

**The relationship between mode and locus of exposure
and the impact of interpersonal violence in
a sample of South African adolescents**

By

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**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Social Science (Clinical Psychology)**

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30 November 2014

**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with immense gratitude that I acknowledge the support of the following people who made it possible for me to complete this research project:

- First and foremost I wish to thank my supervisor, Prof. Steve Collings. Your academic guidance, insight and wealth of knowledge, helped me to develop my research skills. I consider it an honour to have worked with you once again.
- I would also like to thank my family and friends for their continuous love, patience, support and encouragement.
- Finally, I would like to acknowledge the vital role that the adolescent research participants in this study played. By sharing your experiences, you have helped provide valuable insight into the impact of interpersonal violence on South African children.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my children Skye, Courtney and Jordan who continue to be a source of my inspiration. Your unconditional love and endless support gives me the courage to achieve.

ABSTRACT

Children living in South Africa are exposed to chronic adversity on a daily basis, placing them at increased risk for psychological distress and high levels of fear. In particular, the impact of interpersonal violence on children has been noted with concern and has been well researched. Whilst numerous studies have focused separately on either mode of exposure (direct versus indirect or vicariously experienced) or locus of exposure (the specific domain such as the home, school or community) to interpersonal violence and the wide array of detrimental outcomes on childhood development, there remain inconsistencies in findings. The aim of this study was therefore to systematically investigate the constructs of mode and locus of exposure, simultaneously and comprehensively, in order to provide more clarity into the relative impact of different forms of interpersonal violence on South African children. The study expanded on an existing research project that was conducted over three loci of exposure: the home, the school, and community, in order to explore the nature of South African adolescent fears, using existing data. Ecological systems theory was the guiding framework to gain an integrative perspective. This was a quantitative study that employed a cross-sectional survey research design. Stratified random sampling in terms of the quintile system was utilized. A self-administered questionnaire consisting of a free response format and a 5-point Likert scale, was administered to a sample of 312 adolescent school children in the North West province (South Africa) in 2013. Systematic Content Analysis was utilized to derive content categories and coding was informed by Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources theory. Data were analysed using a 2 (mode) x 2 (locus) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results showed that the risk of exposure to interpersonal violence was high, with 56.1% of respondents reporting that they had been exposed to some form of interpersonal violence in the past 12 months. A significant main effect of mode of exposure indicated that vicarious forms of traumatic exposure were significantly more distressing for participants than were direct forms of traumatic exposure. However, the impact of exposure to interpersonal violence was found to be unrelated to locus of exposure. Respondent's age, gender, and race were not found to be related to the impact of exposure to interpersonal violence. These findings suggest that the impact of interpersonal violence on children is mediated by mode of exposure but not by locus of exposure. Our results took into consideration children's chronic exposure to interpersonal violence within the South African context. These findings are discussed with reference to their implications for practice and future research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) and the Bill of Rights provide advanced legislative frameworks to safeguard the rights of children living in South Africa. However, despite having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, children in South Africa are still exposed to a wide range of adversity on an ongoing basis, resulting in fears beyond what is considered normal for their optimal well-being and development (UNICEF, 2013). Death, disease, poverty, violence, and injury are prevalent, placing children at increased risk for psychological distress, fear, and anxiety (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Cluver, Bowes & Gardner, 2010; Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna, Jama & Puren, 2010; Seedat, Nyamai, Njenga, Vythilingum, & Stein, 2004; Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, & Ratele, 2009; Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2009). High levels of psychological distress not only reduce the child's sense of safety, but also results in a violation of their basic human rights, and can be seen as a hindrance to all aspects of the child's development (Papalia, 2006; UNICEF, 2012). As a result, numerous studies have directed their attention at children's exposure to chronic adversity, and how it impacts negatively on the adjustment and adaptation of children living in the South African context.

Following the inherited legacy of violence within the South African socio-political context, the majority of available literature focuses on the assumption that exposure to interpersonal violence is what children fear most, and what places them at an elevated risk for undesirable outcomes (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin, Richter & De Wet, 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). South Africa is considered to be one of the most violent countries in the world (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Seedat et al., 2004). Consequently, South African children are frequently exposed to extremely high levels of violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). As a result of persistent exposure to interpersonal violence, children living in South Africa have been found to be "scared everywhere", in their homes, at school, and in their communities (Gopal & Collings,

2013). A number of studies emphasize the necessity for the prevention of violence to be viewed as a national health priority, as South Africa faces a daunting task of addressing the impact that high levels of violence has on children (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Burton et al., 2009; Cluver et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2009; Shields et al., 2009; UNICEF, 2012).

Numerous studies provide compelling evidence that childhood exposure to interpersonal violence has a negative impact on socio-emotional development, resulting in psychological distress and high levels of fear (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Perrin, Smith, & Yule, 2000). Long term psychopathological outcomes include poor psychosocial adjustment; anxiety; depression; suicide ideation; repetitive self-injury; post-traumatic stress disorder; low self-esteem; destructive behaviour; aggression; dissociative defences; interpersonal relationship difficulties; alcohol and drug dependency and vulnerability to repeated victimisation (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Nansel et al., 2004; Seedat et al., 2004). Deficits in academic performance and behavioural disorders may also become evident; with such deficits affecting the child's future psychological and social adjustment (Gopal & Collings, 2013; Ward, 2007). Jewkes et al. (2010) conclude that childhood exposure to ongoing violence in South Africa, has a detrimental effect on all health outcomes, and needs to be addressed urgently.

1.2 Background to the study

A considerable amount of research on childhood adversity has focused on either mode of exposure (directly experienced versus vicariously experienced exposure) or locus of exposure (the specific domain in which interpersonal violence takes place), and related psychological distress.

Most available literature has found evidence that the impact of interpersonal violence on children is not related to the mode of exposure (Richters & Martinez, 1993; Osofsky, Wewers, Hann, & Fick, 1993). A study into the effects of exposure to violence in the family and in the community found “that exposure to ambient and vicarious violence produces effects parallel to those observed when the violence involves direct victimisation” (Barbarin et al., 2001, p.23).

Similarly, earlier research found evidence that exposure to interpersonal violence, is associated with a variety of psychological problems, regardless of locus of exposure. A review of research by Horn and Trickett (1998) focussing on community violence, indicated that levels of distress in children were not affected by locus of exposure to adverse conditions.

However, more recent research by Shields et al. (2009) compared the psychological effects of witnessing violence and being directly victimised in two different domains (the community and at school). This study found that in schools, direct victimisation had a stronger effect on children's reported distress than did witnessing violence; whilst in the community the opposite was found, as children reported being more traumatized by witnessing violence than by direct victimisation. Shields et al. (2009) noted though, that the differences found between witnessing violence versus direct victimisation were not striking and that "all forms of experiencing violence resulted in significant psychological distress independently when other forms of violence were controlled" (p.1203). These findings suggest that the relationship between locus and mode of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence in South African children may in fact be far more complex, thus emphasising the need for further research on the topic.

1.3 Rationale for the study

Whilst most available literature has found evidence that levels of psychological distress in children are not influenced by either mode or locus of exposure to violence, there remain inconsistencies (Horn & Trickett, 1998; Osofsky et al., 1993; Richters & Martinez, 1993). Since the majority of studies have focused separately on either mode or locus of exposure, they have also failed to obtain a complete view (Feshbach, & Feshbach, 1998; Osofsky et al., 1993). Findings that have emerged from more recent studies, however, have indicated a more complex picture (Shields et al., 2009). This suggests that further research is necessary to investigate the constructs of mode and locus of exposure simultaneously and comprehensively, in order to more fully understand the complexity of the impact of interpersonal violence on South African children.

1.4 Research objectives and research questions

The objectives of the study were:

- To survey a sample of South African adolescents in order to explore the association between:
 - mode of exposure to interpersonal violence and the impact of interpersonal violence on children
 - locus of exposure to interpersonal violence and the impact of interpersonal violence on children

Critical questions addressed by the research are:

- Is the relative impact of interpersonal violence on adolescent children mediated by mode of exposure?
- Is the relative impact of interpersonal violence on adolescent children mediated by locus of exposure?
- If the relative impact of interpersonal violence on adolescent children is mediated by mode and locus of exposure, what is the relative importance of these two constructs?

1.5 Key concepts

A definition of the following key concepts will be provided: adolescence; mode of exposure; locus of exposure; psychological distress and interpersonal violence

1.5.1 Adolescence

“The term ‘adolescence’ derives from the Latin verb *adolescere*, meaning ‘to grow up’ or ‘to grow to adulthood’, thus referring to a development phase in the human life cycle that is

situated between childhood and adulthood” (Burger, Gouws & Kruger, 2000, p.2). The adolescent phase is characterised by dramatic physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes that can be particularly stressful, usually spanning a decade, ranging from 10 - 11 years until the late teens or early 20s (Papalia, 2006). “Adolescence is generally considered to begin with puberty, the process that leads to sexual maturity, or fertility – the ability to reproduce” (Papalia, 2006, p.412).

1.5.2 Mode of exposure

Mode of exposure refers to direct victimisation (when the child is in immediate danger, in other words a victim of violence or threat of violence), versus vicarious victimisation (when the child is either witness to a specific incident of violence or subjected to ambient violence which does not involve a specific incident, for example the child may be living in fear due to high levels of violence in a community they reside in) (Barbarin et al., 2001; Horn, & Trickett, 1998; Jameson, 2014; Foster et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009).

1.5.3 Locus of exposure

Locus of exposure refers to the specific domain in which interpersonal violence takes place (domestic versus non-domestic): For the purposes of the present study domestic exposure to violence relates to the home and family domains (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005); and non-domestic exposure relates to school violence (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; De Wet, 2003; Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004) or violence within the community (Barbarin et al., 2001; Garrido, Culhane, Raviv, & Taussig, 2010; Foster, Kuperminc, & Price, 2004; Shields et al., 2009).

1.5.4 Psychological distress

Psychological distress is the adverse psychological sequelae that may be influenced by the individual’s experiences in their living environment, including childhood exposure to interpersonal violence (Sue, Sue, & Sue, 2010). Such experiences may be associated with extreme or prolonged emotional reactions, such as heightened levels of fear; anxiety; depression; suicide ideation; post-traumatic stress disorder; low self-esteem; destructive behaviour; aggression; interpersonal relationship difficulties; alcohol and drug dependency

and vulnerability to repeat victimisation (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Nansel et al., 2004; Seedat et al., 2004; Sue et al., 2010).

1.5.5 Interpersonal violence

Interpersonal violence can be defined as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (Dahlber and Krug, 2002).

1.6 Outline of the study

Chapter 1 comprises an introduction to the present study. A background to the chronic adversity that children living in South Africa are exposed to on a daily basis is provided. Included in this chapter are the rationale for the study, the research objectives and questions, definitions of key concepts, and an outline of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews available literature relating to the relationship between locus and mode of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence in children. The Ecological Systems theoretical framework; interpersonal violence in the South African context; mode of exposure to interpersonal violence; and locus of exposure to interpersonal violence are discussed.

Chapter 3 provides a summary of the methodology of a previous broad project that generated the data utilized in the present study including: the research design, location of the study, sampling, instrument for data collection, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and data analysis. The measures the researchers took to ensure reliability and validity are also discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the major findings that emerged from the analysis of the data in the present study. The findings are discussed and presented in tables in terms of risk of exposure to interpersonal violence and impact of exposure to interpersonal violence, in order to facilitate a better understanding of the relationship between locus and mode of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence in children.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings in the context of the available literature on the topic. The limitations and implications of the study are also addressed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the conceptual framework used in the study and explores empirical literature relating to the mode and locus of exposure to interpersonal violence.

2.2 Theoretical framework: An ecological systems perspective

A number of perspectives have been used in an attempt to understand the effects of children's exposure to adversity. Historically, research on childhood adversity has tended to rely on single factor approaches, that focussed on the individual and on intrapersonal aspects (Feshbach, & Feshbach, 1998; Osofsky et al., 1993). However, more recently, there has been a shift towards an ecological perspective, which takes into account how the individual responds to the dynamic multi-factoral influences in their environment (Astor & Benbenishty, 2008). An extensive investigation into the ecological influences associated with child maltreatment concluded that "an ecological model has been posited as the most appropriate framework for understanding the heterogeneity in maltreatment sequelae because it takes into account the interaction of multiple factors across numerous contexts" (Zielinski & Bradshaw, 2006, p.50). Ward (2007) also emphasises the importance of viewing children as developing in an "ecology of contexts", using the ecosystemic model to provide a better understanding of their environments. Such a perspective provides a basis for identifying multiple risk and protective factors that children are exposed to. Ward (2007) further proposes that the interconnection of the multiple systems and how they affect each other as a whole must be considered, rather than viewing them in isolation.

