

**AN EXPLORATION INTO THE DYNAMICS OF  
VIOLENCE IN TWO SCHOOLS IN PHOENIX  
TOWNSHIP, KWAZULU-NATAL**

**MURUGAN REDDY**

**2013**

# **AN EXPLORATION INTO THE DYNAMICS OF VIOLENCE IN TWO SCHOOLS IN PHOENIX TOWNSHIP, KWAZULU NATAL**

by

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**2013**

# **DECLARATION**

**I, MURUGAN REDDY declare that**

- 1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.**
- 2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.**
- 3. This dissertation does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.**
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**M. Reddy**

**Phoenix, Durban**

**.....2013**

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## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to:

- ❖ My mother, Ramayie Reddy, who showed me and my siblings that even in the face of adversity as a single parent she could rise above her situation and give us the opportunities to be the best we could be.
- ❖ My children, Seshni and Shaunolen. May this work inspire them to persevere in their quests to excel and to always strive for greater knowledge even when circumstances challenge them as knowledge is a priceless gift.
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- ❖ To every educator who still keeps the faith in the noble calling despite the insurmountable challenges in schools.

## **ABSTRACT**

This was a qualitative, case study conducted in two township primary schools. Both schools are in the township of Phoenix in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The aim of this study was to investigate what are the dynamics of violence in two Phoenix township schools, what are the perceptions and experiences of educators, school governing bodies, learners and support staff about violence in two Phoenix township schools and finally what measures are taken by two Phoenix township schools to promote a violence-free environment. The study indicated that various forms of violent behavior are being played out during school time, including lesson time in view of the educators. The study examined the reasons why perpetrators of violence behave the way they do. The stakeholders that are affected most adversely by school violence are the victims who fear school, educators who are stressed and intimidated by threatening learners who abuse teaching time for disciplinary investigations and non-educators or support staff who get no respect from the learners. The members of the SGB and DSSC are affected to the extent that they have to hold disciplinary hearings and increase security measures at a high cost. Most parents seem unaffected by the violent incidents because the communities of the schools are generally violent and dangerous.

The study showed that insufficient measures are being used to curb school violence. Evidence of apathy and a sense of hopelessness have exacerbated school violence. Recommendations were made for a collaborative effort from all stakeholders to rehabilitate all perpetrators. The education laws need review and added funding will facilitate effective security measures, smaller classes and appointments of school counselors. School violence is far too serious to be ignored. The immediate action from government, social services, police services, health services working with the schools can alleviate the crisis. Quality education needs restoration. The human right to a safe environment must be guaranteed to each person at every school.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

SASA	The South African Schools Act
SGB	The school governing body
SMT	School Management Team
DSSC	Discipline, Safety and Security Committee
DoE	Department of Education
LO	Life Orientation
KZN	KwaZulu Natal
COLTS	Culture of learning and Teaching in School

## **KEY OPERATIONAL TERMS**

Learner or pupil

Educator or teacher

Principal or head-teacher

SGB or governing body or school governing body



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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1. Problem Statement**

In terms of Section 24 of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) a learner has the right to an environment that is not harmful to his or her well being. It is the right of every learner to enjoy a safe environment. Oosthuizen, de Waal, de Wet, Roussouw and Van Huyssteen (2005, p.1) states that according to the “Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies” in adopting a code of conduct for learners, all learners have a right to a safe environment that is conducive to education. Security of property, well-cared for school facilities, clean toilets, water and a green environment, absence of harassment all create an atmosphere that is conducive to education. According to The South African Schools Act, Act No 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1996) the learners have a right to the provisions of a secure and non-violent learning environment. De Wet (2003) states that the root of the security problems in schools are socio-economic conditions, poor role models, lack of morality, peer pressure, gangs, culture of violence and poor academic achievement.

Xolisa Mgwatyu, Daily Dispatch (2011a, p. 7) reported that there is a serious concern of school violence in Phoenix as in all township schools in South Africa, where crime is rampant. He adds that communities in townships living below the poverty index are easy targets for criminals who target schools for drug-money. The need for this study was to explore the dynamics of violence in township schools and to identify measures taken by schools and their communities to promote a violence-free or secure environment in the schools and protect the school communities against harm. The study also examined how school violence impacts on the culture of teaching and learning (COLTS) and explored what measures could be put in place by all school stakeholders to

ensure a non-violent environment. When crime is rampant in schools it affects the performance of both learners and educators. In consultation with learned colleagues it was concurred that parents who are apathetic to the violence contribute to apathetic learners who impact negatively on educators who struggle with little support from the school governors and departments of education. This snowballing effect or domino- effect results in schools with violence, performing poorly. They have become unsafe places for teaching and learning. There is a need for schools to be free of violence. The effects on educators are multi-layered. For example, in one school educators do not stay behind after learners are dismissed because the school is too quiet and there are no security guards present and this leaves them susceptible to criminals. As a result, minimal time is spent at school. Educators are inclined to spend just the minimal expected teaching time of seven hours per day without giving any extra time for sports coaching and extra lessons.

Statistics published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR, 2008), implies that South African Schools are the most dangerous in the world. The survey conducted by SAIRR states that only 23% of South African learners felt safe at school. This fear of safety was one of the key reasons why learners drop out of school. De Wet (2003, p.89) reported that as a result of the violence, learners and educators are often too scared to attend school. They are fearful of being killed by fellow learners in possession of dangerous weapons. Countries such as Australasia, North America, Europe, the Nordic Countries, the Far East and the rest of Africa are experiencing similar problems. Bucher& Manning (2003, p.160) state that in American schools out of every 12 learners who stay at home on any given day, one stays at home due to fear trying to avoid the violence at school and almost 8% of all American learners have been injured or threatened at school within a year. These alarming statistics indicate that schools are not the safe havens of learning they were intended to be.

De Mattos (2009) in reviewing the production of school failure in Brazil has shown that violence promotes failure but at the same time school failure has been generating violent practices among educators and learners. It is a vicious cycle. Williams (2009) stated that fourteen children aged five or under are suspended from primary schools in England every day for violence against educators and learners. If learners that young are violent then the schooling system is in very serious trouble.

Cruel Number (2008, p.5) reported that 1838 children in Pakistan were victims of sexual abuse in the year 2008. The writer mentions that both religious and secular educational institutions are places of violence with the perpetrators mostly known to the victims. Vally et al (1999) says that in South African schools one in 5 learners (21%) had been threatened or hurt by someone at school and a third had been verbally abused. The perpetrators of violence are learners and educators with both groups carrying the brunt of continuous bullying, gender-based violence, accidental violence, sexual assault, physical and psychological violence.

Among critical friends it was concurred that Phoenix schools too are under severe threat with school violence. There are many reasons for the Phoenix community being violent but amongst those reasons it was believed that the most common cause is the poverty levels of the people. Unemployment breeds crime. Theft is considered an option to survive. Alcoholism and substance abuse are rife among the unemployed. Govender in the Phoenix Sun (2011a, p.7) reports that learners were held at gunpoint in a Phoenix school on 10 March 2011. The learners masqueraded as armed robbers wearing ski-masks and held up a group of learners from another school. They held firearms to the learners' heads and threatened to shoot before making off with their cell-phones and money. This occurred during their lunch break in full view of all the learners and educators on duty. The suspects fled on foot but it is unclear how they gained access into the school premises.

Like this episode incidents of school violence are reported weekly in the local press. Govender in another issue of the Phoenix Sun, (2011b, p.5) states that a 15 year old learner was held up and her dress ripped off during another robbery at a secondary school in Phoenix. This incident is recorded as the latest in a spate of shootings and robberies that has plagued the same school in recent months. The local police communications officer, Captain Nzimande states that crime in the school has been an ongoing problem. Learners carry knives with them to school hence a lot of stabbing has been occurring. There is a syndicate who is identifying those learners who have money and cell-phones and they contact their friends from the outside. He adds that these intruders jump over the fence and rob the learners during the break. The learners commented that they live in fear and their only place of sanctuary is the classroom where they remain during the breaks so that they do not become victims to criminal attacks. In view of the spate of serious incidents of school violence in Phoenix recently, incidents of violence nationally and school violence globally there was an urgent need to address this educational crisis through research.

The dynamics in just two Phoenix township schools is a slice of the reality of global studies that emanate from countries like England, Pakistan and Brazil. It was hoped that recommendations yielded through the study could be implemented in our schools. This study was intended to explore a critical issue which the government and stakeholders in education needed to address urgently.

## **1.2. Rationale and Motivation**

### **1.2.1. Personally**

As an educator of 28 years, serving presently in a management position as Head of Department (Foundation Phase) in a Phoenix school, I have observed that with the increase of school violence, the educators are under severe stress

and learner attendance and performance have been deteriorating. This negativity affects staff morale and many are no longer committed because they feel that no one cares about their safety. This has serious implications for the quality of teaching and learning that takes place on a daily basis. The educators do not articulate their concerns because they state that nobody listens. Some of the incidents that plagued staff at my school in the recent years were: an educator had her handbag with jewelry in it stolen while she was at assembly and her bag was left in the classroom, an educator was held at gunpoint to surrender his car as he drove into the school car park, the secretary was held up while counting the school fees for the day, the tuck shop was broken into and cleared of all goods, computers were stolen from the computer room, educators who wore gold jewelry left themselves susceptible to robbery and learners were assaulting others to the point of some being hospitalized. The crisis of school violence looms while the lack of school funds makes it difficult to provide adequate security measures. This is a critical concern that needed to be investigated to inform the governing bodies, the school managements teams, the Department of education and other stakeholders.

### **1.2.2. Professionally**

Legally, the learner has a right to study in a safe environment in which learning and growth takes place, without feeling intimidated and afraid. According to the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996), children have a human right to education without any fear. SASA concurs in section 8 that school governing bodies must establish a disciplined and purposeful school environment. Research done by De Wet (2003, p.4) states that educators and learners are terrified to attend school and when at school they are afraid to visit the toilets or move around on the school grounds. Like in other countries, school violence in South Africa is a critical issue that deserves urgent attention. It is not a problem that will just go away with time. Solutions need to be offered to redeem our schools and make them non-violent. There is also a

need for all partners in education, particularly school governing bodies, to become engaged in finding solutions. KZN No. 3 of 2002 (DoE, 2002) outlines what governing bodies must do to manage school violence. Such plans need support and implementation.

### **1.2.3. Conceptually**

Besides my teaching experiences in three township schools in KwaZulu Natal, I became more informed about the crisis of school violence when I engaged in a mini-research project for my honors degree (Bachelor of Education, Management). The University of Pretoria set as a requirement that an investigation had to be conducted in an area posing a challenge to schools. I pursued a study of the lack of school security that poses a challenge to schools. It became evident through the investigation that due to a lack of security measures, township schools were struggling to keep their schools, learners and educators safe. My study was considered as ground-breaking and I passed my degree *cum laude*. I was inspired to pursue this investigation through my Masters research. I believed that this study would be deeper and would provide a greater insight to the situation so that solutions could be sought for school violence which my previous study did not investigate. This study explored the experiences of educators, learners, support staff and school governing bodies concerning school violence in township schools.

### **1.3. Significance of this study**

The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1996a) had an addendum promulgated in November 2006 which addressed Regulations for Safety Measures in Public Schools (DoE, 2006). It stated that public schools must develop action plans to counter threats of violence which have the potential to have a negative effect. It added that public schools must encourage governing body members and parents to participate in policing forums. Schools in the Phoenix Township, like other township schools throughout South Africa, are

grappling with issues of school violence. The findings from this study could affect the decisions made by school governing bodies and officials in the department of education to provide security measures so that schools will be free from violence.

This study was intended to explore a serious issue which the government and the communities have not interrogated adequately. Many reasons for educators exiting the teaching profession have been offered in various studies. However, this study explored to what extent all stakeholders (educators, support staff, learners and governing bodies) were coping with the dynamics of violence in township schools.

## **1.4. Literature Review**

### **1.4.1. Internationally**

Violence in educational institutions is seen as a growing problem in many parts of the world. According to Burton (2007) citing the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1991), half of all crimes against teenagers occurred in school buildings, on school property, or on the street. Moreover 44% of teachers in the United States reported that student misbehavior interfered substantially with their teaching. Another survey found that school principals considered physical student conflicts (76%), vandalism of school property (53%), and verbal abuse of teachers (55%) to be as serious a problem as student and staff absenteeism, tobacco-related offences, and lateness. Other serious problems were theft over \$10 (38%), trespassing (34%), racism (26%), and weapons (20%). Burton (2007) further found that only 20% of principals indicated that weapons were a problem, it is estimated that 568,000 teens or about 5% of the student population of American schools are in possession of firearms. About half as many carry pocket knives.



School violence is reported through the media to be increasing in intensity, particularly in the form of verbal assault, as teachers see learners becoming more confrontational. In the main, violence is still perpetrated against other learners (that is teasing, bullying, assault), although teachers can also be victims. Some teachers in Canada reported that they have become more hesitant to break up fights in the fear that they may become seriously injured, particularly in the event that a weapon is used (Burton, 2007).

Countries such as Australasia, North America, Europe, the Nordic Countries, the Far East and the rest of Africa are experiencing similar problems. Bucher & Manning (2003, p.160) state that in American schools out of every 12 learners who stay at home on any given day, one stays at home due to fear of trying to avoid the violence at school and almost 8% of all American learners have been injured or threatened at school within a year. School violence is an international challenge facing schools worldwide.

Cruel Number (2008, p.5) mentions that both religious and secular educational institutions are places of violence with the perpetrators mostly known to the victims. The perpetrators of violence are learners and educators with both groups carrying the brunt of continuous bullying, gender-based violence, accidental violence, sexual assault, physical and psychological violence.

#### **1.4.2. Nationally**

The Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2, (RSA, 1996) stipulates the various rights that are applicable for a safe school environment. Prinsloo (2005, p.7) concurs that the purpose of any school is to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place in an orderly environment. South African educators have an important duty towards the safety and protection of learners, not only in terms of the Constitution (1996) and other legislation, but also in terms of their *in loco parentis* status.

In the exploration into the dynamics of violence in township schools the applicable legislation that underpins school security and human rights of both learners and educators was reviewed. The need for the protection of these rights was reflected through literature. The legislation that governs schools, The South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996) and resultant promulgations dealing with school security at National and Provincial levels was examined. Theories of how school violence was being perceived by educators in other countries were used to inform us of the situation in South African Schools.

The South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR, 1998) published statistics from the 2006 Progress in International Study (PIS), a study by the U.S.-based Institute for Education Sciences (IES) in 30 countries worldwide. The study revealed that South Africa was ranked last in school safety.

De Wet (2003, p.95) reported that educators complained that they found themselves in classrooms where they could not handle certain behavioral problems. Prinsloo (2005, p.8) states that learners have a constitutional right to study in a safe school environment. Rossouw (2003, p.414) asserts that currently one of the most prominent factors influencing the learning environment in South African schools is the conduct of learners. Joubert & Squelch (2005, p.36) state that the school environment should ensure that learners are free of fear of being intimidated, victimized or assaulted. Verbal and written threats to any learner or educator should be strictly forbidden. There should be a relationship of mutual trust and respect between learners and educators. From my experience of 30 years as an educator I agree that a safe and conducive learning and teaching environment is required for optimal learning to take place.

#### **1.4.3. Locally**

Violence impacts negatively on learners whether they have experienced violence as victims, observers or perpetrators. White Paper 6, DoE (2001a) proposes

minimizing barriers to learning and maximizing participation in the education of the learner. In terms of Section 24 of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) a learner has the right to an environment that is not harmful to his or her well being. Oosthuizen et al (2005, p.1) states that according to the “Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies” in adopting a code of conduct for learners, all learners have a right to a safe environment that is conducive to education. According to The South African Schools Act, Act No 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1996a) the learners have a right to the provisions of a secure and non-violent learning environment. Xolisa Mgwatyu of Daily Dispatch (2011a, p. 7) reported that there is a serious concern of school violence in Phoenix as in all township schools in South Africa. Lyse Comins of The Independent on Saturday (2011b, p. 2) reports that a primary school educator was robbed at knifepoint in a Phoenix classroom when two unknown men pulled out a knife in front of the grade one learners and stole the educator’s bag with her wallet and cellular phone. Statistics published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR, 2008) imply that South African Schools are the most dangerous in the world. The survey conducted by SAIRR states that only 23% of South African learners felt safe at school. De Wet (2003, p.89) reported that as a result of the violence, learners and educators are often too scared to attend school.

In a study on school violence in South Africa, Leoschut & Burton (2009) found that schools appear to be environments that elicit feelings of apprehension indicating feeling unsafe while at school and some learners reported that there was a particular place at school they were scared of. Williams (2009) stated that 14 children aged 5 and under are suspended from primary schools in England every day for violence against educators and learners. Vally et al (1999) says that in South African schools one in 5 learners (21%) had been threatened or hurt by someone at school and a third had been verbally abused.

De Wet (2003, p.95) reported that educators complained that they found themselves in classrooms where they could not handle certain behavioral problems. Rossouw (2003, p.414) asserts that currently one of the most prominent factors influencing the learning environment in South African schools is the conduct of learners. Burton (2008) also argues that South Africa is somewhat behind many countries in responding to violence in schools which the government is grappling to curb.

## **1.5. Theories underpinning the study**

This study is underpinned by theories of violence and non-violence. This study is placed in the conceptual framework of the following theories:

### **1.5.1. Theory of symbolic interactionism**

Wikipedia ([http:// symbolic interactionism](http://symbolicinteractionism), 4/4/2011, p.1) defines this theory as a major sociological perspective that places emphasis on social interaction. It is derived from American pragmatism especially the work of George Herbert Mead and Charles Cooley. Blumer (1969) states that people act towards things based on the meanings those things have for them and these meanings are derived from social interaction and are modified through interpretation. He was influenced by John Dewey who said that human beings are best understood in relation to their environment. He adds further that most of interactionist research uses qualitative research methods like participant observation to study aspects of social interaction and individual selves. Interactionist concepts that have gained widespread usage include definition of the situation, emotion at work, impression management, looking glass self and total institution. Blumer (1969) set out 3 basic premises of symbolic interactionism: humans act towards things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things, the meanings of such things is derived from the social interaction that one has with others and the society and these meanings are handled and modified through an interpretative process used by the person dealing with the

things he or she encounters. Symbolic interactionist researchers investigate how people create meaning during social interaction, how they present and construct the self and how they define situations of co-presence with others. People act as they do because of how they define situations. Interactionists see the social world as a continuously dynamic and dialectical web. For purposes of this study, learner behavior was understood best in relation to their social contexts and the environments in both school and home. An examination of the violent behavior of learners was viewed against the backdrop of their social contexts.

### **1.5.2. Theories of power and social control**

Blumer (1969) states that power control theory is relative in the work place conditions, patterns of parental control of children in two parent families, resulting in gender differences in rates of non-serious delinquency. Power control theory of delinquency is one of the few theories that has attempted to account for both gender and class in delinquency causation. A path analysis revealed that the quality of the relationship with the mother was important in explaining high or low levels of delinquency in boys. The quality of a youth's relationship with parents, particularly the experience of negative sanctions from the father, was found to explain delinquency for both sexes. This theory links gender differences in risk preference to patriarchal family structures. Social control theory attempts to explain why it is that all of us do not commit crime or why are most people law-abiding. The answer lies in dimensions of social control. The many ways in which people are controlled are by family, schools, work situations, conscience, etc. For purposes of this study learners who committed violence were assessed in terms of their family factors like if they have two parents, their economic class and the number of children in their homes since these factors could have impacted on their violent behavior.

### **1.5.3. Theories of non-violence espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King**

The third theory underpinning this study is that people could practice the Mahatma Gandhian principles of non-retaliation and non-violence (Satyagraha). Curren & Takata (2001, p.1) assert that Professor L. Garfield specialized in cross-cultural philosophy and thought and thus represents for us a good guide to an understanding of peace and non-violence through the thoughts of other cultures. He parallels Gandhi with the Dalai Lama. He states that it does not mean that Gandhi's central insight of grasping the nature of reality and insistence of truth is the foundation of all morally significant action and meaningful life. Truth could be different for a Buddhist from a Hindu. The impact the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence had on Martin Luther King is to be explored under literature review in the next chapter.

## **1.6. Conceptual Framework**

According to Guba & Lincoln (2005), paradigms focus on answering questions related to ontology, epistemology and methodology. The main paradigms are positivist, critical and interpretivist paradigms.

**1.6.1. Positivist Paradigm:** According to this paradigm, researchers are of the belief that the social world can be studied in the same way as the natural world.

*Ontology:* Positivists acknowledge that there is only one reality that exists and it is the responsibility of the researcher to discover that reality. They further believe that the world is ordered and operates according to scientific laws (Robson, 2002; Mertens, 1998).

*Epistemology:* Positivists are of the belief that the inquirer and the inquired people were independent to each other. They argue that the researcher should remain neutral in order to prevent values and biases in influencing their studies (Mertens, 1998).

*Methodology:* It is contended that positivists borrowed their experimental methods from natural sciences (Mertens, 1998).

**1.6.2. Critical Paradigm:** This is concerned with the critical meanings of experiences as they relate to gender, race, class and other kinds of social oppression (Maree, 2010, p.21).

*Ontology:* In this paradigm more stress is placed on the influence of cultural, political, social, gender, ethnic, economic and disability values when reality is constructed (Mertens, 1998).

*Epistemology:* Mertens (1998) regards the relationship between the researchers and the participants as interactive. He stresses that this relationship should be empowering to those who are powerless.

*Methodology:* These researchers believe that it is essential to involve participants in the planning, conduct, analysis, interpretation and the use of the research (Mertens, 1998).

Both the positivist and critical paradigms do not conform to this study which relates more closely to the interpretivist paradigm discussed below.

**1.6.3. Interpretivist Paradigm:** This study is located in the interpretive paradigm. Some scholars refer to interpretivism as constructivism (Denscombe, 2005). Interpretivism provides a framework for researchers to study and understand people's beliefs, values, meaning making, experiences, attitudes and self-studying (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). In this study, I attempted to understand perceptions and experiences of learners, teachers, other school staff, and school governors pertaining to violence in schools.

*Ontology:* While positivists seek to find the truth, researchers operating in the interpretive paradigm believe that a phenomenon under investigation is underpinned by multiple realities (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). Interpretivists believe that people understand and make meaning of realities in

their minds (Denscombe, 2005). Such realities are influenced by the context and experience of those who construct them (Guba, 1990).

*Epistemology:* Interpretivists believe that the researcher and the participants are interdependent in that they influence each other in producing knowledge (Guba, 1990). In other words, the interpretivist strives to understand a phenomenon from the participants' point of view. The phenomenon of school violence was understood from the point view of various stakeholders.

*Methodology:* In relation to methodology, interpretivists use qualitative methods and use data collection methods which include interviews, observations and document reviews (Denscombe, 2005; Henning et al, 2004). Data collection methods that were used in this study were interviews, observations and document reviews.

This study adopted a qualitative methodology because it was concerned about understanding the dynamics of violence in schools rather than to test variables (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Qualitative methodology allowed me to collect rich and thick data with the aim of uncovering and understanding the dynamics of violence (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The data generated used multiple sources that included interviews, observation and document reviews (Creswell, 2008). Fraenkel & Wallen (2007) contend that qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting and in line with that, this study was conducted in two schools as natural contexts where the participants were interviewed and observed. Although qualitative research is dynamic in the sense that the initial plan may change during the process of research, during this study the plan did not change (Babbie & Mouton, 2004; Creswell, 2008).

As I explored how educators, learners, support staff and school governing bodies are coping with violence in their schools, the study drew on the interpretivist paradigm. The reason for this is that the central aspects within the interpretivist paradigm are to capture the lives of the participants in order to understand and to interpret meaning (Henning et al, 2004, p.19). This



implies that I tried to access the participants' personal thoughts and feelings about the topic. I was interested in understanding their experiences, attitudes and behavior in dealing with violence at their schools.

Therefore the interpretive paradigm was best suited to the study as the interpretivist paradigm assumes that reality is not objectively determined, but is socially constructed (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 58). The underlying assumption was that by studying the participants in their social contexts, there was greater opportunity to access and understand their own experiences and perceptions.

### **1.7. Research Aims**

My study sought to investigate violence in two schools in the township of Phoenix in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In identifying the dynamics of violence in schools, the research also explored the underlying reasons and types of violence as well as initiatives for prevention, with the intention to generate indicators that would inform a common framework for comparison within the nine provinces of South Africa.

The aims of this study were:

1. To investigate the dynamics of violence in two Phoenix township school.
2. To elicit perceptions and experiences of educators, learners, school governing bodies and support staff about violence in two Phoenix township schools.
3. To identify measures taken by two Phoenix township schools to promote a violence-free environment.

### **1.8. Research questions**

This study was part of a bigger national project. Research questions were drawn from those of the main project but modified to refer specifically to the two case study schools in a South African township.

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the dynamics of violence in these two Phoenix township schools?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of educators, learners, school governing bodies and support staff about violence in these schools?
3. What measures are taken by the two Phoenix township schools to promote a violence-free environment?

### **1.9. Research design and methodology**

The Case Study approach was used to gather descriptive data. The focus was narrowed to a small number of learners, educators, support staff and members of the school governing bodies who could provide me with data of this nature. Maree (2010, p.75) states that a case study is a bounded system and that it does not necessarily imply that one site is only studied (Schumacher & McMillan, 1989). According to Bromley (1990, p.302), it is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. This case study involved an in depth analysis of the *status quo* of violence in each school.

Cohen & Manion (2008, p.253) state that case studies penetrate situations in ways that are not susceptible to numerical analysis. They list the strengths of case studies as: the results are more easily understood by a wide audience as they are written in non-academic language, they speak for themselves, they catch unique features, they are strong on reality, they provide insights into other cases, they can be undertaken by a single researcher and can embrace and build in unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables. They list the weaknesses as: the results may not be generalized, they are not easily open to cross-checking hence they may be selective and subjective and they are prone to problems of observer bias (Cohen & Manion, 2008, p. 253). As a researcher I will attempt to be non bias and objective.

### **1.9.1. Sampling**

Purposive sampling is used in special situations where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind (Maree, 2010, p.178). Purposive sampling was best suited to this study as it ensured that the participants who would be of value to the study could be selected. From the 96 schools in the township of Phoenix, KwaZulu-Natal, two primary schools were chosen. Fictitious names were used in order to protect the identity of the schools selected. Criteria used for selection were based on anecdotal evidence of incidences. This evidence was garnered from media reports and conversations with critical friends (educators, principals, ward managers and school governors etc.). The schools were chosen on their basis of being violent, as per discussion with critical friends as mentioned above. In addition, most of the local media reports mentioned the names of these schools in episodes of school violence. Further, based on the criteria, all the schools identified as violent in Phoenix Township were put on the short list and the two most convenient schools in terms of accessibility and proximity to the researcher were finally chosen.

The two schools are Alpha Primary and Omega Primary and both schools are located in poor township areas serving indigent learners. A short description of the two school case studies follows:

*Alpha Primary School* is a co-educational township school attended by learners of all races with the large majority being Indian. It has 543 learners from grades R to 7. It is a relatively advantaged school with very neat buildings. It has 20 educators. The school is walled and has a security guard. The school has a good income from fundraising that provides resources. It is quintile 5.

According to Lauren Anthony of the Northglen News (2011e, p.3) schools are divided into five quintiles with quintile five being the most affluent schools and quintile one having almost nothing. The quintile is essentially the poverty score of a school and is based on the poverty level of the community the school is situated in. This is determined using data relating to income per household,

unemployment rates and education levels in surrounding communities. The quintile system aims to ensure that poor families and communities are able to access quality education. The system divides all schools in the country into five categories (quintiles) that are funded differentially per learner per year. Quintile five schools receive R165 per learner per year and quintile one learners around R944 per year. The anomalies are primarily associated with schools in the same socio-economic areas having different quintile classifications. This often means that learners who are equally poor receive different levels of support from the state.

*Omega Primary School* is a co-educational township school in Phoenix. It is attended by learners of all races with the large majority being African. It has 520 learners from grades R to 7. It is a disadvantaged school with dilapidated buildings. It has 16 educators. The school does not have funds to provide security measures like walls and a guard. It is rated as a quintile 5 school.

It was evident that both these schools that serve indigent learners in an impoverished township have been erroneously classified by the Department of Education. Lack of funds results in lack of security measures which translates into fertile opportunities for school violence.

### **1.9.2. Instruments for data collection**

#### **1.9.2.1. Interviews**

The data that I was aiming to collect was largely descriptive in nature and based on the experiences of the participating learners, educators, support staff and SGB members. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed daily. The methods of data collection needed to ensure that they were provided with the freedom to discuss the topic from their own point of view in as much detail as they chose. Individual interviews were therefore the most appropriate method for data collection within this study, as they were successful in capturing the holistic experiences of the chosen participants. According to

Nieuwenhuis (2007, p.87) an interview is a two way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviors of the participant.

Maree (2010, p.870) says that an interview is a valuable source of information as we see the world through the eyes of the participant. It obtains rich descriptive data. This research used a structured interview schedule same for both schools where questions were detailed and developed in advance. It ensured consistency in the data collection. The interviews were conducted with the chairpersons of governing bodies, the safety and security committee chairpersons, the principals, the LO educators, the support staff, 5 learners who were victims of violence and 5 learners who were perpetrators of violence. The sample for interviews comprised of the following:

Educators: A purposive sample of two educators (the school principal and the life orientation educator in the Grade 7 classes).

School Governing Body: A purposive sample of two representatives of school governing bodies (the chairperson of the SGB and the chair of the school's Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSS).

Learners: 5 learners who were victims and 5 learners who were perpetrators.

Support staff: one cleaner and one security guard.

