

**TEACHING IN A SCHOOL AFFECTED BY GANG VIOLENCE IN DURBAN: AN  
EXPLORATION OF EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES**

by

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**DECLARATION**

I, Nonkululeko Khuzwayo confirm that this dissertation is my own work which I have never previously submitted to any other university for examination or any other purpose. Scholarly ideas used are cited using American Psychological Association (APA 7\*).

Signature of Candidate .....  .....

On the .....15th..... day of ...July..... 2021

Signature of Supervisor   
.....

On the ...09 ... day of .....August....2021

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to educators at a selected Secondary School, those affected by school gang violence, either directly or indirectly.

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## ABSTRACT

The escalation of gang violence in South African schools has resulted in schools rapidly becoming places of violence. The violence is not only perpetrated by learners on fellow learners, but it is now being directed towards educators as well. The social ills existing in the communities negatively affect both learners and educators. Most studies focus specifically on how gang violence occurring in schools affects learners and thus there is a dearth of literature interrogating the extent to which educators in South Africa have been affected by the phenomenon. There is a need for policy makers and stakeholders to consider the effect of school-based gang violence on educators as the risk is not limited to learners.

Acknowledging this vacuum, this study aimed to explore educators' experiences of gang violence in Umlazi District, Durban, South Africa. The study adopted a qualitative approach to delve deeper into the educators' narratives to understand their interpretation of the phenomenon in their natural setting. The population for this study comprised educators from one secondary school in Umlazi District. Five educators and four members of the School Management Team (SMT) were purposively selected by virtue of possessing rich data on the phenomenon being interrogated. To enhance the robustness of the findings, the researcher observed the School Safety Policy. The data obtained from in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion were analysed using the thematic analysis method. The thematic analysis process allowed the researcher to develop themes that reflected the researcher's interpretation of the participants' meanings of the narratives on gang violence bedeviling South African schools.

This study revealed that the gang violence occurring in schools poses danger to the educators' social, psychological and physical well-being within the school setting. The most common effects of gang violence affecting schools were mainly found to be traumatic, behavioural, and psychological. Consequently, teaching and learning have been affected thus compromising learners' academic achievements over a period of time. Educators demonstrated the strategies they adopted to navigate situations arising from gang violence. For instance, they distanced themselves from disruptive learners, they supported each other in overwhelming situations and they worked in groups to deal with issues arising from the violence. Accordingly, the study advocates the provision of onsite psychological services to the victims of gang violence. It recommends the development and implementation of programmes meant to capacitate educators and thus create awareness on dealing with school-based gang violence

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The past decade has witnessed an alarming increase in gang violence occurring in school environments in South Africa, thus affecting many surrounding communities. It is important to first unpack the phenomenon before delving into its details. A gang is a group of three or more individuals sharing common affiliation, name, or sign and engaging in some sort of criminal activity (Pyrooz & Densley, 2018). Gangs engage in high-risk behaviours that lead to a wide range of potential social consequences. Gang members are more likely to drop out of high school, engage in early parenthood, have unstable employment, face relational problems with family members and the community at large (Dupéré, 2019). School-based gang violence affects society at all levels and individuals' personal safety (Pyrooz & Densley, 2018). Bounds and Jenkins (2018, p.440) contend "that gangs in schools should be seen as a community problem in South Africa since schools are a part of the community that is, they reflect the problems of that community". Learners engaging in gang violence often pose a huge challenge and are dismissive of legitimate authority.

Most studies have focused on the psychological impact of school-based gang violence on learners, with only a few studies having been conducted on the effect of the phenomenon on educators working in violence-prone communities. South Africa has the highest incidence of school-based gang violence, globally (Masuku, 2018). This study seeks to explore the experiences of educators working in the community affected by gang violence. This chapter provides the general introduction to the study. It presents the background to the study, problem statement, rationale for the study and the motivation to conduct the study, research aim and objectives, research questions, the structure of the dissertation, and definition of the terms utilised in the study.

### **1.2 Background of the study**

In order to maintain and enforce discipline on learners in schools, educators believed in the use of harsh punishment and strict approaches. Enforcing compliance with school rules was thus brought into classrooms by educators as a way of dealing with learners exhibiting disciplinary issues (Carson & Esbensen, 2019). Educators disciplined learners using corporal punishment

which entailed canning the learners on their hands and buttocks, slapping them in their faces, twisting their ears, using rulers to strike their fingers and in extreme cases educators used chalkboard dusters to hit the learners. The practice was abolished in 1996, by the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 which states that: (1) “No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner; (2) any person who contravenes subsection 1 is guilty of an offence, and liable to conviction or a sentence which could be imposed for assault” (Reyneke, 2018, p.125). Thus, the Department of Education (DoE) criminalised the use of corporal punishment when enforcing discipline on learners and as a result, educators who were unable to discipline and maintain order in their classrooms experienced challenges and became easy targets of verbal and emotional abuse by learners.

During Apartheid South Africa, the Bantu education system was mainly developed for ethnic groups that only spoke African languages (Morel, 2018). The system ensured that there was no effective teaching and learning in schools attended by Black learners. The challenges faced by the youths of that era were significantly different from those being experienced by contemporary youths. Some of the challenges they encountered included being taught in Afrikaans, being taught by unqualified educators which led to the massacre of Black students in Soweto (a Black South African township) in 1976. Morel (2018) asserted that learners were exposed to riots, gang wars, shootings, murder, and rape. As such activities escalated, gang violence and other violent activities were used as coping strategies; thus, fights, the carrying of weapons, gangsterism and corporal punishment were adopted by both educators and learners in the school settings. These strategies continued even beyond the Soweto Massacre of 1976, as most of these strategies are still evident in schools ensconced by violent communities.

Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) assert that fights, the carrying of weapons, gangsterism and corporal punishment are occurring continuously as educators use them to respond to problematic situations that confront the new democratic society that demands change in the environment as well as in people’s mind sets in order to produce a school environment which is conducive for teaching and learning. However, even though corporal punishment has been banned, some educators still administer it to instil discipline in learners. This is mainly due to the fact that educators may find it very difficult to enforce discipline in disruptive and ill-disciplined learners that exhibit a significant propensity for violence (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Moreover, some educators still perceive corporal punishment as one of the most effective ways of enforcing order and discipline in the classroom.

Learners frequently challenge educators and principals by displaying violent behaviour. The violence particularly manifest in high schools between learners and between learners and educators. However, it is worthwhile to acknowledge the violent behaviours that occur on school settings against the backdrop of the negative socio-economic factors prevailing within South African communities. For instance, a school that is located in a community characterised by a high crime rate, violence and drug abuse is more likely to experience incidences of violence.

Most studies have explored the effect of violence and crime occurring in schools on the well-being of learners and the community at large; however, little attention has been paid to the impact of school-based gang violence on the educators' physical, psychological and professional well-being. Currently, educators grapple with the problem of learners that arrive at school drunk and high on drugs; such learners are members of gangs, and carry illegal weapons whilst on the school premises. These factors underline the extent of the gang violence and crime being experienced in the communities. These generally impact negatively on the quality of education and what happens in the school in particular. Media reports attest to the numerous incidences of gang violence taking place in schools where educators have been assaulted or even killed by learners. Such behaviour is being prompted by the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours within the community and that has spilled onto school premises.

A school is an environment that should promote effective teaching and learning which allows learners to achieve to their maximum potential. Masuku (2018) argues that this can only occur if the school's physical and psychosocial environment is conducive to learning and development. In certain South African schools, this is hardly the case, as classes are plagued with constant interruptions, poorly disciplined learners, and violence. Netshitangani (2018) contends that schools are generally seen as places that nurture individuals and prepare them to be better citizens with positive attitudes for the roles they are supposed to play in society at large. However, research and media reports assert that regardless of popular discussion schools have in fact become locations of violence (Maringira & Masiya, 2018). In the South African society, gang violence has evidently become a matter of serious concern in both primary and secondary schools as it cuts across age, gender, race and school categories. The problem requires more serious attention.

### 1.3 Problem statement

The South African Council for Educators (SACE), a statutory body that was established to develop and maintain ethical professional standards for educators, has recorded statistics since 2012, on national school violence. Its reports indicate that 13.3% of the learners reported that they had been forced by someone at school to engage in gang activities against their will, and that they felt that they were doing wrong things and that they did not want to engage in them again; 12.2% of the learners had been threatened with violence by someone at school and 4.5 % had been robbed at school (Grobler, 2018). The factors that contribute to the prevalence of gang violence in schools include high levels of unemployment and poverty, ongoing racism, the illegal possession of guns as well as patriarchal values and behaviours, (Sonterblum,2018). Schools located in disadvantaged areas where the culture of violence reigns were the most plagued with gang violence (Sonterblum, 2018).

South African schools are commonly viewed as dangerous places where gangs intrude and victimise educators and thus disrupt the teaching and learning process (Venter & Jeffries, 2020). Offenders in schools are typically gang members that trespass school premises. Some of these trespassers may have been learners at that school but have dropped out owing to socio-economic reasons. The social factors driving gang violence include dropping out of school, poverty and unemployment, patriarchal notions of masculinity, vulnerabilities of families and exposure to violence during childhood, widespread and easy access to firearms, alcohol and drug misuse, and a weak culture of law-enforcement and failure to uphold safety as a basic human right. The role of criminal justice is to meet its obligations of ensuring the safety of learners and educators in school settings (Grobler, 2018).

The gang violence occurring in schools has a negative impact on educators who may view themselves as victims, which may adversely affect their work-related performance (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). Educators dread any work environment that is dominated by gang violence; this may result in the manifestation of impaired personal relationships within the school setting they work in, leading to poor performance and low academic outcomes (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018). Support from the school management team may reduce these problems through enforcing a healthy engagement and promoting educators' commitment to their work. To promote safety in schools, communities need to work together to establish a conducive environment for educators to perform their duties (Sykes & Gachago, 2018). The Department of Education ought to contribute towards enhancement of safety by fostering a positive school climate and

reducing the possibility of violence through training staff on crisis management. The provision of therapeutic services after a tragedy or an attack by gangs at schools and working in collaboration with the law enforcement units to combat incidents of gang violence are also essential in establishing conducive environments for educators to enforce effective teaching and learning in schools (Sykes & Gachago, 2018).

Stressful working conditions affect educators' personal health, leading to under-performance and a negative attitude towards their profession and the learners they teach (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018). Educators suffer psychologically due to the stress they endure in communities and schools that are prone to gang violence, and because of this, there is a reduction in staff establishment especially in urban and semi-urban areas where the phenomenon is highly pronounced (Makgoke & Mofokeng, 2020).

#### **1.4 Rationale for the study**

This study was prompted by the fact that few scholars have focused on the impact of school-based gang violence on educators. South African schools display a high prevalence of school-based gang violence (Steyn & Singh, 2018). The effects of school-based gang violence on educators and the negative influence it has on achieving positive academic outcomes, need to be urgently addressed. Understanding educators' experiences of this phenomenon and how they develop strategies to navigate the problem will assist in the employment of effective measures that help to rid schools of this menace. The findings and recommendations from a study of this nature contribute positively to the development of strategies that deal with gang violence in schools.

Limited studies have been conducted to interrogate the presence and nature of gang violence in South African schools (Ezell, 2018). The impact of gang activities as a threat to school safety was examined in a study conducted by De La Rue and Forber-Pratt (2018). Researchers usually use law-enforcement statistics of gang activity on incidents of law violations at the schools (Maringira & Masiya, 2018).

#### **1.5 Motivation to conduct the study**

The school environment is regarded as a social institution where children are nurtured to be better individuals in society, yet school-based violence accounts for more than a quarter of international school-related news (Cornell, 2017). Within the South African context, 15% of

overall crime and violence reported in the media are school-related (Veriava & Power, 2017). Gang violence in schools poses a significant social problem to communities (Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017). A growing body of knowledge on school-based gang violence indicates that violent acts occur within social contexts and involve complex interactions among individuals; however, educators have often been overlooked as victims of gang violence in these complex interactions (Anderman et al., 2018).

School-based gang violence directed at educators and other school personnel is a phenomenon that has been ignored by the Department of Education. This might be because they are not aware of the effect that it has on educators' psychological wellbeing. The information on such incidences appears to be only released when the crisis has been reported in the media. Literature seemingly focuses on ending corporal punishment in schools ignoring the reality that educators are also victimised by learners, mainly in public schools. Crime is generally linked with drugs and gangsters, and children growing up in such crime-prone communities are bound to be adversely affected by their environment. Le Mottee and Kelly (2017) maintain that educators are three times more likely to become victims of school-based gang violence than learners. Furthermore, educators do not only witness gang violence occurring in schools, but they also become victims, which perpetuates an atmosphere of stress, anxiety and fear leading to ineffective teaching and learning.

To date a few studies have investigated the effects of school-based gang violence on educators. The escalation of violence in South African schools has led researchers to conclude that schools are increasingly becoming arenas of violence, not only among learners, but also between educators and learners, through interschool rivalries and gangs (Grobbler, 2018). This study was motivated by the desire to explore the experiences of educators teaching in schools affected by gang violence. Numerous media reports attesting to the high rates of school-based gang violence targeting educators stimulated the researcher to undertake an in-depth exploration of school-based gang violence and its effects on educators. This study sought to outline two broad aspects on the issue of gang violence in schools; the first comprises the effects of gang violence on educators and the second are the educators' experiences of working in schools affected by gang violence.

## **1.6 Aim of the study**

This study aimed to explore educators' experiences of teaching in a school affected by gang violence.

### **1.6.1 Objectives**

- To explore educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence;
- To identify educators' strategies for navigating situations arising from gang violence within the school setting;
- To examine measures suggested by educators in dealing with school gang violence more effectively.

### **1.6.2 Research questions**

- What are educators' experiences of working in a school affected by gang violence?
- How do educators navigate situations arising from gang violence within the school settings?
- What measures have educators suggested in dealing with violence more effectively?

## **1.7 The structure of the dissertation**

### **Chapter One: Introduction to the study**

This chapter presents an overview of the study and an understanding of gang violence occurring in schools and its effect on educators. The background to the study was highlighted through literature and media reports that were available and relevant to the study.

### **Chapter Two: Literature review and Theoretical framework**

This chapter reviews related literature and definitions of key concepts. It critically assesses the effect of school-based gang violence on educators. The chapter reviews national and international literature that provides insights into gang violence in schools and the effect it has on educators and other school personnel. A complete review of prior research correlates with the aim and objectives of the current study, as it highlights the challenges being experienced by educators both nationally and internationally. The chapter presents the theoretical framework underpinning this study. It articulates the Emotional Processing Theory and the

Deviant Place Theory to delineate the effects of school-based gang violence on educators who bear the brunt of victimisation and the fears they experience due to the menace brought by this phenomenon.

### **Chapter Three: Methodological orientation**

This chapter describes the qualitative research methodology that was employed in the study. It focuses on the data collection and interpretation processes, the data collection tools, and the different ethical procedures that guided and directed the execution of this study.

### **Chapter Four: Presentation of findings**

This chapter presents the narrative stories of five educators and four members of the School Management Team (SMT). The findings elicited from these narratives are reported and the data are presented within the conceptual framework of the study.

### **Chapter Five: Discussion**

The discussion, which constitutes this chapter, is based to a historical analysis of gang violence in schools and the new findings that corroborate arguments raised by previous researchers thus giving a deeper meaning to educators' diverse experiences of gang violence pervading South African schools.

### **Chapter Six: Conclusion and recommendations**

This chapter highlights the conclusions and presents a summary of all the chapters that constitute this dissertation. The findings and results are summarised. The chapter presents the final conclusions and proffers the relevant recommendations.

## **1.8 Clarification of terms**

### **1.8.1 Violence**

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2002, p.5) defined violence as “the premeditated use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation”. Thus violence is intentional use of forceful power to threat the other individual.

### **1.8.2 Gang violence**

A gang may be defined as a group of three or more individuals who share a common name or sign and engage in a criminal activity (Knox, 1994). A gang is a group of three or more individuals sharing common affiliation, name, or sign and engaging in some sort of criminal activity (Pyrooz & Densley, 2018)

### **1.8.3 Victimization**

Victimization refers to persistent the commission of violent acts by one person or group against another individual or group and that is tantamount to criminal violations (Knox, 1994).

### **1.8.4 Educator**

Rundell and Fox (2002, p.12) define the term educator as “a person whose profession is teaching”. It is somebody who supports and assists learners to achieve positive academic outcomes, within the school setting. An educator is also “any person recognized as an individual who guides and assists in the learning process” (Du Plessis, 2008, p.5).

### **1.8.5 Learner**

The term refers to an individual registered in a schooling system to acquire knowledge and the individual goes to school (Rundell, 2002). In the context of this study, the term learner refers to an individual in a high school environment (Grades 8 to 12 in the South African context).

### **1.8.6 School Management Team (SMT)**

The Department of Education (DoE, 2000) defines the SMT as comprising senior staff at a school and these include the Principal, Deputy Principal and the Heads of Department (HoDs).

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter presented an overview of the study by giving an insight into the basic preoccupations of the dissertation as encapsulated in the background as well as the aim and objectives of the study. The next chapter reviews literature related to the study. It also presents the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

# **Chapter Two: Literature review and Theoretical framework**

## **2.1 Introduction**

South Africa has the second highest incidence of gang violence in schools after Jamaica (Masuku, 2018). In South Africa educators state that gang violence in schools is the norm, and their experience of the phenomenon seems to have long-term effects on their psychological well-being as well as their professional and personal self-esteem. Gang violence occurring in school settings poses a significant challenge for the education system in South Africa. Literature shows that previous research only focused on how gang violence in schools affects learners; thus, a limited number of studies have explored how the phenomenon adversely affects educators.

The current study thus examined gang violence in schools with a focus on the experiences of educators working in a school affected by gang violence. In addition, the study sought to understand how educators navigate risky situations imposed by school-based gang violence; it further explores how they deal with the physiological effects of gang violence in the selected school. This study employed the Emotional Processing Theory and the Deviant Place Theory to provide insights into school-based gang violence and how it victimises educators. These theories were most appropriate to this study as they are grounded how fear stimulus and the individual respond to danger. Moreover, the theories address the phenomenon since they contend that when an individual is exposed to a dangerous environment, they are more likely to become a victim of crime (Siegel, 2006).

This chapter reviews literature on the following aspects: school-based gang violence, prevalence of gang violence in school settings, South African law in relation to school-based gang violence, profile of gang violence in schools, the victimisation of educators in South African schools, the psychological effects of gang violence on educators, differences in terms of levels of gang violence between advantaged and disadvantaged schools in South Africa, the effects of gang violence on schools, the brutality of gang violence in South African schools, the responses of educators to gang violence, conditions that promote gang violence in schools, and global and national perspectives on educators' experiences of gang violence.