In view of the above, investigating the complexity of the impact of interpersonal violence on South African children, necessitates looking beyond the individual level, to how the broader socio-political context influences the developing child. As a result the present study utilized

Ecological Systems Theory as conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which considers childhood development from a contextual perspective, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of interpersonal violence on South African adolescent children. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory encompasses the interaction between the individual child's development (which includes biological development, inter- and intra-psychological development, and behaviour), and multiple social contexts or systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Papalia, 2006; Zielinski & Bradshaw, 2006). The ecological environment in which child development takes place is perceived as "a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p.39). The reciprocal interactive processes that take place between these structures, explains how the characteristics of the individual are viewed as both a producer and a product of their own development (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) differentiates between five levels of dynamic interacting environmental systems that have an impact on the developing child, including the following:

1. **The microsystem:** a pattern of activities and daily interactions within the child's immediate setting such as the home, school and neighbourhood
2. **The mesosystem:** the interaction between two or more microsystems
3. **The exosystem:** the interaction between two or more settings which does not contain the child
4. **The macrosystem:** the broader societal cultural patterns
5. **The chronosystem:** the dimension of time that affects the developing child

Each system, together with relevant examples of factors that are found within each system, will be discussed in more detail below.

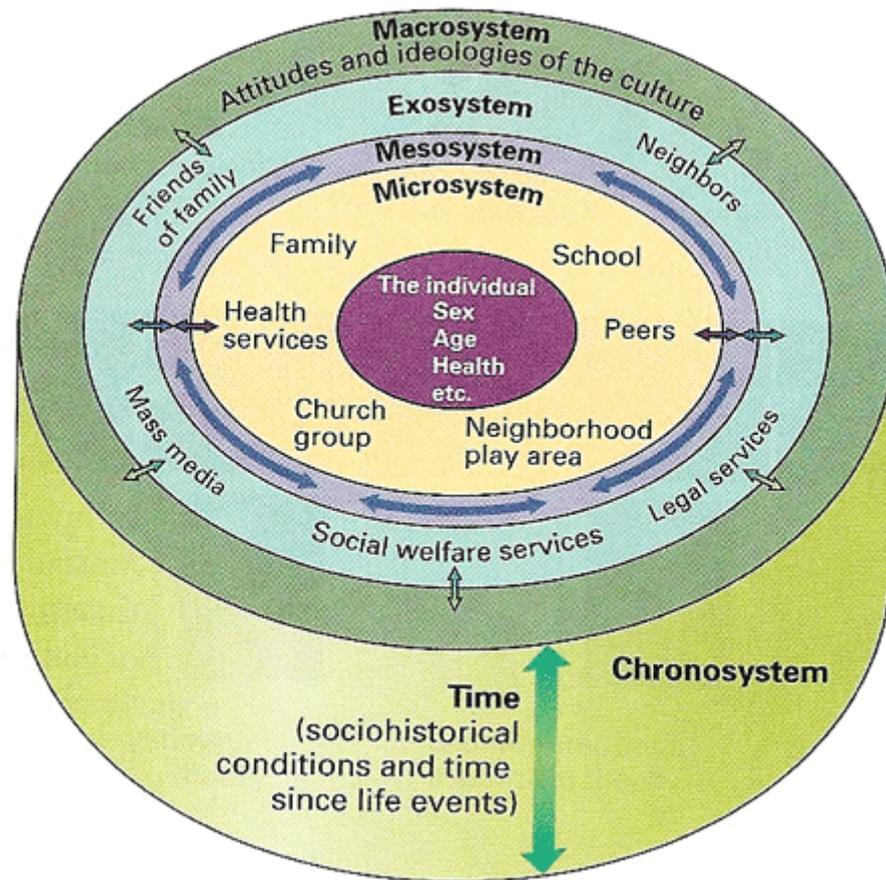


Figure 1: Summary of Bronfenbrenner’s five interlocking contextual systems that influence the developing child namely: the Microsystem; Mesosystem; Exosystem; Macrosystem and Chronosystem (image taken from Bronfenbrenner GIF image, 2013; Papalia, 2006, p.38).

2.2.1 Individual factors

The first level refers to individual child characteristics such as age, race, gender, personality, health and education, which create a complex bidirectional interaction with other contexts (Papalia, 2006; Ward, 2007). The term bidirectional interaction, also referred to as reciprocal determinism, is whereby the child learns behaviours from the environment, but in turn their behaviour is likely to elicit reactions from the environment (Ward, 2007). This interactionist perspective acknowledges that individuals play an active, manipulative role in their environment. By actively participating in shaping their environment, individuals may in fact unintentionally select high risk situations that put them in a vulnerable position (Hamilton & Brown, 2005). Specific individual characteristics of the child that are relevant to the present study will be discussed below:

The adolescent stage of development

The adolescent developmental stage, which involves a transition from childhood to adulthood, is fraught with accelerated physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. These major changes can be particularly stressful, impacting on the adolescent's mood and often leading to heightened emotionality (Burger et al., 2000; Papalia, 2006). Under-developed problem solving and coping skills can also result in increased risky behaviour (Papalia, 2006). Coping with these developmental changes may be overwhelming for the adolescent, and can influence their responses to added environmental stressors, such as exposure to interpersonal violence (Papalia, 2006).

Gender dynamics

Research indicates that responses to fear related experiences can be influenced by gender dynamics (SACE, 2011). The majority of studies have found that in general, girls have a greater number and intensity of fears than boys (Burkhardt, 2007; Papalia, 2006). These gender differences may be associated with the stereotypical gender-role socialisation process, which influence how emotions are expressed (Papalia, 2006). "In the South African society, for instance, it is often not acceptable when boys cry or show fear and girls are often criticised for being aggressive" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.84). Foster et al. (2004) found significant gender differences in symptoms of psychological distress among adolescents exposed to community interpersonal violence. Further studies indicate that the gender variations in the expression of fear may be as a result of the different types of adversity that male and female adolescents are exposed to (Burton, 2007; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; SACE, 2011). However, there also appear to be inconsistencies in the research findings on gender dynamics, as the results provided by some studies have found no significant gender differences in relation to the effect of exposure to interpersonal violence (Barbarin et al., 2001; Shields et al., 2008).

2.2.2 The Microsystem

The Microsystem is represented by the immediate environment and constitutes the "pattern of activities, roles, and relationships within a setting, such as the home, school or neighbourhood" in which the individual developing child interacts with others on an everyday basis (Papalia, 2006, p.36). Examples of these relationships include familiar people

such as family, friends and peers. The quality of the child's relationships is capable of helping or hindering their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bidirectional influences at the microsystem level have the strongest impact on the child (Ward, 2007). One of the most influential socialising environments in childhood development is the family, as this is where children spend most of their time (SACE, 2011). Within the family context, parents thus play a central role in the positive or negative social and emotional functioning of the child (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). If parents model dysfunctional behaviour, this may adversely affect how children deal with their world, leading to disastrous consequences (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). For instance, children who are exposed to violence in their family of origin, including intimate partner violence and child abuse, are more likely to learn that violent behaviour is a normative and acceptable way to resolve conflict, regardless of the context (Abraham & Jewkes, 2005; Ward, 2007).

2.2.3 The Mesosystem

The Mesosystem is the interconnection between two or more Microsystems that contain the child, such as those between the family home and teachers at school, or the family home and peer group (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For instance, a child who has been directly or indirectly exposed to abuse in their home may withdraw from their peers at school. They may also lose trust in authority figures, which in turn would impact negatively on their attitudes and behaviours towards their teachers at school (Kempster, 2014).

2.2.4 The Exosystem

The Exosystem involves the interaction between two or more social settings such as work or school environments, home and neighbourhoods, which do not contain the developing child, yet indirectly affect the child in their immediate context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These everyday social contexts can manipulate or determine the child's vulnerability and thus also play a pivotal role in their social development. For example, one parent may be affected by stress at work, which may increase the chance of conflict between the parents at home, and the child's subsequent risk of exposure to interpersonal violence (Kempster, 2014). In addition, schools interact with the broader communities in which they are located in. "For this reason, the social ills prevalent in communities are known to permeate the school environment to varying degrees" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.54). Easy access to drugs and

weapons in the community, may contribute to the easy availability of drugs and weapons in schools. This adds to the risk that the child will be exposed to school violence (Burton, 2008; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

2.2.5 The Macrosystem

The Macrosystem refers to the outer layer of the child's environment comprising the "dominant values, beliefs, customs, and economic and social systems of a culture or subculture, which filter down in countless ways to individual's daily lives" (Papalia, 2006, p.37). It includes the broad structures that contribute to the creation of a climate of violence such as legislation, policies, norms of what constitutes acceptable violence, patriarchal systems as well as social and economic inequities. The impact of South Africa's socio-political history of colonialism and apartheid also needs to be taken into account, including discriminatory policies which promoted increased levels of poverty and a culture of violence, which remain evident today (Burton, 2008). "Poverty and inequality are crucial social dynamics that have contributed to South Africa's burden of violent injury" (Seedat et al., 2009, p.1014). Inequalities in socio-economic conditions in South Africa often means that children from poorer communities have barriers to resources such as the availability of health, education, and social services which can lead to anger, frustration, and violence (Ward, 2007). Furthermore, children who are living in less than ideal conditions may view their environment as more threatening, as they have frequently "been directly and indirectly exposed to negative events such as violence, crime, rape, and health problems, etc." (Muris, Du Plessis & Loxton, 2008, p.1511). Differences in the quality of their education may also lead to differences in their interpretation and responses to violence (Papalia, 2006). Variations in cultural child rearing practices in South Africa are another important aspect that may influence behavioural and emotional responses. For example "black and coloured youths perceived their parents to be more anxious, controlling and rejective than white youths, and it was also shown that precisely these rearing behaviours were positively linked to children's anxiety levels" (Muris, et al., 2008, p.1511). A study by Burkhardt (2007) which compared children from different ethnic groups in South Africa, found that black South African children reported a higher number and intensity of fears than other ethnic groups. Moreover, the apartheid regime has contributed to a dysfunctional society and family structure which has resulted in parents who now lack the necessary resources and skills, to provide for the optimal development and adjustment of their children (SACE, 2011).

2.2.6 The Chronosystem

“The Chronosystem adds the dimension of time: the degree of stability or change in a child’s world” (Papalia, 2006, p.38). This may be internal such as the developing child’s physiological changes, or external, as in the death of a parent. The child may also interact differently with their environment as he or she gets older. For example, spending less time with the family and more time in the community will influence changes in the developing child (Ward, 2007). Other chronosystem factors relevant to the South African context include changes that occur in family structure, such as “the decline in the extended-family household in developing countries” (Papalia, 2006, p.38).

2.2.7 Rationale for the use of the Ecological Systems Theory

The relationship between the child and the impact of violence cannot be viewed in isolation. It requires a consideration of complex and reciprocal relationships within the child’s environment that impact on their development and adjustment (Astor & Benbenishty, 2008). As Ecological Systems theory emphasises, children are not merely acted upon by the environment, but are both active and reactive in that their responses also shape the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Another important aspect of Bronfenbrenner’s approach that was taken into account is that the child’s perception of their own environment is seen as providing a vital key to understanding their behavioural and emotional responses (Papalia, 2006). The use of Ecological Systems Theory, which is based on the influence of the interconnection of multiple systems in the child’s environment, is therefore essential to provide a better understanding of the complexity of the mode and locus of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence on South African adolescents.

2.3 Interpersonal violence in South Africa

Literature suggests that the high levels of interpersonal violence in contemporary South Africa has its roots in socio-political history, including the liberation struggle against racism and oppression, which in turn promoted ongoing political violence (Burton, 2008; Kaminer & Eagle, 2010; Stevens, Seedat, & Van Niekerk, 2004). Although the wave of politically motivated violence decreased after South Africa’s transition to democracy in 1994, the level of violence in general has escalated (Barbarin et al., 2001). “The ongoing socio-economic

inequities, social fragmentation, and individual socialisation patterns have been asserted as amongst the spectrum of causal agents complicit in the persisting prominence of violence in South African society” (Stevens et al., 2004, p.13-3). Furthermore, South Africa’s predominant system of patriarchal social norms and ideals of masculinity, have resulted in the use of violence as an acceptable means to ensure such a hierarchical structure is maintained (Seedat et al., 2009). In South Africa, violence is regularly used in various situations, including as punishment, expressing anger, asserting power, settling disputes between neighbours, in schools and health care settings suggesting that “if not condoned legally, it is normative and generally accepted by communities” (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005, p.1811). Seedat et al. (2009) reviewed the magnitude of violence and injury in South Africa, and concluded that half of all the deaths are due to injury caused by interpersonal violence (which is four and a half times the amount worldwide). As a consequence, the impact of such high levels of interpersonal violence in South Africa continues to dominate public discourse, and prevails as a significant area of attention for researchers (Barbarin et al., 2001: Stevens et al., 2004).