#### **1.9.2.2. Observation**

Observation is an everyday activity where we use our senses and intuition to gather bits of information. It is a systematic process of recording behavioral patterns without questioning or communicating (Maree, 2010, p.84). I was a complete observer. As a non-participant I looked at the situation from a distance. This is the least obtrusive form of observation. I used an observation schedule which was the same for both schools on all observation dates. The advantages of observation are: This is a direct technique. The researcher is not required to ask people but only listens to what the participants say and watch what they do (Robson, 2002). Robson also contends that the researcher gets

the real life in the real world. The disadvantages of observation are: There is great possibility for the observer to affect the situation being observed, meaning that there could be artificiality in the actions of those observed. It is also time consuming.

#### **1.9.2.3. Documentation analysis**

Documentation from the schools recorded the events of violence. They showed what policies were in place to address issues of violence and reflected the measures taken by the school to curb school violence. The number of entries in some records for example the Class Misconduct Book was an indicator of the level of severity of violence in that school.

Various types of school documentation made available by the school principal were perused. The list of documentation that was requested is as follows:

1. The school's code of conduct
2. Office Discipline record
3. Class misconduct record
4. Letters to parents in violent incidents
5. Policies dealing with violence
6. Ground duty record book
7. SGB minutes about security
8. Minutes of DSS committee

#### 1.9.2.4. Summary of data collection

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Alpha Primary</b>	<b>Omega Primary</b>
Interviews (Use of structured questionnaires)	Principal, LO Educator SGB Chair, DSSC Chair, group of 5 learners who were victims, group of 5 learners who were perpetrators, security guard, cleaner.	Principal, LO Educator SGB Chair, DSSC Chair, group of 5 learners who were victims, group of 5 learners who were perpetrators, security guard, cleaner.
Observation (Use of observation schedule)	2 school visits	2 school visits
School Documents	A deliberate choice of 8 school record books	A deliberate choice of 8 school record books
TOTALS	26	26

The data was analyzed as follows:

At the interviews I recorded the discussions on tape and transcribed the data when I got home on the same day while all information was fresh. There was no translation as all participants spoke English which I had first checked. The transcripts were analyzed where there was reading, redundancies were eliminated, language transformed into the language of science and the insights synthesized into a description. Joseph (1998, p.11) states that questions posed deliberately yields useful information. This instrument (interviews) is time-consuming yet highly effective because of the immediate verification of information where there is a need. Greater sincerity in answers is evident in face to face interviews. During my observation visits I wrote down information concerning how the educators, learners, support staff and parents are coping with the school violence according to the headings on the observation schedule.

## **1.10. Issues of quality in research**

### **1.10.1. Validity and Reliability**

Maree (2010, p.80) states that a measure or instrument is said to be valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity and reliability in a qualitative research refers to research that is credible and trustworthy. Maree (2010, p.80) includes credibility and dependability as key criteria of trustworthiness. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.316) claims that there can be no validity without reliability. The credibility and trustworthiness of the research instruments are crucial in the qualitative research. These terms refer to the research being trustworthy and credible. According to Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2006, p.62) credible research produces findings that are convincing and believable. They add that triangulation is a strategy used to enhance the findings of the research. Triangulation involves checking of information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data (Mertens, 1998, p.183). According to Stake (2000, p. 443), triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. In using triangulation of three sources of data any exception found in the data could lead to a modification. Also the veracity of the data is confirmed through various sources one being checked against the others. In this study the findings from the interviews, observations and reflective journals were checked against each other as a test of veracity.

### **1.10.2. Limitations/ Constraints of this study**

Some of the many challenges of this study were: It was limited to the township of Phoenix. While school violence is prevalent in many South African townships just one township on the South African map has been identified for this study. This is a very small slice of the reality of township schools. The study hoped to project that the events of the two Phoenix schools may epitomize other



township schools. The study researched events in two primary schools. While incidents of violence prevail in both primary and secondary schools, the study implied that the situations in the primary schools are the same in secondary schools. The researcher had to rely on the authenticity of the data provided by educators, support staff, parents of governing bodies and learners. The other sources of data were observations and documents. The researcher had to accept the information and only after triangulation proved its validity.

### **1.10.3. Ethical considerations**

Strydom (2002, p.63) states that anyone involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreements about what is proper and improper in scientific research. There is a need to guard against the harmful effects of research. According to Mouton (2001, p.238) the ethics of science concerns what is right in the conduct of research. Because scientific research is a form of human conduct, it follows that such conduct has to conform to generally accepted norms and values. Some of the ethical considerations given to this study are:

*1.10.3.1. Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity:* With reference to Burns (2000), both the researcher and participant must have a clear understanding regarding the confidentiality of the results and findings of the study. There was non-disclosure of participants or schools.

*1.10.3.2. Consent:* Leedy & Ormrod (2001, p.101) state that research participants should be told of the nature of the study to be conducted and given the choice of either participating or not. Researcher obtained participants consent without coercion.

*1.10.3.3. Protection:* The researcher ensured that participants were not exposed to any undue physical or psychological harm (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). All participants were protected by ensuring anonymity and secrecy.

*1.10.3.4. Information:* participants were informed of how the data would be used.

1.10.3.5. *Debriefing*: participants would be debriefed after the research is completed.

1.10.3.6. *Approval*: as a researcher I acquired approval from review boards.

1.10.3.7. *Permission*: consent was obtained from the Department of Education, principals of schools and participants.

1.10.3.8. *Publication*: I ensured that the data was gathered with all due ethical considerations.

## **1.11. Organization of the study**

This work is divided into five chapters which are worked out as follows. In chapter one I presented the introduction of the study and problem formulation. In addition, I presented significance of the study, rationale and motivation, critical questions, and study objectives. The chapter distinguished between two levels of school violence: firstly, the violence itself, types of violence (injury, sexual violence, crime, vandalism, etc.) secondly, the effects of the violence on educators, support staff and learners. This chapter briefly referred to how theories underpinning this study and the conceptual framework. The research design and methodology was discussed briefly.

Chapter 2 sets to explore the theoretical frameworks which serve as lenses through which the phenomenon of school violence was viewed by exploring various theories. These theories of symbolic interactionism, power and social control and non violence postulated by M. Gandhi and M.L. King provide insights into the shared views of school communities about violence in schools, which will result in better ways of understanding the causes of school violence and its mitigation strategies. Chapter 2 also explores the global trends of school violence. It examines the impact of violence in schools, in particular on learners, educators, support staff and SGB parents. Research studies revealed that the core of the problem of violent crime in South Africa is a culture of violence and criminality, associated with a strong emphasis on the use of

weapons where some specific factors sustain this culture, like, inequality, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and marginalization (CSV, 2007). The high level of violence in our schools reflects a complicated combination of past history and recent stresses on individuals, schools, and community levels in a society marked by deep inequalities and massive uncertainty and change within school settings (Vally, Dolombisa, & Porteus, 1999).

Chapter 3 provides the information on the research design of the study. This chapter critically engaged with the research paradigms that guided this research inquiry. This included the research approach used in conducting this study. This is followed by a discussion of the sampling plan, the descriptions of the two schools and its participants. I have detailed how research techniques and their related tools were used which include the breakdown of participants. I have also included the process of data analysis which is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Further, the chapter dealt with a number of issues pertaining to research namely ethical issues, issues of quality in qualitative research, authenticity, trustworthiness, validity and reliability.

In chapter 4 the findings from the data were discussed. This chapter reflected what dynamics of violence prevail in each of the two schools, what are the perceptions of school violence by educators, learners, support staff and governing bodies and what measures are being used at each school to curb violent behavior.

Finally, in chapter 5 the study concluded with recommendations by the researcher on how school violence may be curbed. These recommendations included some observed in either of the two schools and others gleaned from experiences and literature that all schools could use.

The next chapter explores literature on school violence and provides a theoretical framework.

## **Chapter 2**

### **School violence**

#### **2.1. Introduction. What is school violence?**

Violence is defined as behavior by people against people liable to cause physical or psychological harm (De Wet, 2003). The World Health Organization defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maladjustment or deprivation (WHO, 2002, p.5). De Wet (2003) adds that the phenomena of increasing occurrences of violence in schools are often referred to as a “culture of violence” or a “spirit of lawlessness”. This is deemed to be a reflection of the “spiral of violence” in the community. Schools are described as sites of violence.

South Africa is a very violent society and South African schools are plagued by violence (Harber, 2001). According to him, schools are often violent towards children and are directly involved in the active perpetration of violence in society at large. Violence in schools is most prevalent among learner to educator and learner to learner violence. Harber also contends that schooling in itself is often responsible both for initiating violence and for reproducing violence that exists in the wider society. The more he looked the more he found instances and examples of schooling having a violent impact on learners (Harber, 2001).

#### *Internationally*

Astor et al (2009) state that school violence is a global phenomenon. The Fourth International Conference on School Violence and the newly created International Journal of School Violence are the most recent reminders that school violence is a global phenomenon (CSVSR, 2010). Countries with cultures as diverse as Japan and Jordan, Finland, Brazil, Norway, Israel, Malaysia, Columbia, South

Africa, USA and Ethiopia are alarmed by atrocious acts of senseless violence in schools. In a recent tragic incident in Finland a masked gunman opened fire at his trade school in Finland, killing 10 people and burning some of their bodies before fatally shooting himself in the head. This is an almost exact replication of a previous incident in Finland less than a year earlier that left 11 casualties. Both shooters posted violent clips on YouTube that were seen by many thousands of young viewers around the world. Both were fascinated by the 1999 Columbine school shootings in Colorado, in a little town thousands of miles away. With today's internet, media and the globalized culture, an incident in a school in one corner of the world, can have a devastating effect on many. (Astor, 2008)

Harber & Davies (1997) assert that the impact of violent conflict on schooling internationally takes place in many different contexts and violence is certainly one of them. Learners have been deliberate targets of violence. Violence against young people in democratic South Africa has in recent months made national news headlines. From these media accounts and related research, it seems that the country's youth are in crisis. Violence often occurs in environments considered as safe places for youth, namely the home and schools. South Africa's youth make up a significant proportion of the population. Youth violence has taken the form of, among others, gang activities, violence at school, and sexual violence mainly perpetrated by young men and boys against young women and girls. Much of the causes and contributing factors are inextricably linked to South Africa's past oppression that can be identified to explain both the nature and frequency of the violence. The culture of violence continues to be firmly embedded in South Africa's democratic society. This violent behavior has impacted negatively on our structural inequalities that were brought on by the apartheid government's discriminatory policies and high unemployment rates.

The provision of schooling and learners being unsafe at school resulted from some of these conflicts. The following examples are extracts from articles cited

by Mac Gregor in the *Times Educational Supplement* (30/06/2000) that reveals the impact that violent conflict has on schools. In Zimbabwe, "more than 2,000 teachers were assaulted and at least one was murdered during the run-up to the nation's elections last weekend. Government militia targeted teachers as part of their month long campaign of terror against all opposition supporters. The Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe said that more than 9,000 teachers and 551 schools had been affected by the Mugabe-led wave of political violence and 2096 teachers had been assaulted. It also received reports of 12 teachers or their wives being raped and 25 pupils being abducted or raped by Zanu-PF thugs (Mac Gregor, 2000).

In the midst of serious food shortages, Robert Mugabe's Deputy Foreign Minister said that anyone who voted for the opposition party could not expect to get food aid from the government and the self-styled war veterans have enforced this by deliberately stopping the distribution of food to school children in areas where their parents have supported the opposition in elections (Black, 1999; Meldrum, 2002).

Harber (2001) further emphasizes that the negative impact created by these types of violent conflict on schooling is detrimental not only because of the physical and psychological harm done to the learners and educators concerned but also because schooling as an institution is inherently beneficial to society because it is a key agency of human development.

According to Apple (2001), parents who have no positive memories of school might still regard education as neither a force for change nor for good, but rather as an imposition from an official world. Some reasons that parents and learners choose home education is that they view schooling in a negative way as an authoritarian, indoctrinatory and controlling experience for children. Another strong force behind home-education in America, the religious right, is

critical of state schooling because it is not authoritarian and indoctrinatory enough (Apple, 2001).

### *Nationally*

Statistics according to the National School Violence Study that was undertaken by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (2007), states that school violence in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) which is one of the nine provinces in South Africa, is rife. The report goes on to state that KZN has the highest percentage of learners (49.4%) reporting theft and the third highest percentage of learners reporting sexual assault with 3.8% that have been abused at school.

As a challenge for many schools, one of the primary goals of discipline is to provide a safe learning environment for all educators and learners. Statistics that have been published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR, 2008) reflected that South African schools are the most dangerous in the world. According to this study when South African learners were questioned as to whether they felt safe at their schools and if they had experienced incidents of theft, intimidation and bullying and other forms of abuse or violence to themselves, only 23% stated that they felt safe (SAIRR, 2008, p.1).

Violence and crime are not only confined or limited to either primary or secondary schools. De Wet (2003, p.90) states that approximately 50% of all crimes reported in South Africa are committed by youth between the ages of 14 and 18 years of age. According to research conducted by Mncube, violence in schools goes hand in glove with discipline problems to the extent that any discussion dealing with violence in schools will have an adverse effect on learner discipline (Mncube, 2004).

### *Locally*

As an educator at a school in KZN-Phoenix, I have noted the high rate of violence-related incidents in Phoenix Township schools during the past few years. Various community media-reports confirmed a number of incidents of physical violence, bullying and theft in schools in Phoenix. As a researcher I intend to show how literature supports the view that there is an increase in violence, drug and alcohol abuse in schools globally, nationally and locally making teaching a daunting task for educators. In an article that appeared by Nair (2011) in *Post*, an independent newspaper in KwaZulu-Natal it stated the manner in which a female learner was degraded was sickening enough for people to want to pretend it did not happen. The learner's uniform was torn apart by a male student in the presence of other learners who jeered on. This was not an isolated incident. The article states that crime statistics for 2009/2010 revealed that there were 68 332 rapes. No one can say how many go unreported but just in terms of the official records South Africa has one of the worst rape problems in the world. It is calculated from the figures submitted that a rape takes place every twenty six seconds (Nair, 2011).

Nair (2011) states that gang rape in South Africa is not new. It has coined a uniquely South African name – “jackrolling”. The term was coined during the latter part of the 1980’s following a series of gang rapes in Soweto. Citing a report by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, the perpetrators are generally young and they rape in the open, and make little attempt to hide their identity. The same study found that “jackrolling” coincided with an increase in youth unemployment. It found this behavior was not instinctual, but acquired. It also found that perpetrators failed to see their victims as people. Nair offers explanations for why men rape, which include the male wish for domination, the culture of violence that has dominated South African society, and an ineffective criminal justice system that makes it easy to get away with rape (Nair, 2011).



However there is one further explanation that needs to be explored and that is the way we socialize with our children. In conversations with learned colleagues it is stated that in Indian and African culture (two social groups which make up a large majority of the South African community) in particular, males are generally revered. Sons are expected to be masculine. They are discouraged from doing household chores and even mocked for doing so. Daughters, on the other hand, are more often than not expected to be docile. They are brought up to cook, clean and take care of the children. Parents are at the forefront of entrenching these stereotypes. And until we break this stereotype, more women will be abused and raped.

"The day a boy changed two young lives forever", an article that appeared in The Sunday Tribune (P.5, 29 April 2012) as reported by Bowman (2012) refers. "Wearing pyjamas emblazoned with pink stars and clutching a stuffed Tigger, the eight- year old girl who was raped by a fifteen year old boy this week slept soundly in her hospital bed at Ngwelezane Hospital in Empangeni. Her face bore the scars of that vicious attack. Her right eye was severely swollen and she had deep bite marks across her face, neck and mouth. Clear marks of the attempted strangulation were visible around her neck."

Doctors have had to remove her left eye, which was dangling out of the socket after the attack. The teen tried to gouge out with his hand. The victim's family is still awaiting the outcome of the medical tests which will show the severity of the damage. The perpetrator was arrested that afternoon and appeared in court. He was released into the custody of his parents in Inanda, a township that borders Phoenix. According to the victim's aunt the child was in Grade 2 and is experiencing severe nightmares. In her anger she remarked "That boy is not a child. A child could not do this. He is not even a human-being. He deserves a life sentence and no less. He tried to take innocent lives and the brutality of his actions belies his age." The grade 2 child's behavior has changed drastically and often wakes up screaming. She has to be reassured all

the time. She recalls everything that had transpired. The girl was walking home from school with the boy after school when he apparently dragged her into a sugarcane field near her home. It is alleged that he raped, strangled and bit her and tried to gouge out her eyes. She could not walk and had to crawl to her home with blood pouring out of both eyes, shivering and calling for her grandmother.

According to Bowman (2012), she was not the first victim. About an hour before the attack the boy allegedly tried to rape another girl (grade 4) in the school he attends. Recalling what had happened, the grade 4 learner said school was about to finish when she went to use the toilet, which is a separate building at the end of the school property. "I saw him there and told him to go away. When I went in he came back. I tried to pull on my panties back up and he pulled them down. He started to strangle me so I could not scream. I thought he was going to rape me and was afraid. He was slamming my body against the wall." She said that the boy stuffed her head in the toilet pan and pushed his knee into her back and kicked her several times in the stomach. "I don't remember anything after that. After a while I woke up and was on the floor. I ran to tell a teacher. I then went to tell my older sister at the high school near my school. I walked with a friend so I felt safe. I went home and told them what happened. I was crying a lot."

Picking up the story from her daughter the girl's mother said they went to the boy's house to confront him. She said he tried to run away when he saw them, but was caught. The boy's grandmother was angry when told what transpired and she started to hit the boy. The boy retaliated and became very violent. He eventually confessed to what had happened saying that he "just wanted to play nicely with the girl" and he would not have strangled her if she had cooperated. He stated that he did not rape her because he thought she was dead. The girl is afraid to go back to school. According to her mom the girl's behavior has changed and is scared to go to the toilet alone and complains of pain where

she was kicked in the stomach. She also refuses to sleep alone. Her family is angry that the victim has been released from prison into parental custody. A police spokesman confirmed that the perpetrator would be charged for both attacks (Bowman, 2012).

### **2.1.1. Types of school based violence**

Schostack (1986, Ch.2) as cited by Harber (2001) provides a useful and detailed discussion of different ways of explaining why violence occurs. He divides these into three broad groups namely biological, psychological and criminological or sociological. Irrespective if one accepts that there are biological, instinctive tendencies towards violence inherent in human beings, different rates of violence between different individuals and cultural groups in similar contexts and between the same individual and cultural groups in different contexts strongly suggests that the conditions of human existence related to the social structures and cultural practices and relationships that shape our lives will definitely influence whether or not we behave violently (Harber, 2001).

Harber (2001) quotes Salmi who has provided a useful categorization of four types of violence that can be applied to schools.

- His first category is *direct violence* – deliberate injury to the integrity of human life. This includes murder, massacre, genocide, torture, rape, maltreatment, forced resettlement, kidnapping, forced labor and slavery.
- *Indirect violence* is the indirect violation of the right to survival. This is violence by omission or lack of protection against poverty, hunger, disease, accidents, natural catastrophes or is mediated violence through harmful modifications to the environment.
- *Repressive violence* is the deprivation of fundamental human rights such as freedom of thought, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, right to a

fair trial, equality before the law, freedom of movement and the freedom to vote.

- *Alienating violence* or the deprivation of higher rights consists of alienating working conditions, racism (and presumably sexism), social ostracism, cultural repression and living in fear.

In KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, almost a quarter of schools were reported as being unfit for educational purposes and most of these were considered too dangerous to be occupied by pupils because of the precarious state of the buildings (Maloney,1997). Harber (2001) also states that in England the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors Association are to investigate the state of school toilets as they are concerned that many are unhygienic and are breeding grounds for germs which could affect the health and well-being of pupils.

According to Du Plessis (2007, p. 22), it is important to distinguish between the different kinds of violence, as it can easily be perceived as a single or general problem in society. He claims that a clear distinction can be drawn between political violence, gang violence, general criminal violence, and violence in relationships. All of these types of violence in some way affect many of our South African schools and are often interrelated.

Astor et al (2009) state that the scientific literature indicates strongly that school violence has many forms and types, each with different frequencies and different patterns of association with student characteristics, such as gender and age, and with school context variables, such as poverty in the school neighborhood. They suggest, therefore, that school violence studies examine the prevalence of a wide range of concrete and specific victimization types. These should include at least the following groups of behaviors:

- Verbal, such as calling names, racial slurs, and cursing;

- Social, such as isolating a student or a group of students;
- Indirect violence, including media-related victimization (e.g. showing private pictures over the internet and spreading rumors through cell phones);
- Physical, both moderate physical violence, such as pushing and shoving, and more severe types of physical violence such as serious beating;
- Property related, including vandalism, theft, and damages to students and staff property;
- Sexual, including verbal harassment and physical forms of unwanted sexual behaviors;
- Weapon-related, including the possession and use of a range of weapons, such as pocket knives and guns.

### **2.1.2. Bullying and intimidation**

De Wet (2003, p.169) refers to bullying as "premeditated, continuous, malicious and belittling tyranny". Bullying can take on many forms – physical violence, threats, name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, persistent teasing, exclusion from a group, tormenting, ridicule, humiliation and abusive comments. All are forms of violence. Educators bullying learners and learners bullying educators certainly do exist. Learners bullying each other, is a common problem in schools. This in itself is an indictment of a schools' inability to eradicate this form of violence, given that learners are compelled, cajoled and persuaded to attend.

Naicker & Waddy in "Towards Effective School Management", (2002) reflect that bullying is the physical or mental abuse of one individual by another, or others. It further states that the victim is usually unable to respond appropriately and his or her inadequate response tends to encourage the perpetrators to continue their bullying tactics. The effect of bullying is often not realized, but its negative consequences can last a lifetime. As an educator I have experienced

that occasionally learners in the course of their interactions, utter threats against one another. These quite often amount to nothing, especially if the recipient has been schooled in dealing with such issues. Sometimes, however, the threats are much more serious and if not acted on, can result in psychological and physical injury to learners.

Bullying can be either overt or covert. According to Shariff (2004, p.223) overt bullying involves physical aggression, such as beating, kicking, shoving, and sexual touching which could be accompanied by covert bullying, in which victims are excluded from peer groups, stalked, stared at, gossiped about, verbally threatened, or harassed. Covert bullying can also be random or discriminatory, racial, sexual, homophobic or based on social class, abilities, or disabilities (Shariff, 2004, p.224). Gale *et al.* (2004, p.12) warns that intimidation and bullying could cause psychological harm, not only to victims but also to bystanders. In addition to the psychological harm caused through violence or situations in which there is a threat of violence, developmental harm may also occur in the form of anxiety about the threats of harm. This happens because anxiety of this sort can disrupt the educational process.

Developmental harm has been defined as harm that occurs due to events or conditions that prevent or inhibit children from achieving their maximum physical, social or academic potential (Gale *et al.*, 2004, p.13). A Gauteng-based educational psychologist, Wendy Sinclair, said that she dealt with four to five cases of bullying a month and that this had become “the norm rather than the exception” in schools (Govender, 2008, p.1). Often parents have to intervene before anything will be done about the problem by the school, as is illustrated in the case “Bullied boy refuses to go back to his school”. Prince (2008, p.3) reported that a learner at a school was attacked with a welding rod by another learner and that his attacker had threatened to kill him. The accused had a record of violence at the school, but was only given a warning. When the victim’s parents asked for a disciplinary hearing to be called, this

request was refused because it was said that it would take too long and would be drawn out. As a result, the parents of the victim had to resort to lodging a criminal case with the local police.

Failing to ensure that the school environment is safe and conducive for learners to learn, without fear of harassment and bullying can result not only in serious disciplinary problems but could also require the victims' parents and the Department of Education to engage in high legal costs. According to Prince (2008), in the year 2007 a judgment was reserved in a landmark bullying case in East London. Attorney Harry Pretorius, who appeared for a Grade 9 pupil, argued that the alleged bully should be immediately suspended. He alleged that the boy was guilty of a serious misconduct over an on-going period starting in 2006, (Prince, 2008, p.3). A report by a psychologist stated that the applicant, Pretorius's client, was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of persistent bullying. Pretorius argued that the case involved violations of Constitutional Rights, the Children's Act and the Bill of Rights (Legal-brief - Today, 2007).

The above implication signifies that when a school fails to address the issues of bullying in whatever form it takes or they do not take action against the perpetrators, not only is the victim's constitutional right to dignity infringed, but bullying could lead to serious psychological problems. A form of bullying other than physical bullying, which has become increasingly common, especially among girls, is "Cyber-bullying". This is a form of covert bullying that involves the use of mobile phones or the Internet. Perpetrators make anonymous, malicious comments or threats, tease and engage in gossip through online chat rooms such as "Facebook" and "Twitter", or use e-mail or mobile phones to intimidate others (Shariff, 2004, p.223). Govender (2008, p.1) states that it is an easier way to humiliate, abuse and threaten others because mobile messages can remain anonymous. It was reported that many victims of cyber-bullying are so traumatized and disempowered by the bullying that they

often express, in therapy, a desire to die rather than suffer further humiliation and abuse.

In her article, Shariff (2004, p.223) points out that often the consequences for victims can be psychologically devastating. Cyber-bullying poses new challenges for teachers because it is more difficult to detect than direct physical bullying, since it is conducted in a “virtual environment”. Aggression via electronic media such as blogs, instant messaging, chat rooms, e-mails and text messaging is affecting many children. International statistics on Internet and mobile phone use reported that 16% of British children/adolescents claimed to have been cyber-bullied over the Internet (Shariff & Johnny, 2007).Accordingly as reported, school authorities are becoming more aware of the negative psychological consequences of verbal harassment (Shariff, 2004, p.226).

According to Beckmann & Russo (1998, p. 7), in Canada, the suicide case of a teenager, Dawn Marie Wesley (*R.v.D.W. and K.P.D.2002*), set a precedent when the court ruled in 2002 that verbal harassment is deemed criminal under the Canadian Criminal Code if it causes a victim to perceive a real threat of harm concluded that educators should act as *bonus paterfamilias* (one for whom the interests and the safety of the learner is most important) since it is the educators’ responsibility to ensure that learners understand the importance of respectful, inclusive and non -discriminatory discourse, whether it is face-to-face, over the telephone or on the Internet, for the sake of their own safety (Shariff, 2004, p.226). It is, however, impossible to enforce disciplinary steps in most cases of cyber-bullying because educators cannot intervene on the Internet.

"Schools can become a nightmare for vulnerable teens when bullying, both physical and cyber, is allowed a free rein" an article by Isabella Littlegates (2012) that appeared in the Daily News (12 April, 2012). The ever-increasing



trend of cyber bullying almost ended in the death of a Durban teenager who tried to commit suicide after her name was put on a so-called "sluts list" that went viral on Facebook and BlackBerry Messenger (BBM). She found her name was on the list last month and tried to overdose by drinking a cocktail of household detergents and petrol. The girl recovered in hospital. In January 2012 a 15 year old Gauteng pupil was harassed by four fellow learners. It is alleged that they mocked her, called her fat and threw diet pills at her. They then went onto Facebook making a series of threats and nasty comments. And if that was not enough, they allegedly hit her over the head with a glass bottle. The assault was filmed by another learner, allegedly at the attackers' request. The assailant was suspended but was back at school a week later. The mother of the victim filed a complaint of assault with the police. She was also angry with the school as she was not told that the alleged attacker would be back at school. She stated that her daughter had been friends with the group but they had drifted apart (Isabella Littlegates, 2012).

Commenting on the above incident, Izabella Littlegates (2012) who is an internationally published author and parenting expert from Life Talk, said that Cyber bullying is something that is escalating and should be taken seriously. It must be addressed and parents must discuss it with their children. According to the article psychologists and experts said that cyber bullying was under-reported and the country would see more cases as access to technology increased. She adds further that the study on cyber aggression was carried out among young people in four provinces by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention in 2009. The research found that just under half of the 1726 youngsters interviewed had been victims of cyber aggression. One in three had been a victim of cyber aggression at school and 42% had experienced it outside school. In the survey, a quarter of the youngsters said that they had experienced bullying by SMS.

An insert of the same article includes the following: Bullying, Violence, and Risk Behavior in South African School Students by du Plessis (2007) of the University of Johannesburg, published in The International Journal:

- More than a third of pupils at 72 government schools in Cape Town and Durban were either a bully or a victim.
- One in four teens was bullied, according to “Stomp out Bullying”.
- Male pupils were most likely to be bullies or victims and younger boys were more vulnerable to victimization.
- Most pupils were targeted by bullies in taxis on the way to school, or in toilets and bathrooms at school.
- 43 percent of boys and 20 percent of girls experienced direct and physical forms of bullying.
- Verbal bullying involving teasing, mocking and taunting were more likely among girls.

With reference to Port Elizabeth psychologist Dr Crystal Watson as quoted by Laganparsad (2012) bullying can cause withdrawal symptoms to the point where the child can become suicidal. The child may project a personality change and will be reluctant to attend school. Dr Watson also outlines the following symptoms that both educators and parents could identify among the so called "bullies":

- Aggressive behavior
- An over-bearing person who antagonize the non-violent and physically less strong
- Someone who rules by intimidation and terror
- A person who calls an assault a "fight", "disagreement" or "justice".

### **2.1.3. Gang-related violence**

In the context of the manual by the Department Of Education (Towards Effective School Management, Naicker & Waddy, 2002) gangs are groups of learners who act or go about together, often for purposes that are not approved of by society. They also state that gangs are groups of youth that embark on activities that are socially unacceptable and illegal. These learners are often challenging and dismissive of legitimate authority.

Dissel (as cited in Crawage, 2005, p.45) defines gangsterism as the evolution of an urban identity determined along racial and economic lines. It includes the formation of groups with the aim of committing violence and crime, and to defend themselves physically against violence of other groups.” Musick (1995) classifies gangs into three different categories.

- In the first category, the scavenger gang’s crimes and transgressions are usually not planned, and this group’s members are often low achievers or school dropouts.
- Secondly, territorial gangs are well-organized gangs that have initiation rites which separate members from non-members. Often, prospective members have to prove their loyalty to the group by fighting.
- The third category is the corporate gangs which are highly structured criminal conspiracies that are organized to sell drugs. It is believed that teenagers as young as fourteen could become members. All gangs have names and recognizable symbols.

