



**Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Learners with Violent Behaviour: A
Case of Contextually Selected High Schools in KwaZulu-Natal**

By

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Doctor of Philosophy in the Discipline of Educational Psychology**

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Declaration of originality

I, Xolani Simangaye Fakude, declare that: “*Teachers’ Experiences of Teaching Learners with Violent Behaviour: A Case of Contextually Selected High Schools in KwaZulu-Natal*” is my own work and that:

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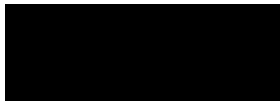
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Statement by the supervisor

I, Dr B.N. Hadebe-Ndlovu

As the candidate's supervisor I agree/do not agree to the submission of this thesis.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the supervisor's signature.

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Supervisor's signature

Date

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I cannot forget my parents, Mr B.M. Fakude and Mrs Z.N. Fakude, for the stable environment you created to enable me to prosper in life. Izandla zedlula ikhanda!

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late daughter, Fisokuhle Fakude. We did not see you and we did not have a chance to see you growing.

And

My wife, Ncamisile, and my son, Sandlasikayise, for all the time I have been with you physically but absent in mind.

May this piece of work be an inspiration to all those who have challenges staying positive in their lives – as nothing is impossible in life, no matter where you are coming from.

Abstract

School violence is a pervasive that has received much attention from the media, highlighting its increasing occurrence and the effects it has on the school community. South African schools are not exempted to violence, particularly learner violence instigated against teachers. Due to learner violence, schools are no longer safe working environments for teachers. Hence, the main aim of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools. This was a qualitative case study conducted in three different settings in the Pinetown District of KwaZulu-Natal, namely urban, township and rural. A qualitative design was employed in order to tap into the teachers' lived experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour, to understand factors contributing to teachers' susceptibility to learner violence, and to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of the factors influencing learners' violent behaviour. A purposive sample of six teachers was selected from three schools, one in each setting. Data were generated by means of in-depth interviews, a focus group and teacher narratives. Content analysis was employed to analyse data.

All ethical issues were considered before embarking on data generation. The study was underpinned by the bioecological systems and transactional analysis theories. The findings of this study indicated that teachers experience various forms of violence instigated by learners against them, and these include verbal abuse, learners' disrespectful behaviour towards teachers, learners' physical abuse of teachers, and learners' sexual harassment of teachers. The study further revealed that the gender and age of a teacher, the teachers' personality and self-presentation, being new in an environment, lack of discipline towards learners, their poor communication skills, lack of insight into learners' personal problems, interference in learners' fights, and tendency not to report school violence, are some of the factors that contribute to teachers' vulnerability to learner violence. The study also revealed that learners' personal characteristics, biological dispositions, lack of respect towards others, emotional problems, family conditions, school dynamics, peer pressure, and social factors have a negative impact on the development of violence instigated by learners against teachers. Deriving from the interpretivist paradigm and guided by the two theoretical frameworks, there is a need to establish an integrative approach to combat school violence, and a collaborative effort from all stakeholders involved in the education sector is recommended.

Keywords: *KwaZulu-Natal High Schools, learner violence, school violence, teachers' experiences.*

Doctoral learning journey

The doctoral degree journey entailed the beginning, a process and an ending. The beginning of the journey was exciting, but filled with the fear of enduring a new challenge. The process was challenging and it highlighted to me the meaning of a doctoral degree as a journey, and the ending is the exciting and fulfilling part of the journey. Doing a doctoral degree has opened up transitional space for the formation of a new sense of identity. The journey was emotionally draining, exhausting and sometimes discouraging, and it required a high level of motivation and persistence. I have learned that a PhD requires passion about the research interest in order to pursue it up to completion. Although it has been a long and time demanding journey, I am proud that I have finally crafted a piece of work that will contribute to the body of knowledge.

List of acronyms used in the study

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APA	American Psychological Association
BA	Bachelor of Arts
B. Ed	Bachelor of Education
B. Psych	Bachelor of Psychology
CPD	Continuous professional development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
NSSF	National School Safety Framework
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation
WHO	World Health Organization

List of tables

Table	Page
Table 5.1: Biographical characteristics of participants	102

List of Figures

Figures	Pages
Figure 3.1: A model of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (2005).	66
Figure 3.2: Graphic representation of the child's interaction with the subsystems based on the bioecological perspective.	69
Figure 3.3: A transactional analysis theory of a child's ego states impacting on the child's personality growth.	75
Figure 5.1: Graphic representation of the child's interaction with the subsystems based on the bioecological perspective.	105
Figure 5.2: Themes that emerged from a study of teachers' experiences of learners' violent behaviour.	107

Table of Contents

Declaration of originality	i
Statement by the supervisor	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	iv
Abstract	v
Doctoral learning journey	vii
List of acronyms used in the study.....	viii
List of tables.....	ix
List of Figures	ix
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Study focus and context	2
1.3 Background to the study	2
1.4 Statement of the problem	4
1.5 Significance of the study.....	7
1.6 Objectives of the study.....	7
1.7 Critical research questions	7
1.8 Research methodology.....	8
1.8.1 Research paradigm.....	8
1.8.2 Research design	9
1.8.3 Sample.....	9
1.8.4 Sampling method	9
1.8.5 Data generation plan	10
1.8.6 Case study	11
1.8.7 Data analysis	11
1.9 Theoretical framework.....	12
1.10 Anticipated limitations of the study	13
1.11 Definition of terms	13
1.11.1 Violence	13
1.11.2 Experiences	14
1.12 Ethical considerations	14
1.13 Issues of trustworthiness	14

1.14 Outline of the study.....	15
1.15 Conclusion	16
CHAPTER TWO	17
LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1 Introduction.....	17
2.2 Government legislation for discipline in South African schools	18
2.3 Violence in schools	19
2.4 The concept of experience	21
2.5 Teachers' experiences of school violence.....	22
2.5.1 Forms of violence perpetrated against teachers in schools	25
2.5.1.1 Learners' bullying of teachers.....	27
2.5.1.2 Racially orientated violence against teachers	28
2.5.1.3 Sexual harassment directed at teachers	29
2.5.1.4 Vandalism of teachers' property	30
2.5.1.5 Disruptive behaviour in the classroom.....	30
2.5.1.6 Verbal abuse against teachers	31
2.5.2 The dynamics of violence in schools	32
2.5.3 Effects of school-based violence on teachers' wellbeing	33
2.5.3.1 Health-related problems of teachers	37
2.5.3.2 Mental wellbeing of teachers	38
2.5.3.3 Poor work performance of teachers	38
2.5.3.4 Absenteeism and resignation of teachers from work	39
2.5.4 Summary	40
2.7 The reasons why teachers experience violence in the way that they do	40
2.7.1 School factors affecting teachers	42
2.7.2 Status as a risk factor for violence against teachers	43
2.7.3 Gender-orientated violence directed at teachers	44
2.7.4 Inequality as a source of violence against teachers.....	45
2.7.5 Sexual orientation as a source of violence against teachers.....	46
2.7.6 Age as a risk factor for violence against teachers	46
2.7.7 Summary	47
2.8 Factors contributing to learners' violent behaviour against teachers.....	47
2.8.1 Biological and internal factors of learners	50
2.8.2 Family factors contributing to learners' violence	52

2.8.3 School factors influencing learners' violent behaviour	54
2.8.4 Social and community factors influencing learner violence	55
2.9 What needs to be done to alleviate learner violence in schools?	58
2.9.1 Parental involvement	60
2.9.2 Provision of psychological services	61
2.9.3 Collaboration of different stakeholders.....	62
2.10 Conclusion	63
CHAPTER THREE	64
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	64
3.1 Introduction.....	64
3.2 Overview of the bioecological-transactional model	65
3.3 Bioecological systems theory.....	67
3.3.1 Microsystem.....	70
3.3.2 Mesosystem.....	71
3.3.3 Exosystem	71
3.3.4 Macrosystem	72
3.3.5 Chronosystem	72
3.4 Transactional analysis theory.....	73
3.4.1 The basic components of transactional analysis theory	75
3.5 Relationship between teachers and learners with violent behaviour in the classroom	77
3.6 Teachers' experiences of the factors contributing to violence.....	78
3.7 Conclusion	80
CHAPTER FOUR.....	81
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	81
4.1 Introduction.....	81
4.2 Research paradigm.....	81
4.3 Research design	84
4.4 Qualitative design	85
4.5 Research methodology	86
4.5.1 Target population	88
4.5.2 Sampling method	89
4.5.3 Sample size	90
4.5.4 Data generation techniques	90
4.5.4.1 Semi-structured interviews	91

4.5.4.2 Focus group.....	92
4.5.4.3 Narratives.....	94
4.5.5 Gaining access to the participants.....	94
4.5.6 Data Analysis.....	95
4.6 Trustworthiness.....	96
4.6.1 Credibility.....	97
4.6.2 Transferability.....	98
4.6.3 Dependability.....	98
4.8 Limitations of the study.....	100
4.9 Conclusion.....	100
CHAPTER FIVE.....	101
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	101
5.1 Introduction.....	101
5.2 Biographical characteristics of participants.....	102
5.3 Results and discussion.....	106
5.3.1 Teachers' experiences of learners' violent behaviour.....	108
5.3.1.1 Teachers' experiences of the nature of learners' violence.....	108
5.3.1.1.1 <i>Learners' verbal abuse of teachers</i>	108
5.3.1.1.2 <i>Learners' disrespectful behaviour towards teachers</i>	112
5.3.1.1.3 <i>Learners' physical abuse of teachers</i>	115
5.3.1.1.4 <i>Learners' sexual harassment of teachers</i>	117
5.3.1.2 Teachers' emotional responses to/experiences of violence.....	119
5.3.2 Underlying reasons for teachers experiencing violence perpetrated by learners.....	128
5.3.2.1 <i>Gender of a teacher</i>	129
5.3.2.2 <i>Age of a teacher</i>	132
5.3.2.3 <i>Newcomers in the profession and environment</i>	134
5.3.2.4 <i>Teacher's personality and self-presentation</i>	137
5.3.2.5 <i>Lack of disciplinary actions against learners</i>	143
5.3.2.6 <i>Teachers' poor communication skills</i>	148
5.3.2.7 <i>Teachers' poor insight into learners' personal problems</i>	150
5.3.2.8 <i>Teachers' interference in learners' fights</i>	154
5.3.2.9 <i>Not reporting violent incidents</i>	155
5.3.3 Factors influencing learners' violent behaviour.....	157
5.3.3.1 <i>Learners' personal characteristics</i>	159

5.3.3.2 Learners' biological factors.....	161
5.3.3.3 Learners' lack of respect.....	163
5.3.3.4 Learners' emotional problems	165
5.3.3.5 Family factors	167
5.3.3.6 School factors.....	171
5.3.3.7 Community factors	172
5.3.3.8 Learners' peer pressure	175
5.3.3.9 Social factors	177
5.4 Conclusion	180
CHAPTER SIX.....	182
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	182
6.1 Introduction.....	182
6.2 Mapping out the research journey.....	183
6.3 Summary of major findings	184
6.3.1 Teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour	185
6.3.2 Underlying reasons why teachers experience violence perpetrated by learners	189
6.3.3 Factors influencing learners' violent behaviour.....	193
6.4 Conclusion	197
6.5 Contribution of the study	198
6.6 Areas for further research	199
6.7 Limitations of the study	199
6.8 Recommendations.....	199
References.....	201
Appendices.....	213
Appendix A: Ethical Clearance.....	213
Appendix B: Gatekeeper's letter.....	214
Appendix C: Counselling Psychologist Consent Form.....	214
Appendix D: Registered Counsellor Consent Form.....	218
Appendix E: In-depth Interview Consent Letter.....	221
Appendix F: School Consent Form.....	225
Appendix G: Editor's Report	228
Appendix H: Turnitin.....	229

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Learners who exhibit violent behaviour present significant challenges to their adult caregivers, peers, and others whom they interact with. Anderson (2016) asserted that the demonstration of problem behaviour early in a child's life is predictive of various negative developmental outcomes, such as drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, violence, and school dropout in the later years of schooling. Moreover, learners who lack social, emotional, and behavioural competence receive less mental health services and, when coupled with the potential for serious negative outcomes, are at a significant disadvantage in the classroom setting (Markowitz, Carlson & Frey, 2006).

There are a variety of influences on human development, including but not limited to biological factors, family circumstances, community, socio-economic status, and neighbourhood influences. In addition, the impact of the school and, particularly, classroom influences are of increasing interest to researchers, and teacher-learner relationships have emerged as an important factor associated with downstream school adjustment (Markowitz et al., 2006). Developing negative relationships with teachers early in the school years can be harmful, as difficult relationships as early as kindergarten are associated with academic and behavioural problems at a later stage. One important aspect of teacher-learner relationships is the moment-to-moment interactions that occur; these interactions serve as the basis for academic and social learning in the classroom and influence subsequent teacher and adolescent learner behaviours (Sutherland & Oswald, 2005).

This study aims to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in contextually selected high schools in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). This chapter begins by discussing the focus and context of the study, and the background to the study, followed by the statement of the problem. It further discusses the significance and objectives of the study, critical research questions, and the methodology employed to conduct the study. It also delineates the theoretical framework guiding the study, with clarification of concepts and ethical considerations.

1.2 Study focus and context

The focus of the study is on teachers' experiences of teaching learners who use violence to abuse them in high schools in KZN, specifically in Pinetown District. Research indicates that teachers who are not adequately equipped with the necessary skills to cope with school violence are prone to developing psychological problems (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; Singh & Steyn, 2014). It is therefore imperative to understand what makes teachers susceptible to learner violence and the causes of learners' violent behaviour.

The scope of the study is centred in the area of Pinetown District and the data generated is limited to teachers in the schools around this area and is not amenable to generalisation. The study was conducted in different high schools in a township, urban and rural setting. This enabled the researcher to acquire holistic, in-depth information from these sites. I have observed from the media that the focus in the education sector is mostly concerned with the rights and safety of the learners, while overstepping the rights of teachers to a safe working environment. This study aimed to understand learners' violence from the perspective of the teachers.

1.3 Background to the study

Violence in schools is a serious, pervasive and global problem that affects learners, teachers, parents and stakeholders involved in the education sector. According to UNESCO (2017), each year approximately 246 million learners around the world are affected by school violence. Anderson (2016) asserted that school violence has gained much attention with the increased incidents of aggressive behaviour in schools across the United States of America (USA); hence public schools are requiring school safety initiatives to alleviate the problem. These initiatives are motivated by the growing incidents of shootings and bullying in the school premises (Anderson, 2016).

Kaya et al. (2012) investigated the types and rates of aggressive behaviour among high school students in Istanbul, Turkey. The sample of the study comprised 805 students aged 14 to 18 years attending five high schools. The findings indicated that beating others was the most common form of violence in Turkish secondary schools, which accounted for 34.5% of the sample. Zengeya (2016) sought to establish the causes, manifestation and impact of

classroom aggression on students' physical and mental health and academic performance in Harare urban secondary schools in Zimbabwe. The findings of this study revealed that the participants believe that aggressive behaviour in the classroom was caused by biological, social and economic factors. Aggressive behaviour was exhibited in physical, relational, cyber and verbal forms. The study also revealed that aggressive behaviour resulted in negative effects that included physical injuries, depression, suicide, anxiety, poor academic performance and early school dropout (Zengeya, 2016).

Ndibalema (2013) critically explored the perceptions about bullying in secondary schools in Tanzania. The target population for this study to gauge relevant information in understanding the concept explored were policy makers, teachers and parents. The idea behind the study was that to reduce and prevent bullying requires joint efforts by policy makers, school administrators, teachers, students, parents and the whole of society at large. This study revealed that students coming from distant areas were bullied a great deal by their teachers because of being late at school. The study further showed that 64.7% of students were involved in relational bullying by watching violent films. The study also revealed that bullying behaviours among students in Tanzania is still a challenge and results in student problems such as truancy, dropout and poor academic performance.

In the South African context, Liang, Flisher & Lombard (2007) examined the prevalence of bullying behaviour among adolescents from Cape Town and Durban, and the association of these behaviours with levels of violence and risky behaviour. A sample of 5074 Grade 8 and Grade 11 school children from 72 government schools in Cape Town and Durban completed self-report questionnaires on participation in bullying, violence, and anti-social and risky behaviour. The findings of this study indicated that over 36.3% of students were involved in bullying behaviour, 8.2% as bullies, 19.3% as victims and 8.7% as bully-victims. Cluver, Bowes and Gardner (2010) examined whether bullying is a risk factor for psychological distress among children in poor, urban South Africa. A population of 1050 vulnerable children, including orphans, AIDS-affected children, street children and child-headed households, were interviewed. The findings indicated that 34% of children reported bullying victimisation. Children with experience of bullying showed high levels of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideations, and posttraumatic stress symptoms. The study indicated that bullying is an independent and important risk factor in children's psychological distress in South Africa.

To my knowledge as a researcher, there are no South African studies, particularly in the area of Pinetown in KZN, that have examined the topic as it is investigated in the current study, but there are various related studies. To mention a few, Pileggi (2017) investigated correlates of aggressive behaviour in typically developing coloured children and young children living in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, with specific emphasis on the role of empathy. Mncube and Harber (2013) investigated the dynamics of violence in South African schools in six provinces. Mthimkhulu (2015) explored the perceptions of parents with regard to school violence in a secondary school in Alexandra. Fitzpatrick, Oghia, Melki and Pagani (2016) and Mthiyane (2013) explored the role of the school governing body in addressing violence in South African schools. Mohapi (2014) explored the views of stakeholders of four schools in Nkangala District in South Africa about school violence. It is against this background that this research focused on teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools in KZN. The study was conducted in different high schools in Pinetown District, which is a district that is multicultural in character. This is important for this study, as it aimed to gather rich and in-depth data from participants with different backgrounds.

1.4 Statement of the problem

There are increasing reported incidents of violent behaviour in South African schools. Schoolyard violence has dominated news headlines over recent years. In two of the most recent incidents, which occurred in KZN in 2018, both caught on video, learners were caught in enacting violent behaviour (News 24, 2018). In Siyathuthuka Secondary School at Inanda, a girl was shown being beaten and kicked by other children. Another incident was in Richards Bay, where a group of boys was seen fighting with knives on the school premises. School violence is by no means limited to KZN, but is prevalent throughout South Africa. In North West, on 13 September 2018 a student stabbed a teacher at Zeerust High School to death. The death of a pupil at Forest High in Johannesburg brought school violence into the spotlight again in 2019. Furthermore, a 16-year-old learner was stabbed to death by a fellow learner at Ga-Mamabolo in Polokwane. In March 2019, a 13-year-old girl was stabbed in the bathroom at Tlhabane Technical School in Tlhabane. In addition to this, in March 2019 a 19-year-old Grade 11 learner at Mondeor High School was stabbed to death outside the school (News 24, 2019). These are some of the incidents that happened since the beginning of 2018, to illustrate the nature and extent of violence in South African schools. Teachers experience

learner violence in schools in various forms including but not limited to verbal abuse, learners' disrespectful behaviour towards teachers, learners' physical abuse against teachers such as beating, and learners' sexual harassment against teachers in the form of touch or verbal comments.

Subsequent to the reported incidents of violence taking place in schools, the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, expressed that the recent widespread incidents of stabbing across the country is a serious cause for concern. This led to the Minister calling (News 24, 7 June 2019) an urgent meeting with the law enforcement departments to look closely at the situation and determine the strategies that need to be employed to address the phenomenon.

Consistent with international conventions, South Africa adopted and introduced laws and legislations that are aimed at protecting people against and addressing issues of violence at schools, among other things. The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996, ch. 2, p. 24) mandates a safe environment for all citizens and protects the right of learners to study in a safe environment. Violence in schools violates the constitutional rights of learners to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right to be free from all forms of violence. Violence also violates the rights to basic education of learners. The National School Safety Framework (NSSF) (Republic of South Africa, 1996) provides an instrument through which minimum standards for safety at school can be established, implemented and monitored, and for which schools, districts and provinces can be held responsible. The framework provides a systemic approach to ensuring that each member of the school governing body plays their role in creating and maintaining safe school environments. The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) was introduced, with the aim of ensuring that schools are safe for all and that effective measures are taken to deal with matters concerning lack of discipline, drug abuse, carrying dangerous objects, violence, bullying, rape, assault, sexual abuse, theft and robbery.

The South African Human Rights Commission was introduced with the aim of supporting constitutional democracy through promoting, protecting and monitoring the attainment of everyone's human rights in South Africa without fear, favour or prejudice. Safety and Security Policy was introduced in accordance with the South African Constitution, to give practical effect to violence- and drug-free schools and to protect the well-being of schools' staff, learners and visitors. The policy was drafted in order to create the healthy school atmosphere necessary for excellent education. Also, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 aims,

among other things, to give effect to the protection of learners from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation, and to ensure that the best interests of a child are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child. The Act aims to make provision for structures, services and means for promoting and monitoring the sound physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional and social development of children and adolescents. The Act further aims to strengthen and develop community structures which can assist in providing care and protection for children. The Act also aims to protect children from discrimination, exploitation and any other physical, emotional or moral harm. Despite the laws and intervention strategies that have been introduced by policy makers and government legislation, violence in schools persists and is increasing day by day.

In addition to the country's legislature, various studies (Cluver et al., 2010; Kaya et al., Bilgin & Singer, 2012; McGaha-Garnett, 2013; Zengeya, 2016; Pileggi, 2017) have been conducted on school violence and have proposed strategies that may be useful to alleviate the problem. Burton and Leoschut (2013) posit that as much as the focus of school violence is mostly centred on learners' well-being, the effects of school violence on teachers and support staff must not be overlooked. In this regard, Cetin, Danaci and Kuzu (2020) pointed out that crime and violence can result in a great deal of educator turnover, negatively affecting their ability to teach, and effectively rendering the relationship between learners and staff as strained. Burton and Leoschut (2013) further alluded that violence occurring in schools mostly takes place in the classroom setting, where the educators are unable to manage and control their class or when there is no teacher in class. There is no literature on studies exploring teachers' experiences and feelings about violence displayed by learners in their schools in KZN. Despite the recommendations made by various studies that have been conducted in relation to school violence and the legal framework as discussed earlier, there are still reports of violence in schools. I have also observed as a community member that violence perpetrated by learners against teachers has increased substantially, and I feel that teachers are no longer safe, even amongst their learners. It is against this background that I was eager to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour and the emotional responses attached to the experience of violence.

1.5 Significance of the study

In order to provide relevant interventions regarding a particular problem, it is essential to understand the underlying factors contributing to the presenting problem. A study of this nature is pertinent to the profession of psychology, as it talks specifically to the need for the services of psychologists in our society. In addition to the significance of the study to the profession of psychology, the education sector and teachers in particular will benefit from the study. The study is valuable in that it brings about insight into understanding the nature, extent and effects of learners' violent behaviour in schools, and understanding their situation will enable relevant stakeholders to render the appropriate interventions. The findings will provide valuable information with regard to learner violence experienced by teachers in South Africa. The researcher further gained an in-depth understanding of the problems of learners with violent behaviour and its impact on teachers. The study also served as a baseline for future studies on violent behaviour exhibited by learners against teachers.

1.6 Objectives of the study

This study has the following objectives:

- To explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools in KZN.
- To explore the reasons why teachers experience learner violence in the way that they do.
- To understand the reasons behind learners' violent behaviour in high schools in KZN.

1.7 Critical research questions

The research intends to answer the following critical research questions:

- What are teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools in KZN?
- Why do teachers experience learners' violent behaviour in the way that they do?
- What are the reasons behind such violent behaviour of the learners?

1.8 Research methodology

This study was qualitative, and more specifically exploratory in nature. There are numerous research methods employed in the qualitative approach to research. The present study used a case study method to explain teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour. According to Thomas (2011), case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. Case studies are an in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey. A case study is a method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic. Whilst it does not answer a question completely, it gives some indication and allows further elaboration and hypothesis creation on a subject. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provide an analytical frame within which the study is conducted, and which the case illuminates and explicates (Thomas, 2011). Thus, this section sets out the research methodology that was used to achieve the objectives of the study and describes the research paradigm, research design, and sampling method used in the research. It also describes the data generation methods and data analysis technique used to make meaning of the data generated.

