



**Violence Against Teachers: An Investigation of Teachers' Experiences of
School-Based Violence in the Umzinyathi District, KwaZulu-Natal**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master in Education in Social Justice in Education**

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

PIETERMARITZBURG

October 2022

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DECLARATION

I, **Thinasi Phelele Sithole**, declare that:

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Date

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Date

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



05 August 2020

Miss Thinasi Phelele Sithole (206515553)
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Dear Miss Sithole,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001365/2020

Project title: Violence Against Teachers: An Investigation of Teachers Experiences of School-Based Violence in the Umzinyathi District, KwaZulu Natal.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 04 August 2020 to our letter of 09 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has 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.

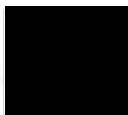
This approval is valid for one year until 05 August 2021

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

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INSPIRING GREATNESS

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father, Eclothe Nzula Sithole, a man who lived life as simply as possible and was so supportive of my venturing into the teaching fraternity.

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I begin by thanking God, the Almighty, for carrying me through this journey. His abundant blessings and everlasting grace gave me the strength to complete this study.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CSTL	Care and support for Teaching and learning
CJCP	Centre For Justice and Crime Prevention
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
DSD	Department of Social Development
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
NGO's	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSE	Norms and Standards for Educators
NSSF	National School Safety Framework
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SBV	School-Based Violence
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

ABSTRACT

Protecting learners from harm as well as promoting a safe and caring environment for learners are imbedded in teachers' core duty of providing learners with an enabling teaching and learning environment (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). However, with teachers experiencing violence at the hands of learners, the teachers' duty to care for learners and create safe learning spaces has been significantly compromised. This study sought to investigate the teachers' experiences of school-based violence of selected teachers in the Umzinyathi District, province of KwaZulu-Natal.

A qualitative, narrative research approach, located within the critical paradigm, was used to address the aim and objectives of the study. The data to respond to the key research questions of the study was generated through conflict mapping and focus group interviews with the selected teachers. The participants of the study were five (two male and three female) teachers from two rural secondary schools, who were selected through purposive sampling. The data generated were analysed using thematic analysis.

The study found that school-based violence perpetrated by learners against teachers was the most common form of violence, with institutional, interpersonal, and structural factors contributing to its prevalence. It also revealed that the experiences of violence make teachers feel unsafe and negatively affect their relationships with learners. The findings pointed to the fact that the development of safe schools was a collective responsibility, requiring the involvement of a range of stakeholders.

The findings of the study point to the fact that school-based violence against teachers is cancer to the education system. Thus, the perpetration of school-based violence against teachers by learners will see the demise of the South African education system if left unchecked. There is, therefore, an urgent need to address school-based violence and redirect the path of young people to that which will empower them to contribute to a socially just and peaceful society.

Keywords: school-based violence; teacher-learner relations; safe school

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“North West female teacher stabbed in her classroom”

Motsepe (2021)

“17-year-old killed teacher for not allowing him to jump the food queue”

Ramphele (2018)

1.1 Introduction

The above two headlines, extracted from media platforms, reveal the extent to which teachers experience violence perpetrated by learners in South African schools. These bring to the fore the ideas that violence against teachers may be on the increase and that schools may be increasingly becoming unsafe for both teachers and learners. The Global Peace Index, a monitoring tool used by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) to track and rank the status of peace in 163 countries and territories, placed South Africa at number 123 out of 163 in 2020, making it one of the most dangerous places on earth (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2018). In 2018, the IEP noted that a long history of violence socialised and adapted South Africa to a culture of violence. This culture of violence has infiltrated the schooling system, resulting in a surge of school-based violence (Dlungwane, 2017). Internationally, there is an outcry about the escalating rate of violence in schools (Ngidi, 2015). Burton (2008), Burton and Leoschut (2013) and Mncube and Harber (2013) suggest that South African schools have become sites of horrific violence. Singh and Stein (2014) assert that when one speaks of school-based violence, no school is excluded.

Safety is compromised due to violence in schools. Ngqela and Lewis (2012) posit that schools must be safe and secure sites, where effective teaching and learning can take place. However, the increasing occurrences of violence within schools negatively influence the quality of teaching and learning. Studies on school-based violence have focused mainly on violence experienced by learners and less attention has been dedicated to the teachers' experiences of violence (Grobler, 2018). Given the increase

in violence perpetrated in South African schools, this study sets out to investigate teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers. The does so by exploring and examining the learners' perceptions and experiences of violence against teachers and its consequences on teacher-learner relations and the quality of teaching and learning. In this regard, the study also sought to identify the forms of violence teachers experience, their perceptions of the causes and how safety in schools could be promoted.

1.2 Purpose, focus and aims

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of the prevalence and causes of school-based violence perpetrated by learners against teachers and its influence on teaching and learning. Thus, the study focuses on the teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers. Given my experiences of violence in the school in which I teach, I recognised the need to understand the teachers' experiences from a social justice perspective, given a range of factors which contribute to the prevalence of school-based violence. The study, therefore, sought to investigate the participants' perceptions of the prevalence, causes and consequences of violence perpetrated against teachers by learners. In this regard, the study also sought to identify how violence against teachers affected teacher-learner relationships and teaching and learning.

From a social justice perspective, the study sought to engage teachers critically in sharing their experiences of violence against teachers by moving outside their comfort zones to identify the factors that contributed to school-based violence as well as suggest how safety in school can be promoted (Boler, 2004). Boler (2004) explains that the comfort zones we occupy are characterised by dominant ideologies and cultural values that we have internalised unconsciously and not realising their impact on the construction of our realities.

1.3 Rationale for the study

My motivation to explore the teachers' experiences of violence is personal. As a high school teacher, teaching in a school in Msinga for the past nine (9) years, I cannot recall a year that the school has not experienced an incident of violence. The forms of violence that I have witnessed and experienced include bullying, swearing, harassment and physical attacks with weapons. My experiences are similar to those experienced in various studies on violence in schools in South Africa (see, for instance, Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Mncube & Harber, 2013). A trend has recently emerged with the outbreak of school-based violence in our school which has demonstrated and pointed to a change in learners' attitudes towards teachers. For instance, respect towards teachers has declined drastically and learners are increasingly becoming aggressive and violent towards teachers. Several incidents involving the physical assault of teachers have been recorded in my school and surrounding schools. Reported incidents on different media platforms reveal that the violence perpetrated by learners against teachers is escalating and should be a matter of concern.

Research on school violence in South Africa focuses mainly on violence against learners. Martin et al. (2013) note that most studies about school-based violence pay inadequate attention to violence against teachers by learners. The few studies, which focus on teachers, have focused on the manifestations and possible causes of violence against teachers (Govender, 2015; Dlungwane, 2017). Findings from these studies suggest that violence against teachers manifests mainly as verbal abuse and aggression. In addition, the studies have identified socio-economic factors, such as poverty, substance abuse and gangsterism, as the drivers of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers. Institutional factors, such as the style of discipline, school management and lack of policy implementation, were also identified as contributing causes of violence against teachers (Espelage et al., 2013; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

The studies conducted on school-based violence have focused on urban and peri-urban schools (Martin et al., 2013). This study focused on the schools in the rural area of

Msinga. The social, historical and political context of Msinga is harnessed in this study to understand the prevalence and manifestations of violence against teachers in this rural context. In this regard, I investigated how the teachers' experiences of violence influenced their relationships with their learners and the teaching and learning processes. In addition, I investigated how teachers navigate acts of violence and continue to teach learners who display violent behaviour toward them and continue to fulfil their role of creating safe, conducive learning spaces.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The key objectives of this study were to investigate:

- teachers' experiences of increased school-based violence perpetrated against teachers.
- the teachers' perceptions of the causes of increased school-based violence perpetrated against teachers.
- how teachers' experiences of violence influenced their relationships with their learners as well as the teaching and learning processes.
- teachers' perceptions of how school safety can be promoted and their role in creating safe schools.

1.5 Key research questions

The main research question for the study was:

- What are teachers' experiences of school-based violence perpetrated by learners against teachers?

The subsidiary questions for the study were:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the causes of school-based violence perpetrated by learners against teachers?
- How do these experiences of violence influence their relationships with their learners as well as the teaching and learning processes?

- What are teachers' perceptions of how school safety can be promoted and their role in creating safe schools?

1.6 Background to the study

With the rate of violence in South Africa being disturbingly high, the inherited culture of violence has led to violence spilling over into schools, resulting in a gradual increase in school-based violence over the years (Ngidi, 2018). Violence, however, is not unique to South African schools; it is a global concern (see, for instance, UNESCO, 2017; James, 2020; Turanovic & Siennick, 2022). The outcry about the escalating school violence in South Africa is predominately based on how a country, such as South Africa, with a constitution and legislation based on social justice aimed at protecting and upholding the rights and safety of citizens, could witness such an unfortunate development. South Africa, as a democratic country, advocates for the respect, protection and upholding of human rights, such as equality and human dignity, freedom of expression, access to basic education and an environment that is not harmful to the health or well-being of all citizens (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). To protect the rights and safety of learners, South Africa has promulgated several pieces of legislation, such as the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005). However, this does not seem to have assisted in arresting the increasing violations of learners.

The escalation of violence in South African schools seems to present a mirror image of a violent society, given that schools are a microcosm of society (Espelage et al., 2013; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Learners often mirror the behaviours they see and experience in their contexts. According to Khumalo (2019), South Africa has not adequately dealt with its violent past in many ways. With South Africa's schooling system influenced by the past system of apartheid, township and rural areas are characterised by poverty, high unemployment rates and crime (see, for instance, Bhorat et al., 2017; Tshabalala, 2014). Schools in these contexts often lack teaching

and learning resources, have inadequately qualified teachers and have low academic achievement rates (Govender & Killian, 2010). Dlungwane (2017) describes how violence can feed into the deteriorating culture of teaching and learning, compromising the safety of teachers and learners and rendering schools averse to effective teaching and learning.

Khumalo (2019) contends that, in South Africa, one in four learners has experienced violence at or near a school. The findings of several studies on school violence have revealed similar and common forms of violence prevalent in schools, namely, physical and verbal abuse, intimidation, vandalism, sexual harassment and gender-based violence, to mention a few (Espelage et al., 2013; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Ngidi, 2018; Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). The above-mentioned forms of violence are perpetrated not only by learners against learners or teachers against learners but also learners against teachers (see, for instance, Bass et al., 2016; Botha & Zwane, 2021).

Studies of school-based violence in the main take on a one-sided approach and focus on violence against learners; hence, this study sought to investigate violence against teachers, focusing on their experiences of violence perpetrated against them by learners. Pahad (2011) contends that limited research has been undertaken to investigate teachers' experiences of school violence. The limited research has revealed that teachers are often physically attacked, bullied, threatened, and humiliated by learners, which suggests that teachers often fall victim to various forms of abuse at the hands of their learners (see, for instance, Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Govender, 2015; Grobler, 2018; Shield et al., 2015).

The few studies undertaken on violence against teachers reveal the consequences and impact that violence has on teachers who have been subjected to violence. Teachers are affected at both a personal as well as a professional level (Shields et al., 2015; Taole & Ramorola, 2014). These studies reveal that, on a personal level, teachers experience low self-esteem, depression, frustration, helplessness and shame as a result of the experiences of school violence. Professionally, teachers' experiences of violence

impact negatively teaching and learning, as teachers may absent themselves to avoid teaching violent learners, develop negative attitudes towards violent learners or even opt to leave the teaching fraternity (see, for instance, Grobler, 2018; Ncontsa, 2013).

The negative impact of violence on teachers compromises their core responsibility of facilitating effective teaching and learning to produce expected and desired outcomes (Grobler, 2018). How teachers navigate through the violence perpetrated by learners to teach violent learners and create safe learning spaces is missing in the literature regarding school violence; hence, among others, this study sought to explore the teachers' experiences of school violence and their views on how safety could be promoted in schools and their role in creating safe schools.

1.7 Clarification of key concepts

1.7.1 School-based violence

According to MacNeil and Steward (2000), school violence comprises verbal and/or physical acts, which intentionally cause the victim pain, while they are under the supervision of the school. The National School Safety Framework (NSSF) of 2015 defines school-based violence as “acts of violence that not only occur on the school premises but travelling to and from school or at a school related event” (Department of Basic Education, 2015, p. 2). Forms of violence, that occur in schools are often physical and psychological, which may include assault (physical or sexual), bullying, rape, intimidation, sexual harassment, gangsterism, vandalism and theft (De Wet, 2016). This definition includes violence perpetrated against teachers, learners, non-teaching staff, parents and the community as it affects everyone connected to the school (De Wet, 2016). School violence compromises safety for everyone within the schooling environment and harms teaching and learning.

1.7.2 Teacher-learner relations

The common law principal of *in loco parentis* meaning ‘in place of a parent’, applies to the teachers’ legal duty to ensure the safety of learners under their supervision and

care (Prinsloo, 2005). Maithufi (1997), cited in Soldaat (2019), highlights two interrelated pillars of teachers towards learners, namely, teachers must care for and maintain order in the school. For this study, the notion of teacher-learner relations refers to relationships or points of touch between teachers and learners due to the obligations they have towards one another.

1.7.3 Safe school

The notion of a safe school can be defined as a school where there is an insignificant or no risk of harm (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). For this study, a safe school is a place where teachers, learners and non-educators can work without fear of intimidation, humiliation, harassment, or violence. It is the contention of this study that safe schools are important in that they promote the protection of everyone from violence, exposure to weapons, threats, theft, bullying, and the sale or use of illegal substances on school premises (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Soldaat (2019) contends that safe school environments are essential for effective teaching and learning.

1.8 Conceptual framework: A Pedagogy of Discomfort

To explore the teachers' experience of school-based violence directed towards teachers, a conceptual framework, drawing on the work of Boler and Zembylas, namely, a pedagogy of discomfort, was deployed.

A Pedagogy of Discomfort engages learners and teachers on issues of difference and social justice by unsettling their comfort zones (Zembylas, 2017). It is an approach to teaching and learning about issues related to oppression, suffering and social injustice while challenging individuals to critically analyse their ideological positions about race, gender, class and sexuality. To this end, any form of violence is an injustice and a form of oppression. In this regard, this study set out to investigate teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated against them by learners, as a form of injustice and oppression. By creating opportunities for teachers to share their stories of school-based violence, it is envisaged that the participants will develop an awareness of the

injustices and oppression associated with violence in schools. This can form the basis of a critical consciousness on how to address school-based violence, which is generated through the discomfiting experiences and emotions of the context of teachers. Boler and Zembylas (2003) assert that talking about issues such as violence can make people uncomfortable, but that a pedagogy of discomfort provides a useful device for creating safe spaces for engaging with sensitive issues, such as this one. Boler (2004) views the pedagogy of discomfort as a stepping stone towards social change and transformation. While Boler (2004) advocates for a pedagogy of discomfort as an approach that teachers can use in their classes to raise awareness of social injustice among learners regarding their and others' social realities, I chose to deploy it as a mechanism or device for engaging teachers on their experiences of school-based violence through a critical, reflexive engagement. A pedagogy of discomfort as a conceptual framework provides a useful device for engaging teachers on school-based violence. Given the fact that teachers are likely to exhibit strong emotional responses based on the threat of violence or actual experiences of violence, which can lead to a breakdown in relations between teachers and learners and an adverse or hostile learning and teaching environment, a pedagogy of discomfort provides a useful device for encouraging and facilitating engagement difficult issues, such as the prevalence of violence against teachers in South African schools.

In the section below, I present and discuss an overview of the four strands of the pedagogy of discomfort, as suggested by Zembylas (2007).

1.8.1 Politics of trauma

In his analysis of a politics of trauma, Zembylas (2007) foresees the notion to be challenging to educators seeking to develop empathy and reconciliation after events of trauma, as it sustains conflict through continuous thoughts and emotions of hatred, resentment and fear. To understand their perceptions, we need to understand the nature of the conflict and its consequences and the effects of trauma, given the fact that teachers must continue working with the learners who have been violent towards them.

1.8.2 Politics of compassion

After reviewing the emotional complexities of trauma, a politics of trauma is regarded as valuable and necessary in trying to understand the structural inequalities and experiences of vulnerable people. In investigating the teachers' experiences of violence, this study can contribute valuable knowledge to promote compassion, empathy and care as means of navigating through past historic experiences of violence and establishing safe schools conducive to learning and teaching.

1.8.3 Empathy, reconciliation and an ethics of care

Boler (1999) suggests an ethic of empathy and care as important and necessary for providing a safe space for learners and teachers to challenge and confront their cherished beliefs and assumptions about emotions. This can be achieved through exhibiting care towards one another and seeing the viewpoints of others on issues of conflict and emotion. Boler and Zembylas (2003) define an ethics of care in education as a relationship between, for instance, a caring teacher and the cared-for learner, and explain how teachers who practise an ethic of care view themselves as caring for their learners and creating safe learning spaces (Noddings, 1992).

The conceptual framework of a pedagogy of discomfort, trauma, empathy and an ethics of care will enable the teachers, who are participants in this study, to speak about their discomforting feelings and traumatic experiences, developing empathy and an ethics of care to navigate past the discomforts, build lasting relationships with their learners while fostering reconciliation, transformation and peace education (see, Chapter Three for a more comprehensive discussion).

1.9 Methodological approach

The study adopted a qualitative narrative inquiry in exploring the teachers' experiences of school-based violence perpetrated against them by learners. The qualitative narrative inquiry allowed me to access their perceptions of the causes of violence, the

impact of violence on their relationship with their learners and how they believed safety in schools could be promoted and what their role was in creating safe schools.

Data for the study was generated using conflict mapping and a focus group discussion. The stories shared through the narratives in this study exemplify the teachers' voices about their own experiences of violence in their terms. This further enabled me to obtain a more holistic picture of the complexities of the teachers' experiences of violence, such as trauma and navigating through the experiences of discomfoting emotions constructively to create safe learning areas.

1.10 Organisation of the study

This study is divided into six (6) chapters, whose summary is provided below.

Chapter One constitutes the preliminary chapter of the dissertation and presents and discusses the motivation, background, the research aims, questions and objectives of the study. In essence, this chapter provides an overview and background of the study.

Chapter Two reviews the local and international literature on the prevalence and manifestations of school-based violence. The chapter also focuses on violence directed to and perpetrated against teachers.

Chapter Three introduces the conceptual framework of a pedagogy of discomfort, empathy and ethics of care as a basis to analyse, interpret and understand the findings of the study.

Chapter Four presents the methodological and design considerations made to respond to the key research questions of the study. Sampling procedures, data collection techniques, data analysis methods and issues of trustworthiness are also discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Five presents and analyses the data generated through conflict mapping and focus group interviews. The presentation of the findings in this chapter follows specific themes and sub-themes that are generated following the strands of the key research questions of the study. However, it is important to indicate that the data generated sometimes went beyond the strands of the key research question and that such these were also discussed as part of the findings.

Chapter Six, which is the concluding chapter, presents a summary of the key study findings, linking them with the key issues and debates in the literature reviewed. In concluding, the chapter discusses the strengths, significance and limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future investigation or research.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a broad overview of the study as an introduction the study, providing the rationale, purpose, focus as well as background of the study.

In the following chapter, I present a review of the literature which provided an initial foundation for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines a variety of literature relating to school-based violence. The chapter begins by conceptualising school-based violence from a broad perspective as it manifests itself in schools internationally and locally while interrogating the policies and legislation put in place to curb it. With the main research question on teachers' experiences of violence against teachers, the review of literature then focuses on the teachers' experiences of the manifestations of violence against teachers in schools and their perceptions of the causal factors that contribute to school-based violence perpetrated against teachers. Literature on the effects of experiences of violence against teachers that can potentially influence teaching, learning and teachers' relationships with learners will also be reviewed. Lastly, the teachers' perceptions of how school safety can be promoted and their role in creating safe schools are also discussed.

2.2 Conceptualising school violence

Scholars differ in how they define violence. Lekalakala (2019) asserts that definitions vary extensively due to explanations reflecting an author's biases as violence is a broad concept missing explicitly defined concepts. Before I explore the definition of school violence, I must examine the meaning of violence, in general, to assist in setting up the foundations for the proper conceptualisation of the concept.

Khumalo (2019) cites the definition of violence by the University of New York (2007) which draws from three dimensions or aspects, namely, direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Direct violence intends to insult the basic needs of other people; structural violence is built into the social and world structures as exploitation, repression and cultural violence, which includes aspects of culture, such as religion and language, legitimising direct and structural violence. Such aspects of violence

maybe identified within the schooling context. School-based violence has also been defined variously by scholars. For instance, Burton (2008) defines school violence as “intentional harm or discomfort inflicted on learners, including incidents such as schoolyard fights, bullying and drug abuse” (p. 19) Similarly, Madikizela and Mncube (2014) define school violence as any behaviour of learners, teachers, administrators or non-school persons, attempting to inflict injury on another person or damage school property. The National School Safety Framework (NSSF) of 2015 defines school-based violence as “acts of violence that not only occur on the school premises but travelling to and from school or at a school related event” (Department of Basic Education, p. 2). From this perspective, school-based violence includes aggressive behaviour and victimisation in and out of the classroom and around the school perpetrated against teachers and by teachers to learners. UNESCO (2017, p. 8) defines school violence as incorporating “physical violence, with the inclusion of corporal punishment, psychological violence, including rape, harassment, bullying including cyberbullying”. Girmen et al. (2018, p. 703), as cited by Khumalo (2019), conceptualise violence as “extensive use of force against one’s self, another person, group and community climate”. From the various definitions above, it could be argued that school violence encompasses any form of violence that impacts individuals who are directly linked to the school.

2.3 Legislative and policy framework on school-based violence in South Africa

Since 1994, when South Africa embraced democratic rule, significant emphasis was placed on the importance of building a peaceful society and promoting dignity, respect and tolerance (Mampane, 2018). Some of the ways the government has put in place to protect the rights of, for instance, learners and teachers, have been the enactment and implementation of specific policy and legislation frameworks. Constitutionally, learning in a safe and secure environment is within an individual’s rights (Mgijima, 2014). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), whose Chapter is the Bill of Rights, grants all citizens the right to equality, human dignity,

freedom and security and to be protected from all forms of abuse and maltreatment (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). The Bill of Rights elevates and articulates the importance of respecting, protecting and upholding the rights of all citizens (Republic of South Africa, 1996a; Mampane, 2018).

The South African Schools Act (SASA) (84 of 1996) lays important foundations for protection against unjust treatment, as it advocates for the combating of racism, sexism and other forms of intolerance and discrimination (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). Section 10 of the South African Schools Act prohibits the use of corporal punishment in schools and, according to it, any teacher who administers corporal punishment to a learner shall be guilty of a crime (Republic of South Africa, 1996b).

The Employment of Educators Act (EEA) (76 of 1998) provides a regulatory framework for the employment of teachers (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Amongst other things, section 18 of the Act states that “unfairly discriminating against a learner on the bases of gender, race, class, disability, having a sexual relationship with a learner, assault causing grievous bodily harm constitutes serious misconduct on the part of the educator” (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

The Code of Professional Ethics, embedded in the South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act (31 of 2000), stipulates and articulates expected educator conduct, that is, what educators should not engage in and the consequences of misconduct (Republic of South Africa, 2000). To highlight examples of what is contained in the Act, for instance, educators must “avoid improper physical contact with learners, refrain from sexual relationships with learners and any form of harassment” (Mampane, 2018. p. 184). Any educator who fails to abide by this Code may undergo disciplinary procedures and if found guilty, can face dismissal and be removed from the register of educators (Mampane, 2018). This means that such a teacher cannot teach in or be employed in any school as a teacher.

Any form of violence violates a person and their human rights, just as violence perpetrated against teachers is a violation of their human rights, teachers are also protected by legislation. In this regard, like everyone else, “teachers have the right to work in a safe environment, an environment in which they feel valued, respected, actively supporting learners’ development and learning and where they are free from threat and harm” (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Violence against teachers violates their rights to dignity and life, as teachers lose their dignity and respect when assaulted and possibly their right to life if their life is lost in the process.