The presence of gangs in schools in the United States of America has been reported as having doubled between 1989 and 1995 (Gasa, 2005, p.70). Through critical friends it has been noted that schools that have a presence of gangs have a higher violent victimization rate than those that do not have a gang presence. It is also noted that teenagers who are gang members are far more likely to commit serious and violent crimes than other teenagers.

Because gang activity has become prevalent at many schools, school districts do not implement policies to regulate the behavior of gang members. Moreover, school administrators have not developed site-specific, gang-related policies that are aligned with district policies, the school's philosophy and general policies. Gang-related policies should appear in a specially allocated section of the educators' manual and this section should be displayed in all areas of the school offices as well as in all classrooms. However, it seems that all the best-developed policies in the world are worthless if incidents of violence are not reported to those who could make a change. Implementation of policies is more critical than just having rules.

In South Africa, many preventive measures were introduced into schools. It was suggested that a police presence in the school area would prevent troubling situations from escalating, and that police officers can be "adopted" through the *Adopt-a-cop* program for the school (Segoe & Mokgosi, 2007, p.5). However, many South African schools will not report incidents because of a fear of victimization. According to Kodluboy (2004), school systems are prone to ambivalence about an outright denial of gang presence or the significance of a gang presence in schools. Thompkins (2000, p.7) points out that the learners believe that if they retaliate against an act of aggression that is committed by one gang member, they will have to deal with the entire gang. This is one reason that they refuse to report gang activities at their schools.

According to research that was conducted on the perceptions of educators regarding the course and the scope of violence in the province, the presence of gangs in schools and in the townships increases the incidence of victimization of non-gang members (De Wet 2003, p.93). The results of this study showed that learners and educators are fearful, not only at school, but also on their way to school and back home. They are afraid, not without reason, that they will be attacked by gang members.

Activities outside the school can often have a disruptive influence on what happens inside the school in a variety of ways. De Wet (2003, p.93) points out that gang violence is therefore both an internal and an external problem. Other “school gang-related” incidents in township schools involve assaults, threats, fighting, vandalism, trespassing and disruptive behavior (Trump, 1998, p.6). These incidents can take place on the way to and from school and inside school as well when gang members enter school to sell drugs, steal or extort money.

One can concur with Crawage (2005, p.45) that gangs in schools should be seen as a community problem in South Africa since schools are a part of the community, they reflect the problems of that community. Gangsterism which causes violence in schools is, however, not restricted to one province but is found in schools throughout South Africa. In South Africa, urbanization has been characterized by a history of repression and poverty, especially of people living in townships, informal settlements and single-sex migrant hostels. This confinement, according to Crawage, (2005, p.45) could create an opportunity to form gangs along racial lines. He argues further that what often happens is that when families become dysfunctional and discordant many children choose to leave the family home, opting to spend their time on the streets where they are gradually drawn into gang-related and criminal activities. The sad fact of the current situation in South Africa is that, as Donald *et al.* (2006) point out gang violence is often born out of need and a socially disadvantaged situation.

Thompkins (2000, p.7) claims that innocent learners can be drawn or forced into violent behavior, alcohol and drug abuse by joining gangs, as this provides them with a sense of belonging. Furthermore, Thompkins points out that one of the reasons that learners for instance, easily identify with street gangs is that they believe that such associations fulfill the need for the transition from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. They are also made to feel accepted and important in a society that is ruled by gang leaders. Barbarin & Richter (2001, p.203) argue that youngsters may, on the other hand, suffer

psychological trauma and encounter social alienation, resentment and suspicion from their families and community as a consequence of their involvement in gang-related activities. It is important that teachers understand the nature of all these feelings of aggression when developing a disciplinary plan for their schools.

#### **2.1.4. Violence related to drug and alcohol abuse**

Researchers Fagan & Wilkinson (1998, p.74) state that there is a relationship between violent crimes in schools and the abuse of alcohol and drugs. In township communities, where alcohol and drugs are easily available to under-age children, the availability of these commodities places those who live in these communities at higher risk of violent encounters. Ensink *et al.* (1997, p.1527) agree that the use of alcohol makes a person less inhibited and thereby increases the likelihood of violence in situations where violence is not frowned on.

They concur that alcohol is consumed by South Africans of all ages. More than one in four South Africans (28%) aged 15 years and over currently acknowledge that they consume alcohol. Among adolescents, aged 15-19 years, 11% are current drinkers (Ensink *et al.*, 1997, p.1527). The Crime Intelligence Unit of the South African Police Services, for instance, is of the opinion that alcohol abuse plays an important contributing role in crime and violence. The risk of being involved in violent behavior at school also increases with alcohol consumption. This was confirmed by Rossouw (2003), especially in the case of boys. According to critical friends, dagga (cannabis) is the most common drug of choice in South African schools because it is cheap and easy to access.

The research findings of Naser *et al.* (2003) showed that dagga was easy to get hold of and could be bought within an hour. This ready availability has contributed to a widespread substance abuse market. According to Naser *et al.*, one third of the respondents in their survey admitted to having smoked dagga.

Learners in more affluent schools who receive more pocket money can afford to buy drugs, while poorer learners who reside in the townships and who have developed the habit could easily become involved in violence to obtain the money to pursue it. This suggests that the proportion of illegal drug use is not negligible and it places young people at risk of negative health and legal consequences that could impact on their education.

Moor (2009) states that educators in Victorian schools are personally seizing drugs and alcohol from learners on a daily basis. Moor states that the biggest number of drug users was at state schools, with 49% of educators reporting learners being caught with illegal drugs, followed by 32% at Catholic Schools and 31% at Independent Schools. Educators at these schools report that the drug use problem is so severe that educators believe that schools should subject learners to drug tests. These educators are also concerned about the alarming number of learners becoming violent towards them and threatening them with violence. Moor (2009) further states that claims of violence and bullying were growing problems which needs urgent attention. Many of these educators complained about the lack of disciplinary measures that were made available to them.

Some of the responses as quoted by Moor (2009) were:

- "A student can abuse a teacher and get away with little consequence these days."
- "As teachers, we effectively have our hands tied behind our backs in terms of what we are allowed to do and not to do."
- "The students have all the rights, we as teachers seem to have none."
- "The biggest problem facing schools was the lack of adequate consequences for bad behavior by students."

The National Institute on Drug Abuse Survey researchers found that 50% of high school seniors in South Africa partake of an illicit drug at some stage of their lives (Mc Entire, 2007, p.1). The fact that drugs, such as marijuana, LSD, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines (tik), inhalants, Ritalin, prescription and over-the-counter medicines are readily accessible to youngsters in South African township and suburban schools is bound to impact negatively on education in general, and on what happens in the school in particular. Furthermore, knowledge of drug availability is similar, regardless of race or location. However, Mc Entire (2007, p.1) states that what is more shocking is that 29% of students said that someone had offered, sold or given them an illegal drug while they were at school.

Alston (2007, p.9) makes it clear that South Africa has one set of laws which is equally applicable inside and outside the school fence. Learners must never gain the message that the school will protect them when they engage in any criminal activity. Furthermore, he argues that if a learner's continued presence in a school threatens the safety of other learners or exposes them to danger through the selling of illegal drugs, the other learners deserve protection and parents have a right to expect a school to act to ensure the maximum safety of their children. School rules, as subordinate legislation, are applicable to all learners of the particular school. Alston (2007, p.2) concludes that this is to ensure that all such learners will understand in precise terms what the law expects of them. Schools could refer to their code of conduct for support in legal cases. Schools are reluctant to suspend or expel learners. Learners who assault others or are caught with drugs or alcohol are never reported to the police as it makes the school and the system look bad. To what extent the schools' Code of Conduct has the power to enforce implementation of the law is challenging.



### **2.1.5. The use of illegal and other weapons contributing to school violence**

The regulations in Department of Education (DoE), 2003, explicitly declare that all public schools are dangerous-object-free zones. According to Walker (MacDonald *et al*, 1996, p. 84), learners carry weapons to school for a variety of reasons, including protection, security, power and status, or to sell them. A study by Eliazov & Frank (2000, p.22) revealed that twenty schools showed that the carrying of weapons was particularly widespread where intimidation, drug abuse and gangsterism were present. Thus, early intervention methods addressing bullying, drug abuse and gangsters may well help to eliminate the use of weapons in schools. A further finding by Eliazov & Frank (2000) concluded that 40, 9% of the respondents said that the relative availability of firearms is an important factor contributing to learner violence.

In their findings, Eliazov & Frank (2000 p.22) showed that most of the twenty schools that they researched seemed to have a “weapon-free policy”, and that most schools confiscated all weapons found on school premises. However, educators reported that possession was commonly accepted and often overlooked. Teachers explained that pupils might need to defend themselves on their way to and from school. Teachers also said that they sometimes felt too intimidated to confront learners, particularly those affiliated to gangs (Eliazov & Frank, 2000, p.22). These times learners use any instrument to protect themselves. The compass and divider from the Mathematics set or a very sharp pen or pencil can still cause grievous bodily injury.

Previously, educators and the school's management have frequently found it necessary to search learners for items which may be harmful to them or to others. Today, however, the prevalence of drugs and guns or other dangerous weapons has increased the importance of school searches as being in the best interest of all learners. The study by Eliazov & Frank (2000, p.22) shows that knives were identified as being present in all schools while, in 11 out of 20 schools (55%), pupils were found to be in possession of firearms. However,

Walker (as cited in Mac Donald, 1996, p.84) reported that other items such as razors, box cutters, metal knuckles, chemical irritants, mace, and pepper spray are also used as weapons.

Incidents of school violence are commonly reported in the media:

- "School fight highlights 'thug mentality'" (Mungroo, 2012,p.1)
- "Teachers scared of violent children" (Naran, 2012, p.3)
- "The day a boy changed two young girls forever"(Bowman, 2012, p.5)
- "Phoenix school girls held hostage and raped" (Naidoo, 2012, p.8)
- "He was robbed of his life"(Khoza, 2011, p.4)
- "Boy stabbed to death at rural school" (Ngcukana, 2007, p.2)
- "Teenager in teacher assault suspended after stabbing" (Prince, 2008, p.1)
- "Classmates watch in horror as pupil stabbed to death" (Ngcukana, 2008, p.1)
- "Pupil tries to save his friend stabbed at school (Sokopo, 2009, p.1).

The above are just some of the incidents that have caught the public's attention. It is a pity that unfortunate incidents like these first have to happen before people become aware that there might be a problem. One incident that caused a major call to action by teachers to search for weapons was the case of the Krugersdorp "ninja death". Here, a learner killed a fellow learner with a sword and attacked another three people: "School boy appears over sword death" (Sapa, 2008, p.1). Such incidents are not unusual in other countries as well. The result of incidents like the 1999 massacre of pupils at Columbine High School in Columbia, USA, caused a national outcry and increased the emphasis, not only on school safety, but on the availability of weapons and bullying as a nationwide problem. In another incident in South West Germany, a teenager went on a rampage at his former high school, killing sixteen people by discharging his father's gun (Sapa, 2008).

Also, in South Africa, school shootings are reported periodically: “Horror school shooting with police service pistol of 14-year-old at a Pretoria private school” (Prinsloo, 2005, p.5). In Umlazi in KwaZulu Natal, a high school learner went on a shooting spree. In this case, no one was reported to be hurt fatally (Dibetle, 2008, p.7). The seriousness of such incidents has provoked extensive debate about the safety of schools in South Africa. These violent incidents demand interventions to ensure that schools are safe places whereby fences around all schools should be erected, alarm systems installed, burglar bars and security gates fitted, with security guards on duty.

Taking all of this into consideration, one cannot ignore the reality that violence in our schools does occur. It emphasizes the proactive role that teachers, principals, parents and all stakeholders need to play to address high levels of violence in schools and to provide a safer learning environment for every learner and teacher. The governing body in schools stresses the importance of discipline policies and interventions that needs to be implemented in schools so that all learners can have the full benefit of education.

#### **2.1.6. Vandalism**

Stout (2002) defines vandalism as the willful or malicious destruction, injury, disfigurement or defacement of any public or private, real or personal, without the consent of the owner or persons’ having custody or control. Private citizens commit vandalism when they willfully damage or deface the property of others. Vandalism as an aggressive act against any school may have the intention of targeting a particular learner, educator or a particular gang. Because of where and when it occurs learners are never free to express themselves or develop their full potential for fear of other learners destroying whatever they have.

Vandalism can occur by a group within the school or ex-learners who return to settle an old disagreement (score) or revenge against perceived betrayal, injustices or shortcomings related to school. Stout (2002, p.2) adds further that

school violence is mostly committed by the school's own learners. Vandalism can be shocking and confusing when it prevails. In its existence, it may create a feeling of despair and bewilderment similar to what people ascribe to after a physical assault. Vandalism is therefore a situation whereby one person willfully destroys another person's property like a school-bag or uniform. In each case it begs the question of what level the safety and security measures apply within the school.

An extract by Alyssia Birgalal (Tribune Herald, 29 April, 2012) states that teachers and learners are outraged at the ongoing theft and vandalism at Pinewood Primary School in Chatsworth in KwaZulu Natal and wants the Department of Education to intervene. The principal stated that the school was being "wrecked and broken into daily because there was no security or electricity on the premises." This school is alleged to be vandalized daily. Thieves gain access through the roofs, windows or even break down the iron gates and steal computers, textbooks, stationery, toilet handles and light fittings. They have pleaded with the department to intervene and to address the issues on numerous occasions but did not receive any success. The principal remarked that the school had operated without electricity since 2011 because the power breakers had been stolen and light fittings were damaged. This school receives a small sum from the department for upkeep but is insufficient to contend with. An appeal was made by the school governance and the Local Ward Councilor to the Department of Education to make this school safe by installing security and fencing but to date nothing has changed.

#### **2.1.7. Corporal Punishment**

Corporal punishment has been debated all over the world as one of the major issues that challenge educators in schools. In the last decade, corporal punishment in South African schools was banned. This is in keeping with international trends of recognizing the rights of the child and the South African

Constitution (RSA, 1996). The Bill of Rights entrenches the rights of all persons to be protected against any form of abuse.

According to Harber (2004) corporal punishment at schools is a degrading and humiliating act of violence and is a denial of the fundamental rights of the child. Nevertheless, the physical punishment of children is still commonplace, widely supported and justified as being 'for your own good'. Newell (1972), Strauss (1994) and Simiyu (2003) provide several definitions of "corporal punishment". In general, these definitions seek to point out that corporal punishment is the use of physical force against an individual.

According to Newell (1972), corporal punishment is the act of causing physical pain to the learner by an educator or a child by a parent (p.3). This corresponds with Simiyu (2003, p.6-7) who states that corporal punishment against a child "is the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but no injury on an individual's body whereas Strauss (1994, p.4) states that corporal punishment is a deliberate infliction of pain for the purposes of correction or control of the child's behavior. Strauss (1994, p.7) further states that "the most frequent forms of corporal punishment are spanking, slapping, grabbing or shoving a child roughly (with more force than is needed to move the child), and hitting with certain objects such as a hair brush or belt. However, according to the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996), the Bill of Rights has a wider definition of abuse. Corporal punishment includes physical pain, emotional pain and psychological pain. Examples of these are name-calling of children like "stupid", isolating a child in class, depriving a child from privileges because it is humiliating and discriminatory. It is important to note that corporal punishment was seen as the means of ensuring the control of children and this was a mirror of how government was able to control social, economic and political conditions through acts of violence (Vally, 1998).

The World Health Organization as cited by Harber (2004), reviewed research revealing that parents themselves were beaten at school. An institution that sanctions violence towards children in the home is connected with violence in the school. It further adds that if it is legitimated by the state and their own parents who sent them there, then this must have provided an influential behavioral role model. Physical punishment at school must contribute to the idea that this is normal and acceptable form of punishment in a society and that it can be used against children both in the home and at school. In this way physical punishment at school not only affects children at school but in the home too as it does nothing to break the cycle of violence (WHO, 2002).

The South African society has undergone major social, economic and political changes over the past few years with the intention of establishing a democratic and humane nation. Among the changes in the education sector has been the banning of corporal punishment in all schools under the South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996a). Like most other democracies, South Africa has passed several laws that make corporal punishment illegal. For example, The Department of Education has further entrenched section 12 (e) of Chapter Two on the Bill of Rights in the Constitution in its National Education Policy Act (DoE, 1996b). Section 3 of this act states: "No person shall administer corporal punishment, or subject a student to psychological or physical abuse at any educational institution." According to Section 10 (1) and 10 (2) of the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 (DoE, 1996a):

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

These prohibitions work in line with The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) which guarantees and supports the right to human dignity, equality, freedom and security. If educators including parents employ physical or

psychological means to “discipline” or “punish” children, they are taking these rights away from them. Since the banning of corporal punishment, it is evident that there were mixed responses from both parents and educators as the policy change was difficult to comply with and accept. At present, there are still reported cases of corporal punishment being used in classrooms often resulting in serious injury. The use of corporal punishment is seen as an act of violence which seems to be discouraged in schools but many scholars feel it is the only form of disciplinary measure that is effective.

Different views have been put forward in modern times to persuade us that corporal punishment is bad and inadmissible. It is important to note that the community views corporal punishment from different perspectives: there are those who favor the use of corporal punishment as it is seen as a means of molding learners, and there are those that are against it as they believe it is inhumane to inflict pain on another.

Critical friends argue that their cultural and/or religious freedom is being curbed as educators are no longer allowed to discipline children using physical force. Their traditions and religious beliefs claim that corporal punishment should be used by educators in order to change learners’ bad behaviors. This is in line with Parker-Jenkins (1999) who also believed that children who are badly behaved deserve severe punishment when necessary, (p.2). This belief also concurs with Hyman (1990) and Simiyu (2003, p.11), who add that corporal punishment should be used as long as the child’s family and the child's own perception of justice accepts it, for example, in most African cultures, beating is permitted in order to discipline the child.

According to Simiyu (2003) corporal punishment should be used as the last resort only when it is absolutely necessary to maintain order and discipline. In schools educators are concerned about violence both in and out of the classroom and feel that corporal punishment is able to address this issue (Morrel, 2001).

This concurs with Roos (2003) who claims that the use of corporal punishment should be used on offenders such as bullies as they deserve severe punishment. He supports his claim by stating that with non-violent approaches to discipline such behavior will not have any effect on hooligan learners, particularly when there are gangs and violence in a school.

Most educators view corporal punishment as a “deterrent and reformative” measure for learners. They believe that this external constraint maintains order by correcting misbehavior within a short time. Other methods require time, patience and skill and most educators often lack such skills (Docking, 1980). According to research conducted by Simiyu (2003, p.31), the educators expressed that the only way to deal with difficult and disruptive learners that don’t respond to other disciplinary measures is to beat them. These educators add that with the use of corporal punishment being administered it prepared learners minds in readiness for the learning process. These indirectly improved academic performances as it created a sound learning atmosphere in the classroom.

According to Simiyu (2003) most teachers that use corporal punishment have actually stopped understanding child psychology. She argues that the uses of corporal punishment in schools have both psychological and educational consequences that impair a child’s learning experience in school. Simiyu (2003, p.25) asserts that corporal punishment decreases a learner's motivation which results to low academic levels. She further adds that caning causes aggression, fear and anxiety which hinder the learning process rather than improving their academic performances. This concurs with Bandura’s study (1973) which indicated that corporal punishment in schools caused psychological deficits which affects the child's cognitive abilities to learn.

Physical punishment (strapping, ear pulling, cheek pinching, bottom slapping) are common practices in schools. Conversations with critical friends say that learners reported a feeling of fear, humiliation, embarrassment and intimidation



as a result of the punishments. Spanking, in case of any misbehavior, may be an easy way out for the educators to reign in the moment but its larger implications on the psyche of a child can be devastating. Morrell (2001) argues that every action of children in their formative years is not a result of their own liberalized thinking. Educators and even parents must understand that any child's behavior problem stems from an indirect influence and reflection of the social circumstances which are imposed on him. This society is the very community in which the educator is very much a part. According to Strauss (1994), educators who use corporal punishment are total failures in classrooms. Both Jennings (1979) and Simiyu (2003) further emphasize that inexperienced educators only resort to corporal punishment due to their inability to address discipline in the classrooms. The social consequences of corporal punishment imply that it is direct violence against learners. It creates aggressive behavior which leads to a cyclic reproduction of violence. Therefore, no matter how time consuming or brain storming it can be, it is important to have a reasoned approach for dealing with learner issues that must be done in a manner which is non-violent.

## **2.2. Gender and violence**

Harber (2001) states that youth violence has taken the form of, among others, gang activities, violence at school, and sexual violence mainly perpetrated by young men and boys against young women and girls. A multitude of causes and contributing factors inextricably linked to South Africa's past of oppression have been identified to explain both the nature and frequency of the violence. Key among these is the culture of violence that continues to be firmly embedded in South Africa's democratic society, structural inequalities brought on by the apartheid government's discriminatory policies and high unemployment rates. In the midst of the debate on the nature and causes of youth violence, exists the noticeable disparity in the way in which males and females engage in and experience crime and violence (Harber, 2001).

Jefthas & Artz (2007) emphasized unequal power relations, strong patriarchal values and rigid notions of masculinity and femininity. The existing national and international literature on theories of deviance, delinquency, crime and violence among the youth shows that theoretical frameworks have evolved along gender-specific lines. There is general agreement among researchers that males perpetrate and experience the most violence, and that violence is generally recognized as a problem and a consequence of masculinity. Female violence is considered insignificant in both numeric and statistical terms, and is frequently dismissed as inconsequential in comparison to the violence perpetrated by males. Even where gendered analyses have been conducted, the emphasis has been on young men and the construction of manhood. The social construction of femininity and its impact on female engagement with and participation in crime and violence has for the most part been ignored.

However, a gendered perspective is necessary as it recognizes that the balance of power in male–female relationships tends to be grossly unequal. It also acknowledges that manifestations of violence are inevitably gendered in terms of: who commits acts of violence, who is victimized, what type of violence is perpetrated, where the violence occurs, what weapon is used and the underlying reasons for the violence (Jefthas & Artz, 2007).

In “Someone Stole My Smile: An Exploration into the Causes of Youth Violence in South Africa” (Burton, 2007), discloses an investigation on the amount of space within criminology textbooks devoted to the study of women as both victims and perpetrators of crime. He asserts that topics on women and crime have been decidedly absent from criminological discourse. They attribute this finding to the dearth of empirical research on the issue.

Women and children are most often the victims of the physical and psychological abuse. Marital discord, spouse beating, discontinuity in parenting, physical or sexual abuse, neglect, and witnessing alcohol abuse by a

parent may be relatively common experiences that young people have lived through (Burton, 2007).

Burton (2007) adds that there is evidence in our society to suggest that youth who experience violent home lives are more likely than others to engage in violent behavior. Young children in particular often internalize the violence they experience in the home, ultimately coming to regard it as a normal and acceptable means of resolving conflicts. As they grow up and start their own families, the cycle of violence continues.

MacDonald et al, (1996) state that in a study of the violence experienced by pupils at five junior high schools in America it was found that not only was bullying common but that 25% of the female pupils had experienced sexual harassment at the hands of male students. The pupils said that teachers did not notice or ignored the violence experienced by the pupils. Administrators at the schools perceived violence to be less of a problem than the pupils and felt that teachers were more aware of the problem than pupils thought they were.

The reluctance to report matters to teachers is not surprising given that often teachers themselves are to blame for the sexual harassment and sexual abuse of female pupils. Girls who did report abuse told Human Rights Watch that school officials responded with indifference, disbelief and hostility. Schools that do not take sexual violence and harassment seriously provide support for those who would commit violence against girls' (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p.4).

### **2.3 Socio-economic status (rich and poor) and violence**

Both poverty and the perceived gap between rich and poor seem to play a role in rates of aggression. Children, who are raised in poor families and in neighborhoods where the majority of families are poor, are more likely to engage in violence. Neighborhood poverty is often associated with community

social disorganization and poor families have less opportunity to move to better neighborhoods (Harber, 2001)

Harber (2001) adds further that poverty at the family and neighborhood level is, however, more likely in a country where poverty is widespread. Broad socioeconomic factors, such as opportunities for employment, influence whether a family is likely to be poor or not. Unemployment among 15–64 year olds in South Africa tends to hover around 30% (or close to 12 million people). This is a high figure which suggests that jobs are hard to find. Employment levels have increased at a rate of about 500,000 people a year in the three years since this figure was calculated, but unemployment rates are still very high. It is therefore not surprising that measures of household poverty are high. The perceived gap between rich and poor may also play a role in violent behavior.

Harber (2001) refers to a study of income inequality and level, together with the percentage of the male population aged 15–29 and unemployment rates, especially the unemployment of young men, influence the likelihood of non-state violence. In this study investigating why young people join gangs in Cape Town, respondents uniformly reported that gang membership gave them access to goods, such as brand-name clothing, that are perceived to be central to their full participation in society. One justification for (often violent) crime was to obtain goods that otherwise only the rich could afford. Such feelings of relative deprivation may also sometimes be used as a reason for violent crime when basic necessities rather than luxury goods are sought, as is evidenced in this quote from a recent newspaper article: “You whites will never understand anything about living in the sand in a hok (cage) big enough for a dog. And you will never understand crime. What’s crime? Am I a criminal because I eat with robbed money? I don’t want to know how my two sons earn the R20, R30 or R100 they bring home most evenings. Of course they’ve stolen it; or maybe they’ve mugged somebody; maybe somebody was stabbed with a knife or screwdriver. Maybe somebody is dead now and their money paid for my pap

tonight.” Consequences of violent actions are therefore minimized through emphasizing what the perpetrator gains, and this gain is justified in terms of what is essential for either physical or social survival.

#### **2.4. Violence by omission**

Harber (2001) states that the inclusion of the word “power” expands the conventional understanding of violence to include those acts that result from a power relationship, including threats and intimidation. It also serves to include neglect or acts of omission in addition to the more obvious acts of commission.

Harber (2006) explains further how children and young people are encouraged, persuaded and even forced to attend school by national governments and international agencies, even though schooling may not automatically or uniformly be beneficial for them and they may be reluctant to do so. However, school may actually be harmful if, having got them there it fails to protect children from violence and suffering when it could do so. Indeed, they could be in danger simply by entering the school building. When an earthquake shook the town of San Giuliano di Puglia in southern Italy in November 2002, the sole building it completely destroyed was the local primary school killing 26 children and a teacher. It became clear that the school had been cheaply and poorly built despite a history of earthquakes in the region. The final date for making all school buildings secure had been put back five times because of a lack of funds. Since the earthquake a number of surveys and reports have come to light suggesting that around half the schools in Italy are unsafe or lacking safety certification.

A government report in Japan, where tremors are common, revealed that less than half of all schools and universities are sufficiently earthquake resistant. Some experts have predicted that a force 6 or 7 earthquake would hit the Kanto region soon in which case half of Tokyo’ schools would simply

disintegrate. Moreover, two thirds of the schools in Tokyo have no nearby evacuation spaces. Boards of education have repeatedly asked for money to rebuild schools to make them safe but it has not been provided (Harber, 2006)

In KwaZulu Natal, South Africa almost a quarter of schools were reported as being unfit for educational purposes and most of these were considered too dangerous to be occupied by pupils because of the precarious state of the buildings (Moloney, 1997). In England the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors Association are to investigate the state of school toilets as they are concerned that many are unhygienic and are breeding grounds for germs which could affect the health and well-being of pupils (Times Educational Supplement 29/1/2002).

Harber (2006) states that schools can also be responsible for violence because they do not survey, regulate and control enough, that is that schools ignore violence in their midst or potential threats from outside and therefore fail to protect their children. Yet this violence by omission happens for reasons consistent with the authoritarian basis of direct violence. First, it can happen because schools explicitly or tacitly condone the type of violence that is happening and therefore do not intervene to stop it. Second, education personnel simply may not recognize it as an issue because it is so much part of their common-sense understanding of how the world 'is' and it is therefore perceived as 'natural' and 'inevitable'. Third, schools are reluctant to intervene or find it difficult to do so because the type of intervention required is not congruent with what are perceived as the main purposes of the authoritarian type of education often provided – the teacher-centred transmission of largely cognitive curriculum content, whether this is 'factual' knowledge, understanding of concepts or basic skills. Schools and teachers are often ill equipped and unwilling to deal with controversial issues, values and with the affective dimension of learning - feelings, emotions and relationships. Teachers' own education and training has often not emphasized the importance of these,

yet to be able to handle them effectively would require a transformation of school and classroom power relationships in a significantly more democratic direction. Schools therefore regularly find themselves implicated in indirect violence by omission.

## **2.5. The impact of violence on the school society**

### **2.5.1. The impact of violence on educators**

Learners are not the only victims of violence in schools. According to Bartollas (1993, p.341) extortion and victimization of educators occur frequently in public schools. Cornia Pretorious in her study of psychological violence (*The Teacher*, 2011, p.2) states that according to researchers from the North-West University, health problems among educators may have been triggered by incidents of psychological violence at the school where they teach. Dr Tiaan Kirsten in the same article states that people are more familiar with physical violence such as assault or vandalism but educators are often unaware that they are victims of psychological violence. Colleagues, managers such as the principals or officials of the department of education, parents or learners could be responsible for psychological violence aimed at educators. Actions could include verbal or non-verbal abuse that could be emotionally taxing on the victim, intimidation, humiliation, blaming the victim for work-related problems, giving the victim more work than he/she can handle, attempts to ruin the victims' reputation, malicious gossip, slander and poor teaching.

Pretorious in *The Teacher* (2011), quotes fellow researcher Jackie de Vos, a trained psychological counselor, who believes that this type of violence could have a devastating effect on educators' health, triggering a long list of problems, including depression, anxiety and disrupted sleep. De Vos in her previous study probed the characteristics and behavior of educators and their bullies that may contribute to workplace violence. She found that educators are mostly verbally and physically abused by colleagues and learners, severely traumatizing victims. According to De Vos, the risks involved in overlooking

workplace violence in education settings could impact on educators' ability to perform.