1.8.1 Research paradigm

In educational research, a paradigm is defined as a pattern containing a set of legitimated assumptions and a design for collecting and interpreting data, which represents a particular worldview that defines what is acceptable to research (Barker, 2003; Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). The study adhered to the interpretivist paradigm in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. In this paradigm, individuals are viewed as having a desire to understand the world they live in (Creswell, 2007). The interpretivist paradigm is aimed at understanding people's worldview and how they make meaning of the environment in which they live (Lichtman, 2010). I elected to conduct an in-depth exploration into teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools in KZN.

1.8.2 Research design

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2015), the research design is a strategy of inquiry and investigation to obtain answers to research, and provides specific directions to a research study. The research design that was used in this study is an exploratory and descriptive case study that is aimed at providing in-depth information on the cases (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative research design was used to conduct this research, as the researcher aims to understand teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour. This approach enabled the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of teachers' understanding of learners' violence, their experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour, the reasons behind experiencing violence in the way that they do, and their perceptions regarding the possible reasons for learners' violence in high schools in KZN. As an interpretive, inductive form of research, case studies explore the details and meanings of experiences and do not usually attempt to test a prior hypothesis; rather they attempt to identify important themes and patterns in data (Bender & Emslie, 2010). Kumar (2011) further indicated that the research design assists in determining and constructing the suitable instruments to be used in order to answer the research questions.

1.8.3 Sample

A sample is a group of potential participants from whom the researcher wants to generate information in a particular inquiry (Struwig & Stead, 2007). A sample of six male and female teachers was selected from schools in different high schools in Pinetown District.

1.8.4 Sampling method

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) are of the view that when the research focus is on a complex micro process, such as school-based learner violence, the sites should be purposefully selected to locate the people involved in that phenomenon. According to Creswell (2015), purposive selection includes identification and selection of participants or a group of participants of interest. A critical case purposive sampling method was used for the selection of the three male and three female participants. This method was used in order to

gain in-depth data, although it is not amenable to generalisation of findings. The participants were selected on the basis that the schools at which they taught had been well known to have a history of violence taking place.

The study is a case of different high schools, which is likely to gauge a sample of multicultural backgrounds, which is important for this study. The rationale for choosing different schools is that learners come from vastly different socio-economic backgrounds and represent different racial groups. Thus, they are likely to display violence in different forms, which affects teachers in many ways. Selecting participants from different schools gave the researcher an opportunity to gain insight into the vast experiences of teachers. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010), the nature of school violence can be linked to the community in which the school is located. It was important for me to select participants from different backgrounds, as each of these subsystems plays an integral role in the school system. The goal was to obtain insight into the phenomenon by purposefully selecting individuals from these contexts in order to enhance understanding of school violence.

1.8.5 Data generation plan

The data were generated by means of individual interviews with teachers, a focus group and teacher narratives. The interviews conducted were semi-structured, allowing for deeper insights into the teachers' experiences of learner violence against them. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), semi-structured interviews are flexible and more likely to produce rich information beyond the expectations of the researcher. A focus group discussion was conducted to enable the researcher to interact with the interviewees and allowed their participation among themselves. Focus groups trigger thoughts and ideas among participants that do not emerge during an individual interview (Packer, 2011). The individual interviews and focus group discussion were conducted virtually due to the national restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Neuman (2014) argued that in qualitative research, researchers use multiple forms of data collection in any single case. Thus, the data were also generated through teacher narratives, which allowed them to write down the incidents of learner violence which they remembered, in their own time.

The first two weeks of data generation were used to carry out individual semi-structured interviews with the teachers. The following week was used to conduct a focus group session

with all participants of the study. While we were busy with the interviews, teachers were asked to write their narratives in the booklet that they were given, in their spare time. After the interviews they were given an extra week to write down as much information about relevant cases as they possibly could. Notably, the narratives did not provide much that was different from what was acquired from the interviews, but it did allow them to give thorough details of their experiences of learner violence.

1.8.6 Case study

A case study examines a case in detail by employing multiple strategies of generating data in a particular environment. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) posit that as qualitative research is concerned with understanding social phenomena from the respondents' point of view, it is important to employ multi-method strategies to obtain valid data. Thus, in this study the information was obtained by means of semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and narrative analysis strategies. Semi-structured interviews include predetermined questions that are presented to all interviewees systematically and consistently. The interviews are permitted to probe and deviate from these questions (Struwig & Stead, 2007). All interviews were conducted individually with each participant, and data were audio-taped, transcribed and incorporated into the data analysis process. Bertram and Christiansen (2017) view focus group discussions as a data generation method in which participants are purposively selected to discuss issues based on a list of key themes drawn up by a researcher. Participants are selected on the basis that they have common characteristics and knowledge that relate to the phenomenon being investigated. Neuman (2014) referred to a narrative as a term assigned to any text used within a mode of enquiry in qualitative research, with a specific focus on stories told by participants. Narratives from the six teachers were in written form and were recorded to generate relevant data on issues of learners' violence. The three methods are considered sufficient for triangulation of the data, which is the basis for the researcher claiming that the data are trustworthy.

1.8.7 Data analysis

The study used content analysis to analyse data. Content analysis refers to the gathering and analysis of textual content (Struwig & Stead, 2007). The study applied content analysis to

select, categorise, compare and interpret the information generated from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group. The research questions, interview guide, theoretical framework, existing knowledge obtained from the reviewed literature and the data generated in this study were used as a guide in coding and interpreting the data. The narratives which were reviewed provided triangulation of the data and concluded data analysis.

1.9 Theoretical framework

This study was contextualised through the use of two theoretical lenses, namely the bioecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (2006) and transactional analysis theory of Eric Berne (1957).

Bioecological system theory is relevant to the study because the researcher recognises that schools are embedded within systems that directly or indirectly influence learners' behaviour. Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes an individual's behaviour as a lasting change in the manner in which a person perceives and interacts with his/her environment. In the context of this study, the school as a system is regarded as a set of units with the capacity to interact within the scope of the school, family and community environments. Developmental outcomes such as violent behaviour are the consequences of the individual's interaction with his/her environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which includes school staff members, peers, family and community members (Donald et al., 2010; Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).

Transactional analysis theory is a theory concerning personality growth and improvement of interpersonal relationships (Berne, 1957). It holds the assumption that each individual's personality is made up of three ego states, namely parent, adult and child. Eric Berne considers a transaction as the unit of social interactions, which consists of a transactional stimulus and a transactional response. The transactional stimulus is the behaviour displayed by one person in the presence of others, when two or more people encounter each other. The transactional analysis model explains human development as a product of interplay with processes in the individual's context over time. The development of a child is a product of the continuous dynamic interactions of the child and the experiences provided by his or her social settings. Within the context of an individual, the interactional influences on a child alter their view of the world, their ability to form relationships, and their ability to moderate

stimulation. Thus, the development of violent behaviour is viewed as a product of poor transactions between individuals.

I believe that it is important to take into consideration the multiple sources of influences that shape the individual in order to understand learners' violent behaviour and the experiences these impose on the teachers. Thus, the combination of these two theories is found to be relevant to provide a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon being investigated.

1.10 Anticipated limitations of the study

The main limitation of this study is the application of a qualitative research design that relies on self-reported information which may contain potential bias, such as memory distortions. The other limitation of the study is the small sample selected for data generation. This limits the potential generalisability of the study beyond the area in which it is located.

In an attempt to overcome the above-mentioned limitations the study used both semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion, in order to enable participants who might have found it difficult to share sensitive issues in face-to-face interviews to feel free to express their feelings and opinions in a group session. An audit of the entire research process was also done to provide confirmation that the data were generated from the participants. The transcribed information was given back to the participants to read and to verify accuracy of the results.

1.11 Definition of terms

1.11.1 Violence

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violent behaviour as any use of force in the form of verbal, written, physical, psychological, or sexual force against any person by an individual or a group, with intent to directly or indirectly do wrong to, injure or oppress that person by attacking his or her integrity, psychological or physical wellbeing, rights or property (WHO, 2002). Alzyoud et al. (2016) defined violence in schools as a pattern of

offensive behaviours which include physical and psychological abuse of peers or teachers and the destruction of school property.

1.11.2 Experiences

Given the fact that different researchers have different views about the concept of experience, it is important to explain experience in the context of this study. According to Erlich (2003), experience refers to psychic actuality and emotional immediacy, in the sense of being subjectively connected to what transpires, particularly in the affective sphere. Dewey (1934) defines experience as a result of interaction between a lived creature and an experienced object in a specific environment.

1.12 Ethical considerations

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011) indicated that it is imperative to obtain appropriate informed consent for each investigation. Before starting this project, I obtained informed consent from the Department of Education (DoE), the principals at the schools in which the data were generated, and the teachers who participated in this study, as well as ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Codes for Research. The teachers were given Participation Information Letters which described the purpose of the study and the intended use of the data, as well as requesting their voluntary participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were adhered to and respected during the course of the study and after its completion. The study also abided by the principle of non-maleficence.

1.13 Issues of trustworthiness

According to Shanley and Dalley-Hewer (2017), qualitative research includes assurance, faith and trustworthiness. Kennedy-Clark (2012) and Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012) are of the view that qualitative research has three issues of trustworthiness to consider, namely credibility, transferability and dependability.

Credibility is when a researcher has confidence that the findings are trustworthy. I ensured credibility by allowing the participants to view the data that were transcribed, and they had an opportunity to clarify, correct errors or add information where it was necessary, including adding information that might have been omitted in the transcriptions. According to Anney (2014), credibility can be ensured when a researcher immerses himself in the participants' world by spending extended time in the field. The trust of the participants was gained, and this helped me to obtain more understanding of their culture and context. I also ensured credibility of the study by triangulation of methods of data generation, by using data from diaries (narratives) and a focus group discussion as well as the individual interviews.

Anney (2014) argues that transferability is when the results of generated data can be applied to another study or situation. It is the duty of a researcher to provide sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork and site so that another researcher can use the information in his/her own study. I provided a thick description and clarification of methodology, research process and data generation in the final report. This study was based in three different high schools in Pinetown District, and therefore results cannot be generalised. However, it is acknowledged that the findings from this study could be helpful in other clusters.

A researcher can establish dependability of his/her work if it can be repeated in the same context, using same methods with the same participants, to attain similar results or findings. Furthermore, a researcher must provide a reader with full details of the research practice that has been followed (Anney, 2014). An audit of the entire research process was done to provide confirmation that the data were generated from the participants. In addition, I did not bring my own experiences into the interviews and discussion. Transcripts were given back to the participants to read and to verify that whatever had been written was accurate. I also recorded all of the semi-structured interviews and the focus group session.

1.14 Outline of the study

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter One serves as a baseline for the study. It begins with an outline of the background to the study, the statement of the problem as observed by the researcher and the significance of the study. The objectives of the study and critical research questions are discussed. The chapter further gives a brief discussion of the theoretical framework that guides the study, and the methodology that was followed. The

chapter also provides a clarification of terms used and an outline of the whole study. Chapter Two gives thorough review of the literature on studies related to the phenomenon under investigation. These include studies on the nature and extent of school violence in South Africa and across the world, the dynamics of school violence, the possible causes and intervention strategies to combat the pandemic.

Chapter Three presents a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework that serves as a lens to guide the study. This is made up of two theories, namely the bioecological systems theory and transactional analysis theory. Chapter Four provides a detailed discussion of the methodology that was employed to carry out the study. The study is located within the interpretivist paradigm. It also discusses the research design, access to the research site, sampling method, data generation instruments, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Chapter Five presents the data that were generated by means of semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and narrative analysis strategies. The data are presented, analysed and discussed in relation to the research questions posed in the study. Finally in Chapter Six the results are discussed in the light of the reviewed literature, to arrive at answers to the research questions. The thesis unpacked new knowledge on the teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour. The thesis concludes by providing recommendations that emerged from the findings of the study.

1.15 Conclusion

This chapter presented an orientation to the entire study and has illuminated its key aspects in order to give the reader a general overview of the study. I briefly discussed major components of the thesis, starting by giving the background to the study. I discussed the statement of the problem that was a starting point triggering my interest in embarking on a study of this nature. The purpose and rationale of conducting this study were further delineated. I presented the research aims and critical research questions guiding this study, and briefly clarified key terms used. The theoretical frameworks underpinning the study were highlighted. A summary of the general organisation of the study was also given. The next chapter presents and discusses the reviewed literature on teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave a brief introduction to the study, with the background to the problem, research questions and objectives, and the significance of the study. This chapter aims to give an overview of what other researchers have found on teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour, and to identify gaps in knowledge that need to be filled. Thus, the literature review is an important component of the study, because it provides a theoretical basis upon which the study is built (Buntain, McGrath, Golbeck & LaFree, 2016). It also highlights significant issues pertinent to the study and situates it in the body of research. In this study the review of the literature sought to provide a detailed description of the characteristics of violence exhibited by learners against teachers. Due to the length of the chapter, the literature review is organised into three sections in line with the critical research questions of this study. The first section provides an outline of some government rules that are pertinent to guide proper behaviour in the school environment, an overview of school-based violence and its prevalence, and a detailed discussion on teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated against them. The second section focuses on the reasons why teachers experience violence in the way that they do. The last section overviews factors contributing to violent behaviour exhibited by learners against teachers.

A considerable amount of research studies have been conducted on violent behaviour in schools, internationally and nationally (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016; Oghia, Melki & Pagani, 2016; Pileggi, 2017; Grobler, 2018). However, there are limited recent studies that have sought to understand the views of teachers on their experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour. Research has looked at how teachers' experiences of aggressive behaviour in schools affect their ability to enact an ethic of care in teaching (Grobler, 2018). Pileggi (2017) explored correlates of aggressive behaviour in typically developing coloured children and young children living in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, with specific emphasis on the role of empathy. A study conducted by Mthimkhulu (2015) aimed to explore the perceptions of parents with regard to school violence in a secondary school in Alexandra. More studies (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016; Oghia, Melki & Pagani, 2016; Mohapi, 2014;

Mthiyane, 2013) examined the importance of the school governing body in alleviating aggressive behaviour in schools.

Given the above studies, the focus of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in South African high schools, particularly in KZN. This chapter reviews relevant data on the nature, extent and prevalence of violence in South African schools and globally. It begins with an overview of some government legislation that sets out clear rules and gives guidance on appropriate behaviour to enable smooth teaching and learning processes. This is followed by a discussion of experiences as a phenomenon. Furthermore, an exploration of teachers' experiences and understanding of school violence is tackled. The chapter also discusses the impact of violent behaviour exhibited by learners on educators.

2.2 Government legislation for discipline in South African schools

The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996, chapter 2, p. 24) commands a safe environment for all citizens. Schools are an integral part of the community-based organisations, where teachers and children spend most of their time. This form of organisation ought to provide a safe environment for all stakeholders involved, in order for teaching and learning to take place without interference. However, the researcher has observed a number of incidents occurring in schools that are contradictory to what the schools aim to achieve. Singh and Steyn (2013) assert that schools have become hotspots for crime and violence. The Bill of Rights further asserts that the child has a right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. It also states that everyone has the right to basic education, and everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. This implies that the dignity of both teachers and learners needs to be protected by both teachers and learners.

The National Safety School Framework (NSSF) approved by the Minister of Education in 2015 is in line with national and global laws and policies that aim to safeguard teachers and learners to ensure that teaching and learning in schools is practised efficiently without interruptions. The framework promotes the protection of the rights of all learners in South Africa against various forms of violence to ensure access to quality education. The framework affords an approach to ensuring that all of the school stakeholders involved take

the initiative to create and sustain a safe school environment (Makota & Leoschut, 2016). Despite the laws and guidelines set out by government to protect all school community members, violence in schools continues to rise. The following section gives an overview of the nature and extent of violence in schools.

2.3 Violence in schools

There is no agreement on a single definition of violence, since violent behaviour involves the individual's perception and feelings of the act or standards of proper behaviour in a particular society. Cultural factors must be considered when determining what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, and the definition constantly needs to be rewritten as the culture and time evolves. Kaur and Niwas (2017) define violent behaviour as verbal, nonverbal and physical behaviour that harms another person directly or indirectly and results in inessential gains for the perpetrator. It is a reactionary behaviour which occurs in various social contexts and enables the individual aggressor to break the rules and regulation of a specific place (Kaur & Niwas, 2017). The WHO (2009) defines violent behaviour as any use of force – verbal, written, physical, psychological, or sexual – against any person by an individual or a group, with intent to directly or indirectly wrong, injure or oppress that person by attacking his or her integrity, psychological or physical wellbeing, rights or property.

As indicated in the introductory chapter of this study, violence in schools has dominated news headlines, and incidents of school violence are becoming worse. The various forms of violence experienced by teachers in schools include verbal abuse, learners' disrespectful behaviour towards teachers, learners' physical abuse against teachers, and learners' sexual harassment against teachers. The pragmatic evidence suggests that school violence is prevalent almost all over the globe (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Cluver et al., 2010; Kaya, Bilgin & Singer, 2012; McGaha-Garnett, 2013; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Anderson, 2016).

To illustrate the seriousness of school violence in South Africa, a study by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention gave evidence about the severity of violence in South African schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). The findings of this study gave estimation that one in five (22.2%) secondary school learners had a history of any form of violence at school in the 12 months of the academic year between August 2011 and August 2012. This translates into over a million learners (1 020 597) across the country (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In 2018

the Birth to Twenty Plus study led by the Department of Science and Technology-National Research Foundation Centre of Excellence in Human Development at the University of Witwatersrand (Richter, Mathews, Kagura & Nonterah, 2018) aimed at giving an overview of exposure to and experience of violence as well as perpetration of violence across childhood in South Africa. The findings of this study indicate that over the past two decades, only 1% of learners have not been exposed to or have not experienced violence in their home, school or community, with 36% reporting that they had been victims of all categories of violence studied in this research (Richter et al., 2018).

On 15 September 2019, News 24 reported that as the country was faced with widespread school violence, with ongoing protests as a result of student deaths at universities, the spotlight turned to bullying at schools as the Minister of Education, Angie Motshekga, revealed during a safety and security in schools briefing in Parliament that there were 1345 violence hotspots in the country. In order, Mpumalanga was leading with 414 schools hit by crime and violence, followed by 251 in Gauteng, 202 in KZN, 147 in the Western Cape, 99 in Eastern Cape, 90 in Free State, 80 in North West, 40 in the Northern Cape, and 22 in Limpopo.

School violence does not occur only on the school premises; it includes incidents that occur on the way to or from school. Some respondent learners (Singh & Steyn, 2013) reported that they have witnessed older learners bullying smaller children in a school bus. One female learner stated that she once experienced bullying on a bus, where a young male learner pushed her towards the back seat and wanted to strangle her with an elastic band (Singh & Steyn, 2013). It is also the case with teachers that violence perpetrated towards them does not only occur while at school – there are circumstances where they are attacked in the streets or at their homes. De Wet (2010) conducted in-depth personal interviews with victims of educator-targeted bullying to describe specific acts and establish qualitative information on risk factors for these negative acts and the effects of educator-targeted bullying on the victims, their schools and the society in which they are based. The findings of this study revealed incidents of teachers being beaten up with stones while walking in the streets, eggs being thrown at their homes, and having their property defaced by graffiti. A male respondent teacher admitted nearly having gone mad when he saw his name written on the walls of a community building, referring to him as a homosexual. One female teacher indicated that she was cycling near the school and heard some people shouting “whore, whore, whore” at her, which shocked her and caused her to cry the whole day (De Wet, 2010).

At times violence in schools happens because of the influence of societal violence. This is in line with the reciprocal effects of interaction between two variables, in keeping with transactional analysis theory. Mncube and Harber (2013) investigated the dynamics of violence in South African schools in six provinces. It is evident that with regard to violence, there are direct connections between what happens in the school and what happens in the community. However, schools also indirectly promote violent behaviour by their failure to act on maladaptive behaviour of learners coming from outside the school (Mncube & Harber, 2013). These violent incidents clearly indicate the seriousness of school violence in South Africa.

The following sections provide an explanation of experiences as a phenomenon and outline teachers' experiences of school violence perpetrated by learners.

2.4 The concept of experience

Experience is considered to be entirely dependent on the manner in which it is processed. Erlich (2003) also argues that it is imperative to speak of experience as embodying the quality of the process that shaped and formed it, rather than looking at it in narrative and content terms. This view holds that experience is a product of the operation of internal and external input, and reflects the polarities of subject-object experience.

Dewey (1934) defines experience as “the result, the sign and the reward of that interaction between organism and the environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication”. In a simplified manner, experience is a result of interaction between a lived creature and an experienced object in a specific environment. In addition to Dewey's definition, Hohn (2012) incorporates other aspects of experience such as conceiving, feeling and enlivening. Moreover, Vyas and Van der Veer (2005) conceptualised experience as a subjective and holistic phenomenon where an individual constructs the eventual experience within the settings provided by the environment. It is meaning that is created, communicated and maintained by an individual during his or her interaction with the world. These definitions are well suited for this study, as it focuses on teachers and the interaction they have with their working environment. As opposed to focusing on an individual or his/her mind, like the psychoanalysis perspective,

these definitions embody an individual and the environment which they constantly interact with.

According to Erlich (2003), experience refers to the psychic actuality and emotional immediacy, in the sense of being subjectively connected to what transpires, particularly in the affective sphere. Different researchers have different views about the concept of experience. It is, therefore, important to explain experience in the context of this study. I explain experience by looking at scholars who have different approaches to the concept. For the purposes of this study, experience is regarded as an individual's, in particular a teacher's, understanding and response to violent behaviour occurring in their working environment. This violence may be exhibited by various individuals at school; however, the main focus in this study is on violence perpetrated by learners against teachers. Most importantly, the researcher sought an understanding of the secondary school teachers' experiences of school violence directed at them.

2.5 Teachers' experiences of school violence

Teachers are essential in changing the world; if they are compromised, learners' development and accomplishments will ultimately be compromised. Effective teaching and learning cannot occur in a school environment where teachers who are supposed to lead, supervise and act as role models are targeted by those whom they are supposed to lead, supervise and protect.

Regarding the effects of violence, much attention has been given to learners rather than to teachers. As a researcher I have observed that the media tends to pay attention to the explicit details of violent incidents in schools and capitalise on the impression that these incidents stimulate. It is unusual for the media to focus on the vulnerabilities of teachers in coping with the effects of violence in schools. I feel that it is important to also pay attention to the wellbeing of teachers, as they are essential for teaching processes. In support of this view, Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) asserted that the practices of school violence are not only inflicting danger on learners but also on teachers. Similarly, Daniel (2018) argued that school violence, whether it is perpetrated against teachers or not, has negative effects on the teachers' wellbeing.

Given the fact that teachers are the first witnesses of school violence, whether it is directed towards them or not, it is likely that they experience it in a certain way. Even if violence is not perpetrated against teachers, the fact that they are the authority figures to their learners means that violent acts are reported to them. In that way, they end up having to deal with it. In Buck's (2006) study, at least a quarter of the sample once had to evacuate the school premises due to vandalism of property, threats of bombs, being threatened with severe physical harm, and sexual harassment. Even though the participants in that study reported that they had never experienced physical violence, they were aware of teachers in their schools who had a history of being slapped, punched or hit. Over a third of the teachers reported a history of sexual harassment by a learner, another teacher, or by an administrator while at school. Most of the teachers in this study described themselves as feeling unsafe while at work (Buck, 2006).

The American Psychological Association Task Force on Violence Directed Against Teachers (2011) conducted a national anonymous web-based survey that examined violence perpetrated against teachers. From their sample, the findings revealed that 80% of teachers reported that they were victimised at least once or twice in the current or previous year; of those who had a history of violence, 94% were victimised by students. In Northern Ireland, a survey conducted by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) (2011) revealed that 50% of the respondents had witnessed incidents of school violence, whilst 57% of the participants had experienced violent acts at some point in time, including physical violence. One of the respondent teachers in this study reported that she was once pushed against the wall by an 11-year-old child, which resulted in her suffering a dislocated shoulder (INTO, 2011). Lokmic et al. (2013) conducted a study of violence against teachers in Zagreb, Croatia. The results of this study suggest that violence against teachers in primary and secondary schools in Zagreb is very present and it appears to be the rule than the exception. The findings indicated that 74.3% teachers had experienced violence from their students during the year in which the study was conducted. This study also showed that learners in primary and secondary schools equally display violence against their teachers.