Unfortunately, the protection citizens of South Africa enjoy against violence, and school-based violence for this study, as stipulated by the Constitution, laws and policies, the reality is different. That is, often these protections are insufficient to protect those who need protection, teachers for this study. Mncube and Harber (2013), Burton and Leoschut (2013) and Ngidi (2018) contend that even though policy and legislation make provision for the respect, protection and upholding of the rights and safety of learners and teachers in schools, research on school violence reveals inadequate protection with the escalating prevalence school-based violence becoming a serious reality.

2.4 Prevalence and manifestations of school-based violence

A 2017 UNESCO report provides evidence of and contends that school violence is a global phenomenon. For instance, it is estimated that, worldwide, 246 million children and adolescents are exposed to some form of school violence annually (Greene et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2017). International studies on school violence report similar trends as those witnessed in South Africa, whether it is violence against teachers or learners. Diliberti et al. (2017) conducted a national survey themed “Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools 2015-16”, a survey that involved Grades 9 to 12 learners and sought to explore school violence. The findings of the study revealed that 8% of learners reported having been in a fight on the school grounds during the previous 12 months; 4,1% bringing a weapon to school in the form of a gun

or knife on one or more days 30 days before; and 6% having been threatened or injured with a weapon on the school grounds more than once in the 12 months before the survey (Diliberti et al., 2017).

Domestically, the results of the 2012 National School Violence Study by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) reported that 22.2% of learners had experienced violence in school within a year between August 2011 and August 2012 (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 2012). The results amount to approximately over a million learners who had experienced school-based violence. Furthermore, the findings revealed that 12.2% of the learners had been threatened with violence by someone while at school, while 6.3% of physical assault cases had been reported by one in 16 participants, and 4.7% had been sexually assaulted or raped at school with female learners being the most affected by school violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Grobler (2019) supports Mhlongo (2017) and argues that the prevalence of school-based violence in South Africa is higher than international trends.

In a media briefing, based on the findings of the study conducted by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) during the first quarter of 2019, the Minister for Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, revealed that 1 345 schools had been identified as violent hot spots in the country. Of the nine (9) provinces, Mpumalanga had the highest number of such schools (i.e. 414), followed by Gauteng at 251, KwaZulu-Natal at 202, Western Cape at 147, Eastern Cape at 99, Free State at 90, North West 80, Northern Cape 40 and Limpopo 22 (South African Council for Educators, 2019). The Minister further revealed that statistics for bullying were also increasing across all schools as the most common form of violence, which was common among no-fee paying public schools, with 48% of learners have reported being bullied weekly, compared with a quarter of those in independent schools (Naidu, 2019).

The statistics on violence in South African schools continue to reflect a gruesome picture of the prevalence in schools. The South African Crime Statistics for the First Quarter of 2021/2022 revealed that between April 2019 and March 2020, nine (9)

murders and 19 attempted murder cases were recorded by the South African Police Service, which was as a result of violence in schools, with 345 assault cases with the intent to cause grievous bodily harm and 546 common assault cases from schools around the country (Mitchley, 2021). Some reported incidents in 2020 of school-based violence on media platforms to include a Grade 9 pupil from Sizwe Secondary School in Germiston, who was stabbed to death by a Grade 11 pupil in March, and a fatal stabbing of an 18-year-old Grade 10 pupil from Reiger Park Secondary (Grobler, 2020). These incidents paint a picture of an unsafe schooling environment for learners and teachers, which can only undermine effective teaching and learning and healthy teacher-learner relations.

Shifting the focus to the prevalence of violence experienced by teachers, with the little but a growing body of research focusing on school-based violence against teachers, which suggests that teachers have also been bullied and victimised by learners (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; De Wet, 2010; Govender, 2015; Grobler, 2018; Shields et al., 2015;). The Health of Educators in Public Schools in South Africa 2016 (2016), surveyed 1 380 schools, of which 20% of the 20 000 teachers felt that schools were violent and unsafe places.

Burton and Leoschut (2013) reported, in their study, that 41% of teachers in South Africa reported having been verbally abused by a learner, 7.9% to have been physically assaulted and 3.3% to have experienced sexual violence that was perpetrated by learners. Other studies (for instance, Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; De Wet, 2010; Taole & Ramorola, 2014) have corroborated these findings reporting that teachers have also become victims of school violence, including mocking, intimidation, bullying and gang violence. This suggests that the phenomenon of school-based violence has branched out to claim not only learners but even teachers as victims. This is an observation that must concern all those who want schools to be safe places for effective teaching and learning and for building peaceful communities.

The findings of the SACE (School Based Violence report of 2017) revealed an alarming increase in the reports of learners attacking teachers (South African Council for Educators, 2017). For instance, shocking statistics revealed in the first four (4) months of 2018, Western Cape alone reported 60 attacks on teachers, which included threats, insults, sexual abuse and theft (South African Council for Educators, 2017). This report provided an unexpectedly alarming figure for the number of teachers who were victims of the incidents of school-based violence in the hands of their learners. According to the 2017/2018 report of the South African Council for Educators, 87 cases of verbal abuse, harassment, victimisation, defamation and intimidation as well as 27 cases of violence against teachers were reported to the Council. This, according to the Minister for Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, along with the Secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union, Mugwena Maluleke, is a cause for serious concern and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency (Dlamini, 2019).

Among the incidents reported, was the January 2018 murder of a teacher by a Grade 8 pupil in Kuruman, Northern Cape, and a learner who threw a stone at and injured a teacher, who was later expelled by the Gauteng Department of Education. In August 2018, two pupils were stabbed to death on the school premises, allegedly over a gang conflict at Kwamasakhane High School in KwaZulu-Natal (News24, 2018). In August 2019, a 24-year-old learner assaulted his unsuspecting female teacher by dragging her out of her car and attempting to drive the car over her, near the Chibelihle Combined School in iMpendle, (Shange, 2019). Included in The South African Crime Statistics for 2021/2022 were the cases of nine (9) teachers who had been murdered (Mitchley, 2021). These incidents, although the tip of the iceberg, suggests the escalating infiltration and contamination of the teaching and learning environment by violence.

This section on the prevalence of school-based violence from administrative statistics to empirical research provides a depressing picture of the escalating occurrences of violence in schools, especially violence directed against teachers who must ensure that learners learn and can enjoy their constitutional right to education.

Singh and Stein (2014) contend that no school is excluded when one speaks of school-based violence. A school is a common place for the manifestation of different forms of violent incidents such as bullying, intimidation, aggression, sexual harassment, physical violence and corporal punishment. South African schools have become sites of violence where violence is not just perpetrated between learners, but also between learners and teachers, and between rival schools and rival gangs (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Mncube & Harber, 2013; 2014).

Madikizela and Mncube (2014) highlight how manifestations of school-based violence are shifting from minor cases of bullying, teasing, and theft to seriously shocking cases of victimization involving rape or gang rape, assaults, shootings and stabbing to death. According to Liang et al. (2007), in Lekalakala (2019), bullying behaviours are the most common, male students are most at risk of being the perpetrators of violence and victimisation, while girls are more vulnerable to victimisation by males. Mncube and Harber (2012) concur as they posit that sexual harassment of female learners by males is prevalent in many schools. School-based violence is not one-sided but occurs among learners themselves, teachers to learners and as well as learners towards teachers, it reflects socially ingrained power disparities which exist both inside and outside the classroom (Mthiyane, 2013). Destruction of property in the form of vandalism is also a considerable challenge in schools by learners and members of the community (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

Besides learner-on-learner forms of violence, teachers are also implicated in violence against learners through unwelcomed corporal punishment, physical contacts such as fondling, sexual harassment and even rape (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). A study by Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) revealed that learner victimisation by teachers in the name of discipline was quite prevalent, with the use of corporal punishment by teachers on learners in itself an act of violence, furthermore calling learners' derogative words and swearing at learners is a common form of verbal abuse teachers enacted on learners (De Wet, 2016).

Having provided a broad investigation of school-based violence, locating this study in exploring teachers' experiences of violence against teachers, I will now focus on what literature produces on the prevalence of violence against teachers. Although a study by Burton and Leoschut (2013) was not focused on violence against educators, the study revealed that three out of five educators have been victims of verbal abuse by learners in South Africa. Similarly, Sibisi (2016) also found that one in every five educators in South Africa falls victim to learner-on-educator violence each year. Other similar research studies on school-based violence and violence against teachers within South Africa (De Wet, 2016; Dlungwane, 2017; Govender, 2015; Grobler, 2018) all have produced similar findings of how a very large portion of educators within the span of their careers have already experienced learner to educator violence.

Across the globe violence directed against teachers is a serious matter that has received little attention in literature according to Berlanda et al. (2019), not due to its non-occurrence but possibly due to under reporting. In an American Psychological Association (APA) (2016) study exploring classroom violence directed against teachers, (80 %) of the teachers in 48 states who participated in the study reported experiencing one form of school-based violence. The results revealed that (85%) of the teachers experienced school-related violence within the twelve months before the conduct of the study. Harassment topped the list as the most common type of violence against teachers followed consecutively by physical attack, intimidation and lastly objects being thrown by learners at teachers.

Violence perpetrated against teachers according to SACE (2019) is becoming common in primary schools across the country. Govender (2015) established that teachers teaching in primary schools experienced higher incidents of verbal abuse from learners which included swearing, back-chatting and physical aggression. However, high school violence still leads to violence against teachers with cases ranging from minor verbal assaults to serious cases of injuries and fatalities. Researchers identified the following as the manifestations of violence against teachers: verbal abuse where learners swear at teachers, harassment that included intimidation by learners, bullying

and physical violence. There have been incidents of a serious nature, which included brutal physical violence as well as assault with a deadly weapon, which could lead to injury or fatality. (Du Plessis, 2008; Dlungwane, 2017; Grobler, 2018; De Wet, 2016; Govender, 2015).

2.4.2 Gendered violence

Gendered violence is also a form of violence prevalent in schools and teachers are not exempt from being victims of this type of violence. According to the Department of Education (2015), school related gender-based violence is defined as “acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics” (p.2). According to Ngidi (2018), gender-based violence occurs in a multitude of ways and situations, its inclusive of physical force not only between male and female but between male and male. It seems that gender-based violence, acts of sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape are experienced at far higher levels by female learners, while males are generally found to experience higher levels of physical assaults (Ngidi, 2018).

Bhana et al. (2009) explain that gender inequality is a result of masculinity and power relations stating that men are biologically superior to women; boys see violent behaviour as being linked with manliness. Sexual harassment of girls in schools by male educators is one of the most underreported forms of gendered-based violence in schools (Bhana, 2015). Research depicts that male educators were found to be engaging in love relationships with learners, these relationships range from being secret to being commonly known to other learners (Mgijima, 2014; Bhana, 2015). Many learners thus fear that disclosing this form of sexual abuse by their teachers will result in negative consequences, such as being failed or kicked out of school.

In 2012, the South African Council of Educators (SACE) conducted a study on factors and environment facilitating/enhancing sexual-related misdemeanour between

teachers and learners, the report on teachers' misconduct, revealed that improper or sexual relationships with a learner were highest with 142 cases reported, followed by sexual misconduct assault/abuse and rape with 95 cases reported and sexual harassment with 89 cases reported. This comes at the foreground of teachers who are to act *in loco parentis* and policy and legislation that prohibits educators from such conduct, such as Section 17 of the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, which prohibits educators from having sexual relations with learners or committing any form of sexual or any form of harassment towards learners, however sexual misconduct against learners by their teachers is deemed to be escalating.

De Lange et al. (2012) in their findings of a study suggests that women educators and female learners are vulnerable to aggressive sexual behaviour from male educators and male learners within the school. Older male learners make sexual advances on usually younger female teachers and pass sexual comments towards teachers. Threats of boys forcing themselves on female teachers were also experienced by teachers in a study conducted by De Lange et al. (2012) on gender inequalities and gender-based violence in rural schools in South Africa. In addition, the study identified that female teachers received more harassment than their male counterparts and that new teachers to the profession felt more exposed to harassment by learners than older serving teachers. Pahad (2011) states that violence towards female educators tends to be verbal abuse whereas violence towards male teachers is more physical.

2.5 The basis of violence in schools

According to Govender (2015), school violence is a multifaceted phenomenon, which makes it difficult for researchers to identify its root causes. Violence, which manifests in schools, is influenced by a range of issues, including poverty and resultant deprivation, normative issues of masculinity, gendered inequalities, patriarchy, and gender and social norms (UNESCO, 2017). Violence in schools originates from a catalogue of sources. Researchers assert that common situations and circumstances, such as peer humiliation, being exposed to violence, misuse of alcohol and drugs, the

inability of schools to enforce policies that deal with discipline and violence, abuse and instability within the family, high crime-rates in some communities which then spills over to the schooling environment, are some of the factors which contribute to the escalating prevalence of violence in schools (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; De Wet, 2010; Dlungwane, 2017; Espelage et al., 2013; Grobler, 2018; Shields et al., 2015; Taole & Ramorola, 2014). The section below discusses some of these sources to provide a context for the investigation of the school-based violence perpetrated against teachers.

2.5.1 Violence in society

The escalation of violence in South African schools presents a mirror image of a violent society, within which schools constitute a microcosm of society (Espelage et al., 2013; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). This can be justified by statistical information released by the Department of Police in 2019 in which approximately 20 336 people were murdered in one year nationally (Grobler, 2019). This paints a depressing picture of the impact of outside crime on the schooling system and how it has influenced the surge of violence within schools. Learners often mirror the behaviours that they see and experience within their contexts, be it their families, schools and communities. In this regard, Pahad and Graham (2012) contend that “schools are microcosms of the broader communities in which they are located” (p. 10). This means that schools are a subset of and resemble the qualities of the communities within which they are located. Khumalo (2019) argues South Africa has inadequately dealt with its violent past in many ways. That is, the effects of the country’s apartheid past are still visible and have been difficult to get rid of in many aspects of its people’s lives. Ngidi (2018) argues that apartheid resulted in the development of a generation of violent communities, often characterised by a high level of violence, and that violence in schools is thus reflective of a combination or mixture of that present and the inherited ingredients of the apartheid past. During apartheid, South African schools became extremely violent when black learners were forced to oppose and challenge an education system that favoured white interests (see, for instance, Mouton et al., 2012). To challenge the

imposed system of education, learners protested and rioted carrying guns and fighting to express their anger and rage (Van der Merwe, 2014). This mirrors what is currently happening in schools, where learners have adopted violence as a way of dealing with the societal issues that they feel need to be addressed.

Schools in South Africa have in the past frequently been disrupted by violence and unrest, in reaction to the repressive political situation in the country (Zulu et al., 2004). For this reason, Vally et al. (1999) suggest that present-day violence within the education system in South Africa must be understood and researched within the context of this history of political and economic disadvantage and inequality. In other words, to understand the genesis of what we see, we need to understand the historical path that the country has travelled to where it is today. For instance, the racial segregation of the schooling system gave birth to severe faults of inequality, with the township and rural schools hit harder by socioeconomic disadvantage, including within communities experiencing inadequate health, housing and sporting services (Govender & Killian, 2010).

Benette (2008) shares similar views when suggesting that for people who are exposed to chronic poverty, violence often becomes an attractive option, which may be the case for young people from some townships and rural schools. In this regard, the violence within the community is transmitted to schools, often morphing into school-based violence. In South Africa, township and rural schools are often characterised by overcrowding, dilapidated buildings, shortage of resources, such as textbooks, teaching materials and facilities, high crime rates and violence, which contributes to poor academic performance (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012). This, unfortunately, suggests that, in South Africa, the type of school the learner attends often determines the quality of education that they receive (Tinswalo, 2014). For instance, the influence of peer pressure, substance abuse and easy access to alcohol and drugs in the community also contributes to the increase in school violence (Tinswalo, 2014). Burton and Leoschut (2012) and Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2014) assert that easy access to alcohol and drugs, gangsterism, as well as firearms, have created a high-risk profile for

schools, especially those in socioeconomically depressed contexts. This suggests that schools and classrooms may be gradually becoming havens of violence, with alcohol and drugs being the most common driving cause for the escalating resistance against authority (Mncube & Harber, 2013).

In her study, Mthiyane (2013) argued that the other forms of violence that are a reflection of the wider society, which also exist in schools, relate to the racial and ethnic discrimination towards the 'other', based on cultural differences or the colour of their skin. Harber (2004) believes that some schools have become places where hatred and intolerance becoming normalised. The racial and ethnic tension and violence from communities surrounding schools have, therefore, been adopted by learners as a mechanism for resistance and survival. For instance, within communities, the ongoing xenophobic attacks that young people continue to witness must have contributed to the preference for school-based violence as a remedy for social problems (see, for instance, Ngidi, 2018).

2.5.2 Family dynamics

Family dynamics may also be a contributing factor to learners becoming violent (Shea, 2013), which suggests that learners may have learned to deploy violence to resolve issues from the ways of their families, especially non-clear families. Shea (2013) describes non-nuclear family contexts as comprising grandparents, relatives, or a woman or a man living with one or more children, whereas a nuclear family has parents that live with their children at their homes and who are usually married. Non-nuclear families may include child-headed households, which have become a new reality for many school-going children in South Africa. Krug et al. (2002) have argued that the absence of a parental figure and an appropriate family support structure could affect young people's social and emotional functioning and behaviour. Although this is an argument that must be trodden carefully, it suggests that the stability of families is important for instilling specific values and practices in children.

Gasa (2010) describes how modelling behaviour in youngsters is mostly influenced by the family, as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is learnt within the family as the primary context for a child. Thus, the SACE (2011) associates exposure to violence and crime within the family with the increase in the number of young people who have become perpetrators of violence in schools. In this regard, young people who are predisposed to violence may become instruments for enacting violence, which will sustain the idea that abuse breeds abuse (Burton & Leoschut, 2012).

Burton and Leoschut (2012) posit that violence is a reflection of the socioeconomic conditions in which children have been raised. This includes several conditions and circumstances under which young people live, such as poverty, child-headed household contexts, and lack of access to necessities, such as food, clothing and adequate shelter. Opic et al. (2013) contend that a child that is healthy and lives in a healthy, favourable environment, is most likely to do well and excel as opposed to a child who is hungry and tired. This means that the family conditions under which young people are raised may be a determining factor regarding participation in violence.

2.5.3 Power relations and discipline

Teachers draw power from the positions of authority that they hold and may abuse such power to make life difficult for learners. South African schools have traditionally been authoritarian, often requiring learners to obedient, passive and conforming, with learners who challenge the status quo being regarded as defiant and ill-disciplined (Harber, 2004), which may cause tensions between teachers and learners.

Teachers must care for and protect learners, although they sometimes betray their duty of care by abusing learners (see, for instance, Mashaba, 2015). Teachers have often found themselves not knowing how to respond to or confront encounters with violence. To this day, their inability to deal with violence has led to inappropriate ways of discipline in resolving matters, which has often led to the mistreatment and exclusion

of learners (Davids & Waghid, 2016). This explains why there the use of corporal punishment has persisted as a means for maintaining discipline in schools despite it being unlawful and banned by the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). This suggests that teachers often fall short of relating properly with some learners, which may cause retaliation by learners through undesirable ways that often put teachers at the receiving end of school-based violence. In this regard, learners are often made to feel that they need to protect their dignity from the teachers' violation and often retaliate violently towards their teachers. The inability of schools to enforce policies to deal with challenges regarding discipline has opened a gate for the prevalence of violence in a school (Espelage et al., 2013).

2.5.4 Toxic masculinity

Masculinity is a behaviour associated with the dominant norms of manliness (Mthiyane, 2013). The socialisation of males to believe that they are superior to females, with ideologies such as agreeing that it is normal for men to act violently and it is their duty as African men to put girls and women in their places feeds into boys thinking that it is acceptable to treat girls and female teachers as inferior (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012). This kind of behaviour develops into boys' construction of masculinity, with some believing that the toxic display of manliness is acceptable.

In a study conducted by Toale (2016), the bullying of female teachers by boys in school was associated with how they had been brought up to understand and respect women, which refers to how they had been socialised. Unsubstantiated beliefs of masculinity seem to increase the chances of boys engaging in school-based violence. For instance, in a society where boys have been taught to regard women as weak, this creates a gap for boys to not take instructions from their female teachers, which is what Grobler (2018) has characterised as the subordination of female teachers through toxic forms of masculinity prevalent in schools and society. This challenges female teachers' authority and position in the school hierarchy. However, girls too have also victimised teachers, especially young novice female teachers who are perceived as 'soft' become

targets. Girls may, thus, challenge the gender roles prescribed by society. Girls engage in violent attacks against teachers often as a way to display powerfulness and bravery over an authority figure such as a teacher. The literature on masculinities reveals similar findings regarding the causes of violence against teachers linked to the unprofessional misconduct of male educators' sexual relationships with learners (De Lange et al., 2012; Bhana et al., 2009). In this regard, boys often assume that girls become privileged academically due to their engaging in sexual relationships with their teachers and that the teachers are thus using these power imbalances to steal their girlfriends (Bhana et al., 2009; De Lange et al., 2012). This means that boys may thus become aggressive towards their teachers and disregard their authority to claim back their power.

Bester and Du Plessis (2010) posit that a significant number of learners who are often prone to violence are faced with poor academic achievements. It is said to be the ill-mannered, misbehaving and academically challenged learners who are usually involved in violent related incidents, as they continuously experience failure, violent learners envy their peers' success, disrupt lessons and blame teachers for their academic failure (Ngidi, 2018).

2.6 Effects of school-based violence on teachers

School violence hurts the well-being of teachers as it affects teachers on personal and professional levels. Empirical studies from Bester and Du Plessis (2010), Mncube and Harber (2013) and Dlungwane (2015) have reported that violence hurts teachers on emotional and professional levels. Violent incidents in schools are resulting in stressful experiences, over and above the expectations of their profession, which teachers have reported as stressful. Bester and Du Plessis (2010), Espelage et al. (2013) and Grobler (2018) mention stressors that teachers encounter at schools as acts of violence whether as witnesses or as victims these include stabbings, shootings, and personal attacks from learners, traumatic experiences and psychological distress. The long-term effects, according to Govender (2015), are more severe and emotionally and psychologically

embedded in the victim of trauma. Hamber and Lewis (1997) define trauma as “an event that overwhelms an individual’s coping resources”, which includes events leading to injury or death, or the possibility of injury or death. The psychological symptoms of trauma, according to De Wet (2010), Espelage et al. (2013), Taole and Ramorola (2014), Shields et al. (2015) and Khumalo (2019), include stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, helplessness, frustration, guilt, shame, anger, feelings of worthlessness and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), can be experienced by the teachers who have been exposed to violence. Teachers may also socially isolate themselves from their family, friends and colleagues, due to the traumatic violent experiences which negatively impact their relationship with those closest to them, including their teachers (Shields et al., 2015). Based on the impacts of violence on teachers, Govender, 2018), has classified teachers as a vulnerable fearful, demotivated and demoralised group.

2.7 Teacher agency and resilience

Kaminier and Eagle (2010) suggest that people deal with traumatic experiences and that, during that adaptation process, they develop a coping mechanism against the consequences of traumatic feelings. Individuals often avoid engaging in discussions about their experiences with anyone, even at a professional level; hence, teachers may choose not to report acts of violence perpetrated against them. Govender (2015) and Dlungwana (2017) concur that violence against teachers is often under-reported due to them being afraid of being labelled as being incompetent, blaming themselves for the attack and their dignity being dented as they are usually assaulted in front of their learners.

Howard and Johnson (2004), cited in Grobler (2018), characterise two types of teachers in respect of dealing with violence. On the one hand, some teachers focus on the wrongfulness of the situation in which the violence has occurred and adopt a deficit view of the challenges faced. Howard and Johnson (2004) further explain that this category of teachers often stress and burn out. On the other hand, there are those

teachers who display resilience and cope well under highly stressful situations (Howard & Johnson, 2004). They adapt well to circumstances where others do not. Rauch et al. (2010) define resilience as an individual's ability to adapt to and recover from adverse circumstances. Teachers who show high levels of resilience, according to Howard and Johnson (2004), are those who display a degree of recovery from post-traumatic violence and still find meaning and purpose in their teaching. Resilience is an ongoing process that involves a person's thoughts, actions, and behaviours where choices are made to adapt and change to positive attitudes and thought patterns. Ungar (2012) asserts that assessing an individual's resilience from traumatic experiences must be on the change and empowerment they will gain from a bad experience. The findings from a study by Ungar (2012) revealed that victims of violence increased psychological functioning due to how well they dealt with the stressors. That is, they were expected to practise or exercise personal agency to avoid being drawn back to their trauma.