Violence has a negative impact on educators which is inclusive of the following:

- fear
- decreased morale
- career impact symptoms
- physical symptoms
- emotional symptoms

Singh (2006, p.45) stated that eighty percent of educators experience crime-related violence at school. Furthermore, fifty six percent of this violence occurs in full view of the learners. Educators occupying higher positions face a higher risk of being victimized. He added that the traumatic experience of the principal's death would remain in the minds of his colleagues and learners, who witnessed the crime, for a very long time. It is clear that the educators who were exposed to this criminal act in the sanctity of their school environment will never recover from this violence.

In certain parts of KwaZulu-Natal, educators have to abandon their classes in fear after many robberies and hijackings on the school premises. Several learners take guns to school and are later involved in shootings that leave other learners and some educators injured (Mhlongo, 2007, p.1).

Violent crimes and drug trafficking by gangs are of great concern in educators' working conditions. Gang activity has been reported in schools in many large cities, and robberies and assaults on educators frequently involve youth acting in groups, thus prohibiting educators from doing their work effectively. Violent crimes that brings a threat of sudden, anonymous death and injury into every



school, terrifies the educators and learners (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1996, p.119).

Kuppan (2006, p.16) maintains that it is difficult to concentrate on teaching because a school environment characterized by crime is not conducive to teaching and learning. Educators are under strain and have to be social workers and even healthcare workers to learners who are traumatized by crime. Furthermore, he adds today we talk about teenage pregnancy, gunfights, and killings in our schools and not issues relating to education. There has been a shift in the focus of attention.

Singh, (2006, p.46) examined the effects of crime on teaching as a career, as well as emotional and physical effects. Between sixty and eighty percent of respondents reported that physical and emotional symptoms occur in educators affected by crime. Over half of the participants reported decreased job satisfaction and also acknowledged that crime and violence led to poorer job performance and absence from work. Over sixty percent of the respondents pointed out that criminally-affected educators display physical symptoms such as sleep disturbances, fatigue and headaches. Eighty four percent revealed that the emotional impact of crime on educators include frustration, stress and anger.

### **2.5.2. The impact of violence on learners**

Harber (2001) cites Miller (1987) that when learners are trained they learn how to train others in turn. Learners who are lectured to, learn how to lecture; if they are admonished, they learn how to admonish; if scolded, they learn how to scold; if ridiculed, they learn how to ridicule; if humiliated, they learn how to humiliate; if their psyche is killed, they will learn how to kill. In general, children are far more often victims of violence than perpetrators' and schools can either be a force for violence prevention or can provide an experience which reinforces violent attitudes and add to the child's experience of violence.

According to Harber (2001) when we respond to violence in schools, if we respond at all, it is to the learners who are violent. When a child forces another to do his or her bidding, we call it extortion; when an adult does the same thing to a child, it is called correction. When a learner hits another learner it is assault; when an educator hits a learner it is for the learner's 'own good'. When a learner embarrasses, ridicules or scorns another learner it is harassment, bullying or teasing. Kauffman (1992, p.417) states that crime in schools makes learners develop school phobia. It is more than likely that traumatic incidents of crime in school will induce fear in learners. When school becomes threatening or aversive, the learner may seek refuge and protection at home or with peers. This situation adversely affects his learning experience.

Criminally victimized learners often feel abandoned and lack the security of being part of the school. According to Bartollas (1993, p.278) crime has a negative impact on the emotional development of the learner. This leads to truancy and disruptive behavior in school, and generates so much pain that alcohol and drugs are viewed by the victimized learner as a needed means of escape. Some criminal acts of learners cause so much self-rejection, especially for victims of incest, that these learners may vent their self-destructiveness through prostitution and may even commit suicide. Criminal acts on learners create so much anger that victimized learners sometimes later commit aggressive acts against others (Bartollas, 1993, p.278). The majority of sexual offenders have been the victims of crime themselves, more specifically sexual abuse.

Bartollas (1993, pp.278-279) views the following characteristics as associated with learners affected by crime:

- They have low self-esteem.
- They have considerable feelings of guilt.

- They have high anxiety levels.
- They have mild to serious depression.
- They also have high internal conflicts.

Learners who have been abused frequently through crime run away from home and school. Running away becomes a way of coping with the pain created by criminal acts, such as neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Learners often see running away as the only way to manage an unmanageable problem (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995, p.143).

According to Gwynne (1988, p.19) abused learners as victims of crime often feel that they have nothing to lose by taking drugs, for they are concerned only with forgetting their insecurity, anxiety, and lack of confidence. Love and trust relationships that these learners have never had with people before sometimes develop through substance abuse. They can eventually belong, experiencing closeness and security with peers who are also involved in substance abuse (Emmett & Nice, 1996, p.285).

### **2.5.3. The effects of stress on educators and learners**

A response from an educator as quoted in the “Teacher and Child” by Ginott (1972, p. 15-16 cited by Harber (2006):

“I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate, humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized”.

Harber (2001) states that if a teacher is suffering the children in his or her care will also suffer. Educators debilitated by stress and unable to give of their best will be short-changing the pupils through no fault of their own one way for an individual to cope with stress is to take it out on other people. We have all known the 'kick the cat' syndrome, when in frustration and anger a person lashes out at the nearest available target. Place a person under stress in a classroom with small children and the consequences will certainly be unpleasant and could be dire. Fortunately, physical attacks on children are rare but the daily classroom experiences for a child whose teacher is under stress will certainly be less than positive. Shouting, verbal put-downs, short temper, poor quality assignments, poorly planned, unimaginative lessons and work not marked are negative experiences.

Stress is experienced when a learner subjectively responds to a criminal situation or event. Stressors which are perceived to be specially threatening create a fear response that leads to sickness, anger and absenteeism from school and decreased levels of learner performance.

Harber (2006) refers to Powell (1997, p.7) who points out that the prevailing crime in schools results in learners developing stress which has the following effects on their learning:

- Learners experience difficulty in concentrating.
- They develop forgetfulness.
- They experience increased sensitivity to criticism.
- They develop negative self-critical thoughts.
- They develop distorted ideas.
- They show more rigid attitudes.

Learners affected by crime in schools reflect behavioral, learning and social problems. Many of these problems are the result of stress and depression. Learners are exposed to situations for example gun-violence in which they are the victims turn out to be an extremely traumatic affair (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003, p.34). The experience of trauma results in the learner being too stressed to cope with learning.

Stress is one of the major psychological effects of crime on learners (Gopie, 2003, p.25). According to Chazan, Laing & Davies (1994, p.174) the severe consequences of crime- induced stress could be expressed in a variety of physical and emotional signs of stress which include:

- headaches
- muscle tension palpitations
- panic – attacks
- low self-esteem
- depression
- fatigue
- eating disorders
- excessive drinking or smoking
- sleeping problems

For learners who, due to crime in school, are stressed out, in pain, and struggling for survival, drug abuse may be a solution (Galas, 1997, p.28). Drug taking is also a criminal-related activity. With reference to Hlayiseka Early Warning System, September 2006, a manual designed by the Department of Education (DoE, 2006) for monitoring school safety, gangs appear to choose the arrival and departure times of educators and learners deliberately, and

they wait for learners at the school gate. This brings with it a terrorizing "fear factor" which traumatizes educators, learners and parents. Threats, intimidation and harassment engender fear, and result in the absenteeism of both educators and learners (Segoe & Mokgosi, 2007, p.5). They reported that not only does violence have a serious impact on learning, but educators are often absent because they need time off for trauma counseling and debriefing.

#### **2.5.4. The impact of violence on schoolwork**

Harber (2001) contends that one of the most well-known critiques of authoritarian forms of education originated from Brazil. This is Paulo Freire's 'banking education', whereby knowledge (as defined by the teacher) is 'deposited' in the student and on which he or she is later expected to 'capitalize'. It implies a view of knowledge as static, as made and finished, and of learners as empty and lacking consciousness. Freire as cited in Harber (2001) cites ten ways in which this sort of student-teacher relationship manifests itself:

- The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
- The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.
- The teacher thinks and the students are thought about.
- The teacher talks and the students listen -meekly.
- The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.
- The teacher chooses and enforces his or her choice and the students comply.
- The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
- The teacher chooses the programme content and the students comply.
- The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with professional authority which he or she sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.

- The teacher is the subject of the learning process while the pupils are mere objects.

In South Africa the authoritarian style of schooling was replaced by an education policy based on principles of democracy and human rights in 1994 (The Constitution of South Africa and The South African Schools Act) but this proved difficult and slow to implement (Harber, 2001). In Tanzania, not only was caning common but one very common teaching method was ‘copy-copy’ where the teacher copies notes or words from a textbook or notebook onto the blackboard. The students then copy these into their own notebooks and ‘copy’ their notes onto paper from memorization in the examinations.

Harber (2001) cites Bauer (1996) who explains how authoritarian schooling works in reference to Michael House Private School in KwaZulu -Natal, South Africa which charges R32, 000 a year and which is based on the model of the British public school. Michael House operates on what it calls the ‘cack’ system - cacks being the term by which all first years are known, meaning ‘scum of the earth’. Like the ‘fagging’ system in British public schools, junior students are expected to serve and do tasks for senior students. In the past this was enforced with a great deal of physical punishment. Although it does not now involve this element of brutality the practice remains in place. Harber states that the essence of this practice is that the younger students serve an apprenticeship in authority commencing at the bottom of the ladder. The principle which underlies this is subordination as a necessary prerequisite for super-ordination that is those who expect to give commands (both inside the school and later outside) should have experience of receiving them. Such future expectations of leadership are reinforced by the acknowledged elite status of the school which is manifested in its buildings and traditions and reflected in the post-school professional connections and opportunities it provides.

Kuppan (2006) states that considering that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education MEC in 2006, Ina Cronje, called for the support of different stakeholders to make schools safe for the learners and educators, it is obvious that criminal activities that were taking place in schools prevent learners from doing their school work successfully. Kuppan (2006) added that two grade 12 learners were gang-raped by four men at an Umlazi school on the eve of Good Friday. The girls had been part of a study group and were getting in some extra study time when the incident occurred.

According to Mahlobo (2000, p.25) crime which is rampant in schools, could have a negative impact on the academic performance of learners. Kauffman (1992, p.417) states that crime in schools makes learners develop school phobia. It is more than likely that traumatic incidents of crime in school will induce fear in learners. When school becomes threatening or aversive, the learner may seek refuge and protection at home or with peers. This situation adversely affects his learning experience. Criminally victimized learners often feel abandoned and lack the security of being part of the school.

According to Bartollas (1993, p.278) crime has a negative impact on the emotional development of the learner. This leads to truancy and disruptive behavior in school, and generates so much pain that alcohol and drugs are viewed by the victimized learner as a needed means of escape. Some criminal acts of learners cause so much self-rejection, especially for victims of incest, that these learners may vent their self-destructiveness through prostitution and may even commit suicide. Criminal acts on learners create so much anger that victimized learners sometimes later commit aggressive acts against others (Bartollas, 1993, p.278). According to Bezuidenhout & Joubert (2003, p.29) the majority of sexual offenders have been the victims of crime themselves, specifically sexual abuse.



According to Gwynne (1988, p.19) abused learners as victims of crime often feel that they have nothing to lose by taking drugs, for they are concerned only with forgetting their insecurity, anxiety, and lack of confidence. Love and trust relationships that these learners have never had with people before sometimes develop through substance abuse. They can eventually belong, experiencing closeness and security with peers who are also involved in substance abuse.

Many of these problems are the result of stress and depression. Learners when exposed to situations for example gun violence in which they are the victims, turn out to be an extremely traumatic affair (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003, p.34). The experience of trauma results in the learner being too stressed to cope with learning.

## **2.6. Violence Prevention (Measures taken by government to reduce violence in schools)**

### **2.6.1. The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996)**

The Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996) commits us to the establishment of a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. As with all the values contained in the Constitution, our rights come with certain responsibilities. We may not exercise our rights with the intention of infringing on other people's rights. Furthermore, the Constitution also confirms the values of accountability, responsiveness and openness.

Harber (2001) asserts that within schools, the rule of law is the guarantor of accountability for it holds us all to a common code of appropriate behavior. Accountability means that we are all responsible for our individual behavior. There can be no rights without responsibilities – whether we are parents, educators or learners. Schools cannot function effectively if there is no mutual respect between educators and parents and effective learning cannot happen if

there is no mutual respect between educators and learners. Considering the growing emphasis on the protection of human rights, it was inevitable that increasing attention would be given to issues such as child abuse and corporal punishment in schools. Although controversial, the use of corporal punishment is widely viewed as a form of child abuse and its use is discouraged as a means of punishment. Inflicting physical pain on children is no longer accepted as a form of controlling behavior and correcting inappropriate behavior.

The Constitution (RSA, 1996) is the supreme law of the country and therefore all law, including education legislation, regulations and school policies may not be in conflict with it. Chapter 2 of the Constitution contains the Bill of Rights that have a direct bearing on school violence and discipline. It also states clearly that everyone has the right to be free of all forms of violence in a safe environment. This right needs to be protected and universally recognized and it implies that every learner has a constitutional right to learn in a safe environment, so that those who want to can do so without disruption. Prinsloo (2005, p.7) concurs that the purpose of any school is to ensure that effective teaching and learning take place in an orderly environment. Furthermore, South African educators have an important duty towards the safety and protection of learners, not only in terms of the Constitution and other legislation, but also in terms of their *in loco parentis* status.

The Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996) is a corner stone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. The state must respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights in the Bill of Rights. Some sections relevant to school violence are discussed hereunder:

### Equality (Section 9)

- Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
- Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedom. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.
- The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.
- No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.
- Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed I subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair.

### Human Dignity (Section 10)

Everyone has inherent dignity and right to have their dignity respected and protected.

### Life (Section 11)

Everyone has the right to life.

### Freedom and security of the person (Section 12)

Everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right:

- not to be deprived of freedom arbitrarily or without just cause,
- not to be detained without trial,

- to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources,
- not to be tortured in any way, and
- not to be treated or punished in a cruel, in-human or degrading way.

#### Privacy (Section 14)

Everyone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have:

- their person or home searched,
- their property searched,
- their possessions seized, or
- the privacy of their communications infringed.

#### Environment (Section 24)

Everyone has the right:

- to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and
- to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations.

#### Children (Section 28)

Every child has the right:

- to a name and a nationality from birth;
- to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment;
- to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services;
- to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation;

- to be protected from exploitative labor practices;
- not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that are inappropriate for a person of that child's age or place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development;
- not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case ,in addition to the rights a child enjoys under sections 12 and 35, the child may be detained only for the shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18years and treated in a manner, kept in conditions, that take account of the child's age.
- to have a legal practitioner assigned to the child by the state, and at state expense, in civil proceedings affecting the child, if substantial injustice would otherwise result; and
- not to be used directly in armed conflict, and to be protected in times of armed conflict.

A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child. In this section 'child' means a person under the age of 18 years.

### Education (Section 29)

#### 1. Everyone has the right-

- to a basic education, including adult basic education, and
- to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

2. Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that

education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account:

- equity
- practicability and
- the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices .

3. Everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that:

- do not discriminate on the basis of race
- are registered with the state and
- maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.

#### **2.6.2. The South African School's Act (SASA) (DoE, 1996a)**

The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) seeks to ensure a safe school environment by making the following provisions:

- Section 10 prohibits the use of corporal punishment. Human Dignity: Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected.
- Section 8 (1) places an obligation on school governing bodies to draw up a code of conduct for learners.
- Section 8 (2) stipulates that the school's code of conduct must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment.

- Section 8 (4) places a legal obligation on learners to comply with the code of conduct of the school they attend.
- Section 8 (5) stipulates that a code of conduct must make provision for legal process to safeguard the interest of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings.

According to these provisions, learners have a constitutional right to study in a safe school environment (Prinsloo, 2005, p.8). Rossouw (2003, p.414) asserts that currently one of the most prominent factors influencing the learning environment in South African schools is the conduct of learners. He points out that maintaining discipline is seen by educators to be a major problem and source of stress. Oosthuizen (2005) states that a school's code of conduct could play a significant part in the case of a law suit, as school rules constitute a particular form of subordinate legislation; therefore it is important that schools should have a legally defensible code of conduct.

### **2.6.3. Province of KwaZulu-Natal, Department of Education - KZN Circular No.32 of 2012 (KZN, 2012)**

This circular according to Dr N.S.P. Sishi (Head of Department: Education) mandates all schools to put measures to counter violence, drug abuse and other forms of crimes in Public Schools. The District in contemplation to the above circular, declares war on the following:

- Late coming
- Substance abuse
- Dangerous weapons

1. All schools as a result, are required to have morning assemblies for moral lessons and safety signage. The circular outlines the following measures to address the above concerns:

- Problems of school violence, drug abuse and other forms of crime have risen drastically in recent months resulting in some learners'

lives being lost and others being injured critically. The MEC, Head of Department and the whole education fraternity is deeply saddened by the recent incidents of school violence including the stabbing and shooting.

- The Department of Education acknowledges that every parent is concerned with the life of his/her child therefore the issue of safety in schools cannot be the responsibility of the Department of Education alone. Parents should also play an active role in ensuring that the safety of their children in and outside the school premises is guaranteed. Therefore, it is very important for all sectors in education to ensure that violence in schools is curbed. The Department of Education has since developed strategies which parents and school administrators can apply to stop school violence. These include the following: Strengthening the Quality of Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC). This must involve the following:

- a. District Director taking a lead in the strengthening of QLTC structures.
- b. Localizing the strategies to stop violence in schools.
- c. Mobilizing communities to monitor and support schools, teachers and learners.
- d. Mobilizing Amakhosi, Izinduna, Community forums and Social Partners to play an active role in ensuring that schools become the drug and dangerous free zones.

2. Support the schools that are conducting morning assemblies. To this end:

- a. Principals of schools must use assemblies to reinforce the provisions of the Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools, which declared all public schools as drug free and dangerous object free zones. This message must be repeated over and over again.



- b. Where it is not possible for schools to hold assemblies on a regular basis, the principal must hold meetings with learners on a regular basis to reinforce the contents of the Regulations for Safety Measures in Public Schools i.e. reminding learners and the personnel of the school that all public schools have been declared drug free and dangerous object free zones.
  - c. The principal must invite the police and other prominent members of the community for example the SGB chairperson, Mayors, MPLs to conduct school safety awareness campaigns and encourage learners to strive for quality education.
  - d. Subject to affordability, schools may buy or mount boards in prominent positions, displaying messages that advocate for the prohibition of drugs and dangerous objects in schools.
  - e. Intensification of My Life My Future Campaign at a school level.
3. During the first period, teachers must repeat what has been said at the assemblies about the prohibition of drugs and dangerous objects at school.
  4. Teachers must display in every classroom the contact numbers of important role players in school safety for example the police, ambulance, etc. This is the line with the linking of schools with SAPS and other school safety role players.
  5. It is mandatory for all District Directors to take a lead in ensuring that the strategies are effectively implemented at all schools.

#### **2.6.4. School Policy: School's Code of Conduct**

It is the duty of a school's governing body to adopt a code of conduct that will be a legal instrument, regulating the maintenance of discipline in the school. The South Africa Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) requires in Section 8 that the governing body of a school has to adopt a code of conduct for learners after consultation with learners, educators and parents. In many states and countries all over the world, however, there are many school districts that have a single code of conduct for all the schools in their districts. For instance,

Ontario in Canada has a single code of conduct for the whole district, and it seems to have significant advantages, such as equity and equality for all, and presents a clear balance of rights and responsibilities for all schools. The Ontario Code of Conduct includes the specific reasons for law enforcement and the conditions for re-accepting learners after suspension from school, in accordance with school board policies (Harber, 2006). It goes to show that one national code of conduct for schools can be drawn up to include all the rights and responsibilities of principals, educators and school staff as well as the learners to ensure Constitutional compatibility.

The Department of Education in South Africa provides schools with an example of a code of conduct as part of its guidelines for constructing their own codes of conduct (Department of Education, 2007). The duties of parents, disciplinary procedures, accepting responsibilities, and the payment of school fees are some of the matters that need to be discussed with learners, parents and educators of the school (RSA, 1996) before drawing up a code of conduct for the school. The governing body is also empowered to maintain and enforce school discipline in accordance with the code.

For instance, in the case of serious misconduct, the governing body can suspend a learner for a maximum of seven days after a fair hearing (RSA, 1996). However, the punishment must be clearly understood and accepted by the perpetrator. The effectiveness of the punitive measures described in such a document will largely depend on the content of the document, the involvement of parents, and learners and teachers implementing the rules of the school. The national behavior policy guideline for schools in England suggested that schools may choose to have key messages that are highlighted in their school rules, displayed on classroom walls and staffroom posters and in the reception areas and public rooms of the schools (Department of Education and Skills Development, 2003). What is important is that everybody that comes to the school could see the messages and be reminded of the rules every day.

Alston (1998, p.1) warns, however, that the legitimacy of school rules could be in question in the event of a court case arising over the application of school rules. Schools today are challenged, not only in the application of their school rules, but also in the drafting of their school rules, which need to serve as a legally valid document. Therefore, this implies that those responsible for drafting the school rules need to have a knowledge and understanding of the basic law principles to draft rules that will conform to such original legislation.

Harber & Mncube (2011) state that parental involvement in the drafting of a code of conduct could in fact, play an important role in establishing a safe school environment. The positive input of parents in the drafting of school rules is crucial in establishing a safe environment for their children, also in ensuring that they understand and agree with what is expected of their children, regarding the rules of the school. Thus, the duties of parents, as stipulated in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (DoE 1996a) should also be listed in the code. Language and parental illiteracy should be taken into consideration so that everybody involved in the school will be able to understand the rules of the school as clearly stipulated in the code of conduct. The wording should therefore be as simple as possible, so that even younger learners would know what is expected of them and what is permitted at their school. Furthermore, school rules should not just be a set of legal rules that are designed to avoid future law suits rather than to establish classroom order.

Alston (1998, p.51) suggests that parents and learners should at least give a moral if not legal binding agreement to abide by the rules and support the school in their application. The school may also request parents and learners to sign their acceptance of the rules. To ensure that parents receive and review schools' discipline codes, the State of Virginia in the United States of America enacted a law effective from May 1995 requiring parents, under penalty of a fine, to sign and return a copy of the school rules to the school. The law also

requires parents of suspended students to meet with school officials or face a fine of up to five hundred dollars. Similarly, a 1994 Alabama law holds parents liable when students damage school property. This is a written school rule (Cotton, 1990, p.33).

As one could learn from these recommendations, a school's code of conduct could play a significant part in the case of a law suit as school rules constitute a particular form of subordinate legislation. Therefore it is important that schools have a legally defensible code of conduct (Oosthuizen, 1998, p.29). Where there is a lack of effective behavior management and disciplinary practices, Cotton (1990, p.33) advises that teachers should recognize vague or unenforceable school rules and address these immediately. Cotton (1990, p.34) found that both learners' behavior and attitudes are affected adversely when teachers ignore violations of school or classroom rules.

#### **2.6.5. The Role of the Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC)**

In terms of KZN Circular No.55 of 2001 it is mandatory that every school constitutes a Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC). The Discipline, Safety and Security Committee is set up by the School Governing Body (SGB), which is a legal body of parents, educators, non-educators and learners (in the case of secondary schools) who are responsible for governing the school including its safety aspects.

The DSSC should be made up of a reliable group of learners, educators and community members who are given the responsibility of preparing, implementing and monitoring the school's security plans. The formation of a responsible committee creates accountability and a group to drive the process. This committee should be formed to create a safe school environment. It identifies all necessary tasks for handling an incident or crisis and assigns staff members and back-ups to be responsible for each task. The first step in creating a safe school environment is analyzing existing incidents of violence to

ensure that the members of the DSSC understand the scope of the problem. They must focus more effort on prevention than on punishment.

According to KZNDoE (2001) every school needs to develop an action plan towards the establishment of an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The DSSC should be responsible for:

- Identifying the school's security problems
- Working with the significant people in the community
- Drafting a school security plan
- Overseeing and monitoring implementation of the plan
- Charting the rise or decline in school based crime and violence.

## **2.7. Theories underpinning this study on school violence**

The theoretical framework is concerned with the way in which the research is framed, as research cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum (Henning et al, 2004). This study is underpinned by three theoretical frameworks namely: Symbolic interactionism, theories of power and social control, and theories of non-violence non-cooperation.

### **2.7.1. Theory of Symbolic Interactionism**

This study addresses the dynamics of violence at schools by using symbolic interactionism theories. These theories are designed to provide insights into the shared views of school communities about violence that will result in understanding the causes of school violence. This understanding will influence school communities in their endeavors to reduce school violence to create a safe learning environment at school. G.H. Mead's "A Behaviouristic Account of

the Significant Symbol" Symbolic interaction has been a foundation of sociological theory beginning (Mead, 1922, pp.157-163)). According to Mead, much of human behavior is determined not by the objective facts of a situation, but by the *meanings* people ascribe to it. A subjective interpretation of reality impacts and helps influence human behavior.

What humans define as "reality" is actually a set of social constructs consisting of symbols that are assigned meaning and acted upon in accordance with these meanings. These symbols become language, and it is language that humans use to construct reality. Symbolic interaction examines language and habitual behavior as it reflects the unspoken rules that govern how people are expected to "act" in various social circumstances.

Symbolic interactionism is derived from American pragmatism especially the work of George Herbert Mead and Charles Cooley. Blumer (1969) states that people act towards things based on the meanings those things have for them and these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation. He was influenced by John Dewey who said that human beings are best understood in relation to their environment. Most of the inter-actionist research uses qualitative research methods like participant observation to study aspects of social interaction and individual selves. Inter-actionist concepts that have gained widespread usage include definition of the situation, emotion work, impression management, looking glass self and total institution.

Blumer (1969) set out three basic premises of Symbolic interactionism: humans act towards things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things, the meanings of such things is derived from the social interaction that one has with others and the society and these meanings are handled and modified through an interpretative process used by the person dealing with the things he or she encounters. Symbolic inter-actionist researchers investigate how people create meaning during social interaction, how they present and

construct the self and how they define situations of co-presence with others. People act as they do because of how they define situations. Inter-actionists see the social world as a continuously dynamic and dialectical web.

This theory briefly entails the following. Symbolic interaction which is also known Symbolic Convergence theory is a social psychological theory developed from the work of Charles Horton Cooley & George Herbert Mead in the early part of the twentieth century. Symbolic interactionism is derived from American Pragmatism, but the actual term of the theory was coined by Herbert Blumer (1969), the then student of Herbert Mead. It may be assumed that the magnitude and shocking consequences of the various forms violence at schools create great fear, tension and anxiety, which makes this theory more appropriate and relevant to this study.

It will be necessary to examine the definitions and boundaries related to violence at school level. Mead (1922) distinguishes three levels of school violence: firstly, the violence itself (injury, sexual violence, crime, vandalism etc) – which would relate to Salmi's 'direct violence; secondly, incivilities (humiliation, lack of respect) and thirdly, symbolic and institutional violence (irrelevant schooling, power relations between teachers and learners). Social analysts would add in structural violence – the violence perpetrated by dominant groups in society based on social structures such as race, gender, social class or religion, by which certain groups are systematically denied opportunities or rights.

While it would be easier just to look at physical violence, this would ignore the numerous ways in which learners and teachers experience violence in their school career (Astor, Benbenishty, & Estrada, 2008).

Considering the existing studies on this topic, as well as the investigations of the researchers, (De Mattos, 2009), violence in schools may be analyzed through the lenses of symbolic interactionism. He defined symbolic

interactionism as a process giving meaning to symbols and words, which starts at infancy, through the course of social interaction.

### **2.7.2. Theory of power and social control**

Theories of power and social control have been applied to enable an investigation of how learners and educators navigate around the institutional processes of the use of authority and power and when violence is used to claim back recognition.

Giddens (1997) assert that power control theory states that relative in the work place conditions, patterns of parental control of children in two parent families, resulting in gender differences in rates of non-serious delinquency. Power control theory of delinquency is one of the few that has attempted to account for gender and class in delinquency causation. A path analysis revealed that the quality of the relationship with the mother was important in explaining low levels of delinquency in boys. The quality of a youth's relationship with parents, particularly the experience of negative sanctions from the father, was found to explain delinquency for both sexes. This theory links gender differences in risk preference to patriarchal family structures. Social control theory attempts to explain why it is that all of us do not commit crime or why are most people law-abiding. The answer lies in dimensions of social control. The many ways in which people are controlled are by family, schools, work situations, conscience.

In this study, theories of power and social control has been applied to enable an investigation of how learners and teachers navigate around the institutional processes of the use of authority and power and when violence is used to claim back recognition.

Giddens (1997) argued that inequality exist in all types of human society, even the simplest cultures, where variations in wealth or property are virtually non-existent, there are inequalities between individuals, men and women, the



young and the old. Giddens (1997) described social inequalities in terms of social stratification. Stratification is defined as structured inequalities between different groupings of people (Giddens, 1997). Four basic systems of stratification can be distinguished: slavery, caste, estates and class. In this study social stratification between the powerful and the powerless will be looked at in terms of class.

Social classes are economic or cultural arrangements of groups in a society (Giddens, 1997). In the modern Western context, stratification comprises of three layers: upper class, middle class and lower class (Giddens, 1997, <http://en.wikipedia.org>). Societies can be seen as consisting of “strata” or layers in a hierarchy, with the more favored at the top and the less privileged nearer the bottom (Giddens, 1997). Giddens (1997) stated that the most basic class distinction is between the powerful and the powerless.

For purposes of this study learners who commit violence were assessed in terms of their family factors like if they have two parents, their economic class and the number of children in their homes. These factors could have impacted on their violent behavior.

### **2.7.3 Theory of non-violence espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King**

The third theory underpinning this study is that people could practice the Mahatma Gandhian principles of non-retaliation and non-violence (Satyagraha). Curren & Takata (2001, p.1) explain how Professor L. Garfield specializes in cross-cultural philosophy and thought and thus represents for us a good guide to an understanding of peace and non-violence through the thoughts of other cultures. He parallels Gandhi with the Dalai Lama. He states that it does not mean that Gandhi’s central insight that grasping the nature of reality and insistence of truth is the foundation of all morally significant action

and meaningful life. Truth could be different for a Buddhist from a Hindu. The impact the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence had on Martin Luther King is also to be explored.