## **2.2 School-based gang violence**

School-based gang violence cuts across developing and developed countries, with localised and cultural factors influencing the perceptions and manifestations of this phenomenon as it occurs in different settings (Olive, 2019). According to Sanders (2017), a gang is a group of three or more individuals sharing a common name or sign and engaging in a criminal activity. Gangs tend to engage in high-risk behaviours that culminate in a wide range of social consequences. Studies indicate that gang members often drop out of high school, engage in early parenthood, have unstable employment, and face relational problems with family members and the community at large (Van der Merwe & Swanepoel, 2017). School-based gang violence affects society at all levels and it instils fear in individuals as it threatens their personal safety (Sanders, 2017). Socialisation significantly influences an increase in gang violence, with social factors such as poverty and unemployment being the chief triggers of gang violence (Sommer, 2017). Some of the schools are located in areas that experience high crime rates and violence. Learners arrive in the school premises carrying dangerous weapons and being under the influence of intoxicating substances such as drugs and alcohol. Such behaviours instigate violence which impacts negatively on teaching and learning activities (Cornell, 2017).

The antisocial behaviours that are learned from different role players such as parents or family members and the community exert an equally important influence (Miller, 2020). Aggressive and criminal activities by gangs have attracted remarkable attention globally and nationally. Veriava and Power (2017) argues that schools have no measures in place to combat the increase in gang-related criminal activities. Dupéré (2019) contends that the existence of gangs in South African schools is reflective of the problems obtaining in the community since school's form part of the community. Ill-disciplined learners often challenge and are dismissive of legitimate authority vested in their educators. Gallupe (2017) stated that schools with a high enrolment tend to record higher numbers of gang-related activities than those with lower enrolment figures as the former have a greater number of external connections that spill over into the school environment.

## **2.3 Prevalence of gang violence in school settings**

The escalation of gang violence in South African schools has resulted in schools being rapidly turned into spaces of violence, not only directed towards learners by other learners, but also

directed towards educators (Cornell, 2017). Statistically, 22.2% of South African learners were exposed to some form of violence (any violent crime, threats of violence, assault, sexual assault, robbery and theft), Vuk (2017). Additionally, the Department of Basic Education (DBE), Republic of South Africa (2014) found that learners in the Western Cape (WC) Province recorded the second lowest exposure to school-based gang violence among the nine provinces at 10.7%, the WC emerged as the province with the second highest rate of learner exposure to violence 28.7%) (Veriava & Power, 2017). Nonetheless, these inconsistent statistics may cast doubt on the seriousness of the problem in the WC, when looking at the problem in the media, the Cape Times frequently conveys the message to the general public that gang violence in schools is a serious problem (Edwards et al., 2019).

Gang violence occurring in schools is not a new phenomenon and is of great concern worldwide, especially in developing economies such as South Africa. Children are vulnerable to challenges such as racism and poverty (Themane & Osher, 2014). Thus, school-based violence is associated with gangsterism, remarking that “schools in urban areas, particularly townships are regularly prey to gangsterism. Social factors such as unemployment, poverty, rural-urban-drift, the accessibility of weapons such as guns and general legacy of violence has formed a context where gangsters rob schools and kill and rape educators and learners in the process” (Grobler, 2018, p.75).

#### **2.4 South African law in relation to gang violence in schools**

South African schools are commonly viewed as dangerous places where gangs intrude, victimise educators and disrupt the teaching and learning process (Venter & Jeffries, 2020). The perpetrators of violence in schools in South Africa are typically gang members who trespass onto school premises. Some of these trespassers were once learners at particular schools but had dropped out of school due to socio-economic problems. De La Rue and Forber-Pratt (2018) indicated that the Criminal Procedure Act No. 51 of 1977 and the Law of Evidence which apply to children who become involved in crimes, are legally the same as those that apply to adult offenders. According to Section 290 of the Criminal Procedure Act No. 51 of 1977, a minor aged between 14 and 21 years is accountable for their actions because they can differentiate between right and wrong. The role of criminal justice is to meet its obligations of ensuring the safety of both learners and educators whilst in school settings (Grobler, 2018). The main aim of any school is to ensure effective teaching and learning and to uphold the learner’s right to education (Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

1996). South African educators have an important role to play, thus “acting as parent” (*loco parentis*). However, educators are bereft of protection as they are vulnerable to dangerous situations they face when exercising their daily professional duties (Veriava & Power, 2017).

## **2.5 Profile of gang violence in schools**

Urban schools exist in particular places, and are affected by their geographical settings; thus, it would be fallacious to think that schools are homogeneous. Hence, Hagedorn (2017, p.2) described the “iconic ghetto” as necessarily inferior to their cosmopolitan or suburban counterparts. There is sufficient evidence of well-functioning schools situated in the heart of separated urban places. The environment plays a role in determining the atmosphere of the school. Schools are institutions that are influenced by the environment in which they exist. However, the two mutually influence each other. Gang violence in schools is surging and becoming more prevalent in most South African schools. Most studies found that educators experience gang violence in their workplaces and the possibility that new educators who enter the system will become victims of the same violence is disturbing (Reddy et al., 2018). The most common forms of gang violence experienced by educators in schools include disrespect, verbal threats, back-chatting, refusal by learners to follow instructions and, in extreme cases, physical assault. A study conducted by Singh (2006) on the violence perpetrated by learners against educators highlights a lack of support from parents and the Department of Education (DoE) in preventing gang violence thus aggravating the problem of violence in schools. School-based gang violence does not only have psychological impact on educators’ careers, but it also accounts for emotional symptoms such as anger, frustration and stress (Mncube & Harber, 2013). Psychological symptoms include insomnia, headaches and a general decline in educators’ physical health and poor retention of educators.

## **2.6 Victimization of educators in South African schools**

The term victimisation refers to the perpetration of tenacious acts by an individual or group of individuals against another individual or group of individuals and such acts are tantamount to criminality or abuse. Another form of gang-related violence affecting South African schools, especially in the Western Cape Province, is gangsterism (Baruth, 2016). The preponderance of gangs in schools and townships has exacerbated the victimisation of non-gang members such as educators (De La Rue & Forber-Pratt, 2018). According to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED, 2003), gang members seem to monitor educators’ arrival and departure

times and consciously wait for them at the school gates. This scenario brings with it a petrifying “fear factor”, which can traumatise educators, learners and parents alike. Moreover, threats, intimidation and harassment stimulate fear, all of which may result in the absenteeism of both educators and learners (Cornell, 2017). The Western Cape Education Department (WCED, 2003) reported that gang violence seriously affects teaching and learning and educators are also repeatedly absent because they need time off seeking trauma counselling and debriefing. Incidents of gang violence often occur in bigger cities compared to small towns or rural areas. The reflections of what happens in schools in communities riddled with high levels of crime such as gangsterism, drugs abuse and robbery are known to occur in such settings.

According to Venter and Jeffries (2020, p.59), “gang activity has been reported in schools located in bigger cities and educators are frequently attacked by gangs, thus preventing educators from performing their duties diligently”. Communities that are characterised by social ills tend to be responsible for the increasing number of children who get involved in such criminal activities. Not only do they increase the chances of being involved in crime and gang violence, but these communities also increase the vulnerability of educators working in such crime-prone environments. SACE (2011) affirms that communities exhibiting social ills usually have a high rate of exposure to gang violence and schools that are based in such areas tend to replicate this trend. Moreover, the victimisation of educators occurs in public schools where crime is rife and in rural schools that already have high rates of drug use and gangs, rather than in private schools where the security management system is better.

Therefore, parents who can afford to take their children to private schools believe they will get better education and the security management is better, thus preventing their children from getting involved in gang violence which victimises educators. Strict enforcement of discipline often results in educators being susceptible to victimisation. Le Mottee and Kelly (2017) assert that while trying to maintain discipline, educators always have to worry about being targets of gang violence, simultaneously exercising vigilance to avoid being accused of child abuse in the process. However, the education system has changed drastically, with learners consciously exercising their rights, leaving educators with little leverage in terms of enforcing discipline. Although parents often condone the use of the abolished corporal punishment on their children, the learners are aware of their rights and there is little that the educators can do in that regard. Le Mottee and Kelly (2017) further maintain that the idea of learners being aware of their rights and not being taught their responsibility has resulted in learners being ill-disciplined and

threatening educators whom they are aware will not do much as they are restricted on how they should discipline the learners. This has left them vulnerable to fear and threats.

## **2.7 Psychological effects of gang violence on educators**

Stressful working conditions adversely affect educators' personal health, leading to under-performance and a negative attitude towards the teaching profession and the learners (Jennings, 2018). There are no effective support structures that protect educators from falling victim to violence that occurs in schools (Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017). The following points are some of the shortcomings of government policy:

- The Safe School Policy that does not include learner-on-educator violence;
- The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) does not provide for the rights of all including school personnel;
- The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) does not specify what serious misconduct is and thus  
there are no clear guidelines as to which category violence against educators falls into;
- It is practically impossible with the existing policies to expel learners regardless of how  
serious the transgression may be;
- The EAP (Employee Assistance programs) does not include preventative measures to curb school violence; and
- None of the existing legislation and policies in education makes provision for the safety  
of the educator.

## **2.8 Differences in the level of gang violence between advantaged and disadvantaged schools in South Africa**

The level of gang violence in advantaged and disadvantaged schools is significantly different. Studies have shown that the location of a school has an impact on the level of gang violence taking place in the schools. Moreover, the locations with gangs experience more violence than those that do not have gangs; up to 80% of gang violence can be attributed mostly to urban areas (Esbensen & Maxson, 2020). Membership to a gang increases the likelihood of violence in the community where crime-related activities are rife. A comparison of the learners from

advantaged schools and those from disadvantaged schools reveals that the latter perpetuate violence against educators due to the following factors:

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Disadvantaged schools</b>	<b>Advantaged schools</b>
Classroom size	Generally, the schools have a larger enrolment, classes are overcrowded	Classes are small and easily manageable
Community	Located in high crime areas where there is inadequate security infrastructure	Mostly in suburban areas with security in the area
Family structure	Live in poverty, which has a negative effect on for example parent's interest in and support of their children	Most families afford and support their children
Security measures	Lack of security measures which is a contributing factor to gang violence occurring in the school premises	Adequate security measures
Support services	Lack of support services such as school-based psychologist or social worker due to lack of financial assistance from the Department of Education (DoE).	Proper support services in place

The table shows that the levels of gang violence are different though the main causes of violence in both categories are similar. Vuk (2017) maintains that the lack of discipline at home partly leads to gang violence in schools. This indicates that the community and family where the learners are born influence how the learners behave towards educators at school. Schools, especially the disadvantaged ones, are becoming centres of fear and intimidation instead of being places of enlightenment for both educators and learners. Learners witness their classmates surrender to drugs and misbehave and be involved in gang activities in the school premises, which compromises educators' level of discipline (Kamrath, 2019). The problems that exist in the schools replicate those that already exist in the community due to social ills. The findings of the survey on school violence in South Africa indicated that the effects of neighbourhood crime-related activities and gangs are highlighted by the fact that 60.5% of the learners who had been exposed to crime in their neighbourhood had brought it to school (SACE, 2011). Generally, criminal activities start in the communities before spilling into school premises.

Another study conducted on school violence in South Africa (2012) indicates that the gang violence that occurs in schools does not only occur among learners but these acts are also perpetrated against educators. More than 15% of the principals who participated in the survey reported that they had received reports of verbal abuse from educators. However, statistics indicate that educators were also often victims of verbal violence (52%), physical violence (12.4%) and sexual violence (3.3%), with learners being the perpetrators of the above-mentioned violence that emanates from gang violence-related activities. This creates an atmosphere of fear and anxiety in educators, which interferes with effective teaching and learning. When educators are working in an environment characterised by persistent crime and gang violence, they are bound to grapple with the effects of such antisocial behaviours.

Vidourek et al. (2017) argue that one of the reasons learners easily identify with street gangs whose activities spill over into schools, is that they believe that such associations fulfil the transition from childhood to adolescence and finally adulthood, and they are also made to feel accepted by a society ruled by gang leaders. Romero et al. (2018) argue that children may, on the other hand, encounter psychological trauma and social isolation; they may be hated and distrusted by their families and community due to their involvement in gang-related activities. It is important for educators to understand the nature of these feelings of aggression when developing disciplinary plans for their schools and when the same violent acts are perpetrated on them. Moreover, the social ills that exist in the communities include affiliation to gang membership and drug abuse. Since crime figures are increasing, schools are no longer safe zones for learners and educators.

## **2.9 Effects of gang violence on teaching and learning**

- The educators find it difficult to teach effectively as learners have become uncontrollable. They challenge all the available disciplinary measures, and they have become unmanageable in the classroom due to gangs' turf wars. Educators spend a great deal of time trying to calm the learners and make them ready for the day's lesson.
- The school syllabi are not completed on time because of the disruptive violence that leads to poor attendance by learners. Time is wasted while trying to resolve problems arising from gang violence and some learners absent themselves from school to circumvent being affiliated to gangs and rivalry between gangs.

- There is high rate of theft as learners steal each other's learning material such as textbooks, calculators and so on. Sometimes, these misbehaving children damage school property, which negatively impacts on educators' morale and commitment to duty.
- Learners lack respect for each other; as a result, they engage in fights which consume teaching and learning time. Learners constantly engage in fights and the classroom atmosphere becomes hostile and educators have to mediate, which is an equally risky undertaking.
- Educators' performance is affected as they have less time to prepare for their lessons as their time is lost dealing with misbehaving learners responsible for gang violence that takes place in the school.

## **2.10 The brutality of gang violence brutality in South African schools**

Gang violence was previously associated with high schools located in townships but lately, the phenomenon has become so pervasive that even primary schools are also affected. According to the *Daily News* (4 October 2018), the following incidents were reported by Masuku (2018): a pupil stabbed a 24-year-old educator to death inside a classroom in Zeerust, North West Province. In another incident, a 15-year-old Grade 8 pupil pulled a gun on an educator at Eldorado Park Secondary School in Johannesburg. Two pupils were stabbed to death at Masakhaneni High School in KwaMakhutha in Durban, and another learner was stabbed at KwaMakhutha High school in Durban. The report also captured a fight that took place at Fairvale Secondary School during break before an exam and in front of other children. Witnesses stated that the fight began with slapping, before knives were drawn (Barbeau, 2012). According to witnesses, a 15-year-old learner was stabbed three times in the chest and once in the arm. The learner later died in hospital. The 16-year-old learner who allegedly stabbed him was arrested whilst in hospital, also with a stab wound on his chest. It was reported that the two learners had been friends until a few months before the fatal incident occurred. The learners who saw the fight said it was not the first time that knife fights took place at, or outside, the school, and the wars were referred to as "gang wars" fought over territories. One eye-witness said that the older teen was apparently part of a gang known as CBS, but it was not clear if he was an affiliated gang member (Barbeau, 2012).

Gang violence does have adverse effects not only on those who are victimised, but also on the witnesses, normally educators and other school personnel, who assist the victims after such incidents have occurred (Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017). The focus has changed from educational attainment to gang affiliation, fights and drug sales occurring on school premises and energy and time are spent on quelling these fights instead of refining the quality of education being offered in schools. Nako and Muthukrishna (2018) assert that the effects of gang violence in schools, as perceived by educators, negatively affect learning for the following reasons: The school setting is no longer conducive to teaching and learning. Poor school attendance contributes to the lack of effective learning and teaching, which leads to a high failure rate. Learners become uncontrollable, disruptive and unmanageable. Too much time has to be spent on conflict resolution meetings at the expense of learning and teaching. High absenteeism and dropout rates impact negatively on learner achievement. There is a general lack of discipline in schools. Disobedience leads to non-submission of school tasks or homework. School violence causes a drop in academic performance, which is not part of the vision and mission of the school. Learners who are victims of bullying intentionally miss lessons and eventually drop out of school. Moreover, vulnerable learners lack concentration in class because they are constantly scared of the perpetrators of violence and the classroom atmosphere becomes hostile.

## **2.11 Responses of educators to gang violence**

### **2.11.1 Emotional response**

Different kinds of violence exist, for instance domestic or school violence. Regardless of its kind, violence has a tremendous psychological impact on the victims and witnesses of acts of violence. Educators are affected psychologically, whether they are victims or witnesses, when violence is perpetrated against them or their learners. According to Le Mottee and Kelly (2017, p.50), “psychological harm is caused by violence or situations in which there is a threat of violence, whereas developmental harm may also occur in the form of anxiety about the threats of harm”. Anxiety distracts educational progression, particularly the teaching and the learning process. The literature mainly focuses on how educators should support learners in dealing with traumatic events that occur within the school setting, but very few researchers have actually focused on how educators should be assisted in dealing with the traumatic experiences they witness on a daily basis. Educators are under constant pressure from the Department of

Education and parents who expect them to upgrade the performance of learners in the schools, but neither of these role-players admits that many learners themselves are partly responsible for their poor academic performance.

### **2.11.2 Physiological response**

An individual whose safety is threatened by gang violence naturally responds as they would do to any other form of threat, that is, by experiencing agitated provocation or an acute stress response which is known to instigate the ‘fight or flight’ response (Cornell, 2017). When an individual is confronted by a possibly life-threatening event, they can either be provoked into taking a flight (run away) from the situation or stay on and ‘fight’; the latter has the potential to fuel and escalate the violence, which may result in death. Men and women respond differently to potentially life-threatening events when it comes to the flight or fight response. Scholars argue that men are more likely to respond by fighting than females, whereas women are more likely to take flight from the situation than males (O’Dea et al., 2017). Moreover, female educators are more likely to walk away from or avoid confrontations with misbehaving learners than males, while male educators are more likely to get into physical confrontations, especially with male learners than their male counterparts.

### **2.11.3 Effects of stress on educators**

The term stress is defined as a state manifested by a specific syndrome of biological events that can be both pleasant and unpleasant (Reddy et al., 2018). Stress occurs when there is interaction between an individual person and the environment. Stress arises when something that has happened out there presents a person with a demand, or a constraint, or an opportunity for behaviour. In this study stress refers to a state of affairs demonstrated by a detailed pattern of genetic events that can be both pleasant and unpleasant. Victims who witness violence in their daily lives could be affected either at a personal or professional level. According to Zembylas (2018), the Social Stress Theory is grounded on the idea that persons experience social stress which is different from the psychological diagnosis of stress. It presupposes that educators work in a stressful environment due the presence of gang violence in the schools.