Howard and Johnson (2014, p.5) identify the following as traits of a teacher who has resilience: 1) They find appropriate ways of responding to learners with violent behaviours; 2) They are effective in implementing strategies to deal with challenging learners; 3) They are effective in time management and managing curriculum coverage; and 4) They respond with sensitivity and care to learners' personal issues and needs, while emotionally protecting themselves. Contrary to the above, teachers with less or no resilience and who are at risk of not coping due to trauma show challenges in working with learners with behavioural problems. They understand the need to request assistance when dealing with disciplinary problems. They are overcome by learners' needs and personal problems. Lastly, they take time off work due to occupational stressors (Howard & Johnson, 2014, p. 6).

High self-efficiency, personal agency, problem-solving skills, and significant relationships with friends and family are what Howard and Johnson (2014) characterise as the protective factors from which resilient teachers draw to become teachers who can deal with and adapt to unfavourable situations. These teachers work

with various strategies associated with resilience to reduce the effects of school-based violence, such as support from friends, family, and colleagues, avoiding difficult learners, being able to draw the line between professional and personal issues and prayer (Maring & Koblinsky, 2012).

2.8 Roles and responsibilities of teachers

Berlanda et al. (2019) argue that the role of the teacher extends to more than transmitting knowledge to their learners; they become role models to their learners and have a responsibility to protect and develop a caring relationship with them. In addition, the learner-teacher relationship plays a role in contributing to the development of a conducive atmosphere for effective teaching and learning. According to Govender (2015), Dlungwane (2017) and Grobler (2018), teachers must protect and care for learners in their care, as stipulated in the SASSA (84 of 1999). That is, a teacher is placed *in loco parentis*, which according to Berlanda et al. (2019), means that they are responsible for the child who is in their care.

2.8.1 Teacher-learner relations

The violence perpetrated against teachers has a significant impact on teacher-learner relationships. However, a distinction must be made between how violence could lead to unhealthy teacher-learner relationships and where teacher conduct and behaviour may lead to violence.

2.8.1.1 Violence leading to poor teacher-learner relations

According to the findings of a study by Bester and Du Plessis (2010), the participants reported that teachers often developed negative attitudes towards learners who perpetrated violence against others. The participants acknowledged the fact that they often ignored aggressive and violent learners and did not deal with them professionally. The study further revealed that teachers often developed hatred and resentment towards such learners, which suggested a total breakdown of teacher-learner relationships, making it difficult for teachers to perform their professional duties. This

undermined trust and respect between teachers and learners, leading to the erosion of caring practices and an increase in school-based violence (Govender, 2015; Grobler, 2018).

2.8.1.2 *Teacher attitudes and behaviour*

Teachers' conduct, attitude and behaviour may lead to violence (see, for instance, De Cordova et al., 2019). Govender (2015) and Ngidi (2018) assert teachers often pay attention to learners who are academically inclined, well-mannered and behaved while labelling struggling learners as mischievous, rude and violent. The labelled learners are often reprimanded due to behavioural problems; hence, they see themselves as being targeted and picked on by their teachers. As a way of dealing with being a target of teacher ridicule, Govender (2015) reports that learners often retaliate with rude remarks and violence as a way of standing up for themselves. Responding to the overwhelming feelings of anger, frustration and hatred, teachers may react violently towards the learners, verbally abusing swearing at and using derogatory words against learners (Shields et al., 2015). Accompanied by verbal abuse, aggressive behaviour and corporal punishment are used by teachers to respond to the violent behaviours of their learners. Khumalo (2019) asserts that teachers often feel that they are losing the battle against violence due to their lack of effective ways of disciplining learners.

2.8.2 *Influence on teaching and learning*

School violence often has a devastating impact on the effectiveness and stability of teaching and learning (Singh & Steyn, 2014), which is of great concern. In their study Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) contend that constant violence often undermines effective teaching, leading to a loss of learning and teaching time as constant disruptions often require teachers to attend to the incidents, which take their attention away from the core of their professional duties.

Violence perpetrated against teachers often undermines teachers' well-being and safety (Espelage et al., 2013), where teachers confirm that they are reluctant to go to school

after having experienced incidents of violence and are hampered from performing their professional duties. High levels of absenteeism and failure to see to classes due to fear were some of the consequences that the teachers who experienced violence displayed as a survival mechanism (Espelage et al., 2013). This also compromised the quality of teaching and learning, including academic performance, as learners were often not effectively taught and the work was often not completed (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; Dlungwane, 2017; Govender, 2015).

The experiences of school-based violence by teachers may lead to a loss of passion and interest in the profession, low morale and lack of motivation, loss of confidence in themselves as teachers, a lack of enthusiasm towards teaching and thus a feeling of no desire to continue, are some of how teachers have characterised the consequences of exposure to stressors caused by violence (Dlungwane, 2017; Grobler, 2018; Khumalo, 2019).

2.8.3 Addressing school-based violence and creating safe schools

Having reviewed the literature on the teachers' experiences of responding to violence, in this part of the chapter, I present a review of how the Department of Basic Education has responded to address school-based violence and review the approaches advocated relating to the plan of the Department of Basic Education to address violence in schools. The South African government and the Department of Education have implemented several policy and legislation frameworks to ensure the respect, protection and upholding of the learners' and teachers' rights (Makota & Leoschut, 2016). However, Burton and Leoschut (2013) and Ngidi (2018) assert that a plethora of programmes and strategies implemented to curb the surge of violence in schools have been disjointed and have not lived up to what was expected of them.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed some of the pieces of legislation and policies that have been developed to protect ordinary South African citizens from various forms of violence, and those that are intended to protect both the learner and the teacher.

Policies and acts that are intended to curb violence in schools, as discussed earlier, include the Constitution of the Republic of South African (Act 108 of 1996), which contains the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2) (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996) (Republic of South Africa, 1996c) and the Employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998) (Republic of South Africa, 1998). However, the escalating number of incidents of violence and crime in South African schools is undermining the realisation of the policy promises (Davids & Waghid, 2016).

In its effort to combat school-based violence, the Department of Basic Education introduced the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) programme, which is a priority intervention to improve and sustain the health of learners (Grobler, 2018). The purpose of the CSTL is to provide safe, gender-sensitive spaces, and zero-tolerance areas for discrimination, violence, psychological abuse, sexual abuse and vandalism (Department of Basic Education 2010, p. 12). With the increased cases of violence continuing post the implementation of the CSTL Framework, in 2015, the Department of Basic Education realise a need to build upon the CSTL framework and incorporate and implementation of the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) 2015 for safer schools. The NSSF guides schools to make special schools safer across the country (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

Against the backdrop of the policies, legislation, and other departmental strategies, it is vitally important that the school implements its whole-school strategies to reduce incidents of school-based violence. The literature on school safety elevates the need for a whole-school approach in dealing with the issues of violence in schools (Dlungwane, 2017; Ngidi, 2018). The literature also suggests that schools must have clear plans for responding to school-based violence. These strategies should, among other things, promote a climate of safety, peace and tolerance within schools and classrooms, a culture of respect for the rights of all individuals, while enabling social and academic growth (De Wet, 2007).

Section 20 of the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) requires that a school governing body must develop a code of conduct for learners and ensure that they abide by it (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). The code of conduct for learners must be in alignment with the Constitution as the supreme law, and be aimed at establishing a purposeful learning and teaching environment (Mthiyane, 2013). In addition, the code of conduct for learners must also, amongst other things, have clear violence prevention mechanisms to deal with the learners who may perpetrate violence against their fellow learners, teachers and non-teaching staff (Burton, 2013; Espelage, et al., 2013;).

2.8.4 School and classroom management

Shafii and Shafii (2001) point out that management and teachers in schools that work together often experience lower rates of violence. Mthiyane (2013) supports this argument as he underlines the importance of school leadership in turning around an unconducive violent schooling environment into one that promotes safety and conforms to democratic and lawful management styles.

A key factor in the reduction of violent behaviour among learners, according to Espelage, et al. (2013), is effective classroom management, which incorporates social and emotional learning; hence, a lack of effective classroom management may ultimately lead to violence. The American Psychological Association (2016) describes effective classroom management as inclusive of the following practices: having rules that are clearly stated, consistency, modelling and rewarding of positive behaviour and showing care toward learners. Espelage et al. (2013) suggest that there must be good effective communication between learners and teachers as it plays an important role in building relations that lead to understanding, respect, trust and care. The literature on school-based violence suggests that teachers may show frustrations regarding being expected to effectively deal with violent learners when they have not been trained to do so (Govender 2015; Mthiyane, 2013; Ngidi, 2018). That is, the literature suggests that the constant development and support provided to the teachers for curriculum

implementation may be futile if there is no training or support for teachers to deal with aggressive learners.

Walker (2013) concurs with the above in his suggestion that the education system must have effective teacher preparation programmes to provide the next generation of teachers with better skills for managing conflicts before they escalate. Burton (2008) contends that appropriate steps must be taken to provide teachers with the appropriate skills for dealing with situations of violence that may arise in their classrooms and identify and prevent violent situations. Introducing skills training in classroom contexts would allow learners and teachers alike to familiarise themselves with appropriate ways of reacting to possible violent situations.

Classroom management can be associated with the interconnectedness to instil discipline and order in the classroom and within the school. The code of conduct intends to guide learners on expected behaviour and the sanctions that they can expect if they violate it (Sibisi, 2016). In this regard, schools must establish the difference between discipline and punishment when dealing with corrective measures for unacceptable learner behaviour. Differentiating discipline and punishment Mthiyane (2013) suggests that discipline is the practice of training people to obey rules which are used positively to correct a mistake. It involves teaching children how to make better choices in the future. While punishment is the act of inflicting pain and making a child suffer for breaking the rules, Mthiyane (2013) defines it as the act of making a child pay for their mistake.

Jansen and Matla (2011), in Lekalakala (2019), are of the view that punitive approaches have been adopted as the most appropriate strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. However, the use of corporal punishment in schools is continuing irrespective of it having been abolished under Section 10 of the South African Schools Act, making it unlawful to administer it to learners (Republic of South Africa, 1996b; Moris, 2001, in Ngidi 2018). Dlungwane (2017), Govender (2015) and Grobler (2018) have argued that the use of corporal punishment is still rife in schools.

In their justification for administering corporal punishment, teachers often argue that the abolishment of corporal punishment has created a vacuum in the effective management of serious learner misconduct (Lekalakala, 2019). Some teachers agree that corporal punishment is wrong, but do not always know what other methods to implement in its place (Ngidi, 2018).

The participants in a study conducted by Ngidi (2018) advocated for the use of corporal punishment as they believed that it had the potential to shape their lives and make them behave at school, moulding them into the people they are today. It could be argued that the socialisation of teachers has played a significant part in disciplining learners, they may believe that they are disciplining learners while they are punishing them. Grobler (2018) argues that corporal punishment may perpetuate violence; it is a continuation of oppressive conduct upon learners, when learners resist the unjust practices, they are often seen as disruptive or disobedient. Some learners are well aware of their rights and provoke and bully teachers with the knowledge that teachers will not hit them or fight back, however, in some cases, teachers respond violently to threats of violent (Madikizela-Madiya & Mncube, 2014; Toale, 2016).

Both teachers and learners must understand that rights come with responsibilities. That is, learners must be taught responsibility with the understanding that their violent actions towards teachers will have dire consequences. On the other hand, teachers must be mindful of not violating learners' rights in the form of abuse and harassment and learners and must also limit actions that may trigger learners to respond violently towards them. Dlungwane (2017) posits that both teachers and learners are protected by rights, teachers must not violate learners' rights to protect their rights, by unlawful acts and punishment. Mgijima (2014) and Govender (2015) dismiss claims for the advocacy of corporal punishment to instil discipline as findings in their studies revealed that even though schools administered corporal punishment learner misconduct and violence did not decrease but rather escalated.

The interventions that seek to reduce and eliminate aggressive behaviour in learners include effective management strategies that will allow the teacher to have control in the classroom (APA, 2013), a holistic commitment by teachers and the SMT to encourage positive discipline, including the values of respect, peace, social justice and dignity (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

2.8.5 Key stakeholder roles in addressing school-based violence

In using the ecological systems theory to conclude her research study on the teachers' experiences of violence perpetuated by primary school learners, the findings of the study by Govender (2015) revealed that violent behaviour occurs due to the interplay of the individual, family, school, community and societal factors. Hence, the suggestion of oral collaboration is a vital intervention strategy to curb violence against teachers. This collaborative action involves parents, school management, the community and the Department of Basic Education working together and instilling a positive change in the behaviour of learners towards their teachers (South African Council for Educators, 2018).

Mgijima (2014), Govender (2015) and Khumalo (2019) agree that community leaders should collaborate and develop social networks to address structural disadvantages, such as poverty, abuse, and unemployment while implementing community initiatives that build community values, economic development, employment programmes, parental training must assist reduce violence amongst the youth. Partnerships with local government, traditional leaders, healthcare professionals, the police, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders, could serve as a bridge between the increased incidents of school-based violence and the eradication of violence in schools. A participant from a study conducted by Mgijima (2014) emphasised the need for schools to collaborate with traditional leaders and stated "If the principal does not get the chiefs involved, he will not succeed in stopping violence ... the chiefs know the troublesome people" (p. 7). This means that the issue of school-based violence is not an isolated matter; it is a phenomenon that requires collaborative action.

2.8.6 Creating safe schools

Another approach to addressing violence in schools is the creation of safe schools. One of the questions this research seeks to answer is how teachers can create safe spaces for learners. Addressing school-based violence, Reynolds et al. (2014) called for schools and teachers to create safe and secure learning environments and creating safe schools. The Department of Basic Education has developed policies that outline the responsibilities of teachers regarding the ethics of care and support in schools. These have been included in the Norms and Standards for Educators (NSE) and the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Conceptual Framework (Department of Basic Education, 2000).

A safe school promotes teaching and learning and ensures the safety of learners and staff, and creates an emotionally, physically, socially and academically secure environment with a shared understanding among all persons in the school (Smylie et al., 2015). Bester and Du Plessis (2010) assert that teachers must create schools and classrooms as spaces where learners can engage freely with their teachers on school and private matters. Grobler (2018) suggests that schools can also be areas of protection and care with the creation of ethics of care. Grobler (2018), discusses Noddings' (1992) ethics of care and introduces other dynamics many researchers have failed to look into. The ethic of care in relationships is enhanced as learners realise that the caring teacher's commitment is to meet the learning needs of their learners and understand and accept each student as they are and seek involvement in the lives of learners (Zembylas, 2002; 2015).

The nature of teacher-learner relationships paves a way for academic, emotional and social support and can lead to healthy personal relationships. The positive connections created between both teachers and learners have the potential to generate social capital for effective academic work to occur in classrooms as a safe schooling environment (Opdenakker et al., 2012). Murphy and Torres (2014) are of the view that the culture

of care should be expressed at multiple levels of a school, amongst management, teachers, learners, non-teaching staff, parents and other stakeholders. That is, working collaboratively at all levels may foster a sense of shared common goal and responsibility for a conducive safe learning environment.

Louis et al. (2016) assert that schools must restructure to become caring communities by “engaging the school community in the vision and challenge of being a caring school and cultivating the larger systems of caring relationships to which school members belong, such as parent partnerships, and partnerships and projects with community organizations” (p. 320). Caring in schools is important for creating environments where learners can thrive and develop their full potential. Seashore Louis et al. (2016) and Grobler (2018) share similar views on the fact that caring is a powerful mechanism for creating long-lasting relationships and addressing the needs of learners. With that said, caring schools can showcase ways of transforming the status quo and creating social change regarding school-based violence and, more especially, violence against teachers.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined empirical research undertaken internationally and in South Africa on school-based violence, and the manifestation and causes of violence in schools. The literature reviewed provided insights into the teachers’ experiences of violence. The impacts of experiencing violence and approaches to combating school violence in creating safe schooling were reviewed.

The next chapter presents and discusses the conceptual framework that was used to analyse, interpret and understand the experiences of teachers of school-based violence perpetrated by learners against them.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

As explained previously, this study sought to investigate the teachers' experiences of school-based violence perpetrated against them by learners. In doing so, I drew on the work of Megan Boler and Michalinos Zembylas, specifically, their conception of a pedagogy of discomfort. A pedagogy of discomfort has its origins in the work of Boler (1999), which was further developed by Boler and Zembylas (2003) as a pedagogical framework. The purpose of the framework was to promote social justice education by engaging students and teachers on issues of difference and social injustice by unsettling their normative beliefs and values (Zembylas, 2017). The rationale for adopting this framework was based on the fact that I wanted to understand what the teachers' perceptions revealed about the nature and consequences of violence perpetrated against them by learners, as this has critical implications for how we think about creating socially just and safe schools for all.

In this chapter, I explain and discuss Boler and Zembylas' (2003) conception of a pedagogy of discomfort and demonstrate how this conceptual framework informed this research study.

3.2 A pedagogy of discomfort

Boler (2004) explains that a pedagogy of discomfort promotes social justice education in that it can unsettle normative beliefs and dominant cultural values, which perpetuate social injustice based on race, class, or gender, you name them. A pedagogy of discomfort is a critical approach to teaching and learning about social injustice, as engagements with issues of oppression, regarding our social positioning as oppressor or oppressed, can trigger strong emotions, thereby evoking discomfort. In this study, I

drew on this conception to engage teachers on the prevalence, causes and consequences of violence perpetrated against them by learners. In this regard, I assumed that the discomfort this evoked amongst the participants could reveal valuable insights about school-based violence, particularly regarding the teachers' views on the contributing factors to violence in schools, as well as how to address this to create safe schools. A pedagogy of discomfort facilitates critical inquiry in terms of the emotional investments that shape the teachers' attachments to dominant beliefs and values (Boler, 2004). Boler (2004) asserts that a pedagogy of discomfort has not been used to understand teachers, and it can be used for that purpose. In this sense, I have swapped relationships from the initial theory that focused on the lecturer/teacher, using this approach with their students/ learners to a focus on me, the researcher, using it with the research participants.

Discomfort, according to Boler (2004), is a platform from which students and teachers can engage with issues of oppression to develop critical consciousness. This can lead to an engagement with the ways of challenging and addressing various forms of oppression. In this regard, I believed that by engaging teachers in their experiences of violence perpetrated against them by learners, this study could shed more light on school-based violence. That is, I believed that this could create spaces for teacher voices to be vocalised and heard and for critical engagement with their normative ideological values and beliefs, thereby facilitating critical consciousness. This is based on the understanding that discomforting emotions “play a constitutive role in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities”, thereby opening up possibilities for social transformation (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012, p. 41). To this end, any form of violence is injustice and oppressive. In engaging teachers on their experience of violence perpetrated against them, a pedagogy of discomfort becomes a useful analytical device to engage teachers in the identification of the contributing factors to school-based violence as well as their part in the prevalence of violence and ways of addressing it to create safe schools. Violence is a social injustice which hurts both the survivor and the perpetrator and given, that teachers must provide quality education for all, engaging them in their roles and

responsibilities in creating safe schools can potentially lead to them engaging critically and consciously to address the prevalence of violence in schools.

Engaging teachers in their experiences of violence perpetrated by learners was bound to trigger different emotions. The experiences of violence at the hands of learners can evoke, amongst others, fear, resentment and anger towards learners. In discussing experiences of violence, memories can be triggered which can lead to moments of discomfort. This is the discomfort that Boler and Zembylas (2003) assert can become a pedagogical approach to engage people on social injustice to develop critical consciousness. As Boler (2004) suggests, such critical consciousness is a stepping-stone towards social change. Berlack (2004) supports Boler (2004) when stating that some discomfort is unavoidable, but is important and necessary for social transformation.

Teachers are likely to exhibit strong emotional responses based on the threat of violence that leads to particular negative attitudes towards learners, which do not promote a conducive, caring, learning and teaching environment. By understanding the emotional routines and habits, along with the attachments to structural injustices, teachers can begin to identify the underlying ways through which they conform to dominant ideologies (Zembylas, 2017). That is, discomforting emotions can be used as a springboard to uncover the mechanisms with which hegemonic values and beliefs are held by people, for example, by teachers for this study. These hegemonic values and beliefs operate in our daily lives, both consciously and unconsciously (Zembylas, 2017). Thus, using a pedagogy of discomfort to engage with teachers on their experiences of school-based violence generated key issues regarding the beliefs that teachers held and the extent to which this was associated with their hegemonic values and beliefs about learners.

Boler and Zembylas (2003) argue that although safe classroom spaces are what we desire, this does not mean that classrooms should be free from discomfort, as they are places and spaces of power and privilege. Thus, this approach can raise awareness of

how the power differentials between teachers and learners contribute to classrooms as unsafe spaces. Whether teachers can promote safety, learning spaces in schools must allow for teachers and learners to engage in a critical inquiry regarding their values and beliefs. When people have assured safety, they usually do not foresee being subjected to conflict, discomfort, pain and trauma (Zembylas, 2003). Davids and Steyn (2012) believe that, in that regard, many tend to assume that transformation will not occur when safety is absent.

With the belief and assumptions that in education, there should be easy and comfortable methods for achieving transformation. Boler and Zembylas (2013) and MacDonald (2018) advocate for the adoption of a pedagogy of discomfort in education, arguing that resistance is often possible when people feel discomfort. However, encouraging individuals to identify their discomfort and engage with their discomforting emotions, instead of using them to pull back and retreat, can prevent this. At the heart of safety lies the ability to recognise and respect others' emotions and safety, which is a requirement for aiding empathy, trust and growth (Leonardo, 2009).

3.3 The politics of trauma

According to Zembylas (2007), recounting experiences of violence can be painful, but that trauma can create spaces in which survivors of violence, for instance, can reconstruct their memories, leading to healing. Zembylas (2007) holds that this can perpetuate their pain. However, Zembylas (2007) argues that reconstructed memories and their associated emotions can translate into socially and politically relevant collective narratives of dehumanisation. That is, the politicisation of trauma can enable a broadening of the analysis of trauma, an understanding promoted by socio-cultural theorists, which encapsulates the expression and experiences of emotion based on social and political relations. The politics of trauma focuses on the need to address trauma collectively rather than individually, as people are shaped by different constructs socially, institutionally and politically. Zembylas (2007) understands the politics of trauma to be challenging for the teachers who desire to develop empathy

and reconciliation, in that a politics of trauma sustain conflict through its constant negative thoughts and emotions.

To understand teachers' insights, we need to understand the nature of conflict and its consequences from their perspectives. That is, we need to understand the effects of trauma given that teachers must continue working with the learners who have been violent towards them. Given this, the politics of trauma is a useful notion for the understanding of teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated against them by learners, including their views on their individual and collective responsibilities to create safe learning spaces. This study did not focus on a homogenous group of teachers regarding social identities. Instead, it sought to investigate the experiences of a heterogeneous group of teachers.

Zembylas (2007) highlights the role of collective memory and identity regarding the politics of trauma. He defines the politics of trauma as a way of representing the historical past events of violence perpetrated against particular social groups, such as war or genocide (Zembylas, 2007). However, the focus of this study is not the historical events that have led to trauma, such as war or genocide. However, it focuses on the impacts of our historical past of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa to understand how violence continues to manifest in our daily lives. Thus, for this study, the politics of trauma involves ways in which hegemonic power is acquired through the recall and remembrance of past events. That is, for this study, I was particularly interested in how the participants made sense of their individual and collective experiences of violence.

With trauma narratives, survivors reconstruct memories in social and political spaces, where they can heal and/or perpetuate their pain. Zembylas (2007) discusses two strands of analysis of the consequences of trauma and the alternatives of healing and recovering from trauma, namely, the psychological and political strands. This study draws on the political strand. Boler (1999) states that trauma, as a political construct, focuses on how emotions are produced through power relations in political and cultural

discourses. Collective stories of trauma and memories of the historic past make people likely to be vulnerable to the influences of the discourses of conflict (Zembylas, 2007). This points to the connection between the politics of trauma, the individual and the group. That is, how teachers perceive violence against them and their individual and collective trauma is critical to understanding the factors that contribute to the prevalence of violence and its consequences for teaching and learning. Thus, an understanding of violence perpetrated against teachers can provide valuable insights into how safe schools for all can be promoted.