Theories of non-violence non-cooperation sit well with this study of dynamics of violence in schools. Nonviolent action includes the types of behavior known nonviolent resistance (satyagraha) which include myriad methods of action, such as strikes, boycotts, and the like (Sharp, 1979). Nonviolence non-cooperation theories resist violence in order to combat violent acts of the perpetrators (Kumar, 2003). Nonviolent non-cooperation action is commonly used against opponents who have a superior capacity and masculinity to use physical violence (Kumar, 2003). It will be also necessary to determine some definitions and create boundaries in order to investigate violence at school level by applying nonviolent non-cooperation approach. Gandhi defined non-cooperation as an attempt to awaken the masses to a sense of their dignity and power (Kumar, 2003).

According to Kumar, (2003), love should occupy an unending place in non-cooperation, where non-cooperators should not wish to punish or inflict pain upon their opponent. Nonviolent action is a generic term covering dozens of specific methods of protest, noncooperation and intervention, in all of which the actionists conduct the conflict by doing – or refusing to do – certain things without using physical violence (Sharp, 1984, p.64). Politically, nonviolent action is based on a very simple postulate: people do not always do what they are told to do, and sometimes they do things which have been forbidden to them (Sharp, 1984). For example, workers may halt work, soldiers and police may become lax in inflicting repression and so on (Sharp, 1984). When all nonviolent actions take place simultaneously, the “ruler” loses power. This dissolution can happen in a wide variety of social and political conflicts (Sharp, 1984).

Nonviolent direct action is a method of producing or thwarting social change by interventions aimed at establishing new patterns or policies or disrupting activities regarded as evil (Sharp, 1984). This type of nonviolent direction action method was demonstrated greatly by Mohandas Gandhi (in his Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills) and Martin Luther King, Junior (in the Montgomery Bus Boycott). The contributions of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Junior will be examined in this study as follows:

#### **2.7.3.1. Gandhi's Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills**

It was Gandhi who made the most significant personal contribution in the history of the nonviolent technique, with his political experiments in the use of noncooperation, disobedience and defiance to control rulers, alter government policies, and undermine political systems (Sharp, 1984, p.82). Gandhi used his nonviolent approach to deal with India's internal problems as well as to combat the British occupation of his country, and he encouraged others to do the like (Sharp, 1984). The provision of the Rowlatt Bill provided for powers of preventive detention - the arrest and confinement of persons suspected of acts threatening public safety, the Act further provided that "dangerous" persons could be continuously detained (Hare & Blumberg, 1969).

One of the well known uses of Satyagraha ("truth force") took place at Vykom in South India in 1924 and 1925 which was conducted by Gandhi supporters to gain right for the untouchables (Sharp, 1984).

#### **2.7.3.2. The Vykom (1924-25)**

The untouchables had for centuries, been forbidden to use a particular road leading directly to their quarter because it passed an orthodox Brahman temple (Sharp, 1984; Hare & Blumberg, 1969). Together with the untouchable friends, Gandhi walked down the road and stopped in front of the temple (Sharp, 1984). Orthodox Hindus attacked them severely, and some of the demonstrators were arrested. Volunteers then poured in from all parts of India;

in stopping the crowds the government ordered the police to barricade the road (Sharp, 1984). The social reformers stood in an attitude of prayer before the barrier, pleading with the police to allow them to pass. The actionist groups organized day and night shifts, while pledging themselves to nonviolence and refuse to withdraw until the Brahmins government recognizes the right of the untouchables to use the freeway. As time pass the rainy season came and the road was flooded, but the demonstrators didn't budge, they stood by their posts, shortening each shift to three hours between replacements. The water reached their shoulders, while police manning the barrier took boats. After six months the Brahmins government gave in and said "We cannot any longer resist the prayers that have been made to us, and we are ready to receive the untouchables" (Sharp, 1984, p.83).

In this study, the Vykom struggle taught me that the journey of nonviolence is not a short cut to receive desired freedom. While engaging on nonviolent methods the social reformers needed to be familiar with some of the worst experiences of using the nonviolent methods in an attempt to change attitudes and feelings of the evil doers. In an attempt to remove the similar restrictions elsewhere, Gandhi engaged in a struggle against British domination. In so doing Gandhi announced the Gandhi's theory of power (Sharp, 1984).

#### **2.7.3.3. Gandhi's theory of power**

Gandhi is better known for his struggles against British domination (Kumar, 2010). In these struggles he operated on the basis of a view of power based on his newly developed approach to conflict – satyagraha – upon a theory of power (Sharp, 1984; Kumar, 2003). In Gandhi's view, if the maintenance of an unjust or nondemocratic regime depends on the cooperation, submission and obedience of the populace, then the means for changing it lies in the noncooperation, defiance and disobedience of that populace (Hare and Blumberg, 1968). These, he was convinced, could be undertaken without the use of violence or hostility toward the opponent group (Sharp, 1984).

In his nonviolence theory, Gandhi inspired many social reformers like Dr Martin Luther King, Junior, Chief Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela and others. Gandhi was assassinated while leading a movement to extend human rights by nonviolence (Hare & Blumberg, 1969).

#### **2.7.3.4. The Montgomery Bus Boycott: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Dr. Martin Luther King was internationally recognized for his work in the American civil rights movement (Kumar, 2003). The many awards he had received include the Nobel Peace Prize. Like Gandhi, he was assassinated while leading a movement to extend human rights by nonviolence (Hare & Blumberg, 1969).

From the beginning a basic philosophy guided the movement (to boycott the segregated Montgomery, Alabama, buses), the guiding principle has since been referred to various nonviolent resistance, noncooperation and passive resistance (Hare & Blumberg, 1969; Kumar, 2010). Hare & Blumberg (1969) reported that in the first days of the protest none of nonviolence expressions were mentioned; the phrase most often heard was “Christian love.” It was the sermon on the Mount, rather than a doctrine of passive resistance, that initially inspired Negroes of Montgomery to dignified social action (Hare and Blumberg, 1969). It was Jesus Christ of Nazareth that stirred the Negroes to protest with the creative weapon of love (Hare & Blumberg, 1969; Sharp, 1984; Kumar, 2010).

As the days unfolded, however, the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi began to exert its influence. Martin Luther King, who first perceived cowardice in nonviolence, after carefully examining the Gandhian approach of nonviolent resistance, came to the conclusion that it was a potent philosophy with real potential (Kumar, 2003). After hearing stories about Gandhi, King became extremely enthused about the Mahatma's ideas. He felt compelled to expand

his knowledge of Gandhi and after reading a number of his books, began to lose his skepticism about the power of love (Kumar, 2003).

In his nonviolent theory King made it clear that the nonviolent register seeks to attack the evil system rather than individuals who happen to be caught up in the system (Ayres, 1993). The struggle is rather between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness (Ayres, 1993). And if there is a victory it will not be a victory merely for fifty thousand Afro-American, but it will be a victory for justice, a victory for good will, a victory for democracy (Ayres, 1993).

In this study positive liberty model / non-violence model is viewed as one of viable models which can be applied successfully in schools with an ultimate goal of managing and reducing violence in schools. Research by Mncube, (2004) concurs with this notion that schools have custodial responsibilities to maintain peace and safety in schools.

## **2.8. CONCLUSION**

This chapter gave a view of the literature on violence that contributes to the current disciplinary problems experienced in schools nationwide. The researcher examined the nature of different forms of school-based violence, providing an overview of what seems to be a worldwide phenomenon in playing an integral role in the breakdown of school discipline. In order to come to a better understanding of what perpetuates aggression in learners and violence in schools, different theoretical perspectives were also discussed. The next chapter deals with the research methodology.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The research and methodology chapter comprise of a research design or plan on how the researcher went about collecting and analyzing data. This was explored in order to discover the relationship between the literature findings and the current research. The plan or methodology was used to collect data to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the dynamics of violence in two Phoenix township schools?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of educators, learners, school governing bodies and support staff about violence in two Phoenix township schools?
3. What measures are taken by two Phoenix schools to promote a violence-free environment?

#### **3.2. Paradigms**

With reference to Guba & Lincoln (1994), paradigms focus on answering questions related to ontology, epistemology and methodology. The main paradigms are positivist, interpretivist and critical paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 2006).

##### **3.2.1. Positivist Paradigm**

Mertens (1998) states that in the positivist paradigm, researchers believe that the social world can be studied in the same way as the natural world.

*Ontology:* Positivists acknowledge that there is only one reality that exists and it is the responsibility of the researcher to discover that reality. They further believe that the world is ordered and operates according to scientific laws (Robson, 2002; Mertens, 1998).

*Epistemology:* Positivists are of the belief that the inquirer and the inquired people were independent of each other. They argue that the researcher should remain neutral in order to prevent values and biases in influencing their studies (Mertens, 1998).

*Methodology:* It is noted that positivists borrowed their experimental methods from natural sciences (Mertens, 1998).

### **3.2.2. Critical Paradigm**

This is concerned with the critical meanings of experiences as they relate to gender, race, class and other kinds of social oppression (Maree, 2010, p.21).

*Ontology:* In this paradigm more stress is placed on the influence of cultural, political, social, gender, ethnic, economic and disability values when reality is constructed (Mertens, 1998).

*Epistemology:* Mertens (1998) regards the relationship between the researchers and the participants as interactive. He maintains that this relationship should be empowering to those who are powerless.

*Methodology:* Researchers aligning themselves within the critical paradigm believe that it is essential to involve the participants in the planning, conduct, analysis, interpretation and the use of the research (Mertens, 1998).

### **3.2.3. Interpretivist Paradigm**

This study is located within the interpretive paradigm. Some scholars refer to Interpretivism as constructivism (Denscombe, 2005). Interpretivism provides a framework for researchers to study and understand people's beliefs, values, meaning making, experiences, attitudes and self-studying (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). For this study, I investigated the perceptions and experiences of learners, educators and school governing bodies that have a bearing on violence in their schools and explained how they are affected by violence.

*Ontology:* Whilst positivists seek to find the truth which is one reality, researchers operating within the interpretive paradigm believe that a



phenomenon under investigation is underpinned by multiple realities (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). Interpretivists are of the belief that people understand and make meaning of realities in their minds (Denscombe, 2005). Such realities are influenced by the context and experience of those who construct them (Guba, 1994).

*Epistemology:* Interpretivists believe that the researcher and the participants are interdependent in that they influence each other in producing knowledge (Guba, 1990). This means that the Interpretivist strives to understand a phenomenon from the participants' point of view. The phenomenon of school violence is understood from the point of the various stakeholders.

*Methodology:* In relation to the methodology, Interpretivists use qualitative methods and use data collection methods that include interviews, observations and document reviews (Denscombe, 2005; Henning et al, 2004). Data collection methods used in this study were interviews, observation and document reviews.

### **3.3. The qualitative approach**

This study adopted a qualitative methodology because it is concerned about understanding the effects of violence in schools rather than to test variables (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Qualitative methodology allowed me to collect rich and thick data with the aim of uncovering and understanding the dynamics of violence (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The data generated used multiple sources that included interviews, observation and document reviews (Creswell, 2008). Fraenkel & Wallen (2007) contend that qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting. In line with that, this study was conducted in two schools namely Alpha Primary School and Omega Primary School that served as the natural contexts where the participants were interviewed and observed. In addition, since qualitative research is dynamic in the sense that the initial plan may change during the process of research (Creswell, 2008) some aspects of the research project could have changed while the focus of this study did not change.

To further substantiate the researcher's adoption of engaging in the use of a qualitative research approach, reference is made to Fouche & Delport (2002, p.79) who state that the qualitative research paradigm in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits participants' accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions.

I as the researcher explored how educators, learners, school governing bodies and support staff were coping with violence in their schools. This study drew on the interpretive paradigm. The reason for this is that the central aspects within the interpretive paradigm are "to capture the lives of the participants in order to understand and to interpret meaning" (Henning et al, 2004, p.19). This means that I tried to access the participants' personal thoughts and feelings about the topic. The researcher was interested in understanding their (participants) experiences, attitudes and behavior in dealing with violence at their schools. Therefore the interpretive paradigm was best suited to the study as the interpretive paradigm "assumes that reality is not objectively determined, but is socially constructed" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.58). The underlying assumption was that by studying the participants in their social contexts, there was a greater opportunity for the researcher to access and understand their own experiences and perceptions. The researcher made an effort to gather as much of the true feelings, beliefs and ideals, experiences, thoughts and actions of the participants as possible, as suggested by McMillan & Schumacher (2006, p.373).

Qualitative research was considered to be an appropriate approach for this study because it enabled the researcher to gain an understanding and insight into the challenges that educators and learners experience regarding acts of violent issues at school and into how this can be curtailed to foster a safe and conducive learning environment for all.

### **3.4. Research approach: Case study**

According to Bromley (1990, p.302), a case study research is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. Yin (1984, p.23) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. From an interpretive perspective, the typical characteristic of case studies is that they strive towards a holistic understanding of how the participants relate and interact with one another in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study (Niewenhuis, 2007, p.75).

The case study approach was used to gather the descriptive data that I required since this research study was located within a social and human setting namely the schools with all the stakeholders being people affected by violence. Henning (2004, p.36), states that the methodology used must have a "goodness of fit". This view is further supported by Cohen et al (2007, p.253) who claims that a distinguishing feature of case studies is that human systems have a wholeness or integrity to them, rather than being a loose connection of traits necessitating an in-depth investigation. The focus was narrowed to a small number of learners, educators and members of the school governing bodies who provided me with data of this nature. Maree (2010, p.75) states that a case study is a bounded system (Merriman, 1988) and that it does not necessarily imply that one site is only studied (Schumacher & McMillan, 1989). This case study involved an in depth analysis of the *status quo* of violence in each of the two schools selected.

An advantage of using a case study is that the data is ascertained directly from the source. Cohen & Manion (2008, p.253) state that case studies penetrate

situations in ways that are not susceptible to numerical analysis. They list the strengths of case studies as:

- the results are more easily understood by a wide audience as they are written in non-academic language
- they speak for themselves
- they catch unique features
- they are strong on reality
- they provide insights into other cases
- they can be undertaken by a single researcher and can embrace and build in unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables.

Nieuwenhuis (2007, p.76) states that the key strength of the case study method is the use of multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process. The researcher determines in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use with the data to answer the research question. According to Cohen & Manion (2008, p.253) the following weaknesses may prevail when using a case study:

- The results generated may not be generalized.
- They are not easily open to cross-checking hence they may be selective and subjective and they are prone to problems of observer bias (Cohen & Manion, 2008, p.253).

As a researcher, I was aware of the limitations of the proposed designs. I intended to prevent these challenges from affecting the quality of the study by eliminating bias views. Cross-checking through triangulation assisted to validate the findings.

### **3.5. Sampling**

It was difficult to obtain information from all members in a given population, therefore sampling was used. According to (Gorard, 2001, p.10) the purpose of

sampling is to use a relatively small number of cases (the sample) to find out about a much larger number being the population. Terre Blanche (2006) concurs that sampling is the process of selecting cases to observe.

According to Maree (2010, p.79) sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for study and qualitative research is generally based on purposive sampling. With reference to Maree, purposive sampling simply means that the participants who have been selected have some defining characteristics that make them the holders of data that is required for the study. He also states that sampling decisions are therefore made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions. According to Black (1999), purposeful sampling involves the researcher hand-picking the participants based on the exact characteristics in order to develop a sample that is large enough yet possesses the required traits. Likewise, Cohen & Manion (2008, p.114) state that researchers handpick the cases to be included in their sample on the basis of their judging of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. In this way they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs.

In this research project the researcher contacted the schools involved and informed them about the research project. Purposive sampling was used in special situations where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind (Maree, 2010, p.178). In many cases purposive sampling is used in order to access "knowledgeable people", those who have an in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, expertise or experience (Ball, 1994, p.114).

Purposive sampling was best suited to this study as it ensured that the participant who would be of value to the study could be selected. From the 96 schools in the township of Phoenix, KwaZulu-Natal, two primary schools were chosen. This section focuses on describing case study schools. Fictitious

names are used in order to protect the identity of the chosen schools selected. Criteria used for selection was based on anecdotal evidence of incidences. This evidence was garnered from media reports and conversations with critical friends (educators, principals, ward managers and school governors). The schools were chosen on their basis of being violent as per discussion with critical friends mentioned above. In addition, most of the media reports always mention the names of these schools. Further, based on the criteria, all the schools identified as violent in Phoenix Township were put on the short list and the two most convenient schools in terms of access and proximity to the researcher were finally chosen. The two research sites were visited to seek permission from the principals and school governing bodies. Letters granting the researcher permission to conduct research from the Department of Education KZN, Research Section, Pietermaritzburg, were given to each school.

### **3.6. The two schools selected for the research**

The two schools selected were Alpha Primary and Omega Primary and both schools are located in poor areas serving indigent learners. A short description of the two school case studies indicates why they are fertile contexts for violence. More detailed descriptions of incidents in each school will be conveyed through analyses of interviews, observations and school documents in the next chapter.

#### **3.6.1. Case Study 1: Alpha Primary School**

##### **3.6.1.1. Situation**

This is a co-educational township school attended by learners of all races with the large majority (almost 90%) being Indian. It has 543 learners from grades R to 7. It appears to be a relatively advantaged school with very neat buildings. It has 20 educators. The school is walled and has a security guard.

This school is situated in a former Indian (now very mixed with all races) residential township of Phoenix about 10 kilometers away from central seaside city of Durban which is the bustling hub of tourists to KwaZulu Natal. Phoenix

has 21 sections of low cost dwellings and each section or unit has a name. This school is in unit 11 which is called Whetstone which is in the heart or centre of the township. The area in which this school is located has been dubbed by the local media as the “drug capital” of Phoenix. There are many drug lords or peddlers around the school and learners easily relate stories of how they are used as “runners” by their parents to sell, deliver or buy drugs. About 5% are self employed and they are engaged in small businesses from homes eg. car wash and motor mechanics.

#### 3.6.1.2. Funding

Almost half the learners receive child support grants or are in foster care with relatives like grandmothers. Learners who receive social grants are exempt by law The South African Schools Act, (DoE, 1996a) from paying school fees. As a result the income from fees is low and with just a meager subsidy of about R35 000 per annum from the state, the school engages in fundraising drives and depend on generous donors to keep the school open. The school has a good income from fundraising that provides resources. It is ranked as a quintile 5 school. According to Lauren Anthony of the Northglen News (2011, p.3) schools are presently divided into five quintiles with quintile five being the most affluent schools and quintile one having almost nothing. The quintile is essentially the poverty score of a school and is based on the poverty level of the community the school is situated in. This is determined using data relating to income per household, unemployment rates and education levels in surrounding communities. The quintile system aims to ensure that poor families and communities are able to access quality education. The system divides all schools in the country into five categories (quintiles) that are funded differentially per learner per year. Quintile five schools receive R165 per learner per year and quintile one learners around R944 per year. The anomalies are primarily associated with schools in the same socio-economic areas having different quintile classifications. This often means that learners who are equally poor receive different levels of support from the state.

#### 3.6.1.3. Infrastructure (buildings, fences, walls, toilets)

The school buildings are 35 years old but have been renovated to give it an overall good appearance. The roofs have been painted and an assembly cover was erected. The school has 20 classrooms, all being used. It has 15 girls' and 15 boys' toilets. There are 3 female staff toilets and 2 male staff toilets. The toilets for boys and girls are adjacent and there are reports that boys sneak into girls toilets especially during lesson time when there are no teachers and prefects on duty. Because the toilets are isolated, learners also “bunk” lessons and hide in the toilets. Toilets are frequently dysfunctional and the overwhelming stench is discomforting. The school also has an office block, library, computer room and sports grounds. The premises are protected by a wall that is 1.5 meters high and the two access gates are locked.

#### 3.6.1.4. Security Measures

The school has employed a guard through a security company from 7h00 to 15h00 which is the time by which the staff leaves the premises. The guard is intended to protect the lives of those present at school. He is exposed to all weather conditions as he is stationed at the main gate on a chair. He is unarmed but has a radio to make contact with his offices in an emergency. They cannot afford a guard to protect buildings after school hours. As a result the school is plagued with break-ins and huge asset losses like computers. The locks to gates and doors are easily broken during the night. A cleaner lives on the premises and doubles up as a night-watchman. The frequent thieving is blatantly the work of neighboring residents to steal a few items who feed their bad habits like drugs.

#### 3.6.1.5. Socio-economic status of learners

The school is situated in a low income residential area where most family income is in the low income range. The houses are mainly two-bedroom flats that accommodate families of about 10. All houses are designed the same by the municipality and are referred to “scheme” homes. Some learners come to



school without a meal and this school does not receive a nutrition subsidy from the state. A local church provides lunches for hungry learners. The group that takes these daily lunches is usually the ones that are in trouble. They are prone to fighting, swearing and stealing. Their parents never report to school when requested because either they are not around or they just cannot be bothered to hear about their kids. They have abdicated their parental responsibilities for many reasons.

### **3.6.2. Case Study 2: Omega Primary School**

#### **3.6.2.1. Situation**

This is a co-educational township school in Phoenix. It is attended by learners of all races with the large majority being African. It has 520 learners from grades R to 7. It is a disadvantaged school with dilapidated buildings. It has 16 educators. The school was opened in 1981 which makes it 31 years old. The school is about 10 kilometers from the city of Durban which is a big town of KwaZulu Natal. The school is situated in Phoenix Township, unit 10 or also called Redfern. The school is on the border of the Phoenix Township and the informal settlement of Amouti. On the one side of the road is low-cost housing and on the opposite side of the main road are self-help houses with communal sanitation and complete dirt roads. Most learners (almost 95%) come from the side of the road with the informal houses and huts. Close to the school are informal vendors, salons and liquor outlets. The taxi rank opposite the school causes a great disturbance to the learners because of the loud music, constant revving of engines and loud chatting from commuters and drivers waiting for taxi loads.

#### **3.6.2.2. Funding**

The school does not have funds to provide security measures like walls and a guard. It is also ranked as a quintile 5 school. For this school with its extremely low poverty levels it is an injustice that it is classified quintile 5 which has a

meager income of about R30 000 from the state per annum, no nutrition scheme, no security guards and no cleaners.

#### 3.6.2.3. Infrastructure (buildings, fences, walls, toilets)

The school looks very dilapidated with worn out paint and broken windows. Graffiti has insults at teachers with their names written on the walls. The vulgar language has not been removed. The structural layout of the building is not conducive for tight control. The classrooms are near the gate allowing for quick exits for learners who are playing truant and the office block is enmeshed among trees further up the school away from all the crowds. As a result the management is away from where misdemeanors occur. The school grounds are also very large and away from the school buildings. During breaks the grounds are a hotspot for violence. Incidents of dissent are carried onto the grounds and violence occurs. Also the breaks are too long giving learners more time for trouble. The two teachers on duty can barely see what goes on in distant ends of the grounds. The school does not have boundary walls but fences that have holes. Outsiders creep through the fences. Nothing is safe at school, not even computers or exercise books as vagrants, trespassers and thieves make their way into the premises at night.

#### 3.6.2.4. Security measures

The school cannot afford a guard but it uses a cleaner to double up for gate control during school hours. When someone approaches the gate and hoots or yells then the old man runs to the gate to open it. He is unarmed (not even a whistle or baton). One gate is used for vehicles and pedestrians.

#### 3.6.2.5. Socio-economic status of learners

Most learners do not eat before coming to school so they cannot pay attention with empty stomachs. Churches again have been requested to provide peanut butter or jam sandwiches (2 slices) per child. Most parents are unemployed and almost every learner receives grants. The school fees of R500 are not paid

by 80% of the learners because their parents just cannot afford to do so. At least 50% of the parents work as casual domestics because they are not educated to have better jobs. This labor brings in about R1000 per month for food and essentials. Poor learners are prone to stealing especially stationery because they cannot afford to buy these themselves. At least half the learners live with grandmothers or by themselves. The AIDS statistics for this area (as acquired from the Whetstone Community Health clinic nurses) is that at least 40% of the patients attending that clinic are HIV positive. This is an indicator of the high HIV statistics in this area. AIDS has resulted in many parents dying and little siblings are left to take care of each other. These child-headed households are perfect breeding grounds for violence because without adult supervision the children join gangs, engage in bad habits and spend most time after school in groups at taverns.

### **3.7. Instruments for data collection**

#### **3.7.1. Interviews**

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2008, p.252-253) in their definition of an interview, state that an interpersonal encounter with people are more likely to disclose aspects of themselves, their thoughts, their feelings and values, than they would in a less human situation. At least for some purposes, it is necessary to generate a kind of conversation in which the informant feels at ease. In other words, the distinctively human element in the interview is necessary for its validity.

A face-to-face interview was conducted by the researcher with educators, non educators, learners and governing bodies in order to seek greater depth and to elaborate and generate qualitative data on detailed views and opinions regarding situations of violence in the respective schools selected.

According to Maree (2010, p.87), the aim of a qualitative interview is to see the world through the eyes of the participant as they can be a valuable source of information, provided that they are used correctly. He further contends that if the participants you are interviewing think that the topic is of importance and that they trust you, they will give you information that you will not be able to collect in any other way.

The data that I planned to collect was basically descriptive in nature and it reflected on the experiences of the participating principals, educators and school governing body members, learners and support staff of Alpha and Omega Primary Schools respectively. The methods of data collection needed to ensure that the participants are provided with the latitude and freedom to engage in the discussion from their own point of view in as much detail as they chose. Individual interviews were therefore the most appropriate method for data collection within this study, as they were successful in capturing the holistic experiences of the chosen participants. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007, p.87) an interview is a two way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviors of the participant. Cohen, et al (2007, p.349) state that interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view.

Maree (2010, p.87) concurs by stating that an interview is a valuable source of information as we see the world through the eyes of the participant. It obtains rich descriptive data. This research used a structured interview where questions were detailed and developed in advance. It ensured consistency in the data collection. The interviews were conducted with the Governing body chairpersons (x2), chairpersons of the safety and disciplinary committee (DSSC) (x2), the school principals (x2), the life orientation educators of grade seven (x2), 5 learners (x2) who were victims of violence and 5 learners (x2) who

were perpetrators of violence in individual interviews in each school, cleaners (x2), clerks (x2) and security guards (x2). The interviews were conducted in quiet libraries that were free from a busy and noisy environment that eliminated any form of disruptions. Participants were informed accordingly of the date, time and venue of the interview to be conducted. The interviews were recorded on tape. The use of the tape-recorder allowed me to capture verbatim the words of the participant. Interviews captured on the recorder gave me the latitude to replay the recordings as often as is necessary to elicit the required data necessary for complete and objective analysis (Best & Khan, 1989).

One disadvantage of an interview was that it was time consuming. Another drawback was that possibly during the interview, the interviewer may have misinterpreted what the interviewee/participant was saying, therefore to minimize this each interview was tape-recorded so that I was able to recheck and listen carefully to the responses while completing transcripts. According to (Cohen et al, 2000) interviews are limited to the spoken word and to the inferences made by the interviewer. There is a possibility of bias creeping into interviews since interviewers are human and their mannerisms could have an effect on the interviewee. Bell (2003) contends that interviewing can pose a challenge considering that researchers have not found it easy to strike a balance between complete objectivity and trying to put the interviewee at ease. As a researcher I took cognizance of these limitations and deliberately avoided succumbing to these shortfalls.

The sample for interviews in each school comprised of the following:

- Educators: A purposive sample of two educators (the school principal and the life orientation educator in the Grade 7 classes).
- School Governing Body: A purposive sample of 2 representatives of school governing bodies (the chairman of the school's Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) and the chairman of the SGB).

- Learners: 5 learners who were victims of school violence and 5 learners who were perpetrators of violence.
- Support staff: A purposive sample of one cleaner, clerk or security guard.

At the interviews I recorded the discussions and then transcribed the data when I got home on the same day while all information was fresh. There were no translations as all participants spoke English which I had checked before. The transcripts were analyzed where there was a re-reading and redundancies were eliminated, language transformed into the language of science and the insights synthesized into a description. Joseph (1998, p.11) states that questions posed carefully yields useful information. This instrument (interviews) is time-consuming yet highly effective because of the immediate verification of information. Greater sincerity in answers is evident because the integrity of the respondent will be kept in check.

### **3.7.2. Observation**

Observation is an everyday activity where we use our senses and intuition to gather bits of information. It is a systematic process of recording behavioral patterns without questioning or communicating (Maree, 2010, p.84). Wiersma (1991, p.77) defines observation as a research technique which utilizes direct contact between the researcher and the phenomenon under investigation. The purpose of using observation as part of data collection strategy is to observe the participants in their natural habitat when they administer measures that may ensure school safety and security functionalities. This assisted the researcher to gather information (data) as written field notes on a first hand basis that was unbiased and accurate. According to Robson (2002, p.310), what people do may differ from what they say and do. Robson also states that observation provides a reality check and that it enables a researcher to look afresh at everyday behavior that otherwise might be taken for granted or go unnoticed.

I was a complete observer. As a non-participant I looked at the situation from a distance. This was the least obtrusive form of observation. I used an observation schedule. The advantages of observation according to (Robson, 2002) are:

- Observation is a direct technique. The researcher is not required to ask people but only listens to what the participants say and watch what they do.
- The researcher gets the real life in the real world.

One of the main disadvantages of observation is that there is a great possibility for the observer to affect the situation being observed, meaning that there could be artificiality in the actions of those observed. Observers are often accused of choosing "rose-tinted glasses or foggy ones". The observer sees the world through the type of lenses he chooses. I did strive to be neutral in my observations. An observation is also time-consuming because the researcher must record every detail of what is observed. During my observation visits I wrote down information concerning how the educators, learners, SGB parents and support staff are coping with the school violence.