Exposure to chronic interpersonal violence is common for South African youth and the implications are profound, as fear of violence permeates every aspect of their daily lives (Burton, 2006). Violence against children is reported as ubiquitous, including ‘beatings’, sexual abuse, bullying, and corporal punishment (Seedat et al., 2009). Although many cases of violence go unreported, violence is pervasive, as reported figures show that between 2009 and 2010, over 56,500 South African children were victims of violent crime (SAHRC, & UNICEF, 2011). Studies also indicate that “South Africa has one of the highest incidences of rape worldwide and an analysis of South African police statistics indicates that over 40% of all reported rapes, and half of all other sexual assaults, have been perpetrated against children” (Kaminer, Du Plessis, Hardy, & Benjamin, 2013, p.112). Other research found that disturbingly high mortality rates are due to injury, caused primarily by interpersonal and gender-based violence, which places our youth at extreme risk (Seedat et al., 2009). A recent study that assessed South African adolescent’s direct and indirect exposure to violence in the home, school and neighbourhood found that

Almost all participants (98.9%) had witnessed community violence, 40.1% had been directly threatened or assaulted in the community, 76.9% had witnessed domestic violence, 58.6% had been directly threatened or assaulted in the community, 75.8%

reported direct or indirect exposure to school violence, and 8% reported that they had been sexually abused. (Kaminer, et al., 2013, p.112)

In a systematic attempt to conceptualize adolescent fears in a South African context, a broad research project conducted three separate studies over three loci of exposure: the home, the school and the community (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014). Findings from this study indicate high levels of fear in relation to interpersonal violence. This has particular relevance in the South African context, where numerous studies emphasise that the increased levels of psychological distress associated with a high prevalence of interpersonal violence, is a reflection of what is happening in the broader South African society (Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Seedat et al., 2009; Shields et al., 2009). Contemporary South African children, who are constantly in a violent context that elicits fear and anxiety, thus face an increased risk for initial and long-term negative outcomes (Jameson, 2014; Kaminer et al., 2013).

2.4 Mode of exposure to interpersonal violence

The mode of exposure to interpersonal violence differs according to whether exposure is direct or indirect (in other words either witnessing violence or being subjected to ambient violence) (Barbarin et al., 2001; Horn, & Trickett, 1998).

2.4.1 Direct victimisation

Direct victimisation includes being “hit, kicked or shoved, badly beaten up, threatened with a knife or sharp weapon, attacked with a knife or sharp weapon, threatened with a gun, robbed or in a fight” (Shields et al., 2009, p.1196).

2.4.2 Vicarious or indirect victimisation

Vicarious or indirect victimisation is when the child is a witness to violent events, for example childhood experiences of witnessing their mothers being abused in their homes (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). Children may also experience violence indirectly by knowing someone who has been assaulted or through reports provided by members of their family, friends, neighbours, or the media (Horn, & Trickett, 1998). Ambient violence is not tied to a

specific event, but is a result of the child living in a dangerous environment that elicits fear responses due to high levels of violence, for example living in a dangerous community with known violent gang-related activity (Barbarin et al., 2001; Horn, & Trickett, 1998, Norton, 2014). This may result in the child becoming particularly anxious about the potential for violence. Whilst direct victimisation is more obvious, findings indicate that vicarious or indirect victimisation is more frequent (Horn, & Trickett, 1998).

2.4.3 Adverse effects of direct and vicarious victimisation

The adverse effects on children of exposure to direct or indirect interpersonal violence have been well documented, and includes symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Ward, Flisher, Zissis, Muller, & Lombard, 2001). Findings by Burton and Leoschut (2013) indicate that children who have been directly victimised, as well as those who witness violence within schools, develop feelings of fear and anxiety, which inevitably resulted in short- and long-term consequences, notably depression, fatigue, and aggression. Research by Abrahams and Jewkes (2005) found that childhood experiences of witnessing maternal violence, negatively affect future emotional and social functioning. The authors found that children who witnessed their mother's abuse, subsequently regard the use of violence as an acceptable means of resolving conflict. These findings are in line with research that indicates that "adolescents who have been victims or witnesses of violence are also likely to exhibit poor school performance and behavioural disorders which jeopardise their ability to function well later in life" (Ward et al., 2001, p.297).

Acts of violence may also negatively impact on children who may not have directly experienced violence, but who may have seen friends or peers affected in the school context (UNICEF, 2012).

Fear of violence at school can be as harmful as primary victimisation and personal experiences of violence, causing learners to drop out or avoid school, or to lose concentration in the classroom. Equally, fear of violence can be as harmful in developing healthy pro-social relationships as actual victimisation. (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.102)

2.4.4 The impact of mode of exposure to interpersonal violence

Numerous studies indicate “that the impact of violence on children does not depend on mode of exposure” (Barbarin et al., 2001, p.17). A series of studies with African American youth who live in communities with high levels of violent crime, was conducted by Hastings and Kelley (1997). The authors developed violence exposure scales for the home, school and community, to identify the factor structures of the various forms of exposure to violence. Their findings showed there was no distinction between direct victimisation and witnessing violence, as both severe victimisation and severe exposure through witnessing, loaded on the same factors.

Evidence from other research also suggests that direct exposure to violence results in similar levels of psychological distress in children, as indirect violence, which is supposedly less threatening (Barbarin et al., 2001). This could be due to the child’s perceptions of the possibility of future harm, for example, “cognitive processes that involves altered expectations about the degree of control and vulnerability may arise just as easily from vicarious as from direct violence exposure” (Barbarin et al., 2001, p.17). However, the effects may vary depending on proximity, that is, if violence takes place physically close to the child, this may increase the severity of the distress; and also may be greater if violence is against someone who is known to the child, for example a family member or friend, rather than if the violence is against a stranger (Barbarin et al., 2001). These findings are in line with the “principle of social propinquity: expectations of directly experiencing violence increase when violence happens to someone with whom a child has a relationship or identifies. The closer the connection with the victim, the greater the adverse impact of the incident” (Barbarin et al., 2001, p.17). Ward et al. (2001) also found that the relationship between the type of exposure to violence (either as witness or as a victim) and symptoms “are in most cases, weak but significant (p.300). Circumstances that relate to exposure may differ, which in turn influences the child’s subjective sense of safety. For example Ward et al. (2001) suggests that “known” violence, whereby danger is present in the home and connected to a family member that the child has a close relationship with, is associated with PTSD, depression and anxiety; whereas “stranger” violence, which is likely to consist of isolated incidents and may be buffered by access to family support, is unlikely to be associated with PTSD. “Stranger violence may thus be more likely to give children access to protective factors than “known” violence, which appears to undermine resilience more seriously” (Ward

et al., 2001, p.300). Horn and Trickett (1998) also indicate that both direct and indirect violence that has been perpetrated by a family member is likely to be more traumatic and damaging to the child's development and sense of safety. On the other hand, Barabarin and Richter (2001) found that exposure to ambient violence within the community resulted in symptoms of PTSD, whereas direct victimisation did not.

Horn and Trickett (1998) acknowledge that additional research is needed to clarify multiple dimensions that are associated with mode of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence. These factors include the level of atrocity of the violence, multiple exposures of each kind of violence, the environment in which the violence occurs, the child's developmental stage, the closeness of the child "both physically and along a continuum of relationship, whether the violence is directed at self, parent, friend, acquaintance, someone in the community, or a stranger" (Horn and Trickett, 1998, p.134).

2.5 Locus of exposure to interpersonal violence

In South Africa there are few spaces where children can feel safe, as exposure to violence is everywhere, and levels of fear are high (Kaminer et al., 2013). The youth in South Africa are "surrounded by violence and crime in all the spheres they occupy: the home, the school and the community" (Burton, 2006, p.1).

In view of this and in keeping with an ecological systems perspective, the present study has identified the domestic context (including the home and family) and the non-domestic context (including the school and community) as the spheres where interpersonal violence takes place.

2.5.1 Domestic context: Family-based interpersonal violence

The family is the immediate care-giving structure in a child's life. As it is usually the most proximal factor, it is thus considered to be one of the most influential socialising environments in childhood development (SACE, 2011). Ideally the family should be "the social group to nurture us, instruct us in social and moral values, and protect us from harm" (Witt, 1987, p.297). Early studies reported that violence against children within the family home was a rare phenomenon, and research in this domain was neglected (Gelles & Straus,

1979). However, with the increased public awareness, partly due to the feminist movement, more recent research indicates that family violence is common, and that children are frequently exposed to various types of violence within the privacy of their own homes (Kiselica, & Morrill-Richards, 2007; UNICEF, 2012). In fact, family violence researchers have found that

The family is perhaps the most violent social group, and the home the most violent setting, in our society. A person is more likely to be hit or killed in his or her home by another family member than anywhere else or by anyone else. (Gelles & Straus, 1979, p.15)

In view of South Africa's socio-political history and the legacy of violence; the high levels of poverty and inequalities in living conditions; the burden of disease and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS that has resulted in increased levels of orphaning and child-headed households; fragmented family structures; and a decline in the extended-family support; it is not surprising that the child's immediate care-giving structure is compromised. As a result, many South African children are living in a stressful and threatening home environment that is characterised by anger, frustration, and violence (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Muris et al., 2008; SACE, 2011; Ward, 2007).

2.5.1.1 The concept of family-based violence

Family violence can be defined as “any act of commission or omission by family members, and any condition resulting from such acts, or inaction which deprives other family members of equal rights, and/or interferes with the optimal development and freedom of choice” (Pagelow, 1984, p.21). Family violence is also the unjustified use of power and force by some family members toward other family members and includes several types of violence such as child abuse, incest, intimate partner violence, family murder and sibling abuse (Pagelow, 1984). Most family violence researchers limit their studies on the effects of violence on children to intrafamilial abuse, which includes parents as perpetrators (as well as nonparents such as uncles and grandfathers) (Trickett, & Putnam, 1998).

2.5.1.2 Adverse effects of family-based violence

A study by Barbarin et al. (2001) investigated the exposure to violence and the psychological adjustment of South African children. Their findings showed that in addition to anxiety and depression outcomes, family violence was directly associated with attention deficits, aggression and lack of academic motivation. In particular, Hildyard and Wolfe (2002) found that children who have been abused or neglected within the very relationship that is supposed to provide a “safe haven” in terms of support, nurturance and protection from harm are more prone to incur devastating negative developmental, emotional, and behavioural consequences. “Violence perpetrated by adult family members is likely to be more traumatic than the same acts of violence involving nonfamily members: The former is likely to be chronic, more frequent, more intense, less controllable, and evokes damaging stress symptoms” (Horn, & Trickett, 1998, p.132). Similarly, research by Osofsky et al. (1993) found that violence in the family results in far more adverse effects than that of community violence. This suggests that violence that has been committed within the family home is associated with higher levels of psychological distress in comparison to violence that occurs outside the home (Horn & Trickett, 1998). However, a large scale study was conducted by Barbarin and Richter (2001) in the area of Johannesburg-South Africa, to assess the psychological adjustment of children born in 1990 over a period of 10 years. The results of their study suggested that children who had been victimized in the family home, had no more adverse affects than those who had been victims of community violence.

2.5.1.3 Categories of violence in the family context

Physical abuse

Physical abuse in the family can be defined as when “a caregiver, other family member or other adult had inflicted a physical injury upon a target child by other than accidental means” (Garrido, Culhane, Raviv, & Taussig, 2010, p.759). Forms of physical abuse include punching, biting, kicking, pushing, burning and shaking (Van Rensburg, & Van Staden, 2006; Wider, 2012). Children are severely beaten and threatened on a daily basis with sticks, belts and other types of weapons such as guns and knives (Seedat et al., 2009). “Generally, the frequency and severity of beatings are greater for boys than for girls” (Seedat et al., 2009, p.1013). Typical physical injuries include bruising, bite wounds, welts, burns, concussion,

internal injuries, broken or fractured bones, and even death (Seedat et al., 2009; Wider, 2012). Children are also recipients of severe physical punishment at home. Despite not being socially approved, corporal punishment remains common in both high and low income households (UNICEF, 2007). “A recent national survey found that even though the majority of South African parents are against corporal punishment, 57% smack and 33% beat their children” (SACE, 2011, p.25).

Sibling abuse

Children are also victimised at home by their siblings, with incidents of abuse including kicking, biting, stabbing, punching, shoving, slapping and hair pulling (Hamilton & Browne, 2005). Belts, hangers, knives, broken glass, scissors, sticks and guns have reportedly been used (Gelles & Straus, 1979). Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (2007) found that the most common form of sibling abuse is physical aggression, occurring in the pre-adolescent phase. Injuries as a result of victimisation increased with the child’s age, peaking in the older adolescent phase. The negative effects on both the victim and the perpetrator can be ‘devastating’ (Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007).

Sexual abuse

The sexual abuse of children in South Africa is widespread. “Approximately 302,000 rapes were endured by young girls under the age of 18 in South Africa in the 2005/2006 reporting year” (Burton, 2007, p.1). Research indicates that 39% of girls have reported various types of sexual violence such as unwanted touching, forced sex and exploitation by older men (Seedat et al., 2009).