An understanding of trauma as a political construct focuses on the cultural and political discourses and how emotions are produced within power relations (Boler, 1999). This enables us to focus our understanding of trauma on the constitutive discourses, which can have a useful rather than limiting power over both individuals and groups. This can assist us to move from a focus on the productive power of social power to the limitations of focusing on the inner psychological realities. This means that we can understand trauma as a form of emotion politics that is produced within particular social and political contexts. This study was located within the context of increased school-based violence within a national context emerging from a violent past (Zembylas, 2007).

For this study, individual identities and collective emotions are linked to the politics of trauma and emotions, while emotions are in individuals. However, for them to be translated into identity and political agency, they must be allocated meanings by the larger group, as suggested by Fierke (2004). This points to the inevitable connection between the politics of trauma, the individual and the larger group, which is a subject of this study.

3.4 Ethical implications of a Pedagogy Discomfort

Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) argue that vulnerability and discomfort can provide a basis for learning about oppression. That is, a pedagogy of discomfort can evoke strong

emotions linked to the pain and trauma associated with experiences of violence (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012). In this regard, there is an ethical dimension and an ethical responsibility to use a pedagogy of discomfort to ensure that participants experience no harm. Given the nature of this research study, I acknowledge that there are no safe spaces given the fact that power and privilege are always evident and operate within social relations (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). While there are power imbalances between the researcher and participants, as well as between participants themselves, power does not necessarily equate to harm or the lack of safety (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012). There are ways of ensuring safety in the research spaces, despite the discomfiting circumstances, as was the case in this study (see, Chapter 3). Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) acknowledge this in their critique of a pedagogy of discomfort regarding the “safety, risk, comfort, ethics, responsibility and vulnerability—issues that come up in explicit or implicit ways” (p. 42) social interactions between, for instance, teachers and learners. This study investigated teachers’ experiences of violence, given their responsibility to create safe and conducive learning spaces. If the responsibility to create safe and conducive learning spaces is compromised by violence perpetrated against them by learners, how can teachers work towards creating safe and conducive learning and teaching environments? Drawing on Michel Foucault’s concept of an ethic of discomfort and Judith Butler’s concept of an ethic of violence, Zembylas (2007) argues that discomfort can be pedagogically useful, as it encourages survivors, for instance, teachers in this study, to move out of their comfort zones and question their normative beliefs and assumptions. In addition, if the discomfort leads to a critical consciousness through an examination of social positions and worldviews, then one can argue that this has an ethical dimension. In this regard, Zembylas (2007) contends that there is always tension, which is not easily resolved, and that discomfort is inevitable when engaging with social injustice. Thus, a politics of trauma is valuable and necessary for addressing structural inequalities to ensure that the rights of vulnerable people are respected and protected. In addition, a politics of trauma can facilitate an understanding of how compassion can be translated into pedagogies that can challenge injustice (Zembylas, 2013).

3.5 Politics of compassion

Zembylas (2013) discusses a politics of compassion that takes into account the possible dangers, including compassion fatigue, desensitisation and self-victimisation. Zembylas (2013) describes how sufferers of trauma may develop compassion fatigue. Tester (2002) defines compassion fatigue as “becoming so used to the spectacle of dreadful events, misery or suffering that we stop noticing them” (p. 13). With the violence teachers are subjected to, there is the possibility that, to some, violence may have become normalised. That is, their experience of violence may have become one of the many occurrences. This implies that they may have become desensitised to it and even ignore their experience thereof, whether it is perpetrated against them or learners. Desensitisation, similar to compassion fatigue, involves a lack of willingness to participate in actions of compassion by individuals who do not demonstrate concern for the sufferer as a self-protective mechanism (Seu, 2003).

With compassion fatigue, two risks have been identified which require further attention within the pedagogical context, namely, the bystander and boomerang effects. The bystander effect refers to a lack of interest to act on own or others' suffering due to overwhelmingly negative emotions, which could make one feel powerless (Cohen, 2001). In such instances, an individual may detach themselves from the suffering, fail to act compassionately and engage in passive empathy (Boler, 1999; Zembylas, 2008). The boomerang effect refers to an individual's anger and resentment toward those who have made them feel guilty or shameful for their failure to enact compassion. Emotional resistance and self-pity may develop in those who feel they are victims, and they may disengage from compassion (Zembylas, 2013). For this study, the politics of compassion was useful for making sense of the participants' experiences of violence and the extent to which they demonstrated compassion or a lack thereof. In this regard, feelings of powerlessness can lead to a lack of compassion or compassion fatigue.

Zembylas (2013) notes three conditions that are required for the development of compassion. Firstly, the recognition of one's vulnerability is a starting point for the development of solidarity and compassion. The recognition of one's vulnerability enables individuals to acknowledge their vulnerability, thereby opening up the possibility of recognising others as vulnerable (Zembylas, 2013). This does away with the ideology of them and us, which becomes meaningless and unproductive. The second condition that compassion strengthens is the connection between the personal and the political (Zembylas, 2013). When individuals can empathise with others and recognise them as human, this potentially produces the realisation of common humanity. Thirdly, a politics of compassion considers the attentiveness to how the ethics of compassion interrogates inequality and injustices. That is, a politics of compassion is not about evoking anger toward the oppressor, in this study, anger towards the perpetrators of violence (Hogget, 2006). Instead, it is a device for critically engaging with anger at injustice. Anger at injustice can be viewed both as positive and powerful in assisting, for instance, the teachers' transition from self-pity into transformative action that challenges and deal with injustice (Lorde, 1984, cited in Zembylas, 2013).

While theorists, such as Noddings (2005), focus on the role of empathy and suffering within a pedagogical context, Zembylas (2013) feels that insufficient attention has been given to the emotional intricacies of teaching empathy with compassion. According to Zembylas (2013), it is, therefore, important to analyse the lack of understanding of emotions that involve suffering and which can shed light on how to develop active and critically compassionate citizens. In understanding teachers' perceptions of violence, their actual pain, trauma, and their surviving violence at the hand of learners, we can identify ways of promoting compassion, empathy and care as means for creating safe schools for both teachers and learners.

3.5.1 Empathy, reconciliation and an ethics of care

Boler (1999) defines reconciliation as a societal and cultural process, where new emotions and beliefs are formed about an enemy, a process that incorporates coexistence, peace and respect. The notion of reconciliation, together with the emotional impacts of trauma and conflict, raises a question of how teachers can work towards contributing to reconciliation, when both trauma and conflict occur at a social and political level, and, in this regard, Zembylas (2007) questions how possible this is, emotionally, pedagogically, and politically.

Boler and Zembylas, (2003) define empathy as “the process of putting one’s self in the place of another person, seeing events from that person's point of view and understanding the feelings and ideas of that person” (p. 4). One of the tenets of a pedagogy of discomfort is active empathy (Boler, 1999). Boler (1999) and Lindquist (2004) point to how empathy may not necessarily lead to the urge and desire to bring about change, but that it can produce critical exposure to suffering, pain and discomfort, which promotes awareness and knowledge and the need for change.

Within education, the teacher must empathise with students troubled by discomfoting emotions and develop a starting point for working towards transformation (Zembylas, 2012). Empathy is encouraged in teachers, as it can create spaces where students can recognise, deliberate and act on their experiences of social injustice (Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Butler, 2004). Empathy, thus, is the extent to which teachers can place themselves in the situations of learners. That is, for this study, teachers must be cognisant of the learners’ difficulties and struggles that may cause them to act violently.

Boler (1999) explains that an ethic of empathy and care is important and necessary for providing safe spaces for learners and teachers to challenge and confront their beliefs and assumptions. This can be achieved by creating schools that have a caring ethos, which promotes respect and tolerance for diversity.

Boler and Zembylas (2003) and Zembylas (2007) define dehumanisation as a process by which people are regarded as and rendered less of human beings. Kreuzer (2002), cited in Zembylas (2007), defines dehumanisation as a process of depriving an individual of their human qualities and dignity. That is, dehumanisation is often associated with negative emotions, which may include hatred and fear. Perpetrators of violence often dehumanise their victims who they perceive as less than human. When learners' subject teachers to violence, the teachers' rights to safety and security are violated and suspended, leading to their dehumanisation.

The study of teachers' experiences of violence can shed light on how discomfoting feelings and emotions can lead to the development of empathy, compassion and an ethic of care. The ability to accept the other person, empathise with them, and shift from viewing them as the 'enemy' and recognise them as human demonstrates rehumanisation (Zembylas, 2003). Individuals who have experienced violence and were treated inhumanely must reverse the humiliation caused by violence, process their experiences and develop a sense of empathy and care for the perpetrators for rehumanisation to occur, which can then lead to the process of reconciliation. Empathy is important for reconciliation, as individuals can then imagine the perspective of the other, as human and not as the enemy, which is a significant but challenging step in the rehumanisation process of the Other (Zembylas, 2012).

Reconciliation is a societal and cultural process where new emotions and beliefs are formed (Boler, 1999). That is, reconciliation involves a process where an individual is in a relationship with the other, which allows them to overcome negative feelings. Bar-Tal (2000) and Kreuzer (2002) support the view that with reconciliation, relationships and co-existence must be developed and embraced, where the values and emotions of respect and peace must be accepted. Zembylas (2007) believes that stories that trigger hate, mistrust and fear, must be identified and exposed and those positive emotions, which demonstrate the humanity of the 'Other' and the 'enemy' working together, signal actions of care among conflicting groups. The role of the school is important in the development of empathy, as teachers and the schooling community have an

important role to play in understanding and assisting learners who demonstrate violent behaviour in schools, as well as in homes and communities. This is important, given the fact that an individual can only develop an ethic of care by developing an ethic of empathy. (Zembylas, 2007). An ethics of care in education is defined as a relationship between a caring teacher and the cared-for learner, and Boler and Zembylas (2003) explain how teachers who practice an ethic of care within their school environment view themselves as caring for their students and creating safe learning spaces. For this study, an ethic of care was useful for identifying the extent to which the participants demonstrated empathy and a commitment to creating safe learning spaces and socially just schools, despite the threat and experiences of violence they may have experienced.

The Department of Basic Education has policies that stipulate the educational and professional responsibility of teachers to enact the ethics of care and support learners. Whilst the teacher must demonstrate an ethic of care, teachers' narratives of violence perpetrated against them can be a barrier to their fulfilment of this responsibility, which could lead to a lack of an ethic of care. The question then is how must teachers act in a caring way after they have experienced violence and what caring practices and behaviours will restore the damage caused by school-based violence perpetrated against teachers. Caring teachers must be afforded the space to use their professional and moral judgement to respond to the needs of their learners and a recognition of interdependence and coexistence of both the teacher and learner for caring relationships to develop (Boler & Zembylas, 2003).

3.5.2 Creating a climate for caring

Given the expectations of teachers to demonstrate an ethic of care, one can ask how teachers should act in a caring manner and what their views are on how they can create a safe, caring and conducive learning environment when they have experienced violence. In addition, one can question how an ethic of care can address the damage done by violence experienced by teachers to their relationships with learners as well as to the culture of teaching and learning (Woolfolk, 2010). According to Chaskin and

Rauner (1995), caring is present in all school environments all the time, whether it is through actions of caring or not caring or interactions between the teacher and learner. Schools are important for the promotion of caring practices and cultures (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995). Caring in schools enables the development of lasting relationships, which teachers and learners must develop (Noddings, 2013; Seashore Louise et al., 2016). Caring has the potential to transform behaviours in violent contexts while promoting a conducive learning environment for academic success (Weeks, 2008).

Chaskin and Rauner (1995) discuss care beyond the schooling context. In this regard, they contend that caring provides a protective tool for learners, especially those subjected to poverty, unstable family circumstances and unfavourable socio-economic contexts. Through nurturing, care and empathy, learners can be assisted to develop morally, and behave ethically and responsibly for future success. Noddings (2013) concurs with Chaskin and Rauner (1995) and emphasises that care is the foundation of moral education and plays an important role in assisting teachers to teach learners about caring for themselves and each other while they strive to acquire their social and academic needs.

In creating a caring environment, the caring teacher is responsive, and understanding and can build interpersonal relationships with learners, establishing trust and respect for and from their learners. Seashore Louise et al. (2016) contend that caring should not only be the responsibility of the teacher but a shared responsibility for individuals at all levels. Smith and Scherman (2016), cited in Grobler (2018), support this view and argue that the relational leadership between the staff, learners and parents, combined with an ethics of care, can reduce violence in schools. Noddings (2013) calls for the inclusion of parents in activities that include their children and for the schools to initiate opportunities for raising awareness and for learners to practise care and caring. For this study, I investigated the participants' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of education stakeholders in promoting and maintaining safe schools.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented and discussed the conceptual framework underpinning the study, namely, a pedagogy of discomfort. As this study sought to understand the teachers' experiences of school-based violence perpetrated against them by learners, adopting the notion of a pedagogy of discomfort enabled the participants to engage with and share their experiences of school-based violence, which triggered discomfoting emotions. In this way, this discomfort provided a useful platform for effecting social change and transformation. Finding ways for addressing school-based violence to create safe and conducive learning spaces was a significant consideration. Safe learning spaces can be achieved when teachers acknowledge that there are ways to create safety despite being subjected to the discomfoting circumstances of violence. In this chapter, I also discussed how the notion of the politics of trauma, politics of compassion, empathy and ethics of care can be useful to deployed to enable teachers to demonstrate empathy and care towards violent learners and enable them to commit themselves to create safe learning spaces irrespective of the threat of violence they experience.

The next chapter presents and discusses the methodological and design considerations made to investigate the key research questions of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research design and methodological decisions that were taken to respond to the key research questions of the study. Methodology refers to how researchers will study what can be discovered and known, including what can be researched, from where, when and how data will be generated and analysed (Scotland, 2012)., This chapter will, first, discuss the philosophical framework of the study, which is located within the critical paradigm. This will be followed by the research approach used, namely, the narrative enquiry, which enabled me to make sense of the research participants' experiences as they shared and told their stories through narratives. The chapter also discusses the data collection methods used to generate and the processes used to analyse data. Hereafter, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the trustworthiness, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

4.2 Research paradigm

A paradigm, according to Lichtman (2011), is a set of beliefs, concepts and thought patterns held by a group of people with general assumptions, theories and ideas. These beliefs, concepts and thought patterns contribute to their view of the world, which informs daily action and how one operates every day.

This study is located within the critical paradigm. The critical paradigm is concerned with power relations, race, gender, class, religion and other social constructs within a social system (Richard, 2003). Horkheimer (2014, p. 76) defines the critical paradigm as “a theory that seeks human emancipation as a means to liberate humans from situations that enslave them”. This definition views the critical paradigm as a three-dimensional construct, as it does not only seek to explore the problem, but to also address the problems rather than only identifying and reporting about them (Bohman, 2005). Therefore, in respect of oppression, the critical paradigm does not only explain

and explore oppressive social factors and powerful groups, but it also strives for equality for all members of any society (Asghar, 2013). Critical theory is interpreted variously by researchers some of which leads to disagreements (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2018). Critical theory is often advocated for in the sense that it not only welcomes constructive possibilities (Richard, 2003), cited in Kincheloe and McLaren, 2018), but also embraces empirical techniques. The emphasis on the critical paradigm in research is a philosophical consideration, as it requires the conduct of research that is emancipative (Asghar, 2013).

The critical paradigm does not obsess with objectivity (Creswell, 2014). It holds that meanings and truth can be developed through engagements with the realities of the world. The subjective realities of the world are different for each individual; hence, the experience of each individual is shaped by multiple and different realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The understanding in this research study is that what we are exposed to, our experiences and what we embark on becomes our truth and reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Hence, within this framework, it could be argued that there is no objective reality, as sense and facts emerge from interactions with the facts of our world (Crotty, 1998). As a consequence, there is a multiplicity of truths.

The purpose of this study was to understand the teachers' experiences of school-based violence perpetrated by learners against them. By sharing their narrative stories from their subjective points of view, which revealed their lived truths as they shared stories and voices. Approaching this research study from the critical paradigm was relevant as violence is a societal issue, its root causes being power struggles and contestation. Thus, the assumption is that this research study will vocalise the teachers' critical voices and perspectives (Neuman, 2006).

Power differentials are often subtle and may exist as a form of violence (Pieterse et al., 2018) For this study, the critical paradigm allowed me to obtain an understanding of the power differences between teachers and the perpetrators of violence against them, namely, the learners. The critical paradigm also enabled me to understand the causes,

impacts and effects of violence on teachers, and how social structures, their own beliefs and values can contribute to violence against them. In this regard, the critical paradigm enabled me to identify and explore transformation and empowerment points in the narratives of the participants. Utilising the critical paradigm for this study, thus, allowed me to understand the teachers' experiences and how they could navigate the grey areas in the minefield of violence and create safe learning spaces for teaching and learning to happen.

The ontological positioning of the study was influenced by the deployment of the pedagogy of discomfort, empathy and ethics of care. The pedagogy of discomfort constitutes a pedagogy of practice for teaching and learning about issues related to oppression and suffering, and can be used to understand how discomfoting emotions challenge the dominant beliefs and normative practices that can sustain social and individual transformation. With the research study exploring teachers' experiences of violence, analysing their narrative stories potentially raised awareness about the injustices of violence and how these could be challenged. For change and transformation to occur, the development of empathy and an ethics of care can potentially allow teachers to navigate the realities of their experiences of violence. The assumption was that their voices would provide a comprehensive picture of their realities and the strategies required to bring about change to eradicate triggers of violence against them and explore ways of creating safe schools where effective teaching and learning can occur.

4.3 Research design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, which involved a systematic generation, description and interpretation of data (Steyn, 2014). The main aim of qualitative research, according to Terre-Blanche et al. (2006) is to explore the behaviours, interactions, and experiences of individuals or groups in their natural settings or contexts. That is, qualitative research is often used to understand how people experience the world; hence it is used mostly in social science studies, where

an attempt is made to discover and understand new ways of lived social realities (Steyn, 2014). According to Denzil and Lincoln (2000), the main function of qualitative research is the understanding of human action by the description of inherent characteristics of human experiences. Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical enquiry into meaning” (p. 5). By quoting the word systematic, it is an illustration of a well-planned and orderly inquiry following a set of rules as expected by the qualitative research community. Empirically this means that it is grounded in experience.

Denzil and Lincoln (2000) assert that qualitative research involves and has an interpretative, naturalistic approach, which suggests that phenomena are studied in their natural settings while trying to make sense of and interpret what meanings the individuals bring to them. Creswell (2014) concurs with the above description as he also posits that qualitative research is an approach to understanding the meanings that individuals and groups assigned to social or human problems. Creswell (2013) discusses how research begins with assumptions and theoretical frameworks which are used to enlighten the research problem of the study by addressing meaning that is attributed to a social or human problem. Creswell (2013) further states that in qualitative research, the process involves the development of questions with the intent of finding answers to them.

Qualitative researchers highlight the social factors, and constructs that are inherent in the investigation and the closeness the research becomes to the subject and situations being studied (Denzil & Lincoln, 2000). With regards to the main focus of the study, which sought to investigate the teachers’ experiences of school-based violence it includes what Terreblanche (2001) terms as inclusions of personal and social contexts being part of the study. This study aligns with this philosophical position as the participants’ experiences of violence presented their realities as they saw and understood them.

As a qualitative researcher, my interest in this study lay in the human experience and how human beings make meaning. For this study, I wanted to find out how the teachers, who were participants in this study, developed meanings from their personal experiences of school-based violence, which was perpetrated against them by their learners. To this end, a qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study as it captured the voices of the teachers, which means that the research participants could share their narratives as the stories of their experiences of school-based violence. This allowed me to understand their social realities on a personal level. For this to happen, I had to immerse myself in the study as a researcher, and Holloway (1997) asserts that human experience and subjective narrative data is an important aspects of the research.

Denzil and Lincoln (2000) posit that in qualitative research, phenomena are studied in their natural settings. For this study, this enables me to make distinct meanings of participants' realities and meanings that participants could link to their experiences within that context. That is why, as a researcher, I provided enlightenment into participants' narratives based on their specific context without having generalised findings to other findings. It is also important to note that as qualitative researchers study phenomena within their social worlds, researchers themselves may also form part of that social context (Steyn, 2014).

4.4 Research methodology

Narrative enquiry is a methodology which uses stories and storytelling activities for research purposes (Bold, 2012; Creswell, 2013). Narrative refers to spoken or written text, accounting for an event or action that has occurred (Czaeniawaska, 2004). Creswell (2013) describes the steps of a narrative enquiry in the research process. For Creswell (2013), the process begins with the collection of data through audio recordings or written notes, which are then analysed and studied and its meaning is developed and reported chronologically.

Methodologically this approach stresses the importance of capturing and reporting the lived experiences of the participants in the form of the stories that they share in response to key research questions. For this study, the participants' narratives were composed of their responses to the questions regarding their experiences of school-based violence perpetrated against them by learners. Squire (2008) suggests that narratives are meaningful in that individuals make sense of their experiences by reconstitution of their experiences. Squire (2013) states that narratives are transformational, which means that they represent personal changes and are an attempt of restoring human agency, which resonates with the foundations of the critical paradigm.

For this study, narrative enquiry enabled me to obtain a view of what participants experienced within their social worlds and how they constructed and reconstructed their understandings of their personal and social experiences. Creswell (2013) has identified features of the narrative inquiry, which includes the recall of individual experiences, which explained how the participants viewed themselves and constructed their identities in respect of their lived experiences. These stories were set within specific places or situations and provided me with a glimpse into their contexts. As Creswell (2013) contends, the participants' narratives comprised turning points which were emphasised and highlighted by the outcomes and objectives of the research.

Narrative inquiry, as the research methodology for this study, allowed me a point of entry to explore the teachers' experiences of school-based violence. The participants' sharing of their personal stories of school-based violence within their social worlds, allowed me a glimpse into their experiences as a means of understanding the manifestations and consequences of violence perpetrated against teachers. Bruner (1990) suggests that people share narratives as their experiences of their world and their role in it. Using narratives was a way to make sense of the participants' worlds and their lived experiences presented a way of understanding how they made sense of those experiences and assigned meanings to them (Squire, 2013). Through the stories the participants shared, I could use the narratives to explain how they experienced

specific events that occurred, why they happened in a particular way and how they responded.

The narrative enquiry also enabled the formation of particular kinds of relationships. For instance, using focus group interviews allowed for openness and trust during the sharing of experiences by the participants. Privileging the participants' voices helped to create a relationship of trust between myself and the participants. This allowed the participants to have a sense of autonomy and power in sharing what they were willing to in reconstructing their memories to provide reconstructed realities. Keats (2009) describes how in narrative research, spoken, visual and written texts can be used together. That is why for the study both the conflict mapping activity and focus group discussions were considered. The participants could map out and present a drawing of their schooling community and surroundings, identifying risks to safety and plotting where the manifestations of violence frequently occurred. Together with the focus group discussion, the participants shared commonalities and fed off each other based on their experiences. In this regard, my responsibility, as the researcher, was to embrace their narratives as they were, that is, as they regarded them as their truth. Therefore, mapping and focus group discussions allowed a significant foreground for probing to develop a better view and understanding of the ing participants' stories.

4.4.1 Research site

Clandinin (2006) explains that place and social context are important in any inquiry attempting to understand participants' lives. Therefore, it is important to describe the site in which the study was undertaken. This study was conducted in two schools in Msinga, Umzinyathi District, province of KwaZulu-Natal. The local municipality of Msinga is one of four in the uMzinyathi District Municipality, which is situated in the northern parts of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Msinga Local Municipality is made up of six (6) traditional authorities. Msinga Local Municipality is a deep rural area, characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment, with few economic activities to sustain the communities in the area (Mbatha & Masuku, 2021). Msinga

Local Municipality has a young population of approximately 184 494, with 53.7% under the age of 18 of which 67% of households are headed by females (Republic of South Africa, 2022). Agricultural activities, such as small-scale agriculture and gardening are two of the major economic activities. The majority of communities under Msinga Local Municipality live off and are sustained by government social grants.

