputy Principal

[REDACTED]





[REDACTED] SECONDARY SCHOOL

PINETOWN DISTRICT DURBAN NORTH WEST CIRCUIT [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED] P.O. BOX 27021 [REDACTED]  
KWAMASHU [REDACTED] Fax: 031 505 2997 [REDACTED]

22/08/2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to confirm that Siboniso Talent Mcbothi student No. [REDACTED] has been granted a permission to conduct Research in the above-mentioned school.

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully  
Mrs T.J. [REDACTED]  
(Principal)  
[REDACTED]

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
[REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL  
22 AUG 2023  
[REDACTED]  
Fax/Tel: 031 505 2997







**ENQUIRIES** :   
**EMAIL** :   
**CELL** : 

  
**INANDA NEWTOWN**  
**4310**  
**23 AUGUST 2023**

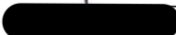
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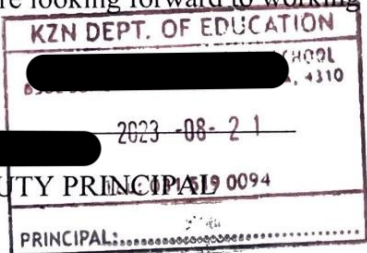
**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

The school () Secondary acknowledges the request of Mr Sboniso Talent Mcobothi (student number ) , and grants him permission to conduct his Master’s research interviews.

Mr Mcobothi shall be permitted to strictly interview four teachers who will out of their will agree to be his participants. The student has requested to collect his data via the interviews. It is then expected that the participants shall remain anonymous and that there will be no funds involved.

We are looking forward to working with Mr Mcobothi.





**DEPUTY PRINCIPAL** 0094



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201  
Tel: 033 392 1063

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

**Enquiries:** Phindile Duma

**Ref.:** 2/4/8/115

Mr ST Mcobothi

Dear Mr Mcobothi

### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS**

Your application to conduct research entitled: **“TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE FROM LEARNERS IN THREE HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE KWAZULU-NATAL PINETOWN DISTRICT”**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 28 August 2023 to 31 August 2026.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

**PINETOWN DISTRICT**

**Mr GN Ngcobo**  
**Head of Department: Education**  
**Date: 30 August 2023**

**GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER**



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

17 CROMPTON STREET  
PINETOWN, 3600  
Tel: 031 737 2077

Email: Celiwe.Mbuli@kzndoe.gov.za

PINETOWN DISTRICT  
Enquiries: Mr Z. Gagai  
Reference: 4/7/4

To: The Research Ethics Committee  
University of Stellenbosch  
Western Cape

From: District Director  
Pinetown District

**Re: Letter of confirmation to provide counselling services**

The Employee Health and Wellness Component within the Human Resource Management Sub-Directorate agrees to assist the Stellenbosch University MEd student's request to conduct a research project which explores learner to teacher violence in the selected High Schools in Inanda, Ntuzuma and Kwamashu.

The researcher will be using semi structured interviews to collect data therefore if the questions being posed to the participants evoke emotional distress or triggers post traumatic experience there will be a need to provide counselling service. Miss Celiwe Mbuli who is a professional wellness counsellor has been assigned to assist in this regard.

This letter serves as confirmation that the counselling services are available to provide support to any research participants who may experience psychological distress during or due to participation in the research being conducted by *Siboniso Talent Mcobothi* student number

The above mentioned student is conducting this research in fulfilment of his Master of Education (MEd) qualification under the supervision of Dr S. Xeketwana and Prof M. Robinson from the Department of Curriculum Studies in Stellenbosch University.

His research title is: *Teachers' experiences of violence from learners in three high schools in the KwaZulu Natal Pinetown district.*

The researcher agrees to provide the counselling details to all research participants to ensure that they are aware of the support available and are thus able to access the necessary support should the need arise.

**MR SLN KHESWA**  
DISTRICT DIRECTOR  
PINETOWN DISTRICT

2018/9/18  
DATE

## APPENDIX B: Interview schedule



### Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Teachers.

Teachers' experiences of violence from learners in three high schools in the KwaZulu Natal Pinetown district.

#### Objectives:

- To identify the different types of violent actions by learners faced by township-based teachers in the Pinetown district.
- To understand how these teachers deal with these violent actions.
- To explore these teachers' views on how the problem can be addressed.