Sexual abuse of children ranges from non-contact to contact behaviour. Non-contact behaviour includes persuasion, exhibitionism, or other forms of sexual exploitation, and the production of pornographic materials. Contact sexual abuse includes intercourse, fondling of genitals, non-genital contact, rape, statutory rape, prostitution, molestation, incest and sodomy (Milner, 1998; Wider, 2012).

Of concern is that the sexual abuse of children under 18 years is often perpetrated by a male and someone the child knows and trusts, such as a member of the household or a relative

(Burton, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2001). Many cases of sexual abuse within the home go unreported. If children are abused by someone they know and trust, they may feel bound to protect the perpetrator, particularly if they are the breadwinner in the family (Pretorius, Chauke, & Morgan, 2011). Also, sexual abuse within the family is often not disclosed due to fear of being disbelieved, shamed, punished, retaliation, and/or stigmatisation (Wider, 2012).

Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (2007) report that the most frequent form of incest that occurs within families is perpetrated by a sibling, and is not only considered the most serious but places the abused child at a higher risk for other forms of victimisation. Krienert and Walsh, (2011) suggest that as this field of child abuse is the least researched, it remains hidden as a private family issue.

The effects of sexual abuse include anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, posttraumatic stress, suicide, relationship problems, intimacy problems, eating disorders and submissiveness (Krienert, & Walsh, 2011). Girls who have been sexually abused during childhood are at increased risk for being re-victimised, whereas boys are at increased risk for becoming sexual abusers in adulthood (Seedat et al., 2009).

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse generally takes place in a relationship between the care-giver and a child. It takes on many forms such as rejection, withholding love and affection, isolation, verbal attacks, ignoring, threatening, minimising and corrupting (Papalia, 2006). Emotional abuse results in a wide array of adverse effects include lowering of self-esteem, helplessness, hopelessness, depressed mood, antisocial behaviour and academic problems (Lev-Wiesel, & Sternberg, 2012; Van Rensburg, & Van Staden, 2006). Unlike sexual abuse, it is not secretive and is easily observable. However it is also difficult to prove and is the most under-reported form of child abuse (Lev-Wiesel, & Sternberg, 2012).

Neglect

Neglect is another form of abuse whereby the basic essential needs of a child are not met, including adequate food, clothing, shelter and medical care (Papalia, 2006). South Africa's widespread poverty, lower SES of families, the enormous HIV/AIDS burden and the resultant

high levels of orphaning and child-headed households makes children living in South Africa particularly vulnerable to neglect (UNICEF, 2012).

Intimate partner violence (domestic violence)

The term “intimate partner violence” (also known as domestic violence) describes non-accidental adult-to-adult violence (regardless of relationship status), such as physical, sexual or psychological harm that has occurred in the home (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). It is known as intimate partner violence because it is often caused by one person to another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Kempster, 2014). Forms of intimate partner violence include actual or threatened abuse, controlling behaviour, being evicted from home, restricting movements, insults, denial, blame, humiliation, stalking and isolation (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Garrido et al., 2010).

South Africa has a particularly high prevalence of intimate partner violence (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). Whilst no reliable data are available nationally, reports indicate that more than 40% of men disclose they have physically abused their partners, whilst 40-50% of women report they have experienced violence from their partners (Seedat et al., 2009). Violence is often considered normative within the South African patriarchal system, whereby many men believe they have entitlement over their wives and that they have a right to physically punish them (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Seedat et al., 2009). In addition, a South African study suggested that physical violence may also be seen by some women as acceptable, as it is considered an indication of love, provided it does not leave a mark (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005).

With a high prevalence of intimate partner violence within the home, it is inevitable that much of this violence is witnessed by children, who then become the ‘unintended victims’ (Horn & Trickett, 1998). Abrahams and Jewkes (2005) found that close to a quarter of the male participants of their study had witnessed the abuse of their mothers. Research by Kaminer et al. (2013) investigated exposure to violence in a sample of South African adolescents found that the majority of participants reported witnessing intimate partner violence. Such a high rate of exposure to violence puts these children at an increased risk of

psychological distress and maladjustment, including violent behaviour in adulthood (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005).

2.5.2 Non-domestic context: School-based interpersonal violence

Children spend approximately half of their time at school and “can serve as the second most important socialising mechanism after the home” (SACE, 2011, p.4). Schools should therefore provide a safe, supportive space so that children can learn in an environment that is conducive to learning without them feeling threatened or afraid, so that they can thrive in accordance with their academic potential (UNICEF, 2012). However, “schools, once a haven to which parents could send their children with regarding their safety and protection, have become an environment in which violence is a frequent visitor” (Feshbach & Feshbach, 1998, p.269). Numerous studies indicate that violence in South African schools is widespread, and pervasive and that fear is common, thus compromising the learning environment (De Wet, 2003; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009).

2.5.2.1 The concept of school-based violence

School violence can be defined as the physical or psychological harm or discomfort inflicted on learners attached to direct or indirect victimisation (Burton, 2008). This includes not only violence within the schools physical border, but “acts that are, on a daily basis, associated with the school, specifically travelling to and from school, or arriving at or waiting outside the school grounds” (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.3).

School violence takes many forms including the following harmful behaviours:

Verbal, such as calling names, racial slurs, and cursing; Social, such as isolating a student or groups of students; Indirect violence, including media-related victimisation (e.g. showing private pictures over the internet and spreading rumours 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 behaviours;

Weapon-related, including the possession and use of a range of weapons, such as pocket knives and guns. (Astor & Benbenishty, 2008, p.72)

2.5.2.2 The prevalence of school-based violence

The 2012 National School Violence Study in South Africa found that one in five children had experienced violent crime in school and that “22.2% of high school learners were found to have been threatened with violence or had been victim of an assault, robbery and/or sexual assault at school in the past year” (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In comparison, a previous study conducted by Burton (2008) showed only a marginal difference in learners who had been exposed to violence, suggesting that over the past four years the levels of violence in South African schools remains disturbingly high. Although school based violence is not a new concept, there has been a shift towards more severe forms of violence that have gained media attention. This has resulted in the public perception that school violence is increasing at an alarmingly high rate (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Jameson (2014) found that the majority of fears reported in the school context related to interpersonal violence. These findings were in line with most available literature that focuses on the prevalence of interpersonal violence in schools as one of the greatest perceived risks to South African children, resulting in high levels of psychological distress (Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). Despite various studies which indicate that South African children face an extremely high risk of experiencing interpersonal violence at school, there have been few solutions to safeguard children in their learning environment. Thus the prevalence of school based violence remains a grave national concern as “the learning process of young people is compromised since the youth are compelled to be taught in environments where both learners and educators provoke feelings of threat” (Burton, Bonora & Leoschut, 2009, p.103).

2.5.2.3 Adverse effects of school-based violence

School-based violence not only impacts negatively on academic performance, and places the mental and physical health of learners at risk, but it is also a violation of the basic rights of children (UNICEF, 2012). Previous research on school-based violence in South Africa, indicates that children who are constantly in an environment characterized by chronic violence that elicits fear responses, face an increased risk for negative outcomes, including

psychological distress and poor academic performance. Findings show that these adverse effects are not only short-term, but extend to longer-term psychological distress such as posttraumatic stress, depression, anxiety, and aggression (Barbarin et al., 2001; Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Cluver et al., 2010; Perrin et al., 2000). These findings are in line with those of Seedat et al., (2004) who indicate that youth who had been exposed to violence in urban African schools, were more likely to manifest a variety of negative psychological outcomes such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. A comparative study by Shields et al. (2009) investigated the differences in levels of fear in the school or neighbourhood context. Their findings suggest that being victimised in the school context resulted in higher levels of psychological distress, because of the high level of fear in schools and being victimised in a place which the learner is unable to avoid.

2.5.2.4 Categories of violence in the South African school context

South African learners, regardless of gender, are exposed to various forms of violence including physical assault, sexual assault, threats of violence, robbery, gangsterism and bullying which includes new types of violence such as cyber bullying, that disrupt the safe school environment and create a climate of fear (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

Corporal punishment

Teachers are often the perpetrators of violence, as corporal punishment is still widely used as a disciplinary measure in schools (Burnett, 1998; Abrahams & Jewkes 2005; Shields et al., 2009). These findings are in keeping with Seedat et al (2009) who indicated that the perpetrators of violence are often family members or someone the child knows from within the community, and can also be teachers within the child's school. Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that despite the fact that corporal punishment was abolished in the South African schools in 1996, and that legislation further protects children's rights from being maltreated or punished in inhumane and degrading ways (Constitution, 1996), physical punishment remains a way of implementing discipline. The results of the 2012 National School Violence Study found that 49.8% of the learners maintained that they had been "caned or spanked by an educator or principal as punishment for wrongdoings" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.29). A study by Jameson (2014) found that teachers were often perpetrators of violence, as specific fear responses were related to violence or threat of

violence, including being hit by teachers on a daily basis with sticks, hands and pipes. These findings indicate that whilst educators may be aware of policy changes, this did not necessarily mean a transformation of behaviour towards corporal punishment. Violence in the form of corporal punishment by educators, may lead to the perception that violence is an acceptable means of resolving conflict (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). This not only negates the basic human rights of learners, but also contributes to a compromised school environment, thus increasing the learners' vulnerability to psychological distress (Burton, 2007, Burton et al., 2009).

Sexual and physical abuse

A study by Jewkes et al. (2010) found that in African schools, sexual and physical abuse is widespread and alarmingly high, resulting in a threat to learners' sense of safety and security. Sexual violence is a major concern, with girls being more at risk of being victims of sexual harassment, rape, and sexual abuse. Perpetrators are both educators and male students (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Girls are more likely to be sexually assaulted than boys, with reports indicating that over 30% of girls from all levels of society are raped at school (Burton, 2008). Learners reported that there are few safe places for girls as they "were raped in school toilets, empty classrooms, hallways, hostels, and dormitories" (Burton, 2007). As a result, girls not only had to endure the physical abuse, but being raped at school often led to increased psychological distress as girls also feared unintended pregnancy and loss of self-respect (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

The increase in sexual abuse of female learners, often perpetrated by male educators who abuse their positions of authority, is a common feature which acts as a barrier to the whole school experience (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2010; Modisaotsile, 2012). Alarming statistics indicate that one-third of rapes of young girls in South Africa are carried out by teachers (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). "Girls acquiesce to sexual demands from educators for fear of punishment if they refuse" (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.325). Reports suggest that educators assume a sense of entitlement to sexual favours from learners. In exchange for sex, learners claim that educators promise better grades or passing grades, money or gifts, and exemption from school fees (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). "Such behaviour exploits the teacher's position of authority and betrays their duty of care" (Wilson, 2008, p.2). The SACE (2011) also indicated that some educators in secondary schools were

involved in 'love relationships' with learners. Learners may fear negative repercussions such as being made to leave the class, stigmatisation, repetitive abuse, or even failing the term or year if they disclose these relationships. The Department of Basic Education (2012) has recognized that the increase in the incidence of alleged cases of sexual harassment, intimidation and sexual violence of learners by educators, is not only a significant barrier to learning, which deprives school children of their basic Constitutional rights to equality and dignity, but also elicits fear and aggression.

Girls who have experienced the trauma of rape and other forms of sexual violence in South African schools are more at risk of contracting the HIV/AIDS virus, bringing another dimension of distress to these learners (Burton, 2008). An investigation into youths understanding of gender based violence and its contribution to the risk of HIV/AIDS infection in secondary schools, focussed on learners' perception of safety in schools. Their findings showed that girls in particular felt at risk for gender-based violence, with one participant reporting that "It's about being scared, because we have all been scared....." (De Lange & Geldenhuys, 2012, p. 494).

The detrimental consequences of gendered or sex based violence within schools is described in the following summary:

Gendered or sex based violence, in the broader context of discrimination, constrains freedom of movement, choices and activities of its victims. It frequently results in intimidation, poor levels of participation in learning activities, forced isolation, low self-esteem or self confidence, dropping out of education or from particular activities or subjects or other physical, sexual and/or psychological damage. It erodes the basis of equal opportunity realized through equal access to education.

(Human Rights Watch, 2001)

However, it is important to note that incidents of sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation were not only confined to girls, and that boys were also at risk. Furthermore, recent reports indicate there has been an alarming increase in the number of gays, lesbians, bi-sexual, and transgendered learners being victims of 'corrective rape' in schools (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

Bullying in schools

Bullying is “aggression deliberately and persistently directed against a particular target: a victim who typically is weak, vulnerable, and defenceless” (Papalia, 2006, p.398). The aggressive behaviour can be verbal, physical or relational, with the key characteristic being the repetitive ongoing pattern (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; Nansel et al., 2004).