The selection of the two schools for this study was based on the prevalence of incidents of violence. In 2016, violent factions fighting disrupted schooling and matric examinations (Mercury, 2016). The Mercury (2020) reported that the Department of Education's school safety programme, which sought to keep teachers and learners safe, failed to curb violence, vandalism and theft at the schools. The newspaper also reported that six (6) suspects were arrested in 2020 for the murder of the school principal at Somashi High School in Msinga, who was shot dead in front of teachers and learners (Mercury, 2020).

4.4.1.1 School A

School A falls under the AbaThembu Tribal Authority and is bordered by agricultural fields at the back and households on either side of the school. The staff component comprises the School Management Team (SMT), fifteen teachers, four (4) food handlers, and two (2) support staff members. The high school has classes from Grades eight to twelve. Amongst other things, the school experiences overcrowding, a shortage of learning resources, dilapidated buildings and a shortage of water, which disrupts teaching and learning. These problems negatively impact teaching and learning. However, the school strives against those challenges as it continues to show an improvement in its matric results.

4.4.1.2 School B

School B is located under the Mchunu tribal area, along a busy main road surrounded by homesteads, within a community subjected to severe levels of poverty and high

crime rates. During the study, the school was extended with additional classrooms to alleviate overcrowding. Even though the school has three (3) SMT members and nineteen teachers, it still seemed to experience a shortage. The challenges that the school experienced included inadequate resources to meet the learning needs of learners. Hence, the school experienced a decline in performance, which was reflected in its results for the National Senior Certificate. The violence experienced in the school mirrored incidents of violence reported in the community. The teachers at the school reported that the extent of violence in the school had resulted in other schools in the area refusing admission of the learners from this community out of fear that this might infect their schools.

4.4.2 Selection of the participants

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for the study. Cohen et al. (2007) define purposive sampling as the use of specific selection exclusion and inclusion criteria to choose a sample of participants from the target population. This means that the participants were selected through a non-probability sampling design based on the researcher's judgement about which participants would be useful for responding to the key research questions and the objectives of the study (Babbie, 2007). Johnson and Christensen (2012) and Creswell (2008) contend that purposive sampling involves selecting participants with characteristics or qualities that are relevant to the study.

For this study, purposive sampling was chosen because it was appropriate for selecting participants that can provide relevant rich data on the teachers' experiences of school-based violence. Rich data refers to the generation of a diverse and wide range of information for the study (Babbie, 2007). The sample for the study comprised six (6) teachers, three male and three female teachers, stratified across age and working experience. The participants were from two (2) schools within the Msinga Circuit, Umzinyathi District, KwaZulu-Natal. The selection of both male and female teachers allowed for the generation across gender lines. The difference in age and working

experience provides an opportunity to determine whether teachers from different age categories experienced the phenomenon under investigation differently.

Before the initial focus group session, I met with the participants and shared my intentions with them regarding the research process. I explained to them the purpose of collecting data on their experiences of school-based violence. In this regard, I assured them that all the information they shared would be used only to fulfilling the requirement of the qualification. I had to gain their trust as a researcher and build a relationship with all participants before the focus group session, what Clandinin and Connelly (1990) refer to as an important aspect of ensuring that participants feel like equals and ensuring the participant's voices are heard and valued.

4.5 Data collection methods

There are various methods of collecting data for a qualitative research study. These data collection methods are used to generate data on a range of variables, including the attitudes, motivations, feelings and experiences of individuals (Gail et al., 2007). For this study, two data collection methods were chosen, namely, conflict mapping and focus group interviews, which were combined to complement each other to strengthen the credibility of the data generated. The methods are presented and discussed in the section below.

4.5.1 Conflict mapping

Conflict mapping is an approach to analysing any conflict situation (Kabir, 2016). The analysis of a conflict situation involves the graphical representation of a conflict area, including placing the relations between the parties associated with the problem. The maps in conflict mapping often show the perspectives of their drawers, which suggests that conflict maps reveal significant amounts of information for the study. Sharp (2003), cited in Kabir (2016), describes conflict mapping as participatory. According to Ziemke (2014), conflict mapping involves group members creating resource maps to show locations of resources, houses, terrain features and infrastructure, useful for

analysing the community and their associated issues of conflict. Often, this involves the use of charts and drawing materials to depict and illustrate what participants identify as relevant. Sharp (2003) contends that participatory mapping is a useful technique for data collection as participants are involved in the creation of maps, which stimulates significant enthusiasm and discussion around the topic under investigation. For this study, conflict mapping was also used as a transitioning device in the focus group interviews.

For this study, participants were requested to draw a map of their school and surrounding areas, identifying resources, the people and the associated safety risks. The participants were requested to use words, symbols and drawings to represent the various aspects that made up their school environment. The aspects included physical buildings, people (staff, learners, community members), resources and spaces that presented or were associated with safety risks. Once the drawing was complete, the participants from each school shared what they had drawn on their maps. To add to the mapping activity to gain insight into where the manifestations of violence occurred, the participants had to plot on their maps places or areas where violence was prevalent and the types of violence that manifested in their schooling community. As indicated earlier on, the conflict maps produced were used as an entry point into the focus group interviews.

The section below presents and discusses the focus group interviews mentioned above.

4.5.2 Focus group interviews

Nyumba (2018) contends that focus group interviews have become popular in participatory research. Muhamad (2013), cited in Ngidi (2018), defines focus group interviews as a qualitative research technique, involving six (6) to ten individuals per group session, in which a discussion on a phenomenon under investigation is discussed. The focus group interview provides a space for group members to deliberate on the phenomenon within a group context, in which they can hear and respond to each

other's views. The interaction generated through the focus group interview often generates significant amounts of data (Hyden & Bulow, 2010) useful for responding to the key research questions of the study. Focus group interviews are, therefore, useful for data collection as they allow participants to speak out and be responded to by their fellow participants.

Mthunjane (2013), cited in Sibisi (2016), contends the success of focus group interviews often relies on the intensity of the interaction among the participants. The advantage of using focus group interviews is that it allows the participants to respond to and build on each other's ideas. Creswell (2013) asserts that focus group interviews have the potential to generate in-depth data as they provide in-sights that cannot be generated through a typical one-on-one interview. For example, a participant may, by listening to a fellow participant's view, be triggered to think about the dimensions of the issue that would not have been possible with a one-on-one interview. In addition, for this study, focus group interviews, because of their group format, were the most economical way of generating data that would produce rich data within a limited period.

In preparation for data collection using the conflict mapping exercise and the focus group interviews, a data collection plan was developed to guide the process. Before the commencement of the session, the participants were reminded that they had consented to participate and for the focus group interviews to be voice recorded, which they were allowed to confirm or reconsider. The participants were also informed that they could speak in a language of their choice. Of the six (6) participants expected, five (5) participants could participate in the focus group interview session. The participant that could not attend reported a personal emergency to which they needed to attend. Given the fact that the country was operating under strict protocols of disaster at the time, I had to ensure the focus group interview followed all the COVID-19 restrictions to ensure the safety of the participants and myself. The venue for the focus group session was one of the two schools, with sufficient space to allow for the

required social distancing during the discussion of the maps drawn during conflict mapping.

The focus group session took approximately two and a half hours, which include the conflict mapping activity at the beginning of the session. The questions used to broach the discussion were asked in English and most participants used their home language (isiZulu) to respond. This was most welcomed as some phrases and terms could be better expressed using their home language. This flexibility in the use of language enabled the generation of rich in-depth data as the participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and talking about their maps in their language of preference, as suggested by Kirk and Miller (1986).

The participants were asked questions that sought to generate rigorous participant engagement with the conflict maps produced. All the participants seemed to engage rigorously with each other during the focus discussion session and expressed appreciation for having been allowed to share their experiences of school-based violence perpetrated against them. Recording the focus group interview discussion made it easier for me to focus on the interview process, instead of scribing every aspect of what transpired. In addition, the recordings made it possible for me to re-listen to the discussions. After the focus group interview session, the audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim.

Through the discussion, the participants could express their emotions, feeling and thoughts about their experiences of violence. Their body language and tone provided rich data for what their experiences of school-based violence meant for them. The information provided enabled me to obtain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. The use of conflict mapping and focus group discussion as methods of data collection enabled the triangulation of the data to understand the realities of the participants regarding school-based violence.

4.6 Data analysis

This study employed the thematic analysis approach, which enabled me to generate specific themes, trends and patterns (Mouton, 2010). The thematic approach requires the constant comparison of the identified themes, which are grouped into categories (Cohen et al., 2007). Creswell (2013) contends that data analysis is an important stage in the research process, as it involves the understanding of texts and data. For this study, once the focus group interview session had ended, I immediately began the process of transcribing the audio-recordings verbatim, as guided by Steyn (2014). Johnson and Christensen (2012) define transcription as the retrieval of discussions or narratives from a recording device into a formatted document, with clearly defined notes. During the process of transcription, I translated the participants' responses into English.

I decided to transcribe the data myself as this allowed me to familiarise myself with the data to see meanings and find emerging patterns. Nieuwenhuis (2007) refers to this process as immersion, as it involves the researcher reading and rereading data to familiarise themselves with it. Within the process of data analysis, I started identifying emerging patterns and categorised them through a process of coding. This allowed me to identify links between the discussions on the conflict mapping exercise to the focus group interview responses. This brought about thematic analysis (Denzil & Lincoln, 2011). To ensure the accuracy of the transcribed data, I compared the transcripts with the original recordings by listening to them and following and adapting what had been transcribed.

In the identification of themes in the data, I was guided by the conceptual framework of the study, namely, a pedagogy of comfort, empathy and ethics of care.

4.7 Trustworthiness of the study

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are debated, unlike in quantitative research where there are measured statistics for acknowledgement or reproof. Creswell

and Miller (2000) opine that validity is the strength of qualitative research. This is based on discovering if findings are accurate from the point of view of the researcher, participant and reader. For this study, the cross-checking of the findings revealed the extent of the credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity of the study.

Secondly, for this study, I used member-checking to revalidate and authenticate the responses of the participants. This involved sharing the transcriptions with the participants so that they could verify what had been transcribed. No issues arose from member-checking as the participants confirmed them as a true reflection of their responses. Gall et al. (2007) posit that trustworthiness can be established in the findings being reported by using direct quotes from the narratives of the participants. For this study, the participants' responses were quoted and presented verbatim to support the arguments raised. As a researcher, I understood the participant's responses to representing their subjective realities and, therefore, their truths.

Thirdly, the honesty of participants during data collection is an important contributor to validity (Leedy, 1993). Hence, for this study, each participant was first approached and allowed to decide if they were willing to participate in the study. This was to ensure that the process of data collection involved only those who were willing to participate and would offer genuine responses. As the researcher, I assured participants that they were no wrong answers to questions being asked in the focus group discussion and that participants were encouraged to participate freely in their experiences without fear of losing credibility from other participants or the researcher.

Fourthly, Creswell (2014) suggests that ensuring validity is fundamental in research, not only because of the measurement techniques but the whole research process. The validity, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2013), is the extent to which the data collection instruments measure what it is meant to be measured. There are various strategies to ensure validity in a research study. For this study, validity was ensured by conducting an extensive review of the literature on the debates and issues regarding school-based violence and the teachers' experiences thereof. Also, the techniques that

had been used by other researchers were used to guide data collection and analysis for this study. In addition to this, constant consultation with my supervisor for feedback and guidance was used.

Fifthly, ensuring the reliability of the findings was an important part of this study. According to Bryman (2012), reliability refers to the consistency of measurement. That is, for the findings to be reliable, the same variable measured in different contexts should produce the same or similar results. This study ensured reliability through the triangulation of data generation methods, as guided by Bryman (2012). Commencing the focus group session with the mapping exercise followed by the focus group discussion allowed me to identify the links and build on discussions of the maps to focus group interview discussion responses. In this regard, I could establish the connections between the community schooling environment and unsafe spaces in and around the school that contribute to school-based violence experienced by the teachers.

Lastly, for this study, dependability was ensured through detailed descriptions of the processes and the rationale for using them, as guided by Steyn (2014). In this regard, for this study, dependability was ensured by providing a rich and clear explanation of the research data collection and analysis process followed in the study. As in all other qualitative research studies, I was careful not to allow my biases to influence the presentation, analysis, interpretation and understanding of the findings, what Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to as confirmability. This means that I tried as much as I possibly could be careful not to allow my subjective realities to take over the processes. In this regard, I relied on my supervisor and critical friends to read over the collected data and the analysis to provide feedback.

4.8 Ethical considerations

When considering the ethics of this study, it was important for me to conduct the study ethically. Ethical consideration is an important consideration in any research (Bryman, 2004). Aguinis and Henle (2002) define ethics as moral rules and principles of conduct

regarding what is considered as right and wrong. The main responsibility of a researcher is the respect, protection and upholding of the rights and interests of the participants and for the participants to, as a result, suffer no harm (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). To ensure this, for this study, I requested permission to conduct the study in schools from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. I also applied for ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee. Letters to request permission to conduct research were also sent to the two principals of the schools where the participants taught. Both principals were informed that three teachers from their school would be requested to participate in the study and assured that every possible step would be taken to ensure that the teaching and learning time is not negatively impacted.

Data collection only commenced once ethical clearance was granted. The participants were informed of the nature, purpose and focus of the study, as guided by Henning (2004). After the participants had provided consent, they were requested to sign the consent forms to indicate their willingness to participate. The participants were also informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time should they feel the need to do so. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the assigning of pseudonyms for each participant. Furthermore, the participants were requested not to share information on their participation in the study with anyone. To ensure controlled access to the data, all data collected was safely locked up, with all electronic data password-protected.

Cohen et al. (2015) define non-maleficence in a research study as the phenomenon of causing no harm to the participants as a result of their participation. Given the nature of the study, dealing with a potentially sensitive topic of experiencing violence, I understood that I had to put measures in place to cushion the participants from emotional and psychological harm as issues of violence can evoke unsettling emotions. For this study, counselling services were arranged for the participants should they so require. However, none of the participants required any counselling as a result of the study.

A relaxed friendly atmosphere was created during the data collection process. This made the participants feel comfortable and relaxed during the discussions. In respect of beneficence, the voices of the participants were the central focus of the study in the stories they shared. This allowed for the participants' voices to be heard (Cohen et al., 2015).

4.9 Limitations of the study

Firstly, due to the small size of the sample, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to other school settings. That is, the responses of the teachers who participated in this study may not be a representation of other teachers in other contexts. However, it is important to point out that it was not the intention of this study to generalise findings but to understand the teachers' experiences of school-based violence within a particular context.

Secondly, with the outbreak of COVID-19 during data collection, I experienced fears and concerns about safety from the participants, especially when data had to be generated through the methods discussed above. However, to mitigate this, I assured the participants that the venue was big enough to maintain social distance and that, in addition, all COVID-19 safety protocols would be strictly adhered to. Sanitisers.

Deciding on a collective time to meet with the participants for the focus group interviews was also a challenge. The participants felt they were overwhelmed with work commitments during the week and some were not available during weekends due to family commitments. I also had to provide transport for two participants to the venue for the focus group interview. Initially, I had recruited six (6) participants for the study; however, one of the participants withdrew on the day of the session, stating a personal emergency. The need to recruit many participants is important in the event of a participant withdrawing, as was the case in this study. Given the challenges I experienced within the context of COVID-19 and subsequent delays with data

collection given the lockdowns and the reluctance of teachers to participate, I did not attempt to find a replacement. This would have meant postponing the focus group interview, which would have been a challenge to set up again, given the participants' busy schedules.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the methodological and design considerations I made to respond to the key research questions of the study. In this chapter, I discussed how the data for the study was collected, organised and analysed, including the sampling procedures, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

The next chapter will present, discuss, analyse and interpret the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data and findings of the study on the experiences of teachers of school-based violence perpetrated against them by learners. Using thematic analysis, I identified key themes that formed the structure of this chapter. The chapter also presents a discussion of the findings drawing on the conceptual framework and relevant literature.

The presentation of findings in this chapter is informed by the following key research question:

- What are teachers' experiences of school-based violence perpetrated by learners against teachers?

In investigating the teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated against teachers, the following subsidiary questions were used:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the causes of increased school-based violence perpetrated against teachers?
- How do these experiences of violence influence their relationship with learners as well as teaching and learning?
- What are teachers' perceptions of how school safety can be promoted and their role in creating safe schools?

These research questions were instrumental in the formulation of themes drawn from the analysis of the narratives the participants shared in this study. I begin with a presentation of the participants' biographies and then present the key findings thematically, as expressed above. The themes focus on the teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding the following: factors that contribute to school-based violence perpetrated against teachers by learners; the consequences of such violence on teachers

and learners; teacher-learner relations and teaching and learning. In addition, I present key findings about the teachers' perceptions of the ways of creating safe schools and their role therein.

5.2 Biographic information of research participants

This study comprised five (5) participants from Schools A and B. Two (2) participants were selected from School A, while three (3) were from School B. Pseudonyms were used for the participants and schools to protect their identities. All the participants were South Africans of African descent.

5.2.1 Participants from School A

Cappy is a 33-year-old black, female Mathematical Literacy teacher, who teaches Grades 10 to 12. Cappy is a Post Level 1, isiZulu-speaking teacher with eleven years of teaching experience in School A.

Crissy is a 56-year-old black, isiZulu-speaking female, Post Level 1 teacher. Crissy teaches Grades 8, 11 and 12 First Additional Language English and Life Orientation. Crissy has twenty-three years of teaching experience, thirteen of which was at School A.

5.2.2 Participants from School B

Siba is a 40-year-old isiZulu-speaking black male Post Level 1 teacher. Siba has fifteen years of teaching experience, ten years of which have been at School B. Siba teaches Mathematics in Grades 8, 9, 11 and 12.

Shushu is a 37-year-old black, isiZulu-speaking male Post Level 1 teacher with nine years of teaching experience. Six years of these nine years have been at School B. Shushu teaches Tourism, Geography and Social Sciences from Grades 9 to 19.

Khumbu is a 26-year-old isiZulu-speaking female Post Level 1 teacher. Khumbu teaches Economic and Management Sciences and Business Studies in Grades 8, 10, 11 and 12. Khumbu has four (4) years of teaching experience in School B.

5.3 Emerging themes

5.3.1 Forms of school-based violence against teachers

Before engaging the participants on the causes of violence perpetrated against teachers and its consequences on teacher-learner relations and, more importantly, its influence on teaching and learning, I sought to identify the forms of violence perpetrated against teachers by learners. It was important to identify the forms of school-based violence that participants had experienced to understand the causes of school-based violence against teachers from the participants' perspectives. The common form of violence that the participants identified included physical violence, threats of physical violence with weapons, sexual harassment, bullying, verbal abuse and vandalism.

5.3.1.1 Physical violence

The participants reported that the forms of physical violence perpetrated against teachers included the threat of violence with weapons. Burton and Leoschut (2013) contend that in communities where weapons are easily available, violence with weapons tends to be more common. This is evident in the narratives of the participants as reflected in Crissy's comment below:

"...they easily get these weapons like guns, knives, whatever weapon they get they use them when they are fighting against each other...Learners are so violent towards teachers, it is mostly verbal abuse and they threaten to "catch us", which means they can hit us." (Crissy)

The presence of weapons, such as knives and guns, in South African schools is common, as has been argued by Mncube and Harber (2013) who assert that the carrying of knives, guns and other weapons has become a norm in schools. Mncube

and Harber (2013) further indicate how these acts highlight “the extent of violence and crime we experience in our communities” (p. 1), which they believe tends to spill into schools and negatively impact education (Mncube & Harber, 2013).

The acts of violence narrated by Crissy fall within the definition of school violence as coined by Van den Aardweg (1987), cited in Mncube and Harber (2013), which entails acts of teachers, learners, administrators and non-school individuals whose intention is to cause harm to another person or damage school property. It should also be noted that the response from Crissy shows discomfort, which resonates with the theoretical framework of this study. The verbal abuse and threats which Crissy highlights suggest that the learners could hit them and the emotional response and discomfort experienced in sharing this view is a basis for engaging teachers on the factors that contribute to increased violence or threats of violence in schools as well as ways in which to create safe schools (Boler & Zembylas, 2003).

Physical violence against teachers was also referred to by Shushu and Crissy as indicated below:

Researcher: *So there were xenophobic attacks against a teacher?*

Shushu: *Against two teachers.*

Researcher: *In the school?*

Shushu: *It ended up being physical.*

Researcher: *What was the problem? What was the issue around it?*

Shushu: *Xenophobic.*

Shushu: *It becomes physical.*

Shushu: *Yes, they slap them.*

Researcher: *They actually slap the teacher?*

Crissy: *Yes, to see what you are going to do. As I am not scared of you as I do have a backup from the community. The learner can easily insult the teacher.*

Crissy: Because you know that the learners are still having that you have been just hit by that child.

This observation of actual physical violence has been reported by Dinkes et al. (2009) and Wilson et al. (2011), who highlighted the increase in aggressive behaviour against teachers. The aggressive behaviours have been identified as ranging from verbal threats, and intimidation to physical and sexual violence (Wilson et al. 2011).

5.3.1.2 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment was another sub-theme identified from the participants' responses in this study. The participants reported that sexual harassment among learners and teachers was a prevalent form of school-based violence. Female teachers were identified as the common victims of sexual harassment perpetrated by learners. One participant narrated her experience of sexual harassment:

When I arrived in 2017, they (the learners) were rude to me. They were noisy and did not listen to me. When it was time for class, I felt like crying when I needed to go to the class. A child would say, "You know, Miss I dreamt of you at night, I love you," in front of other learners. I cried when I went to that class. (Khumbu)

The vulnerability of female teachers to sexual harassment was also expressed by Siba, a male participant:

You see the issue of gender plays a part because Miss Khumbu and I would go to the class together, but they would not be rude to me because I am male. As Miss Khumbu has said, they tell her all they want. Even if we were the same age and we arrived in the same year, the respect we get won't be the same because I'm male. (Siba)

The challenges of sexual harassment and gender-based violence in schools are not uncommon, as the literature suggests that they are grounded in gender inequality, which informs the kind of cultural backgrounds of learners (Lehelma et al., 2000; De Lange et al., 2012). As can be discerned from Khumbu's experience, these incidents are uncomfortable and painful to the teachers, especially female teachers who are at the receiving end. This is especially concerning because, as can be noticed in Khumbu's case, there are no mechanisms to protect victims of sexual harassment in schools. In this regard, sexual harassment becomes normalised as part of the lives of its victims. That is, they must take the pain and discomfort and learn to live with it. The exposure of female teachers to sexual harassment, or any other form of gender-based violence, has been attributed to toxic masculinity and the domination of women within a patriarchal society (see, for instance, Ngqela & Lewis, 2012). Unfortunately, this dominance is not something that magically appears when the boys are men, but it is the masculine hegemonic culture they are socialised into from a very tender age (see, for instance, Hamlall & Morell, 2012).

5.3.1.3 *Bullying and verbal abuse*

The participant narratives also identified that another form of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers was bullying, as described by the participants in the following excerpts:

(Crissy): *“Yes, to see what you are going do. I am not scared of you as I do have the back-up from the community. The learner can easily insult the teacher”.*

(Cappy): *“I think it was 2017 when our boys used to go to the toilet and smoke dagga then after that they would sit on top of the desk, shout and insult the teachers, yes it was 2017.”*

(Crissy): *“Yes! Because even at our school we know that these young teachers are not respected by these older boys at school”.*

(Crissy): *“They just speak anyhow.”*

(Crissy): *“Even in the classroom, the classroom they boys don’t respect the young teachers there are so many cases that I have seen in my school”.*

The participant narratives support the findings of the study by Toale (2016) that the bullying of female teachers by boys in schools was often associated with how they had been raised to behave towards women, and how they have been socialised to be in their families and communities. These stereotypical constructions of masculinity often increase the chances of boys engaging in school-based violence. The bullying of younger teachers has been reported in a study by Grobler (2018) in which it was argued that bullying in schools often involved school boys using the power from dominant constructions of masculinity subordinate female teachers. As can be seen from the participants’ narratives above, this challenged the teachers’ authority and positions in the school hierarchies.

Further examples of the link between community influence and violence perpetrated by learners against teachers are exemplified in the excerpts from the participants’ narratives below.