The persistent presence of gang violence in schools and the resultant stress stimulates educators’ stressful response, which has a negative effect on the emotional as well as

physiological reaction to their everyday work situations (Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017). Thus, the impact of daily stress that educators experienced in the workplace may not be a concern that one may be aware of, especially how it affects them. Educators work in environments where they are continually disrespected and violated by their learners. A stressful working environment therefore impacts adversely on educators' personal health, work performance and how they respond towards their profession and the learners that they teach.

The most significant source of stress is the reality of having to confront ill-disciplined and abusive learners. Steinberg and Lacoé (2017) argue that educators' level of stress is raised by their inability to discipline learners in a manner that they prefer. It comes as no surprise that educators endure occupational stress as they have to cope with the high number of learners they have in class and the overall workload. This is especially true for educators working in public schools that are characterised by staff shortages. "The educator to learner ratio is constantly under pressure due to the reduction of staff members and some classes have as many as forty to fifty learners" (Cuellar, 2018, p.35). According to Le Mottee and Kelly (2017:3), "educators' failure to control misbehaving learners is a result of the high level of instability in some schools".

## **2.12 Conditions that promote gang violence in schools**

Apparently, gangsterism is another form of violence affecting schools in South Africa, especially in the Western Cape Province. According to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED, 2003), gang members seem to select the exact times when the targeted educators and learners depart and arrive and intentionally wait for them at the school gates. This brings with it a terrorizing "fear factor", which can traumatise educators, learners and parents alike. Moreover, the threats, intimidation and harassment stimulate fear, and all these result in the absenteeism of both educators and learners (Cornell, 2017). The Western Cape Education Department (WCED, 2003) reported that not only does gang violence adversely influence learning, but it also compels educators into absenteeism because they need time off in search of trauma counselling and debriefing. According to a study conducted on the perceptions of Western Cape educators regarding the cause and scope of violence in the province, the incidence of gang violence in schools and townships increases the incidence of victimisation of non-gang members (De La Rue & Forber-Pratt, 2018). The findings of this study indicated that learners and educators are fearful, not only at school, but also on their way

back home. The exposure to gang violence in schools causes fear, long-lasting physical, emotional and psychological consequences on educators and the symptoms include distress, low self-esteem, high risk of depression, absenteeism and inability to learn (Nunan, 2018). In an environment where educators feel unsafe it becomes difficult for them to instil discipline in learners. In a school with no safety measures in place, the learning and teaching time is affected, resulting in low pass rate. Intense pressure is exerted on educators' performance without paying attention to the root causes of educators' underperformance.

### **2.12.1 Root causes of gang violence in schools**

Globally, gang violence affects schools and is spread and performed by learners in school (Lekalakala, 2019). Gang violence in schools is attributable to different causes; it takes on many forms and involves different people. For example, being a gang member may be learned outside the school, but perpetuated inside the school because the school condones it or does not decisively deal with it. It may also involve different people at different times within the school premises; for example, at one point, learners may fight each other, and may threaten or victimise educators at another. Gang violence in schools also takes place in different ways and in a wide range of contexts. Moreover, gang violence is not caused by a single factor, but a number of causes are at play in perpetuating this culture. Vuk (2017) argues that academic tension, lack of consequences for poor behaviour and gang violence modelled by society were the main causes of gang violence in schools. According to Hoffmann (2020), there is a strong relationship between academic underachievement and antisocial behaviour. Makgoke and Mofokeng (2020) identified the causes of crime which impact negatively on the teaching and learning process in South Africa. These include involvement in gang activities, a lack of meaningful transformation in schools, availability of weapons and guns at schools, use of drugs or intoxicating substances, a lack of counselling services, worshiping gang leaders and criminality arising from parental apathy.

### **2.12.2 Community**

The location of the school has an impact on learners' behaviour. For instance, if a school is located in an area that experiences high levels of crime or gangsterism, it will experience high rates of violence as the violence that occurs outside the school will spill over into the school. According to Van der Westhuizen and Gawulayo (2021, p.118), gangsterism is "the

development of an urban identity determined along racial and economic lines”. Gang violence is often instigated by need and a socially disadvantaged situation (Richter et al., 2018) to which, due to the effect of our democratic era, our schools might unintentionally be contributing (Richter et al., 2018). Gangs are by-products of a broken family structure and thus gang members find a family among their peers and sense of belonging. Moreover, in many communities’ gang membership gives the youth status, rank and prestige (Augustyn et al., 2019). A gang-related activity is sometimes defined as “any antisocial behaviour committed by or among gang members”, and sometimes it is more restrictively defined as “antisocial behaviour occurring as a different function of gang membership or for a distinct benefit to the gang itself” (Vigil, 2019, p.9).

Gangs have unique symbols they use to identify themselves and reports indicate that in the United States of America, gangs have increased drastically (Capp et al., 2017). Gangs participate in criminal activities to sustain their authority and control (Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017). Thus, learners are exposed to violence occurring at school because there is a very high level of crime in the community. For example, reports about the fight at Fairvale Secondary School took place during break, before an exam and in front of other children. Witnesses stated that the conflict began with slapping, before knives were thrust (Barbeau, 2012). During the fight, a 15-year-old learner was reportedly stabbed three times in the chest and once in the arm. The learner later died in hospital. The 16-year-old learner who allegedly stabbed him was also in hospital and was arrested. He had also sustained stab wounds on the chest. It was reported that the two had been friends until a few months before the fight ensued. The learners who witnessed the fight said that it was not the first-time knife fights had broken out. The fights often erupted outside the school, and were referred to as “gang wars” fought over ownership of territories. One said that the older teen was apparently part of a gang known as CBS, though his membership to the gang was somewhat hazy (Barbeau, 2012). The above examples demonstrate how community violence spills into schools. Furthermore, 41% of the teachers had been verbally abused by learners and 7.9% had been physically victimised.

The lack of self-confidence or the feelings of helplessness caused by social, political or economic pressure are other factors contributing to the culture of gang violence in South African schools (Fleisher, 2018). This gap also exists because many victims of violence do not report these incidents to the police for fear of intimidation, retaliation, retribution and a lack of trust in the police. In addition, some victims do not report the violence because they blame

themselves, or they think no one would believe them and they are ashamed of exposing themselves as victims.

### **2.12.3 Easy access to weapons and drugs**

Easy access to weapons and illegal substances and substance abuse has drastically increased in South African schools over the past ten years. Learners use different types of drugs (Rapp & Wodarski, 2019). The distribution of drugs and drug use on school premises has been reported repeatedly in the media. These reports reflect a shocking trend among South Africa's youths who have easy access to different harmful drugs such cocaine, 'nyaope', 'whoonga' and 'ecstasy', which are also easily available in their communities (Baruth & Mokoena, 2016). High school learners are persistently dependent on drugs (Hagedorn, 2017). Almost 50% of inpatients who are under the age of thirty seek help at Durban's South African National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (Sanca) offices, are younger than 17 years of age and come from local schools (Hagedorn, 2017).

The most disturbing issue is the increase in drug and alcohol abuse in urban areas and townships. Furthermore, as long as drugs are still a problem in the communities, the problem of drugs will replicate itself in schools. Maringira and Masiya (2018) argue that the high level of substance abuse by learners does not only contribute to crime, but it also stimulates the existence of gang violence, which also means that the expected loot from crime is more attractive in South African schools. The illegal drug trade in South African schools is the most typical example of lucrative criminal activities. This lucrative criminal activity also involves the fundamental aspects of gang violence and the official corruption that props it.

Learners in need of an income easily fall prey to drug dealing. Mamabolo (2020) maintains that drug abuse and excessive alcohol use directly contribute to violent learner crime, especially when taken in a group context, where there is strong social pressure to conform to the group's rules. Baruth and Mokoena (2016) points out that severe intoxication is related to aggression in many individuals. This propensity for violence happens when alcohol stimulates an individual into aggression thus increasing the risk of violence in an intoxicated learner. These changes include reduced rational functioning; reduced self-awareness; selective lack of inhibition; and the inability to inaccurately assess risks or threats (Hendricks, 2018). High level

doses of alcohol in learners result in impaired judgment and inhibition, which leads a particular learner into committing criminal offences.

In terms of developmental consequences for the adolescent learner, regular and high doses of alcoholic intake cause learning impairment (Amankwaa, 2019). Teenagers that are under the influence of alcohol often become perpetrators of crime (Makgoke & Mofokeng, 2020). Such learners are much more likely to engage in fights, theft, hurting other learners and educators, and committing other acts of delinquency (Thompson & Bynum, 2016).

Studies have thus shown a solid relationship between substance abuse and criminal activities, including gang violence. High rates of alcohol and drug use increase the level of aggression in individuals and therefore the chance of such learners committing crime is increased. Within the school context, learners have easy access to drugs and alcohol as learners often arrive at school drunk, often bunking lessons to hold house parties where they consume larger quantities of alcohol and drugs (McCabe, 2020). The effects of drugs on individuals differ. Substance abuse like dagga tends to impair an individual's occupational capacity and judgement and lose control over their acts. The more they use drugs, the more they become violent. They may lose interest in their school work as they focus more on drug abuse. Such learners frequently miss lessons, tests and assignments. They eventually lag behind the rest of the class. When their educators question them about their absenteeism, they deny involvement in wrong-doing but, with time, they eventually misbehave and drop out of school.

### **2.13 Global and national perspectives on educators' experience of gang violence in schools**

Media reports reflect tragic situations in South African schools, where educators are assaulted, stabbed to death, and left feeling unsafe as they are robbed in broad daylight and in front of learners and other educators (Masuku, 2018). In some schools in KwaZulu-Natal, educators had to abandon classes for fear of being robbed and hijacked on the school premises. Learners are on record for bringing guns and other lethal weapons, thus posing danger for educators and fellow learners as stabbings and shootings leave victims injured or dead (Hagedorn, 2017). Such schools fail to retain educators who have to leave due to fear for their lives. Educators who remain in such schools do so only for a couple of months only to transfer to other schools (Hagedorn, 2017). In 2018, media reports carried a story where a learner stabbed a 24-year-old

teacher to death in the classroom in Zeerust, North West Province. Such violent incidents traumatise the learners and their peers who may have witnessed them (Masuku, 2018).

The educators who remain in these schools do not perform to the best of their ability because they live in constant fear of violence being perpetrated by learners. Some educators despair and stop putting their honest effort into the education of learners, as others quit teaching for other jobs (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018). Educators constantly face threats of violence (Cornell, 2017). Students or other outsiders who enter the school premises cause trouble and often perpetrate gang violence. This environment is characterised by physical harm and emotional distress. According to Ferreira et al. (2020, p.296), school violence is “any behaviour of learners, educators, administrators or non-school persons who attempt to inflict injury on another person or who do damage to school property”. For example, learners may verbally assault each other; educators may verbally assault learners; learners may verbally abuse educators; parents may verbally assault educators; and principals may verbally assault educators or educators may verbally assault principals. Thus, one can conclude that school violence occurs in different ways and settings, and that nobody is spared by it.

In addition, more than 43% of educators in public schools and 25% of educators in private schools who had left the education field rated “safety of environment” as better in their new positions. The survey established that public schools are viewed as unsafe not only in South Africa, but worldwide. Moreover, more than 32% of public-school educators and 21% of private-school educators rated ‘dissatisfaction with workplace conditions’ as ‘very important’ or ‘extremely important’ in their decision to move to other schools. The gang violence in schools has a negative impact on educators who may view themselves as victims; this adversely affects their professional performance (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). Educators reportedly feared work environments that were characterised by gang violence, which may result in the impairment of personal relationships within the school setting they work in and this leads to poor performance and low academic outcomes (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018). The support from the School Management Team (SMT) may reduce these problems through enforcement of healthy engagements and commitment to educators’ work.

To create safe schools, the community is required to be involved in eliminating violence and therefore establish a conducive environment for educators to effectively perform their duties (Skyles & Gachango, 2018). The Department of Education can contribute towards the

restoration of safety in schools by fostering a positive school climate and by reducing possibilities of violence through training school staff on crisis management (Veriava & Power, 2017). The availability of psychosocial support services to assist with counselling and psychotherapy following a tragic incident arising from gang violence that may have traumatised educators. Police engagement could assist schools reduce gang violence, which may ease the fear educators grapple with as they work in schools that have a high rate of gang violence; this makes the educator feel safe (Skyes & Gachango, 2018).

## **2.14 Theoretical framework**

This study is grounded on the Emotional Processing Theory and the Deviant Place Theory. These theories provide insights into gang violence in schools and the victimisation of educators. These theories appropriately articulate the purpose of this study.

### **2.14.1 The Emotional Processing Theory**

The Emotional Processing Theory has its relevance in processing how an individual experience the fear the process of how it is stimulated in order to respond to danger. The Emotional Processing Theory is primarily concerned about analysing and understanding fear and an individual's response to danger. Moreover, educators are likely to experience fear due to their toxic work environment which makes them vulnerable to threats and violent attacks by gangs. These gangs use guns to threaten educators or other learners and the educators who may have witnessed such violence refrain from intervening due to fear (Nako & Muthukrishna, 2018). After a traumatic event, the survivors tend to view the world as a dangerous setting and find it difficult to cope with the trauma (Alpert et al., 2021). The fear, uneasiness, and intimidation impact negatively on the educators and the teaching and learning outcomes (Sonterblum, 2018). In other words, having experienced gang violence, educators may perceive a gun or any other lethal weapon as life-threatening and seek to escape. Educators feel too unsafe and incompetent to perform their professional duties.

The Emotional Processing Theory assumes that the fear structures of trauma include basic cognitive dysfunction that underlies the development and maintenance of trauma. Cognitive dysfunction affects an individual's intellectual functions such as thinking, remembering and concentration (Alpert et al., 2021). According to Rupp et al. (2017), referring to cognitive structures of underlying emotion, suggests that fear can be understood as a memory structure that is programmed as escape and avoidance; thus, the above is applicable to educators who

fail to discipline learners due to fear and they resort to avoidance and escapism as coping mechanisms. Rupp et al. (2017 p.698) suggested that “fear memory consists of three types of information, the information about the feared stimulus, individual’s verbal, behavioural and physiological response to stimulus, and about the meaning ascribed to both the stimulus, and the individual’s responses”. This theory is relevant to this study as it explores factors of fear associated with danger as a response to threats posed on individuals subjected to violence.

### **2.14.2 The Deviant Place Theory**

The Deviant Place Theory posits that when an individual is exposed to a dangerous environment, they are more likely to fall victim to a crime (Siegel, 2006). This theory states that unlike a normal daily routine or a theory that defines lifestyle, it is worthwhile to focus on the need to indicate that victims do not influence crime by actively or passively encouraging it, but they are victimised by being in a bad environment (Siegel, 2006). The victimisation of educators is not only caused by gangs who enter the school premises with the aim of causing disruptions. In this study, educators spend their working time within the school premises. They meet potential offenders who may be in the classrooms, on the school grounds during lunch breaks, or hanging around the school premises after dismissal.

Educators are victimised by learners when classrooms are filled with misbehaving and uncontrollable learners who intimidate or bully both their peers and the educators. Direct victims are persons who are directly victimised by the offenders; thus, experiencing first-hand victimisation by the offender. Conversely, indirect victimisation occurs when the underlying motive of the offender is not only directed at the victimised person, but also towards all the members of a social category (Siegel, 2006). This becomes pronounced when aggressive learners threaten one educator or physically harm one educator, consequently implanting fear in other educators working in the same environment. This form of victimisation usually sets people belonging to a certain group (such as educators) into panic mode as they fear direct victimisation and that can also reduce the quality of their lives (Siegel, 2006).

The study setting, which was Wentworth, located in Durban, is well known for high rates of crime and gangsterism. The crime and gang violence occurring in the community spill over into the schools, making educators vulnerable to victimisation. Moreover, as individuals are exposed to the conditions in the Wentworth area, there are greater chances of them being victimised. The Deviant Place Theory also recommends that taking safety precautions in affected areas may be of little use because it is the conditions in the neighbourhood, and not

lifestyle choices, that causes victimisation (Siegel, 2006). Thus, working in such settings results in educators being unable to anticipate when a violent incident might occur or when they might be in danger, which makes it very difficult for them to prevent exposure to violence.

Furthermore, if an individual's neighbourhood is 'deviant' or dangerous, the best way of lowering one's chances of being victimised is to leave that place. In the context of this study, the best option for educators would be to leave the violence-prone school and assume another post in another school situated in a 'better' or 'safer' neighbourhood. Siegel (2006, p.26) verbalises the Deviant Place Theory as follows: "This theory holds that victims do not motivate crime but rather are prone to becoming victims simply because they live in social areas that are disorganized and contain high crime rates and therefore have the highest risk of coming into contact with criminals, regardless of their lifestyle or behaviour." The victimisation of educators is not confined to victimisation perpetrated by their own learners, but they can also be victimised by non-school persons who enter the school premises with the aim of causing disruptions. In this study, educators spent their working time within the school premises which were semi-private or public spaces. This is where they get victimised by offenders who, at any time of the day, may be in the classrooms, on the school grounds during lunch breaks, or even on the school premises after dismissal.

Educators are easily victimised by learners when the classes they teach are filled with misbehaving and uncontrollable learners who are ready to intimidate or bully their peers and the educators. The victimisers often find it very easy because there is often only one educator teaching a class of up to 30 or 40 or even more learners. Direct victims experience first-hand victimisation perpetrated by the offender. On the contrary, indirect victims are intimidated by the underlying motives of the offender that are directed not only at the targeted victim, but which also affect all members of a certain social category (Venter & Jeffries, 2020). For example, when aggressive learners threaten one educator or physically harm one, these implants fear in other educators working in the same environment. This form of victimisation often affects discriminated minority groups (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). This sort of victimisation usually puts people who belong to a certain group (such as educators) in fear of direct victimisation, which can also reduce the quality of their lives. When learners or other non-school persons hold certain views about educators, for example, they may perceive them as weak and they might deliberately bully them because they might be aware of their vulnerability in the sense that they might not retaliate. The 'deviant' environment in which educators work thus makes them vulnerable to assault perpetrated by aggressive learners.

In this context, the gender of the victims and their capacity to defend themselves also play a big role in determining whether they are likely to be victimised or not. There are a number of factors that drive learner to physically assault educators; one of the factors is the desire to obtain good grades regardless of the effort the learner would have put into their work. Thus, when an educator tries to discipline the learner, they may confiscate the learner's property (weapons or drugs), and if the learner is under the influence of drugs and the educator confronts them, the situation can erupt into violence. This theoretical framework is deemed relevant to this study as it explores the factors of victimisation within the context of being in a bad environment or setting. Thus, victims of violence do not influence crime by actively or passively encouraging it.