The NSVS found that 13% of school children reported being bullied (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). The prevalence of bullying in schools and the serious adverse effects on learners is both a global and national concern. Research has found clear evidence that bullying in schools is associated with increased health problems, psychosocial, and school adjustment difficulties (Nansel et al., 2004; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). The 2012 National School Violence Study found that learners who had been bullied at school, significantly increases their chances of re-victimised in other settings (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Cluver et al., (2010) investigated levels of bullying inside and outside the school, focusing on highly vulnerable South African children. They reported new evidence that bullying victimisation significantly increases the risk for further psychological distress. These include “higher levels of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and post-traumatic stress disorder”, which impacts negatively on pre-existing psychological distress (Cluver et al., 2010, p. 793). Boqwana (2009) suggests that bullying is in essence a type of child abuse that results in increased levels of distress and anxiety, school absenteeism, poor academic performance, aggressive behaviour, and drug abuse. Moreover, in the event of ongoing abuse, victims of bullying may ultimately retaliate with violence, which in due course contributes to the levels of violence in schools (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). “Bystanders are also affected and are generally secretly fearful of being targeted” (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.325).

Certain forms of bullying are less apparent, such as hazing or initiation and are mostly evident in private schools (Burton, 2008). School initiation can be defined as any activity expected of new students that humiliates, degrades or risks physical and emotional harm, without taking into consideration their willingness to participate. Harsh treatment is frequently rationalised into the explanation that it is “tradition” and allegedly builds character, loyalty to the school and encourages identification with other learners (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2006).

The 2012 National School Violence Study investigated the prevalence and effects of cyber bullying as a new type of school violence. They found that although not as common as other types of violence, “one in five (20%) scholars had experienced some form of cyber bullying or violence in the past year” (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). “Children cannot thrive when they are afraid – and intimidation and fear are prime consequences of bullying” (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.324).

Gang related activities

Research indicates that “the presence of gangs in a school significantly affects the climate of anxiety and violence that may exist in the school” (Feshbach & Feshbach, 1998, p.271). Gangs have infiltrated South African schools, contributing towards learners being victim of gang-related violence. A study by Jameson (2014) explored the fears of South African adolescents in the school context and findings indicated that high levels of fear were associated with gang activity. Furthermore, gang members appeared to gain easy access into schools. Research participants reported specific details related to gang activity which included the name of the gang ‘Born to Kill’ and that school learners were specifically being targeted (Jameson, 2014).

The adolescent is particularly at risk to the attraction of gang membership which may offer a sense of identity, power and belonging, particularly with learners who may have feelings of inadequacy arising from compromised family, neighbourhood, and school environments (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). New gang members are frequently recruited from the learners at school and subsequently coerced into gang related activities which include selling drugs, drug use, illegal use and sale of weapons, and gang rivalries, all which promote violence within the school context (Burton 2007, Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

Research by Boqwana (2009) indicated that learners who were exposed to gang activities in township schools were more likely to experience intimidation, anxiety, and high levels of fear, which has a detrimental effect on their concentration and academic performance. The escalating gang-related violence in South Africa creates an insecure learning environment that has subsequently resulted in many children being fearful of going to school (Boqwana, 2009).

Weapons

Disturbing reports show that a high percentage of learners have access to weapons at school (Burton, 2008, Burton et al., 2009). “3 in 10 learners at secondary school know fellow students/learners who have brought weapons to school; 3 in 10 report that it is easy to organise a knife, and 1 in 10 report that it is easy to organise a gun” (SACE, 2011, p.10). Weapons related to school violence include being “threatened with a knife or sharp weapon, attacked with a knife or sharp weapon, threatened with a gun” (Shields et al., 2009, p. 1196). “Weapons are potentially lethal and their mere presence in schools compromises the safety of learners, scares and intimidates them, and articulates into a disturbed environment inhibiting effective learning and socialisation” (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.325).

2.5.3 Non-domestic context: Community-based interpersonal violence

As children are regularly exposed to violence in the community, the associated negative outcomes on childhood development has been well researched (Barbarin et al., 2001; Garrido et al., 2010; Horn & Trickett, 1998; Foster et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009; Zielinski & Bradshaw, 2006). The ‘community’ is considered an important unit of analysis for the study of the impact of violence, specifically because the community will affect the individual’s daily social and living conditions. Whilst multiple meanings of the term ‘community’ exists, a useful understanding is “as an image of coherence, a cultural notion which people use in order to give a reality and form to their social actions and thoughts” (Thornton & Ramphela, 1988, p.38). Community therefore should not be seen as a static, but rather as a socially constructed interactive dynamic concept. Community also plays a significant role in supporting parents and care-givers, and in turn children by “assisting the infrastructure of family life” (Zielinski & Bradshaw, 2006, p.56).

The terms ‘community’ and ‘neighbourhood’ are often used interchangeably, although some researchers suggest that ‘neighbourhood’ refers to a smaller more intimate setting, which includes daily interactions (Limber & Nation, 1998). Ward (2007) defines the neighbourhood as "the context in which schools, families and peer groups are embedded" and further emphasises that this is not simply the geographical or physical space but "the social context created by how people act as neighbours to each other" (Ward, 2007, p. 23). For the purposes

of the present study, both community and neighbourhood are viewed broadly as the surroundings, places or "contexts" in which South African children are exposed to violence.

2.5.3.1 The concept of community-based violence

Community violence can be defined as “the frequent and constant exposure to the use of guns, knives, drugs, and random acts of violence” (Foster et al., 2004, p.60). Forms of community violence include muggings, beatings, stabbings, being threatened or attacked with a weapon such as a knife or gun; shootings, sexual assault, car hi-jacking, house being broken into, seeing a dead body, murders, high-speed chases, gang violence and other violent acts (Foster et al., 2004; Garrido et al., 2010; Horn & Trickett, 1998). Children’s exposure to such incidents is considered common in many communities (Horn & Trickett, 1998). A study on the effects of community violence in Cape Town, South Africa found that “children were exposed to a significant amount of community violence in the form of school violence, neighbourhood violence, gang violence, and police violence” (Shields, Nadasen, & Pierce, 2008, p.593). In view of South Africa’s history of state sanctioned violence and liberatory counter violence, early research focussed on the influence of politics in community violence (Stevens et al., 2004). More recent research however has shifted the focus towards the individual’s exposure to violence and adverse outcomes related to gang activities (Shields et al., 2008).

Gang related violence

The influence of gang violence in South African communities is a pervasive problem that affects the safety of children. Of critical concern is the increased levels of crime that gangs bring to the community, including high levels of violent crime (Standing, 2005). A comprehensive South African study found that in the Western Cape, between 40 to 60 percent of criminal related activities is associated with gangs (Reckson & Becker, 2005). The study also estimated that in the Western Cape region alone, there are 100 000 gang members in 137 gangs (Reckson & Becker, 2005). A number of these gangs have become exceptionally large and powerful. These include the “well known groups such as the Americans, the Hard Livings, the Sexy Boys, the Junky Funky Kids and the Mongrels. They have been particularly aggressive in recruiting new members and developing their territories” (Standing, 2005, p.2). In another study by Norton (2014), a large number of adolescent

participants reported that their greatest fear was related to violent gang activity. In particular they specified a gang named the Born to Kills (BTKs).

Not only do these gangs pose a serious threat to those living in the nearby communities, but they also have the potential to cause harm beyond their designated areas. The presence of gangs in the community has been recognized as a cause of constant fear and anxiety, as non-gang members are often afraid to venture outside their homes. In addition, community residents are often intimidated into supporting gang activities by hiding weapons and drugs (Standing, 2005). A study by Boqwana (2009) also found that widespread gang related activity in South African schools was viewed as community-induced violence, and was a reflection of what was happening in the community in which the school was located.

2.5.3.2 The prevalence of community-based violence

Many children are exposed to violence in the community on a daily basis (Foster et al., 2004). In the context of violence in South Africa, children are often “exposed to such extreme forms of violence in the neighbourhood and at such high levels” (Shields et al., 2009, p.1204). A study investigating community violence and the effects on a sample of South African children, found that witnessing someone being threatened or attacked with a weapon, shot at and robbed, were frequent. Furthermore, an astounding 40% of respondents reported having witnessed a murder (Shields et al., 2009). Findings indicate that one in five children living in South Africa do not feel safe within their communities (Burton, 2006). In addition, a recent study that examined the effects of exposure to violence, emphasised that “the majority of violent experiences reported by respondents took place in the community, with pathways to and from school being a particularly high risk” (Gopal & Collings, 2013, p.8). Numerous other studies have provided clear evidence that children living in South Africa are frequently exposed to high levels of community violence (Barabarin & Richter, 1999; Barabarin et al., 2001; Shields et al., 2009; Ward et al., 2001). Violence appears to be widespread in the neighbourhood, taking place in shops, malls, unkempt open places, bars and shebeens, but was reported most frequently on the streets (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

As the perpetrators of violence are often known to many of the children within the community, the problem is further exacerbated, as it increases the child’s vulnerability to being the victim of further violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). A study conducted in Cape

Town, South Africa, highlight what they term the occurrence of a “true community phenomenon”, which describes how the interrelation of multiple forms of exposure to violence within the community decreases the child’s sense of safety as they “have no place to escape from violence” (Shields et al., 2008, p.599).

2.5.3.3 Adverse effects of community-based violence

Exposure to chronic community violence has been found to constitute a risk factor of psychological distress among children (Barbarin et al., 2001; Foster et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2008). Evidence shows “an association of community violence exposure with posttraumatic stress and related symptoms, including anxiety, depression, anger, and dissociation” (Foster et al., 2004, p.67). A review of literature from nine studies by Horn and Trickett (1998) that report on the correlates of community violence and child development, found that the majority of studies indicate a relationship between children’s exposure to violence in the community and PTSD symptoms. Another study conducted in the United States by Garrido et al. (2010) investigated the impact of community violence exposure on trauma symptoms, for a sample of maltreated youth in foster care. Their findings indicated that community violence exposure was associated with significantly high levels of trauma symptoms, even after controlling for the effect for family violence exposure. The possible explanation for this result was the pervasive fear of feeling unsafe and insecure that is experienced within communities (Garrido et al. 2010). Shields et al. (2008) study conducted in Cape Town, South Africa, suggested that the belief that there was nowhere safe in the community resulted in extremely high levels of distress. An investigation into exposure to violence in the community and the psychological adjustment of South African children, found that “community violence emerged as the most consistent predictor of adverse child outcomes” (Barbarin et al., 2001, p.23).

Despite the South African context being considered as a source of extreme adversity, research has also suggested that children may feel safe and positive whilst living in violent communities (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Norton, 2014). This adds to the complexity of the problem of the impact of exposure to interpersonal violence, and requires taking into consideration aspects such as normalisation and desensitisation (Burton, 2006).

The boundaries between the loci of exposure discussed, which are each regarded as sources of vulnerability, are “a lot more permeable than is generally assumed” with the one impacting on the other (Gopal and Collings, 2013, p. 9). For example, violence from the school is often carried over into the community and also travelling to and from school on community pathways has been considered a high risk activity (Gopal & Collings, 2013; SACE, 2011). Schools interact with the broader communities where they are located. “For this reason, the social ills prevalent in communities are known to permeate the school environment to varying degrees” (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.54). This highlights the ecological perspective of taking into consideration the interconnection of the multiple systems that have an impact on the individual child’s life.

2.6 Conclusion

Numerous studies reviewed have acknowledged that violence permeates every aspect of the lives of children living in South Africa, placing them at an increased risk for psychopathological outcomes (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2008; Ward et al., 2001). These studies suggest that “to be a child in South Africa is to walk a fragile path to adulthood” (UNICEF, 2008). Whilst the majority of these investigations have provided valuable insight, they have failed to provide a complete understanding. The findings from the literature reviewed indicates a more complex picture, suggesting that additional research is necessary to clarify the interaction of multiple dimensions that place children at risk for undesirable outcomes. In particular, the impact of the South African socio-political context was found to bring a unique set of circumstances that needs to be considered. This was emphasised by Seedat et al. (2009) who appeals for an “urgent investment in research to deepen our understanding of the magnitude and nature of the problem” (p.1020).

In order to provide more clarity on the impact that interpersonal violence has on South African children, it seemed appropriate for the current study to investigate the constructs of mode and locus of exposure to violence, simultaneously and comprehensively.

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory was selected as the framework that enabled the researcher to look beyond the individual level, towards how the complex interrelation of multiple levels or systems of experience influences the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

A considerable amount of research has focussed on either mode or locus of exposure to interpersonal violence, and/or the wide array of adverse effects on childhood development (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin, Richter & De Wet, 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). Whilst most available literature indicates that the impact of interpersonal violence does not depend on mode or locus of exposure, there appears to be inconsistencies in the findings (Barbarin et al., 2001; Horn, & Trickett, 1998).