Cappy: *“I think it was 2017 when our boys used to go to the toilet and smoke dagga then after that they would sit on top of the desk, shout and insult the teachers, yes it was 2017.”*

Crissy: *“... as you can see there outside the school, there are some houses out there. The violence also starts, used to start outside where the community used to meet gather together and plot against the teachers in the school, identifying maybe other teachers that they don’t like this because of this maybe they will be just saying things that are not true by*

the teachers, as a result, they used to come inside the school and fighting against that teacher saying “hey! take this teacher away we don’t want this one because of this and because of that”.

Researcher: *“So, they would come armed, with weapons to the school?”*

Cappy: *“Yes”.*

Crissy: *“... and they insult the teachers.”*

The above excerpts point to the possibility that the violence experienced by teachers in schools has some of its roots in the communities where learners come from. This is sad given the fact that the South African Schools Act considers parents and communities as key stakeholders whose support is critical if the education of learners is to succeed (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). This is an issue that requires immediate intervention if South Africa is to achieve its human and sustainability development priorities.

5.3.1.4 Vandalism

Madikizela and Mncube (2014) define school violence as any behaviour by learners, teachers, administrators or non-school persons, to inflict injury to an individual or damage school property. Whilst vandalism is not verbally or physically inflicted on teachers by learners, empirical studies by Bester and Du Plessis (2010), Mncube and Harber (2013) and Dlungwane (2015) have reported that violence hurts teachers at emotional and professional levels. Exposure to violent incidents in schools often results in stressful experiences for teachers, over and above the high professional expectations they must meet. Bester and Du Plessis (2010), Espelage et al. (2013) and Grobler (2018) have reported on the stressors that teachers often experience as acts of violence in schools, whether as witnesses or victims. These include stabbings,

shooting, personal attacks from learners, traumatic experiences and psychological distress (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; Espelage et al., 2013; Grobler, 2018).

Girmen et al. (2018, p. 703), as cited by Khumalo (2019), conceptualise violence as the “extensive use of force against one’s self, another person, group and community climate”. From the definitions above, it is evident that school violence manifests in various forms and often impacts individuals who are directly linked to the school. The excerpts from the narratives of the participants below are a description of vandalism and its impact on teachers and learners.

Crissy: “The children are breaking in since this thing is behind the toilets, there are the toilets (pointing), this fence is behind the toilets. The children are just running like this behind the toilets and they just make holes here and they get in. Because this thing is not visible to the community in front, it is at the back of the school so they get into here inside and do whatever vandalism they want so because they know that they are not seen by anybody.”

Siba: “Maybe if it’s late these holes’ guys, sometimes the community out there they come and do vandalism in the school, you understand they don’t work. As a result, they have many babies, and they get the social grant, drink alcohol and come back to vandalise the school.”

Siba: “The factors would be these bottle stores, when these people of the community get drunk they come. We have got a kitchen here, right? They want to break in wanting the food. Because we are situated in rural areas where there are no jobs.”

Crissy: “There is a security guard room, there is a ground outside, mostly it is outside but it is the school ground whereby there are always some little children playing in this ground. Mostly these children are

problematic because they are just destroying, they used to get into the school, they destroy the water tanks whatever they want to destroy.”

Having presented the common forms of violence against teachers identified by the participants, I now present an analysis of the factors that contribute to school-based violence, focussing on the structural, institutional and organisational contexts that create an environment that nurtures violence against teachers. The participants for this study reported a multitude of factors they believed contributed to the increasing incidents of school-based violence against teachers.

5.3.2 Factors contributing to school-based violence

In Chapter 4, I described the geographic location of the schools in the area known as Msinga. The history and description of the current status of the community of Msinga are important to understanding the structural, institutional and organisational factors that create the context for and contribute to school-based violence against teachers. Marinovich (2014) focuses the description of South Africa’s transition from apartheid to a democratic state on the political rivalry between the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party and the African National Congress. In addition, Marinovich (2014) describes the effects on the lives of the communities there. Marinovich (2014) argues that rivalry extended beyond the political into tribal loyalty and that these spilt into community centres, such as schools. That is, the schools mirrored the configurations of the communities in which they are situated.

As mentioned above, below I discuss some of the factors that have contributed to the perpetration of violence against teachers.

5.3.2.1 Structural factors

I understand structural factors to refer to the broader political, economic, social and environmental conditions that impact an individual’s likelihood of experiencing violence; hence, the emphasis on socio-economic factors, such as rurality, poverty, and

unemployment. I deploy that understanding as a device to interrogate the narratives of the participants and the conflict maps that they developed to describe the structural factors contributing to school-based violence against teachers.

School A is situated in the Emalomini area of the ABathembu Tribal Authority, a deeply rural area in KwaZulu-Natal. The school is located in a community whose major economic activities include crop production. Regarding the structural configurations of the phenomenon under investigation in this study, one participant revealed that close to their school was a tavern that was frequented by and accessible to learners.

“Our school is situated in the Emalomini area at the Bathembu Tribal Authority, it is in a rural area... We also have a tavern that is called Patros whereby even the learners before they come to school start here, because they are just smoking dagga there, it’s whereby they buy drugs there.
(Cappy)

The excerpt above, from Cappy, is supported by the participants’ conflict map for School A (see Appendix E), which identified the following conflict indicators: the location of the school in proximity to the community and that *“starting from outside the school against the teachers, location of the tavern and tuckshop close to the school”*. In addition to the community proximity factors, the conflict map identified the following violence indicators that arose within the school: *“violence starts on the sports ground, corporal punishment in the classrooms by teachers, insults by the teachers to the learners, learners to the teachers, tribal violence among learners and bullying starting from the classroom, smoking dagga near the toilets”*. Thus, the excerpts from the participants’ narratives, together with the conflict map for School A, establish and depict the link between the societal factors and the consequent influence and impact on teacher-learner interactions due to the structural configurations of the school surroundings.

The conflict map for School B (see Appendix F) revealed the following contributing factors to school-based violence. The map shows that the school has buildings such as classrooms, staffrooms, and learners' toilets. Although the school is fenced, the participants reported that the fencing had been vandalised and that learners used the holes in the fence to bunk classes. There is a main arterial road near the school to community homes and teacher cottages. Liquor stores are operating in the neighbourhood of the school and from which physical attacks often occur. Within the school premises, a range of incidents happens, namely, faction fights, bullying, corporal punishment in the staffroom and verbal abuse by community members. The participants also reported that there was a bush behind the school, which was used by learners as a hideaway and a place to commit illegal acts. These factors combine to produce a toxic mix of school-based violence in the school and contribute to the challenges experienced.

Like School A, School B is situated close to two liquor stores. This was a concern shared by the participants: the proximity of liquor stores to the school is harmful to education. They asserted that the violence that is often witnessed at the liquor store often spills into the school. However, the learners themselves often went to the liquor stores to drink alcohol, which contributed to violence when they come to school drunk.

“The bottle stores are problematic...so, if there is a bottle store next to the school, it will cause a lot of problems, because one of the factors that because violence is the abuse of alcohol. They drink alcohol and come and cause chaos in the school.” (Shushu)

The proximity of liquor stores and a tavern to the schools was a major issue of concern for the participants. For them, these places modelled to the learners the fact that violent behaviour is acceptable and then bring it to the school. The influence of the community on the modelling of violent behaviour that contributes to school-based violence has been identified in the National School Safety Framework (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The NSSF asserts that the modelling of violent behaviour from

communities and homes contributes to the increasing school-based violence. In this study, the proximity of the taverns and liquor stores afforded learners easy access to drugs and alcohol. This finding supports what Burton (2007, p. 3) has highlighted “the easy availability of drugs and weapons within communities as other contributing factors to the increase in school violence”.

How liquor stores and taverns contribute to school-based violence, as in the cases of Schools A and B, has been further reported by Gasa (2010), cited in Ngidi (2018, p. 34), who reported that aggression observed in learners and children can be traced back to the social interactions within the community and with their peers. Gasa (2010) has argued that these interactions lay the foundations of what social skills learners ultimately learn and absorb. The tribal factions and political conflicts in Msinga, as reported by Haas (2015) and Marinovich (2014), have also contributed to the increase in school-based violence perpetrated by learners against teachers.

As indicated by Crissy, School A is in ABathembu Tribal Authority, which often experiences tribal factions. This observation has been reported by Gasa (2010), cited in Ngidi (2018, p. 36), who pointed to instability in the community due to political and social violence as crucial elements of the violence perpetrated by learners. Gasa (2010) has emphasised that living and experiencing such acts of violence can contribute to learners being involved in violent acts. Gasa (2010) further argues that such violence may create a constant state of fear that can prompt learners to want to learn survival skills so they can defend themselves. This argument also supports the learners’ justification for carrying weapons to schools, as indicated by Crissy.

Being in a community with ethnic conflicts, learners often fight amongst themselves. This observation points to the potential of ethnic conflict to divide learners into opposing factions, who may identify themselves as superior to the learners and teachers who are not from their tribe. In this study, this behaviour is extended to teachers who learners feel do not belong in the schools, as highlighted in a narrative below:

“Learners fight a lot. The reason for the fighting is tribal discrimination and tribal violence whereby they are fighting according to the areas where they are coming from. Others boast and say, “I am from Mabaso Tribal Authority, ABathembu Tribal Authority, and eMabomvini Tribal Authority.” (Crissy)

For this study, learners have been exposed to tribal conflicts all their lives. That is, the violence that results from tribal conflicts in Msinga has been part of the community for a very long time and has been widely reported as far back as 1998 (see, for instance, Clegg, 1998). In his study, Clegg (1998) noted that the tribal conflicts were mainly driven by the need for power, dominance and rule over Msinga. The participants explained that each tribe was restricted within their respective boundaries and encroaching within the boundaries of another tribe could lead to violent attacks or even death. Marinovich (2014) argues that life in Msinga is a continual struggle with too many people living on too little land and that this competition for land and the defence of tribal boundaries, compounded by drought and men being forced to seek employment in urban areas, forces young boys into being the protectors of what little belongs to their tribes. It is these tribal factions that have found their way into the schools and classrooms of the two schools in this study. Such violence among adults and youth has spilt into schools and has now subjected teachers to perpetual discomfort.

The Mail and Guardian (2019) reported that faction fights were affecting a school in Sahlumbe, an area about 45km from Msinga. The violence that spilt into the school was so bad that the school was closed for three months, as learners were at loggerheads due to tribal differences. It was also reported that such violence included weapons like guns that were used on the school premises. Such events can be traumatising to teachers, making it difficult for them to teach, which will deprive learners of their constitutional right to basic education.

5.3.2.2 *Socio-economic status*

The social injustices prevalent in communities and the violence therein mould the normative practices and social habits that perpetuate school-based violence by learners (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012). These social injustices that model learner violence in turn affect teachers who become victims of school-based violence perpetuated by learners, who often show their anger and frustrations by being aggressive to teachers. This was echoed by the participants from both schools. This finding supports what Madikizela-Madiya and Mncube's (2014) report reported that learners who were raised in impoverished communities tended to be aggressive and display violent behaviour towards others. The excerpts from the participants' narratives pointed to this fact:

“Learners, they are coming from this poverty-stricken community, most of our learners are orphans. They are just getting help from the social grant or from other monies that are just supplied by the government. Mostly, they are poor.” (Cappy)

“Because we are situated in a deep rural area, there are no jobs, they have many babies, and they get the social grant, drink alcohol, and come back to vandalise the school.” (Shushu)

Given the depressing levels of poverty in rural Msinga, learners are often survivors of social injustices that make them susceptible to aggression and violent behaviour that is often directed towards each other and teachers. Marinovich (2014) identifies the lack of economic opportunities in Msinga as the primary driver of men being forced into the migrant labour system, having to earn money to get married, raise children and support their families. It is this constant striving for resources to support their households that inflames differences and makes slights become insults and matters of honour (Marinovich, 2014). In this regard, the participants explained that the communal culture of violence was being carried over into schools by the youth and

community members, evoking strong emotional responses that impacted teacher-learner relationships and the quality of teaching and learning in the two schools.

5.3.2.3 Institutional factors

The institutional factors identified as contributory to school-based violence at schools A and B in the uMzinyathi District are school/community relations, teacher-teacher relations, parental involvement, and school-based policies.

5.3.2.3.1 Parental involvement

The participants highlighted the lack of involvement by parents in their children's education as a factor that contributed to violence perpetrated by learners. The participants reported that there was a lack of interest by some parents in the school and in the education of their children. That is, the participants reported they considered this lack of parental involvement as a contributing factor to the violence perpetrated by the learner, as indicated below:

“This is a deep rural community, there is lack of parental involvement, they are uneducated most of them. They don't know how they can help.”
(Cappy)

“Okay, since we all know that the school is like a three-legged pot, children, teachers, and the parents (community). But most unfortunately in our community where the school is situated some of the parents are just not coming to the school, even to check their children's work, and help us if we have problems with their children.” (Crissy)

The above excerpts point to a worrisome deficiency in one of the most important factors that make schools work, namely, parental involvement in their children's education.

5.3.2.3.2 School-community relations

The participants commented on how the contribution of the community to the incidents of school-based violence against teachers. The participants reported that the community in which the schools were located was a violent area infested with acts of criminality. They argued that what learners were doing mirrored the situation in their communities. This finding is supported by Gasa (2010) reporting that the involvement of most learners in violence was partly due to how they had been raised in their communities. The participants had the following to say in this regard:

“We see that the community is closer to the school...if you are looking, the school is situated along the road, so the people of the community usually come from these bottle stores drunk and pass by the school, speaking the vulgar language to learners. As a result, learners use vulgar language to talk back to the people on the streets. They will then want to get inside the school and hit the learners.” (Siba)

The participants from both schools were unanimous in that the community had a significant influence on the increasing incidents of school-based violence against teachers. They explained that the community was the main instigator of violence, especially against teachers who were disliked. They used alcohol to influence learners to participate in acts of violence that affect teachers in schools. This observation is consistent with the findings reported by Burton and Leoschut (2013), which revealed that teachers were often victims of various forms of school-based violence, including threats, physical harm, and insults by learners. It has also been reported that some teachers have quit their jobs due to their experiences with school-based violence (see, for instance, Ngidi, 2018). The following points to such a reality in the participants' experiences:

“If the community is unhappy with a teacher at school or the principal, they instruct the learners that when they get to school, they should beat the

teacher so and so because they cannot come in and do it themselves. It happened a few years back when the community accused the principal of corrupting school funds. They wanted him gone. They (the community) bought alcohol for the learners to cause chaos at the school and chased him out. So, they influence learners to attack teachers.” (Shushu)

Crissy highlighted that the negative comments by some community members about teachers were a significant influencing factor, which resulted in learners perpetrating violence against teachers at her school. Teachers often experience a lack of respect from their learners from learners as a form of school-based violence in South African schools (see, for instance, Ngidi, 2018; South African Human Rights Commission, 2007). Crissy captures this experience as follows:

“For instance, in the community they discuss, or they speak about teachers’ things that are not good. The learners are easily influenced; they just do not respect that teacher anymore because they know that even if she or he just smacks or hits the child, they can tell the community it will be easy for this teacher to be chased away from the school. Because whatever they say results in ill respect for the teachers. Learners then do not respect teachers.” (Crissy)

Further evidence from the participants’ narratives indicated that community members not only instigated the violence, but they also participated in school violence in which the learners were involved. For instance, the participants reported that the vandalism observed in their schools was mostly by community members and learners. Vandalism has also been reported in several studies as one of the major forms of school-based violence in South African schools (see, for instance, Mncube & Harber, 2013; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Ngidi, 2018). The vandalism that happens in schools causes discomfort to teachers, who must grapple with its adverse effects which often includes destroying teaching and learning materials (see, for instance, Ngidi, 2018). This loss of resources was echoed by one of the participants, Khumbu, who said:

We also had computers, but they are all gone! They were stolen, through the community.

It is important to point out that the loss of learning and teaching support materials has deeper connotations: it contributes to the erosion of access to the right to education.

Another troubling issue that has been observed is that some community members use the school premises as places for conducting illegal activities. The impact of this on learners who witness it is significant. For instance, some learners begin to view the school as an appropriate ground for illegal activities, which undermines the safety of the school community, including teachers. This is captured in the excerpt from Cappy's response below:

“Sometimes people from outside enter the school premises to conduct business and come to commit crime...yes we are not safe. (Cappy)

Vandalism of school property by outsiders was highlighted by the South African Human Rights Commission (2007) and Ngidi (2018) as a form of violence against teachers in South African schools.

5.3.2.3.3 School-based policies/Corporal punishment

Another institutional factor raised by the participants as a contributing factor to the increasing incidents of school-based violence against teachers was school-based policies. The participants reported that some school-based policies contributed to the increase in school-based violence against teachers. The use of corporal punishment was reported by the participants as a factor that was contributing to violence against teachers. The participants reported that although corporal punishment had been banned, some teachers were still using it, and in those instances, it often provoked learners to retaliate. The administration of corporal punishment in front of other

learners, the participants argued, taints the learner's character, a factor that instigates resistance and violence.

“Corporal punishment plays a vital role...if you are going to use corporal punishment in front of learners. It is a defamation of the character of a learner, so, as a result, that learner will go up and then you will end up fighting with the child in front of other learners...corporal punishment causes violence, but we know it's banished but we in the rural areas and sometimes we are “ntshontshing” (stealing) them for discipline.” (Siba)

The teachers in this study understood that the use of corporal punishment was against the law; hence, the use of the words “*stealing them*” and they felt that it was the easiest way to discipline learners. However, it must be pointed out that with the banning of corporal punishment in schools, teachers often feel that they have been disempowered and that this has given learners more power to do as they please, behaving unruly, being aggressive and ill-disciplined. However, the participants seemed to suggest that teaching in a rural area gave them the privilege to use corporal punishment as they act *in loco parentis*. Makhasane and Chikoko (2016) have stated that as teachers act *in loco parentis*, adopting corporal punishment as part of the cultural authority has found a place in the teacher's work. This seemed to have been the case in this study.

There are mixed views on corporal punishment as a form of discipline. In some instances, teachers view themselves as substitute parents who can use corporal punishment on learners who are disobedient. According to Pells (2015), people who advocate for corporal punishment regard it as a harmless disciplining measure that instils respect and obedience. On the other hand, Variara (2014) perceives corporal punishment as hurting learners' emotions, self-esteem, and academic performance. Thus, hostility, anger, and aggression as by-products of the use of corporal punishment were reported in the learners' responses in the two schools. From this, it could therefore be argued that the administration of corporal punishment in these two schools potentially undermined the culture of respect between learners and teachers, which

negatively impacted teacher-learner relationships, often manifesting as violence against teachers.

5.3.2.4 Interpersonal factors

5.3.2.4.1 Stability of family structures

The findings of this study demonstrated how the lack of a familial structure may be a significant factor in the increase in school-based violence against teachers. A narrative from one participant, Crissy, suggests that some learners were from child-headed households, in which they had little or no support or guidance, a factor that they believed contributed to the learners' irritation, which was often revealed in school:

“Sometimes as we have mentioned before some learners are coming from home from where the learner is heading this family maybe they don't have parents, they don't have food there is poverty, she comes from poverty-stricken homes, so they just easily irritated. When you are teaching the learner is sleeping, when you wake them up, the learner becomes so easily irritated.” (Crissy)

The participants were of the view that unstable family systems are fundamental in the moulding of learner behaviour. This observation is similar to what has been reported by Mgijima (2014) and Netshitangani (2014) who asserted that children mimic the behaviour and social norms around them. This means that the contextual factors of violence to which learners are exposed outside of school are likely to be enacted in schools. Erickson (2010) has supported this argument by presenting children as sponges that observe the elders around them and apply what they see to their lives. This observation was also echoed by one of the participants who mentioned:

It could be that at home the learner sees their father abusing the mother and they also become abusive. (Siba)

This argument suggests that the learners' social lives and relationships are an important aspect of the behaviours that learners exhibit against other people, teachers in the case of this study.

5.3.2.4.2 Learner-learner relations

For this study, learner-learner relationships were cited as sources of peer pressure, which often encouraged the use of drugs and alcohol in schools. The participants reported that when learners were intoxicated, they often became violent and aggressive towards teachers:

I think it was 2017 when our boys used to go to the toilet and smoke dagga then after that they would sit on top of the desk, shout and insult the teachers that day. (Cappy)

These findings are similar to findings in previous studies. For instance, according to Govender (2015), learners under the influence of alcohol and drugs have a sense of power and strength and often use it to argue or fight with teachers. Montesh et al. (2015) have reported that most learners who use drugs and alcohol do so due to peer pressure. For some of them, they argue, it is not a decision they would have made on their own, but in their desperate attempt to belong and look cool amongst their peers. For this study, even more concerning was the fact that drug and alcohol consumption also happened within the school premises, as reported by Cappy below:

...even in toilets where they are just, we have made mention of the taking of alcohol, smoking drugs. (Cappy)

This points to the significance of extending safety mechanisms to all the spaces within school premises to ensure that everyone is safe everywhere.

5.3.2.4.3 Social media

The influence of social media on learner-learner relationships was reported as another concerning factor regarding the rise of incidents of school-based violence in the two schools. The participants reported that learners often engaged in violent behaviour that they see on social media platforms to appear cool and strong:

“Media can influence spreading violence because the learner tends to be a celebrity at school they say, “you’re the man!” Even a learner from another school will do the same thing wanting to be praised. They know they will appear on Facebook and all media. So, it does have an influence.”
(Shushu)

The participants also pointed to the violence portrayed on various media platforms, like television, as instrumental factors in the increase of violence against teachers in their schools:

The movies that they watch also influence to increase violence...they say okay I saw this one do this thing so I also want to do it. (Cappy)

These findings are very concerning as media plays a huge part in constructing lives in the twenty-first century and teachers do not have much control over what learners can and cannot watch and learn. The findings of this study support what Burton and Shumba (2013) have reported that there is a link between exposure to violent media and aggressive behaviour. For this study, the participants pointed to the circulation of amateur videos taken through learners’ cellphones, portraying violent incidents against teachers as a contributing factor to violence perpetrated by learners against teachers.

5.3.2.4.4 Xenophobia

Another interpersonal factor reported by the participants as the driving factor for the increase in school-based violence against teachers was xenophobic attacks. The

participants reported that some learners copied xenophobic tendencies they have witnessed in their families and communities. One participant reported that learners' prejudice and hatred towards foreign nationals affected their relationships with teachers from outside South Africa. From the participants' responses, it was clear that violence against teachers who are foreign nationals was not something that the learners conjured up for themselves; it was a result of the attitudes towards foreign nations in their families, which supported the belief that the foreign nationals were enemies responsible for the unemployment of their family members:

Physical violence I have experienced towards teachers was xenophobia...I remember learners hitting them. It was against two teachers...it ended up being physical. They said they didn't like them, it was xenophobic, they said they were from Zimbabwe, and they are taking jobs from their brothers and sisters, and they end up beating them. (Shushu)

This narrative points to how the learners' violence towards teachers in the two schools may not be driven by their thoughts and for their benefit. It shows how their relationships with the people they live with impacted their perspectives of the world and how they believed they had to protect themselves. This observation is consistent with what Van Zalk et al. (2013) have reported. In their study, Van Zalk et al. (2013) reported that young people and their friends socialised with each other's behaviours towards immigrants. Also, the study supports the fact that family and community perceptions and feelings towards foreign nationals are instrumental to how young people respond to foreign nationals. Hattings (2015) reported that xenophobia in schools influences learners' behaviour and intolerance towards foreign nationals, which may result in violence against teachers who are foreign n nationals as they are perceived as outsiders who do not belong. For instance, for this study, teachers who were foreign nationals often experienced the realities of the politics of trauma (Bar-Tal, 2000) as violence in their schools.

5.3.2.4.5 Teacher-learner relations

Teacher-learner relationships were also identified as an interpersonal factor that drove the increasing number of incidents of school-based violence against teachers in the two schools. The participants reported how attempts by teachers to exert their dominance and superiority in the classroom could worsen the incidence of disrespectful remarks made by the learners towards them, as expressed in the excerpt below.

“...while the teacher is teaching maybe the teacher speaks however to the learners sometimes they just insult the learners. They just bully learners emotionally and mentally. Because sometimes when the learner shows that she or he doesn't like the way the teacher speaks, but the teacher continues it makes the learners speak anyhow to the teachers even swear at them and it may result to physical abuse.” (Crissy)

In this narrative, Crissy acknowledges that a relationship of mutual disrespect, often committed by the teacher themselves, may trigger school-based violence against teachers. Also, in some instances, the teachers' responses can be other triggers of school-based violence against teachers, as reflected in the excerpt below.