Bester and Du Plessis (2010) explored a secondary school educator's experiences of school violence. This study aimed to explore, from an interpretive perspective, the secondary school educator's experiences in an educational environment dominated by violence. The study used an unstructured interview with one educator as a data generation method to gain insight into their experiences of violence in a secondary school. The findings suggest that the nature of

violence is experienced as a struggle for power by force, such as intimidation, threats and other means of breaking the law. The participant in this study experienced violence as a harsh reality that had a negative effect on her functioning as an educator in many ways, including feeling emotional, negativity towards learners, poor motivation to help learners, and burnout (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010). Given the negative emotions incurred by the teacher, it is likely that this may ultimately affect her performance in teaching.

Espelage, Anderman, Brown, Jones, Lane, McMahon, Reddy and Reynolds (2013) maintains that many educators in townships experience feelings of anxiety about attending school, and this results in poor motivation and difficulty in executing their work duties. Teachers cannot perform their duties when they feel unsafe in their working environment. In a study of primary school teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated towards them (Govender, 2015), the participants revealed that teachers are disrespected as a result of the new generation of children, whose rights seem to be given priority as opposed to the rights of teachers. The participants in this study indicated that children's attitude towards them is disturbing and uncomfortable for them, for instance, their look, tone of voice and gestures. Such behaviour leads to emotional abuse that affects teachers in various forms, including their ability to teach (Govender, 2015). Furthermore, teachers take their frustrations home and project them onto their families. This in turn results in more stress because their behaviour causes tension in their families. They reported that their frustrations are mostly as a result of lack of support from the school management and that school policies let them down (Govender, 2015).

A study by Singh and Steyn (2014) on the impact of learner violence in schools revealed that teachers are also victims of violence in the form of verbal and physical abuse. For instance, one respondent student in this study indicated that there was an incident of teacher abuse by one of the Grade 11 students in their school. When the teacher asked for the homework that students were given the previous day, this boy refused and started talking back to the teacher. He further engaged in a physical fight with the teacher (Singh & Steyn, 2014).

Given the prevalence of violence in schools and the negative impact it has on educators, it is clear that teachers find themselves worrying about their own or their learners' safety rather than concentrating on teaching. Having discussed teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated against them by learners, the following discussion will allude to the different forms of violence occurring in schools.

2.5.1 Forms of violence perpetrated against teachers in schools

Garrett (2014) argued that violence perpetrated against teachers may involve different forms of direct or indirect behaviour that are obviously or covertly relational, technological, physical and verbal. Direct forms of violence may be physical or non-physical. The physical forms of violence include hitting, spitting, shoving, hair pulling, inappropriate touching and abusive telephone calls. The non-physical violence is manifested in the form of verbal abuse such as the use of sexually inappropriate language, racial remarks, negative comments about the teacher's personal appearance, and threats of violence. Violence against teachers may also be nonverbal, whereby the learners make offensive gestures or noises, stare at or giggle at a teacher, use intimidating facial expressions, throw objects towards a teacher or steal teachers' belongings (Garrett, 2014). It appears that the direct form of behaviour is exhibited intentionally and the perpetrator is aware that he/she is identifiable. In contrast, the indirect form of violence is intended to abuse a victim in such a manner so that it would seem unintentional. Allen (2010) postulated that indirect violence is mostly intended to cause psychological and emotional problems to the recipient, and destroy the recipient's self-concept (Parzefall & Salin, 2010). Although the identity of a perpetrator in the indirect form of violence is often unknown, Maunder (2010) stated that there are instances where the perpetrator is identifiable. These include incidents where a learner ignores a teacher or is constantly disruptive in class. Indirect violence against teachers typically takes the form of nonverbal behaviour, which may include learners talking out of turn, learners' refusal to obey instructions or humiliating the teacher in front of colleagues or other learners (Parzefall & Salin, 2010).

In a national study by Burton and Leoschut (2013) on school violence in South Africa, the findings indicated that only 70% of educators reported that teachers feel safe in their schools. The study also revealed that the incidents of violence were not limited to between learners, but were also perpetrated against teachers. Violence perpetrated by learners against teachers occurred in different forms and varied: 52.1% of teachers were victims of verbal violence, 12.4% of physical violence, and 33.3% of sexual violence. Violence at school not only affects those who are direct victims of it, but also those who witness it occurring on the school premises. What also prevailed in this study is that fear of violence among educators was considerably higher than among learners, with almost one in three educators indicating that they had ever felt unsafe on the school premises (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

In their study of the nature, causes and effects of school violence in South African schools, Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) established that bullying, vandalism, gangsterism, indiscipline, intolerance and corporal punishment were the prevalent forms of violence in schools. Mncube and Harber (2013) investigated the dynamics of violence in South African schools in six provinces, and revealed the different kinds of violent behaviour that are prevalent in schools. Some of the types of violent behaviour, such as gangsterism and illegal drugs, emanate from outside the school premises. Bullying and males sexually harassing female learners is thought to be learned from home and society beyond the school (Mncube & Harber, 2013). In a study by Zengeya (2016), the respondents communicated that violence in schools takes the form of physical, verbal, relational and cyber-bullying.

As much as the majority of the learners overtly engage in violent behaviour, some of them do not want to be seen to do so. In a study, Makhasane (2014) found that it was evident that some learners do not want to be identified when engaging in violent behaviour. Written forms of violence and damage to teachers' property were good examples of this. It appears that learners behave in this manner when they want to hurt the targeted teacher but do not want to be identified (Makhasane, 2014). The reviewed literature indicates that the most prevalent forms of violence that teachers experienced incorporated physical assault, sexually related abuse, classroom disruption, verbal abuse, intimidation or threats, cyber-bullying and invading personal property.

Bounds and Jenkins (2018) conducted a study on teacher-directed violence and stress. The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in teacher-directed violence among rural, urban and suburban teachers in the Midwest of the USA. The results indicated that teachers from urban schools experienced the highest level of violence perpetrated against them, followed by teachers in rural schools, and then suburban teachers. With regard to the prevalence of the nature of violence instigated by learners against teachers, obscene remarks were the most frequently experienced type of violence (34.26%), with 24% of verbal threats, 23% obscene gestures, 22% damage to personal property, 21% obscene graffiti, 18.52% intimidation, 18.52% theft of personal property, 16.7% objects thrown, 14% physical attacks, 6% cyber harassment, 1% a weapon being pulled, and 1% other (Bounds & Jenkins, 2018). However, a study of violence directed against teachers by McMahan, Martinez, Espelage, Rose, Reddy, Lane and Brown (2014) revealed that harassment was the most common form of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers, followed by property offences, and lastly physical offences. This study aimed to examine the three forms of teacher-directed violence

of physical attacks, harassment and property theft. The study revealed that 80% of the surveyed teachers experienced one type of victimisation at least once in that school year (McMahon et al., 2014).

Lokmic et al. (2013) conducted a study to examine the prevalence of violence perpetrated by students against teachers. The sample of the study included 175 teachers from 5 primary schools and 5 secondary schools in Zagreb, Croatia. The results indicated that violence was very present in primary and secondary schools in Zagreb: 74.35% of teachers had experienced violence perpetrated by learners in the year, while 25.65% of teachers had not. Among those who had experienced violence, 28% were victimised once in a year, 15.9% once in a month, 21.3% once in a week, and 90% daily (Lokmic et al., 2013).

2.5.1.1 Learners' bullying of teachers

Bullying has been known to be a dominating form of violence in schools in many countries (Mncube & Harber, 2013; WHO, 2002). Bullying can manifest in different forms, including beating up, threatening someone, gossiping, exclusion from a particular group, teasing and name-calling. A study of 13-year-old adolescents in 27 countries discovered that most of them have a history of being bullied (WHO, 2002).

A study conducted in Lesotho (Ngakane, 2010) on learner experiences of school violence in secondary school indicated that violence was considered normal behaviour. The participants of this study reported that new learners in the school are bullied by the returning learners, and they view this as a way of socialising. It is asserted that new learners are beaten up and forced to run errands for the older learners. This form of bullying is reportedly prevalent in both boys and girls. The study further revealed that learners from higher grades were the perpetrators of violence towards learners from lower grades. In this regard there is evidence of abuse of power relations, whereby older learners used their age and the number of years they had spent in the school to exert power over the young and new children (Ngakane, 2010). This study also revealed that the perpetrators of violence not only bullied learners of the same school, they also bullied learners from other schools. One respondent of this study shared a story where he/she witnessed bullying directed towards a learner from a different school. In this incident, learners from two neighbourhood schools shared the same bus on

their trip to athletic competitions in the same district, to reduce costs of travelling. In this bus, the boys from one school forced other learners from the other school to stand up. One of the boys refused to stand, and this resulted in a fight with the whole group against him (Ngakane, 2010).

A study conducted at Inanda in Durban by Mweli (2013) on learners' experiences of bullying revealed that this was not uncommon among both boys and girls. The participants of this study indicated that girls are mostly bullied by other girls if they are new in the school. These findings are in line with those of Ngakane (2010) in Lesotho, where new students are victimised by older ones in a school. In Mweli's (2013) study, bullying is reportedly occurring in different and varied forms, including verbal and physical attacks. The majority of the girl participants of this study indicated that they were subjected to bullying by older girls because of their personality traits. For instance, quiet learners were viewed as thinking they were better than others, and were at danger of being teased. On the part of the boys, the most prevalent form of bullying was punching and kicking of younger boys by older ones for no apparent reason. Older learners were also reportedly teased by younger ones because of their age being out of step with the grade they were doing (Mweli, 2013).

2.5.1.2 Racially orientated violence against teachers

Even though South African schools have become multiracial and multicultural, racial segregation still persists and is one of the factors that perpetuate violent behaviour among learners (Singh & Steyn, 2013). An Indian teacher respondent in the study asserted that in their school they teach a large number of black students. These students tend to have a negative attitude towards Indian teachers and are resistant to taking instructions from them. Many participants in this study attested that cultural differences in schools led to disrespect and discrimination among the different races (Singh & Steyn, 2013). Mncube and Harber (2013) highlighted the role that racial and ethnic discrimination plays in violent behaviour in schools. Hostility towards other races was found to be prevalent in South African schools, and is believed to have its origin in the apartheid system's attitude to segregating people on the basis of skin colour (Mncube & Harber, 2013). However, in a study conducted by Maharaj (2011), not even a single learner mentioned race as a possible causal factor in violent behaviour. This study was conducted in a multiracial school with black, Indian and coloured

learners. Nevertheless, the writer believed that the participants intentionally did not reveal this issue because topics of race, even after about 16 years of democracy, were still sensitive (Maharaj, 2011).

2.5.1.3 Sexual harassment directed at teachers

Even though sexual harassment displayed by learners against teachers is not as prevalent as physical violence, research indicates that sexual offences remain a serious issue for some teachers in schools (De Wet, 2010; Ngakane, 2010; Mncube & Harber, 2013). Sexual abuse has been found by many authors to be a common form of violence in school (Mncube & Harber, 2013; Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). The study of secondary school teachers' personal and school characteristics and experience of violence and perceived violence (Mooij, 2011) revealed that teachers do experience sexual harassment perpetrated by learners. The findings of this study indicate that younger teachers often report that they are victims of sexual violence perpetrated by learners due to their appearance and since they were women. Homosexual teachers are also victimised by learners on the basis of their sexual orientation, especially in the areas where it is still considered a taboo (Mooij, 2011).

Beside sexual violence instigated against teachers, learners too are not excluded from experiencing this form of violence. In their investigation of the dynamics of violence in South African schools, Mncube and Harber (2013) revealed that sexual harassment is a form of violence that happens inside and outside the school premises. One of the respondents in this study mentioned that girls face sexual harassment every day of their lives; they are threatened with sexual assault by other learners, raped by learners and teachers, and some are given higher marks in return for sex. Shaffer and Kipp (2010) alluded to the fact that some boys find it difficult to accept the refusal of girls, and tend to use sexual teasing to humiliate them after being rejected. They express their anger and frustrations through the use of illegal substances and sexual misconduct (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

Ngakane (2010) also revealed that school girls experience sexual assault in schools. Sexual violence perpetrated by teachers on girls in their school was mentioned in the findings. One of the male learner respondents reported that as boys they are able to observe teachers' differential treatment of girls with whom they have a sexual relationship and those who have rejected their proposals. It is contended that girls who have rejected teachers' advances suffer

verbal abuse and are treated unfairly by the teachers. They are beaten even for minor provocations, and their work is marked more strictly than those with whom the teachers have sexual relationships (Ngakane, 2010).

2.5.1.4 Vandalism of teachers' property

Among other forms of violence in schools, vandalism was found to be linked with learner violence. According to Singh and Steyn (2014), violent perpetrators engage in destruction of school property as a way of relieving their frustrations emanating from failure to cope with academic work. Most participants of this study expressed concern about vandalism of school property by angry students. A study conducted in Phoenix, KZN by Reddy (2013) indicated that there were many incidents of acts of vandalism in the two schools where the study was based. Learners who use violence project their anger onto the school buildings and do not seem to care for the property. Learners target school resources and intentionally break windows, block toilets with toilet paper rolls, scratch educators' cars, and deliberately break chairs and tables (Reddy, 2013).

The participants in a study, De Wet (2010) admitted that teachers' classrooms were vandalised with spray paint, their cars were scratched and their tyres were punctured by learners with delinquent behaviour. Similar findings were discovered in Marais and Meier's (2010) study, where vandalism was viewed by the respondents as a serious form of behaviour directed against teachers by learners. The researchers (Marais & Meier, 2010) asserted that breaking windows, blocking toilets with toilet paper, scratching cars and puncturing teachers' tyres are some examples of violent behaviour exhibited by learners towards teachers, as well as disrespect and using bad language to teachers. The nationally representative study carried out by McMahon et al. (2014) indicates that in the USA over one-third of teachers had experienced property offences, this being the second most prevalent form of student bullying of teachers.

2.5.1.5 Disruptive behaviour in the classroom

Teachers found disruptive behaviour in the classroom to be frustrating and hindering to teaching and learning processes (De Wet, 2010; Garrett, 2014). According to De Wet (2010),

disruptive behaviour is recognised as both a direct and indirect form of teacher abuse. When learners relentlessly and repetitively behave in a manner that disturbs the functioning of the class, teachers feel demotivated, unimportant, disillusioned and drained (Garrett, 2014). Verbal abuse is considered the most important component of disruptive behaviour in class. This kind of behaviour is time consuming, as teachers have to spend valuable teaching time in trying to address the issue.

2.5.1.6 Verbal abuse against teachers

Various studies (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Lokmic et al., 2013; Singh & Steyn, 2014) indicate that verbal abuse is the most common form of violence instigated by learners against teachers. According to Lokmic et al. (2013), verbal abuse is intentional use of inappropriate and unpleasant words to hurt another person. A national study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013) on school violence in South Africa revealed that violence perpetrated by learners against teachers occurred in different forms, with verbal violence being the most form of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers. This study revealed that 52.1% of teachers were victims of verbal violence. Singh and Steyn (2014) revealed that teachers are mostly victimised in the form of verbal abuse, among the other forms of violence used against them. The study showed evidence of back chatting between the teacher and the learner which affected the whole class lesson (Singh & Steyn, 2014).

Further to the research showing verbal abuse of teachers, Lokmic et al. (2013) conducted a study on the prevalence of violence against teachers by students. The sample of the study was a total of 175 teachers from five primary and five secondary schools. The findings showed that verbal violence was the most common form of violence instigated by learners against teachers. Garrett (2014) also conducted a study on student bullying of teachers. The study sought to advance conceptual understanding and awareness of student bullying of teachers and to highlight the ways in which the phenomenon may manifest. The findings showed that, among others, verbal abuse of teachers is a prominent form of violence against teachers. This is experienced in various ways, including the use of sexually inappropriate comments, racist remarks, hurtful comments about teachers' personal appearance, intimidation, and threats of violence (Garrett, 2014).

2.5.2 The dynamics of violence in schools

By no means is the occurrence of school violence only perpetrated by learners against teachers as highlighted in the aforementioned discussion. When reviewing the literature, it was discovered that a great deal of teachers are verbally, psychologically and physically abusive towards learners, including using corporal punishment, which is constitutionally illegal. According to Mncube and Harber (2013), unprofessional conduct of teachers, such as absenteeism and lateness, play a detrimental role in the development of violent behaviour among learners. In addition, male teachers sometimes take advantage of female learners by sleeping with them in favour of giving them higher marks (Mncube & Harber, 2013). Similarly, research conducted in Lesotho (Ngakane, 2010) indicated that male teachers lure girl learners to engage in sexual behaviour with them in return for better marks.

Naicker, Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2014) investigated learners' experiences of teachers' aggression in a secondary school in Gauteng, South Africa. The findings of this study suggest that even though the main aim of the teacher-learner relationship is to facilitate teaching and learning, in some instances this is not the case. Learners experience aggressive behaviour perpetrated towards them by teachers, which leads to mental health issues. There tends to be a communication breakdown between the parties involved. The results of this study indicate that learners are victims of violence in the form of being demeaned and emotionally and verbally abused by the aggressive behaviour directed towards them by their teachers (Naicker et al., 2014). A study in Tanzania found that learners from families with poor economic status are victimised by teachers more than those from economically stable families (Ndibalema, 2013). A study conducted in Alexandra (Mthimkhulu, 2015) on parents' perception of school violence revealed that educators have been identified as perpetrators of violence in schools. The behaviour displayed by teachers contributed to learners' feelings of worthlessness and increased the level of school dropout (Mthimkhulu, 2015).

In other instances the violent behaviour of learners to teachers may be caused by the teacher's attitude or behaviour towards a learner, which in turn the learner responds to negatively. In Mncube and Harber's (2013) study, one of the learner respondents reported that the inability of the school to recognise them as human beings and enhance their self-esteem pushes them to utilise illegal substances. Another indirect perpetuation of violence by educators towards learners is violence by omission, where schools are aware of problems of violence – for instance, failure of the school to deal with reported cases of bullying or sexual harassment

even when they are reported (Mncube & Harber, 2013). This is in keeping with the transactional analysis theory which alludes to experiences provided by the environment not being viewed as independent, but rather are shaped by and shaping the individual's developmental trajectory (Doumen, 2008).

According to Buck (2006), many children, especially in disadvantaged areas, view teachers as stable and reliable adult figures. In such instances, if a teacher feels burned out due to the maladaptive behaviour of learners, then their ability to serve as a role model is diminished. As a result learners may perceive this as the teacher being disinterested, and fail to function at the level of which they are capable (Buck, 2006). Having discussed the nature, extent, dynamics and forms of violence, the following section will delineate the effects of violence on teachers' wellbeing.

2.5.3 Effects of school-based violence on teachers' wellbeing

Violence in schools has a negative impact on both learners and teachers, as it interrupts teaching and learning processes (Mthimkhulu, 2015). The recurrent threats of violence in the classroom leave teachers feeling depressed, demotivated and burnt out. As a result, teachers produce poor scholastic results due to poor performance (Govender, 2015). Hart (2017) investigated the teachers' experiences in dealing with oppositional and defiant learners in special needs classrooms. The teacher respondents expressed a range of experiences they have when they are dealing with learners who present with oppositional and defiant behaviour. The disruption of teaching time that these children exert triggers negative feelings in teachers, most of whom indicated that they felt frustrated when attempting to deal with these learners. Teachers also felt demotivated to pursue their work activities and started questioning their suitability in the career they had chosen (Hart, 2017). The respondents in this study further indicated that dealing with learners with oppositional and defiant behaviour led them to respond aggressively, either towards the learner that presents with oppositional and defiant behaviour, or towards other learners in the classroom. These experiences relate to transactional analysis theory, as they occur within a context where teachers are in constant interaction with the learners. Doumen (2008) spoke of the personal and social interactions that influence both parties involved. The classroom setting provides for these interactions between teachers and learners, even if their interaction is negative.

Mthimkhulu (2015) primarily focused on the effect of school violence on learners. Nevertheless, apart from the impact that school violence has on the learners, the participants of this study highlighted the negative effects of violent behaviour on teachers. Since the teachers form part of the school community and are in constant interaction with the learners on a daily basis, they are also directly or indirectly affected by the residual effects of violence in schools. Teachers are affected in various ways by this violence, including feeling fearful, helpless, stressed, unsupported, and inexperienced, and might lose interest in their work. Some educators are even beaten by learners, and are threatened when they try to intervene against violent behaviour displayed by learners (Mthimkhulu, 2015).

A study conducted by Buck (2006) examined the effects of school violence on high school teacher burnout. The results revealed that teachers who were participants reported that even though they were experiencing psychologically violent behaviour, rather than physically violent acts, they were aware of other teachers who were experiencing physical violence. The overall findings of this study suggest that teachers go through a great deal of violent behaviour within their working environment, which could lead to professional burnout. Both direct and indirect violence result in emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Buck, 2006). Prolonged exposure to an environment with violence can result in burnout. When teachers are burned out, they lose interest in working with learners and feel disconnected from learners. Similar findings were evident from Bester and Du Plessis's (2010) study, which revealed that teachers felt humiliated, helpless and disillusioned by the physical and verbal attacks directed towards them by the learners.

Garrett (2014) alluded that teachers who are objectified by their learners regarding their sexuality or physical appearance develop negative feelings, such as feeling offended or confused. Whether teachers experience the comments by learners positively or negatively, they become aware of their sexuality or appearance. The study also revealed that male teachers become disempowered and vulnerable when they are labelled as homosexuals, as this leaves them questioning their masculinity (Garrett, 2014).

Ndibalema (2013) explored the perceptions of teachers and students about bullying behaviours among secondary schools in Tanzania. The study particularly explored the elements of bullying, characteristics of bullies, contributing factors and consequences of bullying as understood by both teachers and students. The study revealed that both students and teachers are of the opinion that students' and teachers' absenteeism is one of the

challenges facing schools because of violent behaviour. Violent behaviour in schools is directly or indirectly associated with poor scholastic performance, social withdrawal, truancy, school dropout and resignation on the part of teachers (Ndibalema, 2013).

As indicated in the above discussion, violence in schools is not only perpetrated against teachers, learners are also affected by aggressive behaviour exhibited by their teachers. Learners develop multiple psychological problems such as feelings of anxiety and insecurity consequent to the aggression directed towards them by teachers. Disrespect and aggression directed towards learners create mental health problems, both intra- and interpersonally (Naicker et al., 2014; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) argued that violence has a negative impact on the learners' level of concentration in class, scholastic achievement, class attendance, and emotions. These subsequently affect teaching and learning (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Zengeya (2016) found that aggressive behaviour in classroom has a detrimental effect on the students' physical and mental wellbeing, and may even result in pregnancy, poor academic achievement and school dropout. Similarly, a study conducted by Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009) revealed that learners who are victims of violence experience negative feelings such as helplessness, worthlessness, anger, depression, fear, discouragement and social withdrawal.

Singh and Steyn (2014) investigated the impact of learner violence in rural South African schools. The findings suggested that violence in schools results in various consequences. The victims of violence are prone to absenteeism from school, involvement in substance abuse, expression of their frustrations through vandalising property, poor academic achievement, and suicide attempts (Singh & Steyn, 2014). In addition, students with a history of being physically and verbally abused reported symptoms of depression and anxiety. It is also revealed that students who exhibit violent behaviour and who have been abusing drugs and been expelled from school may eventually commit suicide by drinking toxic substances (Zengeya, 2016). Singh and Steyn (2014) argued that poor self-esteem, low morale, and poor self-confidence develop feelings of insecurity in individuals, which consequently raises anxiety and fear. These psychological problems might result in poor scholastic performance and to greater school dropout (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

Low self-esteem was documented as a consequence of violent behaviour among learners (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2009; Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Singh & Steyn, 2014). Feelings of inferiority and the sense of vulnerability lead to a low self-concept in learners, and this may

ultimately result in depression and suicidal ideation. According to Shaffer and Kipp (2010), the heightened level of stress in learners contributes significantly to their mental wellbeing. Learners who are constantly suffering from depression are prone to suicide attempts. In addition, the participants of the study by Singh and Steyn (2014) were of the same view that there is a great association between learner violence and low self-esteem of the victims. The victims of violence experience feelings of helplessness emanating from the injustice of their situation, and repressed them. Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009) pointed out that adolescents have a fragile sense of themselves, which is why they easily break down when they feel violated. Ndibalema (2013) revealed that bullying among students reduces self-esteem, and motivation to partake in school work, and affects their psychological wellbeing, which may ultimately result in impairment of their general childhood development. However, the perpetrators of violence have different feelings after they have abused someone. Some participants in Mweli's (2013) study reported that they feel proud about their own behaviour, while others feel the pain at a later stage, particularly those who engage in this form of behaviour to avoid being rejected from a group or to prove their masculinity.