Date of interview	
Name of school	
Location of the interview	
Start time of the interview	
End time of the interview	

Name of interviewee (teacher)	
Gender	
Qualifications	
Number of years as a teacher	
Number of years at this school	
Grades currently teaching	
Subjects currently teaching	

***NB.: All participants need to sign the consent form, and make a preliminary test of the recording equipment.***



**Interview schedule questions.**

*Types of violence:*

1. What are the different types of violent actions teachers in your school face? These acts involve the following practices: physical, verbal, destruction of property, sexual, and psychological violence?
  - a. In general
  - b. By learners to teachers?
2. In your experience, has there been any change over the last few years in the types of violent actions occurring by learners in your school? If so, what do you think are the reasons for these changes?

*Factors contributing to violent actions:*

3. What do you think are the causes of learners' aggressive behaviour towards teachers in your school?
4. What factors outside the school do you think lead to these violent actions in your school?
5. Do you think the culture of the community influences the violent actions that learners practice? If so, in what way?

*Teacher emotions*

6. How do you feel when these violent actions take place in your school?
7. Do you still love the teaching profession? Do you ever feel like leaving your profession? Why do you say this?

*Short term strategies to address violence in schools:*

8. What instant measures do you take when violence takes place in front of you?

2

- 
9. What policies are available to protect teachers from violence in your school?
  10. What programmes, if any, does the school or government provide in order to protect your safety and emotional well-being? How effective are these programmes? How might they be improved?

*Long term strategies to address violence in schools:*

11. Do you have any suggestions to combat violence in your school in the future?
12. What advice would you give newly qualified teachers to deal with this challenge?



## APPENDIX C: Ethics approval



### CONFIRMATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

REC: SBER - Annual Progress Report

3 September 2024

Project number: 27525

Project Title: Teachers' experiences of violence from learners in three high schools in the KwaZulu Natal Pinetown district.

Dear Mr ST Mcobothi

**Identified supervisor(s) and/or co-investigator(s):**

Your REC: SBER - Annual Progress Report submitted on 22/08/2024 09:58 was reviewed and approved by the Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE).

This approval is only valid until the end of the protocol approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
17 September 2024	16 September 2025

**GENERAL COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:**

**INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter.
2. Always use your project ID number (27525) in all correspondence with the REC: SBE concerning your project.
3. Please note that the REC has the prerogative to ask further questions, seek additional information, and monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process, where required.

**List of documents approved by the REC: SBE:**

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Research Protocol/Proposal	ST Mcobothi Proposal	05/09/2023	Final
Default	Mcobothi Gatekeepers attachments colour please	09/09/2023	Final
Informed Consent Form	Consent form STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY Final Document (1) (4)	09/09/2023	Final

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC administrative officer, Mr Aden Williams at aden@sun.ac.za

Sincerely,

Ms CJ Robertson

Secretariat: Social, Behavioral and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.  
The Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

## APPENDIX D: Consent form



### STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

---

You are invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information below which will explain the details of this research project.

Please feel free to contact the researchers about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are completely satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to participate. In other words, you may choose to take part, or not. Saying no will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever.

You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part initially. There is no foreseeable emotional distress/ trauma for any persons participating in this research project, although some of the subject matter that may be explored could pose as a sensitive topic for some. For this reason, should you feel unease or discomfort at any time during their participation in this study, you may withdraw from the study at any time, and without negative consequences.

The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research at Stellenbosch University has approved this study [Project ID: 27525]. We commit to conducting the study according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the South African Department of Health Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Studies (2015).

#### 1. WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS STUDY?

This research study is conducted by Mr Siboniso Talent Mcobothi.

The researcher is a Master of Education student in the Department of Curriculum Studies at Stellenbosch University.

#### 2. WHY DO WE INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

The study focuses on teachers' experiences with violence in three schools in the KwaZulu Natal Pinetown district. Such violence could include physical, verbal, destruction of property, sexual, and psychological violence

The reason why you are invited to participate is because you have indicated that you have some experience of learner to teacher violence, either as personal experience of learner to teacher violence yourself, or as knowledge of such violence at your or surrounding schools. This makes you a suitable respondent who will provide information that will add positively to the topic.

REC: SBE\_General ICF template\_December 2021

You are kindly invited to participate in semi-structured interviews and share your ideas, opinions, and views based on the topic.

### **3. WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH PROJECT ABOUT?**

The objectives of the study are as follows: To identify the different types of violent actions by learners faced by township-based teachers in the Pinetown district, to understand how these teachers deal with these violent actions, to explore these teachers' views on how the problem can be addressed.