“It was in class, I was teaching, I asked him to keep quiet, but he continued talking while I was still teaching. I knew he has issues with people in the outside community. Then I spoke badly to him and said “doesn't your brain work? Because I've been telling you to keep quiet.” He replied “does yours work? If mine does not work, yours doesn't either.”
(Cappy)

This observation by Cappy suggests how a negative attitude towards learners who are perceived as difficult, disruptive, challenging, troublesome or violent, can be violent. When they feel unwanted, they can cause trouble to get attention or to prove that they

are not weak (Grobler, 2018). Mncube and Harber (2013) describe how humiliation, name-calling and ridicule often lead to violent confrontations. Thus, when learners feel ridiculed and humiliated, especially in front of their peers, it bruises their egos, leading to violent confrontations against teachers. In such instances, there is a need for teachers to show compassion, empathy and ethics of care and an understanding of what learners could be feeling (Zembylas, 2013; Boler & Zembylas, 2003). That is, instead of perceiving those learners as troublesome, teachers could recognise that they are troubled learners who need compassion and patience.

The same compassion should also be extended to learners with poor achievement performance. The participants reported that learners who were classified as underachievers often exhibited some violent tendencies:

“Sometimes they (learners) strike. This one time they wanted to pass one pass all. It was the rude and naughty ones who did not work, and always absent that were striking.” (Crissy)

The above finding is consistent with what Ngidi (2018) and Bester and Du Plessis (2010) have asserted that learners who are categorised as underachievers are more likely to exhibit violent and aggressive behaviour. This violent behaviour negatively affects teachers’ well-being, including how they teach (Aldrup et al., 2018; Montuoro & Mainhard, 2017).

During the discussion of the mapping activity involving the identification of areas prone to violence within their school, the participants pointed out the teachers’ cottages. When asked to elaborate, it was revealed that some teachers had sexual relationships with learners. During the focus group discussion on the causes of violence against teachers, the issue of sexual relations between teachers and learners surfaced. For instance, the participants reported that there were teachers who have had love affairs with or had asked school girls for sex:

... sexual relationships between teachers and learners cause violence, between teachers and learners. You can't have a secret with a child... If you come to the class to teach they will see just a "boy", they will not take you as an adult person because you've got a girlfriend within the classroom. And even your treatment as well, you won't treat the learners in the same way as your girlfriend in the class. (Siba)

Teachers felt that learners often lost respect for a teacher once it comes to light that a teacher has a love affair with one of their fellow learners. This means that teachers who have love affairs with learners will often find themselves in a compromised position, especially when it comes to discipline and the awarding of marks. Other learners will likely feel that the teacher's girlfriend is given special treatment than them, which may cause and aggravate tensions between the teacher and their learners. Also, male learners may likely feel that the teachers who have love affairs with their fellow learners are "stealing" their girlfriends because they can offer them financial and academic benefits.

South Africa has one of the highest figures of violence against women in the world, including cases of sexual harassment and the violation of girls in schools (see, for instance, Duma, 2013). The sexual harassment of girls in schools by male teachers is one of the most underreported forms of gender-based violence (Bhana, 2015). One of the main reasons for this is that girls often fear being victimised by teachers, repeating a grade, or their parents not believing them. Teachers have a professional and ethical duty to act *in loco parentis* in a manner that respects, protects and upholds learners' rights (Prinsloo, 2008). However, some of these teachers create an unsafe teaching and learning environment through their inappropriate victimisation behaviour. Unfortunately, girls are often abused by adults who are ethically supposed to protect them. Teachers must care for and protect the learners who are entrusted to their care (UNICEF, 2012; Department of Basic Education, 2010). Such unprofessional misconduct tarnishes the image of teachers and contributes to violence against teachers by learners.

5.3.3 Consequences of school-based violence against teachers

Having highlighted the forms of violence and factors influencing the increasing incidents of violence against teachers, this section presents findings and the implications of violence against teachers by learners in the two schools. The main subthemes that were identified from the narratives by the participants are low self-esteem and fear. The participants agreed that confrontations and victimisation by learners affected their self-esteem, breakdown of teacher-learner relationships, and poor academic performance. These also posed a threat to respect among their fellow teachers.

5.3.3.1 *Self-esteem*

The participants also mentioned links between school-based violence and their self-esteem, especially when confronted with difficult situations that show them as failures in front of their learners:

“You got low self-esteem because I can just take for granted there is no learner that is going to respect me anymore. Because they saw me that I’m nothing.” (Crissy)

“I felt like everyone is laughing at me. The teachers and the learners.”
(Cappy)

“As Miss Cappy has said, there will be that insecurity following you that the learners are laughing at you when you go to class, which will also lead to dropping self-esteem.” (Shushu)

These observations have been supported by a range of studies (see, for instance, Mgiijima, 2014; Taole & Ramorola, 2014; De Wet, 2010; Bester & Du Plessis, 2010;

Du Plessis, 2008)> These studies have pointed to the negative psychological, physical, and emotional effects that school-based violence had on teachers in the two schools.

5.3.3.2 *Fear*

Fear was another factor that the participants reported as contributing to school-based violence in the two schools. The participants reported that they were experiencing constant fear of their learners, given incidents of violence that had occurred in their schools. That is, there was a general feeling of fear of their learners, as expressed by one of the participants below.

“You are scared now of the learners you know that even your teaching now can’t be productive to the learners because you just have that, you’re scared.” (Crissy)

This fear, coupled with the low self-esteem discussed above, brought on major psychological stress for the participants. The result of such discomfort was often resignation or leaving the teaching fraternity altogether. For other teachers, long-term psychological challenges, like stress, anxiety, depression and alcohol consumption were some of the challenges they had to grapple with after experiencing violence at the hands of their learners.

“I have seen teachers resign from work; they are running away from all this violence. And I have seen other teachers relocate, and go to other schools. To relocate is not a laughing matter because starting a new life it’s a terrible thing. And I have seen teachers abusing alcohol (yes) as a result of its stress, anxiety and low self-esteem as we’ve mentioned before.”
(Siba)

The above narratives reflect Case’s (2011) findings on how school-based violence against teachers can lead to long-standing psychological, emotional, and physical

challenges. Kaminer and Eagle (2010) have referred to how these experiences may disrupt the various aspects of an individual's psychological functioning. These findings are consistent with the pedagogy of discomfort in which teachers can develop fear, resentment, and anger towards learners due to exposure to violence (Boler & Zembylas, 2003).

5.3.3.3 Breakdown of teacher-learner relationships

Another subtheme that emerged from the narratives of the participants on the consequences of school-based violence against teachers, was the breakdown of teacher-learner relationships. The participants unanimously agreed that the violence against teachers by learners put a strain on the relationships between themselves and their learners. For the participants, this violence eroded and destroyed the trust between teachers and learners.

“The relationship will be no more the same. Because firstly, (like we had said you will now be scared), since you are scared of them now it will not be easy for you to come closer to them. Secondly, you are self-conscious thinking about what can I say to these learners when they are looking at me they don't see a real teacher anymore, it will be so difficult to rebuild that relationship with the violent learners and those that saw me being violated. Violence just destroys, it destroys everything. Fighting with a learner just destroys everything.”

(Crissy)

The above excerpt suggests a professional and ethical dilemma for the participants, who were teachers in the two schools. If this matter is not resolved, it will also erode the enjoyment of the right to education by learners, most of whom, in this context, require it as an escape route from poverty and disadvantage.

5.3.3.4 Lack of care

The teachers also highlighted that there was often a lack of care for the learners. According to the participants, the learners received minimal attention from their teachers due to the fallouts in their relationships. According to the participants, teachers often developed resentment towards their learners and their work and their sense of obligation deteriorated, as expressed by Siba below.

“You don’t give them attention anymore...I carry on with others and teach, up until they see that he or she was wrong and comes to apologise. I ignore the learner.” (Siba)

“I have hated him ever since. Even now if I see him at the mall, I still hate me. If a learner does something wrong that hurts me, I cannot forgive them.” (Cappy)

The findings suggested in the above narratives have been reported in the literature. For instance, Grobler (2018), Bester and Du Plessis (2010) and De Wet (2010) reported that teachers often developed negative attitudes and feelings towards learners who were regarded as bullies or exhibited violence tendencies. The use of the word “*hate*” by Cappy, especially if used by a teacher, points to the professionally damaging effects of school-based violence against teachers. This lays bare the erosion of ethics of care from the teachers who had been at the receiving end of the school-based violence perpetrated by their learners. According to Noddings (2013), the erosion of ethics often leads to the withholding of care and emotional support. When this happens, teachers often believe that the learners who are disobedient, violent, troublesome, and challenging are not worthy of care and that, to this end, they will withhold it.

5.3.3.5 Disruption of teaching and learning and poor learner achievement

The disruption of teaching and learning and poor learner achievement was reported as some of the challenges by the participants. The participants agreed that school violence

destroys the education system as it erodes the culture of teaching and learning in schools.

“After a violent incident at work, you will not be able to teach learners the same. Even productivity at work will go down as well because if you were a hard worker trying to take off these learners will then you will be diminished. It will have big consequences for how you view learners after these incidents have happened.”

(Shushu)

“After a learner is rude or violent towards you as a teacher, even the exercise book you don’t mark it and don’t give them attention, you don’t care if they fail.” (Cappy)

The participants’ narratives above point to how the teaching and learning practice slowly erodes with increasing school-based violence. That is, the quality of teaching and learning is compromised, while social relationships between teachers and learners are damaged. Given the fact that caring is an important aspect of teaching and learning (Noddings, 2015), a point where it is taken away is concerning. Woolfolk (2010) suggests that this reaction by teachers is nothing unusual as each action and interaction of teachers can have qualities of caring or not caring. Poor learner behaviour, often manifesting through school-based violence, can lead to the absence of caring qualities.

5.3.4 Teachers’ perceptions of how school safety can be promoted and their role in creating safe schools

The participants were asked about their perceptions of how school safety could be promoted and what their role could be in creating safe schools. In identifying ways in which school safety could be promoted and ascertaining their role in creating safe schools, I sought to assess the agentic responses of the participants given their experiences of school-based violence. Given the fact that this study is located within

the critical paradigm, agentially creating safety is a transformative effort to address an injustice such as violence. For this study, the participants identified various stakeholders who they considered crucial for creating safe schools.

The stakeholders identified by the participants included internal stakeholders, consisting of the community and the school, and external stakeholders, comprising the Department of Social Development, and the police and teacher unions. The school was considered to be comprising teachers, learners, and the school management team.

5.3.4.1 School policies

The participants argued that policies are vital for ensuring the efficient functioning of the school. They emphasised the need for a code of conduct and classroom rules as instruments for instilling discipline in their learners. However, the participants showed limited knowledge of the existence of policies to curb school-based violence and whether, if any, these have been distributed to learners and parents. The participants believed that having a code of conduct regarding violence against teachers would ensure accountability in the event of an incident of violence. The participants believed that a learners' code of conduct should be shared with both learners and parents so that they are familiar with the rules, expected standards of conduct and the consequences of misconduct:

“We do have a school code of conduct, I’m not sure if it was given to learners or parents. Maybe if it was used properly, it would help with the violence. Learners would know that if they do wrong what will happen to them.” (Siba)

The above narrative suggests the poor implementation of the code of conduct for learners, which could have assisted in reducing violence at the schools. When asked about policies that protect teachers against school-based violence perpetrated by learners, the participants reported that they were not aware of their existence:

“A policy that is drawn to protect teachers against violence, no I have never seen it. I have never heard of it in schools. They have policies that just focus on the learners who are hit by others.” (Crissy)

“I think that the Department of Education must have a policy that is just used in schools. The policy must focus on teachers and protect teachers. The Department is looking or focusing on the learners. They just verbalise our side, and no action was taken. They may say the teachers are mainly abused by learners if something has recently happened and we see videos of violence against teachers, but they do nothing about it. Even if you just see in the media whereby the children or the child was fighting with the teacher, we do not hear the views of the Department of Education supporting that teacher and what happened to that child. Instead, the Department of Education is supporting the learner saying the teacher must have done something wrong to the learner.” (Crissy)

The narratives above suggest a gap that needs to be addressed in protecting teachers against school-based violence. Having robust policies in place to reduce and protect teachers against school-based violence will ensure that safer schools are created. This is consistent with what Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) have reported, which suggests that effective policy implementation is critical for the functionality of a school. When the school exercises its duty of ensuring that the code of conduct for learners includes procedures for dealing with issues of violence, safer schools can be created as there will be accountability and consequence management for everyone within a school (Prinsloo, 2005).

5.3.4.2 Moral regeneration for learners

There was general agreement among the participants that learners have an integral role to play in ensuring safety in schools. The participants argued that, as learners constitute

a significant proportion of the school community, their role in curbing school-based violence was critical. This suggests that the participants identified learners as the main stakeholders in the fight against school-based violence, focusing especially on the need for strong morals and discipline among learners.

“These learners should be taught how to behave, how to respect others. You cannot respect other people if you cannot respect yourself. I always tell them. How can a learner hit an old person who is like their mother or father? They have lost Ubuntu. That is why even the fence has holes, the windows are broken, and they steal books. They don’t care.” (Khumbu)

Scholars like Espelage et al. (2013) and Lefa (2015) agree that strong morals and good values and principles are fundamental for addressing behaviours that promote violence by learners. That is, they argue, these values can promote respect among learners, which induces empathy from teachers, thus creating a safe teaching and learning environment for both teachers and learners.

5.3.4.3 Parental involvement

The participants also highlighted the fact that the parents and guardians of learners were instrumental in moulding the behaviour of learners. They argued that more involvement of parents and guardians in their children’s lives, especially in school-related matters, would contribute to the efforts of raising well-behaved children. Also, there was a consensus on the need for the disciplining of children at home, and most participants believed that there was sometimes too much lenience at home, which may be a contributing factor in the lack of discipline and good behaviour observed in learners, as expressed in the participants’ responses below:

“Parents of learners come in small numbers to parents’ meetings. They will only come if the learner is in trouble, and they have been called to the

case. During the case, the parent would stand by their child even though they have done something wrong.” (Siba)

“What you find is that when the parent is just called by the school for misbehaviour, the parent is so surprised that their son or daughter is naughty, rude or smoking now at the school. The mother or father only knows the good side of the child.” (Crissy)

These accounts by the participants, if true, suggest a concerning lack of interest by parents. They also suggest a lack of accountability by parents, manifesting in the defending of their children regardless of misconduct they might have committed. For the participants, school-based violence could be stopped if parents took their parenting roles seriously to raise responsible adults. Despite the participants’ desire for more parental involvement in their children at school, the national education policy encourages parental involvement in schools. According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, parents are the official partners in the governance of their children’s schools (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). Moreover, parents are the first role models for their children and thus have a significant role to play in influencing their behaviour. This argument has been supported by Ngidi (2018) who asserts that children are most likely to represent the environment they were raised in, for instance, children raised in non-violent and loving homes are less likely to be troublesome or violent. Therefore, for this study, the critical role of parents in assisting with the development of safer schools was an issue of significant importance.

5.3.4.4 Caring teachers

The participants also identified teachers have a role and influence in ensuring that there is no violence in schools. They agreed that they could have a significant positive influence on their learners, given the amount of time they spend with them. There was a general agreement that showing more empathy and care towards learners could contribute to the reduction of school-based violence. For instance, the participants

argued that teachers can create a relationship of trust with their learners and be more attentive so that they can detect any deviance in behaviour and character so that it can be addressed before it has escalated beyond control:

“I think we should be vigilant; we show that we love and care for them regardless of where the learner comes from. Love is just something that covers everything. love and care. We as teachers play the role of being more than just teachers to these learners. we end up being psychologists, social workers, and their parents, all in one. I have just thought about a learner of mine who was doing grade 10 earlier this year. I started noticing that she was frequently absent and often came to school late. One day after my lesson I called her and asked her why she was coming late to school and was often absent. She confided in me and told me that she only started learning at our school this year and she lives very far. She is the eldest and lives with her younger brother who is in primary school. She has to help get him to get ready for school before she goes and hikes for transport to get to school. When I asked her how they get food, she said they get the grant money for her brother but if the food is finished, they ask neighbours. I felt something had to be done to help this young girl. I let the class teacher know and the SMT was also informed. The School Nutrition Committee took it upon themselves to supply the learner with tin fish, soup and maize meal twice a month from the food allocated for the school. The principal notified the circuit psychologist; however, when she came around, the learner had already decided to quit school.” (Crissy)

This narrative by Crissy suggests that timely intervention could have helped in ensuring the learner continued with school, which implies the need for teacher vigilance and care towards learners in promoting safety in schools:

“As teachers, we also show we care for learners by talking to the learner when we see they have changed their behaviour and are failing on their

schoolwork. Sometimes it's because of friends (peer pressure) they get involved in wrong things like smoking and bunking classes. I try to motivate them and also make them see how their behaviour is changing them. You find that their parents do not know of how these learners are behaving at school, or their parents are also tired of scolding them, but they don't change.” (Khumbu)

Khumbu's narrative points to how vital teachers are in the moulding of learners' behaviour, as they may be the only adults to show the care that would allow learners to trust and adopt good behaviour. This finding supports what Weeks (2008) has reported that caring behaviour and empathy towards learners can lead to prosocial behaviour where learners become more resourceful and resilient to adverse circumstances. However, the participants also acknowledged that empathy and care drawn from the pedagogy of comfort cannot lead to a change in learner behaviour, but it can be a starting point towards understanding the injustices surrounding the violence against teachers in schools (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). Teachers can use ethics of care and politics of compassion as suggested by Zembylas (2013) to navigate through their experiences of violence and continue teaching learners. Reconciliation and transformation will be eminent in doing so, which is the basis of the critical paradigm that informs the study.

5.3.4.5 External role-players

5.3.4.5.1 Department of Social Development (DSD)

When describing the community in which their schools were situated, the participants highlighted unfavourable socioeconomic conditions to which learners were subjected to. These included poverty, unemployment, low-income and child-headed households. They also reported that a significant proportion of their learners were beneficiaries of government social grants. Learners, therefore, lack the necessities for school, such as food and uniform:

“Many of our learners get a social grant or the foster grant that is over R1000.00. But the learners come to school hungry and they don’t have an appropriate uniform at all. Some don’t have school jerseys in winter. The problem is the guardians, take it and buy whatever they want like alcohol, and the child does not benefit from the grant. These parents need to be reported to social workers.” (Cappy)

The above response suggests that collaboration between DBE and the DSD could go a long way in ensuring that learners from adverse living conditions living on their own or not benefitting from their social grants, can be identified and supported. Furthermore, the participants raised the need for counsellors to be allocated to schools to strengthen systems of support for learners. The participants argued that if a case of violence, for instance, has occurred, counsellors who are professionally trained could assist to deal with both the needs of the victims and perpetrators. The participants reported that they had not been trained to deal with some of the difficult issues their learners faced, and some learners required professional help.

5.3.4.5.2 Police and the justice system

One of the priority mandates of the basic education sector is to ensure that schools are free from all forms of abuse and violence and to create safe and protective environments for teachers and learners (Department of Basic Education, 2010). With that being mentioned, the participants argued that the police have a crucial role to play in the reduction of school violence. With both schools having experienced extremely violent incidents, they had to call the police to assist to disperse the armed and violent learners. A participant shared the following:

“We have had to call the police more than once at our school. The most violent incident I remember was when learners were rioting saying teachers failed them on purpose. They wanted to pass and go to the next grade forcefully. We had heard rumours from other learners about what

might happen that day, so we left our cars at the mall and took local taxis. When we gave the reports to the learners, they started singing and shouting and throwing rocks, and bricks at the teachers. The principal called the police when they arrived the armed learners ran out back by the holed fence. For two days after the incident, the police came every morning during the start of school.” (Crissy)

“In our school, it was the tribal conflicts. The boys were carrying knives, pangas and all sorts of weapons. We could see that they were unsettled and carried big bags with them that had the weapons. We had to call the police, we feared for the lives of innocent learners who would get hurt. The police came inside the school, some learners jumped the fence. They didn’t fight at school, but we heard they fought on their way home.” (Siba)

The experiences of dealing with violence shared by participants above pointed to the importance of the presence of the police in ensuring safety in schools during volatile situations and violent outbreaks. The participants were appreciative of the police presence at their schools; however, the participants also suggested that police must also consider holding awareness-raising initiatives in schools to alert learners about the need to curb school-based violence, crime and abuse, and about the consequences of criminal activities.

5.3.4.5.3 Teacher unions

Another external role player the participant identified as one of those that can contribute to the development of safe schools was teacher unions. Teacher unions serve as a link between teachers and the Department of Education. According to Steward (2011), some of the functions of teacher unions are to ensure that schools treat teachers justly and ensure that they work under the best possible conditions. In this regard, the participants pointed to the need for teacher unions to be aware of the

challenges that teachers face in schools, including increasing violence against teachers and the fact that their safety within the workplace was being compromised.

“Our unions should also be involved closely with teachers and attend to the problems they face at schools.” (Cappy)

“We see these union people only if a video of violence is seen in the media, only then do they care about teachers’ safety. They should be fighting with the National Department to make sure that we are safe always.” (Khumbu)

The participants further called for the teacher unions to hold the Department of Basic Education and other structures accountable for the lack of implementation of the policies regarding safety within schools. For them, the lack of accountability contributed to the continued rise of school-based violence, especially violence against teachers.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the key findings based on the analysis of data generated on school-based violence against teachers from the participants from two rural high schools in the uMzinyathi District, KwaZulu-Natal. The key themes emerging from the participants’ narratives and the conflict mapping were used to focus on the teachers’ experiences regarding the factors that contributed to school-based violence perpetrated by learners against teachers; the consequences of such violence on teachers and learners; and teacher-learner relations and teaching and learning. In addition, I presented key findings regarding the teachers’ perceptions of ways in which safe schools could be created, their role in it as well as that of the external role-players that were crucial for creating safe schools, free from all forms of violence.

In the next chapter, I draw upon the emergent themes from the participants' narratives and conflict mapping to identify the key research findings, make recommendations, identify the limitations of the study and suggest areas for further research.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the key findings, recommendations, and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with the solidification of the key issues that cut through issues that emerged from the study. At this point, it is important to remind the reader that the study investigated the teachers' experiences of school-based violence against teachers. In this regard, five (5) teachers from two high schools in the Msinga Circuit in the uMzinyathi District, KwaZulu-Natal, were interviewed.

In the first part of the chapter, I present a discussion of the key findings, drawing from the concepts by Boler and Zembylas (2003) on the pedagogy of discomfort, the politics of trauma, the politics of compassion, empathy, reconciliation, and the ethics of care, that were adopted to understand the teachers' experiences of violence. This study adopted these theories as they address issues of difference and social injustice that unsettle the comfort zones of teachers and learners (Zembylas, 2017). In addition, the theories, particularly, the politics of trauma, addresses trauma as shaped by the various factors and integrated approaches to healing, while creating just societies (Bar-Tal, 2000). Furthermore, the theories draw on empathy, compassion, ethics, and care of teachers for their learners, who have inflicted injustices on them.

These theories informed the methodology implemented in this study as well as the findings of the study. The literature review and theoretical framework constituted the second and third chapters. A critical research paradigm was adopted for this study, as it enabled me to understand the teachers' views on the increasing incidence of school-based violence against teachers, its impact on teacher-learner relationships, and the teachers' thoughts on their roles in creating safe schools. The study followed a qualitative narrative inquiry research approach, as this potentially enabled me to gather rich data on the teachers' experiences of violence through the participants' narratives.

6.2 Discussion of key findings

The presentation of key findings in this chapter is informed by the following key research question:

- What are teachers' experiences of school-based violence perpetrated by learners against teachers?

In investigating teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated against teachers, the following subsidiary questions were used to investigate the main question:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the causes of increased school-based violence perpetrated against teachers?
- How do these experiences of violence influence their relationship with learners as well as teaching and learning?
- What are teachers' perceptions of how school safety can be promoted and their role in creating safe schools?