Mthimkhulu (2015) revealed that learners who are victimised by violent behaviour in schools develop feelings of helplessness, as they feel that no one can help them as teachers and parents are also feeling powerless and lack competency in dealing with violent acts in schools. Most participants in this study indicated that school violence also makes learners violent, as they feel that this kind of behaviour may help them overcome violent acts directed at them. Furthermore, victims of violence lose concentration in class because they are preoccupied by the fear of being threatened and hurt by other learners. They expressed that these learners are scared during class because of the fear that they will be caught during the break time and after school (Mthimkhulu, 2015).

Poor scholastic achievement of learners is one of the significant consequences of violence in schools. Mthimkhulu (2015) revealed that violence in schools impedes learners' academic development. One of the objectives of this study was to investigate the effects of school violence on learners. In relation to this objective, it was discovered that the average participants mentioned that school violence involving stabbing and killing results in a significant drop in academic achievement, absconding classes, increased school dropout and the internalisation of violent behaviour. The findings concur with the views of Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009), in that learners who have experienced bullying fall behind with their homework, assignments and tests, resulting in underachievement. Zengeya (2016) further

revealed significant correlations between students' violent behaviour and poor academic achievement. It is indicated that when students are injured due to violence, they end up absenting themselves from school and missing classes. It is further indicated that both perpetrators of violence and the victims display poor academic performance at school. Victims of violent behaviour failed at school because they tend to lose concentration in class due to the fear of being victimised again (Zengeya, 2016). The study further alludes that violent behaviour may result in students' dropout from school. In some instances, they drop out because they are expelled from school. Some of the aggressive students are poorly motivated towards schooling and easily absent themselves from school. As a result, they are left behind and end up failing grades, which subsequently leads to dropout.

As the current study mainly focuses on teachers' experiences of violence against them, the following paragraphs give a detailed discussion of some of the effects of violence perpetrated against teachers.

2.5.3.1 Health-related problems of teachers

Singh and Steyn (2014) revealed a correlation between psychological problems and ill-health. The study revealed that severe depressive symptoms experienced by teachers may result in health-related problems. Individuals' feelings of worthlessness and helplessness or negative self-concept weaken the immune system, which subsequently renders one susceptible to medical illnesses. The respondents of this study were in agreement with the notion that there is a connection between learner violence and the victim's health problems. One respondent principal indicated that he/she does not have normal teachers in their school anymore. Teachers are always on sick leave due to ill-health, and this affects teaching and learning processes. Another principal concurred with this point, that once the teacher is stressed he/she will definitely suffer sicknesses and will consequently be absent from school (Singh & Steyn, 2014). Shaffer and Kipp (2010) also argue that teachers who experience violence directed towards them may suffer from health problems due to their difficulties in coping with harassment and constant victimisation.

2.5.3.2 Mental wellbeing of teachers

Violence in school has a negative effect on the teachers' psychological wellbeing, as is the case with learners (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; Singh & Steyn, 2014). Bester and Du Plessis (2010) and Singh and Steyn (2014) discovered the relation between school violence and teachers' degeneration of morale. In these studies, teachers expressed that they feel humiliated and less important because of violence perpetrated by learners against them (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; Singh & Steyn, 2014). Bester and Du Plessis (2010) further asserted that teachers lose the motivation to help and support learners in their classroom activities. In a study by Singh and Steyn (2014) both teachers and principals concurred that the low morale of teachers contributed to the low self-confidence among teachers, and they end up feeling demotivated to go to classes. However, the participants in Garrett's (2014) study indicated that despite the emotional turmoil caused by their bad experiences in their working environments, they do not feel incompetent or perceive themselves as unsuccessful teachers.

Singh and Steyn (2014) highlighted depression as a result of learner violence in schools. In their study, it was mentioned that both learners and teachers are susceptible to depressive symptoms due to heightened levels of stress, fear and preoccupation with the traumatic experiences. One respondent principal in this study contended that there are a number of medical certificates indicating that a certain teacher is not fit for work-related duties due to depression. Another participant principal also alluded that teachers constantly take psychological or depression leave, because they have difficulty in handling the discipline in high schools. Teachers with a history of being victimised also develop strong anger and resentment towards the attacker (Singh & Steyn, 2014).

2.5.3.3 Poor work performance of teachers

Shaffer and Kipp (2010) stated that school violence plays a role that is detrimental to the work performance of teachers, and this result in absenteeism, resignations, and death caused by stress and depression. Violence affects all school communities, including teachers, irrespective of who the perpetrator is. When there is violence in schools, teachers and learners who are concerned about their safety are less likely to focus on teaching and learning, lose

concentration and confidence, and as a result are subjected to low self-esteem (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

Mweli (2013) also discovered an association between violence in school and teachers' inability to deliver class lessons. The respondents in this study who were victims of violence stated that they often cried and found it difficult to concentrate on their work. They tended to be preoccupied by thoughts of what happened to them. They found it difficult to prepare for class work and appeared as incompetent to their learners, which further stressed and traumatised them. Some teachers chose to bunk classes or school as they felt too weak and powerless to face the perpetrators of violence (Mweli, 2013).

2.5.3.4 Absenteeism and resignation of teachers from work

Teachers may experience threats and feel intimidated when they are in the school premises (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2009). Due to the fear of victimisation, teachers resort to absenteeism and report that they are ill, and this consequently affects their work. Research by Singh and Steyn (2014) indicated that both learners and teachers who have direct experiences of violence often opt to drop out from school (on the part of a learner) and resign from work (on the part of the teacher). They resort to these decisions because of the threats exerted due to the attitudes of learners with violent behaviour (Singh & Steyn, 2014). One of the principal respondents of this research indicated that teachers who are victims of violence tend to absent themselves from school, because when they have a black eye or bruised face, for instance, they feel embarrassed. As a result, they do not go to school until they are healed. Equally, when a teacher has been humiliated by a learner, they find it difficult to come to school and go back to the same class where they were victimised (Mweli, 2013). The respondent learners also mentioned that it is difficult for the innocent teachers to go to school after they have been victimised (Singh & Steyn, 2014). It is also evident that violence and aggression may result in educators seeking transfers from a particular school or even resigning from the profession (Singh & Steyn, 2014).

2.5.4 Summary

The discussion in the previous section provided an overview of the literature related to the phenomenon of learner violence in schools. Some legislation guiding proper behaviour in the school premises has been highlighted. The chapter further alluded to experience as a concept as well as giving a detailed discussion on teachers' experiences of violent behaviour instigated by learners. It transpired from the discussion that teachers endure various experiences of violence perpetrated against them, with an emotional reaction attached to these traumatic events. It is clear from the discussion that the formation of emotional problems and depersonalisation in teachers can lead to various problems in the classroom and within the school premises at large. Exposure to violence is linked with decreased emotional resources and teachers adopting a detached manner of communicating with their learners. In this way, teachers find it difficult to help to solve learners' problems, lose patience in dealing with those learners who are battling with school work, and feel demotivated to put extra effort into their work.

2.7 The reasons why teachers experience violence in the way that they do

The previous section reviewed literature related to the concept of school violence, experience as a phenomenon, and teachers' experiences of violent behaviour and its effects on their wellbeing. This section focuses on the literature related to the second critical research question of this study: 'Why do teachers experience learners' violent behaviour in the way that they do?'. Garrett (2014) asserts that in order for teachers and learners to have good experiences in their teaching and learning activities, they need to complement each other. If there is an imbalance in their interaction, this could lead to undesired experiences. The alarming aspect of this is that learners and teachers may get caught up in a reciprocal exchange that destroys the professionalism of their relationship and promotes mutual violence (Garrett, 2014).

Kauppi and Porhola (2012) understand violence perpetrated against teachers as a subjective judgement by the recipient, based on the impact it has on them. Violence against teachers is a communication process in which a teacher is constantly subjected to interactions that he or she perceives as hurting, insulting or intimidating by one or a group of learners. It appears that this definition does not consider whether the learners deliberately act in a way that

intends to harm a teacher, but its main focus is on the teachers' interpretation of a behaviour displayed by a learner. Garrett (2014) argued that violence directed against teachers by learners are characterised by an imbalance of power whereby a learner is in a position of greater power than the teacher, considering some factors which may not be apparent to an observer, irrespective of the teacher's perceived superiority.

The literature indicates that there is no consensus as to what constitutes violence among teachers, as this relies on an individual's interpretation of a particular event. This gives the connotation that there are various reasons why teachers experience violent behaviour against them in the way that they do. This may range from individual's personality traits to social past experiences. Hence, a particular incident may not be viewed as violent by another person. In support of this view, a study by Garrett (2014) revealed that although some of the teachers perceived the theft and vandalism of their personal property to be a form of bullying, others did not consider property offences to be part of students' bullying of teachers. According to Garrett (2014), the way a person may view violent behaviour is entirely subjective and may be influenced by a number of factors, including the victim's previous experience of violence and their internal frames of reference, as well as their psychological, social and emotional wellbeing at the time of the incident.

In addition, Kauppi and Porhola (2012) acknowledge other factors that may influence an individual's perception of violent behaviour, which includes age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and cultural background. For instance, certain groups of people have a high level of informality, whereby learners address teachers by their first names, which is not considered offensive; in contrast, in places where a high level of formality in the teacher-learner relationship is emphasised, addressing teachers by their first names is taboo (Kauppi & Porhola, 2012). However, even though certain forms of behaviour may be regarded as violent in specific schools or cultural contexts, behaviours such as physical assault are highly unacceptable and are regarded as violent across the board (Garrett, 2014).

A study conducted by Alzyoud et al. (2016) revealed that teachers, school administrators, the school environment, media, and family conditions were the major reasons for learners' violence against teachers. This study was conducted on violence against teachers in Jordanian schools, to examine the reasons for this violence from the viewpoint of students. The study employed a qualitative approach and 50 Grade 12 students were interviewed. It is, however, noted that at some point teachers do not experience violent acts as violence. Allen (2010)

indicated that a lack of knowledge of teachers regarding violence and in particular bullying may contribute to an escalation of violence in the schools – in that the teachers ignore violent behaviour as they do not view it as violence. The next paragraphs discuss some factors that place teachers at risk of experiencing violent behaviour against them.

2.7.1 School factors affecting teachers

Schools with no proper policy guidelines and support structures leave the teacher vulnerable to maladaptive behaviour exhibited by learners against them (Kauppi & Porhola, 2012). In addition to this, Mooij (2011) argued that teachers working in low-attainment schools are more likely to be victimised than those teaching in high-achieving schools, and they attribute social violence to their school performance. Moreover, teachers may refrain from linking with networks of protective power, due to the lack of public recognition of the phenomenon of violence perpetrated by learners against them, and the scarcity of services which may help them address the situation (Garrett, 2014). In such instances, when learners recognise that no disciplinary actions are taken against their misconduct, their behaviour receives further motivation; the teacher subsequently becomes disempowered and the oppressive power of the learner against the teacher is intensified.

Even if the school has good policies and guidelines on proper behaviour, there are instances where the disciplinary procedure may leave the teacher enduring emotional problems due to learners' violence. Maunder and Tattersall (2014) conducted a qualitative study to explore the experiences of staff in managing bullying in secondary schools. Among the findings of this study, one respondent teacher reported that in their school there is a chain of command where individual staff members pass on information regarding bullying incidents to senior staff to deal with. Some forms of violence are not taken seriously, which affects the teacher who personally experienced the incident of violent behaviour (Maunder & Tattersall, 2014). This comment indicates the complexities of the referral system within the organisational hierarchy, with policies and procedures that need to be followed. In this school (Maunder & Tattersall, 2014) the process of reporting incidents of violent behaviour was a bottom-up process, whereby junior teachers had to pass on information to the senior staff. In this regard, junior teachers tend to be concerned if they do not receive feedback about the reported incidents,

and placed emphasis on the importance of top-down communication as well (Maunder & Tattersall, 2014).

Teachers who are generally considered to hold powerful positions at school may be rendered powerless by various interrelated power dynamics (Hohr, 2012). The power vested in teachers through the hierarchical school structure may be challenged if learners realise the instability among teachers, such as staff discontent with management, inconsequential discipline procedures, and weakness in collegiality or in the teacher's ability to discipline learners. When there is a disruption in the normal school power relations, learners tend to use that to their advantage to oppress teachers, consequently affecting teachers and the entire chain of power, and rendering the teacher powerless to seek help (Hohr, 2012).

2.7.2 Status as a risk factor for violence against teachers

Another issue that oppresses teachers and leaves them enduring violence against them is the stigma of being victimised by a child. Garrett (2014) posits that the stigma associated with being bullied by a child as a teacher leads to a brutal circle, in which teachers feel ashamed of seeking help from colleagues, relevant professionals, management and friends, effectively rendering them subject to severe strain and distress. Teachers sometimes endure violence because they are scared of being viewed as incompetent to do their work. Teachers are disempowered by the general view that competent and effective teachers do not have problems maintaining order and control of their classrooms (Allen, 2010). Moreover, they may have difficulty expressing the depth of the pain to anyone because of their feelings of humiliation, failure, fear or embarrassment (Hoffmann, 2013).

A study by De Wet (2010) revealed that teachers who admit being bullied by their learners are at risk of being disliked and segregated by other teachers, who may look down upon them due to failure to control the class. Research shows that teachers who admit being bullied by learners reported experiencing feelings of being weak and humiliated (Doumen, 2008), isolated by colleagues (De Wet, 2010), and being seen as incompetent (Tew & Nixon, 2010). Given this situation, teachers find themselves in a dilemma where they feel responsible for the abuse, even if it is perpetrated against them; this leads to the vast psychological conundrum of being reluctant to seek help (Hunter, 2010).

2.7.3 Gender-orientated violence directed at teachers

Evidence suggests that sometimes teachers experience violence perpetrated by learners against them due to their gender. In her study of voices of teachers on school violence and gender in South African urban public schools, Netshitangani (2019) revealed that young and old female teachers experience violence perpetrated against them by male learners. Boys often refuse to be punished by female educators. They use their masculinity to look down upon female teachers according to their gender order in school and society at large. Thus, these boys challenge female educators' authority and positions in the school hierarchy (Netshitangani, 2019). Due to their feelings of helplessness, some female teachers resort to using their male colleagues to administer corporal punishment on their behalf to reinforce this gender hierarchy (Allen, 2010; Netshitangani, 2019). However, there are other female educators who handle violent offenders themselves instead of seeking help from male educators (Netshitangani, 2019).

Although violence is mostly perpetrated by boys, girls are also subject to cause violence against teachers. The findings of a study, Lokmic et al. (2013) on violence against teachers revealed that male teachers, as opposed to female teachers, are more frequently victims of violent behaviour instigated by their students. McMahon et al. (2014) revealed that actual physical violence, verbal threats and general harassment were more prominent for men, while women were subjected to intimidation from the learners. In Netshitangani's (2019) study, the participants of the study viewed school violence as both a male and female problem. On the issue of safety in schools premises, it is stated that some female educators feel unsafe at school and depend on male educators for security (Doumen, 2008; Netshitangani, 2019). From the discussion, it is evident that some female teachers are the victims of school violence because they are attuned to the stereotypes and socialisation character of gender, as there are those who still believe that male teachers are physically stronger than women.

Further gender-related violence is inflicted by boys against female teachers. One of the participants in a study by Netshitangani (2019) reported that one learner who is a serial offender said to a white female educator that he was going to show her what a black man does to a white woman. As the boy was saying this, he was holding his private part and pointing it towards a teacher (Netshitangani, 2019). Similarly, in a study of the nature and extent of teachers as targets of bullying by their learners in a high school, Hoffmann (2013) revealed that violence perpetrated by black learners against white teachers was prevalent.

This kind of behaviour is gendered and emotionally violent, and indicates that some teachers find themselves victimised by learners because of their gender. In contrast, one gender study revealed no differences in victim rates between male and female teachers (Parzefall & Salin, 2010).

2.7.4 Inequality as a source of violence against teachers

A qualitative study exploring voices of women teachers about gender inequalities and gender-based violence in rural South Africa (De Lange, Mitchell & Bhana, 2012) indicates that as much as there is legislation that provides the framework advocating for equality in schools, it is difficult to implement it due to the diversity of people in terms of who they are, where they come from and where they live. The participants of this study indicated that they succumb to violent behaviour directed towards them because of their background, be it their previous personal experiences or their tradition and culture with its gender roles (De Lange et al., 2012).

Given the socialised roles of women and men in certain communities, some women teachers endure violence because of the pressure of society's expectations. In their study, De Lange et al. (2012) revealed that some teachers reported having to decline promotions to become head teachers in order to avoid being accused of having had sex with a male in power in order to get to a particular position. This occurs in communities where women are socially presented as incapable and holding inferior positions. It is clear from these findings that women teachers place emphasis on the interactional influences of home, school, work and society on each other, which is in line with an ecosystemic framework where various subsystems speak to and influence each other to shape an individual's behaviour.

As a coping strategy to violent behaviour against teachers, some women teachers tend to ignore learners that display maladaptive behaviour (Netshitangani, 2019). Makhasane (2014) revealed that sometimes teachers ignore learners' violent acts due to their fear of being victimised by learners. Although the tendency of teachers to ignore learners with violent behaviour may be helpful as a coping mechanism, it may be dangerous as learners may continue with maladaptive behaviour because they know that there will be no consequences for their actions. As they continue violating teachers' rights, teachers will endure more pain due to the prolonged experience of violence.

2.7.5 Sexual orientation as a source of violence against teachers

Research indicates that sometimes school violence is directed against teachers on the basis of their sexual orientation. Netshitangani (2019) contends that school violence is also perpetrated against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and transgender people, especially in countries where the existence of people outside the heterosexual norm is denied or criminalised. As homosexuality is not accepted by some, gay teachers regularly experienced physical violence and verbal abuse or harassment from learners and even from their colleagues. In an exploratory study (Mooij, 2011) of secondary school teachers' personal and school characteristics, experience of violence and perceived violence motives, one respondent male teacher admitted almost going crazy with rage and shock when he saw the walls and benches of his local community filled with his name and making reference to his inferred homosexuality. Male teachers are left most vulnerable when they are labelled as homosexuals by their students, as this raises questions about their masculinity (Garrett, 2014). Homosexual teachers believe that they are subjected to violence because they are 'deviant' from society and are handicapped (Mooij, 2011).

Although sexually orientated violence by learners against teachers is less prevalent than physical abuse, De Wet (2010) argues that sexual aggression remains a serious problem for some teachers. Female learners may attempt to disempower male teachers by seducing them or behaving in a sexualised manner, resulting in feelings of discomfort, embarrassment or confusion in the teacher (Netshitangani, 2019).

2.7.6 Age as a risk factor for violence against teachers

The study conducted by Mooij (2011) on secondary school teachers' personal and school characteristics, experience of violence and perceived violence motives indicates that younger teachers are more likely to believe that they are victims of violence because they are young and female, especially when learners refuse to be punished. The study also found that younger teachers are more likely than older ones to believe that they have witnessed violence against other teachers owing to their school performance (Mooij, 2011).

Alzyoud, Al-Ali and Tareef (2016) conducted a study on violence against teachers in Jordanian schools to examine the reasons for this violence from the viewpoint of students.

With regard to the age of a teacher, the findings of this study indicated that many teachers are old and there is a huge gap between them and their learners. Due to the significant age gap, they have different interests and worldviews, which leads to misunderstandings between the two parties because of different views on educational and non-educational issues. Teachers raised with traditional ways of doing things in education are rigid and unwilling to adapt to modern educational approaches. Thus, they do not show respect to students and do not support them in their academic work (Alzyoud et al., 2016). These studies demonstrate that the age of a teacher has an impact on their susceptibility to violent learner behaviour, whether they are young or old.

2.7.7 Summary

This section focused exclusively on reviewing literature related to factors that act as a basis for teachers' vulnerability to violent behaviour exhibited by learners. What is evident from the literature is that violence perpetrated against teachers by learners does not occur in a vacuum within the school workplace, but rather is influenced by contextual factors such as age, gender, status, organisational structure, cultural and traditional background, and psychological factors. Having discussed various risk factors that render teachers susceptible to violent behaviour, the following section will look at some factors contributing to violent behaviour exhibited by learners against teachers.

2.8 Factors contributing to learners' violent behaviour against teachers

As mentioned earlier, this section reviewed literature related to the third critical research question of the study: 'What are the reasons behind violent behaviour of learners in KwaZulu-Natal high schools?'. The escalation of violent behaviour in South African schools draws attention to the significance of exploring the factors that contribute to such behaviour (Pileggi, 2017). The literature reviewed indicates that the determinants of violence cannot be described in a single form; there are numerous contributing factors to violent behaviour among learners in schools. Burton and Leoschut (2013) are of the view that in order for one to have good picture of the causes of violent behaviour in schools, one needs to analyse and try to understand the context in which the school is located. The environment in which the

school is located helps to establish whether there is a correlation between internal and external environment and prevalence of forms of violence in schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Hence, the current study seeks to establish teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in three different contexts.

According to Burton and Leoschut (2013), previous experiences of violence play a detrimental role in determining future conduct problems and maladaptive behaviour. When learners are exposed to violence, they develop emotional problems which subsequently have a negative effect on their lives. As a result they develop feelings of inadequacy, poor self-image, cruelty, impulsivity, rebelliousness, lying, fighting and depression (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Govender, 2015). This puts young people at risk for bullying, destruction of property and other forms of violent behaviour (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In addition, learners who have exposure to bad models are predisposed to developing violent behaviour in class (Govender, 2015).

A study conducted by Netshitangani (2014) revealed among other things a lack of values among learners due to lack of parental care, peer influence, unguided exposure to media, psychological factors and poor socio-economic factors as laying the foundations for the high incidence of school-based violence in South. It is indicated that the most influential of these is the degree to which the child views aggressive behaviour as normal because he or she is always exposed to it. The findings of this study revealed that children who are exposed to more risk factors than protective factors are prone to violent behaviour. They ingrain the acts of violence and it becomes normal to be violent. The study further alluded that unguided exposure to mass media allows children to copy violent acts and exhibit it towards others. Lastly, poor socio-economic background was found to have led children to engage in criminal activities in order to acquire basic requirements for living (Netshitangani, 2014).

Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) revealed that some of the main causes of violence in schools are indiscipline and intolerance. The study indicated that 90% of the respondents viewed lack of discipline as a major contributing factor to aggressive behaviour in schools. The learners become uncontrollable and exhibit maladaptive behaviour as they please (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Indiscipline affects the school environment and fighting and bad behaviour prevail (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Duma, 2013). According to Duma (2013), indiscipline by learners is persistently increasing, irrespective of the safety measures by schools.

In their study to address learner aggression in rural South African schools, Singh and Steyn (2013) revealed three core factors contributing to violent behaviour in secondary school learners: family factors, environmental factors and school factors. The study indicated that family factors incorporate broken homes, poor parenting and poverty as contributing to the violent behaviour of learners (Singh & Steyn, 2013). This concurs with Burton and Leoschut's (2013) findings that children brought up by single parents are at risk of developing violent behaviour compared to those from two-parent homes. The environmental factors include drug and alcohol abuse, peer pressure, gangsterism and racism as significant to violent behaviour among learners in schools (Singh & Steyn, 2013). Lastly, school factors include age cohort, teenage pregnancy, teasing, gossiping and jealousy, and poor management structures (Singh & Steyn, 2013). Additionally, Zengeya (2016) explored the causes, manifestation and impact of classroom aggression in urban secondary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. The study concluded that aggressive behaviour in the classroom emanates from various factors within the students' environment, and that these factors include biological factors such as pubertal changes, social factors such as family structure, peer pressure, neighbour influences, cultural and religious factors, as well as economic factors (Zengeya, 2016).