Research on mode of exposure to violent crime conducted by Hastings and Kelley (1997), found that there was no distinction between direct victimisation and witnessing interpersonal violence, as both were related to severe negative outcomes. Barbarin et al. (2001) also suggested that both direct and indirect (vicarious) exposure to violence resulted in similar levels of psychological distress, however they noted that the effects varied depending on the child's proximity to the violence. Ward et al. (2001) indicated that the child's subjective sense of safety is influenced by the circumstances that relate to exposure, including whether it is "stranger" violence that consists of isolated incidents, or "known" violence which is ongoing. To fully understand the multiple dimensions associated with mode of exposure, it has been suggested that further research is necessary (Horn & Trickett, 1998).

Studies that have focused on the locus of exposure to interpersonal violence have found that violence occurs in all spheres of the child's life, including the home, school and community. Many South African children have been found to be living in a threatening home environment characterised by violence (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Muris, Plessis, & Loxton, 2008; SACE, 2011; Ward, 2007). Forms of violence investigated by researchers included physical, sexual and emotional abuse, sibling abuse, neglect and intimate partner violence (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Garrido et al., 2010; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Seedat et al., 2009). A study conducted by Hildyard and Wolfe (2002) suggested that violence perpetrated by family members in a home environment that is supposed to offer nurturance and protection, is more likely to evoke intense negative psychological consequences. However in contrast, the results from a large scale South African study conducted by Barbarin and Richter (2001), indicated that children who were victimized in the family home, had no more adverse effects than those exposed to community violence.

Research has shown that violence in South African schools is widespread and pervasive. South African learners are exposed to various forms of violence at school which threatens their sense of safety, and compromises the learning environment (De Wet, 2003; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). These included corporal punishment, sexual and physical assault, threats of violence, bullying, gang related activities and the presence of weapons in school (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013). A study by Shields et al. (2009) found that being victimized in the school context resulted in increased levels of psychological distress. The authors suggest that this was a result of being victimized in a place where they felt under constant threat of violence, and which they were unable to avoid.

Whilst exposure to community violence emerged as a strong predictor of adverse effects, reports also indicated that some children still feel safe and positive living in violent communities (Barbarin et al., 2001; Burton, 2006). The issues of normalisation and desensitisation were noted as important aspects to take into account when investigating the complexity of exposure to community violence (Burton, 2006).

It is hoped that the findings that emerge from investigating the constructs of locus and mode of exposure, simultaneously and comprehensively, will provide more clarity into the complexity that the impact of interpersonal violence has on South African adolescents. The present study aims to provide further information that will contribute towards a better understanding of children at risk, and form the basis for further research that will address the concerns of South African children at all levels.

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed literature which emphasises that children in South Africa are subjected to high levels of interpersonal violence on a daily basis in all contexts they occupy, which places them at a high risk for adverse outcomes. The majority of previous studies reviewed, focused separately on either mode or locus of exposure, with a number of inconsistencies in their findings. The present study utilized a contextual approach, guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, to investigate the complexity of impact of both locus and mode of exposure to interpersonal violence on South African adolescents. The following chapter discusses the research methodology and design used for the present study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

No new data were collected in the present study. Data were obtained from a data base generated from a previous research project that conducted studies across three loci of exposure, in order to investigate the complexity of adolescent fears and anxieties within the South African context (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014). Each study considered the same research questions, but focused on a particular locus of exposure that was a potential source of vulnerability for children, including the home, the school and the community. A summary of the methodology utilized in the previous research project is provided in this chapter. A detailed description of all the elements of the research study and the procedural steps that were followed will be reviewed with regards the research design, location of the study, sampling, instrument for data collection, data collection methods, ethical considerations, data analysis and issues of reliability and validity (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). As the emphasis of the current study is on the relationship between the impact of mode and locus of exposure to interpersonal violence and the level of psychological distress, data analysis procedures will focus on fears related to interpersonal violence.

3.2 Research design

The previous study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey research design, making use of a self-administered questionnaire that consisted of a free response format. This enabled the researchers to investigate adolescent children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the context of the home, school and community, from the perspective of the children themselves, rather than drawing conclusions from statistical procedures that focus mainly on "children as objects of research rather than subjects" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p.1). A quantitative approach that consisted of a fairly large sample was considered appropriate, as it enabled the researchers to systematically explore childhood fears in ways which permitted

generalisations to other comparable situations within the broader South African context (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In addition, as the previous study had resource constraints in terms of time, a cross-sectional survey was considered the most suitable research design, as the researchers were able to collect data at one point in time within a particular context (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

3.3 Location of the study

The adolescent children, who participated in the previous study (that took place during June – July 2013), were from 7 different secondary schools in the North West Province of South Africa.

3.4 Sampling and sampling method

The researchers utilized stratified random sampling of the school children, selected from secondary schools in the North West Province. The age group ranged from 13 to 18 years, divided into three subgroups of 13-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-18 years. The sample was stratified in terms of the quintile system, whereby South African schools are divided into 5 categories (quintiles) according to their socio-economic status, dependency ratios and literacy levels of the area that surrounds the school, ranging from quintile 1 (poorest) to quintile 5 (wealthiest) (Hall & Griese, 2008; Meny-Gibert & Russel, 2010). The individual schools were then randomly selected within each category, proportional to the size of each quintile, in comparison with the overall population in the North West Province (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014). The use of the quintile system enabled the researchers to get a proportional representation of schools to “ensure the sample fairly represented the major sub-groups within the overall sampling frame thereby enhancing generalisability” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, p.136).

The final sample of 312 children was considered large enough to make inferences about the sample population (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The research participants had a mean age of 14.8 years, with an age range of 13 – 18 years. Participants were predominantly female (57.4%) and black African (90.7%), and were from grades 7,9,10 and 11 (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

3.5 Instrument for data collection

A self-administered questionnaire was designed and administered to the research participants, in order to explore children's fears and anxieties in the context of the family, school and community (Appendix 1). As a self-administered questionnaire enables sensitive information to be collected, it was considered the most appropriate for use by the researchers (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). The questionnaire was presented in elementary English, taking into account varying levels of literacy and the fact that English may not be the home language of research participants (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) consisted of 2 sections:

The first section included standard items relating to the research participants socio-demographic information in terms of age, gender, grade at school, name of school and race, which was then used to characterize the sample (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

The second section consisted of two open-ended questions and one scaled question utilizing the 5-point Likert scale format. The open-ended questions allowed the researchers to explore the content of the research participants' fears and anxieties in their own words without restricting their views, thereby avoiding the limitations of predetermined response categories and not impeding the validity of the data (Krippendorff, 1980; Terre Blanche et al. 2006). Furthermore, the researchers considered the free response format as the most appropriate, as it was more likely to reflect the individual respondents' unique outcomes (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014). The first open-ended question requested the research participants to indicate "What is the scariest or most upsetting thing that has happened to you them in the past year?" in each of the three domains (home, school and community). There was also a follow up question, "How scared or upset did it make you feel?" for each domain, requesting participants to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not feeling scared at all) to 5 (being extremely scared), which was useful to survey the level of fear and anxiety (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

A preliminary study was conducted in a school in Wentworth, KwaZulu Natal during April 2013, in order to identify potential threats to the validity and reliability of the research. The

questionnaire was pilot tested on a sample of 163 learners whose demographics were similar to the participants of the actual research study. This was to determine whether the contents of the questionnaire were clearly understood and if the responses elicited were in keeping with the research aim. Any problems were adjusted and the refined questionnaire was distributed to the sample of research participants from the 7 selected schools in the North West Province, who were included in the final research study (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

3.6 Data collection procedures

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2013, prior to the start of the study. Written permission to conduct the research in the selected secondary schools in the North West province, South Africa, was obtained from the Department of Education and the relevant provincial department. Access was gained by the principals (gatekeepers) of the schools participating in the study.

The research participants in the three age groups: 13 – 14 years; 15 – 16 years; and 17 – 18 years were contacted and selected based on their willingness to participate. An information form was provided, clearly stating the purpose of the study, the procedures, with assurances of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity being provided (Appendix 2). Written informed assent was obtained from all research participants, with consent from all the parents or guardians of minors participating in the study (Appendix 3).

The study was conducted on the premises of the participating schools. Arrangements were made for the questionnaires (Appendix 1) to be administered by school counsellors, or life orientation teachers in the classrooms at school under test-taking conditions as part of Life Orientation lessons. This prevented discussion amongst the research participants, thereby decreasing the chances of individuals influencing each others' responses. As the questionnaire was presented in English, the administrators addressed any language problems and provided translation if necessary.

Administrators of the questionnaire informed participants of the purpose of the study, assured them of anonymity and confidentiality, and told participants that they were free to

discontinue at any stage without fear of reprisal (Appendix 4). It was made clear that the names of the research participants would not be used nor requested at any stage of the study (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). The anonymous nature of the questionnaire encouraged participants to answer the questions, that may be deemed sensitive, in a more open and honest manner without fear of negative consequences. In addition, an anonymous ballot-type box was used for the collection of participants' questionnaires. This was designed to encourage honesty in answers and decrease the risk of providing socially desirable answers, thus further ensuring that validity was not threatened (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Ethical considerations were applied throughout the research process. Information was also provided as to where the research project supervisor could be contacted and that the data collected in the study would be helpful in providing a better understanding of children's fears. The research participants took between 5 to 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, any concerns that the participants may have experienced their participation as distressing, were addressed by offering free counselling support if necessary, together with the relevant person's contact details (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

The raw data from the completed questionnaires were collected from all the schools participating in the study and then couriered in a sealed document to the researchers for analysis (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

3.7 Data analysis methods

Data analysis utilized Systematic Content Analysis to guide the conceptualization of content categories of adolescent children's experiences of fear (Krippendorff, 1980). Content analysis has been defined by Krippendorff (1980) as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context". It has also been described as "the study of content with reference to meanings, contexts, and intentions contained in messages" (Prasad, 2008, p.1). As Contemporary Content Analysis is an unobtrusive research technique utilized in the social sciences, it was considered an appropriate tool for exploring a sensitive topic such as children's psychological distress (Krippendorff, 2004).

The overall aim of the analysis of the study was to "identify and then to analyse and report on "what" South African children experience as scary and upsetting; at what level they are afraid; and to look for patterns in the data" (Norton, 2014, p.96). As an inductive approach

was considered essential for this, the starting point was derived from the children’s experiences of scary events, as expressed in the content of their responses in the questionnaire (Norton, 2014). Content Analysis, as adapted by Krippendorff (2004), involved the following steps to reduce the complexity of the raw data by transforming it, so that it could be statistically analysed in order to proceed to the results (Jameson, 2014; Norton, 2014):

3.7.1 Development of content categories and coding strategy

The content analysis of the study data revealed that the children’s experiences of fears could be effectively categorized in terms of loss or threatened loss of either primary, secondary or tertiary resources as classified by Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1998).

However, as the emphasis of the current study was on the relationship between the impact of mode and locus of exposure to interpersonal violence and the level of childhood fears, the focus of the present analysis was on the loss, or threatened loss, of resources in the primary resource category (Table 1).

Table 1: Coding Schedule of Specific Primary Resource Fear Experiences

Code	Resource	Description
Primary Resources		
1	Interpersonal trauma (direct exposure)	Being a victim of violence or threat of violence
2	Interpersonal trauma (vicarious exposure)	Witnessing or being aware of a specific incident of violence
3	Interpersonal trauma (ambient exposure)	Awareness of violence (that does not involve a specific incident)

For the purposes of the present study, the primary resources sub-categories relating to the mode of exposure were coded as follows:

1. Direct exposure to interpersonal trauma: being a victim of violence or threat of violence, and;
2. Vicarious (indirect) exposure to interpersonal trauma: witnessing or being aware of a specific incident of violence, or ambient which involves awareness of violence that does not involve a specific incident

Data relating to the locus of exposure was coded as follows:

1. Domestic exposure to interpersonal violence: the home and family domains
2. Non-domestic exposure to interpersonal violence: the school or community domains

Data relating to the impact of exposure (Appendix 1) was coded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) (Jameson, 2014).

3.7.2 Statistical analysis of the data

The coded data for the fear experiences and the ratings from the levels of fear of the previous study were tabulated using Excel, and then transported into the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 17.0.1) for further analysis (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

The impact of locus and mode of exposure to interpersonal violence was explored by using a 2 (mode) x 2 (locus) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

3.8 Measures taken to ensure validity and reliability

Various steps were undertaken by the researchers during the research process to establish validity and reliability, which are key concepts in quantitative studies (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

3.8.1 Validity

“Validity is that quality of research results that leads us to accept them as true, as speaking about the real world of people, phenomena, events, experiences, and actions” (Krippendorff, 1980, p.313). The previous study addressed threats to validity by taking into account a number of factors discussed below (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014):

Effective sampling enhances validity from a quantitative perspective as it “enables us to make claims, in terms of statistical probabilities, about a population without having studied all the constituent elements that make up the population” (Terre Blanche et al. 2006, p.134). Evidence of sampling validity was provided as the researchers made use of stratified random sampling in terms of the quintile system, thereby accurately representing all the major subgroups of the overall population (Krippendorff, 1980).