The participants could share their experiences, which allowed a personal connection between the participants and myself. Also, conflict mapping employed in the study permitted me to gain an insightful view of the schools in the study, which provided an understanding of the factors that contributed to the violence observed in the schools. The adoption of focus group interviews as a data generation method, allowed me to gather rich data that helped me to understand the teachers' experiences of school-based violence and its impacts on their relationships with learners. Also, the participants could share their experiences, allowing me to connect more with the participants. By using a purposive sampling method, I could select participants of various age groups and different genders to gain insights into how those aspects affected the teachers' experiences of school-based violence.

From the qualitative narrative inquiry employed in this study, I found out that although all the participants had shared experiences of violence, their experiences and

understanding of their impact were heterogeneous. The findings of the study also revealed that although the participants had similar experiences of violent incidents in their schools, some affected young female teachers more. Various forms of violence were highlighted in the present study, with the most common being verbal abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, vandalism, and physical violence. The study also identified various factors that contributed to the prevalence of school-based violence against teachers. Among these were structural factors that constituted socio-economic factors, institutional factors that included school policies on violence, and interpersonal factors that involved learner relations with family, communities, peers, and teachers.

It was also observed that the experiences of violence affected teacher-learner relationships and the teaching and learning process, as the teachers were often forced to withdraw care from the violent and difficult learners. The participants also acknowledged that the creation of safe schools was not solely their responsibility, but a collective effort involving teachers, learners, the school, government, teacher unions, the community, and parents of the learners. This is a significant finding as it points to the fact that curbing school-based violence requires the efforts of more than teachers, learners and parents.

The study was divided into five chapters, which addressed specific objectives. The first chapter of the study presented the introduction; background; rationale; focus and purpose; aims and objectives; key research questions; clarification of key concepts; an overview of the conceptual framework; and the methodological approach adopted for the study. The first chapter highlighted the fact that the study was mostly informed by the researcher's experiences of increased violence against teachers in the schools. These personal experiences and literature on increased violence in schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Govender, 2015; Dlungwane, 2017) were present as part of the rationale for the study. Also, upon literature search, the study identified a shortage of studies on school-based violence against teachers, compared to those on school-based violence against learners. Thus, the findings of this study may

be considered a significant contribution to the scholarship on school-based violence against teachers.

6.2.1 Teachers' perceptions of the causes of increased school-based violence against teachers

To fully assess the teachers' experiences of school-based violence against teachers, the participants had to identify the form of violence they had experienced and the factors that contributed to it.

- Firstly, sexual harassment, bullying, physical violence with weapons, verbal abuse, and vandalism were among the most common forms of violence the participants had experienced. The participants reported that guns and knives were some of the weapons that learners often carry to school to fight each other. They reported that those weapons were seldom used against teachers, although teachers felt that they were victims of all forms of verbal abuse. In some instances, the participants were threatened through victimisation by learners who had access to all sorts of weapons. Some participants, especially female teachers, also reported having been victims of sexual harassment. For instance, the participants reported having experienced inappropriate remarks with sexual innuendo that had made them uncomfortable in the profession. The male participants attested to this form of violence targeted towards female teachers.
- Secondly, the study identified institutional, interpersonal and structural factors, as the main issues contributing to school-based violence perpetrated against teachers. The main structural factors that were identified as contributing to school-based violence against teachers include unemployment, rurality and poverty. The participants identified the fact that the schools are in deep rural areas with very high unemployment and poverty rates as a significant contributing factor in increased school-based violence against teachers. The findings of the study also revealed that being in rural areas, with schools surrounded by taverns and liquor stores, became a challenge when learners

frequented these places and get contaminated with all sorts of ills. The participants also reported that, in some cases, learners tended to stop by the taverns before coming to school. As such, they would come to school under the influence of alcohol and drugs, which triggered rowdy behaviour that often turned into violence against teachers. Also, the proximity of the taverns and liquor stores was reported as a critical issue that contaminated the potential of learners to exhibit the behaviour required to learn and succeed.

- Thirdly, teacher-teacher relationships, school-community relationships, parental involvement, and school-based influences were identified as critical institutional factors contributing to the increase in school-based violence against teachers. With the schools being in rural communities, it was reported that there was a significant lack of involvement by parents in their children's lives at school. The participants reported that most parents rarely attended school activities, even when they were called to the school regarding the behaviour of their children. In addition, the communities in which the schools are rooted, are in violent crimes and criminality, which the learners are exposed to from a very young age and grow up to emulate. Thus, for the learners, such violent behaviour is a normal part of the life that they carry to school. Some of the violent behaviours, according to the participants, are even rooted in tribal wars within their communities. This study also highlighted that in some instances, learners were conduits of grudges held by community members. These members instigate violence against teachers and learners following the orders of the elders who wanted certain teachers they dislike fixed.
- Fourthly, the findings of the study also highlighted that school-based policies, like corporal punishment, also contributed to the increased school-based violence against teachers. It was reported that corporal punishment in front of other learners often aggravated and embarrassed learners, making them want to fight back to regain their dignity.
- Fifth, the participants also pointed to the unstable familial structures for learners as a critical factor contributing to the increase in school-based violence

against teachers. The findings of the study revealed that some learners came from child-headed households, where there was often little or no guidance and support. Some participants argued that such circumstances often resulted in their learners becoming irritable, owing to the frustrations that they often had to mask through rudeness. In some cases, the learners came from families where they were subjected to domestic violence. As they grew up in an environment that does not appreciate them, this lack of self-appreciation often became a part of them, thus informing their ways of interacting with others, including their fellow learners and teachers.

- Sixth, learner relationships were also identified as contributing to increased school-based violence against teachers. The findings of the study revealed that tribal conflicts were also a significant factor informing many of the relationships between learners and their teachers. The fighting within communities was often extended to schools, where teachers witnessed traumatising attacks and fights. Peer pressure was identified as another factor in learner relationships as a contributing factor to the escalating school-based violence against teachers. The findings of the study revealed that social media and the need to ‘look cool’ amongst peers were among the main forms of peer pressure that drove the violence exhibited by learners in schools.
- Lastly, xenophobia was identified as a significant issue that contributed to school-based violence against teachers. This was reported by some participants as a factor that mainly affected teachers who are foreign nationals. The hatred against foreign nationals emanating from communities was reported to often spill into schools, with the participants reporting witnessing acts of physical violence against teachers by learners. Furthermore, the participants indicated that teacher-learner relationships often fuelled violence against teachers by learners. According to the participants, some learners did not respond kindly to the exertion of dominance by some teachers. It was reported that when some learners feel disrespected by teachers, they often responded with disrespect, which often led to violent altercations between teachers and learners.

6.2.2 Consequences of school-based violence

The study also investigated how school-based violence against teachers affects teacher-learner relationships and the learning process.

- Firstly, the findings of the study identified low self-esteem and fear in teachers as some of the main consequences of school-based violence against teachers. It was revealed that the self-esteem of teachers, especially young female teachers, was affected by violent acts and sexual harassment perpetrated by learners. Some participants reported having been left with fear after violent confrontations with learners. Even some verbal threats had left some teachers in fear, as they knew what the learners could do to them. The study also revealed that cases of vandalism and tribal conflicts in the school often left the teachers with a constant fear of the same events happening again.
- Secondly, the breakdown of teacher-learner relationships was another consequence of school-based violence reported by the participants. The participants highlighted the fact that teachers were often left with anger and resentment towards learners. The trust between teachers and learners was broken and often compassion and care for the learners were also lost. Teachers often kept a distance from troublesome learners and paid no attention to them. The study revealed that teachers will withhold care, emotional support, and compassion from learners they consider troublesome, disobedient, violent and challenging.
- Lastly, the study also revealed that the breakdown of the teacher-learner relationships due to violence against teachers by learners often results in disruptions in the learning and teaching processes. Poor learner achievement was also reported to be a contributing factor in school-based violence against teachers. Without care for learners by teachers, the teaching and learning practice slowly erodes.

6.2.3 Teachers' perceptions of the promotion of school safety and creating safe schools

This study also sought to assess the teachers' perceptions of how school safety can be promoted and their role in ensuring this safety. In this regard, the participants identified various stakeholders in the efforts to ensure safety in schools.

- Firstly, the participants identified communities and schools as the internal stakeholders with a key role in creating safe schools. It was reported that the schools can establish comprehensive school policies to instil discipline in schools. Also, the importance of ensuring that those school policies were communicated to both parents and learners was mentioned as important in creating safe schools. In addition, the participants also mentioned the importance of policies to curb school-based violence against teachers. These policies were reported to be instrumental in the moral regeneration of learners. Learners were identified as integral in ensuring safety in schools; thus, learners must have strong morals and discipline. In addition, the participants argued that teachers must show empathy towards learners. With more empathy, the participants argued, teachers could forge relationships of trust with their learners, a factor that could reduce violence in schools. It was further argued by the participants that if learners felt they could be trusted, they would be more open about what may be happening to them, and they could be supported before their frustrations escalate into violence.
- Secondly, this study also revealed that parental involvement in the education of learners was critical in the efforts to moulding and shape the behaviours of learners that could deter them away from perpetrating violence against teachers. The parents were also identified as being crucial for ensuring a disciplined home environment for children so that they could learn to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours.
- Lastly, the main external role players in creating safe schools identified in this study included the Department of Social Development, teacher unions and the

police. The participants argued that providing social welfare to learners was instrumental in alleviating some of the socio-economic ills that aggravated the lives of some learners. The findings also revealed the importance of access to counselling and therapeutic services to provide emotional support to learners and teachers. The police were identified as key role players in ensuring safety in schools, especially in cases of severe violence and criminality. The participants also reported that teacher unions are critical for ensuring safety in schools. Teacher unions, the participants argued, have a key role to play in advocating for the safety of teachers in schools and ensuring good working conditions in the schools they are working. Thus, the study found that teachers could be more protected if unions were more proactive in ensuring the safety of teachers in schools.

6.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- The criminal justice system should be made more stringent in combating violence in communities. As the findings of the study have revealed, the schools in the study are based in violent communities and the violence perpetrated against teachers is only a mirror of their daily livelihoods. Thus, if the government and other relevant stakeholders put more effort into combating crime, the learners would learn the consequences of violence and criminal behaviour and may begin to exhibit appropriate behaviour that is conducive to learning and teaching. In combating violence in communities, violence in schools can also be reduced.
- The Department of Education should establish and implement a curriculum that teaches learners about the problem of violence and its impact on communities and society in general. Such a curriculum should be integrated into basic education in primary schools so that learners can grow with the knowledge of violence and its consequences on individuals and communities. This is particularly important as the study has indicated that learners often model the

violence they see in homes and communities. Learners may not understand that such violence is bad as it has been a part of their entire lives and thus appears normal.

- Schools should have dedicated professional social services workers that are available to support learners with personal problems that often translate to violence in schools. The services should also be extended to teachers as well as they are often victims of school-based violence against teachers. As shown by the study, teachers often must play the role of counsellors to learners, which can be overwhelming for them as they may not have the right professional tools to handle some of the issues presented to them.
- The Department of Education and relevant stakeholders should establish rehabilitation services for the learners who need them. The availability of such rehabilitation services will help with the reintegration of the learners into the schools and communities. As the study has shown, some teachers often give up on troublesome learners and consider them hopeless causes, and that loss of care does not assist them to become less troubled and less violent, but can even make their situations worse.
- There should be proper security systems and measures in schools. The participants reported that the schools in this study were not protected and the fences had been vandalised, which led to all sorts of problems. Thus, with security, there can be better monitoring of learner movements during school times and restrict weapons that learners can bring into school premises.
- Schools should establish and implement strict policies against drugs and alcohol in schools. The schools in the study were reported to be close to taverns and liquor stores, which gave learners easy access to drugs and alcohol. With strict policies, learners will know the consequences of coming to school intoxicated or possessing drugs.
- There should be comprehensive policies advocating for parental involvement in their children's lives at school. When parents and schools work together to discipline learners, the chances of success are higher.

- Also, schools should have better policies to protect teachers from the forms of violence perpetrated against them by learners. Concurrently, school policies should also be strict about the consequences of violence against teachers.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

This study was restricted to two schools and had a limited number of participants. Thus, further studies should expand the study to more (rural) schools with more participants. It would also be necessary to include teachers who are foreign nationals in future studies as the issue of xenophobia was identified as a form of violence that the participants had witnessed perpetrated against their fellow teachers. The study also recommends that further studies must include members of school management teams to obtain their perspectives and experiences on violence against teachers.

6.5 Conclusion

School-based violence against teachers is cancer to the education system. As highlighted in the present study, school-based violence erodes the teaching and learning practice, as teachers become scared of their learners and lose care for them. Thus, the perpetration of school-based violence against teachers by learners will see the demise of the South African education system if left unchecked. It is paramount that strict measures are taken towards ensuring safety in schools. As highlighted in this study, the creation of safe schools is a collective action that must involve learners, teachers, parents, the community, the government and other stakeholders and these should make a conscious effort to ensure safe schools and preserve the integrity of the teaching and learning institutions. There is an urgent to address the violence in the country and redirect the future of education and safety in schools by educating learners from a young age. Violence and its impacts should be incorporated into the curriculum from the primary school level to contribute to the national efforts of combating violence in communities and ensuring that learners have good behaviour models to emulate.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Informed Consent Letter to Gatekeepers

PO Box 1919
PORT SHEPSTONE
4240

Date:

Dear Sir/ Madam

I Thinasi Phelele Sithole currently a registered student at the University of KwaZulu Natal in Pietermaritzburg, am conducting research for a Master's Degree in Education for Social Justice on teachers' experience of school-based violence directed towards teachers. The title of the research study is **Violence Against Teachers: An Investigation of Teachers' Experiences of School-Based Violence in the Umzinyathi District, KwaZulu Natal.**

Focus and aim of the study

The study focuses on teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers. The study aims to explore the experiences of both male and female high school teachers experience of violence. It also aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of the reasons for violence perpetrated against teachers and its effects on them personally and professionally. It further aims to investigate how their experiences of violence influence their relationships with learners as well as the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, it will explore teachers' views on how safety in schools can be promoted and their roles in creating safe schools.

Data collection

The data collection method will be face-to-face interviews with the teachers as well as focus group interviews. All interviews will be conducted after school, at a place chosen by participants with which they are comfortable. The confidentiality of the school and learners is guaranteed as inputs will not be attributed to any person, but reported only as a population member opinion. Information provided by teachers will remain confidential and kept in a safe place and used only for purposes of the research.

Participants will not incur any expenses as the researcher will travel to meet them at the venues agreed on. Involvement is purely for academic purposes and there is no financial benefit involved. No remuneration will be received by participants. Participation in the research is voluntary, should teachers wish to withdraw from it at any stage, they are free to do so and there will not be any penalties.

Should you agree that your teachers from your school be included in this research, kindly indicate by signing the consent form attached.

If there are any queries regarding the research, please do not hesitate to contact me at 0848374561 or sunshine14741@gmail.com or my supervisor Dr Saajidha Sader at 0729798477 or saders@ukzn.ac.za.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Thinasi Phelele Sithole (Researcher)

APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Letter by Participants



The School of Education
College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Private Bag X01
SCOTTSVILLE
3201

Dear Participant,

My name is Thinasi Phelele Sithole, student number 206515553. I am studying for the Masters in Social Justice Education in the School of Education, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. The title of my research is **Violence Against Teachers: An Investigation of Teachers' Experiences of School-Based Violence in the Umzinyathi District, KwaZulu Natal**. The research study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions and experiences of school-based violence perpetrated against teachers in the Umzinyathi District, KwaZulu-Natal.

In conducting this research, I assure you the following:

- The confidentiality of the school and participants is guaranteed as inputs will not be attributed to any person, but reported only as a population member's opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on the participant's preference. Interviews will be conducted at a safe & private place selected by participants. All interviews will take place after school. Participants will not incur any expenses as the researcher will travel to meet them at the venues agreed on.
- Any information given by participants will be used against them, and the data collected will be used for this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- Participation in the research is voluntary and you will not be penalized should you wish to withdraw from the research.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- Please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to participate in the research and whether the interview can be recorded using audio recording equipment.

If there are any queries regarding the research, please feel free to contact me. Below are my contact details as well as that of my supervisor.

Email: sunshine14741@gmail.com

Cell: 0848374561

Supervisor: Dr Saajidha Sader

Email: saders@ukzn.ac.za

Cell: 0729798477

You may also contact the Ms Ximba who is based in the research office:

Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 3587

Yours faithfully,

Thinasi Phelele Sithole (Researcher)

Participant declaration

I _____
(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording of interviews		

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

APPENDIX C: In-depth Interview Questions

A. Biographical Questionnaire

Race (Tick one) (Please note that while we acknowledge that South Africa has officially moved beyond race	African	Coloured	White	Indian	Other
--	----------------	-----------------	--------------	---------------	--------------

Name (Please note that this is for record purposes only. Your name or the name of your institution will not be divulged in any way in any communications emanating from this project.)	
School	
Location of the School	
Teaching Experience No of years	
No of years in the school you are at	
Teaching specialisation	

Age	
------------	--

Gender (Tick one)	Female	Male
-----------------------------	---------------	-------------

1st Language	
Other Languages	

Classification, this still provides analytical insights in a historical context.)					
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B. Interview Questions

1. Do you feel safe in and around the school? Please explain your answer.

2. Has the school experienced incidents of violence against teachers? (Probe: How often has the school experienced various forms of violence?)
3. Can you recall any incident of violence directed towards you or any other teacher at your school? If yes, describe what happened and how it made you feel.
4. How did you, or the person who experienced the violence, deal with the incident and/or effects of the violence?
5. If the incident was against you, how did it make you feel going back to teach the same learner/s involved in the incident?
6. How did this influence your relationship with the learner/s involved? How did it influence teaching and learning?
7. If the incident was against another teacher what are your perceptions of how such violence against teachers influences teacher/learner relations?
8. What is your perception of how it may influence teaching and learning?
9. How was the incident/s dealt with by the relevant authorities?
10. Are you familiar with how these incidents of violence in schools were dealt with by the relevant authorities?
11. How did the responsible authorities deal with the incidents?
12. What are your views on how effective the actions taken by the relevant authorities were in dealing with the incident/s?
13. Do you think the way these incidents were dealt with is enough to prevent them from occurring again? Please explain your answer.
14. What do you suggest are the factors that contribute to violence against teachers?
15. How do you think violence against teachers can be addressed and prevented?
16. Does your school have a policy on creating safe schools? If so, were you part of the creation of the policy? Also, is it functional in its implementation?
17. What role do you as a teacher have in creating a safe school?
18. What suggestions do you have in ways of creating safe schools?

C. Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Can you identify the type of violence experienced by teachers in schools within the circuit, District, province and nationally?
2. Are these experiences familiar or the same as the ones experienced in your school?
3. What feelings and emotions are evoked when these violent experiences occur at school?
4. How do you cope with experiences of violence against teachers? How do you cope with having to continue teaching perpetrators after the incident/s?
5. How does it influence teaching and learning?
6. How does violence influence teacher/learner relations?
7. Is there any form of support provided to teachers who experience violence at school?

8. What do you suggest are the causes of violence against teachers?
9. Are there school-based policies in place to prevent and address school-based violence? Do the policies in place protect teachers against violence? Which approaches/practices/strategies work best, and which ones are not working?
10. How do you think school safety can be promoted?
11. What is your role in creating safe schools?
12. Is there anything else you would like to raise in relation to violence against teachers?

APPENDIX D: Certificate from the Editor

10 October 2022

To whom it may concern

Editing of dissertation for Ms. Thinasi Phelele Sithole

I have a Master's Degree in Education Management from UKZN. I hereby confirm that I have edited the dissertation titled 'Violence Against Teachers': An Investigation of Teachers' Experiences of School-Based Violence in the Umzinyathi District, Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Corrections were made in respect of grammar, tenses, spelling and language usage using track changes in MS Word 2016. Once corrections have been attended to the dissertation the dissertation should be correct.

Yours Sincerely

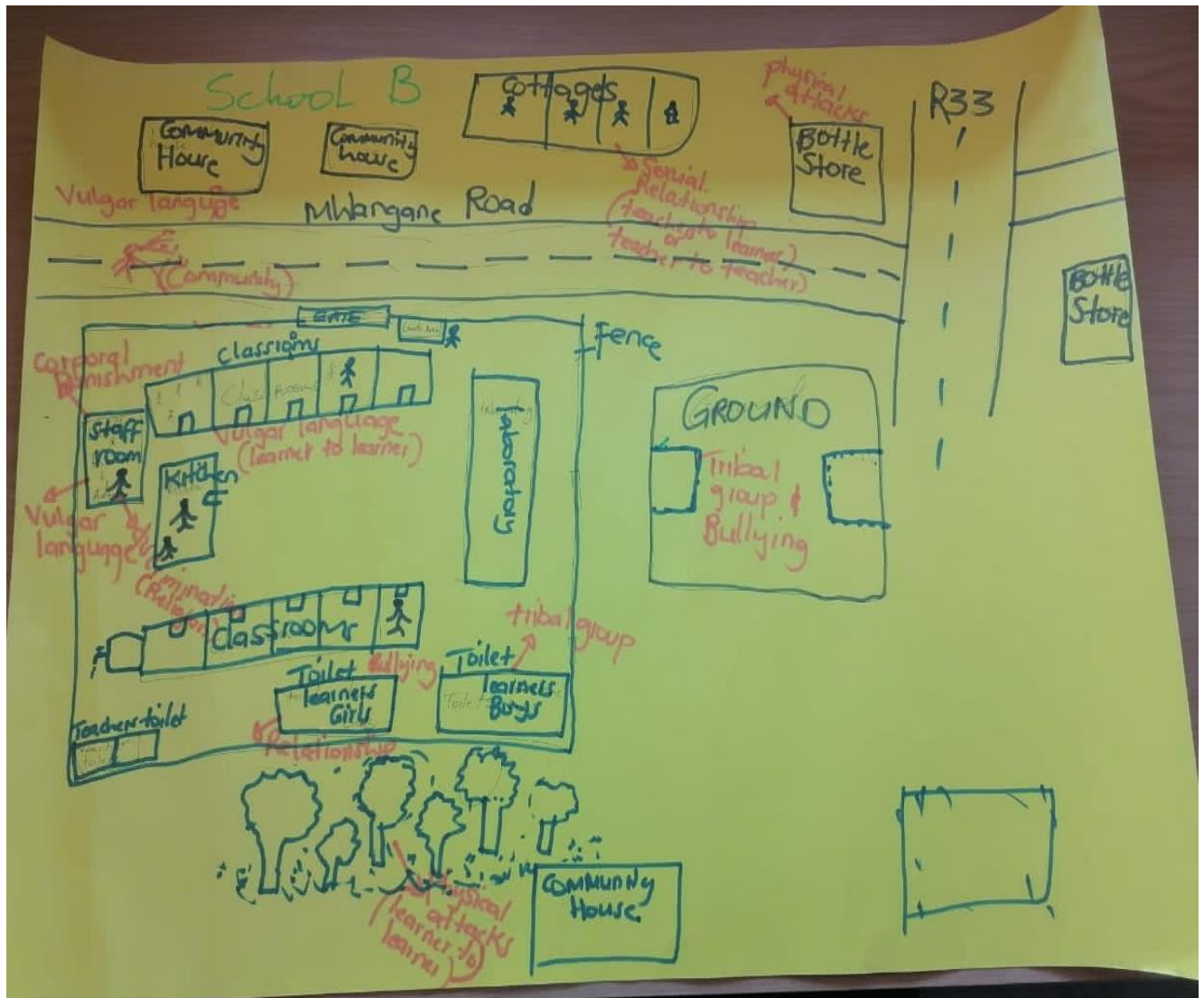


.....
Mahomed Yusuf Sader

Please note:

Should the student not attend to the suggested changes by the editor and made additions to the dissertation after editing has been completed, the editor cannot guarantee the language, grammar and tenses are correct.

APPENDIX F: Conflict Map School B



APPENDIX G: Originality Report

ORIGINALITY REPORT

8%

SIMILARITY INDEX

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INTERNET SOURCES

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Michalinos Zembylas. "The "Crisis of Pity" and the Radicalization of Solidarity: Toward Critical Pedagogies of Compassion", *Educational Studies*, 2013

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