### **WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to answer questions based on your experience opinions, and views about the school violence that is being faced by teachers in township-based schools in the KZN Pinetown district.

### **4. ARE THERE ANY RISKS IN MY TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

There might be few discomforts to the participants in this study. There could be minimal inconvenience of a time commitment and some emotional stress.

### **5. WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

While there is no immediate benefit to the individual, participants this research project will be a platform where the selected teachers can have a chance to share their experiences, views, opinions and be able to suggest possible solutions which will be resolutions to solve the violence posed to teachers in schools.

### **6. WILL I BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY AND ARE THERE ANY COSTS INVOLVED?**

There are no costs for this study and no payments will be made to the respondents.

### **7. WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO MY INFORMATION?**

Only the researcher and the university supervisors will have access to the information. Any information you share with me during this study that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected. The interview schedule will be recorded during our engagement, unless you declare that you do not want the interview to be recorded. All information will be locked in a software named my lockbox application. Access to this folder, its password, and data reading will all be under my sole control. Your responses are private, and we have anonymised your names by utilizing aliases. The final research report will not include any participant's personal information.

### **8. HOW DO I MAKE CONTACT WITH THE RESEARCHERS?**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Siboniso Talent Mcobothi at @sun.ac.za, and/or the study supervisor Dr Simthembile Xeketwana at @sun.ac.za or co-supervisor Prof Maureen Robinson at @sun.ac.za.

REC: SBE\_General ICF template\_December 2021

### 9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions, concerns, or a complaint regarding your rights as a research participant in this research project, please contact Mrs Clarissa Robertson [cgraham@sun.ac.za; (+27) 021 808 9183] at the Division for Research Development.

.....

<b>DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT</b>
--------------------------------------------------

As the participant, I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form, or it was read to me, and it is written in a language in which I am fluent and with which I am comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and I am satisfied that all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary, and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and nothing bad will come of it – I will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I agree that the interview with me can be [video-recorded / audio-recorded].

By signing below, I Siboniso Talent Mcobothi agree to take part in this research study, as supervised by Dr Simthembile Xeketwana and co-supervised by Prof Maureen Robinson.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

<b>DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER</b>
--------------------------------------

As the **researcher**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	I did/did not use an interpreter. (If an interpreter is used then the interpreter must sign the declaration below.)

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### 9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions, concerns, or a complaint regarding your rights as a research participant in this research project, please contact Mrs Clarissa Robertson [cgraham@sun.ac.za; (+27) 021 808 9183] at the Division for Research Development.

.....

<b>DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT</b>
--------------------------------------------------

As the participant, I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form, or it was read to me, and it is written in a language in which I am fluent and with which I am comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and I am satisfied that all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary, and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and nothing bad will come of it – I will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I agree that the interview with me can be [video-recorded / audio-recorded].

By signing below, I Siboniso Talent Mcbothi agree to take part in this research study, as supervised by Dr Simthembile Xeketwana and co-supervised by Prof Maureen Robinson.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

<b>DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER</b>
--------------------------------------

As the **researcher**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	I did/did not use an interpreter. (If an interpreter is used then the interpreter must sign the declaration below.)

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Signature\_\_\_\_\_

**Pinetown District Psychological Counsellor Contact details:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Celiwe</b>
<b>Surname:</b>	<b>Mbuli</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	
<b>Email address:</b>	

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## APPENDIX E: Letter of request



16 August 2023

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THREE HIGH SCHOOLS

I am writing this letter on behalf of Mr Siboniso Talent Mcobothi (student number \_\_\_\_\_), currently registered as a Master's student in the Department of Curriculum Studies at Stellenbosch University.

The title of Mr Mcobothi's thesis is *Teachers' experiences of violence from learners in three high schools in the KwaZulu Natal Pinetown district*. These high schools are located in Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu, and he would like to interview four teachers in each of the schools.

The objective of his research is:

- To identify the different types of violent actions by learners faced by township-based teachers in the Pinetown district.
- To understand how these teachers deal with these violent actions.
- To explore these teachers' views on how the problem can be addressed.

Mr Mcobothi will follow all ethical procedures of Stellenbosch University for this research. Names of individuals and schools will be anonymous, all data will be confidential, and password protected, and the results will not be published.

We would appreciate it very much if Mr Mcobothi could be provided with a letter indicating permission from the KZN Department of Basic Education to conduct this research.

Any queries can be directed to myself at the address below.

Yours sincerely

(Prof) Maureen Robinson

M Ed supervisor

Department of Curriculum Studies, Stellenbosch University