To ensure that the measuring instrument yielded valid data by ‘measuring what it is supposed to measure’, the researchers made use of a questionnaire that consisted of a free response format, thus allowing the research participants to respond in their own way (Krippendorff, 1980; Terre Blanche et al. 2006).

As the questionnaire also assured anonymity, the participants were able to answer the open-ended questions that related to a sensitive topic in an open and honest manner, without fear of negative outcomes (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In addition, validity was further enhanced as the use of an anonymous ballot-box for the collection of the participants’ completed questionnaires, which encouraged more honest answers and decreased the risk of participants giving socially acceptable answers (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

By pilot testing the questionnaire on a sample of learners at a school in Wentworth, KwaZulu-Natal, whose demographics were similar to the final study sample, suitability of the measuring instrument was determined. Potential threats to validity were identified and addressed before the questionnaire was administered to participants in the final study.

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability of study procedures was assessed by pilot-testing the questionnaire on a sample that was representative of the final study sample. This enabled the researchers to check whether the measuring instrument (questionnaire) was dependable by producing similar results in different circumstances (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

As the study utilized Content Analysis, inter-coder reliability was considered a critical component (Krippendorff, 1980). In view of this, the data were independently coded by at least two independent raters, thus ensuring a high degree of inter-rater reliability (Kappa = .967). In instances of disagreement, the issue was discussed by the raters, until consensus was reached (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a summary of the methodology utilized in the study, including the research design; location of the study; sampling and sampling methods; instrument for data collection; data collection procedures; the development of content categories and coding strategies guided by the Conservation of Resources theoretical framework; and the statistical analysis of the data (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

The following chapter will discuss the major findings that emerged from the analysis of the data in an attempt to provide more clarity on the relationship between mode and locus of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence on South African adolescents.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the major findings that emerged from the analysis of the data in the present study will be discussed and presented in tables. The specific objectives were to explore the relationship between the constructs locus and mode of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence, in order to provide a more comprehensive view and to clarify inconsistencies in findings from previous research. Therefore, the findings will be discussed in terms of the risk and impact of interpersonal violence for the various forms of exposure, in order to facilitate more clarity and a better understanding. Results from a qualitative analysis will also be presented.

4.2 Risk of exposure to interpersonal violence

The researcher first examined the participants' risk of exposure to interpersonal violence. One hundred and seventy-five participants (56.1%) reported that they had been exposed to some form of interpersonal violence in the past 12 months.

From Table 2, which shows the incidence of exposure to interpersonal violence, it is evident that the modal form of exposure (44.6%) was vicarious exposure to non-domestic (school and community) violence.

An analysis of the association between demographic variables and risk of exposure to interpersonal violence, indicated that risk of exposure was unrelated to participants' age: $t(310) = 1.31, p = .192$; gender: $\chi^2(1) = 0.01, p = .942$; or race (black African versus other): $\chi^2(1) = 2.43, p = .112$.

Table 2: Incidence of Exposure to Interpersonal Violence

Mode of exposure	Locus of exposure		
	Domestic	Non-domestic	Total
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Direct	20 (11.4)	52 (29.7)	72 (41.1)
Vicarious	25 (14.3)	78 (44.6)	103 (52.9)
Total	45 (25.7)	130 (74.3)	175 (100)

4.3 Impact of exposure to interpersonal violence

The researcher then examined the impact (ratings of psychological distress) of the participants' exposure to interpersonal violence. An analysis of the association between demographic variables and the impact of exposure to interpersonal violence indicated that the impact of exposure was unrelated to participant's age: $r = .07$, $p = .260$; gender: $t(272) = 0.72$, $p = .470$; or race: $t(272) = 0.22$, $p = 8.69$.

Means and standard deviations for impact scores (participants' ratings of psychological distress) are presented in Table 4. The impact of locus and mode of exposure was explored using a 2 (mode) x 2 (locus) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). This ANOVA produced a significant main effect of mode, $F(1,271) = 6.26$, $p = .013$, $n^2 = .04$, with the mean impact score for vicarious forms of exposure ($M = 3.72$) being significantly higher than the mean score for direct forms of exposure ($M = 3.19$).

The analysis indicated that there was no significant main effect of locus of exposure, $F(1,271) = 1.19$, $p = .276$, $n^2 = .00$, and no significant interaction effects, $F(1,271) = 0.48$, $p = .826$, $n^2 = .00$.

Table 3: Means (standard deviations) for Participants' Ratings of Psychological Distress

Mode of exposure	Locus of exposure		
	Domestic <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Non-domestic <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Total <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Direct	3.00 (1.41)	3.27 (1.22)	3.19 (1.27)
Vicarious	3.60 (1.29)	3.76 (1.20)	3.72 (1.21)
Total	3.33 (1.37)	3.56 (1.23)	3.50 (1.26)

4.4 Chapter summary

Chapter 4 describes the analysis of the data. The major finding was that mode of exposure was significantly related to the extent of psychological distress reported by research participants. There were no significant effects of locus of exposure and no significant interaction effects.

Chapter 5 will focus on the discussion of the main findings, limitations and implications of the present study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the study findings in relation to available literature, focussing on the relationship between mode and locus of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence on South African children. Included will be the application of the Ecological systems theory in relation to the findings that have emerged in this study, specifically those relating to the association between interpersonal violence and children living in the South Africa context. The limitations and implications of the current study are addressed.

5.2 Exposure to interpersonal violence

The findings of the present study indicate that the risk of exposure to interpersonal violence was high, with 56.1% of respondents reporting that they had been exposed to some form of interpersonal violence in the past 12 months.

These findings are consistent with results from the majority of previous studies that show that children living in South Africa, face an extremely high risk of experiencing interpersonal violence on an ongoing basis (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Cluver et al., 2010; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jameson, 2014; Jewkes et al., 2010; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). A large scale study conducted by Barbarin et al. (2001), that investigated the adverse effects of exposure to violence among black South African children, indicate that nowhere in South Africa was the burden of violence more onerous than among children. The present study findings, thus, confirm accounts which have been consistently reported in the literature, that exposure to chronic interpersonal violence is common for children in South Africa and permeates every aspect of their daily lives (Burton, 2007; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Foster et al., 2004; Jameson, 2014; Kaminer et al., 2013).

5.3 Mode of exposure to interpersonal violence

The key finding of the present study was that mode of exposure was significantly related to the extent of psychological distress reported by research participants, in that our results suggest that the impact of interpersonal violence is mediated by mode of exposure.

These findings contrast with findings from numerous comparative studies on forms of exposure, which indicate that the impact of interpersonal violence on children is not related to the mode of exposure. Available evidence from the majority of previous studies, suggests that exposure to vicarious violence results in effects that are equivalent to direct exposure (Richters & Martinez, 1993; Barbarin et al., 2001; Osofsky, et al., 1993). Similar findings by Hastings and Kelley (1997) suggest no distinction between the impact of direct victimisation and vicarious violence.

The present findings are to some extent consistent with those of Barbarin and Richter's (2001) study, which found that ambient exposure to community violence results in higher levels of psychological distress, than direct victimisation does. The authors concluded that "ambient community violence was most consistently related to children's psychosocial outcomes" (Barbarin & Richter, 2001, p.16). Whilst Shields et al. (2009) also reported that in the community, witnessing violence had a stronger effect on psychological distress in children than direct victimisation, it should be noted that their dimensions of community differed from that of the present study. The comparative study by Shields et al. (2009) separated the dimensions of community and school, whereas the present study categorized the non-domestic context to broadly include both the community and the school. As a result, the researcher was unable to confirm whether the significantly higher levels of psychological distress associated with witnessing violence, was specifically related to either the school or the community domains.

A possible explanation for our findings that vicarious victimisation had a stronger effect on distress than direct victimisation, relates to the high incidence of vicarious exposure to interpersonal violence in the non-domestic (community and school) context (Jameson, 2014; Norton, 2014). Horn and Trickett (1998) suggest that whilst direct victimisation may be more obvious, vicarious or indirect victimisation is often more frequent and ongoing, resulting in a greater effect on psychological distress. Shields et al. (2001) emphasised that

the prevalence of violence in South African communities is related to children being significantly more traumatised by observing violence. Their study found that apart from seeing someone being attacked, threatened and shot at, an alarming 40% of the respondents had witnessed a murder. The findings of the present study can thus be interpreted within the contemporary South African context, which acknowledges that in both the community and school contexts, violence is pervasive and widespread. As a result, South African children are often indirectly exposed to severe forms of interpersonal violence and at extremely high levels, which manifests in various detrimental psychological outcomes (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; De Wet, 2003; Barbarin et al., 2001; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Kuperminc, & Price, 2004; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009; UNICEF, 2012).

The negative effects of witnessing extreme levels of violence are congruent with results from a study on children living in Cape Town, South Africa, which indicated that “such high levels of violence threaten a child’s sense of safety, which has been shown to mediate the effects of observing violence on psychological distress” (Shields, 2008, p. 589). Findings obtained from a recent study by Kempster (2014), further suggests that witnessing ongoing incidents of interpersonal violence, evokes the most intense fear and can in fact be more harmful than actual victimisation. The constant fear of living in a violent context “which threaten one’s safety and survival (for example, fear of being killed or assaulted), may override all other fears, as it influences the child’s subjective sense of safety” (Norton, 2014, p.120).

5.4 Locus of exposure to interpersonal violence

It was also evident from the findings of the present study, that the impact of exposure to interpersonal violence was not mediated by locus of exposure. The trends revealed in the data, are entirely consistent with patterns that have emerged across the literature, that repeatedly indicate that the levels of distress in children are not affected by locus of exposure to interpersonal violence (Hastings & Kelley, 1997; Horn & Trickett, 1998; Richters & Martinez, 1993).

Surprisingly, the present study found no support for research that advocates the principle of social propinquity, whereby the effects of violence vary, depending on proximity (that is, if the violence takes place in the home which is physically close to the child, or is someone who

is known to the child, or someone the child has a close relationship with, such as a family member, “the greater the adverse impact of the incident”) (Barbarin et al., 2001, p.17). Previous research also revealed that both direct and indirect violence that has been perpetrated by a family member at home, which is supposed to offer nurturance and protection, is possibly more traumatic and detrimental to the child’s development and sense of safety (Gelles & Straus, 1979; Hildyard & Wolfe, 2002; Kiselica, & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Osofsky et al., 1993).

Although research by Shields et al. (2009) suggested that the effects of violence may differ depending on locus of exposure, namely the school and community contexts, they indicated that their findings were not striking. Furthermore the focus of their study was on the comparative effects of both mode of exposure (direct and vicarious victimisation) and locus of exposure (school and community). Again it must be noted that Shields et al. (2009) separated the dimensions of community and school, whereas the present study combined them both under the non-domestic context.

Why levels of distress in children were not affected by locus of exposure to interpersonal violence, could be explained by the various interacting risk factors at domestic (home and family) and non-domestic (school and community) levels, that result in an ongoing climate of fear for children living in contemporary South Africa (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Cluver et al., 2010; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). Kaminer et al. (2013) suggest that South African adolescents experienced interpersonal violence across multiple sites and they have limited access to contexts that were danger free, as their daily lives are “characterized by pervasive threat and danger in the home, school and neighbourhood” (p.121). Gopal and Collings (2013) found that persistent exposure to interpersonal violence, has led to South African children being “scared everywhere”, in their homes, at school, and in their communities. As a result of exposure to such high levels of interpersonal violence, both the domestic and non-domestic contexts could be regarded as equal sources of vulnerability for children (Norton, 2014).

5.5 Ecological Systems Theory

Findings from the present study yielded valuable information on how Ecological systems theory provides a useful framework to systematically examine the constructs of locus and mode of exposure simultaneously, in order to yield meaningful and comprehensive information on the impact of interpersonal violence on South African adolescents. These findings will be discussed in terms of how the individual responds to the dynamic interconnection of multiple systems, rather than viewing the individual in isolation (Astor & Benbenishty, 2008).

5.5.1 Age

At the individual level, the evidence from this study shows, that both the risk of exposure and the impact of exposure to interpersonal violence were unrelated to the participant's age. In contrast, the majority of studies on childhood development indicate that the age of the child needs to be considered when studying their responses in the context of adversity (Burger et al., 2000; Papalia, 2006). Important to note is that the majority of the sample in the present study, consisted of young adolescents. The literature reviewed emphasises that the adolescent stage in particular, which is fraught with major developmental changes, may be overwhelming for the individual if exposed to further environmental stressors, such as interpersonal violence (Burger et al., 2000; Papalia, 2006).