### **3.7.3. Documentation**

Documents are useful in rendering more visible the phenomena under study (Prior, 2003, p.87). According to Bailey (1994, p.294), documents can enable the researcher to reach inaccessible persons or subjects. Bailey also contends that documents are also useful as it may show how situations have evolved over time. Prior (2006, p.26) states that the researcher has to exercise extreme caution when using documents considering that documents are interpretations of events. Documents as a data gathering technique focused on all types of written communications that shed light on the phenomenon (incidents of violence) that was being investigated.

In order to gain a broad spectrum of the incidents of violence presented in the schools under study, the researcher perused through documentation made available by the school principal. The list of documentation that was requested for is as follows:

1. The school's code of conduct.
2. The office discipline records.
3. Class misconduct record.
4. Letters to parents in cases of violent incidents.
5. Ground duty record book.
6. Policies dealing with violence.
7. SGB minutes related to security issues.
8. Minutes of DSS committee.

Maree (2010, p.83), states that the researcher should take care to evaluate the authenticity and accuracy of the records before using them as not all information is accurate and authentic. He also states that not everything that gets written in a report is factually correct.

Nieuwenhuis (2007) guides the researcher when selecting documents by ensuring that the researcher is aware of the main points or arguments put forward and how they relate to the study in context. Using different data collecting methods of the same study is referred to as methodological triangulation. Cohen et al (2000, p.114) state that triangulation involves the use of more than one method in the pursuit of a given objective. This improves the validity of the measures of the same objective by using interviews, observation and documentation. The more the outcomes of one research tool correspond with the outcomes of another, the more confident the researcher becomes about his or her findings.



### Summary of data collection

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Alpha Primary</b>	<b>Omega Primary</b>
Interviews(Use of structured questionnaires)	Principal, LO Educator, DSSC Chair, SGB chair, 5 learners who were victims, 5 learners who were perpetrators, cleaner, security guard	Principal, LO Educator, DSSC Chair, SGB chair, 5 learners who were victims, 5 learners who were perpetrators, cleaner, security guard
Observation (Use of observation schedule)	2 school visits	2 school visits
School Documentation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school's code of conduct.</li> <li>2. The office discipline records.</li> <li>3. Class misconduct record.</li> <li>4. Letters to parents in violent incidents.</li> <li>5. Ground duty record book.</li> <li>6. Policies dealing with violence.</li> <li>7. SGB minutes related to security issues.</li> <li>8. Minutes of DSS com.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school's code of conduct.</li> <li>2. The office discipline records.</li> <li>3. Class misconduct record.</li> <li>4. Letters to parents in violent incidents.</li> <li>5. Ground duty record book.</li> <li>6. Policies dealing with violence.</li> <li>7. SGB minutes related to security issues.</li> <li>8.Minutes of DSS com.</li> </ol>

### **3.8. Issues of quality in research**

#### **3.8.1. Validity and Reliability**

Trustworthiness refers to the way in which the inquirer is able to persuade the audience that the findings in the study are worth paying attention to and that the research is of a high quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability on the other hand refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did occur as the researcher says they did (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002, p.64). Mayan (2001) describes validity as the accurate presentation of a particular context or event as described by the researcher. The researcher tried to ensure that the findings were believable and convincing to add to the credibility of this study.

Maree (2010, p.80) states that a measure or instrument is said to be valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity and reliability in a qualitative research refers to research that is credible and trustworthy. Maree (2010, p.80) includes credibility and dependability as key criteria of trustworthiness. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.316) claims that there can be no validity without reliability. The credibility and trustworthiness of the research instruments are crucial in the qualitative research. These terms refer to the research being trustworthy and credible. According to Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2006, p.62) credible research produces findings that are convincing and believable. They add that triangulation is a strategy used to enhance the findings of the research.

#### **3.8.2. Triangulation**

Triangulation involves checking of information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data (Mertens, 1998, p.183). According to Stake (2000, p.443) triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. In using triangulation of three sources of data (in this study being interviews,

observations and documentation) any exception found in the data could lead to a modification. Also the veracity of the data is confirmed through various sources one being checked against the others. In this study the findings from the interviews, observations and school documentation were checked against each other as a test of veracity. Furthermore, the researcher did strive to eliminate any bias that might be brought to the study by reflecting on the research process (Creswell, 2003).

### **3.9. Limitations/ Constraints of this study**

Some of the many challenges facing the researcher in this study were: It is limited to the township of Phoenix. While school violence is prevalent in many South African townships just one township on the South African map has been identified for this study. This is a very small slice of the reality of township schools. The study hopes to project that the events of the two Phoenix schools epitomize other township schools which may not really be true for all. The study researches events in two primary schools. While incidents of violence prevail in both primary and secondary schools the study implies that the situations in the primary schools are the same in secondary schools. The researcher had to rely on the authenticity of the data provided by educators, parents of governing bodies, learners, non-educators and principals. The other sources of written data are the school documents and the local media, particularly the newspapers. The researcher encountered more constraints as the data was collected and analyzed. The researcher had to accept the information and only after triangulation prove its validity.

### **3.10. Ethical considerations**

Correspondence, in the form of letters, was sent to the Superintendent General in KwaZulu Natal Department of Education seeking permission to conduct this research. The letters sent to the two principals (Addendums A and B) were similar to the letter sent to the superintendent. The correspondence outlined the nature of this study and also explained that participation would be

voluntary and that at no time the names of their schools would be disclosed nor would the names of the participants be used or mentioned in any way in this study. Strydom (2002, p.63) states that anyone involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreements about what is proper and improper in scientific research. There is a need to guard against the harmful effects of research. According to Mouton (2001, p.238) the ethics of science concerns what is right in the conduct of research. Because scientific research is a form of human conduct, it follows that such conduct has to conform to generally accepted norms and values. Some of the ethical considerations that the researcher has given to this study are discussed below.

#### **3.10.1. Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity**

With reference to Burns (2000) both the researcher and participant must have a clear understanding regarding the confidentiality of the results and findings of the study. All the participants' information and responses acquired during the process of data collection will be treated as private and the results will be made available for perusal in an anonymous manner in order to protect the identities of the selected participants. There will be non-disclosure of participants or schools. The participants in this study were informed in writing that their anonymity and privacy would be treated ethically and confidentially.

#### **3.10.2. Consent**

Leedy & Ormrod (2005, p.101) state that research participants should be told of the nature of the study to be conducted and given the choice of either participating or not. At the beginning the researcher undertook to briefly explain to the various participants chosen, the purpose of the research that is being conducted and emphasized the fact that they may withdraw at any time. The researcher obtained the participants consent without any form of coercion. Cohen *et al.* (2000, p.61) assert that if researchers intend to probe into the private aspects of individuals' lives, their intentions should be made clear and informed consent should be sought from those who are involved. For this

study, official permission was obtained in writing from the Department of Education to conduct this research. Letters were also written to all the schools asking for their consent to conduct a survey at their schools, and explaining the purpose of the study as well as the procedures to be followed during the research process. Schools were given copies of the letter that granted permission to research.

### **3.10.3. Protection**

The researcher ensured that participants were not exposed to any undue physical or psychological harm, nor were they subjected to unusual stress, embarrassment or loss of self-esteem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The researcher did strive to be honest, reliable, respectful and sympathetic towards all the participants. The participants were protected by ensuring their anonymity and secrecy.

**3.10.4. Information:** Participants were informed of how the data would be used.

**3.10.5. Debriefing:** Participants would be debriefed after the research is completed.

**3.10.6. Approval:** As a researcher I needed to get approval from review boards.

**3.10.7. Permission:** Consent was obtained from the Department of Education, principals of schools and participants. The researcher also asked for permission before doing the interviews to use a tape recorder; the recordings were only used to transcribe the data and then securely stored where they would not fall into the hands of others.

**3.10.8. Publication:** The researcher assured the publisher that the data was gathered with all due ethical considerations.

### **3.11. Conclusion**

This chapter described the research design and methodology that was used in collecting data for this investigation into school violence. The next chapter deals with the findings and discussions of the data that was collected. It also deals with the choice of the three instruments (see addendums) that were used for triangulation. The data comprises of the answers to pre-developed questions in the instruments that will be discussed accordingly in chapter 4.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Findings and Discussion**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Chapter three discussed the choice of data collection instruments in this qualitative study. This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the data collected. School violence takes many forms. From daily media reports and in conversations with educators it was learnt that in high schools in South Africa many educators face the challenges of intoxicated and violent learners. Sexual abuse is common among learners. The media coverage both in print and visual indicate that the spectrum of violent acts is wide in South African schools.

For purposes of this research I confined my investigation to the types of violence that were prevalent in the two Phoenix primary schools. On analyses of the data from interviews, observations from recordings in the schedules and school documents, there was not a single episode of sexual violence or murder reported in both schools. Also, corporal punishment was not recorded in documents or mentioned in the interviews or observed on visits. The common violent acts by the 5 to 13 year old learners in Alpha and Omega Primary Schools only are analyzed.

#### **4.2. Themes that emerged from data**

The data collected manifested into the following themes which will be discussed using all three instruments and varying stakeholders depending on their topic. For example in drugs and alcohol abuse the interviews by all persons are used and not observation schedules.

- Bullying and intimidation
- Gang related violence

- Drugs and alcohol abuse
- Use of dangerous weapons and physical violence
- Vandalism

#### **4.2.1. Bullying and intimidation**

##### 4.2.1.1. What kind of violence occurs in your school?

This question was posed to victims, educators, governing bodies and support staff. It was reported by all educators, governing bodies, support staff and learners who were victims, that the most common form of violence is bullying and intimidation. This subtle or covert way of harassing learners do not always get noticed by the educators yet the victims are traumatized. The omission by the school management members and the school governing bodies to take action against bullying make children more vulnerable to perpetrators. In both schools the interviewees reported that on a daily basis, parents inform them that their children, who are often bright learners, do not want to come to school.

A letter in the office file from a parent from Alpha Primary illustrates the effects of bullying and it reads:

*My 6 year old child complained of stomach aches and was even bringing on spewing attacks in the morning just to stay at home. Only on investigation did I learn that my son is afraid to attend school. He then told me how a boy in his class kicked him on his private part. He was very sore and after we noticed blood in his urine I had to take him to the urologist for treatment. I have the blood results as proof.*

Such reports confirms that there is bullying at Alpha Primary and it also confirms Harber's view (2004) that violence causes children to play truant from school. The educators and governing body members who were interviewed from



both schools corroborated the fact that bullying is rampant. The support staff members stated that they see learners being harassed and intimidated daily. The principal of Omega Primary stated that he sees learners crying and only when they are questioned they state how they have been mocked and bullied. They are afraid to complain for fear that the bullies will come back for them.

#### 4.2.1.2. How does the violence affect the learners?

The Principal of Omega Primary confirmed that some parents had to endure costs for psychological therapy and some had to resort to transferring their children to other schools for fear of their safety.

An educator from Omega Primary stated what the parent of A, who was in grade 4 said:

*For three years I have brought to the attention of the school management that my son comes crying from school because he is being threatened and mocked because he is not bright in class. I have taken him to the Assessment Centre for counseling but it has not helped. I cannot bear this anymore. Today (10March 2012) I am transferring A to the school up the road which will be further for him to travel.*

Another learner from Alpha Primary who was bullied stated in his interview: *I get very sad when my things are taken from me. My tuck shop money is taken from my pocket. My bag gets thrown on the floor. My parents have written letters to the teachers but nothing has been done. The gang of boys wait for me outside the gate.*

#### 4.2.1.3. What forms of bullying and intimidation are prevalent?

The most popular forms of bullying and intimidation that have been detected during observation visits and through responses in the interviews in these two township schools were:

- Swearing and name calling

- Threats (*“I will catch you after school and finish you”*)
- Shoving and hurting (while standing in lines at assembly the victims get punched on the necks or kicked on their shins (called “skopping”))
- Stealing or abusing their valuables (victims have their stationery, bags and money stolen. One learner who was called a “nerd” had his glasses taken off, bent and thrown into the ground, then jeered at to put the broken glasses on).
- Learners use others as their slaves (good learners are “marked” by bullies to do their homework, carry bags, buy lunches and run errands for them like carry messages to girls they like and even take a hiding). This was observed during visits and confirmed by victims during interviews.

During the interviews it became clear that bullying and intimidation among learners is rife (112 incidents recorded in both schools in one year). From the analysis of incidents recorded in each school’s office discipline book for the year 2011 from January to December there was a majority of incidents of bullying and threatening as opposed to the other forms of violence. Bullying is the most popular form of violence because it is covert and evidence or proof is problematic.

Table of violent incidents recorded in Schools Office Discipline Books.

<b>Type of violence</b>	<b>Alpha Primary</b>	<b>Omega Primary</b>
Bullying & intimidation	47	65
Gang-related violence	14	21
Drugs & alcohol abuse	3	15
Use of dangerous weapons	12	27
Vandalism	25	34

The authenticity of these figures depends on the accuracy of the recording in Office Discipline Record books by the educators. It must be noted that most

educators stated that there is no time to fill in records as they get on with teaching even when the episodes occur in their lessons.

During the visits to schools especially during break times I observed that bullying of "weaker" learners by bigger, stronger learners is rife. Times related to bullying in the two schools is corroborated with the findings of the survey by Mansfield & Farris as quoted by Harber (2004) in United States where it was found that school principals considered physical student conflicts to be the most common type of school violence. Harber (2004, p.251) asks, "Do schools then actively try to stop bullying? Evidence suggests that schools are implicated in violence by omission in relation to bullying. A survey of 2772 pupils in Britain in 2000 reported that more than half the respondents had experienced bullying but just under half said their school did not have an anti-bullying policy."

In both schools the interviews with the groups of learners who were victims and the groups of those who were perpetrators yielded vastly differing responses to why violence occurs in their schools. The victims were frustrated and angry that they were targeted. The perpetrators were happy and satisfied that they are getting the attention they wanted. The groups of victims were generally high-fliers and above average learners. They stated that they come to school to study unlike the perpetrators who said that they come to school to have fun with their friends. They look forward to after school fun rather than lesson times. The victims were neatly clad in uniform and stated that they never get into trouble. They like school rules and feel they should be followed. They came from small families with strict parents. They had aspirations to follow exciting professions when they completed schooling. They were excited that were called for the interview as they felt that something should be done to those who hurt them. The groups of perpetrators were generally struggling with their work as many of them had failed in different grades and stated that even when their parents are called because their work is not done their parents do

not come to school. As underachievers some had failed in grades before and they really hated schoolwork. Their uniforms did not comply with the schools' codes of conduct. They did not like rules and said that they do not give their parents the letters when they are called to school. The parents do not have postal addresses or phones so they feel safe this way. They said that their parents are not around always and that they are poor. They were very nervous about the interview. Their answers were short and they were suspicious that I might report what they said to the principals despite my reassuring them that it would not be so.

Some comments from victims were:

- *I do not like school anymore. I just wait for weekends and holidays.(Alpha Primary)*
- *I mind my own business. Why do I have to get kicked and shoved.(Alpha Primary)*
- *I think that someone mistakenly thought that I liked a pretty grade 7 girl because that boy liked her so he got his gang of friends to throw me into the river after school.(Omega Primary)*

#### 4.2.1.4. Does the violence affect the learners' work in any way?

Educators of life orientation in both schools commented during interviews on the decline of victims' academic performances. The victims admitted that they detest school and stopped participation in sports because they tried to get home straight after school. They did not acknowledge that their marks were deteriorating. It is a warning light when a straight "A" learner starts to fail tests because even when he is in school the fear of the violent episode consumes him to the point that his concentration in lessons is diminished. Below is a table of two grade 3 learners whose marks dropped after they were victims of violence and their attendance also declined. Marks in the two key subjects of English and Mathematics are recorded before the episodes and after the episodes of

violence. While just 2 learners were used to illustrate the view that performance is affected, it was stated by educators that most learners show a drop in marks.

	English		Mathematics	
K in Alpha Primary	67	58	73	65
T in Omega Primary	55	39	53	41

Criminally victimized learners often feel abandoned and lack the security of being part of the school. This proves the view of Bartollas (1993, p.278) that crime has a negative impact on the emotional development of the learner. This leads to truancy and disruptive behavior in school and generates so much pain. Some criminal acts of learners cause so much self-rejection.

The experiences of educators (principals and life orientation educators of grade seven classes) were gleaned from my conversations using the same structured interview schedule (see annexures 2, 3, 4 and 5). The educators at Alpha Primary School and Omega Primary School indicated that there are many episodes of bullying and intimidation on a daily basis that have added to them being stressed and having a low morale. In this way even their work performance was being affected daily.

#### 4.2.1.5. How are educators coping with the violence?

A grade 7 LO educator in Alpha Primary stated:

- *We do not complain about the learners' bad behavior because our control of the class is questioned and the blame shifts from the perpetrator to us the educators.*
- *Violence is as a result of the moral decline. There is no respect for authority. The need for equality and democratic rights has made learners change their value-system and mindsets. They show no respect for adult figures in their homes and communities so they do likewise in school.*

The Principal of Omega Primary stated:

- *School violence is causing us unbearable stress. We feel like victims because the violent learners abuse us but little is done to remove the perpetrators. Mrs R, a 52 year old educator was pushed. She was teased and called names by little grade 5 learners. There is little support from parents. Even when letters are sent home parents do not respond. Parents know that their children are troublesome and expect the school to “sort them out”.*
- *Parents who serve on the governing body (five representatives) are not involved in assisting the school. They have left the educators to resolve problems by themselves. Members show little interest and have become “token” members. Parents do not work well with the school because the children who live near the school come late. According to regulation the children are locked out but their parents arrive swearing abuse at the principal, who is always targeted.*

The Principal of Alpha Primary stated:

- *Even detention plans fail because parents have to sign notes granting permission for detention which they simply fail to do. Many of the learners live in child-headed homes so no “parent” can actually sign or call at school. Latecomers were not all the parents’ fault but due to taxis that transport the learners late to school.*
- *There is no support from other educators. There is a view that the educators must teach and only the principal must deal with discipline matters.*
- *There is far too much bureaucracy and red tape to address a violent episode. The class educator has to write a detailed report of the incident in the class misconduct book. We avoid doing this because we are construed as weak educators if episodes occur during our lessons. The learners are not questioned but the educators’ control becomes spotlighted. After the*

*educators report, meetings are held by the disciplinary committee with the defaulting learner and parents. The submissions are made to Circuit offices, then to District Offices, then to the provincial offices. The recommendation for suspension or expulsion is made. According to the Constitution of South Africa no child can be deprived of education. The worst penalty by the Department of Education would be a request to the present principal to find a place in a nearby school for the learner. The Principal does not pass his problem to the next school as an unspoken code of ethics. As a result after all the paper chase and agonizing months of waiting for responses, the child remains in the school as if nothing happened.*

- Understaffed schools find it harder to cope with violence. Fewer educators equal larger classes, which mean that the educator cannot see what all 50 of the learners are up to. The lessons become more lecture type and even if learners are inattentive they are unnoticed. There are no state-paid cleaners and security personnel at both schools. The only non-educator is the one clerk appointed by the state in each school. The school governing bodies pay for cleaning services and the same cleaners double up as security guards.*
- The school enjoys no support from other organizations for example the rate of drug-lords is increasing yet the South African Police Services (SAPS) are not cleaning up the community. The police services as a whole in South Africa is riddled with corruption and the crime-fighters are colluding with the criminals because they fear for their lives.*

The LO educator from Omega Primary stated:

- The use of swear words is problematic. Children are warned repeatedly to speak with respect but they quickly resort to the vocabulary that they are more accustomed to would spark a huge fight where even girls pull hair and roll in the sand in a fist fight.*

- *Our school had to cancel all physical education (P.E.) lessons due to bad behavior on the grounds where control is more difficult for an educator. Learners' discipline improves if we keep them in a confined space. Name calling, fighting over girlfriends, shoving each other and throwing items around to irritate others lead to tempers flaring. We have a rule 'Do not touch another learner' that is ingrained into the learners. Valuable teaching and learning time is wasted on conflict resolutions. Investigations are time-consuming and if the educator is called as witness the remaining learners in the class are deprived of lesson time. Actually we educators feel that all investigations are frustrating because the perpetrator is never really punished so they do not waste energy on even reporting incidents. This contributes to the growing wave of school violence. Educators are upset when their lessons are disrupted. It is not easy to set the tone once more. Writing reports on the incident for the office is tedious. Often nothing is done.*

There was a general feeling of helplessness from educators. My assessment was that one of the challenges of curbing violence emanated from the size of classes. It is generally agreed that large classes are more difficult to control than smaller ones. With regard to the advantages of smaller classes in curbing violence, Harber (2004) asserts that supporters of small schools while recognizing that it is perfectly possible to have oppressive small schools, nevertheless argue that smaller schools can more easily facilitate the creation of a more democratic, inclusive and responsible environment. He also argued that the familiarity of strong, personal, and face-to-face relationships drastically reduces the risk of alienation and isolation fostered by the impersonality of large schools and hence reduces the risk of crime and violence.



#### 4.2.1.6. How does the violence affect the educators?

The educators felt like their professionalism was being compromised. The educators listed some of the following indicators of their stress levels as a result of school violence:

- *Most of us educators are resigning from teaching or retiring well before the retirement age of 65 years (Educator from Omega Primary)*
- *High absenteeism rate among educators. We get sick often.(Educator Alpha Primary).*
- *We refuse to engage in any extra lessons or sport because we are fed up with the learners and when the learners are dismissed we cannot wait to get out too.( Principal from Alpha Primary)*
- *We do not complain to the managers because we are construed as weak educators and nothing really can be done.( Educator from Omega Primary)*
- *We are constantly fatigued and many of us are on medication for various illnesses like hypertension/ high blood pressure. (Educator from Omega Primary)*
- *We really do not care. Anarchy has set into the classrooms. We feel like our hands are tied. The poor discipline of learners has made us demotivated. How do we teach children who come to school to cause problems and ruin our lessons that take so much time to prepare? (Educator Omega Primary).*

Harber (2004) quotes Cosgrove who asserts that if a teacher is suffering, the children in his or her care will suffer. Teachers debilitated by stress and unable to give of their best will be short-changing the pupils through no fault of their own...one way for an individual to cope with stress is to take it out on other people. We have all known the 'kick the cat' syndrome, when is frustration and anger a person lashes out at the nearest available target...Place a person under stress in a classroom with small children and the consequences will certainly be unpleasant and could be dire...Fortunately, physical attacks on children are

rare, but the daily classroom experiences for a child whose teacher is under stress will certainly be less than positive like shouting, verbal put-downs, short temper, poor quality assignments, poorly planned, unimaginative lessons and work not marked.

During the educator interviews there was an almost desperate cry for help. An educator from Alpha Primary said:

*When I first started teaching 30 years ago children were so well disciplined. In the past decade there has been a huge slide in respect and manners. I cannot teach children who refuse to learn. As an older educator I am scared that one day I am going to be hit by one of them. They even swear me.*

An educator from Omega Primary said:

*If I knew what teaching is really like I would not have chosen this career. I am looking for another job. At the end of the day when I go home I take out my stresses on my own kids and family. I am sapped of energy to do anything else. The violence I see every day is scaring me. I can never bring my own kids to this school.*

They expressed their wish for changes. While I intended to probe the levels of school violence that exists currently they constantly veered my attention to what must be done in the future to stop violence. They are desperate to hear solutions to violence. They were not eager to talk about the violence because they are fed up with these everyday occurrences. They were hoping that my interviews and investigations would provide some way forward.

The comments from the educators in both schools corroborates with Singh, (2006, p.45) who asserts that violence has a negative impact on educators which is inclusive of fear, decreased morale, career impact symptoms, physical and emotional symptoms. Singh (2006, p.45) stated that eighty percent of

educators experience crime-related violence at school. Furthermore, fifty six percent of this violence occurs in full view of the learners. Educators occupying higher positions face a higher risk of being victimized. In concurring with Singh and what I observed, heard and read in both schools, the educators seem to have reached the end of their tether.

Harber (2004) proves this view with the quotation from a teacher who had run away and hidden, “I had been proud to be a teacher, I wanted to educate children, to be a source of enlightenment but now it’s all spoilt. The whole education system is destroyed”.

The government has to take drastic measures to turn the situation around because low morale will equal poor classroom delivery which will equal poor learner performance. This is a vicious cycle. Unfortunately the children who caused the violence (perpetrators) and the innocent ones (victims) will pay the same price.

#### 4.2.1.7. What were the daily happenings observed during school visits?

The entries made on the observation schedule dated the 29 September 2011 at Alpha Primary reads as follows:

*Classes were unruly especially during change of periods due to Indian language lessons where they split into many groups. Educators were punctual by 7h30 but about 8 learners came in almost 10 minutes late. Corporal punishment is not used in this school due to parents making swift reports to the local media which tarnishes the reputation of the school and educators. Educators also feared losing their jobs. During random searches weapons like flick knives and maths compasses were found. Violent episodes during breaks were frequent. Measures had been taken to keep learners to a restricted area under the assembly cover under the vigilance of 4 teachers on duty watching from 4 corners. The assembly area had a painted slogan in bold, large print “DO NOT TOUCH ANOTHER*

*LEARNER” Some of the games played at break were: throttling (try to suffocate another) and face kicking (where the legs lash right up to kick the face of another). The LO educator in Alpha Primary said: during lesson time some are amused as they pull back the chair of learners who are about to sit and they fall to the floor. Some of these victims have reported bruises and others had more serious wounds”.*

The entries made on the observation schedule dated the 30 September 2011 at Omega Primary reads as follows:

*The Foundation Phase learners were loud and ill disciplined during lessons. Educators were screaming at them to be quiet. This school did not have morning assemblies so learners just stroll in. They have tolerance for latecomers as the Principal said that it is not the children’s fault that they are late and coming from child-headed household they have no supervision. No punishment was inflicted on learners. One educator reported he had been reprimanded for touching learners so he has chosen to adopt a laissez faire attitude to learner ill- discipline. This explains why the principal said that he is the only person who disciplines learners. The staff was of the view that it was his job.*

*Weapons that were confiscated during checks and searches were knives, compasses and pellet guns. During breaks learners were on the playground near the broken fences far away from the 2 educators on duty. Breaks were very noisy with learners screaming and running. The perpetrators of violence are taken to the Principal’s office but his sanctions from the school’s code of conduct are ineffective. The dangerous games played were pushing and throttling which are conducted playfully but with the intention to hurt.*

The entries made on the observation schedule dated the 14 October 2011 at Alpha Primary once more corroborates with the findings that bullying and intimidation is rampant:

*Lessons before break were very unruly. Educators were shouting at learners to settle down and pay attention. Although all the educators were punctual there were about 20 learners locked outside the school waiting for the assembly to finish to enter. While educators refrain from corporal punishment, verbal abuse is common like “shut up” and “rubbish”. During break it was observed that two grade 5 girls were going around with scissors in their hands and snipping off girls’ hair from behind. They were reported to the principal’s office. Although benches are provided for learners to sit and eat their lunches, they stand on top of the benches or they run around dashing each other. Some even throw their sandwiches at each other. Dangerous games observed during the break time were hurling paper jets at each other and throwing hard punches to the throats called “skopping”.*

The entries made on the observation schedule dated the 15 October 2011 at Omega Primary reads as follows:

- *Senior learners were uncontrollable during some lessons. They frequently left their rooms during the lesson time. One educator screamed at learners “do not behave like animals”. Learners who were found with knives said that they needed to do so for their own protection. They promised not to use it on learners but they were seen wielding knives as threats to other learners. During breaks the prefects had to constantly stop them from kicking and shoving each other. It was observed and confirmed with interview comments that perpetrators are unafraid of the school’s Code of conduct as nobody applies the sanctions. They know that their educators are scared of their parents who have been known to wait for them outside*

*the gates and vandalized their cars. A common new game in this school was “kick me, play me dead”.*

It was concluded that on a daily basis there are incidents of violence that occurs in both Alpha Primary and Omega Primary Schools. The observation entries, the interviews and the record of incidents in school records prove that learners are violent and vandalize property belonging to the school and others. The learning environment was described in the interviews with the Principals, the LO educators, the SGB chairpersons, the DSSC chairpersons, the learners (both victims and perpetrators) and support staff members as being violent. The environment was observed and recordings made in the observation schedules on all visits to the schools.

#### **4.2.2. Gang related violence**

##### **4.2.2.1. My observations during school visits.**

On school visits the researcher observed that the learners who get into trouble for violence do not work in isolation in the classroom and on the grounds. They have their gang laws that include “strength in numbers”. Even at primary school level where most gangs average 10 to 12 years old, they are organized with a name, same clothes (for example all of them wear the same jackets with the sleeves rolled up), have the same swagger in their walks, talk in the same tone and keep to their marked spots during the breaks. Other learners dare not enter the gangs’ marked area. When the gang approaches a victim, only one member starts to antagonize the child. The others lurk close by waiting for a key word or signal to “jump in”. The gangs know the area outside the school well because if a fight is intercepted by a security guard or generally parents who are present to fetch their children from school, they (the gang members) disperse in a flash through bushes and lanes. Through interviews the gang members insisted that they were not even aware of what they are being implicated with. As the learners report “They play innocent”. Often the lack of

substantial evidence makes the case fall away. Some of the names given to gangs to both Alpha Primary and Omega Primary were: The Dudes, Hell's Angels and Ghostbusters. It was evident that both schools are grappling to curb the incidents of violence. Some measures put into place at Alpha primary was curbing the problem to a small extent. Both schools lack the cooperation of the parents and the governing bodies to address school violence.

#### 4.2.2.2. Responses from interviews

A perpetrator from Omega Primary, 12 years old said in his interview:

*My father and brother sit with groups of friends (gangs). They do not work. Everyone is frightened of them. When they walk down the road the people shiver. I want to be like them. I want everyone to think I am a big shot and do what I say. If the teachers hit me my father said I must just tell him and he will sort the teacher out.*

It is evident that learners are imitating the behavior patterns of the adults in the communities. There are many gang related incidents rampant in the areas of the two township schools and children watch and learn. They believe that it is survival of the fittest and the tough "dudes" will get more acknowledgement and be feared which to them is a form of respect. This behavior confirms the principles of the theory of social interactionism where behavior patterns are imitated from others in a social group even if those patterns are negative.