### **2.14.3 Conclusion**

This section has indicated how a variety of socio-economic factors and experiences of the youth in South Africa spread gang violence in schools. The main focus of the study was on the experiences of educators working in the communities affected by gang violence, the Deviant Place Theory was used to highlight the challenges faced by educators and their vulnerable position during and after school. The discussion of this theory also highlighted the interaction among learners, educators, and the community in which the school is located. The psychological effects were illuminated by the Emotional Processing Theory and focused on how they process the fear induced by gang activities occurring in the school premises, and the respond which could be 'fight of flight' mode.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methodology adopted for the study. It further articulates the research paradigm, research design, research approach, profile of the research site, entry into the research site, sampling, data collection methods, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness and lastly the ethical considerations. Data are the most integral part of the research process. The researcher explored the topic under study through generating meaningful findings. Research data assist the researcher to understand the phenomenon and how the participants generate, interpret and share the meanings and knowledge that constitute their perception of reality. The researcher gathered data through rigorous processes by using and data collection methods and instruments. Through these data collection methods, instruments, and procedures, the central problem of the research is addressed.

### **3.2 Research paradigm**

A research paradigm is a lens through which the world is viewed; it can be defined as a set of beliefs that guide action (Wahyuni, 2012). This study is underpinned by the interpretative paradigm as it seeks to understand the meaning of school-based gang violence and human experiences of educators working within the community affected by gang violence. The interpretative paradigm is centred on the view that an individual's experiences contribute to how they create the social world by interpreting the world as composed of individuals. The interpretative paradigm believes that although reality may be viewed in multiple forms, it can also manifest through individuals' experiences differing across time, culture and place (Hennink et al., 2011). By exploring the relevance of the study, the researcher began to gain an understanding of the meanings constructed by educators about their experiences on working in schools affected by gang violence and the strategies they adopted to navigate the situation they experienced within that school setting.

### **3.3 Research design**

This study adopted an exploratory, single case study design because it helped the researcher to gain deep insights into the experiences of educators working in a school affected by gang violence.

A research design is a plan or procedure followed when conducting the study. It is a description of how the study is going to be conducted and the researcher's adoption of one suitable plan that suits the chosen worldview in order to produce the data required to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014). A case study is an intensive description and analysis of a single bounded unit (Merriam, 2009). Case studies focus on individual participants or groups of participants and seek to understand their perceptions of events in their natural setting (Cohen et al., 2007). Rule and John (2011) view a case study as a systematic and in-depth study of one particular case in its context. There are single and multiple case studies. However, the motive behind choosing between the single and the multiple case study is that the latter allows the researcher to compare subjects being studied, whereas the former allows the study of phenomena in one particular context. The researcher chose the single-case study as it allows the study to be conducted in one particular context.

### **3.4 Research approach**

The study adopted the qualitative research approach. This approach enabled the researcher to get a deeper understanding of how participants interpret meanings with regard to phenomena in their natural setting (Maree, 2014). Qualitative research is multifaceted as it involves an interpretative approach to its subject matter. This means that researchers in qualitative studies study research subjects in their natural settings, thus interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people attach to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research aims to arrive at an understanding of people's lives from their point of view; it seeks to understand people's perceptions and utilise them to establish reality. The qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study because it stresses the quality and depth of the information provided. Thus, the researcher perceived the approach as suitable for the study as it fostered the researcher's interaction with participants in order to get a deeper understanding of their experiences working in a school characterised by gang violence and the coping mechanisms they adopted to navigate the horrific situations within their school.

The study adopted purposive sampling to select a group of four females and five males' educators from a selected secondary school in Umlazi District, Durban, in KwaZulu-Natal Province. The educators were interviewed for data collection purposes. The researcher sought to understand the educators' perceptions on their experiences of gang violence within the school they taught.

### **3.5 Profile of the research site**

The study setting is situated in a school located in a selected township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The township is inhabited predominantly by people of Coloured and Indian racial backgrounds, with a few Black Africans also residing in the area. The township is known for its high levels of crime, violence as well as gang-related activities occurring within the surrounding community. Gang violence is the main criminal activity in this community. During the apartheid era, gang violence was so predominant that people were afraid of walking on the streets at night. The community, the law-enforcement agency (police), non-profit-making organisations, and churches came together to combat crime and gang violence in the area. The levels of crime have subsided, but the area is still mainly known for gang violence. However, the fear to walk on the streets has become minimal as compared to previous era. There are organisations that work to eliminate the high rate of gang violence that leads to crime and drug use. Representatives of these organisations work relentlessly in the area to help the community deal with crime, violence and problems related to drug use. There are approximately six primary schools and four secondary or high schools in Umlazi District. This area was chosen as the study site owing to the violent incident that occurred in November 2012 in which two learners stabbed each other resulting in one of them being certified dead. The focus was on the trauma experienced by the learners who witnessed the incident. Public attention was hardly on educators who witnessed the incident; neither was it on the trauma they also experienced after witnessing that bloody incident (Barbeau, 2012). The area is known for high levels crime, violence and gang -related activities within the community. Moreover, the main source of crime in this area comes from gang members.

### **3.6 Entry into the research site**

To gain access to the research site, the researcher sought the permission from the Department of Education. The researcher approached the school principal requesting for the permission to conduct the study after obtaining ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Approval no: HSS/1228/018M (Appendix 1). The researcher requested permission from the principal to address the educators on the study and disseminated information to educators regarding the recruitment of participants for the study. The educators who were willing to participate in the study wrote their details down which the researcher collected from the principal to set up an appointment with the educators in to discuss the informed consent form. Moreover, the deputy principal, who was appointed by the principal to facilitate the research process, offered the researcher an empty classroom to conduct the interviews.

### **3.7 Sampling**

Sampling refers to the process followed by researchers in selecting a portion of the population which should participate in the study (Silverman, 2013). It is the process or method of selecting a representative part of a research population by means of determining the attributes of the entire population (Seale et al., 2004). The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method which means selecting participants satisfying the criteria that answer the research question (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The current study employed purposive sampling, as it provides more in-depth findings than the probability sampling method (Cohen et al., 2011).

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) reported that researchers in qualitative research select those individuals capable of yielding the richest information on the topic being explored. Since this study intended to collect in-depth qualitative data, the researcher specifically targeted to recruit at least six educators for the interviews and five SMT educators for the focus group discussion, in Umlazi District, KwaZulu-Natal Province. The educators were selected from one secondary school. The selection criteria included educators who had either directly or indirectly experienced gang violence in a school setting (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015). The ideal size of a focus group ranges from four to eight participants (Silverman, 2013). The researcher also targeted between four and six members of the school management team at the same school to conduct a focus group discussion with the intention of gaining an in-depth qualitative data on the phenomenon being studied.

The sample for this study consisted of five educators and four SMT members from a secondary school in Umlazi District, KwaZulu-Natal. The sample comprised both female and male individuals of any age-group, depending on their willingness to participate. The researcher

intended to conduct the data collection process with six educators and five SMT members; however, five educators and four SMT educators indicated willingness to participate in the study. Although this sample size seems small and insignificant, the amount of data collected can be large and qualitative (Fossey et al., 2002). Further, there is no specific number of participants required to conduct a valid qualitative research; however, sufficient and in-depth information needs to be collected to fully comprehend the phenomena under study (Fossey et al., 2002).

The five educators and four SMT members were selected with the assistance of the Deputy Principal, who introduced the researcher to the staff. The researcher briefly introduced the study and conducted a brief meeting with the educators during break time. The researcher left the time-sheet schedule for participants who were willing to participate in the study to list their names, contact details as well as time slots where they would be available for the interview. The other time-slot sheet schedule was given to the members of the SMT who were willing to participate in the study to list their names and time slots when they would be available to partake in the study, particularly after working hours or during free periods. The participants were chosen on the basis of their ability to provide the research with the relevant information on school-based gang violence and its effects on educators.

### **3.8 Data collection methods**

Data collecting is a process of gathering information from various sources in order to answer relevant research questions (Maree, 2014). The information was collected through interviews, focus-group discussion, and document analysis. The researcher used a combination of the above-mentioned methods to gain a better understanding of the effect of gang violence on educators. This increased the credibility of the research findings. The researcher also maintained credibility by collecting data from the educators who were willing to participate without discretion of gender or age.

Parker and Brossart (2003), primary data are usually collected through semi-structured interviews, while secondary data are obtained through publicly available data relevant to the phenomenon being studied. This method of collecting data from multiple sources is known as triangulation Patton (2002, p.274) stated that “it assists the researcher to cross-check their consistency in order to enhance the robustness of findings”. This study required the researcher

to gather rich information in order to gain a broader understanding of gang violence within school settings and the effect the violence has on educators

### **3.8.1 Interviews**

The interviews constituted the main source of data for this study because of the complexity and sensitivity of the research topic (the effect of gang violence on educators). The participants were regarded as experts in their field; hence, they passed on the knowledge to the researcher through conversations during the interview process (Boeije, 2010). The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, and they proved to be the most appropriate method as the researcher could probe for more in-depth answers to certain questions that yielded appropriate responses. The interviews were audio-taped so that the researcher would be able to listen to recordings more than once in order to pick up previously missed information without distorting the original information. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.84), stated that the interview should be “framed by a briefing before the interview commenced and a debriefing afterwards”. Before commencing the interview, the researcher briefly explained the aims of the study and use of the interview method, emphasised issues to do with anonymity, confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the study.

In-depth interviews allowed the participants to express themselves in the way they felt was best for them while sharing their lived experiences in their own words. In-depth interviews allowed individuals to voice their experiences and feelings in a safe and comfortable environment, rather than in-group sessions where they would hold back some information (Boeiji, 2010). In the current study, the educators freely described how they were affected by gang violence in the school where they were working as educators. The researcher used communication skills such as active listening, a non-threatening tone voice and body language, clarification, and probing to elicit meaningful and unambiguous responses.

### **3.8.2 Focus group discussion**

A focus group is a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research (Barbour & Barbour, 2018). Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The main focus is to generate data from a purposively selected group of individuals (Nyumba et al., 2018). In a focus group the researchers adopt the role of a ‘facilitator’ and facilitate a group discussion between

participants and not between the researcher and participants (Nyumba et al., 2018). Focus groups of between five and ten people gather together to voice their opinions and perceptions about a study phenomenon in a non-threatening and comfortable environment (Ho,2006). A focus group discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research (Barbour & Barbour, 2018). The research technique, for conducting the focus group, employs guided interactional discussion as a means of generating the rich details of complex experiences and the knowledge behind a participant's perspective. The focus group is especially useful when: existing knowledge of a subject is inadequate and elaboration of pertinent issues or the generation of new hypotheses is necessary before a relevant and valid questionnaire can be constructed or an existing one enhanced. The phenomenon explored a complex and concurrent use of additional data collection methods is required to ensure validity and credibility of the study.

### **3.8.3 Document analysis**

Document analysis has been used in combination with other research methods as a means of triangulation, to supplement and corroborate findings across different data sets with a view to reducing the impact of the potential biases in a study. (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis refers to any systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents; for “finding, selecting, appraising and synthesising data contained in documents – both printed and electronic” (Bowen, 2009 p.28). Document analysis involves an iterative process of skimming, thorough reading, and interpretation. The document analysis involves planning and preparation. This included the crucial task of defining the specific research question or questions that the document analysis was to address, refining the document it was adapted in as to suit the research aims and objectives.

### **3.9 Data collection instruments**

The researcher used different instruments to capture the relevant data. The instruments included interview schedule, focus group discussion guide, and a review of the School Safety Policy document, journals, media reports, books, and articles. The use of different data collection techniques yielded inter-related sets of data and that increased the study's authenticity and added depth to the exploration of gang violence in school settings (Singh, 2006). The data collection process was executed in three different stages.

### **3.9.1 Researcher as key instrument**

The researcher was the key research instrument (Kvale, 1996). The researcher ensured a robust data collection exercise through a rehearsal of the interview guide, thus enhancing her interviewing skills to probe participants to yield rich data. The researcher established a rapport with the participants by explaining the process in a good tone that was not intimidating. Privacy was ensured as to allow participant to feel comfortable in giving honest responses. Respect was displayed by ensuring that the researcher allowed the participant to express themselves without showing signs of judgement

### **3.9.2 The interview schedule**

After obtaining ethical clearance from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 1), the researcher administered the interviews. The interview guide created space for the researcher to probe for robust data. The in-depth interviews created an atmosphere that promoted open discussions thus guiding the participants to provide useful information the researcher had not considered earlier Wahyuni (2012), mentioned that interview guide mainly assist the participants to share their perspectives, stories and experiences regarding a phenomenon being studied by the researcher. They enabled the interviewer to probe beyond the answers and thus engaging in dialogue with the interviewees to yield more data. The interview guide helped the researcher to gain in-depth responses from the participants without intimidating them with unnecessary formal procedures.

According to Wahyuni (2012), an unstructured interview seeks to understand the experiences of other people and their interpretation of those experiences. All the responses to the questions scheduled (Appendix 3) for the semi-structured interviews were recorded with the consents of the selected participants. The interviews were conducted in English, which all the participants used. The interview sessions lasted for one hour each. Prior to this process, the researcher had contacted the Principal of the school and obtained his consent as the gatekeeper of the school. With the Principal's permission, the researcher was introduced to the deputy principal. Once the ethical clearance letter was obtained (Appendix 1), the researcher then submitted a formal letter requesting for the permission for the educators to participate in the study. Participation in the study was voluntary. Before their inclusion in the proposed study, the participants signed informed consent letters (Appendix 2). The confidentiality of the participants and the study site

were ensured. The interviews were conducted outside of teaching hours, particularly during the educators' non-teaching periods and after school.

The interviews were conducted in the school classroom which was utilised for technology, but was not functioning at the time of the interviews, rather than in classrooms where the noise of learners changing classes might have been disruptive. The notes intended to harness some of the non-verbalised contextual factors, such as the tone of voice, change in the tempo of speech, the silences and long pauses and general body language (Du Plessis, 2008). When the researcher reported on the findings, the non-verbal gestures were linked with the information provided by the participants and this assisted in arriving at the general conclusions drawn from the interviews. The researcher employed this strategy because the voice recorder could hardly capture the lack of reaction to a question when such a reaction was non-verbal.

### **3.9.3 Focus group guide**

In this context, the interviewer became a facilitator rather than a researcher. The focus group guide (Appendix 4) would not have been beneficial in this particular study because it would not have reflected the authenticity of the respondents' feelings; neither would it allow for an interpretation of how the participants made sense of their world. Therefore, the focus group guide helped the researcher become aware of the biases she might be having towards the research topic before conducting the study. The focus group consisted of four SMT members. The focus group discussion was conducted in February in 2019. According to Patton (2006), interviews help research to fill gaps in the existing body of knowledge.

In order to use the various instruments to gather data, Carpecken and Carpecken (1996) advise that the researchers should take an opportunity to: generate content about an event from an insider's perspective, check the honesty, the certainty and the exact meaning of the subject's reply in a face-to-face interview and hence the focus group discussion was added to generate robust data, access a person's definitions and understandings of concepts and processes that are of interest to the researcher, analyse both verbal and non-verbal responses, give immediate clarity if the interviewee was uncertain in their reply, ask follow-up questions to provide detailed and/or specific answers, tap into the beliefs, values, and worldviews of the interviewee.

### **3.9.4 The administration of the School Safety Policy**

As a research instrument, the School Safety Policy allowed the researcher to fill in the information on a questionnaire sheet. The researcher worked with the deputy principal who was the member and leader of the Disciplinary Committee within the school. In order to create a safe environment in schools, the community ought to work together with the school to establish a conducive environment for educators to perform their duties (Skyes & Gachago, 2018). The Department of Education (DoE) is obligated to contribute towards fostering a positive school climate and reducing possibilities of violence through equipping staff with crisis management skills. The policy outlined planned therapy facilities offered after a tragedy or an attack by gangs at school and also the School Management Team (SMT) working collaboratively with the law enforcement to combat incidents of gang violence occurring in school (Veriava & Power, 2017). The School Safety Policy was reviewed with the deputy principal by asking questions that were on the instrument; if the responses were positive, they were recorded by ticking the boxes, if they were practicing the item in the School Safety Policy, the column was ticked applicable or if it not available in their policy it was ticked in the column as not applicable. The explanation was provided in the appropriate column. The data that were gathered through this instrument helped to guide the researcher during the data analysis and interpretation processes. The focus was to compare policy and practice (Appendix 5).

### **3.10 Data collection procedure**

The first stage of data collection involved individual semi-structured interviews that lasted 60 minutes. The semi-structured interviews were conducted after the educators had completed contact teaching with learners and during free periods slotted in-between teaching and learning times. The second stage comprised a 60-minute-long focus-group discussion with the members of the SMT, who were affected by or witnessed gang violence in a school set-up. The researcher facilitated the discussion and acted as a mediator, probing for more information. The focus-group discussion was held after the participants had completed teaching or administrative duties time. The last stage was the review of a School Safety Policy with the deputy principal who chaired the Disciplinary Committee in the school. The review involved the unpacking of the role of justice in creating a safe environment as well as determining whether or not the School Safety Policies provided for the safety of educators. The interview guide was developed through conducting a thorough literature review to establish gaps in the body of knowledge.

For example, the following questions were asked: *In your opinion, how do some schools become targets of gang violence?*

*Have you ever experienced gang violence (verbal or physical) on school premises, if so, how did you address it?*

### 3.11 Data analysis

In this study, data analysis was based on an interpretative worldview with the intention of analysing meaningful qualitative data. During this process, the researcher aims to interpret the participants' interpretation of the meanings of a particular phenomenon (Maree, 2007). Data analysis aims to uncover, interpret and understand the situations or the phenomenon being studied. Generally, the data analysis process aims to interpret textual or image data.

This study employed the thematic analysis technique to identify, analyse and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2014). It involves identifying the themes of meaning across data that serve to answer the research questions guiding the study. According to Boyatzis (1998), a theme is a pattern identified in the collected information and that describes or interprets aspect of the phenomenon being studied. This thematic analysis approach involves six phases that the researcher followed in analysing data. Braun and Clarke (2014) outlined these six phases of analysis.