Fatima and Malik (2015) found that family background, including parents' behaviour and their interaction with children, is a common cause of aggressive behaviour. The behaviour of the teachers and their reciprocal interactions with children was also found to have a direct effect on learners' maladaptive behaviour in schools (Fatima & Malik, 2015). These causal factors of violent behaviour in schools present in different forms of learner violence. Shaffer and Kipp (2010) asserted that there are numerous factors that contribute to violent behaviour in schools, namely, biological, family, school and social or environmental factors, which will be discussed in detail below.

Ugwu (2017) assessed the causes of adolescents' maladaptive behaviour in secondary schools of Ebonyi State in Nigeria. The findings revealed that family background, socio-economic status of parents, the school, peer influence, and influence of the mass media play a detrimental role in the development of learners' violent behaviour against teachers. The results also showed that there was no significant difference between male and female learners in the causes of maladaptive behaviour.

Glozah and Pevalin (2014) conducted a qualitative study to examine the lead causes of aggressive behaviour of adolescents at senior high school level in Ghana. The study adopted a case study approach and a focus group discussion method was used to generate data. A total of 150 students were randomly sampled to participate in the study. The study revealed that adolescents' family background characterised by domestic violence between parents, lack of parental love and affection, and divorce issues could lead to violent behaviour on the part of the learners. The study further revealed that adolescents from broken homes, where the parents are separated and cannot reinforce and motivate learners, also display violent behaviour. Socio-economic status of parents, where the family is poor and is suffering from poverty, was also found to contribute significantly to learners' maladaptive behaviour. The paragraphs give a detailed discussion of the factors contributing to learner violence.

2.8.1 Biological and internal factors of learners

There is a strong correlation between biological and internal factors and learners' violent behaviour (Govender, 2015; Fatima & Malik, 2015; Mthimkhulu, 2015). Govender's (2015) study of primary school teachers' experiences of violence towards them perpetrated by learners found that children's predisposition plays a detrimental role in the development of violent behaviour. Such predisposition includes a chemical imbalance such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, which drives children to act violently and impulsively (Govender, 2015). Maharaj (2011) and Fatima and Malik (2015) also revealed the negative effects of biological and genetic factors in the development of an individual's personality, which may result to aggression. Moreover, when learners have a particular medical or psychological problem that is salient, this can lead to aggression and maladaptive behaviour (Fatima & Malik, 2015). Burton and Leoschut (2013) also argue that apart from external factors as dictators of violent behaviour in learners, intrinsic factors such as impulsivity, antisocial personality traits, neurotoxin exposure and head injury may play a detrimental role in the development of children's violent tendencies (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

In a study of the aetiology of students' violent behaviour in an urban school in Zimbabwe, Gudyanga, Gudyanga and Matamba (2015) revealed that factors influencing learner violence were classified into three types: learner-related, home-related and school-related. One of the participants in this study shared that one student engaged in a fight with another because he

wanted revenge for what had happened to him. The study further revealed that some of the learners display violent behaviour as a way of seeking attention, some become violent because of emotional problems related to poor scholastic achievement, and some display violent behaviour because of depression they are going through (Gudyanga et al., 2015).

Maharaj (2011) revealed that intrinsic factors play a detrimental role in the development of violent behaviour among learners. Learners exhibit violent behaviour for many reasons, including an intrinsic motivation to be powerful. They bully others so that they will feel powerful and will be more favoured and will gain more popularity than those who are powerless. They target younger learners or those who are small in physical build (Maharaj, 2011). In relation to these findings, De Wet (2010) further asserted that negative self-image intertwined with peer rejection and low frustration tolerance has a direct effect on learners' expression of aggressive behaviour. Shaffer and Kipp (2010) also argued that learners with low self-esteem have difficulty gaining recognition in socially acceptable ways, such as excelling scholastically or in sports. Due to the negative feelings they are subjected to as a result of the inability to gain social recognition, they end up displaying antisocial and maladaptive behaviour in order to get recognition and feel better (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

Anger management problems were found to be another factor that contributes to violent behaviour in learners (Mthimkhulu, 2015). Children with anger, which may have resulted from the violence the child witnessed at home or in the community, tend to display their frustrations in the form of violent behaviour (Mthimkhulu, 2015). Moreover, Shaffer and Kipp (2010) argue that a difficult temperament is one of the predisposing factors to the development of violent behaviour in children. Children who are short-tempered have difficulty handling new situations and react to new stimuli with rejection. Children with a difficult temperament are prone to problems in conduct as they react with heightened irritability and anger towards minor provocations, which results in violent acts (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

Some learners display violent behaviour towards teachers because of a lack of respect for adults. In a study of violence against teachers in Jordanian schools, Alzyoud et al. (2016) revealed that one of the reasons learners display violent behaviour against teachers is that they lack respect for others. The participants in this study mentioned that learners come from different backgrounds, where they are not taught social and educational morale, values and ethics that guide socially acceptable behaviour (Alzyoud et al., 2016). Although this value of

life is influenced by factors that are external to a child's development, such as poor boundaries in the family and broken families, it becomes part of the child's internal quality of life.

2.8.2 Family factors contributing to learners' violence

Children who come from dysfunctional families, single-parent households or who are raised by grandparents are at increased risk of developing violent behaviour (Ndibalema, 2013; Mohapi, 2014). They lack proper modelling from significant others and resort to joining bad company, which leads to peer pressure and abuse of drugs at a young age because they are easily influenced in self-destructive behaviour (Govender, 2015). In relation to a dysfunctional family, Ndibalema (2013) maintains that a problematic family history and a poor interpersonal relationship between parents and learners play a negative role in the development of violent behaviour. Further to this, Marais and Meier (2010) conducted a qualitative study of disruptive behaviour in the foundation phase of schooling, which pointed towards lack of parental care and adult role models as the most prevalent contributing factors to maladaptive behaviour in children (Marais & Meier, 2010). Families are perceived to be the foundations for learners to learn to act in a moral way; thus guidance regarding proper behaviour is deeply rooted in the values and beliefs of the family (Marais & Meier, 2010; Mohapi, 2014).

Okeke (2014), Mohapi (2014) and Mthimkhulu (2015) emphasised the role that family factors play in the growth of violent behaviour in children, particularly domestic violence. Mthimkhulu (2015) argued that children who are exposed to family conflicts and violence between their parents are vulnerable to violent behaviour, and Mohapi (2014) emphasised the issue of hostility and ineffective parent practices in the development of deviant behaviour in learners. The participants of the study by Mohapi (2014) believe that the home environment is the primary place where children learn how to behave in society; thus children become violent at school because of what they learn through observation at home (Mthimkhulu, 2015). This suggests that dysfunctional families play a detrimental role in anger outbursts of children when facing conflicts outside the home environment (Okeke, 2014). Similarly, Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that due to violence in the families that children come from, some learners develop a belief that it is normal to solve conflicts among peers with

violence. Violent family members can also be role models to children, and the children can model this behaviour towards others (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

McGaha-Garnett (2013) highlighted family size as a contributing factor to violent behaviour of learners. Learners who come from big households are likely to experience bullying-related interactions from their siblings and parents, and may carry these experiences and transfer them to the school environment (McGaha-Garnett, 2013).

Studies conducted in and outside South Africa (Marais & Meier, 2010; Maharaj, 2011; McGaha-Garnett, 2013; Ndibalema, 2013) have shown parenting style to be one of the determinants of children's behaviour at a later stage. The detrimental role that parenting style has on learners' maladaptive behaviour has been examined and documented (Marais & Meier, 2010). A higher level of parental support has been linked with a lower level of violent behaviour in children (Maharaj, 2011; McGaha-Garnett, 2013), whereas aggressive parenting has been found to be a contributing factor to the development of behavioural problems, especially in the early years of child development (Pileggi, 2017). The study conducted by Maharaj (2011) indicated that children with hard experiences from home also exhibit violent behaviour at school. One respondent reported that "we bully because we come from troubled homes, we feel miserable so we also want to make another person's life miserable too (Maharaj, 2011). Some learners who were participants in this study even articulated that they hate their families due to the experiences they have at home (Maharaj, 2011).

Poverty in a family was found to be a vital constituent that contributes significantly to learner maladaptive behaviour (Dodge & Pettit, 2003; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Learners from poor families do not acquire their basic needs and become frustrated; they then carry frustrations, which produce aggressive energy. As a result, the frustrations they have are projected onto others by displaying antisocial behaviour towards them (Dodge & Pettit, 2003). Similar findings were evident in Singh and Steyn's (2013) study, where one of the respondents indicated that some learners cannot have certain things and arrived at school carrying that anger within themselves. As a result, they tend to bully those who have what they need (Singh & Steyn, 2013). In line with this, it emerged from Maharaj's (2011) study that some learners who come to school without a lunchbox and who also do not have money to buy food at school tend to take it from those who are powerless against them. It also emerged that those learners who come from poor families steal money from others so that they can buy what they want at school (Maharaj, 2011).

Mweli (2013) and Gudyanga et al. (2015) revealed in their studies that family socio-economic status indirectly plays a detrimental role in the development of aggressive behaviour in learners. The participants of this study indicated that children who come from poorly built houses, who do not have money to carry at school and who do not wear expensive clothes are looked down upon and are teased and discriminated against on the basis of their circumstances. These kinds of attitudes towards them lead to anger and resentment, and as a result they display violent behaviour (Mweli, 2013; Gudyanga et al., 2015). Based on these findings, it appears that sometimes bullying is as a result of poor family socio-economic background.

2.8.3 School factors influencing learners' violent behaviour

Singh and Steyn (2013) found, among other things, teenage pregnancy to be one of the contributing factors to violent behaviour in schools. Pregnant girls experience emotional abuse at school by being teased and gossiped about, which resulted in pregnant learners engaging in incidents of violence more than non-pregnant learners. The findings of this study further revealed poor school management structures to be a factor contributing to violence in schools. The respondent learners of this study expressed their concern about the lack of disciplinary structures and distorted ways of doing things in schools. As such the school lacks order, and chaos prevails (Singh & Steyn, 2013).

Some learners attributed violence in schools to overcrowded classes (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Alzyoud et al., 2016). The study by Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) established that overcrowded classes are hardly controllable and learners tend to misbehave, and it is difficult for the educators to identify those who do so. This study also mentioned lack of recreational facilities as a factor contributing to violence in schools. The respondents indicated that in the areas where there are adequate facilities, learners who have low achievement in class could be given the opportunity to showcase their talents in sports, and subsequently earn the same respect as those who excel scholastically (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Moreover, in their study Alzyoud et al. (2016) revealed that schools are not adequately equipped with the necessary educational facilities and resources, and do not offer a safe environment for teachers and learners. In such schools there is enormous enrolment of learners, while the

classrooms are too small to accommodate many learners; as a result they do not enjoy their school life and experiences, due to the huge numbers of learners in class.

The last documented factor that acts as a precursor of violent behaviour in learners is underachievement (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). Learners who have difficulty coping with their school work become frustrated, lack motivation and subsequently resort to violent behaviour. Due to their repeated failure at school, these learners easily become bored and end up disrupting class lessons, harass others and become delinquent (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010).

2.8.4 Social and community factors influencing learner violence

Various social habits are attributed to aggressive behaviour among secondary school learners. Among other things, the use of drugs and alcohol was found to be a catalyst of maladaptive behaviour among learners (Singh & Steyn, 2013; Reddy, 2013; Mthimkhulu, 2015; Anyio, 2015). Mthimkhulu's (2015) study revealed that use of substances such as alcohol, drugs, marijuana and so on is prevalent in Alexandra, as the community is surrounded by many shebeens where learners can easily access them, even during break period in schools. Learners acquire illegal substances even from vendors and local tuck-shops where the vendors do not consider the age of a person who buys the goods (Mthimkhulu, 2015). Consistent with these findings, Singh and Steyn (2013) stated that there is a high correlation between the abuse of drugs and violent behaviour among learners which is widespread in South African schools. Anyio (2015) concurred with these findings, that there is a link between substance abuse and violent behaviour among learners.

Burton and Leoschut (2013) further illustrate the abuse of drugs as a norm in many communities. They revealed through their study that some people sell drugs even at the school gates. The adults who sell drugs to children do this because they lack a sense of responsibility, as they also carry feelings of not having been taken care of at their childhood stages. When they are selling drugs to children, they feel less responsible for the damage that the substances incur in the young (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Reddy (2013) also discovered that children easily access drugs and this impacts negatively on their conduct. On visits to these schools, the researcher observed that they are surrounded by taxi ranks, shebeens, taverns or people wandering about the area. During break periods at school, these drug sellers

come closer to the school fence, where they are able to trespass and hand drugs to learners (Reddy, 2013).

Research exploring the dynamics of violence in two schools in Phoenix, KZN (Reddy, 2013) pointed to the prevailing culture of violence and socio-economic status of the community at large as the determinants of violent behaviour among learners. There is a high unemployment rate in the society surrounding the schools, and the majority of the people continue to live in the partially built houses called informal settlements. As a result children develop anger due to their living conditions and it is ingrained to become normalised in their lives. Learners are then subject to expressing their intrapsychic feelings by hurting anything visible to them, including property, other learners and educators (Reddy, 2013).

Some learners engage in violent acts due to peer pressure (Dodge & Pettit, 2003). They fall into the trap of fitting in with a particular group of peers. In order for one to impress the group, one needs to behave aggressively and victimise other learners. They fall into this trap because of the fear of peer rejection if they do not act in accordance with the acceptable standards of a group (Dodge & Pettit, 2003). They indulge in violent behaviour and join a gang because of the need for affection, particularly those learners who come from dysfunctional families (Mthimkhulu, 2015). They join the gang in order to receive emotional approval, because they did not receive it from their significant others (Mthimkhulu, 2015). Similarly, Mohapi (2014) showed that exposure to delinquent peers is a significant predictor of violent behaviour among adolescent learners. McGaha-Garnett (2013) also discovered that adolescent learners who have constant interaction with violent peers are at high risk of exhibiting violent behaviour.

The participants in Anyio's (2015) study pronounced that learners join peers who are a bad influence because they unconsciously have an intrinsic desire to express their feelings about something that has happened either at home or at school. It is said that children do not easily express themselves to adults, and rather engage in delinquent behaviour as a way of self-expression. The gang is perceived to be a platform for learners to gain recognition, as they might feel unrecognised due to various reasons such as a poor relationship with parents, which results in developing anger and feelings of rejection (Anyio, 2015).

It is pointed out that public media such as television programmes and computer games play a detrimental role in the development of violent behaviour in school-going children (Marais & Meier, 2010). Learners are exposed to violent acts, jealousy and abusive situations on a daily

basis. They internalise the violent acts and lack anger management skills, and as a result express their feelings violently (Marais & Meier, 2010). In support of this opinion, the respondent teachers in a study conducted by Fatima and Malik (2015) are of the view that the media plays a negative role in the community by promoting aggressive behaviour. Learners have excess of television shows, cartoons, films and the internet with violent themes that promote aggressive behaviour, vulgar language and immorality in our communities. Through exposure to such media, learners internalise what they watch and tend to imitate those scenes and events in their real lives (Fatima & Malik, 2015).

Fitzpatrick et al. (2016) reviewed the state of evidence supporting the link between preschool children's exposure to violent media and subsequent wellbeing outcomes. The study reviewed literature on research conducted over the four decades from 1971 to 2011 that gave insight into whether there is an association between early childhood exposure to media violence and health-related outcomes in later childhood and adolescence. The findings suggest that early childhood exposure to violence in media may result in the development of aggressive behaviour and poor self-regulation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016).

It is also revealed that learners engage in violent behaviour due to the new generation after the introduction of rights (Mthimkhulu, 2015). The majority of the respondents' parents in this study expressed that the rights that were brought by the new democratic era in the country contributed negatively to an increased level of violent behaviour in schools. They feel that children's knowledge of their rights gives them power over their parents and teachers. Hence, parents are scared of disciplining and punishing their children because of the fear that they might be accused of violating their children's constitutional rights. Children end up misusing their rights by behaving recklessly, because they know that there would be no negative consequences to their maladaptive behaviour (Mthimkhulu, 2015). Reddy (2013) also found that teachers have similar feelings as the parents. They are scared that when they discipline learners, they might be sued by them on the basis of their constitutional rights. Children are perceived to have taken advantage of the fear that teachers and parents have of disciplining them, which has led to a significant decline in respect.

In their study of violence against teachers in Jordanian schools, Alzyoud et al. (2016) also revealed that the participants had a strong belief that teachers are victimised by learners due to the lack of proper legislation to punish students that display violent behaviour and commit

crimes against teachers. There is no specific legislation that aims to protect teachers from learner violence.

Having discussed various factors that are associated with the growth and perpetuation of learners' violent behaviour at school, it is necessary to discuss strategies that are recognised to be effective in curbing school violence.

2.9 What needs to be done to alleviate learner violence in schools?

A systematic review of programmes designed to reduce school violence (Kelly, 2017) in the USA revealed that programmes that employ a holistic approach to addressing violence were effective; the approach incorporates safety measures, relationship restoration, conflict management skills, and mental health services. The most successful programme components associated with the reduction of violent behaviour in schools comprise all stakeholder systems such as administration, school leadership, learners, parents, and the society that subscribe to the culture of care (Kelly, 2017). These programmes are effective in alleviating the common forms of violent behaviour witnessed in schools, which includes fighting, teasing, and other negative interpersonal behaviours among learners (Singh & Steyn, 2013; Kelly, 2017).

In a qualitative study of the dynamics of violence in South African schools in six provinces, Mncube and Harber (2013) argued that whether violence is externally or internally rooted, schools have a role to play in alleviating it. They asserted that schools with adequate facilities and resources can play a significant role in reducing aggressive behaviour, because learners and teachers are part of the community where the school is situated. A well organised and well run school may have a safety and security committee that ensures that the school is properly fenced and locked. Most importantly, stakeholders' devotion and commitment to the school will reduce internal collaboration with potentially violent external individuals or groups. As opposed to dysfunctional school, such threats coming from outside the school will be detected early and actions will be taken.

Singh and Steyn (2013) elucidated the imperative role that the Department of Education can play in providing support to schools in order to help alleviate learners' violent behaviour. The participants of this study are of the view that the department does not devote adequate efforts

to supporting the schools with regard to this crisis. The study illuminated the significance of reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the code of conduct for learners, ensuring that the disciplinary committees are properly constituted and functional, providing psychological services to all schools, and the availability of support centres in all wards (Singh & Steyn, 2013).

Mohapi (2014) explored the views of stakeholders of four schools in Nkangala District in South Africa about school violence. The participants of this study took note of the existence of the code of conduct for learners, South African Schools Act and safety and security committees in their schools; however, they expressed concern about the delays in these procedures when dealing with cases of violence in schools. These disciplinary procedures are considered valuable only if they are implemented on time and promptly (Mohapi, 2014).

In a study by Makhasane (2014) of the role of leadership in addressing school violence, school managers reported that due to the high rate of violent behaviour in their schools, they have adopted various punitive measures such as warnings, suspension and expulsion as a response to alleviate it (Makhasane, 2014). The participants indicated that in situations where some stakeholders implemented leadership, the learners that were behind the violence changed their behaviour. This demonstrates that leadership has the potential to alleviate different challenges faced by schools in general including aggressive behaviour (Makhasane, 2014).

Naicker et al. (2014) argue that in order to facilitate a healthy relationship between and within learners and teachers, both parties need to master interpersonal relationship skills. Learners and teachers need to act assertively by describing their feelings and thoughts about a particular situation to each other in an authentic and good manner that shows respect for others. This form of intervention needs to be implemented by relevant and adequately trained mental health practitioners. With progressive facilitation and workshops aimed at addressing violent behaviour in schools, learners and teachers should learn to handle problems effectively and constructively. It is evident from the respondents that guidelines should be put in place in order to eliminate an undesirable, unfriendly and insecure environment and replace it with a favourable environment for teaching and learning (Naicker et al., 2014).

In Fatima and Malik's (2015) study teachers proposed that violence cannot be resolved by applying a single mode – there is a need to incorporate parents, teachers, schools, individuals, media and society as a whole in order to solve this problem. The respondents placed

emphasis on a good home atmosphere and parents' relationship with their children as the initial step to eradicate students' violent behaviour. They also emphasised the significance of the parent-teacher relationship in dealing with learners who present with behavioural problems (Fatima & Malik, 2015).

Makota and Leoschut (2016) argue that while having the support of the local police is important, a police presence in schools cannot replace all the other corrective measures required to reduce school violence, such as the necessary safety policies and school disciplinary systems, psychosocial interventions to modify learner behaviour, target-hardening approaches, anti-bullying interventions, and fostering a school climate that is intolerant of and responsive to violence. Greene (2010) concurs with this view, in that a single programme for reduction of violence is not enough to alleviate violent behaviour as it focuses on one level of risk; a more comprehensive programme is required. It is further proposed that the use of security measures such as metal detectors and surveillance cameras, peer-led programmes, and threat assessment and crisis response initiatives are imperative (Greene, 2010). Other factors of some measures found to be useful in combating school-based violence ensue in the discussion below.

2.9.1 Parental involvement to school activities

Parental involvement has been found by many authors to be essential for the reduction of violent behaviour in schools (Duma, 2013; Okeke, 2014; Pileggi, 2017). A study conducted by Duma (2013) on the dynamics of school violence and the role of leadership in reducing it revealed that most of the participants believed that parents have an important role to play in reducing violence in schools. The unavailability of parents to work collaboratively with the school leaves the burden of discipline with the school alone. Parents should develop ways of dealing with violent behaviour, including setting limits on their children that enforce rules for proper behaviour. The respondent teachers in this study indicated that when parents are close to their children, they will be in a good position to trace their whereabouts and quickly detect any suspicious acts (Duma, 2013). The participants in a study conducted by Govender (2015) indicated that parents should be part of their children's lives and have a significant role to play. The role models they display to their children at a primary level will affect all spheres of their lives, from secondary school level to their adulthood. If parents are more involved in

their children's education and communicate with the school about their children's progress, incidents of violence would be controlled (Govender, 2015). Okeke (2014) further alluded that parents should have a belief in knowing their children's needs better than anyone, and that they have the power to influence a change in school-based violence. However, it is argued that parental involvement does not automatically mean that learners will not experience poor academic achievement.

Pileggi (2017) investigated the correlates of aggressive behaviour in typically developing coloured children and young adolescents living in the Western Cape of South Africa, with particular emphasis on the role of empathy. With regard to parental involvement, the findings indicated that children whose parents are involved in their lives were less likely to develop violent behaviour. These parents positively promote good behaviour, monitor their children and provide consistent discipline to them (Pileggi, 2017). Similarly, Mthimkhulu (2015) found that when parents are working together with teachers, there is a likelihood of change with regard to violence in schools. The participants in this study mentioned that it is important for a parent to be concerned about their children's education. Apart from alleviating school violence, parental involvement was believed to have a positive impact in creating a conducive environment for learning at school. This is essential in helping learners to obtain higher grades in class (Mthimkhulu, 2015). Burton and Leoschut (2013) also believe that the home and family environment play a crucial role in teaching learners proper standards of behaviour, which is congruent to acceptable behaviour in our communities, including schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). These findings suggest the significance of the availability of parental care for children.

2.9.2 Provision of psychological services to learners

The significance of psychological services in schools has been emphasised by many authors (Singh & Steyn, 2013; McGaha-Garnett, 2013; Govender, 2015) as having a pivotal role in reducing violent behaviour in schools. The participants in Singh and Steyn's (2013) study strongly suggested that each and every school must at least have a lay counsellor; they are highly unlikely to have psychologists. One school principal respondent indicated that in a circuit of about 450 schools, there is only one psychologist to assist schools. They further alluded that due to budgetary constraints the DoE may have to properly serve all schools with

psychologists; they then suggested that every ward should have a fully equipped support centre with fully qualified psychologists and social workers to provide services to schools within their boundaries (Singh & Steyn, 2013). The responses indicated that apart from the teachers' efforts to reduce problematic behaviour in the classroom context, support services should be made available to schools to render behavioural modification to learners with antisocial behaviour.