The quality of a youth's relationship with parents, particularly the experience of negative sanctions from the father, was found to explain delinquency for both sexes. This theory links gender differences in risk preference to patriarchal family structures. Social control theory attempts to explain why it is that all of us do not commit crime or why are most people law-abiding. The answer lies in dimensions of social control. The many ways in which people are controlled are by family, schools, work situations and conscience.

Harber (2004) affirms this view by stating that the negative impact of these types of violent conflict on schooling is universally regarded as especially serious not only because of the obvious physical and psychological harm done to the pupils and teachers concerned but also because schooling as an institution is normally seen inherently beneficial to society because it is a key agency of human development.

#### **4.2.3. Drugs and alcohol abuse**

##### **4.2.3.1. Who do you blame for the substance abuse among the learners?**

When a non-educator from Alpha Primary was asked this question in the interview, he said:

*The children come from very poor homes. Most of their parents are unemployed. They grow up in the streets. They pick up bad habits from those that they join on the streets. Drugs are easily available in this community.*

The school is fertile ground for drug lords to thrive. On observation visits I found that surrounding one of the schools was the taxi rank, the “shebeens” or taverns and groups of men just loitering about. At break time these drug lords draw closer to the school fence that has holes for trespassers to pass.

A grade 6 perpetrator from Omega Primary, 12 years old, said in his interview:

*The learners are able to acquire a stick of “dagga” at just ten rands. We are surrounded by our friends while some keep watch on the two teachers on duty who are too afraid to be close to the fences so they stand far away near the school buildings. At most times a single stick can be smoked by about six learners. We just need one pull to feel nice and high. When we return to class the educators continue with their work even if they are know that the learners are drugged because they are frightened of us as one of the guys threw a stone at one teacher’s car after school.*



From the statements above it can be deduced that the easy availability of drugs and alcohol in these communities can be blamed for the violence among the learners. The intoxicated condition of primary school learners is serious. Such learners are not eager to follow instructions from educators. They come to school in search of fun which leads to violence.

#### 4.2.3.2. What strategies do educators use to cope with drugs and alcohol abuse?

From the educators' interviews it became clear that they ignore incidents of drugs and alcohol abuse. These were some of the reasons given for not attending to the incidents of drugs and alcohol:

- *We need to finish the syllabus and there are good learners that must not lose out. (Educator from Omega Primary)*
- *The processes of doing an investigation are too cumbersome. Searches and checks must have another educator present too and only males can check males and females must check females. The protocols are stringent and if there is a breach of the processes unwittingly, the educator will be deemed to be mis-conducted. The entire process of an investigation in the education system and in the legal system of South Africa as a whole, does not favor the victim or the investigators but the perpetrators. (Educator from Omega Primary)*
- *We the educators fear that the culprits have "connections" on the outside of the school and will be waiting for us to leave school as happened with our Principal of Alpha Primary who parked her car after school hours (from 18h00 to 22h00) at a community hall where a school Debutantes Ball was in process on the 29 July 2011. When she returned to her car she found that someone had used a nail and vandalized the entire car. It was dark so the culprit was not spotted. Learners who were reprimanded for*

*violence have friends on the outside of the school to seek revenge if they are brought to book. (Educator from Alpha Primary)*

- *The intoxicated learners enjoy attention and are satisfied if the lesson can stop and all focus is on them. Therefore the educators choose to continue with work and they say that “ignore therapy” frustrates them.(Principal from Alpha Primary).*

The educators stated that the episodes of alcohol abuse were not reported frequently in each school because the perpetrators may be afraid that they get found out more easily. Firstly through bag searches at assembly, the alcohol can be confiscated. Then their class mates will see them drinking it and tell the educators. In cases where it was camouflaged in their water bottles they still got caught out because of the strong alcohol smell. Drug taking seems to be a more convenient option because at most times, busy educators will not detect them if they pop pills or smoke a stick on the way to school. This would explain why there were more episodes of drugs than alcohol recorded in office Discipline Books. As mentioned in chapter one the schools are in a community that is known as the drug capital in Phoenix. Drugs are very available. This would also explain why there are more drug related incidents than alcohol.

The comments from educators in both schools confirm the findings in an article on drugs in schools, the National Institute on Drug Abuse Survey researchers found that 50% of high school seniors in South Africa partake of an illicit drug at some stage of their lives (Mc Entire, 2007, p.1). The Bureau of Justice also reports that 85% of teenagers know where to access drugs such as marijuana, and 55% know how to obtain amphetamines. The fact that drugs, such as marijuana, LSD, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines (tik), inhalants, Ritalin, prescription and over-the-counter medicines are readily accessible to youngsters in South African township and suburban schools is bound to impact negatively on education in general, and on what happens in the school in particular. Furthermore, knowledge of drug availability is similar, regardless

of race or location. However, Mc Entire (2007, p.1) states that what is more shocking is that 29% of students said that someone had offered, sold or given them an illegal drug while they were at school.

From the interviews and observation visits it was apparent that there are a few boys who appear to be on drugs. It is possible that drug taking is a more serious problem in high schools and at primary level learners have not yet taken to drugs so extensively. However, in view of the above data, I agree with Mc Entire (2007) who states that many youngsters in South African schools are taking various forms of drugs.

#### **4.2.4. Use of dangerous weapons and physical violence**

##### **4.2.4.1. How did the victims of violence feel?**

The victims of violence were asked the following questions (refer to annexure 5) in individual interviews.

1. Describe the incident when you were hurt.
2. Who did you speak to when someone attacked/hit you? Why that person?
3. How did you feel about coming to school after that incident?
4. How do you feel about the perpetrator/ the person who hit you?
5. Why do you think that person came after you?
6. What do you suggest should be done to that person who hurt you?

Some of the responses by the victims to the above questions were:

- *I do not know why I was hit. I did not do anything to the persons who hurt me. It always happens “out of the blue” suddenly. I am really angry but scared of the boy who hit me. (Victim from Alpha Primary)*
- *My parents are furious. They are blaming the school because they sent me here to learn and not to get hurt. My parents protect me at home and look after me very well. They know that some children are wild but they cannot*

*hurt me because I do not even talk to them. I do not like school anymore. Why did the teachers not help me? (Victim from Omega Primary)*

- *Many of us had to go to the hospital for treatment. I was in hospital for a week for a burst ear drum. I am still feeling very sick (Victim from Alpha Primary).*

One educator from Omega Primary stated from her observation of victims:

*The learners' self-esteem is affected. They feel belittled, degraded and demotivated. This leads to a dislike towards attending school. They begin to grudge the perpetrator. They often go into a shell and shut off all communication with the educators and other learners. Their common ailments are stomach pains, headaches and spewing which they bring on. They cry to go home."*

#### 4.2.4.2. How did the perpetrators of violence feel?

The perpetrators were interviewed individually. The following questions (refer to annexure 5) were asked in the interviews:

1. Explain what happened when you hit the other learner.
2. How did you feel after you hit him/ her?
3. What punishment was given by the school and your parents?
4. How do the other learners feel about you since they know what you did?
5. Do you really like school? Why do you come to school?
6. What plans do you have for your future life?

The perpetrators names were chosen after perusing the schools' office misconduct records for 2011. The names of the frequent offenders were identified. All 10 learners in this category (5 from each school) were boys. This proves the literature that refers to male dominance and violence among men. Harber (2004) asserts that violence is overwhelmingly a male problem, and the roots for this appear to be primarily social rather than biological, highlighting the inadequacies of current socialization of male children.

Some of the perpetrators responses to the above questions during individual interviews were:

- *I hit J and gave him a blue-eye because he's spreading rumors about me. He was saying that he can hit me because he gave one grade 7 boy a sounder (sic) and he is better than me in doing school work. He was irritating me all the time in front of my friends. I felt bad about what I did but in a way it was right. My mother does not live with us but when she heard she came to my house and hit me. The principal gave me a letter after writing in the Misconduct book but I did not give the letter. I did not want them to come to school and see my teachers because they will tell what I am doing. My friends felt what I did was good. Other people get scared of me because they think I am going to hit them too. I come to school because I like to be with my friends who give me money and I buy things. One day I want to finish school and work in the army (Perpetrator from Omega Primary).*
- *I shouted for K and he did not hear me so I ran up and slapped him on his ear. His ear drum got bust. Only the next day I heard he was in hospital. I skopped a girl A because she got a big mouth then her granny came for me in the school. The principal said that I must not go for sports and P. E. and sit at the office during breaks. Some children did not want to play with me because they think I am naughty and I will hit them. I come to school because I got so many friends at school. We have fun after school walking home and interfering with other children (Perpetrator from Alpha Primary).*
- *I gave N two smacks and a boot in class because he interfered with one of my girls (M). I did not like the way he was talking to her. He was speaking rude things to her. He was crying when he went home (laughs). They said he went to the doctors. His ribs turned blue. The Deputy Principal gave me a long lecture about touching other children. My friends think of me as a hero. I told them that I stood up for M, my girl. I come to school for the fun.*

*I like to talk in class and disturb the teachers. I like to make them scream. I like to be with my friends (Perpetrator from Alpha Primary).*

- *I hit a boy called R. He swore my mother. He kept on teasing me. I turned around and gave him one punch in his jaw. He started crying and he fell down. This happened during break as he was going to the toilets. I was angry. People were teasing me and I started to swear them. Someone called the teacher who slapped me and I got angry. The principal gave me a letter to bring my parents but I gave it to my brother who went for the sir (wanted to hit him) who hit me. My brother swore the Principal and the principal said I must get out of his school. I was referred to the Assessment Centre for counseling. My father got angry with my brother and hit him. I got away. I come to school to play with my friends. When others fight I join in. I like to make fun of the L.O. teacher because she screams very funny (Perpetrator from Omega Primary).*
- *I hit Y because he swore my mother. I had a problem with the other “fella” but he jumped in. I just touched him on the neck and he told his parents. I felt happy I hit him. The boys that were jumping for him, I swore them. My parents heard but did not punish me. I gave them a letter from my teacher but they did not come to school. I don’t know why they didn’t come. My friends like me because I am naughty. I come to school to play. I don’t like schoolwork. I failed last year. The teachers keep shouting at me because I do not do my work. I like troubling Mrs R because I like the way she talks because she screams and gets angry (Perpetrator from Alpha Primary).*

A general tone of apathy with broad smiles on their faces during interviews indicated that the perpetrators were not remorseful of the violent episodes. They tried to justify why that had to hit the other persons. They felt like heroes. All of them had gang support. They come to school only for these “friends”. None of them paid for medical costs to the injured persons. None of their parents came to school despite letters being given. They know that their parents will not come even if they are called again. Not one of them said they

would not repeat the offence. None were given severe punishment by the school. The worst punishment was deprivation of sports and break times. None of them had grand career plans for the future. They may become builders or policemen, jobs that require toughness. Most of them stated that they have failed a grade before. All enjoyed mocking the teachers. It was evident that the educators had lost their control of these learners who are having their way during the lessons and are deriding their educators. Respect for adult authority figures does not exist for them. There is a reversal of roles where parents are afraid of their kids and let them do as they please as stated during interviews and this is carried into the school where the perpetrators are intimidating their educators and other learners.

Harber (2004) states that within schooling there can be much day to day resistance and this can take the form of pupil violence against teachers. It was found that compulsory schooling brought with it an increased risk of violence both against inanimate objects (vandalism) and against fellow pupils and teachers in a situation where young people are forced to continue studying against their will, where they don't see it as doing them any good and where the ensuing boredom and frustration is manifested in violence against the representatives of the institution in which they see themselves confined. What is more alarming is that this can reproduce itself down the generations.

While most incidents of violence in the school were as a result of psychological trauma (as from bullying), there were reports of many incidents from physical violence. It was found that violent learners use their bodies to inflict pain on others like shoving, kicking, using karate strokes and tripping. If a grade three boy of 8 years could slap another very hard on his eardrum in March 2012, it indicates the level of severity of violent acts even among very little children.

The mother of the victim from Alpha Primary wrote in a report for a disciplinary hearing (letter was filed in office documents):

*K was hospitalized for a bleeding ear drum. I spent sleepless nights watching him cry with pain. His ears oozed with blood and puss. It was so swollen that the doctor could not take him to theatre straightaway. C's (perpetrators') parents reported that it was the teacher's duty to watch their child who is an active child. I had to pay about R20 000 in hospital bills to Durban City Hospital. C's parents heard about what their son did but did not even call to find out how K was doing. The doctor said the damage to the eardrum might be permanent. How fair is it that my son spent 2 weeks in hospital while the culprit went on normally at school? I want the governing body to take action.*

The Principal of Alpha Primary reported during her interview:

*I pleaded with the parents of C, the perpetrator, to get medical help but they refused to give him the prescribed medication to keep him controlled stating that it would affect him. The class has 45 learners and the educator cannot give him individual attention. They reported that they are too poor to assist with medical bills as the father drives a taxi occasionally and the mother stays at home to nurse a sick baby. They showed no pity for the victim and their way of solving the problem was when the father said he would whip his son to teach him a lesson. It was evident that the violent child has been beaten too many times so he really does not care about beating others up too. K's parents want us to take action but our hands are tied. Even after setting up appointments with a clinical psychologist the parents of K did not keep the appointments.*

Harber (2004) asserts that violence towards children in the home is connected with violence in the school. If parents themselves were beaten at school – an institution sanctioned and legitimated by the state and their own parents who sent them there- then this must have provided an influential behavioral role model. Physical punishment at school must contribute to the idea that this is a normal and acceptable form of punishment in a society and that it can be used



against children both in the home and at school. In this way physical punishment at school not only affects children at school but in the home as well as it does nothing to break the cycle of violence.

#### 4.2.4.3. What dangerous weapons are used by the perpetrators?

The violent perpetrators generally come to school ready for war. They stake out their victim, they plot how they will execute the violence and come to school “ready for action” as they call it. Violent children in their defense stated in interviews that weapons are carried because they were afraid of threats from others and wanted to be ready just in case of an attack. This is an excuse because the weapons are not intended for protection as much as for bodily harm to another. The common weapons that were carried by Alpha Primary and Omega Primary school learners and confiscated by the principals were:

- Knives. Some are more sophisticated like switchblades. Some wield the knives to other learners to let them know that the bullies are in control. The principal of Alpha Primary reported that she confiscated a switch knife from a grade 7 learner recently. She placed it on the table, then turned to her telephone to call the parent in. When she turned around again the knife was gone from the table, there was no evidence but the 13 year old boy was still in front of her. He insisted that he has no knowledge of what happened to the knife. Later that day he reported mockingly to his friends that he flung the knife through an open window and the principal did not even notice. Parents of learners who were brought in are not cooperative to correct the violent child’s behavior. Instead they defend the use of the weapon totally. In cases where knives were produced a common excuse is that the learner “needed the knife to cut his fruit”.
- Compasses. This item from the mathematics sets is needed for class work but they double up as dangerous weapons. The sharp, spear-like end has been used to poke and scratch victims. The compass like other

needles and sharp pens are extremely dangerous because in the school communities in this study at least 40% of the population (statistic provided by the local clinic that services the school communities) was HIV positive. With AIDS (Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome) being as rampant as it is a poke from an instrument in itself may not appear serious but with the easy transference of the virus it could be lethal and fatal to the victim.

- Toys. Some toys with spring actions and squirting pistols have been used to hurt other learners. Loud sounds into other's ears have been reported to destroy their hearing.

The availability of these weapons as evidence made the explanations by the educators and non-educators credible because both school principals had a collection in their offices which they had kept to give back to parents who never came to school. During observation class visits I witnessed how learners use their rulers and sharp pens to lash out at others.

The regulations (DoE, 2007a) explicitly declare that all public schools are dangerous-object-free zones. According to MacDonald *et al*, (1996, p. 84), learners carry weapons to school for a variety of reasons, including protection, security, power and status, or to sell them. A study by Eliazov & Frank (2000, p.22) revealed that twenty schools showed that the carrying of weapons was particularly widespread where intimidation, drug abuse and gangsterism were present. Thus, early intervention methods addressing bullying, drug abuse and gangsters may well help to eliminate the use of weapons in schools.

#### 4.2.4.4. What can SGB parents do to reduce violence?

The school governing body chairpersons and the chairperson of the Discipline, Safety and Security Committees (DSSC) were interviewed using the questions on the interview schedule. Alpha Primary has two male personnel in the respective portfolios but in Omega Primary, the female chairperson said that

she had to double up the portfolios due to a few resignations not being filled. She made her comments with confidence and authority and was truthful to present facts of how serious the violence was which the educators were hesitant to disclose. She sounded very frustrated that violence is escalating at the school and she wanted more support from those at school and the parents from the outside to stem the tide.

The SGB Chairman of Alpha Primary said:

*Learners try to break rules but a strict code of discipline would help to curb violence. We parents work and expect the school to discipline our children. We blame the school environment because our kids are fine at home and it is the influences at school that make our children break rules.*

There is much finger-pointing between stakeholders and very few collective solutions. Parents expect the school to tame violent children. It is considered to be their job for which they get paid. Educators blame the parents for ill-disciplined learners and explain it as bad parenting. School violence solutions require a partnership of both these stakeholders as joint forces taking on the culprits. SGB stakeholders can assist the schools to reduce violence by calling for parent meetings and engaging the communities in cleaning up the vices.

#### **4.2.5. Vandalism**

##### **4.2.5.1. The school environment.**

It was clear during the observation visits that the school with the higher violent episodes had a more run-down appearance. The buildings show neglect but there are no efforts to paint walls, repair broken window panes or fix door latches as “the cost to keep repairing is beyond the school’s finances. As soon as the repairs are undertaken, they are broken again” (Principal of Omega Primary). Violent children are prone to vent their energy on their surroundings. They do not care about property. Actually they tend to care about nothing. The school with the fewer violent episodes had neat gardens, good gating systems, a

security guard, no broken window panes and locked rooms after school hours. It is imperative for a school to start with a good wall or fence before efforts can be made to curb violence. The school with the holes in the fence that allowed for a thoroughfare during and after school hours was most vandalized. It was stated by the principal of Omega Primary that the culprits are not just adults from the community but the learners from that school who come back late in the evening to destroy the buildings. A reported case showed that a learner who was reprimanded for his bad behavior during the day said “I will show that teacher who I am” came back after school hours and stoned the classroom windows. The educator said that what he heard was not substantial evidence to implicate that child. There were no witnesses.

A grade 7 perpetrator in Alpha Primary who wrote graffiti over his desk in tippex and colored ink pens said:

*I was bored in class. Everyone does it but I just got caught because I wrote out my name. The punishment is not much. I have to clean the desk out with some remover. At least we get to leave our mark in this school when we go to high school next year. Also I finished using this desk so I am not interested in the new kids in this class next year.*

#### 4.2.5.2. How does vandalism affect the non-educators/ support staff?

In both schools the administrative clerks, the security guards and cleaners were more familiar with the episodes of vandalism than the educators. Their extensive knowledge came from the localities of their work stations for example at the front gate, in the front office, in the staffroom as a cleaner. Their places of work gave them accessibility to information first hand. Unlike the educators who were not always honest about the violent episodes because it could have reflected on their own control and discipline, the non-educators were frustrated, angry and ready to clean out the perpetrators. They stated that violent perpetrators impact directly on their jobs. There is more to guard, more to clean and more parents to phone and report when learners vandalize school

property. They also see the incidents first hand as the guard at Alpha Primary reported that control at the dismissal gate is impossible because learners do not listen to him but shove and push each other. As the learners leave school they start kicking and punching each other. They also vandalize school property like writing on the school walls. Sometimes he leaves the gate post and run after the gangs to separate them. Then the others start spraying the walls with canned paint. The non-educators get no respect from the learners. The perpetrators treat educators very rudely. They do not respect their parents or any adult, so without hesitation they use vulgarity on the non-educators too.

The cleaner (non educator) in Omega Primary said:

*Fighting and stealing are everyday things. Nothing is done to latecomers. Children are not afraid of teachers. They run out of the class, around the blocks, we find them playing in the toilets and wring on the walls.*

The cleaners and guards said that their work was made more difficult because they double or treble their positions. The cleaner does security checks in the toilets and she also helps educators on errands including running out worksheets. The non-educators are generally fed up with violence and wish the children would come to school to learn. When asked who they blame for the violence they appeared reserved and fearful of the school authority but suggested that stricter educators will help with the crises their schools are facing (support staff at Omega Primary).

The guard (non educator) at Alpha Primary spoke of his stressful day:

*I cross learners on the busy main road so I work first as a scholar patrol. Here the learners cross at their own spots and make me chase after them. The children are very rude. Some even swear me. When school starts I lock all gates and do security checks. By 9h00 I start duplicating worksheets for the teachers and I run around on school errands. I clean out the gardens and supervise the cleaners. At 12h30 to 14h30 I am back on the*

*road crossing the learners at three dismissal times. At 14h30 I come back into school and start fixing things the learners broke. I even repair the lights and plumbing and I paint. Most of my time is spent fixing broken window panes, door latches and taps in the toilets. I finish at 18h00. I work a full 12 hour shift because the school really needs my help.*

#### 4.2.5.3. Who pays for the damages?

An educator from Alpha Primary stated:

*Violent learners are generally very poor to pay for damages. Cellular phones are broken, school windows are broken during scuffles and uniforms are torn, including name-brand shoes that are stolen. Even if there is proof that the perpetrator was responsible for damages nothing can be done because most often the parents are unemployed. In the incident where a grade 3, learner had his ear-drum lacerated due to a hard clout by another 8 year old boy, the hospital bills for the operation were produced by the victim's parents. The other parents were called in but failed to help in any way because they are very poor and living off charity. The biggest problem is the vandalism to the toilets. The graffiti, the wrenched taps and broken seats are costly but the culprits cannot be identified because they visit the toilets during lesson time. It is against the constitutional right of the child not to be allowed to attend to the call of nature during lessons. The school never wins against these vandals.*

From the interviews and entries in the observation schedules on days of visits it was apparent that both the non-educators or support staff and educators are also taking the brunt of violent learners who vandalize school property, who treat them badly and who come to school seeking trouble. Their daily tasks would be fewer if they did not have to cope with violent learners.

The support staff that was interviewed at Alpha Primary was the secretary who doubles as DSSC chairman because he serves on the SGB and the parents

have appointed him to hold that position because none of them had time to and the scholar patrol guard who also serves as gardener, security guard, general assistant etc. The support staff that was interviewed at Omega Primary was the cleaner and the security guard. While these personnel were angry as they spoke they were generally not very articulate. Some of their answers were one word responses and they could not describe the episodes in detail. The response to “Who should stop this violence?” was “Principal”.

#### 4.2.5.4. What can SGB parents do to cope with vandalism?

The comments from governing body chairpersons were:

- *The relationship between all parents and the teachers has to be united and strong to solve the violence in the schools. Some parents are apathetic. They do not attend school meetings or do not respond to notices to call at school.(Omega Primary)*
- *The DSSC chairman should not be a parent according to the department of Education’s requirement. It should be a staff member on the premises. The parent who works and attends meetings 4 times a year (once a quarter as the legislation requires) is clueless about the security issues at school daily. (Alpha Primary)*
- *The school must provide counseling during the LO lessons to those who break the rules. Learners come from troubled homes and need the love and support from the educators. All parents felt that the policy of locking out latecomers was unacceptable and no matter what the offence a child must never be sent home and deprived of learning.(Alpha Primary)*

### **4.3. What measures are taken by both schools to curb violence?**

In each of the two schools the principals were asked at the end of their interviews about the strategies used by the school to curb school violence. An opening comment by both principals alluded to the strict laws about corporal punishment (RSA, 1996). References were made to the past, almost 15 years

ago when learners were spanked for bad behavior or were caned in the principals' offices. They agreed that violence breeds violence but in some way that was a deterrent to the "scoundrels".

The principal of Alpha Primary said:

*I am so tempted to reach for a stick but my job is more valuable and I cannot afford to lose my job for a child who has not been good. Too many educators have already had disciplinary actions instituted against them.*

Through the interviews with the LO educators, support staff and SGB parents it was apparent that measures are being taken to promote a violence-free environment but they are not having the success they intended.

An educator of Alpha Primary said:

*There is a lack of co-operation of all parties and exhaustion has set in. Our initial plans to turn our school around were implemented with enthusiasm for change. Now apathy has set in.*

Schools together with governing bodies have set protocols, policies and procedures in place to address violent behavior of learners. The following records were produced by Alpha Primary. Omega Primary provided their school's code of conduct, letter to parent template calling for them to come to school, ground duty roster and SGB minute book. This school does not keep the other records.

The principal stated:

*Too many incidents happen and there is no time to record, educators are busy in the class and there is one secretary and the records do not help because no investigations follow as the parents never come to school.*



Table of schools' documentation:

<b>RECORD</b>	<b>CODE OF CONDUCT</b>	<b>DISCIPLINE BOOK</b>	<b>CL.MISCOND BOOK</b>	<b>LETTERS /PARENTS</b>	<b>POLICIES</b>	<b>GROUND DUTY</b>	<b>SGB MIN</b>	<b>DSSC MIN</b>
<b>ALPHA PRIMARY</b>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>OMEGA PRIMARY</b>	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO

#### **4.3.1. School's Code of Conduct**

According to The South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996, every school must have its own Code of Conduct. All stakeholders (parents, educators and non-educators) have their say in the drafting of the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct for Alpha Primary had the following sections:

- The aim of the code of conduct
- The rights and responsibilities of the learner
- The rights and responsibilities of the educators
- The rights and responsibilities of parents
- The dress code and school uniform
- Misconduct (minor misdemeanor, serious misdemeanor)
- Disciplinary rules and regulations
- Sanctions

The Code of Conduct for Omega Primary had the following headings:

- The purpose of the code of conduct
- Attire and appearance
- Attendance, leave taking and punctuality
- Use of facilities
- Behavior and conduct
- General
- Rules for parents
- Offences that deem disciplinary action

The various stakeholders were asked during interviews how the Code of Conduct was being implemented. The code of conduct in both schools is given to every learner at the start of each school year. Parents are required to sign to acknowledge the contents of the Code of Conduct. However parents who refuse to sign can have no penalty. If the child breaks the rules the code of Conduct cannot be used as a legal document to have the child removed. Other laws come into operation. Educators have said in interviews that “The code of conduct is not even worth the paper it is written on. It’s a waste of time and paper”. The law requires the code of conduct but rules without the might of the law becomes futile. This could be a cause of school violence escalating because little can be done to perpetrators.

#### **4.3.2. Office Discipline records**

Alpha Primary recorded all incidents of violence in a thick note book that was indexed and had pages allocated to each class. In this way the repeated offenders from a class were identified easily. The process was that if the incident was minor it was recorded in the Class Misconduct Book but if it was serious and required a visit from the parents or if it was minor but repeated after three warnings then it was recorded in the office book. This recording was done by SMT members and learners were told at an assembly that if they were in real trouble that book comes out.

It has been noted that Omega Primary did not provide an Office Discipline Book. Some of the numerous entries in the Office Discipline Book for Alpha Primary for 2011 were:

- *During the 6<sup>th</sup> period K pushed N back resulting in him falling and hurting his head. N taken to the office for first aid. The Deputy Principal spoke to K’s dad at 12h45 informing him of the incident and reminding him that N’s medical bills will be for his account.*

- *A in grade 3A asked a girl to fondle him. Said rude things to her. Parent was called.*
- *Y in grade 4A threatened L, thereafter hit him at break, fight continued after school where Y was injured seriously.*
- *N kicked A during the P. E. Lesson. A does not want to come to school. A transfer card was requested for the neighboring school as he is not feeling safe.*
- *J in grade 5A was poked with a compass by D. D insisted that he did not do it but K did it. Learners in class were questioned. D was the culprit. Parents called in.*
- *W in grade 5B complained that M punched him on his left eye. He has been continuously bullying him and others in the class. W's dad came to school. It was found that W also antagonized M by showing rude gestures. Matter was resolved.*
- *In the absence of a teacher D told M to hit A. Investigation revealed that D threw something at A which hurt him. S a bystander was also hurt in the process.*
- *T and L (grade 6A) were fighting en route to lesson. L tore T's shirt.*
- *K, F and T caught K as he was leaving the school gate and hit him badly.*
- *S (grade 6B) was leaning his head back touching the desk behind. K placed a ruler on his head. S turned around and poked K with a pen.*
- *R slapped A as they were coming into school. A told his uncle who slapped R. Parents called in.*
- *E threatened M in front of teacher. Raised his voice and poked his finger into M's face saying "I'll crack you"*
- *B (grade 7A) poked his pencil towards J's eye. Said "someone (in the previous school) took out your one eye I will take out the other"*
- *During the lesson Sa (grade 7A) jumped onto the desk and hit Si. Si pulled out his shirt and hit Sa back.*

#### **4.3.3. Class misconduct record**

The Class Misconduct book of Grade 7A by Mr. KP from Alpha Primary was submitted for data. There are 16 classes and each class has a book. A page is allocated to each child. If the class has 40 learners there are 40 pages. The incidents by an offender can be easily read off all together.

Some of the entries in this class book read as follows:

- *For FG he had numerous “disturbing the lesson” entries, pulled R’s chair and she fell down, throwing things around in class and swore N.*
- *MJ threw a scissors at J.*
- *SK was swearing, hitting other learners, disrupting lessons, screaming loudly, refusing to do work, fighting and threatening the teachers and picking up chairs and throwing at others.*
- *J was shouting abusive words, refusing to complete work, just sitting and staring at teachers, frequent late-coming.*

#### **4.3.4. Letters to parents**

Omega Primary sent a letter to the perpetrator’s parent stating: “Please call at school on ...as there is an urgent matter to discuss regarding your child....in grade...Kindly note that that you must come to school on the above mentioned date. I hope to receive your co-operation. Signed by Principal and dated.

Alpha Primary sent a letter with a tick list below. It read: To....

You are requested to call at school at 8am tomorrow to discuss the following matter/s about your child.....in grade....