- **Step 1: Becoming familiar with data**

The first step in the thematic analysis of qualitative data involves reading, and re-reading the transcripts in order to be familiar with data. According to Braun and Clarke (2014), it is at this stage that the researcher reads transcripts and makes notes before embarking on the next step. In this study, the researcher worked on the hard copies of the transcripts and made notes on the extracts that were relevant to the research question.

- **Step 2: Generating initial codes**

In this phase, data are organised in a systematic and meaningful way, as coding reduces data into small meaningful chunks (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The researcher worked with all the transcripts in verbatim to formulate small meaningful chunks of data. The researcher coded each transcript, including the focus group transcript. The researcher worked through each transcript, coding every segment of text that seemed relevant to the research question. The

researcher modified the transcripts and generated the new codes and sometimes modified them to match the existing ones.

- **Step 3: Searching for themes**

As Braun and Clarke (2014, p.10) defined a theme as “a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about research question”. A theme is characterised by its significance to the research question. In this study, the researcher examined the codes to affirm their fit into a theme. The themes were organised into broader themes that seemed significantly relevant to the research questions. Some of the codes fitted into more than one theme. For example:

**Theme: The experience of gang violence**

**Codes:**

(a) *“I wanted to stop gang violence but some of the incidents included people from outside the community”.*

(b) *“I started running for it but the boy who was across the road started running for the packet as well and the packet landed on the grass, and when we got there, he had got there within a split second; before I did, he reached into the grass and pulled the gun and pointed at me right into my face”.*

- **Step 4: Reviewing themes**

In this phase the themes identified in Step 3 are developed and modified into preliminary themes. Themes should be coherent and not distinct from each other. The themes generated in this study were coherent and relevant to research questions. The themes were not overlapping.

- **Step 5: Defining themes**

This step involves refining the themes and the aim is to “identify the essence of what each theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2014, p.22). This stage ascertains whether or not themes relate to each other, and whether or not the subthemes interact and relate to the main theme. In this study, the researcher refined the themes and all the themes addressed the research questions.

- **Step 6: Producing the report**

The final step in the data analysis process is the production of a report in the form of either a journal article or dissertation. The main goal of a report is to provide a persuasive story based on the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2014). In this study, the report was produced in a clear and coherent manner, yet embedded in the scholarly field.

### **3.12 Trustworthiness**

Reliability and validity are two factors the researcher in a qualitative study needs to consider while designing, analysing and judging the quality of the study (Cypress, 2017). As much as the researcher in quantitative research attends to the question of external and internal validity, reliability as well as objectivity, the researcher in qualitative research focuses on trustworthiness, which may be viewed as a demonstration that the results being reported are sound and that strong argument is made on the basis of the results (Shenton, 2004). There are four criteria that are most commonly used to evaluate and develop trustworthiness in qualitative research. These are: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

#### ***Credibility***

Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed on the reality of research findings emanating from the views of the participants and the researcher's interpretation and representation of these findings (Cope, 2004). The study ensured credibility by triangulating three data collection methods which were: in-depth individual interviews (Appendix 3), focus-group discussion (Appendix 4) and the review of documents review on School Safety Policy (Appendix 5). The researcher obtained some background information and different perspectives and verified certain points that the participants had supported.

#### ***Dependability***

Dependability is the view that the research process is consistent and is carried out with careful attention to methodological conventions (Erlingson & Brysiewicz, 2013). This process views the documentation of research methods, thus allowing the following and critiquing of the research process (Cypress, 2017). To ensure dependability in this study, the researcher used the questions that were clear and logically consistent with the research purpose. The data collection, data recording and data analysis methods were discussed in this study and these processes enhanced dependability.

#### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to show that data are representative of the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints (Cope, 2014). The researcher ensured confirmability by describing how conclusions and interpretations were established, giving examples that the findings were obtained directly from the data (Erlingson

& Brysiewicz, 2013). In this study, direct quotes from the participants were used to reflect each emerging theme.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings described in one study are applicable and useful to theory, practice, and future research (Moon et al., 2016). This process assesses whether the result applies to other contexts, that is, under similar conditions. According to Cope (2004), this criterion can be met if the results are meaningful to the people who are not involved in the study and if they can associate the results with their own experiences. To maintain transferability, this study used purposive sampling method and provided thick descriptions and robust data solicited through narratives given by participants as they articulated their experiences. The researcher immersed herself into the phenomenon in order to collect, interpret and fully understand educators' experiences of violence in schools. Special attention was paid to the collection and analysis of all data pertinent to the study. The audio-taped data were transcribed meticulously for future scrutiny. In the analysis phase, data were categorised into themes and ordered as a way of making sense of data and to write the final report that was true and accurate.

### **3.13 Ethical considerations**

The main aim of research ethics is to protect the well-being of research participants (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). There are eight elements of ethical research, which are discussed below.

#### **3.12.1 Collaborative partnership**

According to Wassenaar (2006), collaborative partnership occurs when researchers collaborate with the community in which the research is going to be undertaken. The aim of this study was to explore educators' experiences working in the community affected by gang violence and to identify the strategies they adopted to navigate the traumatic situations arising from the gang violence occurring within the school setting. The Gatekeeper's permission was sought before recruiting participants from the Department of Education (DoE) () and the Principal of the school, to show respect for the school as well as the Department of Education. The final findings would be disseminated to the participants once the data would have been analysed.

### **3.12.2 Social value**

Research ethics seeks to ensure that “research should address questions that are of value to society or particular communities in society” (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012, p.14). This study aims to disseminate its findings to the participants as a way of influencing future interventions that may be of value to the school in order to assist in developing strategies that help combat gang violence.

### **3.12.3 Scientific validity**

According to Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012, p.12), “Unreliable research methods are unethical as they waste research resources, yield invalid and generalizable results, which may expose participants to risk and inconvenience for no purpose”. This study ensured scientific validity by adopting rigorous, valid and reliable research methods. This research aimed to explore educators’ experiences of gang violence and the strategies they used to navigate gang violence within the school setting. Furthermore, the qualitative design adopted for this study was appropriate to the study as it allowed an in-depth exploration of individuals’ experiences of gang violence in the school setting. To achieve scientific validity, the study used triangulation, as three methods, individual interviews, focus-group discussion and document review were used to collect data. The study also used purposive sampling to eliminate the researcher’s bias, as it allowed participants to voluntarily take part in the study. The use of thematic analysis also assisted in identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data; therefore, the researcher’s bias was eliminated (Silverman, 2013).

### **3.12.4 Fair selection of participants**

The population chosen for participation in the research must be consistent with the research question (Wassenaar, 2006). This research used purposive sampling to ensure that the participants were fairly selected by voluntary consenting to participate in the study. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007), purposive sampling involves the selection of participants according to criteria that answer a research question. No participant was unfairly excluded from participating in the study.

### **3.12.5 Favourable risks and benefits ratio**

Favourable risk-benefit ratio necessitates a just explanation of the study's risks and benefits (Wassennar & Mamotte, 2012). The researcher was aware of the psychological reactions that some participants might exhibit during the course of the interviewing session because of the sensitivity of the topic. It was thus necessary to secure permission from the Psychology Clinic in Howard College to deal with emotional secondary trauma. The fundamental ethical rule for social research is that research must bring no harm to the participants (Babbie, 2007). There was a great possibility of emotional harm because some educators were directly affected by the impact of gang violence on school premises. The educators were given information on the available facility and the permission granted by the clinic; hence, the researcher would assist them if they felt they had unresolved matters they would wish to discuss. This was a way of ensuring that the research project would not cause any harm but, instead, it would be beneficial to the participants.

### **3.12.6 Independent ethics review**

According to Wassennar and Mamotte (2012), "an independent and competent REC should subject all proposals to independent ethics review prior to commencement of data collection" (p.18). This study was ethically approved and reviewed by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Approval no: HSS/1228/018M) (Appendix 1).

### **3.12.7 Informed consent**

To ensure that participants are protected and are aware of their rights as participants, informed consent was sought from all the participants (Appendix). The informed consent briefly described the study on educators' experiences teaching in a school characterised by gang violence and detailed clearly what the research was all about in order to increase participants' understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The informed consent also included factual details about the study; the study's risks and benefits and contact details of the researcher, the supervisor and the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics (HSSREC) for participants who wished to know more about the study.

### **3.12.8 Ongoing respect for the dignity of participants**

This ethical principle requires that participants be treated respectfully during and after a study (Bell & Bryman, 2007). The participants were provided with additional information or told about the changes required during the research process. If a participant wished to withdraw from the study, the researcher would respect participants' right to withdraw without incurring adverse consequences. Lastly, participation in the study was confidential to ensure the protection of the participant's identity by using pseudonym that did not identify the participants and the study site.

### **3.14 Conclusion**

This research methodology section detailed the methodology that was employed to collect data relevant to the aim of the study. The study employed a qualitative study design and the researcher provided reasons for this decision. The data collection and analyses processes were discussed. The qualitative methodology comprised use of semi-structured interviews, observations of respondents' non-verbal cues, review of documents and the sources utilised in the extensive literature review to collect data. These data collection instruments were employed in an effort to address the objectives of the study and to answer the research questions. The chapter also focused on the nature of the research, the profile of the Wentworth community, sampling and data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations the study adhered to.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This qualitative study aimed to explore educators' experiences of working in a secondary school affected by gang violence occurring in Wentworth Community, in Umlazi District, Durban. The study setting was a secondary school located in Wentworth Township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province. The township has a predominantly Coloured and Indian people, with a few Black Africans also residing in the area. The township is known for high levels of crime, violence as well as gang-related activities. Gang violence is the main crime occurring in this community. The researcher further conducted a focus group discussion with the SMT who post-Level Two (2) were, and only four (4) members participated in the discussion. The participants were all from the same school. They were four females and five males, inclusive of members of the focus group and individuals.

During the transcription process, data were classified into different themes and sub-themes. The themes emerged from the data provided by the participants. Data were then synthesised to form a holistic picture of the experiences of educators' working in a community affected by gang violence and the strategies they utilised to navigate the situations arising from gang violence within the school (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Data analysis helps the researcher to answer the research questions guiding the study (Braun & Clarke, 2014). During the transcription and reporting processes, the anonymity of the participants was maintained using pseudo names. Data were then analysed in a manner that addressed the objectives and aim of the study. The aim of the study is to explore educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence and to identify the strategies adopted by educators to navigate the traumatising situations arising from gang violence within the school setting. This chapter aims to analyse the data and to present the findings of the study.

## 4.2 Profile of participants

**Table 4.1:1 Profile of the participants**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Post level</b>	<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Susan	Female	1	Ten years	B.Ed. Hons	8,10,12
Nokwazi	Female	1	Four years	B.Ed.	9-11
Brendon	Male	1	Six years	B. Ed	8-12
Sham	Female	1	Twelve years	B. Ed	10-12
Tarryn	Female	2	Ten years	B.Ed.	11-12
Andrea	Male	2	Fifteen years	B.Ed. Hons	12
Fazel	Male	2	Fifteen years	M.Ed.	12
Peter	Male	2	Twenty years	M.Ed.	12
Stephano	Male	2	Twenty years	M.Ed.	12

### **The profiling of the participants**

All the educators who were interviewed were teaching at the same school. They had various qualifications, as reflected in Table 4.1.1. Pseudonyms were used in this study report to enhance the anonymity of the participants. The interviewed educators included individuals and focus group members and these mainly comprised members of the school's School Management Team (SMT). The participants were thus referred to as Educator 1: Susan; Educator 2: Nokwazi; Educator 3: Brendon; Educator 4: Sham; Educator 5: Tarryn. Andrea, Fazel, Peter, and Stephano constituted the focus group discussion.

#### **Educator 1: Susan**

Educator Susan had been teaching for the past ten years. She started teaching at a very young age. She had taught Grade 8-12 and was currently teaching Grades 8, 10 and 12. Her school was in an urban area riddled with crime. She was responsible for first aid and assisted in taking care of learners with minor injuries or cuts or those in need of first aid. As the first aid educator, she had directly experienced gang violence. She had developed a defence mechanism of not taking her experiences personally. She held a Bachelor in Education (B.Ed. Honours) Degree in Life Sciences that she had obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood

Campus). She majored in Life Science. She resided in Wentworth, though she knew most people who were involved in the school as she worked closely with learners who needed assistance. She was passionate about her work and when she was free, she worked with the deputy principal checking if learners were where they were supposed to be. She regularly engaged with parents and knew most of them. She said:

*“Although I am a young educator in the school and not residing in this community, I have worked here long enough to know most of the parents. I got to know the people; I got to know those who are directly and indirectly involved in our school. I am a first aider, which makes me know most of the parents as I am the first to be contacted if a learner needs assistance and I have to contact the parents to alert them if need arises.”*

She had been the first aid educator who assisted in ensuring that discipline was maintained in the school. The interview took place in the school classroom which was utilised for technology, but was not functioning at the time. Other classrooms were avoided because it was anticipated that learners would make noise when changing classrooms. The interview lasted for an hour.

## **Educator 2: Nokwazi**

Nokwazi had just been employed recently. She had been in the school for only four years. She was shy and it took time for her to open up. She only opened up after a rapport had been established. She was teaching Grades 9, 10 and 11. She was the youngest educator and had experienced violence as learners were disrespecting, threatening and swearing at her. She was not residing in the community; however, she mentioned that she had close family friends who were involved in gangs.

She described her experiences, thus:

*“I have experienced a lot of verbal violence which is associated with gang violence. The learners associated with violence are also drug dealers. So, I did encounter lots of verbal abuse and I would be sworn at. I think as a teacher, you sometimes reach a breaking point. It helps to speak to colleagues asking for advice. You know, they just advise me to be sort of aggressive as well as they are aggressive to me, verbally. Otherwise the learners continue to bully me because they see that I am light-hearted. You know, even if you just tell them to stop it, they would not take you seriously, and continue to verbally abuse me because they know that I am a kind-hearted teacher and nothing serious will really happen to them.”*

She narrated her understanding of the nature of gang violence and how it spreads to schools and its effects on educators. She added:

*“I am not from this community, but I have known this community for four years and I do have close family friends that are gang members. Back in the days, gangsterism was worse than it is today and the older generation would testify. Even now, I would not say it is over since it is being passed on to young children....”*

She was interviewed in the same classroom as the rest of the educators. The interview lasted for almost an hour. As she was shy, she only opened up when she was probed. She enjoyed the interview and indicated that she would use the counselling services offered at Howard College (University of KwaZulu-Natal) Psychology Clinic because she felt she needed them as the interview had provoked secondary trauma.

### **Educator 3: Brendon**

Brendon had been a learner at the same school. He has been employed there for the past six years. He taught Mathematics and Physical Science from Grade 8 up to Grade 12. He was enthusiastic about the interview and willingly shared his experiences of gang violence. Brendon resided in the community and knew most of the learners. He mentioned that he found it difficult to teach at the beginning as he was once a learner at the school. The adjustment was challenging and he chose not to involve himself much in the disciplining of the learners as he resided with most of them and he feared for his life outside school settings. He also raised an interesting point, as he indicated that he was once a prefect at the school and was hated by most learners for being a strict prefect. He said:

*“Yes, I’m Brendon, a Maths educator at \*<sup>1</sup>secondary school. I teach from lower grades up to Grade 12, teaching Mathematics and Physical Science. So, I am eager to assist in this study. I am from this community as well and I am very familiar with gang violence. I am teaching in the same school that I attended. When I was a learner at this school, I got victimised like any other learner.”*

Brendon narrated his experiences and indicated that he felt demotivated to come to work. However, he said he was happy and proud that he was making a difference through teaching Maths and Physical Science. He was apparently passionate about what he was doing. During

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<sup>1</sup> A selected school in Durban. The name of the school was made anonymous for ethical reasons.

an informal conversation, he mentioned that he used to volunteer, teaching learners while he was still at university.

#### **Educator 4: Sham**

The fourth educator was Sham. She had been employed for twelve years, and was teaching Grades 10 to 12. She was outspoken and freely spoke her mind. During the interview, she narrated that some of the senior educators had greatly influenced the perpetuation of gang violence in the school. She spoke very confidently; however, she did display anger towards horrific situations created by gang violence. She feared for her life, as she mentioned that she was physically small and learners took advantage of that, knowing she had no physical capacity to quell their fights.

Sham narrated that:

*“Learners take advantage of my diminutive size. I am usually terrified when learners fight. I am not a violent person and I did not grow up around violent people. So, all this is new to me. Most of these boys are physically huge and this makes it difficult for me to become a 'referee' whenever they fight. Life is very difficult here.”*

#### **Educator 5: Tarryn**

Tarryn was from the community and she taught Grade 11 and 12, teaching Life Orientation. She was outspoken and spoke with a strong accent. She was excited to be interviewed and was able to share her experiences without reservations. She had been traumatised by the violent incidents occurring at school due to gang violence. She said one of the incidents happened when she was pregnant and therefore too unfit to separate the learners who were involved in the fight. She felt that it was important for the curriculum designers to include the impact of gang violence in the curriculum. She added that learners should be groomed into behaved and responsible citizens. She enjoyed the interview and was happy that the discussion was fruitful and she felt relieved to know that there was a study examining the effects of gang violence on educators as she felt the study would address the issues of safety and fear.

She reported that:

*“I am Tarryn, an educator at \* Secondary School. I teach Life Orientation, teaching Grade 11 and Grade 12 learners. Ooh, I remember one violent incident that happened*

*in 2015 when I was pregnant, uhm. I was teaching Grade 12 at that time. When I was teaching, two boys who were sitting at the back of the room were having an argument but I did not notice them as they were not speaking loudly. The next minute, they were engaging in a physical fight and it was very difficult to separate them. So, they severely hit each other at the back of the classroom. The kids were all screaming and obviously I was in shock. I couldn't dare separate them because I was pregnant. My safety mattered here as well. So, I phoned the office to bring manpower to separate them. They hit each other and the fight escalated into a gang fight and the school management finally separated them. That incident was very traumatising. I then witnessed another fight at the beginning of this year. Two boys were involved and we were having PT practical lessons when the fight occurred. I walked out of my class as they were hitting each other. Then their friends started throwing things at them while they were fighting. It was even very dangerous to separate them. We had to throw water at them in order to separate them."*

**The Focus group (SMT): Andrea, Fazel, Peter and Stephano**

Andrea had been employed for fifteen years and he was the Head of Department (HoD) for Languages at the school. He was soft-spoken and his voice was hoarse. He contributed without dominating the focus group discussion. His main concern was parents' non-intervention in the crisis.