Govender (2015) pointed out that the services of educational psychologists are essential in helping learners with maladaptive behaviour. Therefore, there is a need for the DoE to employ suitably qualified people to counsel children in need. Therapeutic intervention and behavioural modification strategies may help learners with violent behaviour and conduct problems (Govender, 2015). McGaha-Garnett (2013) explored the effects of violence on academic progress and classroom behaviour. The findings of this study also highlighted the significance of incorporating psychological services in alleviating violence and disruptive behaviour in the classroom context. It is indicated that even though teachers are essential in creating a conducive environment for learning and in helping learners recover from their traumatic experiences, they also need the expertise of mental health service providers in order to establish effective collaboration of teacher-student-parent communication for traumatised learners.

2.9.3 Collaboration of different stakeholders to address learner violence

The findings in a study conducted in Alexandra (Mthimkhulu, 2015) suggested the significance of the collaboration of all stakeholders in order to address school violence. The study explored, among other objectives, parents' opinions on intervention strategies that can be applicable in addressing violence in schools. Most of the participants mentioned the importance of collaborating with the DoE, parents, educators, police and community members to curb violent behaviour in schools. They believe that all of these concerned stakeholders working cooperatively can help provide a solution to this epidemic issue (Mthimkhulu, 2015). Burton and Leoschut (2013) also emphasised the importance of community involvement in providing safety in schools, which will ultimately produce positive outcomes in the teaching and learning processes.

McGaha-Garnett (2013) focused on the views of parents on the effects of violence on learners' academic progress and classroom behaviour. In addition to the provision of mental health services, the study also emphasised the crucial role that can be played by parents, school administrators, and the use of community resources such as counselling and case management centres. Collaborative consultations might be helpful because they allows for tackling and promoting the students' strengths and working on the challenging problems that have a negative influence on classroom maladaptive behaviour and deterioration of scholastic performance.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed discussion of teachers' experiences of violent behaviour exhibited by learners. The chapter further dwelled on highlighting and discussing factors influencing teachers' susceptibility to violence instigated by learners towards them. The last section of the chapter gave a detailed discussion on the factors influencing learners' violent behaviour. It is clear from the studies reviewed that there are various factors contributing to violent behaviour by learners against teachers in schools. Based on the findings of the different studies reviewed, it is evident that effective discipline is imperative for safety and security in schools, and that no learning activity can take place without it. What transpired from the literature is that education stakeholders should work collaboratively in helping learners to develop a sense of love for and appreciation of their peers, teachers and their schools at large in order to curb school-based violence. Learners need to develop a strong sense of responsibility in taking care of valuable school goods and the dignity of others. Having reviewed the literature related to the phenomenon explored in this study, the following chapter looks at the theoretical lenses that guided this study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a detailed discussion of the existing international and local literature on teachers' experiences of violent behaviour perpetrated against them by learners, the nature and prevalence of the violence they experience, the contributing factors to violent behaviour displayed by learners against teachers, and the effects of violence on teachers' wellbeing.

As there is evidence of various factors contributing to learners' violent behaviour from the literature reviewed, I set out to conceptualise teachers' experiences of learners' violence and learners' violent behaviour as an individual's experience within the environment in which they live. It is a wider phenomenon, encompassing individual and the multiple social contexts in which they are embedded. This view enables the sophisticated nature of children's development and what influences it to be known. With raised awareness, all stakeholders involved will have a proper understanding that any learner with violent behaviour is shaped not only by the actions of the individual child but also by wider factors that directly or indirectly have contact with the child. Also, the way in which teachers experience violent acts is dependent on their individual circumstances.

Exposure to community violence, whether through witnessing events or direct victimisation, has emerged as a factor that contributes to the development of mental health problems in children, adolescents and adults. The societal problem of school violence has created a need for preventative programmes, intervention programmes to help teachers and learners who are struggling to cope and, in a broader view, prevention and intervention programmes that aim to reduce the occurrence of violence within the communities. In order to accomplish this, Overstreet and Mazza (2014) proposed the need for a comprehensive theoretical model that promotes the integration of knowledge from various subdivisions within the psychology profession and disciplines outside psychology to broaden our understanding of the developmental impact of violence. This view is essential in the sense that in order for one to provide relevant interventions for a particular problem, one needs to have a thorough understanding of the nature and background of it. It is against this view that I employed two

theories that incorporate factors relating to individuals and the context in which they live to understand the phenomenon of teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated against them by learners.

The aim of this chapter is to provide the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. Theories provide a framework for understanding a given phenomenon. Taking into consideration that schools are institutions entrusted with teaching and learning as their main task in a particular environment and context, the environmental theories of violent behaviour were considered pertinent to this study. The position I adopt is informed by two theoretical frameworks that seem to possess particular explanatory power in terms of elucidating the processes and nature of learners' violent behaviour. This study employed a bioecological-transactional model as a conceptual framework of understanding school violence. The chapter presents the integration of the bioecological systems theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, & Morris, 2006) and transactional analysis theory of Eric Berne (Berne, 1957) as a conceptual framework for understanding the phenomenon and guiding future research on teachers' experiences of learners' violent behaviour. It will first discuss Bronfenbrenner's work by explicating the basic premises of the theory on the interactional factors influencing human behaviour. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on the later work of Bronfenbrenner which incorporated biological factors into the social and contextual factors. This chapter then tackles Berne's transactional theory, which gives an overview of understanding personality development through analysis of the interaction of the child and their environment. The following section gives an overview of the combination of the two theories that underpin this study.

3.2 Overview of the bioecological-transactional model

The significant component for the researcher to integrate the two theories in understanding learners' violent behaviour and teachers' experiences of violence is the transaction between the different ecologies that influence an individual's behaviour over time. The two theories emphasise the influences of the environment in shaping human behaviour. In addition, these models allude to the bidirectional influences between an individual and the environment in which they live. I propose Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development as the core framework. This theory provides an understanding of the complex environment in which

every individual is embedded. Although the theory explains development through life span, the focus of this study will be on high school learners, as this chapter aims to conceptualise the violent behavioural pattern they exhibit. The bioecological-transactional framework provides a multi-contextual conceptualisation of learners' violence that derives its power from sociological, cultural, familial, psychological, developmental, and biological processes that influence and interact with one another over time to shape children's behaviour (Overstreet & Mazza, 2003).

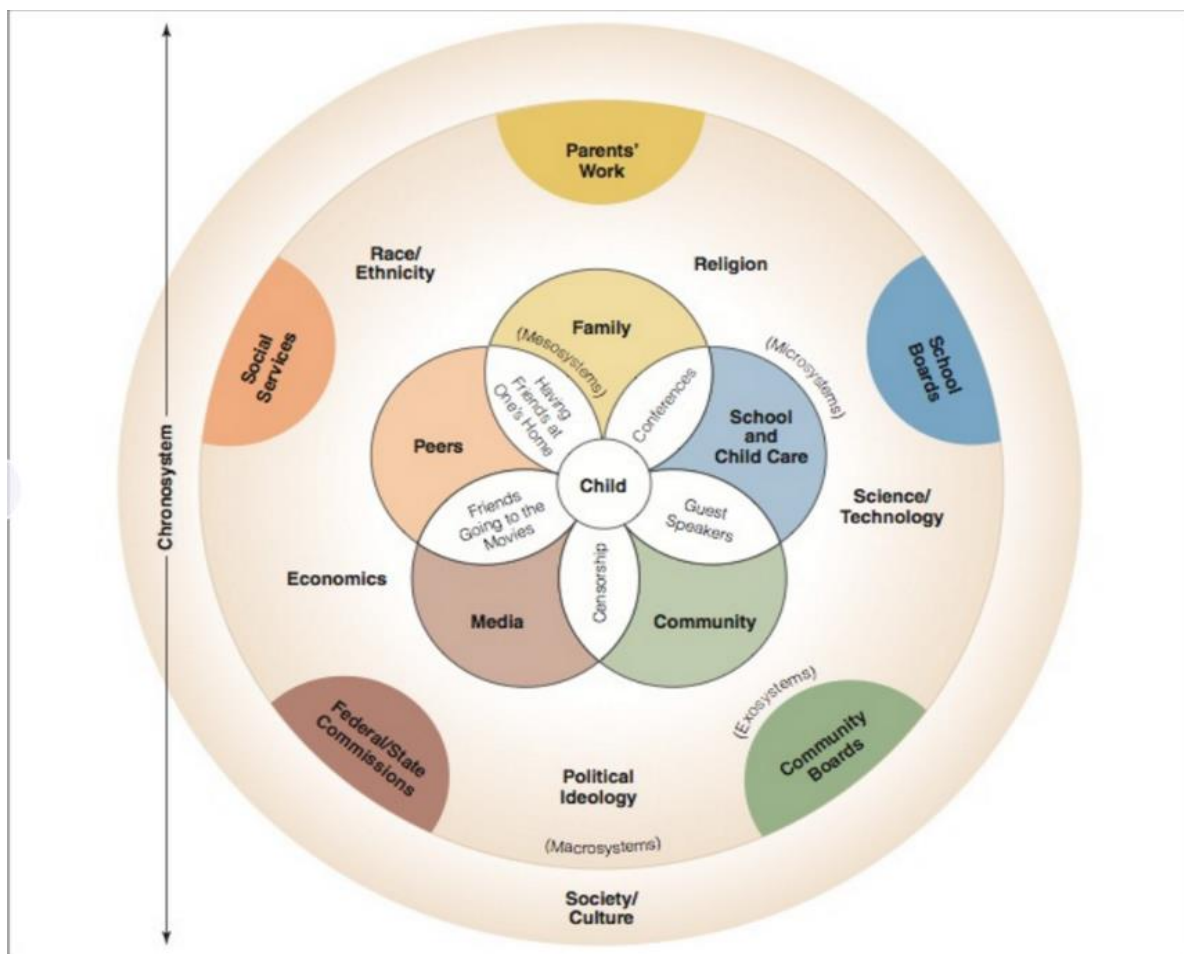


Figure 3.1: A model of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (2005).

Figure 3.1 indicates that in order to understand the learner's behaviour, various important factors need to be considered. These factors include the individual child's internal make-up, immediate family, the surrounding community, school, and society at large. The interaction and communication pattern existing between the learner and their environment also relates to the transactional relations emphasised by the transactional analysis theory.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualised ecological contexts as consisting of various levels with varying degrees of proximities in an individual. These include the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem. Lynn and Cicchetti (1998) hypothesised these contextual levels as interacting and transacting with one another over time in influencing individual's development and adaptation. In this view, context and an individual's functioning are well thought out as mutually affecting each other. Transactions between children and their environment both allow for progress in children's development over time and create potentialities for change.

The basic premise of the bioecological-transactional model is that children grow up in contexts that influence each other, shaping the child's development, and the child in turn influencing the environment. Taking into consideration the role of the environment, the approaches employed in this study are based on the assumption that a child's development can only be understood through considering the social influences in which they are embedded. Even though the significant role of social context in shaping learners' behaviour is acknowledged in today's research, most studies explore specific influences on children's behaviour, not situating the investigated phenomenon within a wider ecological framework. Having given a snapshot of the two theories guiding this study, the following sections discuss each of the theoretical perspectives mentioned above and explain how they inform understanding of learners' violent behaviour processes and how they may account in the school setting. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model will be discussed first, followed by an outline of the basic principles of transactional analysis theory, situating it within the broader theory. As the two theories are discussed below, an explanation of learners' violent behaviour from a bioecological systems and transactional analysis perspective will be delineated.

3.3 Bioecological systems theory

Bronfenbrenner established the ecological systems theory in 1979, which he renamed as bioecological systems theory in 2006. The bioecological systems theory is the integration of an individual's biological dispositions and environmental forces, which come together to influence behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner developed a perspective to map the interacting social contexts that influence the development and behaviour of individuals. It is argued that the social context in which people live are

ecosystems, because they are in constant interaction and influence each other (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). Donald et al. (2010) asserted that Bronfenbrenner developed the bioecological systems theory in order to understand the interactional patterns that influence an individual's behaviour. The theory states that people live, learn and develop within a set of nested systems, including an individual's immediate family, neighbourhoods and schools, community and society as a whole (Woolfolk & Allen, 2010). The model gives an impression that the violent behaviour of learners is an outcome of the interaction between individuals and their environment. This theory is pertinent to this study because it gives an understanding of different social structures that directly or indirectly play a detrimental role in the development of learners' violent behaviour. This theory is of the belief that there is no single factor that influences individuals' violent behaviour. Hence, the approach of this study enabled the researcher to capture any relevant information that will be beneficial to understanding the phenomenon under investigation, be it biological, family, school, community or society at large. Moreover, Espelage (2014) endorsed the application of bioecological systems theory in research on the violent behaviour of adolescent learners, as it recognises that learners are situated in systems that directly or indirectly influence development and behaviour. The bioecological systems theory is also pertinent to understanding teachers' experiences of school violence, as it occurs within the school system where they are working.

Bender and Emslie (2010) described the prevalence and nature of learner violence in urban secondary schools and how school staff members, learners and their parents experience and deal with the prevention of interpersonal violence in the school context. The study was an exploratory, descriptive case study of a qualitative nature rooted in the sociological interpretive paradigm selected to provide an in-depth description of the case. Two secondary schools were purposively selected and the population consisted of five staff members and 16 Grade 9 learners. The findings of this study indicated that learners perceived individual factors and the media as the main factors contributing to learners behaving in a violent way. In contrast, parents viewed cultural and historical factors, community and family-related factors as playing a detrimental role in learners' maladaptive behaviour (Bender & Emslie, 2010). Even though the focus of that study was on learner violence, it did not tackle issues of teachers' experiences of learner violence, which is the primary focus of the current study. The current study also sought knowledge to understand the phenomenon in three different contexts: urban, rural and township.

According to Bender and Emslie (2010), a bioecological systems theory, a positive youth development model and a typology of violence are considered relevant for viewing the phenomenon of learners' violent behaviour in secondary schools. Adopting the ecosystemic framework would help different education stakeholders to understand the multilevel and multifaceted nature of violence in schools. They should also have an understanding of the type and nature of the prevailing forms of violence in their schools in order to establish fruitful violence prevention programmes (Bender & Emslie, 2010).

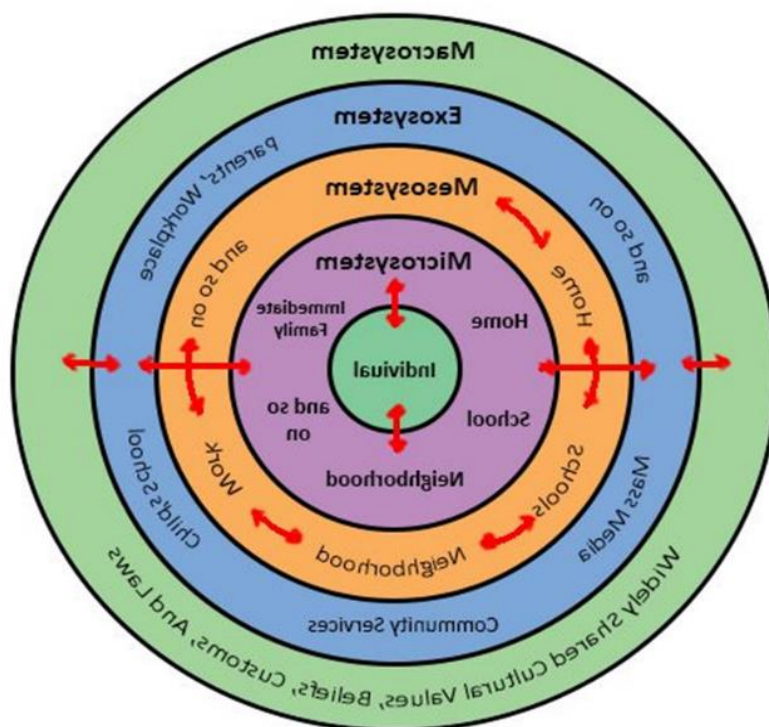


Figure 3.2: Graphic representation of the child's interaction with subsystems based on the bioecological perspective. (The innermost vertical arrows represent factors directly influencing the child's development and the outermost horizontal arrows represent the factors that indirectly influence it.)

From a bioecological point of view, the manner in which learners develop and behave is firstly shaped by their interaction with parents, peers, teachers and community members. Secondly, the individual's personality traits and the external factors of the environment continuously develop and interact with each other, and impact on the individual's development (Bender, 2010). The model is based on the belief that an individual's behaviour is influenced by four environmental systems, namely the micro-, meso-, exo-, macrosystems,

and chronosystem. What constitutes the bioecological systems theory and the implications thereof is discussed below.

3.3.1 Microsystem

The first system is the microsystem, which involves the context in which individuals interact. This layer is closest to the child and contains the structures with which a child has direct contact. It involves the relationship and interactions of a child with his/her immediate environment, including family, school, church or neighbourhood. The child's interaction with these environmental structures has a bidirectional impact. The interaction of structures within a layer and interaction of structures between layers is fundamental in this theory. At this level, bidirectional influences have a significant impact on the child. Wachs (2015) describes the microsystem as the innermost layer that can be viewed as the proximal processes between learners and their environment.

Zengeya's (2016) study explored the causes, manifestation and impact of classroom aggression on students' physical and mental health and academic performance in urban secondary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. The study employed a qualitative research design with a total population of 40 students and 15 teachers. Data were collected by means of in-depth interviews and focus groups. The study revealed that learners' aggressive behaviour in the classroom was caused by biological (temperament and hormonal imbalances during menstrual period), social (peer pressure, power hunger, gang affiliation, etc.) and economic factors. It is interesting to note that there are limited studies that have looked at the role of personal characteristics in understanding learners' violent behaviour. Zengeya's (2016) study revealed, among other things, the effect of biological factors on aggressive behaviour. The current study is open to extending the literature in this area, particularly in secondary schools in KZN. Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) findings also allude that negative outcomes such as violent behaviour are linked with proximal processes and personal characteristics. Having given an overview of the microsystem, the discussion below covers the mesosystem of the theory.

3.3.2 Mesosystem

The mesosystem provides the connection between the structures of the microsystem. For instance, parents and teachers have a particular relationship because they are directly connected with the child. In this study, the school is considered as the set of units that operates within the scope of school, family and community environments, which influence all of the different layers of the system. According to bioecological systems theory, learners' violence is viewed as the outcome of the interaction among factors of all four layers of the system, namely individuals, close relationships, communities and society. Therefore, the manner in which the adolescent learner behaves is influenced by his/her interaction with parents, school staff members, peers, and community members (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Bender (2010) analysed family-school collaboration in preventing learner violence in urban secondary schools. The study was a qualitative exploratory and descriptive case study, which was conducted to explore how school staff members, parents and learners cooperate in preventing learner violence in two urban schools. To help learners with violent behaviour, Bender (2010) found that the meso-systemic linkage between the school and home is essential to promote positive development of a learner. One of the school staff members participating in the study indicated that in their school they have built positive and reciprocal relationships with most of the parents and learners, stemming from a culture of mutual respect and trust (Bender, 2010). It is clear that if certain elements of the microsystems endorse divergent values, tensions will ultimately arise and the child will be prone to experiencing interpersonal and intrapersonal pressure as a result of trying to cope with the differing microsystem values. Such intrapsychic conflicts lead to the development of emotional problems, which are ultimately expressed in the form of violent behaviour.

3.3.3 Exosystem

The exosystem defines the larger social systems, where the child does not have direct contact, but that has an impact on the child's development by influencing certain structures in his/her microsystem. For instance, the child's father may have work-related stress which affects his behaviour at home, and this consequently affects the child. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that the exosystem consists of social contexts that learners do not have direct contact with, but that play a particular role in their lives. It affects learners' behaviour through influencing the

lower layers. This system incorporates events and decisions that the child does not directly participate in, but the results of which influence his/her experiences either directly or indirectly through their parents or school. Considering that children do not possess powers within the exosystem, this context can serve to nourish or impoverish the child's micro- and mesosystem. For instance, in the case of parents who have little control of their working hours due to work overload, this may impact on the time they can spend with their children, or affect the time of collecting children from school. This may mean that there will be little or no routine in the child's home life, thereby causing instability in their development.

3.3.4 Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outermost layer in the child's environment. This layer comprises cultural values, religion, customs and laws. The effects of the principles laid down by the macrosystem have a significant influence throughout the interactions of all the other layers. The macrosystem comprises the belief systems, customs, lifestyles, material resources, and opportunities that help shape interactions across social contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Wachs (2015) argued that through structuring the nature of the lower-order proximal processes, the higher-order systems dimensions indirectly contribute to development. For instance, Burton and Leoschut (2013) and Govender (2015) assert that learners who are exposed to violence develop emotional problems which make them prone to cruelty, impulsivity, rebelliousness, bullying, destruction of property and other forms of violent behaviour. These studies imply critical links between events in the macrosystem that theoretically impact the microsystem. Thus, in attempting to gain insight into the trajectory of learners' violence in schools, it is worth considering the society's predominant ideologies concerning children's development. The final subsystem of this theory is the chronosystem, which is described below.

3.3.5 Chronosystem

The chronosystem constitutes the final component of Bronfenbrenner's theory of development and takes into account changes in time relating to the person and the environment (Stivaros, 2007). It includes consistency or change in the individual's life or environment that takes place over time and influences the direction of development

(Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The chronosystem may affect aggressive behaviour of learners directly through microsystem experiences such as parental divorce, and it may have a negative effect indirectly through external events such as cyberbullying (Espelage, Rao & Rue, 2013). Thus, in utilising the bioecological systems theory to understand children's development and the complicated factors shaping their behaviour, it is imperative to consider the reciprocal interactions of bio-psychological and socio-economic-political systems that characterise their environment.

The researcher based the study on the bioecological systems theory in order to incorporate not only the individual intrinsic factors but also the environment in which the learner lives to understand violent behaviour. This theory explains the intricate nature of violence, as it takes into consideration all the social networks that directly or indirectly shape learners' behaviour. The bioecological theory takes into consideration the interaction between the child's biological, cognitive and emotional attributes and the social context resulting in violent behaviour. The role played by the child's interaction with his or her environment, as explained by the theory, is in line with the transactional analysis theory which also places emphasis on the individual's reciprocal interactions with significant others. The reciprocal interactions of learners and their environment influence behaviour either positively or negatively, depending on the nature of the situation. Below is a discussion of transactional analysis theory in relation to the causes, prevalence, manifestations and effects of learners' violent behaviour.

3.4 Transactional analysis theory

Everyone in the world is affected by another and in turn affects yet another – or, everything in the universe is affecting something else or is being affected by something else. This, in its essence, suggests that everyone is in a relationship, from the immediate family to the complex society at large. Although much focus in research has been devoted to discovering things that stand separate in the world, most crucial discoveries have been of relationships in the world. The history of developmental psychology has been characterised by the view that an individual's behaviour is influenced by his or her internal factors or own experiences (Keshavazi et al., 2016). Now the focus has shifted to the interaction of nature and nurture to explain the progress of children from birth onward. The current study takes cognisance of the

individual's irreversible fundamentals and the context in which they have constant interaction to understand violent behaviour. The transactional analysis model explains human development as a product of the interplay of processes in the individual's context over time. The development of a child is the product of the continuous dynamic interactions of the child and the experiences provided by his or her social settings.

I adopted the transactional analysis theory as a theoretical framework in order to understand and explain how teachers and learners are influenced by various environmental factors either to perpetrate or become victims of violence. Transactions are easily described in the relationships between parents and their children (Keshavazi et al., 2016), but it is important to note that children and parents are involved in many ecological settings that change and also are being changed by their participation (Sameroff, 2009). I hold the opinion that it is important to take into consideration the multiple sources of influences that come together to shape the individual, in order to understand learners' violent behaviour and teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated against them.

The core of this model is the analytic emphasis placed on the bidirectional and interdependent effects of a child and the environment. For instance, within the context of a family, violence causes stress and conflict in a child, which subsequently alters parent-child interactions. The disturbances in a family can have a negative effect on the child, as well as creating a more stressful family environment that is less able to support the child. Some researchers (Keating, 2004; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Ndibalema, 2013) argued that because family violence is the most proximal risk factor, it should inflict a more powerful influence on the learners' violent behaviour. However, Lynn and Cicchetti (1998) postulated that exposure to community violence continues to have a negative impact on learners, even after controlling for family violence. For instance, Overstreet and Braun (2000) presented an ecological-transactional model of community violence as a conceptual framework for understanding the existing literature on community violence exposure and child development. The study revealed that knowing of and witnessing community violence predicted child stress symptoms after family violence was taken into account (Overstreet & Braun, 2000).