5.5.2 Gender dynamics

In relation to the individual level, results of the study also indicated that there were no significant differences between male and female fear responses, as gender was unrelated to both the risk and impact of exposure to interpersonal violence. These findings are not in keeping with numerous studies which indicate that the effects of exposure to interpersonal violence, is influenced by gender dynamics, with females showing a greater number and intensity of fears than males (Burkhardt, 2007; Foster et al., 2004; Papalia, 2006). This was found to be particularly evident in patriarchal societies whereby boys were encouraged to be strong and dissuaded from expressing emotions (Burkhardt, 2007). Burkhardt (2007) however noted that the interrelation between gender and culture needs to be considered when looking at the influence of gender dynamics. In keeping with the Ecological systems theory,

which necessitated looking beyond the individual level towards to how the broader South African socio-political context influences the developing child, the lack of gender differences in the present study could also reflect extremely high levels of interpersonal violence in South Africa. This suggests that “when children are in “real” danger in relation to their survival, the differences between the sexes are not as apparent” (Norton, 2014, p.140).

5.5.3 Ethnicity

Whilst the analysis of the association between race variables and both the risk and impact of exposure to interpersonal violence in the study was found to be unrelated, it must be noted that the research participants of the present study were predominantly black South Africans (90.7%). This may have had an effect on the results. The high incidence level of exposure to interpersonal violence and the related high ratings of psychological distress, as reported by 56.1% of the population sample, were in keeping with Burkhardt’s (2007) study which found that black South African children expressed a greater number and intensity of fears when compared with other ethnic groups. Burkhardt (2007) also emphasized that children from lower socio-economic groups tend to exhibit the most fear. Of note is that the study sample included 65% of participants attending schools from quintiles 1 to 3, “indicating that a preponderance of participants came from similar low socioeconomic status communities” (Norton, 2014, p. 142). Research suggests that due to inequalities in socio-economic conditions inherited from the apartheid policies, many black South African children continue to live in a threatening environment in which they are frequently exposed to interpersonal violence (Barbarin et al., 2001; Burkhardt, 2007; Muris et al., 2008). Thus aspects of the macrosystem level of ecological systems theory which are relevant to the findings in the study, are the broad structures such as legislation, policies, cultural belief systems, values, and socio-economic inequities within the South African context, that increase the child’s risk of exposure to interpersonal violence.

5.5.4 The relevance of applying Ecological Systems Theory to the study

Participants of the present study were found to have been both directly and indirectly exposed to a number of violent activities that encompass the interaction between multiple social contexts or systems. These interactions appear to have played a pivotal role in determining participant’s levels of psychological distress (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).

The observed trends in the findings thus emphasise the importance of future research to view children as developing in an “ecology of contexts” when investigating the complexity of the impact of interpersonal violence on South African children, rather than focussing primarily on the individual at risk (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A major contribution of Ecological systems theory to the present study, is that it not only enabled a basis to be formed in which to identify the risk factors that children may be exposed to, but was also particularly important in the South African context, as it has helped to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of interpersonal violence on children (Ward, 2007).

5.6 Limitations

The researcher acknowledges that there were certain limitations in the present study which will be discussed below:

As the findings of the present study were based on responses given by adolescents living in the North West Province of South Africa, the issue of context and the effects of context on generalizability need to be considered. For example, gang related violence that contributed to high levels of psychological distress reported in the non-domestic context (schools and communities), may be related to specific areas in South Africa. Therefore the findings cannot be assumed to be a representation of all South African adolescents (Jameson, 2014). Further research is indicated in order to establish the generalizability of the patterns that emerged in the present study.

Participants in the present study were predominantly from the same ethnic group, with black South Africans accounting for 90.7% of the study sample. As a result, it was not possible to draw conclusions regarding differences across ethnic or cultural groups. It is recommended that future research needs to replicate the methods utilized in the present study, with proportionate representation across the different ethnic and cultural contexts. This will allow for more meaningful comparisons to be made and provide more clarity into the incidence and impact of exposure to interpersonal violence in South African children.

Furthermore, the questionnaire was only administered in English, despite not being the home language of the majority of the research participants. Whilst participants were afforded the opportunity of translators, language may have been a potential source of bias, as the intended

meaning of the questions could have been lost in translation (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). In addition, the data revealed that some participants were not fluent in English and had difficulty expressing their fears clearly (Norton, 2014).

Finally, the present study did not separate the dimensions of community and school in the non-domestic context. The researcher was therefore unable confirm whether the risk of exposure to interpersonal violence was related to vicarious exposure in the community, or vicarious exposure in the school. Further research may be necessary to systematically unpack the non-domestic context into more discrete types, to provide clarity so that more meaningful comparisons can be made.

5.7 Implications

5.7.1 Implications of the findings for mode of exposure to interpersonal violence

The findings of the study have significant implications for future research, as they challenge the hypothesis that the mode of exposure to interpersonal violence does not have an impact on the level of psychological distress in children. Emphasising that vicarious forms of traumatic exposure can be significantly more distressing than direct forms of traumatic exposure, will increase awareness of children who may face a greater risk for initial and long-term negative outcomes, thus needs to be the focus for practice and future research.

5.7.2 Implications of the findings for locus of exposure to interpersonal violence

The finding that the impact of exposure to interpersonal violence was unrelated to locus of exposure, clearly suggests that each form of exposure plays an equally significant role. These findings have important implications for future research investigating the impact of interpersonal violence on children, and for informing more comprehensive clinical intervention programmes, as it highlights the necessity of taking into consideration both the domestic (home and family) and non-domestic (school or community) contexts simultaneously, rather than focussing primarily on one particular source of vulnerability.

5.7.3 Implications for future research and practice

Whilst the findings of the present study appear to clarify the relationship between locus and mode of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence in South African adolescents, further research is indicated to validate the findings. The present study suggests that additional research could clarify the multiple dimensions that are associated with mode and locus of exposure to interpersonal violence. These factors may include multiple exposures to interpersonal violence, different stages of childhood development, and the closeness of the child in terms of their relationship to the perpetrator of interpersonal violence (Horn & Trickett, 1998).

As numerous studies on the effect of interpersonal violence on children living in contemporary South Africa have indicated, any future research needs to also consider more appropriate interventions for children who may be at risk (Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). The implications of the present study, utilizing Ecological systems theoretical approach as a basis for a contextual understanding in order to identify risk factors and the relative impact of interpersonal violence, is that the use of this perspective can also form a basis for the development of interventions (Ward, 2007). By exploring how the individual responds to the dynamic interrelation of multiple contexts, researchers could also identify resilience factors of the individual and psychosocial supportive factors within the home, schools and communities where children are exposed to chronic interpersonal violence.

5.8 Concluding summary

The conclusions drawn from the present study are summarized as follows:

- The current study expanded on an existing research project that was conducted over three loci of exposure to explore the nature of South African adolescent fears, using existing data (Jameson, 2014; Kempster, 2014; Norton, 2014).
- By systematically investigating the constructs of mode and locus of exposure simultaneously, the present study was able to:

- provide more clarity into the inconsistencies in the patterns that have emerged from available literature, that focused on the relationship between mode and locus of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence on children
- provide a more comprehensive view of the impact of interpersonal violence on children in the context of South Africa
- The risk of exposure to interpersonal violence was found to be high, with 56.1% of respondents from the study sample reporting that they had been exposed to some form of interpersonal violence in the past 12 months. These findings were consistent with available literature, that indicated that children living in contemporary South Africa, are at an increased risk for being exposed to chronic interpersonal violence on a daily basis, resulting in high levels of psychological distress (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Cluver et al., 2010; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009).
- With respect to the level of psychological distress, the study found that vicarious forms of traumatic exposure had a significantly stronger effect than direct forms of traumatic exposure. These findings suggest that the impact of interpersonal violence on children is mediated by mode of exposure. This was in contrast to observed trends in the majority of previous comparative studies.
- On the other hand, it was evident from the findings of the study that the impact of interpersonal violence was unrelated to locus of exposure. This suggests that the impact of interpersonal violence on children is not mediated by locus of exposure. These findings are entirely consistent with findings that emerged from most available literature.
- The results of the study show that respondent's age, gender and race were not related to the impact of exposure to interpersonal violence.
- Additional research was recommended in order to clarify the multiple dimensions associated with mode and locus of exposure and the impact of interpersonal violence.
- A contextual perspective was applied to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of interpersonal violence. Ecological systems theory provided a useful framework to consider the importance of how the individual responds to the

dynamic interrelation of multiple systems, in order to gain a holistic understanding of the risk of interpersonal violence on adolescents living in the South Africa context. Ecological systems theoretical perspective was also identified and recommended as being applicable for the development of future interventions.

- Whilst the findings of the present study were able to answer a number of critical questions relating to whether the relative impact of interpersonal violence on adolescent children is mediated by both mode of exposure and locus of exposure, further research was considered necessary to validate the findings obtained in the present study.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS ON THE PAGE

1. How old are you: 2. Are you male or female: Male
 Female
3. What grade are you in: 4. What is the name of your school:
5. What is your race group: Black White Coloured Asian

THESE QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU **AT HOME IN THE LAST YEAR**

6. What is the scariest or most upsetting thing that has happened to you **AT HOME** in the past year (describe what happened in the space below)

7. How scared or upset did it make you feel (put an X in one box)?

Not at all A little Quite a lot Very Extremely

8. What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do, to make you feel safer at home?

THESE QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU **AT SCHOOL IN THE LAST YEAR**

9. What is the scariest or most upsetting thing that has happened to you **AT SCHOOL** in the past year (describe what happened in the space below)

10. How scared or upset did it make you feel (put an X in one box)?

Not at all A little Quite a lot Very Extremely

11. What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do, to make you feel safer at school?

THESE QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU **IN YOUR COMMUNITY IN THE LAST YEAR**

12. What is the scariest or most upsetting thing that has happened to you in your **neighbourhood or community** in the past year (describe what happened in the space below?)

13. How scared or upset did it make you feel (put an X in one box)?

Not at all A little Quite a lot Very Extremely

14. What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do, to make you feel safer in your neighbourhood or community?

APPENDIX 2

INFORMATION SHEET

Research Title: Exploring children's fears and anxieties in the family, at school and in the community.

Dear Learner

We are doing a study to find out what children find scary and upsetting at home, at school and in the neighbourhood or community. The information we collect will be useful to understand how much fear children experience, and what they believe could happen or what anyone can do to make them feel safer. Your views will be very helpful to us. Here is the information you need to decide whether you will take part in the study:

- If you agree to take part in this study you will be asked to fill in a form with some short questions about what makes you feel scared or upset.
- The form is one page long and should take about 10 minutes to finish.
- There are no wrong or right answers.
- You will not be asked to put your name on the answer sheet so no-one will know what you have written.
- You will not be forced to give any information which you would rather keep private.
- You are free to stop taking part at any time.
- The teacher who hands out the questions will explain what you have to do and will answer any of your questions.
- Please make sure that you answer the questions as honestly as you can.
- The teacher will also give you the name of a person you can contact if you feel you want to talk to anyone privately after you have answered the questions.
- You can also contact the researchers if you have any questions about the study.
 - Project leader: Steven Collings (031 2602414)
 - University Research office: Phume Ximba (031-2603587)

If you would like to take part in the study, please sign the consent form and bring it back to your school. If you are under 18 years, please ask your parent/guardian to sign the form as well.

Thank you for taking part in this study.

APPENDIX 3

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have been informed about the details of the study: Exploring children's fears and anxieties in the family, at school and in the community.

I have read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and freely agree to take part in the study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

If under the age of 18 -

I have been informed about the details of the study: Exploring children's fears and anxieties in the family, at school and in the community.

I have read and understood the written information about the study.

Signature/ Mark of thumbprint of parent or guardian: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX 4

INSTRUCTIONS TO TEACHERS FOR ADMINISTERING QUESTIONNAIRES

- Hand out one questionnaire to each learner in the class.
- Explain to learners that the questionnaire is designed to obtain an understanding of things that have made them feel scared or upset in the past year.
- Explain to learners that they will not be putting their name on the questionnaire, and that nobody will be able to know what they have said
- If learners have trouble understanding any part of the questionnaire, please explain to them (using the learner's home language if necessary) what the questionnaire is about.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING QUESTIONS 1 TO 5

- Ask learners to complete questions 1 to 5 [it might be useful to explain the questions using the learners home language if necessary]

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING QUESTIONS 6 to 8

- Explain to learners that these questions relate to things that have happened at HOME in the past year.
- Before answering question 6, ask them to think about things that made them feel SCARED or UPSET at home.
- Once they have thought about it, ask them to write down the thing that made them feel most scared or upset at home in the space provided in question 6
- Then ask them to indicate how scared or upset they had felt by ticking one box provided in question 7.
- Finally ask them to indicate (in question 8) what they believe could happen, or what anyone could do, to make sure that they felt safer or less upset at home

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING QUESTIONS 9 TO 14

Please use the same procedure used for questions 6 to 8 to answer questions 9 to 14. Please point out to learners that questions 9 to 11 relate to experiences at SCHOOL while questions 12 to 14 relate to experiences in the COMMUNITY.