He stated that:

*"I have confiscated stuff many times and many a child would literally say that they would not have food because I had taken their money which they would use to buy bread or potatoes or whatever. Then, as a human being, I would feel sorry for them, but the children would have been doing the wrong thing."*

Fazel was a Mathematics Head of Department, and had been in the school for fifteen years. He was concerned about the lack of support from the Department of Education. He said:

*"An incident happened when that kid was stabbed, and the educators were traumatised. No one bothered to offer counselling or psychosocial support. No professional was called to have a discussion and a dialogue with the teachers. We had to deal with the trauma on our own."*

Peter was a soft-spoken gentleman. He listened attentively to the questions and articulated his responses very clearly. He had a Master's degree in Education that he obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). He wished the researcher well after the interview. That was heart-warming and indicative of the good rapport the researcher had established with the participants.

Stephano was the Deputy Principal at the school. He had been at the school for the past twenty years, too. He was involved in the disciplinary affairs of the school as he headed the school's Disciplinary Committee. All the educators consulted him on the cases and incidents that occurred in the school. He mentioned the following:

*“If the educators are having disciplinary problems, I support them by going to the class and dealing with the kid that would have created the problem; but uhm... the educators are grappling with psychological problems. We don't have support. Well, I have been to some workshops on safety. We don't have a safety committee, but we are going to establish it just in a little while and we are running a workshop on that aspect; so, all of us can make some contribution because safety is an indispensable issue here. We must put emphasis on it. Yah, I have seen learners threatening to stab male teachers. For example, a young, thirteen-year-old boy would make such threats”.*

Stephano shared his experiences regarding the intervention he had established with a non-governmental organisation assisting learners who are struggling with drugs, giving them help; however, he indicated that the work was still in progress.

### **4.3 Research findings**

The research topic is *Teaching in a community affected by gang violence: An exploration of educators' experiences*. The main findings were presented, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis and in tandem with the study topic. The study explored the experiences of educators working in a community riddled with gang violence. The study also determined the strategies the educators adopted in navigating the traumatising situations arising from gang violence. The effects of gang violence were mainly found to be traumatic, behavioral, and psychological. The effects revealed the impact of gang violence on teaching and learning outcomes. Moreover, the community had an influence on the alarming levels of misbehavior among learners. This has resulted in educators living in perpetual fear as they have become direct and indirect victims of gang violence in schools. Gang violence was found to start from

the community, spilling over into schools. Lastly, the educators that were interviewed were given an opportunity to share their opinions regarding efforts to address gang violence in schools and they suggested measures to be taken to combat aggravated gang violence.

#### **4.3.1 Working in a school affected by gang violence**

The school where the study was conducted was situated at the far end of Wentworth suburb. The learners reside in the area and walk to school daily. They pass through the street where gangs reside and where drugs are sold. There is also a hostel in the suburb where some learners stay with their parents. There is high rate of drug selling at the hostel. The community is plagued with high rates of crime and residents feel unsafe as gangsterism pervades the area. The learners are easily recruited to join gangs, dropping out of school in the end. The older gang members give the learners who are gang members the drugs to sell at school. Since there is no tight security in the school, gang members easily access the school and jump over the fence since there is only one security guard who mans the main gate. The other gates are left unattended to throughout the day, which provides an opportunity for outsiders to enter the school premises and cause disruptions.

The findings of this study indicate that the educators that were interviewed had witnessed gang violence in a school setting where they were teaching. They had directly or indirectly experienced the gang violence that targeted them. All the five educators and four members of the School Management Team (SMT) who constituted a total of nine (9) participants had experienced gang violence occurring in schools. Some of the educators had witnessed gang violence among learners in their classrooms while others had witnessed it occurring within the school setting both were the victims of gang violence in communities in which they work. The participants reported that gang violence occurred among the learners who belonged to rival turfs within the school and the community.

The educator who had been directly affected by gang violence was Susan. She reportedly experienced the violence at first hand. She mentioned that:

*“One day, a gang member tossed a packet full of what seemingly appeared to be drugs. I started running for it but the boy who was across the road also started running for the packet. The packet landed on the grass and, he got there within a split second before I arrived there. He reached for the packet and pulled out the gun pointing into my face.”*

In the above extract, Susan confirmed that she was working in a community affected by gang violence and had experienced a gun being pointed into her face.

#### **4.3.1.1 Defining school-based gang violence**

The results from both individual interviews and the focus group discussion indicated that the participants understood what is meant by gang violence. This is evident in Brandon's articulation of gang violence as it applied to the school setting. He said:

*"I'm from this community as well, and I'm very familiar with gang violence. A gang comprises a group or groups of people from the same area or with the common goals or interests in life. They are gathered together to mark their territories in the school."*

It was evident that the gang violence phenomenon had different meanings for different participants; however, they all understood it as a group of individuals who share common goals. The violence that starts in the community has a way of spilling into the school. It seems school-based gang violence is linked to community violence. However, one participant mentioned that the violence had an adult influence, as some senior educators were accused of being involved in bringing gang violence into the school.

Sham stated the following:

*"My understanding is that violence starts mainly with senior educators who belong to different gangs outside of the school. The violence is then brought into the school, thus influencing young learners to partake in it."*

The participants who were interviewed understood gang violence as a phenomenon that occurs when gangs bring fights from the community to school. The gangs fight in the community and bring the feuds and disagreements over turfs to school settings, thus disrupting teaching and learning activities. Gang violence affects teaching and learning and it ingrains fear in the educators as they are unable to discipline misbehaving learners (Rauch & Foa, 2006).

#### **4.3.1.2 Experiences of gang violence in schools**

The participants indicated that they had experienced gang violence at their workplace. They had witnessed learners stabbing, fighting and bullying each other. They also mentioned that

the threats and fear made it difficult for them to discipline misbehaving learners. The interviewed educators in both individual interviews and focus group discussion reported having experienced verbal threats as they felt that they were victims of gang violence in the school. Brandon had witnessed a learner being stabbed by a gang member in the school. The participants further mentioned that they experienced fear, and that they could hardly discipline children who belonged to gangs; however, as educators, they were obliged to discipline them, anyhow.

Brandon mentioned that:

*“I was on duty the day one boy was stabbed. The violence was caused by the gang fights from the outside community. They came to school to stab him.”*

Stephano reported that educators adopted defensive mechanisms due to the effects of gang violence occurring at school. He reported the following:

*“The learners are becoming more and more aggressive in the way they challenge authority. The other thing is that our female learners are very scared of violence; I would say our educators are becoming defensive. So, it is a matter of you teaching your lessons as your main priority, but if you take one or two kids away, it will destroy the whole essence of teaching and learning.”*

The findings show that the fights distract teaching and learning as the educators had to stop their duties and focus on the constant fights happening in the school due to gang violence. Moreover, threats were also mentioned as one of the experiences of the educators, which caused fear, making the educators too incapacitated to discipline the learners who had become gang members wreaking havoc in the school. Two participants reportedly witnessed the stabbing of learners by fellow learners due to gang violence occurring in the school. Some participants mentioned that the gang fights were most common in the school premises, as gang members fought over violation turf territories. The other fights were reportedly perpetuated by some gangs that brought violence from the community into the school. Verbal violence was also reported to have been experienced by the participants.

#### 4.3.1.3 Unsafe working conditions

According to the participants, the gang violence they experienced in the school resulted in fear. Some participants mentioned that they were afraid of confronting learners who were involved in gang violence and thus they could not effectively assist in dissolving the fights between these learners. The terror was aggravated by the fact that the violent learners carried dangerous weapons which they used to attack each other. Sometimes, intruders from the other gangs' turfs were operating under the influence of drugs when they engaged in the fights.

The findings also revealed that the gang violence that occurred in the schools also involved non-school persons. For instance, Susan stated that:

*“One day, when I was supervising learners on the school premises, I heard someone shouting, ‘Hey I’ve got this, do you want to buy?’. He was shouting to one of the learners. One of the learners told him to just throw it over the fence because if he just threw it, nobody would do anything to him. My first thought was obviously that they were talking about drugs. So, as I observed the situation within minutes. Someone tossed the packet over the school gate. When I saw the package being thrown over the gate, I started running for it and the boy who was across the road also started running for the packet that had landed on the grass. When we got there, he had got there within a split second. Before I reached onto the grass, he had pulled the gun, pointing directly into my face.”*

Susan experienced fear as the gun was pulled off pointing into her face. This is indicative of the dangerous working conditions they are exposed to as educators working in a school and community stricken by gang violence.

Stephano mentioned that they needed more protection as their security was of great concern. He felt that they did not feel safe owing to the reality of being exposed to danger lurking in the school, as anyone could get access to the school premises:

*“We don’t have adequate protection here as anyone can just walk in and attack the teachers. We do have a security guard there, but if a kid is unhappy with the way we are dealing with him, and they go home and to tell their violent parents, our lives could*

*be in danger. So, on the issue of protection, we are sitting in the dark side too. Uhm, when we suspend kids, such kids could be angry and would go out of the gate and climb off the fence; we put on a bob wire around the perimeter. So, that's my greatest fear, if something like that happens, uhm we will be in danger. We just hope that it doesn't happen that way.*

The participant revealed that they were afraid of approaching some learners as they feared for their lives. They let the learners do what they wished without being disciplined. They were victims of the gang violence that characterised the school setting as they were not able to create a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. The participants mentioned the lack of security in the school as intruders enjoyed free access to the school premises, which endangered their lives. The fear of dangerous weapons the learners and the intruders brought into the school premises caused uncertainties regarding what could happen to the educators.

#### **4.3.1.4 The social ills existing in the community**

The participants believed that the violence that was happening in the community spilled over into the school and that greatly influenced learners' violent behaviour. The school is part of the community hence it has a vast influence on learners' behaviour. As mentioned in the previous chapter that most learners in the school under the study lived in Wentworth, which is riddled with crime, gangsterism has become the norm. Many of the learners' family members were part of gangs, and therefore, violence has always been present in their lives.

The participants also felt that they were victims of the social ills existing in the community as what takes place in the community affected them and their professional work at the school.

In this context, Peter commented that:

*“They bring weekend feuds into the school. The violence usually takes place for about two weeks or maybe three weeks and then it stops. The parents are also members of the gangs and they mould their children to behave violently. I have seen over the years how parents also behave. They might shout, rent and rave at the child, but at home this child who is selling the substances is responsible for providing food for the family. So, a parent might look angry over the child's wrong-doings but actually this child might be selling substances here to fend for the family.”*

The study revealed that parents put pressure on learners, forcing them to join gangs as they come from the same neighbourhood. Tarryn mentioned that she was fearful when it came to disciplining the learners that belonged to gangs as they enjoyed full protection from some of the senior educators at the school.

Tarryn mentioned that:

*“Violence mainly starts with senior educators (who are considered as parents) who belong to different gangs outside of school. This then brings the violence into the school. That is how they then influence the younger learners, particularly the Grade 8 and 9 learners. For the Grade 8 learners who have just come into the school, it is like they already selected their targeted kids to join the gangs. because they already know them from the neighbourhood. They live next to each other. They form the gangs and there are certain things they are allowed to do and those they are not allowed to do. There are some people they are allowed to speak to. Basically, these gangs bring whatever is happening in the community into the school. Basically, they form a circle of safety for these learners, who eventually feel protected. I may discipline the learners, but I will be fearful at the same time. However, I cannot show that towards them, but we are always terrified to discipline learners belonging to a certain gang. So, I have been fearful in many occasions, but I have to discipline misbehaving children.”*

Andrea stated that gang formation is transgenerational, as those gang members learnt the culture of violence from their parents or family members:

*“Some of the gangs that operate in our school premises are a transgenerational phenomenon; they are gangsters whose brothers are also gangsters. Their fathers were also gangsters; so, it’s a lineage of gangsters. Normally, for a teenager or a scholar, behaviour plays itself out at school more than it plays itself out at home. It is a matter of survival, as the community is poverty-stricken, and is a community of low socio-economic status. I have confiscated stuff many times and the child would literally say that they would not have food because the money to buy food would have been taken away. Then, as a human being, you feel sorry for that child, though the child would have done the wrong thing”.*

From the findings generated in the interview, gangsterism does not come alone, as it emerges from a number of social issues which include violence, poverty and drugs. The educators were aware of the selling of drugs taking place at the school. The use of dangerous substances

became a norm and the drugs are being sold and used in the school. Furthermore, the interviews showed that the feuds that occurred in the community were brought into school. Parents also reportedly played a vital role in putting pressure on learners to join gangs. It is a transgenerational thing, whereby the parents or family members are involved in gangsterism thus influencing the learners to join such gangs. Race was also mentioned as exacerbating the gang violence that dominates the community. The Coloured and very few Indians and Africans constitute the community's racial composition, which results in the community being riddled with crime as the above-mentioned race are known to be more involved in criminal activities. All the respondents agreed that it had become vastly problematic for an educator to teach or discipline a learner that was under the influence of drugs. Gangsters highly regard and protect their members.

#### **4.3.1.5 Effects of school-based gang violence on educators**

In many professions, it is the workplace where individuals spend most of their time. Thus, everything that happens in the working environment impacts significantly on their lives. The study findings reveal that the educators were affected by gang violence both personally and professionally within the school setting. They were affected professionally in terms of their work-related morale and productivity. The participants mentioned that they felt demotivated due to the high rate of learner absenteeism as ill-disciplined learners are suspended from time to time.

Sham mentioned that they were in danger when they assisted fighting learners, and some educators had been physically affected:

*“It is disturbing because we are now in danger of some sort, especially myself, I am small in size and uhmm, some of the learners are quite physically bigger than me. So, attempting to separate two learners from fighting may result in me getting physically harmed. Some educators have been physically harmed as they were trying to separate two learners who were fighting. So, it is dangerous to be around them when there is a fight. Some learners carry dangerous weapons, so, you might get hurt in the process”.*

Susan stated that:

*“A lot of learners have the mentality of vengeance and if you embarrass them publicly or in front of their particular group or gang, then you stand a possible chance of them coming after you as well. Aside from that, it's a big disruption in the classroom.*

*Teaching cannot be done in a day like I have just described. Grade 12 results are affected by these disruptions as the teaching and learning is seriously compromised”.*

The findings also reveal the effects of school-based gang violence on educators, particularly the fact that the teaching and learning process is disrupted. The participants mentioned that their lives were threatened when they offered to mediate between learners when they were fighting. They reported that mediation put them in danger. In a school that has high level of gang violence, there is a high rate of absenteeism and disruptions. Learners do not get the same quality of education as their peers in other peaceful schools where the environment is conducive to teaching and learning. It becomes a challenge when educators are too demotivated to perform their duties. The results of Grade 12 learners are compromised due constant disruptions. Furthermore, some of the incidents that occur leave them traumatised and vulnerable to victimisation due to gang violence. In this context, it must be commented that educators remained in problematic and violent schools because it was not easy to move to other schools; however, they indicated that if given a choice, they would leave instantly.

### **4.3.2 Dealing with gang violence in schools**

#### **4.3.2.1 The role parents play in dealing with gang violence in schools**

The findings of this study revealed that the participants in both individual interviews and the focus group discussion felt that the parents were not doing enough to complement their efforts. Ill-disciplined children are often suspended for a short period after which they are required to come back with the parent in order to be allowed back into class. It was reported that the parents did come, but it did not make any difference as the cycle of violence repeated itself, whether it was the same child or a different set of children altogether.

Peter mentioned how the parents could hardly discipline their children. He mentioned the following issue:

*“Over the years, I have seen how parents pretended to care while they indeed did not. They might shout and rant and rave at their child, but at home it is the same child who sells substances that provides food for the family. So, the mother of the child might come in front of us and look angry over child’s wrong-doing, but actually this child is selling substances to fend for the family”.*

Susan agreed that the parents were not partaking in disciplining their children. She expressed the following views:

*“The Deputy Principal and I often walked around the school grounds, making sure that no one was there since it was not break time. Everyone was supposed to be in their classes. So, it is just standard routine that we walk around and check that all is in order. We saw a boy that had about twelve or fifteen Zannex tablets. Legally speaking, that is no longer a quantity for consumption, but for distribution. Having said that, the police were not called and the child was only sent home to call his parents. The parents indeed came and apologised and promised to talk to him, and that was that. Ehhm, it has become part of the culture. If the parents come in and don't want to face the problem, what more can we do? We just leave it, and that child was back at school the following day. So, it has become a recurrent problem.”*

Sham had a completely different view. He said:

*“We do have good support. I would say we have 50:50 support system; a lot of parents assist teachers and learners. Obviously, we have some parents who are in denial of how their children behave. They then try to cover up their mistakes by turning blame on us for the faults that they could find in us as educators. However, those who assist and support are making a very big difference.”*

The findings of the study reveal that the educators needed the parent-teacher engagement to ward off gang violence occurring in the school premises. However, it was evident that the parents played no significant role in assisting educators with the discipline of their problematic children. Furthermore, some households were reported to be fed by the children who were involved in gang activities. Sham expressed a different view, asserting that parents had a support system that meet the educators' needs and added that their support made a huge difference.

#### **4.3.2.2 The support services needed to combat gang violence in schools**

The findings of the study indicate that the interviewed educators felt that they needed support services in the school. The learners in the school being studied came from different backgrounds and experienced different challenges which could have been addressed by support services. The participants that were interviewed individually and through the focus group discussion mentioned that the trauma they went through following an incident where a learner

stabbed a fellow learner to death in 2012. Counselling was offered to educators long after the incident had occurred. All educators agreed that in-house support services could be beneficial to them and learners, as they would focus on teaching and learning rather than counselling, and constant disciplining.

Tarryn mentioned that:

*“I think teachers and learners need support. We do not have a support system. Educators and learners have to deal with what happens to them individually. There is no support at all and that is one thing that we urgently need in the school. Precisely, we need counselling.”*

Susan echoed the same sentiments, as she commented:

*“I think it is a very rare occurrence that educators have access to counselling facilities. Unless they really feel that they need to find someone privately, that is, they can pay for the services, other than that on the school premises. If there is something that has really upset you, your counsellor can move in to provide support services.”*

The participants felt that the educators needed psychological help such as counselling, but this kind of service is hardly available. The few educators who received counselling following one of the traumatising incidents stated that it was not helpful as they only had one session with the professional. Educators needed to draw on other people for psychosocial support, for instance, their family members and other professionals. However, there are very limited measures in place to offer any support to traumatised educators. One participant mentioned that there was a support group for learners who were starting to engage in drug use and getting involved in gang activities. Fazel commented on the violent incident that left educators traumatised. They hardly had the counselling support they apparently needed. Such an incident left the educators traumatised and they took time to recover as they always felt vulnerable to gang violence that had victimised them.