The list had the following items: Punctuality, Behavior, Progress, Uniform, Attendance, Other. It was evident through the interviews, observations and the files containing the returned letters that this form of communication with parents was unsuccessful because as the perpetrators themselves stated in the interviews that they do not take the letters home, some dump them on the road

or bins on the way home. Some said that even when they gave the letters to their parents their parents just refused to come to school. In Omega Primary this situation is exacerbated by most learners coming from child-headed households due to the AIDS pandemic.

#### **4.3.5. School Policies that relate to violence**

Both schools had policies in their Policy Files that related specifically to school security. The policies included the Code of Conduct, procedures for hearing before suspension and expulsion and policies about school security systems and the DSSC (Discipline, Safety and Security Committee). The policies outline processes, persons to be contacted and time frames. These “blueprints” are negotiated by educators and parents. This objective yardstick measures all equally and punitive measures are outlined according to the offences for example if there is a hearing for a learner tripping another to a fall which injured him the measures read: Medical expenses must be paid for, positions of responsibility like prefect or monitor must be removed, there is a penalty for all sports and excursions. If the offence is repeated there will be a suspension of a week. If the offence is more than 3 times a recommendation will be forwarded to the MEC of Education in KZN to expel the learner.

The DSSC policy on school security included purpose, recording of incidents (what incidents and what details must be in the report), measures to secure the school property, searches of learners and checks for trespassers. While the policies seem so well worded, the reality is that no child gets expelled because the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) which supersedes all policies grants every child the right to education. Also in processes of suspension the “route card” processes is filled with “bureaucratic red tape” and volumes of paper work often leaving the principal and educators to answer numerous questions like they were the offenders. As one principal said “It’s too much sweat and bother. The incident blows over in a day but a report can drag on for months”.

#### **4.3.6. Ground Duty Control**

The Ground Duty Control book is kept in the office. The first page had a schedule of the 4 educators per day who go on duty. Their duty times and spots were also allotted. Over a double page per week columns were drawn for each day (Monday to Friday). Alongside that grid were listed the areas to be inspected during duty. They were: assembly area, grounds, junior primary blocks and toilets, senior primary blocks and toilets, prefects, injuries and incidents, general, signatures of educators on duty. This book is filled in at the end of each day and serves to record any incident of violence during breaks clearly.

*25/ 02/2011: F tripped when S pushed him and he bruised the side of his face.*

*23/03/2011: B complained that D squeezed his neck from behind. He could not breathe.*

There were many incidents of swearing reported. Generally the accounts during break were reported mildly or favorably. It is possible that educators do not give the true account as the severity of the incident could reflect on their own level of vigilance during the breaks. Also as in Omega Primary they stand very far away from the learners what they do not see they cannot report. This does not imply that violent episodes are not taking place.

#### **4.3.7. SGB minute book**

There were minutes in Alpha Primary that reflected discussions concerning school security. Details at the meetings included security guards, the need for fencing and walls, the disciplinary hearings for some learners and measures to curb learner violence. The SGB minute book was not given to me in Omega Primary because of its confidential nature and being a very important school record. Alpha Primary gave me the Minute book of 2011 to peruse. It was evident that decisions are made at meetings about improving security measures like installing a new alarm system and building boundary walls but no mention is made of how these measures will be implemented. This

corroborates with the comments of the principal of Alpha Primary during the interview who stated that the 5 SGB parents are just decision makers but the real work gets done by the educators. Because they shoulder all issues of school discipline and security they feel overburdened. This principal added that the DSSC chairperson being a parent (obligatory by regulation) is unacceptable as parents are clueless about the daily security challenges facing the school.

#### **4.3.8. Discipline, Safety and Security Minute Book**

In both schools the DSSC functions effectively. The committees comprise of parents, educators and non-educators. One school had just 2 meetings for the year 2011. The minutes were short stating that security measures are in place. The meetings did not address the day to day violent activities of learners. These committees focus on the physical structure instead of finding solutions to the violent episodes that occur in the classrooms daily.

The information from the interviews and the school documents corroborated with the entries on the observation schedule under the heading “security measures” for Alpha Primary on 29 September 2011 and on 14 October 2011.

The Observation schedule and the security plans in the minute book corroborated as follows:

*There is a security guard who is uniformed and carries a baton and two-way radio, appointed at the main gate. He records names and details of all visitors. Then he escorts visitors to the office. The school’s security is tight. All gates are locked at 8h00 and opened at dismissal times when parents fetch learners. The school has an armed response alarm system. Panic buttons can be pressed in emergency to alert the guard and the security company that dispatches personnel to the school. The school is surrounded by high fences and walls. Trespassers have tried to scale the walls on a few occasions. When school fees are collected at the beginning of the year the police escort the secretary to the bank. On special school functions extra patrols and policemen are called in to*

*assist. During every break 4 educators and 25 prefects watch the 550 learners in this school. The educators in this school have had staff development programs to deal with violent episodes and counseling. However they still refrain from bag searches unless very necessary because it is very tedious according to the legislation where 2 educators have to be present.*

The information from the interviews and the school documents corroborated with the entries on the observation schedule under the heading “security measures” for Omega Primary on 30 September 2011 and on 15 October 2011.

The DSSC chairman stated this during his interview:

*While there is just one main gate into the school, learners walk through the holes and broken down fences at various points. The main gate is never locked because the lock is broken. The administration offices are only alarmed. A parent assists as security guard that they were feeling exhausted because of the bad behavior of learners because there are no funds to employ one. Lack of funding has also not allowed for fence repairs. The educators do conduct frequent searches based on “tip-offs” from other learners. The two educators on duty during breaks reported. They have reached a point of fatigue where they are too tired to care.*

This evidence is contrary to Prinsloo (2005, p.8) who states that learners have a constitutional right to study in a safe school environment. The findings of this study prove that many learners and educators are being denied their fundamental human right of being safe. The findings draw reflections on the three theories that formed the framework of this study. It agrees with the theory of Symbolic Interactionism: humans act towards things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things, the meanings of such things is derived from the social interaction that one has with others and the society and these meanings are handled and modified through an interpretative process used by the person dealing with the things he or she encounters. The learners



were deriving their behavior patterns from the impoverished township communities in which they lived. Their role models were their parents and peers who were violent themselves. This theory also could have been used positively because by co-presence with positive valued people the perpetrators could have learnt good behavior patterns. This theory should be advocated in all schools firstly to improve learner behavior by them choosing good role models and secondly by all stakeholders working closely together for the improvement of learner discipline.

Also the behavior of learners and some educators coincide with the theory of power and social control. The many ways in which people are controlled are by family, schools, work situations, conscience, etc. is the way they react to others. The educators, who control them negatively, reinforce the violence in them. Their family and socio-economic factors could contribute to their need for power and control. As evidenced in the interviews with the perpetrators they enjoyed making fun of educators, they loved being recognized as leaders of groups or gangs and they came to school to have fun. This theory was evident in the way perpetrators used authority and violence to claim recognition among their peers. This theory will not be prominent in violent schools if educators and learners are trained to curb those who are power hungry.

The third theory underpinning this study is that learners could practice the Mahatma Gandhian and Martin Luther King's principles of non-retaliation and non-violence (Satyagraha) but as seen learners do not practice non-violence. At the slightest provocation they resort to violent behavior. The victims of violence have been taught non-retaliation or passive resistance by their parents and educators but with the continual violence against them, the good learners are being forced to retaliate. This principle must become the blueprint of every learner's behavior so that violence can be eradicated in all schools completely.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

This chapter analyzed the data collected at Alpha Primary and Omega Primary concerning school violence. The instruments used were various interview schedules, observation schedules and document reviews. They provided clear lenses to delve into the scenario at each school. The next chapter will provide recommendations and conclusions to this research on school violence.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Recommendations and Conclusions**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

As part of a bigger project this research study was undertaken to explore the dynamics of violence in two schools in Phoenix Township in KwaZulu-Natal. The themes of violence that emerged from this study were: bullying and intimidation, gang related violence, drugs and alcohol abuse, use of dangerous weapons and vandalism. In this chapter I present the summary and conclusion derived from the findings of this study and I make recommendations of what can be done to address these areas of violence to promote a violence-free school environment.

#### **5.2. The types of school violence and recommendations to curb them**

The socio-economic environment and the existence of a prevailing culture of violence in the two school communities are the most influential factors connected to the underlying causes of violence in this township of Phoenix. The socio-economic situation affects children in particular. There are very high rates of unemployment among young parents living in this area while the rate of long-term unemployment is even higher. Many families continue to live in damaged or partially reconstructed homes called squatter settlements and in abject poverty. As a result of poverty in these communities, many schools remain in a bad state of repair and lack basic equipment such as books, proper ablution facilities, chairs and desks.

The types of school violence reflected the theoretical framework of this study which comprised of three theories:

The theory of Symbolic Interactionism: The learners were deriving their behavior patterns from the impoverished township communities in which they lived. Their role models were their parents and peers who were violent

themselves. This theory could have been used positively because by co-presence with positive valued people the perpetrators could have learnt good behavior patterns. This theory should be advocated in all schools firstly to improve learner behavior by them choosing good role models and secondly by all stakeholders working closely together for the improvement of learner discipline.

The theory of power and social control: As evidenced in the interviews with the perpetrators they enjoyed making fun of educators, they loved being recognized as leaders of groups or gangs and they came to school to have fun. This theory was evident in the way perpetrators used authority and violence to claim recognition among their peers. This theory will not be prominent in violent schools if educators and learners are trained to curb those who are power hungry.

The Mahatma Gandhian and Martin Luther King's principles of non-retaliation and non-violence (Satyagraha): At the slightest provocation the learners resorted to violent behavior. The victims of violence have been taught non-retaliation or passive resistance by their parents and educators but with the continual violence against them, the good learners are being forced to retaliate. This principle of non violence and non retaliation must become the blueprint of every learner's behavior so that violence can be eradicated in all schools completely.

### **5.2.1. Bullying and intimidation**

People usually associate violence as being physical. The findings in these township schools portrayed verbal aggression and the victims displaying a sense of hostility and harassment from their perpetrators. Although most of the learners have no visible or tangible damage inflicted upon them, their psychological state of mind was affected seriously to the extent that their self-

image was seriously scarred as they felt helpless as the necessary support they needed was not forthcoming.

In both schools it was evident that bullying undermined the self-worth of the individual. The learners' self-image and self-esteem were tarnished. An imbalance in the power relationships at these schools exists.

Suggested corrective measures include the following:

- Schools could develop anti-bullying strategies that could become a policy on its own.
- A section dealing with bullying can be incorporated in the Life Orientation Curriculum for every grade. Continuous professional development and INSET programmes.
- Counseling
- Utilizing the services of the school's DSSC recommendations, social workers and the Department of Justice.
- Cultivate a trust between all parties concerned.
- Communities could be encouraged to voluntarily assist the school to frequently address learners on the consequences of bullying.
- Schools could install close circuit surveillance cameras getting NGO's etc. involved.

Policies that will be of assistance to schools if they applied the regulations and procedures correctly are as follows:

- The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996)
- The South African Schools Act (SASA) in terms of enforcing the School's Code of Conduct (DoE, 1996a)
- The Criminal Procedure Act
- Policies that are specific to Searches, Late-coming, Substance abuse, etc (DoE, 2007a)

### **5.2.2. Gang related violence**

In these schools a hostile environment presents itself in which the learners and educators are expected to function. Faction fights and gang-fights are the key consequences that are experienced in this township. A lack of exemplary role models is also a problem. Gang related violence in this township has stemmed from moral decadence. There is a dearth of UBUNTU. There is also a lack of mutual respect. The dearth of mutual trust compounds this problem further. A values-based system does not exist. Both educators and learners are vulnerable to intimidation. As confirmed with critical friends gangs emerge in areas of economic decline. My observations in these communities have shown that absent positive role models and unstable families are breeding grounds for violence. These findings were true at both Alpha and Omega Primary schools.

Schools like these could be assisted by firstly adhering to the regulations set out in legislation and then following the legal course if those rules are broken.

- Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa (Bill of Rights),(RSA, 1996)
- The Child Care Act.
- Section 12 of the Constitution of South Africa ( Freedom and Security of Persons) (RSA, 1996)
- Sections 20 and 21 of the South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996a)
- The Criminal Procedures Act

Suggested corrective measures that are recommended are as follows:

- Educators could undergo training to be able to recognize gang identification symbols and practices and to be trained in strategies to manage and rehabilitate them.
- Guidance Teachers to be appointed at schools.
- Invite social workers, police (SAPS) and religious organizations from the community to address the learners at the assembly.

- Every educator can act as a counselor (in loco parentis). A requirement in the job description according to The Educators Employment Act (section on Personnel Administrative Measures) is that all educators must offer pastoral care and counseling.
- Establish a Pastoral Care Program in each school and call for parents and religious leaders to assist.
- Take immediate disciplinary action against perpetrators by exercising the sanctions in the Code of Conduct and SASA.
- Involve parents from the school community in the stifling of gangs.
- The use of trained informants among the learners could prove to be useful.
- If gangs on school premises is associated with the rising levels of school violence, management have to confront the gangs before they gain power within the school environment. Recognition and acceptance that there is a gang presence in and around a school in the early stages is one key factor to successfully manage gang concerns (Trump, 1996, p. 46). School officials must be aware that "want-to-be" gang members can be more of a threat to safety and school security than the actual gang members themselves. "Want-to-be" gang members commit much more acts of violence than actual gang members because they feel a need to make an impression on others, more especially to persons who are actually involved in gang activity. "Want-to-be" gang members feel a need to establish a sense of flamboyance and will often commit acts of violence that confirmed gang members do not feel a need to commit.

### **5.2.3. Drugs and alcohol abuse**

The abuse of these substances compromised the good discipline in these schools by undermining socially acceptable behavior. This also created a negative effect on the culture of learning and teaching. It also undermined the

respect for human dignity. Legislations and policies as noted above will benefit schools in curbing the above scourge if the regulations are applied.

The following suggested recommendations could serve as corrective measures:

- Develop a school culture that will discourage the use of alcohol and drugs.
- Guidance and Counseling Educators should be appointed at schools.
- Involve external bodies for example: Health and Welfare Services from the same community.
- Be pro-active by inviting social workers and nurses to address the learners at assembly.
- The above social services should also address the staff and school governing bodies.
- Educators must exercise more vigilance and have "ears" to the ground to know when these learners are consuming these substances so that their parents can be called in and sanctions be implemented.
- The SAPS / Metro Police could be consulted to conduct searches as a short term solution.
- Re-visit and amend or include strategies that are in your policy documents for example the School's Code of Conduct whereby rules related to the possession and distribution of drugs.
- Principals should send a quarterly newsletter to parents informing them of their involvement to stem the flow of these substances in their community.
- During the Life Orientation Lessons, educators should provide information related to the harmful effects of these substances.

#### **5.2.4. Use of dangerous weapons**

Findings showed that illegal weapons are brought onto the school premises. The use of weapons is becoming uncontrollable. Learners being stabbed with scissors, pens, sharpened pencils, dried sticks that have fallen from the trees



and the compass from the mathematics set are on-going. Stone throwing in these schools are leaving many learners with cuts, bruises and cracked heads.

A suggested corrective measure is to make use of the protection services in this community. Schools need to cultivate a proper communication link with the South African Police Services (SAPS) and protection services. Encourage the SAPS/METRO POLICE to patrol schools. Protection services should train personnel at all schools on how to react in emergency situations. Frequent unannounced searches must be conducted if there is reasonable suspicion to believe that learners are in possession of dangerous weapons.

#### **5.2.5. Vandalism**

Vandalism is rife at both schools. Vandals target school resources. Learners deliberately break windows. Toilet cisterns are clogged by rolling balls of toilet paper and stuffing them into the cisterns. Desks, tables, chairs and walls are defaced with graffiti. Educators' cars are badly scratched. Active and purposeful discipline enforced by the Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) are recommended. The school can request the parent of the culprit to make reparations by replacing damaged property or by paying for the damaged property to be repaired.

#### **5.2.6. Corporal Punishment**

A significant finding is that corporal punishment is still an accepted practice in homes of perpetrators of violence as stated by the learners during the interviews. A number of children had experienced or witnessed violence in or around school. Learners generally reported that people that are close to them were the perpetrators of violence against them, with parents or peers as the most common perpetrators. Learners who lived some distance from school were afraid of travelling because of the threat of peer violence. Educators are of the belief that violence committed by teachers towards learners was quite rare and mostly related and limited to verbal abuse. They did however believe that

violence had risen in their community in recent years. They also believed that fear of violence on the street or while travelling to school was widespread amongst young people. This ranged from intimidation to physical violence. Learners also said that domestic violence was common in their environment. It seems that violence is very much normalized by the society. The degree of support for victims of violence appears to be rather limited. As a result, victims of violence if not counseled, can become perpetrators themselves.

There is an urgent need for all educators to be trained on the implementation of “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: A Practical guide for educators to develop and maintain a culture of discipline, dignity and respect in the classroom” (DoE, 2000). The guide outlines why corporal punishment must be banned, how discipline must replace punishment using various techniques in the classroom and finally how disciplinary measures and procedures must be implemented through the enforcement of the school’s code of conduct. The need for this training stems not from the fear that educators have hit learners but because subtle forms of corporal punishment like name calling and insults can have long term scarring.

### **5.3. The recommendations for schools to cope with school violence.**

#### **5.3.1. Tolerance for each other from varying socio-economic backgrounds**

Programs must be implemented to assimilate all learners into the school’s ethos. There must be zero tolerance adopted for slurs and slandering which provokes violent retaliations. There has to be an inculcation of values where children appreciate each other despite differences in abilities and backgrounds.

#### **5.3.2. Understaffed schools**

The school governing bodies must make financial arrangements through the annual budgets to employ more educators. In ex Model C schools almost half

the personnel are paid by the governing bodies. More educators equal smaller classes equals better quality education. Educators in large classes feel burnt – out because control of 50 learners is harder than 30 and marking is a burden if there are 50 books. The state due to budgetary restraints has decided not to allocate more personnel. This solution to understaffing can only come from the school fees and fundraising that the governing body will have to drive. The school must provide for more educators, cleaning staff and security guards. This is possible as seen in one of the schools that engaged in Debs Balls, Fun Runs and Fetes and raised sufficient funds to employ two more educators, two cleaners and a security guard.

### **5.3.3. Closer partnership between parents and educators**

Schools that have forged a close link between parents and the school where all join their efforts for the common good of the learners have greater success than schools where parents and educators work at cross purposes. If the perpetrators of violence know that they are against a united force they will back down. Presently the perpetrators have parents who call at the school after an incident to blame the educators. There is no need for parents and educators to engage in finger-pointing. Instead all stakeholders must pool their resources and assist in the rehabilitation of the violent learners.

### **5.3.4. Rules and announcements in school must be carried through to parents**

When instructions are given at assembly most learners are inattentive. If learners are asked to repeat notices few are able to do so. A more effective system has to be implemented to ensure that instructions are carried through. Some notices that never reach parents are parent meetings, late-coming rules, uniform rules and detention plans. Some suggestions to get the information carried through would be: learners must write all assembly notices in

homework books and parents must sign after they have read the notices every day, the school management team must send out regular written notices always with a tear-off reply slip to acknowledge receipt and the school should telephone the parents if it feels that learners are not conveying important information. When rules and instructions are given educators must carry through in the case of default for example if a learner breaks a school window costs must be carried by the perpetrator and his parents and if the parents are unemployed they should provide a service to the school like gardening in lieu of the cost. If no effort is made for this to be done, the idle threat loses its effect and the violent events will continue.

#### **5.3.5. Setting of buildings, walls and gates.**

It is evident that too many entry and exit points encourage trespassing. If only two gates are available it would curb trespassing. The other gated areas can be walled or fenced off. Where movement through gates is allowed schools should station a security guard or where there are financial constraints, use prefects or responsible parents. The best investment schools can make is to get high walls built around the boundary. This requires the cooperation of the governing bodies. It is really their responsibility to provide a secure learning environment. If the grounds are near the boundaries, to curb learners' communication with outsiders, the space for breaks must be relocated for example learners can be confined to the assembly areas where they can be under the watchful supervision of the educators on duty.

#### **5.3.6. Educators being motivated**

Educators state they are stressed because of violent learners. It must be noted that while to some extent this is valid, some educators who are apathetic to their jobs may be opportunistic. Educators need to keep their focus on their learners who want to learn and not be derailed by a few violent learners who attempt to disrupt lessons. The challenge for educators is to offer quality

education in the most difficult circumstances. Efforts must be made by the SMT to boost educator morale. Educators must be rewarded and praised for their efforts. The tone of supervisors must be informative, supportive and cordial, not harsh and bossy. Educators must not feel pressured about meeting unrealistic demands and deadlines.

#### **5.3.7. Detention Policy**

Alpha Primary school suggested that parents must sign a consent form for detention once off at the beginning of each school year authorizing educators to keep learners in after school if homework was not completed, the child was late and if there was evidence of misconduct. Omega Primary said that detention was difficult to implement because learners run away after school and parents do not sign the consent forms because learners do not take them home. The method in Alpha Primary only worked to the point where parents signed consent. It remained problematic where parents refuse to sign that letter. Detention plans only work with the cooperation of the parents. Unfortunately many township learners travel by public transport and taxis to school which does not allow them to stay in late even if the parents are willing. It is suggested that schools still impose detention plans for break times and learners should be excused from sporting activities to be detained.

#### **5.3.8. Inculcating good values**

The mould of “an eye for an eye” increases violence and a gangster mentality. Learners must be taught during life skills lessons that it is nobler to walk away from an offender. Learners must be taught protocols of who they should speak to in a crisis. Even if they have been taught by their parents to retaliate they must be rewarded if they refrain from violence and choose good ways to resolve their situations.

Harber (2004) cites Miller with how children can be helped morally: When children are trained, they learn how to train others in turn. Children who are lectured to, learn how to lecture; if they are admonished, they learn how to admonish; if scolded, they learn how to scold; if ridiculed, they learn how to ridicule; if humiliated, they learn how to humiliate; if their psyche is killed, they will learn how to kill.

### **5.3.9. School policies**

The school needs specific policies to deal with violent situations. Some of the compulsory policies that every educator, learner and parent must be au fait with are: the school's code of conduct, the search policy, the detention policy, late-coming policy and others. The policies must be user-friendly with the sanction described if the rule is broken. The rules must be carried out and not be idle threats which will make a mockery of the documents.

### **5.3.10. Employ guidance counselors**

Violent learners generally lack proper advice and guidance from their homes. At school educators are too busy completing curriculum. Since the Department of Education due to financial constraints decided to terminate counselors about 2 decades ago, it is incumbent on the governing bodies to provide for this huge gap in school staffing. When counselors were in schools, the delinquent learners were rehabilitated through professional counseling. The counselors set up time to interview parents and deviant learners dreaded a visit to the counselor. Counselors assist learners emotionally which leads to stability in classroom behavior. In ex Model C schools where fees exceed R20000 per learner per annum as opposed to the R600 per annum in both Alpha and Omega primary schools, counselors are employed by the governing bodies. Those schools have a better discipline control with too few episodes of violence. It has become a financial imperative for schools to set aside funds from school

fees (must include in annual budget) for the employment of at least one trained counselor to render professional help to violent learners. Since the need of a counselor has become a priority need in schools it is advised that if funds are short then fundraising events should yield income to cover this cost.

#### **5.3.11. Control of learners during breaks and sports activities**

Learner control is better if confined to a restricted area. As educators in one primary school indicated that when learners were sent to the grounds the wide open spaces allowed for many incidents of violence but now that learners are confined to the assembly area under cover during breaks there is hardly an incident reported. The square area has 4 educators appointed in 4 corners. The Principal and SMT stands on the podium giving an elevated view of all learners. Benches have been erected for all learners to sit down and eat their sandwiches. Other schools should use these methods to curtail violence during breaks. Greater vigilance from educators on duty certainly makes the perpetrators wary.

During extra-curricular activities the educators must practice tighter control. Parents can be used to assist with supervision. If the learners break rules during outings or events on the sports field they should be barred from further activities. Learner discipline outside the classrooms must be as tight as inside the classrooms. A zero- tolerance approach to indiscipline is imperative

### **5.4. Measures schools can apply to promote a violence-free environment**

#### **5.4.1. Security measures**

Environmental factors relate mostly to the safety of learners when they are on the school grounds, when they are just outside of the school and when they are on their way to and from school. Schools must provide a very clear framework detailing what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Policies and

procedures should be clearly displayed for learners, educators and parents to see on a daily basis.

Schools can deploy a task team formed by the schools governing body that may include or involve the community and the police to be on standby to guard the exit and entrance gates to the school. The principal or the schools management should deploy adequate personnel to be on ground duty with clear instructions requested of them when monitoring learners during breaks and to identify and monitor potential hotspots within the school environment where learners may be particularly vulnerable. The responsibility for maintaining effective control and discipline must be written in their performance agreements. This will allow for them becoming accountable and responsible for what transpires under their watch or supervision. Learners and educators must be trained and informed in areas concerning awareness of the importance of knowing emergency procedures.

#### **5.4.2. Thorough record keeping**

Methods of recording data on learners also tend to vary between these two township schools. This makes comparisons and analysis more difficult. Schools must have systems in place, either hard-copy filing or computer programs with back-ups to produce evidence as required. One primary school had some data stored in computers which all SMT members have but most were written in files. There was a file for everything dealing with learner discipline for example office misconduct book, disciplinary hearings, files for letters sent to parents and ground duty records. One school had disciplinary hearings but recording was time consuming. They could not retrieve learner information further than the present year. Schools like this are advised to get more serious about recording incidents of violence.



### **5.4.3. Involvement of other organizations**

Create a central body of multi-disciplinary specialists (for example educators, parent representatives, police, social welfare services, counselors etc.) to deal with the issue of violence against children.

- Establish effective strategies to prevent violence against children.
- Educate parents, children, teachers and other relevant professionals on minimum standards for human rights of the child, thereby equipping individuals and organizations with the skills to better familiarize and prevent violence against children.
- Offer targeted training to professionals who may be involved in cases of violence against children. This group would include police officers, social workers, teachers and support staff in shelters and safe-houses.
- Create a central register of violence in schools to monitor incidence rates and to evaluate the impact of good practice.
- Undertake systematic evaluations of current procedures that address the consequences of violence against children with an emphasis upon the well-being of the victim.
- Monitor and evaluate interventions that protect children and promote non-violence.
- Determine, systematically and regularly, the extent of violence against children.
- Involve the media in raising awareness and changing public perceptions about the level and extent of violence against children.

### **5.4.4. Parental Involvement**

There is a need for specific actions aiming at the involvement of parents in the prevention and training activities and also activities involving the community as a whole. Although there is often a great deal of support for increased parent involvement in education, in practice it is generally poor. Successful parent

involvement depends on the school's strategy to reach out to the parents and to establish an inviting and non-threatening environment. Educators must not have negative expectations about working with parents. They must not feel threatened by parents. Educators must not interpret parental involvement as parent interference. Likewise, parents must not have feelings of intimidation. There are parents that want to help but do not know how to do so. Parents must not have negative feelings about school. They also must not have a negative view of educator incompetence. The school must be tolerant of the difficult work schedules of parents. By being aware of the obstacles and responding accordingly, educators at these two township schools can open the lines of communication and bring educators and the parents together. Educators need to take the lead.

Professionalism in working with parents requires that it is planned and properly managed like all other school activities. Parental involvement cannot be left to chance encounters and occasional conversations.

## **5.5. Issues of quality in this research**

### **5.5.1. Validity and Reliability**

Maree (2010, p.80) states that a measure or instrument is said to be valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity and reliability in a qualitative research refers to research that is credible and trustworthy. Maree (2010, p.80) includes credibility and dependability as key criteria of trustworthiness. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.316) claims that there can be no validity without reliability. The credibility and trustworthiness of the research instruments are crucial in the qualitative research. These terms refer to the research being trustworthy and credible. According to Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2006, p.62) credible research produces findings that are convincing and believable. They add that triangulation is a strategy used to enhance the

findings of the research. Triangulation involves checking of information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data (Mertens, 1998, p.183). In using triangulation of three sources of data any exception found in the data could have led to a modification. In this study the findings from the interviews, observations and reflective journals were checked against each other as a test of veracity. It was clear that the information from all three data sources came to the same conclusions that there are many types of violence in the schools, that school violence is impacting on the teaching and learning processes in schools, that all stakeholders are being affected adversely by school violence and that schools are grappling to find effective measures to curb school violence.

#### **5.5.2. Limitations/ Constraints of this study**

Some of the many challenges of this study are: It is limited to the township of Phoenix. While school violence is prevalent in many South African townships just one township on the South African map has been identified for this study. This is a small slice of the reality of township schools. The events of the two Phoenix schools may epitomize other township schools. While incidents of violence prevail in both primary and secondary schools the study implies that the situations in the primary schools are the same in secondary schools. The researcher had to rely on the authenticity of the data provided by educators, support staff, parents of governing bodies and learners.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

Violence at any school seriously threatens the well-being of everyone. The management of violence in any form is everyone's responsibility. Everyone should take the responsibility to protect him or herself in order to minimize or eradicate this scourge of violent behavior. Those who became perpetrators should not become discriminated or victimized, but rather be rehabilitated to bring about a change in their behavior. All involved should be willing to be informed and educated regarding the different forms and aspects of violent behavior. Many of our learners are aware of their human rights but show little responsibility to meet their obligations.

It is hoped that the suggestions and recommendations outlined in this study will be taken cognizance of and implemented not only in South African township schools but in schools internationally who are struggling with school violence. The suggestions or recommendations will be successful if there is real commitment from the SGB, school's management and the educators, learners and their parents. There is a need for enthusiastic and interested people to drive the process to eradicate violence in their schools.

This study provided me with an opportunity to really see the effects of school violence on both learners and educators. The enormity of the situation has been covered with a smokescreen for too long. The authorities in education know that we are sitting on a time bomb in schools. The inertia to act has exacerbated the crisis. While this study may not provide a quantum leap to resolve the crisis, it is hoped that effort will be made both nationally and internationally to eradicate school violence so that schools will prioritize on teaching and learning.

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