Within the context of an individual, the interactional influences in a child alter their view of the world, their ability to form relationships, and their ability to moderate stimulation. Particularly stress, anxiety, peer influences, and community violence may interfere with the learners' basic developmental tasks, such as the development of trust, a sense of safety,

emotional regulation, exploration and mastery of the environment, and the ability to form relationships (Overstreet & Braun, 2000). Unsuccessful resolution of these developmental tasks may interfere with the child’s ability to cope with experiences imposed by the environment, making the child vulnerable to violent behaviour. The following discussion gives an overview of the core components of the transactional analysis model.

3.4.1 The basic components of transactional analysis theory

The diagram below (Figure 3.3) illustrates the child’s personality development. This helps to explain how children’s personality develops and what influences a particular behaviour that they display when interacting with their immediate environment.

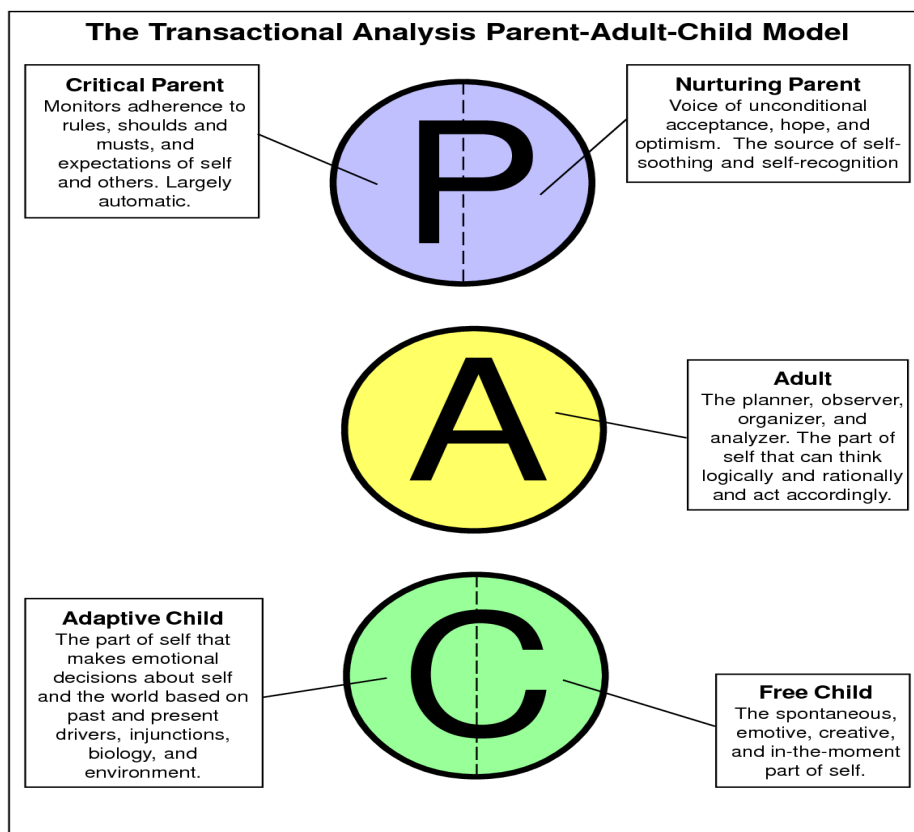


Figure 3.3: A transactional analysis theory of child’s ego states impacting on the child’s personality growth.

The transactional analysis theory is a theory concerning personality growth and improvement of interpersonal relationships that was introduced by Berne in 1957. It is based on the premise

that each individual's personality is made up of three ego states, namely parent, adult and child. Each ego state is recognised by a set of behaviours, thoughts and feelings (Solomon, 2003). Firstly, the parent ego state is a set of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are learned from parents or significant others in a child's life. This ego state is divided into two, the nurturing parent and critical parent ego state. The nurturing parent is the soft, loving and permission- giving side of the personality, while the critical parent entails prejudged thoughts, feelings and behaviours that children carry from their parents or caregivers. Secondly, the adult ego state is considered the part of the personality that processes information based on facts, and solves problems based on facts and not on prejudged thoughts or emotions. Lastly, the child ego state is the part of the personality that carries emotions, thoughts and feelings that the child has from childhood. Understanding the personality ego states is crucial for understanding transactional analysis theory. The following section describes other components of the theory and their implications regarding learners' violent behaviour.

The transactional analysis theory incorporates other components that form the fundamentals of the theory. These include transactions, strokes, and existential positions. The transactions concern the manner in which people interact with each other. This refers to the ego state that one person employs when communicating with another, and the ego state that the other person uses when responding to what is communicated to him or her. The transaction is divided into straight or complementary and crossed components (Sameroff, 2009). In the complementary transaction, the communication between the initiator and the respondent are from the same ego state. In this situation there is mutual understanding between the two people involved and the communication flows. In the crossed transaction there is a breakdown in the communication, which leads to anger, frustration, or arguments between the parties involved.

Another concept in the theory is strokes, defined as a unit of recognising human behaviour. Strokes are described as anything that shows that a human being recognises another human being; for instance, nodding one's head, gestures, touch or spoken words are the signs of human recognition. Sameroff (2009) argued that when children do not receive positive strokes, they tend to seek the negative ones. These forms of responses may in turn result in harmful behaviour. The kind of stroking patterns that children develop tend to reflect how they feel about themselves in relation to others. Their life scripts are the unconscious plan based on the decisions made by children about themselves, others and their lives.

The last concept in transactional analysis theory is existential position, which refers to the life position that an individual develops as a result of the messages received and decisions taken in early childhood. It is argued that most children are born with positive feelings about themselves and others (Sameroff, 2009). If things go well, they will remain in this position throughout their life span. However, if they are treated badly or abused, they are prone to developing anger, feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. This position may lead to the development of a negative view of the self. As a result, the children ingrain these feelings and carry them throughout their development. They will ultimately grow up with this angry position and subsequently try to prove to others that other people are weak. The manner in which they try to prove themselves to others is by controlling and externalising aggression towards the other people with whom they come into contact, particularly, in this instance, teachers. Violence in the school setting has a negative impact on the learners' and teachers' wellbeing. The section below taps into important elements of the interaction of teachers and learners with violent behaviour in the classroom context.

3.5 Relationship between teachers and learners with violent behaviour in the classroom

Human development is influenced by a number of factors interacting with each other, including but not limited to biological, family processes, socio-economic status, neighbourhood and school environment factors. Most importantly, the impact of the school – particularly, classroom influences – are of increasing interest to researchers, and teacher-child relationships have emerged as an important factor associated with learners' problem behaviour (Markowitz et al., 2006). It is of great concern that learners who exhibit problem behaviour are more likely to develop negative relationships with their teachers, and poor teacher-learner relationships tend to be stable over time. Developing negative relationships with teachers early in school can be harmful, as difficult relationships are associated with scholastic and behavioural problems through secondary school. One important aspect of teacher-learner relationships is the moment-to-moment interactions that occur; these interactions serve as the basis for academic and social learning in the classroom and influence subsequent teacher and learner behaviours. Sutherland and Oswald (2005) argue that transactional analysis theory is one way to conceptualise how teachers and learners influence each other's behaviour over time. For instance, a teacher's attitude towards a learner when giving instructions in class may have been influenced by the learner's disruptive behaviour,

resulting in a decrease in quality of work and exposure of academic instruction rendered to the learner. The decrease in the quality of instruction given to the learner may result in the poor performance of the learner, which may ultimately lead to more frustration and disruption on their part, further impacting instructional teaching behaviour.

Sutherland and Oswald (2005) pointed out that researchers continue to investigate the applicable ways for achieving academic and social growth for learners with aggressive and violent behaviour. Nevertheless, they put more focus on the context of a linear conceptual framework, where they examine the impact of educators' behaviour on learners or the effect of learners' behaviour on educators. The current study takes into consideration the complex environmental factors that may impact on learners with violent behaviour and their teachers, and the reciprocal influences that exist between them. Sutherland and Oswald (2005) argue that research methods that take into cognisance the bidirectional influences that exist between teachers and their learners are likely to produce fruitful results.

3.6 Teachers' experiences of the factors contributing to violence

There are various factors that make teachers susceptible to experiencing violence in the way that they do. These range from predisposing factors and personal characteristics such as personality traits and temperament; to interpersonal relationship problems such as past experiences of domestic violence; and environmental factors such as political, work-related or community issues. Research indicates that both the personal characteristics of teachers and school factors influence the way in which teachers experience violence, and contribute to their responses to violent behaviour, whether they witness it or have it directly perpetrated against them. Mooij (2011) investigated secondary school teachers' personal and school characteristics, experience of violence and perceived violence motives. Questionnaires were employed as data generation tools and Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the social interaction patterns in teachers' data. The study demonstrated that teachers attribute violence perpetrated against them as motivated by their physical appearance, behaviour, level of school achievement, age, religiosity, gender, sexuality and disciplinary procedures (Mooij, 2011). In line with these findings regarding individual personal factors, Bester and Du Plessis (2010) revealed that educators' perception plays a pivotal role in their experience of violence perpetrated by learners against them. The educator in Bester and Du Plessis's (2010) study

indicated that she found herself in crisis due to perceived lack of support, and that she felt incapable of dealing with the challenges posed by teaching learners with violent behaviour. Perpetrators of violence are also perceived as untouchable, and fewer actions ensue against violent behaviour in schools (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010). Similarly, Mooij (2011) revealed that female teachers as compared to male teachers believed that they are victimised because they are women. These findings indicate that not only the learners' violent behaviour affects educators, but also the perception that educators have about violence.

Further to internal factors predisposing teachers to school violence is the feeling of not being at home of teachers at school. Mooij (2011) clarifies that feeling not integrated in the environment where the teacher teaches reflects the degree of social cohesion in that specific institution, region or country. Compared to teachers who feel at home when at work, those who do not feel so attribute violence directed against them to their appearance, skin colour and demographic background. Mayer and Furlong (2010) also revealed that not feeling at home may be related to different types of antisocial or maladaptive behaviour.

A teacher's sexuality is an important element to be considered among the factors contributing to teachers' vulnerability to experience school violence. Mooij (2011) stressed that heterosexuality is the norm in specific cultural and religious settings, whereas homosexuality and bisexuality are taboo, and may make teachers susceptible to violence perpetrated against them. Homosexual teachers believe that they are prone to violent behaviour perpetrated by learners towards them because they are regarded as 'handicapped' (Mooij, 2011).

Studies conducted by Salvano-Pardieu et al. (2009) and Mooij (2011) illustrate the age of teachers as an important component in making them vulnerable to school violence. Mooij's (2011) study indicates that even though both older and younger teachers experience some form of violence, the degree and the kind of violence differ. The study shows that older teachers experience violence in relation to the excellent work they produce, whereas younger teachers are subjected to violence because of their gender or because learners refuse to be punished by them. Older teachers often experience verbal violence, whereas younger teachers experience various forms of violence such as verbal, social, physical and sexual violence (Mooij, 2011).

Mooij's (2011) study further stressed religion as a factor contributing to violence in schools. The participants in this study indicated that religious people behave in a more socially acceptable manner than non-religious people. They help and support other people, and are in

a good position to be respected at school. In contrast, in their study of teachers' sanction in the classroom, Salvano-Pardieu et al. (2009) revealed that being religious is related to being more dogmatic and antisocial. Another relevant factor can be the degree of urbanisation of the area in which the school is situated. Studies (Salvano-Pardieu et al., 2009; American Psychological Association, 2011) demonstrate that teachers who work in cities experience more violent behaviour perpetrated by learners against them than those teaching in rural settings.

The media is found to have a negative effect on violence experienced by teachers in schools (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010). The media often focus on the events of violence and the impressions these bring to the society, and rarely pay attention to the vulnerability of educators in coping with the overflow of violence in schools. Neither do the personnel who assist the community focus on the experiences of educators who are subject to violence. According to Bester and Du Plessis (2010), the media influences teachers in various ways. It makes them reluctant to deal with or expose violence, owing to the fear of ending up in the newspapers. It is argued that teachers who act against school violence are considered, in the media, to be violating learners' rights (Daniel, 2018), while they are actually enforcing the school rules and acting against troublemakers (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010). The media has also made teachers aware of violence taking place in schools. The more cases of violence are exposed through the media, the more teachers become aware of the problem of violence in schools and collaboratively share their experiences of learners' violence, thereby worsening the perception of increased violence (Daniel, 2018).

3.7 Conclusion

The discussion provided evidence of the existence of transactions between learners' development and their environment. The chapter first introduced the integration of the two theories of bioecological systems and transactional analysis, how they are connected and their applicability regarding the phenomenon being studied. The discussion further explicated the basics of each theory. Evidence was also provided of the transactions existing between learners and their teachers, and how this informs each other's behaviour.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three presented a detailed discussion of the theories that guided this study. These theories provided a framework for understanding the phenomenon of teachers' experiences of school violence and the underlying factors influencing learners' violent behaviour. The theoretical perspectives of Urie Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bioecological systems theory and Eric Berne's (1957) transactional analysis theory enriched my critical engagement with the literature and analysis of the findings of this study. The transactional analysis theory worked well in substantiating the actual interaction of learners with their environment to shape their behaviour. The two theories guided the research and brought an understanding of what makes teachers vulnerable to school violence, and gave a glimpse into understanding some factors that contribute to learners' violent behaviour. The two theories complement each other and served as a new model for understanding the existing literature and guiding future research on the development of learners' violent behaviour and teachers' susceptibility to school violence. The basic premise of the ecological-transactional model is that individuals (children and teachers) function in multiple contexts that influence each other and their personalities (Overstreet & Mazza, 2014).

This chapter constitutes an essential part of any research process. It begins by presenting the research paradigm within which this study is embedded, followed by the research design. It further sets out the research methodology that was used to achieve the objectives of the study, which includes a description of the approach, procedures, methods and sampling, data collection method, and analysis technique used. It also tackles the issues of trustworthiness, triangulation and ethical issues, and concludes by highlighting the limitations of the study.

4.2 Research paradigm

A research paradigm represents a particular worldview that defines what is acceptable to research and how this should be done (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). Barker (2003) defines a paradigm as a model or pattern containing a set of legitimated assumptions and a design for

collecting and interpreting data. De Vos et al. (2014) pointed out that scientific research is conducted within a specific paradigm; hence, researchers need to know the way in which they view their research material and how they decide which paradigm they are working in, as well as know the nature of their selected paradigm and articulate this in the research report in order to keep communication with their reading public clear and unambiguous. Creswell (2013) further indicated that researchers should have an understanding of the beliefs and philosophical assumptions that they bring to any study they engage in. Prior to embarking on a particular study, it is imperative to decide on the paradigm which the study will be located within. Davey (2006) also alluded that the researcher must adopt a paradigm directed by the focus of the study. Based on the focus of this study, which was to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour, I positioned this study in the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivist paradigm is applicable where the researcher has a belief that reality is constructed and is not just there (Radnor, 2002); in this study reality was created in terms of what knowledge teachers have about their experiences of learner violence.

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) pointed out that there are three different key paradigms that are employed in carrying out research, namely the post-positivist, interpretivist and critical paradigm. The study explored teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools in KZN. It employed an interpretivist paradigm, which allowed me as a researcher to communicate closely with the participants in order to obtain insight and form a deep understanding of the situation under study. The interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. In this approach, individuals are viewed as having a desire to understand the world they live in (Creswell, 2007).

The interpretivist paradigm seeks to understand how people make logic of their worlds and the environment in which they live (Christiansen, 2010). Radnor (2002) is of the view that the interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to collect data through interacting with participants and observing events as they occur. Research that uses an interpretivist paradigm is mainly concerned with meanings, and strives to comprehend social members' descriptions and understanding of situations (Henning et al., 2004). Taking into consideration that this is a social study that explored teachers' understanding of learner violence in high schools in KZN, the study fitted into the interpretivist paradigm well. In this study I had the opportunity to interact with teachers with an aim of gaining insight into understanding meanings, interpretations, context and descriptions that they have socially created about their

experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour. However, there were limitations imposed by the national restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with regard to proper observations when interacting with the participants.

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) indicated that for the interpretivist, the purposes of social research are to understand the meaning which informs human behaviour. They embrace the belief that there is no single reality or truth about the world, but rather a set of realities or truths that are historical, local, specific and non-generalisable. There are many possible interpretations of events and situations. Thus, it is recognised that research results are not out there waiting to be found or discovered by the researcher, but are created through the interpretation of data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). In this study, reality was created by understanding the teachers' lived experiences and understanding, interpretations and perceptions of learners' violent behaviour and how they teach them.

As opposed to the belief that objective reality exists, with a focus on discovering the multiple perspectives of the participants in their natural setting, the ontological belief in an interpretivist paradigm is that those who are involved in the research process construct knowledge socially and individually, which justifies the existence of multiple realities (Neuman, 2011). Thus, the aim of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand people's perspectives of their lived experiences, not some objective notion of that experience. This paradigm does not intend to make predictions about what will happen as a result of human behaviour. Hence, this study aimed to understand teachers' lived experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour.

My ontological belief, as a researcher, is that multiple realities exist, and the construction of these realities is influenced by social, economic, political and cultural factors. The study was conducted in schools from three different contexts of Pinetown District, and I had an understanding that the contextual realities of these schools were different. Thus, the assumption I made was that the teacher participants would perceive and interpret their experiences of violence perpetrated against them differently. I also had an assumption that teachers would have different opinions with regard to the contextual factors influencing learners' violence against them. Each participant would produce his or her own worldview, which would be equally important to those shared by others. I worked closely with the participants in an amicable manner, though virtually, to gain insight into their lived experiences and gauged their diverse perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation.

In terms of epistemology, I believe that the relationship between me as a researcher and what is researched is interactive, and that knowledge is socially situated. In this study, knowledge was created through the interaction between me (the researcher) and the participants of this study in relation to my own beliefs (Creswell, 2013). As a researcher, I was quite cognisant of the power relationships and social contexts which could influence this collaboration. I believed in understanding the teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour from the first-hand experience of teachers. Hence, in-depth individual interviews and a focus group session were employed in generating data, which enabled a detailed and thick description of the social phenomenon. The assumption of a subjective epistemology means that the researcher makes meaning of the participants' data through their own thinking and cognitive processing of data, informed by interaction with the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2015). The theoretical framework that guided this study also suited the interpretivist perspective that I adopted. The theories employed view the world as constructed, interpreted, and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and with wider social systems.

4.3 Research design

According to De Vos et al. (2014), research design refers to a phase in the process of doing research, while Bertram and Christiansen (2017) and Kumar (2011) defined research design as a plan of how the researcher will procedurally collect and analyse the required data to answer the research questions validly, objectively and accurately. Moreover, Creswell (2013) viewed the research design as a plan for conducting the study. Kumar (2011) further elucidated that the research design assists in determining and constructing the suitable tools to effectively answer the research questions. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), the plan of the research should be able to answer the following questions: firstly, what data must the researcher must gauge when answering the research questions, and how will these data will be collected? Secondly, how will the researcher analyse the data in order to make meaning?

There are two types of research approach, namely qualitative and quantitative approach. A study may employ either a qualitative or a quantitative research approach. This study aimed to explore teachers' lived experiences and understanding of teaching learners with violent

behaviour in high schools in KZN. Given the nature of this research, the qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. This approach was appropriate for this kind of study, as the intention was to gain a thorough understanding of the situation from the diverse viewpoints of the participants. The following discussion pertains to the relevance of the qualitative approach to this study as the approach adopted to explore and understand the phenomenon under investigation.

4.4 Qualitative approach

Henning et al. (2004) describe the qualitative approach as a tactic or method that allows for varied views of the topic that is studied, where the candidates have a more unrestricted way of giving their views and expressing their actions. Furthermore, a qualitative approach provides a detailed understanding of meanings, intentions, attitudes, and actions (Cohen et al., 2011). This approach best suited this study, because the purpose was to gain a thorough understanding of teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour, their understanding of the factors influencing their susceptibility to learner violence, and their perceptions regarding the possible reasons for learners' violent behaviour in high schools in KZN.

Qualitative researchers generate data themselves through interviews, document analysis and observation (Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2010). The researcher therefore acts as the key instrument in the process of data collection. This is pertinent to the current study, as the researcher designed the semi-structured interview questions and the focus group questions, and scheduled the appointments to gather data himself.

As De Vos et al. (2014) state that in qualitative design, the researcher is concerned with understanding rather than explanation, with naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement, with the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider as opposed to that of an outsider predominant in the quantitative paradigm. The researcher aimed to establish and understand the meaning that the participants have about learner violence in schools. I employed this approach because it afforded me the opportunity to be involved in a data generation process that produced in-depth and rich data. Creswell (2013) further argued that respondents' interpretations of their experiences may further imply multiple perspectives on a subject and diverse views. This was applicable to this study, as it

used the in-depth interviews and focus group to gain an understanding of the participants' meaning.

De Vos et al. (2014) maintained that most important to a qualitative design is an individual's intrinsic interest and curiosity as a source for the area to be investigated. In line with this view, through reading newspapers, listening to news on the radio and watching it on television made me develop an intrinsic propensity to understand teachers' experiences and their understanding of violent behaviour exhibited by learners in schools. In particular, I had a strong feeling that teachers' feelings and constitutional rights to safe and conducive working conditions are violated. Observing the content of discussions on media platforms, I noted that the focus was mostly placed on learners' experiences and interventions appropriate to help them, while the teachers' experiences of violence occurring in schools are neglected.

Qualitative researchers pay particular focus to individuals' worldview and how they understand and construct meaning out of their experiences. In order to make their interpretations, researchers have to gain access to the multiple spaces of the participants. Qualitative researchers generally focus on in-depth, long-term interactions with relevant people at one site or different sites. This study utilised three contextual sites to collect research data. Qualitative researchers have a belief in acquiring insight and developing understanding by getting closer to the data in order to understand participants' point of view and to obtain knowledge (Strydom, 2005).

4.5 Research methodology

There are numerous research methods utilised in the qualitative approach to research. As indicated above, this study adopted a qualitative approach employing a multiple case study design of three schools. Thomas (2011) posited that case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. Rule and John (2011) indicated that a case study is a systemic and in-depth study of one case in a particular context, where the case may be an individual, group, community or organisation. Case studies are descriptive in nature as they attempt to understand what it is like to be in a particular situation. Thus, this study aimed to understand what it is like to teach learners with violent behaviour from the point of view of individual teachers. This view is also corroborated by Lapan et al. (2012), who argued that

qualitative researchers are keen to understand how people interpret their experiences, their constructed worldview and the meaning attributed to their experiences.

Cohen et al. (2011) postulated that case studies explore and report the factual, dynamic and clarifying interactions of events or human relations in a unique instance, as situations are unique and dynamic. It is an in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey. It is a method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic (Cohen et al., 2011). Thomas (2011) further substantiated that rather than using samples and following a rigid protocol to examine a limited number of variables, case study methods involve an in-depth, and sometimes longitudinal (over a long period of time) examination of a single instance or event. They provide a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analysing information, and reporting the results. As a result, the researcher may gain a sharper understanding of why the occurrence happened as it did, and what might become important to look at more extensively in future research. The case study research design is also useful for testing whether scientific theories and models actually work in the real world (Thomas, 2011).

This study used a case study method to successfully explain the phenomenon under investigation. The study incorporated cases of schools from three different settings, namely rural, urban and township that gave insight into the nature, extent and effects of violence that is occurring in schools. I employed a case study design because it helped me to gain a deep understanding of teachers' experiences and understanding of violent behaviour displayed by learners in high schools in KZN. It provided me with in-depth information on how teachers teach learners with violent behaviour, and their perceptions of the reasons behind such maladaptive behaviour. This research approach suited my study, as I sought to understand the perceptions and experiences of school violence from the teachers' perspective.