Fazel mentioned the following:

*“I remember that incident when that kid was stabbed. The teachers were traumatised but there was no one to provide counselling or support services. No professional counsellor was called to discuss and dialogue with the teachers. We had to deal with*

*those emotions and thoughts on our own and determined how we were going to get over this traumatic experience”.*

Sham narrated that:

*“As a school, we definitely lack support when it comes to discipline because I don’t think the School Management Team (SMT) even knows what to do because the Principal can’t expel learners because educators are not allowed to do so. Equally, the Principal can’t suspend learners because they cannot be out of school for a certain period. Suspending them would be tantamount to infringing on their basic human right, the right to education. He applies that policy, and that right binds him, and he cannot do anything else. So, what he can only do is to send for the child’s parents. The parents will come straight and say that they are tired of the child and that they don’t know what to do, urging teachers to do whatever they want because the child doesn’t listen to them. The parents burden us with their responsibilities.”*

The findings indicate that the educators need support services in the school, especially against the backdrop of gang violence occurring in schools. However, it was clear that the Department of Education has no structured plan of providing such services. The findings reveal that the educators who did Psychology were able to assist fellow educators with counselling services. The Department does not offer counselling support services for educators and the governing body in the school engagement was not mentioned. It was clear that it does not support the educators deal with the incidents of gang violence.

#### **4.3.2.3 The disciplinary measures in place**

Disciplinary measures need to be firmly in place in order for a school to function effectively. The participants revealed that the existing disciplinary measures were ineffective. The findings from both individual interviews and focus group discussions revealed that there was little that could be done by the school or the Principal to control the situation characterised by gang violence in the school. A participant who was part of the SMT indicated that the disciplinary measures they had within the school were able to temporarily suppress the violence, which occurs in a recurring cycle. Another participant mentioned that previously, there was a committee which had a learner representative, parent as well as educator representatives put in place to deal with discipline; however, the committee is now dysfunctional.

Brandon noted the following:

*“It’s obvious that there is a strong affiliation in the school. In past, we had a disciplinary committee. I sat in the disciplinary committee where there was learners’ representation, parent representation and staff representation as well. Disciplinary hearings would be held after a number of serious events had occurred. That committee is now non-existent. The representative body of learner has been active in past, but it is now non-existent. Learners would be elected at the beginning of the year, but then, it is now non-existent. Then on the parent component it was very strong before, but now we battled to get a full quorum to sit and elect a governing body. On budget meetings, nobody shows up. Even on Parents’ Days, very few parents come to pick up their children’s reports. So, the parent component is extremely poor; we are not getting parental support at all. So, the disciplinary measures at the moment are very ineffective. When accidents happen in the class, as the educator concerned, the SMT supplied logbooks where we recorded the incidents of gang violence as they happened. We can say the disciplinary measures at school level are just non-existent.”*

The participants believed that the school’s disciplinary measures were effective to some extent, as learners who deliberately misbehaved knew they were disobeying school rules and that nothing much would be done to punish them. They would get suspended for a couple of days, only to come back to school, and the cycle would start all over again. This lack of effective disciplinary measures demotivated the participants who mentioned that there were no structured plans on how to discipline learners who disrupted effective teaching and learning. Moreover, the police would come and remove the learners for a short period and they would return to school on the following day.

#### **4.3.3 Suggested measures to deal with gang violence in schools**

The findings of the study reveal that more plaintive measures should be adopted if schools have to effectively deal with learners who are involved in gang activities in the school as the three-day suspension is appallingly insufficient.

Nokwazi raised the following point:

*“Honestly, I don’t think these learners should be in the school system. They are in the school for the wrong reasons. They are not in school to learn and some of them are failures. They have been repeatedly failing but they are being pushed through Matriculation but then, they still fail. I think they should be individually picked out because we all know them. However, nothing is being done. They should be referred for rehabilitation or somewhere where they could be kept in solitary confinement so that they can be spoken to. Since they are under 18 years of age, they cannot be treated as real criminals; rather, they should be loved and cared for. They should be spoken to and basically taught societal values and morals. Yes, I don’t think they should be amongst other learners and teachers or other people while doing what they do, without being stopped. That’s where I feel the violence arises from”.*

Tarryn mentioned the following:

*“I think we have to get the Life Orientation teachers involved. I have been trying to tell the learners that they must stop fighting because while they may fight out of anger, one might die and they may become murderers even if it is unintended. So, I do try and teach them about the implications of violence and all its adverse consequences. So, as an LO teacher, I teach them such stuff but we still have to do more because these are young children. When dealing with young teenagers or young kids, I think you have to include Edu-entertainment, for example, to launch some sort of campaign. We do have non-violence boards around the school, but these are not enough as violence continues to grow. As those learners cause violence in the school, there have to be punitive consequences to their actions so that the other kids don’t get influenced to become involved in gang violence”.*

The participants were aware of the fact that they were not coping with the traumatic events that they had experienced in the school and that they required therapeutic intervention to help them deal with their past experiences. The school needed counselling, supportive parents, effective police intervention, and a secure schooling environment. Rehabilitation centres were suggested for learners who are at school for wrong intentions. The participants suggested the adoption of more plaintive measures to deal with learners who are involved in gangs and violent activities in the school, as the three-day suspension insufficiently addresses the problem. The participants

advocated the involvement of Life Orientation educators to preside over awareness campaigns meant to deal with gang violence in schools.

#### **4.4 Other issues that emerged from the data**

Other issues emerging from the data elicited from both individual interviews and the focus group discussion included the fact that the participants felt they had been victimised to an extent that they were too incapacitated to approach certain violent learners.

Susan stated that she was grappling with feelings that she had become a perpetual victim of gang violence:

*“I do feel safe coming to school, but sometimes I am the last person to leave the premises. So, in that sense, I do sometimes experience that wavering moment of doubt.”*

The participants indicated that they feared for their lives, as they felt vulnerable and unprotected. They have to find ways of dealing with dangerous situations they faced on daily bases.

Andrea had the following to state:

*“I remember one incident when I was busy teaching, roughly two years ago and the child that was involved in the violence was sitting at the back of the class, and I was here teaching. Someone came onto the premises with a knife threatening to stab the child. The child sat there while I was teaching and I don’t know whether it was adrenaline because I screamed at him, shouting at him to get out of my class. I told him that he was not allowed there; otherwise he was going to run in there and do whatever he was going to do. If I was just as scared to stand back for this person, something terrible could have happened right there. So luckily, he turned around and ran away”.*

The above extract indicates that fear made the participant to have reservations on how they approached the learners, as they feared for their lives. The participants were not asked how

they coped with gang violence in the school as they mentioned that they talked to people they trusted to vent their frustration and gain advice on how to deal with gang violence.

#### **4.5 Document analysis**

In this study, the School Safety Policy (Appendix 7) was reviewed using the checklist form. The Deputy Principal, who was also a member of the SMT, was interviewed using the School Safety Policy instrument and provided the information that was relevant to the study. According to the Department of Education, it is essential that the school has a safety policy for the safety of learners, educators and personnel within the school setting. The School Safety Policy had indicators, goals or practices; the indicators determine whether or not there are safety and disciplinary measures in place at each school in the Umlazi district. The findings reveal that the School Safety Policy was not in line with the requirements of the Department of Education safety measures; however, the school received no support from the district. Moreover, the school created a file with their indicators of putting disciplinary measures in place. According to Veriava and Power (2017), there are policy guidelines circulating in schools in the form of policy circulars meant to combat violence in schools including gang violence as a way of protecting both educators and learners.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter interpreted the findings of the study. The main findings were presented and analysed using the thematic analysis technique. Themes were created with reference to the topics that were generated from the data. The study explored the educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence. Moreover, it sought to identify the strategies adopted by educators in navigating situations arising from gang violence within the school setting. The effects of gang violence were found to be mainly traumatic, behavioural, and psychological. All these effects disrupted the teaching and learning process which affected educational outcomes over a period of time.

In addition, the findings revealed that the community that the school is situated largely contributed to the prevalence of gang violence in the school. Parental support was reportedly lacking in disciplining and teaching their children as they shifted their responsibility towards the educators. However, it was revealed that not much could be done by educators because

gang violence started from the community outside the school setting and further spilled into the school. Finally, the educators were given an opportunity to share their opinions in terms of addressing gang violence within the school setting. These findings are summarised in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. The study was conducted to explore educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence, and also to determine the strategies educators used to navigate situations arising from the mentioned phenomenon. The study setting was a secondary school in Durban, Umlazi District. The chapter discusses the following aspects:

1. Working in a school affected by gang violence
2. Dealing with gang violence in schools

### **5.2 Working in a school affected by gang violence**

The study was conducted in a community with a high level of crime. Most learners who were recruited into gangs resided in the same community where the school was located. The gang activities occurring in the community replicate themselves in the school setting. When learners are recruited to join gangs, that gesture is indicative of the lack of discipline instilled by the learners' parents and that leads to gang violence (Franzese et al., 2016). The community and family where learners are born and raised influence how the learners behave towards educators at school. Vidourek et al. (2017) believes that in their quest for a sense of belonging, learners choose to identify with and affiliate to street gangs to fulfil the need to transition from childhood to adolescence and finally adulthood, and they feel accepted by gang leaders. The following aspects are discussed:

1. Definition of school-based gang violence
2. Experiences of gang violence in schools
3. Unsafe working conditions
4. Social ills that exist in the community
5. Effects of school-based gang violence on educators

### **5.2.1 Definition of school-based gang violence**

The findings from both individual interviews and focus group discussion reveal that the participants were familiar with gang violence. The participants expressed different views; one of the participants mentioned that he came from the community and was familiar with gangs operating in the neighborhood. This corroborates the literature, which contends that a gang is a group of three or more individuals who share a common name or sign and engage in a criminal activity (Sanders, 2017). Gangs engage in high-risk behaviours, leading to a wide range of adverse social consequences. The participants reported that gangs tend to mark their territories, and they fight over their turfs. Furthermore, they reportedly took issues from the community to the school environment. The participants reported that school-based gang violence negatively affected teaching and learning in schools. As Alpert et al. (2021) note, the Emotional Processing Theory asserts that gang violence affects teaching and learning and causes fear among educators. Clearly, this theory supports the findings of this study. The Deviant Place Theory thus presupposes that the “deviant” environment in which educators work thus makes them vulnerable to victimisation by gangs that find their way into school settings.

### **5.2.2 Experiences of school-based gang violence**

The educators are unable to discipline misbehaving learners due to the fear and threats they receive from gangs operating in the school. It was evident that the fights distract teaching and learning activities as the educators have to stop their duties and shift their focus towards the constant fights happening in the school due to gang violence. The results of this study indicate that all the educators that were interviewed had experienced gang violence in a school setting where they were teaching. The participants mentioned that they had witnessed learners fighting and stabbing each other. They had experienced verbal threats, and had guns pointed directly into their faces. Most educators had experienced gang violence that targeted them. One of the educators mentioned that she experienced gang violence when a gun was thrust into her face. She mentioned that she froze and could not believe what was happening around her. The Emotional Processing Theory is linked to fear stimulus and the response to danger.

According to Alpert et al. (2021), the Emotional Processing Theory is primarily concerned about analysing and understanding fear and response to danger. The theory concurs with the experiences the educators mentioned. Moreover, educators are likely to experience fear due to

the work environment they are situated in; thus, making them vulnerable to threats and violent attacks by gangs, which included gun threats towards educators or other learners which educators witnessed and due to fear, they could not interfere. According to Siegel (2006), the Deviant Place Theory states that an individual is exposed to a dangerous environment and they are more likely to be a victim of crime, and this theory was in support of the findings of this study. Two participants reported on the incident that occurred in 2012, which resulted in one learner being killed in the school setting, leaving both the learners and the educators severely traumatised (Masuku, 2018).

Some participants mentioned that the fights were most common in the school due to gang violence, as they fight to protect the turfs territories they have breached. The fights are often perpetuated by gangs from the community and the fights are then brought into the school premises. The participants also experienced verbal violence. This finding is affirmed by Sanders (2017) who stated that gang violence affects society at all levels, which causes fear and threats to personal safety.

### **5.2.3 Unsafe working conditions**

The educators averred that the community significantly influenced learners' behaviour in the school. A school does not function in isolation, but it is part of a broader community. Most learners from the school under the study were born and raised in a community riddled with crime, violence and gangsterism. Many of their family members are part of gangs, and therefore violence has always been present in their lives (Augustyn et al., 2019). Young people in South Africa live in crime-prone communities where violent behaviour is seemingly rewarded and where they feel that gang violence is an instant panacea to their problems, as it makes them feel powerful and worthy (Grobler, 2018). The engagement that occurs in the community spills over and replicates itself in the schools. The educators that were interviewed believed that what happened in the community had a great influence on the learners' behaviour. This is supported by the Deviant Place Theory, which posits that when an individual is exposed to a dangerous environment, they are more likely to become the victim of a crime (Siegel, 2006). The theory further asserts that an individual and the environment are autonomous units that vigorously interact and impact one another (Siegel, 2006).

Mothibi et al. (2017) state that the presence of gangs at school and in adjacent communities facilitates the relatively easy acquisition of illegal firearms and other deadly weapons as well

as the accessibility of drugs and alcohol by learners, which may lead to the eruption of gang violence within the school setting. The fact that outsiders can easily get access to the school premises indicates how unsafe the educators and learners really were within the school setting. The interviews reflected that gangsterism does not come alone; it stems from a number of social issues which include violence, poverty and misuse of drug. The participants were aware of the selling of drugs taking place at school.

Parents also play a vital role in putting pressure on learners to join gangs. It is a transgenerational phenomenon whereby the parents or family members are involved, compelling the learners to join. Race was also mentioned as contributing to gang violence. The Coloureds are the dominant racial group in the community under study, though very few Indians and Africans also reside there. This makes the community susceptible to crime (Magidi & Erasmus, 2016). Gangs normally regard themselves as a family and thus protect one of their members. Moreover, the Emotional Processing Theory supported the topic for this research as it explores factors of fear associated with danger as a response to threats posed for individuals who are targets of violence. In this case, educators are targets and the unsafe working conditions they are subjected to cause fear.

#### **5.2.4 Social ills that exist in the community**

The fights that occur in the community involve learners who are also gang members; thus, there is a great possibility that the gang members who are in rival gangs would enter the school premises and cause disruptions. As learners in neighbourhoods with social ills identify with their violent role models and heroes, they may be more likely to engage in violent or deviant behaviours as well (Baron, 2017).

Most of the educators felt neglected by their employer, the Department of Education (DoE). They felt that they were placed in a school where they were exposed to a great deal of danger without any personal or psychological protection. Moreover, the participants felt that they were victims of social ills that exist in the community as all that occurs in the community affects them and their professional performance. The participants felt that the gang violence they experienced resulted in terror. Some educators were afraid of confronting learners who were involved in gang violence and thus they were too incapacitated to assist in dissolving fights between the learners. The fear was aggravated by the fact that learners carried dangerous weapons which they used to attack each other; the intruders from the other gangs' turfs

sometimes operated under the influence of drugs when they engaged in the fights (Hagedorn, 2017). The findings revealed that the gang violence that occurred within the school setting also involved non-school persons. The existence of gangs in schools and in the townships exacerbates the victimisation of non-gang members such as educators (De La Rue & Forber-Pratt, 2018). In maintaining discipline, educators always have to worry about being targets of violent gangs and being accused of having committed child abuse in the process (Vuk, 2017).

This study found that since most educators feel that they are strict on enforcing discipline, they are then susceptible to victimisation. Educators constantly face threats of violence (Cornell, 2017). Violent learners or outsiders who enter the school premises often perpetrate gang violence. This causes physical harm and emotional distress. Alpert et al. (2021) stated that after a traumatic event, the survivors tend to view the world differently, as they perceive it as a dangerous setting where they are unable to cope with horrific realities. The element of fear, uneasiness and intimidation experienced by educators impacts negatively on learning and teaching (Sonterblum, 2018). This statement concurs with the major thrust of the Deviant Place Theory, which posits that when an individual is exposed to a dangerous environment, they are more likely to become a victim of a particular crime (Siegel, 2006). Both the Emotional Processing Theory and the Deviant Place Theory support the above findings.

As in other professions, educators spend most of their time in the workplace, and whatever happens in their work environment significantly impacts their well-being. The study findings revealed that the educators were both personally and professionally affected by gang violence occurring within the school setting. However, the educators who participated in this were not affected in the same way, since the challenges they faced sometimes differed. Three of the five educators who were interviewed mentioned that they were personally and professionally affected by gang violence which occurred within the school. They were affected professionally since their work morale and productivity were reduced. Only two educators mentioned that they were not affected, though one decided not to engage in any activity that would need his input. He indicated that he would do what he could manage to do. The other one diligently did her duties as she was supposed to. Moreover, the educators who were interviewed wished to be less engaged in disciplinary issues that directly related to misbehaving learners.

It was clear from the respondents' narratives that gang violence occurring in the school premises caused severe trauma and that it was destructive because learners were constantly fighting over turfs and were selling dangerous drugs. Moreover, educators had to step in to separate the learners. However, it would not end at fighting as the matter would have to be addressed at a disciplinary level as well. A great deal of teaching and learning time was lost. One of the educators mentioned that the disruptions negatively affected teaching and learning for those learners who had positive goals to achieve.

### **5.2.5 Effects of school-based gang violence on educators**

According to Nako and Muthukrishna (2018), the effects of gang violence as perceived by the educators' negatively impact learning. In a school characterised by high levels of gang violence and disruptions, learners do not get the same quality of education as their peers in other schools where there is no gang violence. It becomes a challenge when educators are too demotivated to perform their duties. In this context, it must be commented that educators remain in violent schools because it is not easy to move to other schools; however, if the opportunity arises, they may leave instantly. During the interview with the participants, it was revealed that gang violence in the school had become a 'norm' to the learners. The participants mentioned that the learners' first reaction to a disagreement or a minor misunderstanding would be aggravated by gang violence. They did not seem to realise that there were other means of resolving conflict without having to resort to aggressive means.

The results revealed that fights often started in the morning and would continue throughout the day. Apparently, teaching and learning activities are put on hold as educators have to resolve the dispute. The participants also mentioned that gang violence was directly responsible for high rates of absenteeism. The phenomenon demotivates educators, which in turn affects the results of Grade 12 learners whose academic progress would have been disrupted. Therefore, if educators are not given a choice, they remain in problematic schools because moving to other schools is not an easy process. In this study, it was evident that the presence of gang violence in the school had negative emotional as well as physiological effect on educators' daily work (Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017). Educators work in an environment where they are continuously disrespected by learners and where they are violated by learners through gang violence. The violence negatively impacts on their personal and professional lives. According to Zembylas (2018), the effects of a stressful environment include stress that arises due to the interaction

between a person and the environment; this concurs with the main thrust of the Deviant Place Theory. The Emotional Processing Theory supports the findings as the educators in this study encountered situations in which learners engaged in fights and educators had to mediate, thus risking their lives. The educators mentioned that they do not resolve conflicts that arise amongst learners due to fear. The theory dovetails with the findings of the study as the educators feel unsafe and seek to escape.

### **5.3 Dealing with gang violence in the schools**

#### **5.3.1 The role parents play in dealing with gang violence in schools**

It was clear that the participants in both individual interviews and focus group discussion felt that the parents were not doing enough to assist them. For instance, misbehaving learners are suspended for only three days and are expected to come back to school with their parents for them to be allowed back into class. It was reported that parents did come, but that hardly made any difference as the cycle of violence and misbehaviour would persist with the same child or different children. Vuk (2017) maintains that the lack of discipline at home significantly contributes to the prevalence of gang violence. The educators reported that only a few learners displayed noticeable positive behavioural change after their parents' intervention. Most educators that were interviewed agreed that the parents were not doing enough to assist them in disciplining their children and it was also revealed that most parents were not involved in their children's education. Romero et al. (2018) argue that children may, on the other hand, encounter psychological trauma, social isolation, hatred and distrust from their families and community as a consequence of their involvement in gang-related activities. However, it was evident that the parents did not play a significant role in disciplining their children who exhibited problematic behaviours. It was revealed that some households are fed by the children who are involved in gang activities; therefore, parents turn a blind eye if they misbehave at school and when they are called for disciplinary hearing.

#### **5.3.2 The support services needed to combat gang violence in schools**

The findings of this study, which are based on the educators' responses to the interview, indicated that the educators felt that they needed psychosocial support services in the school. The learners in the studied school came from different backgrounds and experienced different challenges which could easily be addressed by psychosocial support services. Some educators

mentioned that they were traumatised by the bloody incident which occurred in 2012, where learners stabbed each other to death. Counselling services were offered to them long after the incident had occurred. All the educators agreed that in-house support services could be beneficial to them and learners, as they would focus on teaching rather than on regular counselling and disciplinary issues. Most of the educators apparently needed psychological help such as counselling; nonetheless, this kind of service is hardly ever available in the school. The few educators who received counselling after the 2012 violent incident stated that the counselling service was ineffective as they had only one session with a professional counsellor. Educators need to draw on psychosocial support from other people such as family members and other professionals; however, there are very limited measures in place to offer any support to traumatised educators.

Vuk (2017) stated that there are no effective support structures in place to cushion and protect educators from the effects of gang violence occurring in South African schools. However, it was clear that the Department of Education (DoE) has no structured plan in terms of providing such psychosocial services. The findings revealed that the educators who did Psychology were able to assist with the counselling of learners who are affected. One of the educators, who was also a member of the School Management Team, confirmed the existence of an external non-profit organisation offering counselling and other support services to traumatised learners. However, the programme is exclusively learner-centred; therefore, educators have no support services in place.

### **5.3.3 The disciplinary measures in place**

A school can only function effectively if there are effective disciplinary measures in place. Most of the educators that were interviewed indicated that the disciplinary measures were ineffective. The main reason they gave was that learners' rights rendered these disciplinary measures ineffective. The educators revealed that there was little that the school or the principal could do to suppress gang violence in the school. Access to education is a fundamental right in South Africa; hence, every child has the right to education, which means that school personnel and parents are responsible for ensuring that children are taught proper responsibilities. One educator, who was also a member of the SMT, intimated that the disciplinary measures they had within the school were able to calm the situation only for a short period, adding that the culture of violence recurs in a vicious cycle. Another educator mentioned that there was a

committee which had representatives from learners, parents and educators and its mandate was to deal with discipline; however, that committee is no longer existent. Some educators believed that the school's disciplinary measures were effective to some extent, as learners who deliberately misbehaved knew they were disobeying school rules and that they would not be severely punished. They would get suspended for a couple of days and come back to school, and the cycle of violence would start all over again.

This lack of effective measures would influence other learners as to engage in misbehaviour and violent activities as they would be aware of the fact that there would be no drastic consequences if school rules were disobeyed. In this context, it may be strongly argued that the schools lack the mandate to apply effective disciplinary measures; thus, the current measures need to be urgently modified to eliminate gangsterism, drug abuse and lethal weapons within the school setting. Only then will the teaching and learning activities become effective. To create safe schools, all stakeholders in the community is required to work together to establish a conducive environment for educators to perform their professional duties (Skyles & Gimbert, 2018). The Department of Education ought to foster a positive school climate by reducing possibilities of violence through training staff on crisis and risk management (Veriava & Power, 2017). Psychological support services need to be put in place to assist with counselling and the provision of psychotherapy in case of a tragic incident caused by gang violence that leaves educators traumatised. The police should work closely with schools to reduce gang violence in schools. This may ease the fear educators have because of working in schools riddled with gang violence; this enhances the educators' safety in schools (Skyles & Gimbert, 2018). The Emotional Processing Theory posits that fear and intimidation lead to adverse impacts on learners' academic outcomes (Alpert et al., 2021).

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter presented a discussion of the main findings of the study. The study explored educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence. These experiences were found to be mainly traumatic, physiological, and also behavioural. All these adverse consequences jeopardised academic processes and compromised teaching and learning outcomes. Moreover, the results indicated that the community significantly contributed towards the prevalence and perpetuation of gang violence in the school. It was also evident that parents do not play a significant role in disciplining their misbehaving children as they tended

to shift their responsibility towards educators. The participants also shared their experiences navigating the traumatic situations arising from gang violence taking place in the school. However, there was consensus on the notion that not much could be done by educators to thwart gang violence as the phenomenon originates in the community before spilling over into the school. Educators pointed out that they were restricted by the Department of Education's regulations on the discipline of learners. Violent learners bought drugs on their way to school and within the school premises. The educators also suggested measures to be considered for implementation in dealing with gang violence in the school. The next chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This study explored educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence, focusing on a secondary school in Umlazi District, Durban. The chapter presents conclusions that emerged from the findings in line with the research questions and the findings that were discussed in the previous chapter. The chapter concludes by proffering the appropriate recommendations that could be considered in addressing gang violence in South African schools.

### **6.2 General conclusions**

The main conclusions were reached in tandem with the following objectives which guided the study:

- To explore the educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence.
- To identify educators' strategies for navigating situations arising from gang violence within the school setting.

#### **6.2.1 Educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence**

The findings of the study indicated that educators were affected by gang violence occurring in the community and school where they worked. The community in which their school is situated has a high crime rate, and gangsterism is the norm. The educators were psychologically, emotionally, physically, and professionally affected. Evidently, the constant fights occurring in the school were a replica of community-based violence, which often found its way into the school. Furthermore, the educators mentioned on several occasions that they feared for their personal lives. This resulted in them not being able to discipline the learners. They constantly received verbal threats from learners who were also gang members. The educators also reported that the fights distract teaching and learning encounters in the school as they have to leave their duties and attend to gang violence. The time lost compromised curriculum deliverance, as the educators feel compelled to scramble through the syllabus for the sake of finishing it, without considering whether the learners understood the concepts or not. Some educators witnessed learners stabbing each other, an experience which traumatised them. One educator mentioned

that she experienced terror when a gun was directly pointed into her face. The violent environment the school is located was unsafe for the educators who always felt vulnerable. However, some educators changed their attitude and put barriers between them and the learners they feared to ward off victimisation. They strongly believed that the violent community significantly influenced learners' violent behaviour within the school premises. This finding resonates with the Deviant Place Theory, which avers that when an individual is exposed to a dangerous environment, they are likely to become victims of crime (Siegel, 2006). The presence of gangs in the school aroused stress among educators as the phenomenon affected their emotional well-being and professional performance. The educators also felt exposed to a great deal of danger without any personal or psychological protection. They felt neglected by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the Department of Education did not put any measures in place as far as dealing with the traumatic situation they find themselves in.

### **6.2.2 Strategies used by educators to navigate situations arising from gang violence**

The educators developed strategies that helped them navigate the horrific situations arising from gang violence. The first strategy or coping mechanism they mentioned was distancing themselves from violent and disruptive learners, Educators avoided confronting such learners, and they also refrained from interfering or assisting during fights. Some educators mentioned that they had built a barrier between them and the violent learners by becoming strict so that the learners would also dread them. They reported the learners to management of the school, and the learners would get suspended for shorter periods after which they would be expected to come back with their parents. One participant stated that they had a logbook where they recorded the incidents as they could not always run to the office to report the incidents; however, the logbook was seemingly time-consuming as it inflated administrative work.

Another strategy they mentioned was to support each other and if they felt overwhelmed, they would talk to each and ask for advice on how to deal with certain cases they encountered daily. As professionals, they would advise each other on how to tackle cases. Some participants mentioned that the advice had to change how they deal with misbehaving learners who are involved in gang violence activities and their character changed to accommodate the coping mechanisms adopted. They also worked in groups to solve issues, and this strategy helped female educators to feel safer and helped by not being singled out as targets of victimisation by learners who belonged to gangs. The educators emphasised the need for the community and the parents to work collaboratively with the school to assist in lowering the level of gang

violence in schools. Ironically, some parents defended their children when they were taken to task, which compromised the educators' role as authoritarians working in loco parentis to positively impact on their children's lives.

### **6.3 Suggested measures to deal with gang violence in the school**

Educators felt they greatly needed support services to assist them deal with traumatic events they encounter daily. They suggested plaintive measures meant to deal with learners who are involved in gang activities. Educators also suggested the involvement of Life Orientation educators in developing and mounting awareness campaigns meant to eliminate gang violence in the school. They also suggested the need to secure the school with a stable fence and having a designated security guard stationed at the gate to control individuals entering the school premises. Educators advocated effective police intervention and law enforcement for learners to refrain from their illicit and unacceptable behaviours. Lastly, the educators suggested that parents ought to be supportive for their children to be effectively disciplined by educators at school.

### **6.4 Recommendations**

Considering the findings of this study, the following recommendations were deemed essential:

- There was urgent need for counselling support, as the educators teach in a community where gang violence and crime are rife. During the interviews, the educators constantly mentioned that they needed counselling services for them to deal with the traumatic experiences of gang violence. They indicated that such support would help them effectively deal with learners. Some educators mentioned that they used their funds to gain access to professional counselling, which was expensive for them. Precisely, this study recommends that the Department of Education makes such psychosocial services, whether in-house or otherwise, easily accessible to educators and learners alike.
- Even though the study aimed to explore the effects of gang violence on educators working in a community affected by this gang violence, it was significant to note that support services also need to be extended to learners as well. The learners who were misbehaving because of unaddressed psychological issues can only be dealt with by professional psychologists. If learners are feeling secured and motivated, educators'

effectiveness becomes apparent as educators feel more emotionally stable to perform their duties diligently for better academic outcomes.

- Owing to the lack of a proper fence, the school's security measures are compromised. There is no designated security guard who controls the people who gain entry into the school premises with their ulterior motives. As the gate is left unattended to, outsiders have easy access to the school premises with illegal drugs and dangerous weapons to cause disruptions. Therefore, it is imperative that the school considers erecting a proper and secure fence that bars outsiders from getting easy access to the school. The school may also consider roping in the service of a security guard whose role is to monitor human traffic entering and leaving the school premises in order to detect those harbouring sinister motives.
- There is a significant need for parental involvement in the discipline of children. Parents tend to shift their responsibility to educators who are also restricted by the Department of Education's statutory instruments regulating the disciplining of learners. Parents are aware of their children's violent behaviour and involvement in gang activities, but they feign ignorance. For instance, when they are summoned to school following the suspension of their child, they are inclined towards defending their child. It is recommended that parents should work in collaboration with the SMT members in order to address the gang violence occurring in the school to make it a safe environment for educators and other learners who are not involved in such activities.
- The Department of Education needs to work with educators to develop strategies that ensure effective disciplinary measures. Excessive emphasis on learners' rights makes the learners fail to strike a balance between rights and the responsibilities that come with them. This scenario often impacts negatively on educational and future academic outcomes.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

No school exists in isolation as it is part of the community. The social ills existing in the community replicate themselves in the school setting. The educators are subjected to victimisation and the resultant fear which renders them too incapacitated to perform their duties as they are uncertain about their survival to the next day. The gang fights start in the morning and persist throughout the day, disrupting the teaching and learning activities as educators must calm the situation down, risking their lives in the process. Like all other professionals,

educators spend most of their time at their workplace; therefore, gang violence affects them. Gang violence in schools has drastically increased over the years, making South African schools unsafe environments for learners and educators. Gang violence breeds fear and anxiety in the school environs. Although the South African government has embarked on some programmes meant to address gang violence and its effects specifically on learners, it has disregarded the plight of educators as victims of the same phenomenon.

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## APPENDIX 1: Ethical Clearance Certificate



11 January 2019

Mrs Nonkululeko Khuzwayo 216072899  
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Khuzwayo

Protocol reference number: HSS/1228/018M

Project title: Teaching in a school affected by gang violence in Durban: An exploration of educators' experiences.

### Full Approval – Full Committee Reviewed Application

With regards to your response received 10 January 2019 to our letter of 04 September 2018, the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Prof Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Ms Sheena Naidoo  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Maud Mthembu  
cc School Administrator: Ms Priya Konan

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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## **APPENDIX 2: Informed consent (Educators)**

### **UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR EDUCATORS**

##### **Title of the study: Teaching in a community affected by gang violence in Umlazi district-KZN: An exploration of educator's experiences**

Researcher: Nonkululeko Khuzwayo  
Supervisor: Ms S. Mahlawe  
School: Discipline of Psychology: Applied Human Sciences  
College: Humanities  
Cell number: xxx  
Email: xxx

Dear Sir/Madam

I am Nonkululeko Khuzwayo, a Masters student from the school of Applied Human sciences (Psychology discipline) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, doing research on the impact of gang violence on educators. The title of the study is: Teaching in a school affected by gang violence in Durban: An exploration of educators' experiences. The research entails conducting individual interviews with educators in relation to the topic mentioned above, conducting a focus group with the School management team (SMT) and reviewing the School safety policy. My intention is to look at the experiences of educators on teaching in a school affected by gang violence and make future recommendations on how the issue can be dealt with. The objectives of the study are, 1. Exploring the educators' experiences of working in a community affected by gang violence. 2. Identifying educators' strategies for navigating situations arising from gang violence within the school setting.

#### **Procedure**

Educators will be selected for in-depth interviews on their willingness to participate. I will ask a few questions in relation to above mentioned topic. The interviews will be audio recorded and these tapes will be kept under lock and key and no one else will have access to these tapes except my supervisor for a period of five years. There is no foreseeable risk or benefit involved in participating Please note that your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage you want. There will be no rewards for participation, nor would there be any negative consequences should you decide to withdraw.

#### **Confidentiality**

There is no personal information required, therefore the confidentiality is secured. If you wish to partake in the study, please note that the interview will be audiotaped and the tape recordings will be stored in a safe place at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and will be disposed of in five years. The researcher and the supervisor are the only people who have excess to these recordings. Each participant will be given a pseudonym at the inception of the research which

will be used when the researcher writes up the thesis. Each participant has a right to of confidentiality and will remain anonymous at the completion of the study.

### **Authorisation**

I have read and understood this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I have been informed that there will be no risks, should there be secondary trauma due to previous traumatic event, I am aware that there is an opportunity to seek professional psychological help at Howard Psychology clinic and I am aware that there will be no benefit for me or my school for participating in this research. I have also been provided with the researchers contact details who can be easily contacted or the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

#### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness  
(Where applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Translator  
(Where applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX 3: Interview schedule**

### **Interview schedule**

1. What is your understanding of school gang violence?
2. In your opinion, how do think schools become targets of gang violence?
3. Have you ever experienced gang violence (verbal or physical) on school premises and if so, how did you address it?
4. How does gang violence affect your performance in the work place?
5. Does the gang violence experienced in school affect you on a personal level as well?
6. Does the epidemic of school gang violence demotivate you as an educator in any way?  
If so how?
7. As an educator, do you have any reservations about confronting members involved in school gang violence?
8. What school disciplinary measures are in place, and do you feel that they are effective?  
Please give explanation for your answer.
9. What is the school policy or protocol regarding gang violence?
10. Who is responsible for safety in the school?
11. How does management respond to incidents (when you experienced gang violence in the school?)  
**Probe:** 6(a) Was the incident reported to the police?  
6(b) How did you feel when it was reported?  
6(c) How was the matter handled by the police?
12. Are there any school support services currently available for educators to help them cope with the experiences and effects of school gang violence?
13. In your opinion, how can school gang violence be addressed more effectively as a whole?

## **APPENDIX 4: Focus group**

### **Focus group discussion guide**

The focus discussion guide is not exhaustive. The questions serve to stimulate discussion among participants and the researcher as moderator will use responses to direct the discussion towards answering the research questions. Examples of such questions are listed below:

1. What is your understanding of gang violence?
2. How does the school respond to incidences of gang violence?
3. How do you mitigate incidences of gang violence?
4. How do you keep records on incidences of gang violence?
5. What support is offered to educators who are affected (directly or indirectly) by gang violence in the school?

## APPENDIX 5: School Safety Policy

### SCHOOL SAFETY POLICY: CHECKLIST

<b>Indicators/ Goals /Practices</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Explanation/ Documentation</b>	<b>Resources</b>
1.The school district ensures that its safety and security programme have clear direction and is effective at meeting its intended purpose in a cost-efficient manner					
2.The district regularly reviews the organisational structure and safety and security programme					
3.The school district has comprehensive plans and procedures to ensure the safety and security of learners and educators					
4. The district has developed a checklist for each educational facility that provide emergency procedures for example weapons in the school premises and the checklist is readily available in the school					
5. The district has developed the media response plan and distributed it each educational facility, which includes emergency contact numbers and provision for back up in case of emergency, evacuation procedures, and law enforcement.					
6. The district and school has developed a clearly written code of learners conduct and is communicated with both parents and learners.					
7.The district identifies and implement parent and					

community relationship to develop strategies to combat violence and promotes safety in the community					
8. The district implements appropriate violence and drug prevention campaigns or programs for each school.					
9. The district has crime watch and school safety hotlines available in all schools.					

**Adapted from: Basic Education Rights Handbook – Educations Rights – Chapter 17: School violence**