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) postulated that case studies are a style of research that is mostly employed by researchers in the interpretivist paradigm. This further indicates the appropriateness of the current study using the case study approach and being situated in the interpretivist paradigm. This study is a multi-case of high schools in three different contexts. Rule and John (2011) stated that, depending on the underlying philosophical approaches of a researcher, multi-case studies could be positivist, interpretive or critical. For the purposes of the current project, I utilised qualitative methods within the interpretivist paradigm, as it enabled me to have an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences

of violence displayed by learners in their schools. I hold the belief that in order to solve a particular problem, one needs to have a thorough understanding of the nature of the problem and its possible causes. This gave me the opportunity to share some of the coping mechanisms that the teachers may apply in their daily lives whenever they are faced with violence. De Vos et al. (2014) asserted that qualitative researchers seek to collect rich descriptive data on a particular phenomenon or context in order to have an understanding of what is happening.

Lapan et al. (2012) argue that the multi-site case study is used to describe complex phenomena such as recent events affecting the country or a particular community in ways that help discover new and deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This study was based on multiple-site case studies as opposed to a single case study. This was not for the purposes of comparison, but rather to gain rich data that are presumed to bring confidence to my findings. Cohen et al. (2011) argue that case studies provide an opportunity for the in-depth study of a case. The exploration of a case takes place through different methods of data collection, such as interviews, focus groups, narratives, documents and observations that will aid in producing rich and in-depth information. This study employed the three data collection methods of semi-structured interviews, a focus group with the teacher, and teachers' narratives.

4.5.1 Target population

Lichtman (2010) refers to the target population as the entire set of people from whom the data are to be collected. It is the specific population used in the study. Given the fact that the goal of qualitative research is to enrich the understanding of experiences in a particular situation, the selected population needs to be a fertile representation of the experience under study. Such selections are purposeful and carefully sought. The concern is not how data were gathered or from how many sources, but whether the data that were collected are sufficiently rich to bring refinement and clarity to understanding a phenomenon. The target sample for this study consisted of six teachers drawn from a population of three different contexts. The six participants were selected based on the following criteria: they were certified high school teachers who work in the schools selected for inclusion in this study, expressed interest in the topic, were willing to participate, and were comfortable talking to other teachers, especially in the focus group.

4.5.2 Sampling method

A sample is a group of subjects or participants from whom the data will be collected. Qualitative research methods recommend the use of nonprobability sampling methods; thus purposive sampling was selected as a form of nonprobability sampling that was meant to aid in generating relevant data on the phenomenon under investigation (Bertram, 2010). Purposive sampling is a method of identifying and selecting participants on the basis of some characteristics that the researcher finds suitable for him/her in order to explore the central themes in detail and the questions pertinent to the study. Purposive sampling is where the researcher intentionally selects who to include in the study, based on their capability to provide the required data (Bush, 2013). A purposive sampling approach involves selecting information-rich participants from the population from whom to collect in-depth data on the research topic (Cohen et al., 2011).

According to Bertram (2010), purposive sampling can help in a study which intends to concentrate on targeted individuals. In this regard, a specific group of teachers were selected because of their experiences of violence in the teaching and learning setting. Furthermore, teachers were selected because they were in a better position to provide deep perspectives on the nature, extent and possible reasons behind learner violence in schools. They would also be able to give exact information based on their experiences in the teaching and learning environment, as well as on challenges associated with teaching learners who display problem behaviour (Bush, 2013). The criteria for selection of the participants was that the teachers either had personal experiences of learner violence or had observed learner violence in their schools directed at a colleague, which is the central phenomenon under study. The researcher believes that these respondents are in a good position to provide rich information, and that a lot can be learned from them. This is supported by other researchers, who hold the view that in purposive sampling people who are knowledgeable about a phenomenon are selected for study (Bertram, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Bush, 2013).

4.5.3 Sample size

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) stated that even though it may seem that considering the size of the sample is not important, it is crucial that the sample is large or small enough to provide the data needed for the study. Edwards and Baker (2012) pointed out that determining the number of participants in qualitative research is dependent on a number of reflections, such as the heterogeneity of the population, the number of selection criteria, the extent to which nesting of criteria is needed, groups of special interests, multiple samples within one study, and the type of data collection method. A study involving individual interviews usually has a sample of less than 50 participants (Edwards & Baker, 2012). Taking into account the above views, the researcher decided that in order to manage the sample and answer the research questions adequately, the study should have a sample of six participants. These respondent teachers were drawn from three schools in three different demographic settings, as indicated in the above sections.

4.5.4 Data generation techniques

Different methods can be employed to generate data, which include but are not limited to observations, interviews, artefacts, life stories, narratives, and questionnaires (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In the present study the researcher adopted a multi-method qualitative research design that combined in-depth individual interviews, a focus group discussion and teacher narratives to produce rich data and gain a deep understanding of learners' violent behaviour. It is considered that the use of different qualitative methods would be a form of triangulation that would enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Examining data from more than one source is an important way to triangulate qualitative research data, and with multi-method data collection the insights gained from individual sources can be used to complement and enrich the overall research findings (Cohen et al., 2011). Rule and John (2011) further posited that a qualitative enquiry which focuses on meaning in context, using multiple sources of evidence, requires a data collection method that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. It is for these reasons that I used various methods of data generation such as semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview and narratives.

An interview is a verbal interaction between people during which ideas, attitudes and feelings are exchanged (Thomas, 2011). The aim of this study was to acquire teachers' viewpoints about learner violence in the teaching and learning environment. As a result, this study employed the semi-structured interview as an instrument of data generation. Bertram (2010) highlighted that qualitative research is the study of meaning and it requires access to the subjective viewpoints that people attach to their objective surroundings. This is better gained from semi-structured interviews. It is a specialised form of communication in which people interact for a purpose. The interview schedules were crafted in advance to guide both the semi-structured and the focus group interview. This enabled me to think explicitly about what was going to be covered in the interviews. The below discussions elaborate on the data collection techniques that were used in this study.

4.5.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

This study used semi-structured interview schedules to collect data from the individual participants. The motive for using semi-structured interviews as a data generation technique was that they would provide the researcher with the opportunity to expand the information through probing and clarification where necessary. Semi-structured interviews can be viewed as a guide that is appropriately open-ended, is prepared to allow the content to be rearranged and expanded where new routes could be included, and where further probing can be undertaken (Cohen et al., 2011). The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they enable the researcher to gather detailed and intense data using a small number of participants (Packer, 2011; Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, the semi-structured interview was employed because it enabled me to understand the participants' experiences and attitudes in relation to their roles in enriching quality in teaching and learning. Packer (2011) stated that the semi-structured interview is used in qualitative research because it resembles everyday conversations.

This study utilised in-depth semi-structured interviews to gain insight into teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour, and to identify factors contributing to the development of such maladaptive behaviour on the part of learners from the teachers' perspective. The semi-structured interview questions involved teachers' personal profiling, and questions related to their experiences of learner violence, their views on what makes

them vulnerable to learner violence, and their perceptions of the factors that contribute to school violence. The use of qualitative interviews was necessary to examine the topic thoroughly and to tap into the rich textual meanings of the respondents' responses. The interviews were done at a suitable venue and a time that was convenient to the participants. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis to enable the participants to speak comfortably and freely, and to share their views honestly without fear of pressure. Each interview took duration of 45 minutes to an hour. I used audio-tape to record the interviews and to save this accurate record of the participants' responses.

The respondents were informed about the purpose of the interview and the researcher allowed mutual acceptance and understanding of the procedure. Struwig and Stead (2007) indicated that interviews are the most widely used and valued data collection technique for accessing deep-sited information about human behaviour. Questions were phrased in a manner that encouraged participants to share their experiences or their observations about the issue of learner violence and how this is impacting on their practice and their lives in general.

I was quite cognisant of the shortcomings attached to the interview as a tool of data collection, but I tried my best to overcome flaws. In order to enhance the interest and concentration of the respondents, a coding system was designed to record their responses. Consequently, interruption of the communication flow between respondents and interviewer was reduced. Struwig and Stead (2007) maintain that for the interview to be successful, the interviewer schedule should start with non-threatening questions, to enable the respondent to loosen up. After the initial items, more pressing or feeling types of questions are to be asked. A similar pattern was applied during data generation in the present study.

4.5.4.2 Focus group

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined the focus group as a cautiously planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Focus groups are a means of gaining in-depth understanding of how people feel or think about a particular issue, product or service. Participants are selected on the basis that they have common characteristics that relate to the focus group. The researcher creates an environment that is conducive for the participants to share their perceptions, viewpoints, experiences, wishes and concerns without being pressurised. What the participants in the

group share during the discussions constitutes the essential data in focus groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), there are three main reasons for using focus groups. Firstly, focus groups are used in studies in which they serve as the principal source of data. Secondly, they are used as a supplementary source of data in studies that rely on some other primary methods. Lastly, they are used in multi-method studies that combine two or more means of gathering data, in which no one primary method determines the use of the others (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). For the purposes of this study, a focus group was employed as an additional method of data collection as a means of triangulating data, gaining more insights into the phenomenon and enriching the overall research findings. The collection of multiple sources of data ensured that the phenomenon was not viewed from a single perspective and gave me a broader range of information from which to make logical inferences. The focus group was used because within such groups the participants are encouraged to engage with each other by asking questions and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view, thereby providing more information and clarity on the phenomenon.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) postulated that the purpose of focus groups is to promote self-disclosure among participants. This was applicable in this study, as the researcher was interested in acquiring multiple viewpoints and the honest feelings, thoughts and perceptions of teachers about learner violence in schools. I conducted a focus group as a powerful means of exposing reality and investigating complex behaviour and the underlying motivations for it (Packer, 2011).

Some researchers argue that it is appropriate to use focus groups when investigating sensitive topics involving vulnerable groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Packer, 2011; Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). I believe that the focus group is pertinent to this study, as the subject of violence is a sensitive issue in South African schools, and I feel that the teachers are susceptible to the residual effects of violence in schools. A focus group was conducted with the sampled teachers via a Zoom meeting due to the national restrictions enforced by the government subsequent to the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus group enabled the researcher to interact with interviewees and allowed them to participate with each other.

4.5.4.3 Narratives

Hadebe-Ndlovu (2016) substantiated the significance of other means of data generation such as documentary evidence other than solely relying on respondents' voices. The documentary evidence was considered important for her study, as it could also be used for the purposes of triangulation. This technique also played a significant role in data generation in that it provided rich data that would otherwise have been difficult to obtain (Hadebe-Ndlovu, 2016). In this study, a similar approach was adopted, and I employed narratives as a means of generating additional data and for the purposes of triangulation. A narrative is a term assigned to any text used within a mode of enquiry in qualitative research (Neuman, 2014), with a specific focus on stories told by participants. Narratives can be both a method of data generation and a phenomenon of a study. In this study, narratives from the six teachers were in written form and were recorded to generate relevant data for this study on issues of learner violence.

4.5.5 Gaining access to the participants

In this section I highlight my personal experiences of accessing the participants and generating data. I explain the challenges I faced during the data generation stage of this research, particularly due to the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I also share how I overcame those challenges.

At the outset of the journey of this research in 2019 I was able to obtain permission to conduct research in the public schools of KZN. The selected schools granted me permission to undertake the study there. I also obtained consent from the teachers who were willing to participate in this study. However, challenges arose when I wanted to proceed with data generation, caused by the emergent state of disaster imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic early in 2020. The country took serious and emergency restrictions as a response to the pandemic in the form of a national lockdown. This necessitated drastic changes in the way of doing things in the workplace as well as in academic projects. As a result of these restrictions, face-to-face contact with the participants was not allowed. This imposed a challenge for the generation of data in this study, because the data generation techniques required face-to-face discussions. Given this challenge, data had to be generated through virtual platforms.

The generation of data was hence through semi-structured interviews that were carried out by video-calls in the form of Zoom meetings, to take the place of the physical face-to-face interviews and focus group in order to observe COVID-19 lockdown regulations. Taking into consideration that the participants had problems with data bundles and some had challenges using technology, I bought enough data bundles for each interview with them. I bought 1 gigabyte of data for each participant per session. For those who had problems with the use of Zoom, I assisted them over the phone as to how to use this platform, to facilitate the use of this method of communication. The focus group was also conducted via the same videoconferencing platform. The first call was where I introduced myself to the participants as a researcher, the second call was for the interviews where we had to set up Zoom sessions, and the last call was for confirmation of data.

The research participants were sent notebooks to write down narratives of their experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour. I bought the notebooks and delivered them to the respondents by means of post office services or couriers, and they also used the same mode to return the notebooks once they were done. I covered the costs that were incurred during the delivery of these notebooks.

Given the sensitivity of the study, I was quite aware that interviewing a person about their past experiences might evoke suppressed emotions and might lead to them reliving the experiences. In this regard, participants were informed that they may refuse to answer any questions should they choose, and that they may terminate their participation at any time. In the event that unanticipated emotional reactions arose as a result of emotionally provoking questions, I hired a psychologist who was prepared to provide support via the virtual platform. I also organised a registered counsellor to assist in case the appointed psychologist was unavailable for consultation. Nevertheless, there was no need to use these services. All of the participants seemed to have dealt with their past traumatic experiences well.

4.5.6 Data analysis procedure

Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data that are generated. Babbie (2011) refers to analysis as the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. A variety of analytic strategies are used that involve interpreting the

data by sorting, organising and reducing them to more manageable pieces and then exploring ways to reassemble them (Berg, 2007).

The data generated from participants need to be arranged in order to give them meaning. The analysis of data in this study followed the inductive approach. In this approach, the generated data are gathered into patterns, which are positioned into clusters to form themes (Cohen et al., 2011). All of the interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and analysed according to the emergent themes. Once the interviews had been conducted, the audio-tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed into written form. After that the transcription the data was prepared for analyses. Consistent with qualitative research, a constant comparison approach to analysing data was followed in this study. As data are collected, they are read and reread, and through a process of inductive reasoning the researcher identifies emergent themes (Kumar, 2011).

A content analysis plan was employed to make meaning of the data that were generated, and the data were summarised and categorised; thereafter, emerging themes were assigned to those categories (Hadebe-Ndlovu, 2016). The data were analysed using content analysis according to the schemata explicated by Berg (2007), who contends that content analysis is the most obvious way to analyse interview data. The information obtained from the semi-structured interviews, focus group and narratives was reviewed and compared in order to make meaning. As new data were generated, social phenomena were coded and their properties were noted, and they were compared with incidents already identified. Consistent themes were integrated into existing categories, and new themes were organised into new categories. Eventually categories were synthesised into more global descriptive perspectives. Trends which appeared were identified and discussed in light of the critical research questions and literature review.

4.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be assured by the consistency, stability and repeatability of the informants' accounts, as well as the investigator's ability to collect and record information accurately. It further requires that the researcher should have developed consistent responses or habits in using methods and scoring or rating of the results, and factors related to subjects and testing procedures should have been managed to reduce measurement errors. Assessing

the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research is essential when conducting a study. To achieve this, Lincoln and Guba (1999) and Shenton (2004) recommend three measures that need to be taken into consideration by qualitative researchers to ensure trustworthiness of a study, namely credibility, transferability, and dependability. The current study took all of these into consideration, and they are discussed below.

4.6.1 Credibility

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), credibility is the most significant factor in creating trustworthiness, whereby the researcher ensures that what has been reported is factual and accurate. For instance, in this study I employed a research design and methodology, as discussed above, that are well recognised and applied by other researchers in exploring school violence. Participants were encouraged to freely express their ideas, without the concern of losing believability, and were notified that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions that were asked. I used a tape recorder to carefully record all of the interviews in order to obtain truthful transcriptions and minimise interruptions. Shenton (2004) claims that this tactic is significant in promoting reliability as it aids in expressing the authentic situations that are being explored.

De Vos et al. (2014) also asserted that the researcher should ask if there is a match between participants' views and the researcher's reconstruction and representation of them. In line with this, participants were given sufficient time to read the transcriptions of the interviews and were able to check and verify their inputs. This further helped to enrich the credibility of my interpretations. Shenton (2004) stated that it is important for a researcher to allow the participants to confirm what they have said in order to ensure credibility, and this enables them to change anything they believe to be mistaken; this ensures that the study is effective and trustworthy (Shenton, 2004). In this study I ensured that the findings of the study reflected the experiences and thoughts of the participants. During the interviews I consistently shared my understanding with participants about what they were telling me, to ensure that we were on the same page. In that way, participants had the opportunity to clarify and correct me if they disagreed with any information. This enabled me to ensure trustworthiness in my interpretation of the acquired information.

4.6.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of one study can be applied in similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). In this study, I provided thorough descriptions of the steps followed and used the actual words of participants as much as possible, to allow the readers to relate cases of the situation defined in the research report with those that they have seen occurring in their own experience (Shenton, 2004). De Vos et al. (2014) pointed out that designing a study in which multiple cases, multiple informants or more than one data generation method are used can greatly strengthen the study's usefulness for other settings. A similar pattern was applied in this study, as it used three data generation methods.

4.6.3 Dependability

De Vos et al. (2014) indicated that this is where the researcher asks whether the research process is logical, well documented and audited. Dependability can be assured by providing a detailed analysis that allows the reader to evaluate the extent to which accurate research practices have been followed (Shenton, 2004). This study provides enough and broad information in the research design and methodology sections, which explicate its execution and data generation methods. Dependability refers to when the researcher can account for why there may be variations in the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It can also mean comparing this study to previous studies in the field and explaining key differences in the findings.

4.7 Ethical considerations

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Creswell (2013), research is ethical if it conforms to the standards of scientific enquiry. Ethics are described as a set of moral principles that offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct (Strydom, 2005). In conducting research, it is significant to take ethical principles into consideration in order to prevent problems that may arise during research and also to look after the rights and autonomy of the participants (Cohen et al., 2011). Ethics provide a researcher with a guideline to moral conduct and to prevent scientific misconduct. Ethical

considerations and guidelines directed this research. This study followed the guidelines for research with humans set by the Health Professions Council of South Africa and the UKZN Codes for Research.

The ethical issues considered in this study are the participants' rights, privacy, permission, confidentiality, informed consent and anonymity, and harm to the participants. In adherence to these principles, permission was obtained from the KZN DoE to conduct the study in public schools within their jurisdiction. Further permission was obtained from the schools from which the samples were drawn. In this regard, I wrote letters to the principals of the participating schools, who act as gate-keepers, to seek permission to conduct research in their schools. Principals of the participating schools were well informed about the study and its purpose. Participants were asked to take part voluntarily and were asked to offer written consent to participate in the study. The confidentiality of the information obtained was preserved and the findings were presented anonymously. The participants were not coerced to take part in the study and they were well informed about their right to withdraw their participation at any point in time should they wish to do so, without the fear of being penalised. At every stage in the research process I ensured that the participants were not criticised, and I did not intend to cause harm to them in any way. They were not deceived or misled by any means, and all information was laid out clearly for them. The research findings were reported correctly. A high standard of ethics was maintained throughout the study.

Researchers are obliged to ensure that they have necessary skills to conduct research in an ethically acceptable manner (Strydom, 2005). The current researcher is considered to have adequate skills and competency to conduct scientific studies, having a postgraduate knowledge base in psychology, and is therefore familiar with the concepts and theories in the discipline. Recognition of the boundaries of the researcher's experience is acknowledged, and the researcher thus did not venture further than these qualifications allowed. Also, the supervisor of the current research has enough research expertise to ensure that the researcher undertook ethically sound research.

4.8 Limitations of the study

This study has some limitations. Some are inherent to the design of the study, and others are independent of this. The present study may be limited in terms of the generalisability of the findings due to the sample that was included. The sample was very small and consisted of six participants. Qualitative research methods can use a small sample of the population being investigated. Confidence in the results could be strengthened by increasing the sample size and gathering information from teachers who are representative of the entire province. The researcher wished to spread the sample across as many South African schools as possible, but because of the time and costs involved the research had to concentrate on teachers from the selected schools around Pinetown District.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter began with an explication of the paradigm upon which the study is based. The design of the research and the methodology used were elaborated upon. The discussion centred on the qualitative research design and non-probability sampling strategies for selecting participants. The chapter further furnished and discussed the target population, the sampling method, and data generation and analysis techniques. An outline of procedures to address the trustworthiness and quality of the study was given. The foreseen limitations of the study and ethical practices that were considered in conducting the study were also discussed.

The next chapter reports information on the data presentation, data analysis and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of the study is to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour, to explore why teachers experience learners' violence in the way that they do, and to understand the reasons behind learners' violent behaviour in high schools in KZN. This study was exploratory in nature as it sought to gain new insight into the teachers' experiences of violence perpetrated by learners against them. The study adopted a qualitative research approach guided by bioecological systems and transactional analysis theories. The previous chapter presented a discussion on the research methodology, research design, data generation methods, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations in undertaking the study. This chapter presented the data, with analysis and discussion of the data generated through in-depth interviews, a focus group and narratives.

The major data generation techniques were in-depth individual interviews, while a focus group and narrative analysis provided supplementary data. Content analysis was used to analyse data in accordance with the schemata explained by Berg (2007). The data are presented sequentially in accordance with the research questions of the study. The findings are presented and discussed concurrently. For each research question, data from interviews, a focus group and narratives were discussed and concluded, followed by discussion of the data for the next research question. In the discussion, the available literature is drawn upon and reference is made to it in order to validate the data and illustrate if there is relationship between the existing literature and the current findings.

The topic of the study was sensitive in nature, as it sought to explore teachers' lived experiences of violence. Nevertheless, given my sincere respect, empathic understanding and high level of positive regard for the people interviewed, they were able to share their experiences. We managed to establish mutual trust and rapport, which enhanced their free expression of what they are going through. It appeared that some of the participants regarded the interviews as their opportunity to vent their painful experiences. Even though some of the narrated incidents were painful for the participants, they believed that such things need to be exposed and dealt with accordingly. Moreover, they were assured about the availability of a

psychologist or registered counsellor to consult them should they felt the need to talk to someone. Interviews were conducted via Zoom due to the restrictions of the national lockdown, and each lasted between 45–60 minutes. The following section presents the biographical data of the participants and discussion thereof.

5.2 Biographical characteristics of participants

Table 5.1 provides background information on the participants who took part in in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and narratives. The data were generated from three different settings, namely suburban, township and rural areas as the research sites of the study. As indicated in Chapter Four, participants were given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity, and were referred to as Teacher A, B, C, D, E and F.

Table 5.1: Biographical characteristics of participants

Participant	Context	Gender	Age range (yrs)	Level of education	Teaching experience (yrs)
Teacher A	Suburb	Female	40-45	B. Ed degree	17
Teacher B	Township	Female	45-50	B. Ed degree	21
Teacher C	Suburb	Female	30-35	Honours degree	16
Teacher D	Township	Male	25-30	BA & PGCE	6
Teacher E	Rural area	Male	35-40	B. Psych & PGCE	8
Teacher F	Rural area	Male	35-40	Master's degree	9

The gender distribution was equal, with three male teachers and three female teachers participating in the study. The age distribution of the respondents ranged between 25 years and 50 years, with significant variation in duration of teaching experience, which ranged from 6 to 21 years. Teachers' qualifications ranged from a bachelor's degree to master's degree, with the majority holding a bachelor's degree.

The sample was drawn from the secondary schools in Pinetown District. This was purposive, as I realised that secondary schools generally tend to be affected more by incidents of ill-discipline and violence than primary schools. The sample was drawn from secondary schools

in three different contexts, as mentioned previously. The sample was gender representative as males and females may have different experiences and perception of learners' violent behaviour in schools. A description of the different contexts mentioned above follows.

Rural area: Schools in rural areas face serious challenges that are unique from those of most schools in other contexts. Most importantly, they lack infrastructure such as physical space, running water, electricity, proper toilet facilities, and even textbooks (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). A lack of parental interest in children's education, a lack of resources, insufficient funding from the state, under-qualified teachers, and multi-grade teaching are some of the barriers to effective teaching. Also, in most rural schools the teacher-learner ratio is much higher than in urban schools. According to Inan (2014), these challenges can be attributed to numerous sources within school structures and the external environment, including local communities and education authorities. Highly qualified and good teachers leave rural settings and prefer teaching in urban areas (Inan, 2014). The problems that schools in rural areas have predispose these schools to behavioural problems among learners and frustration among teachers.

Urban area: The majority of schools in urban areas are well established. As opposed to schools in rural and township areas, they are privileged in terms of buildings (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). The number of classrooms is adequate and the schools are adequately staffed. Furthermore, the schools have electricity and a piped water supply. They are fully furnished and have all of the necessary supporting learning materials, such as computers, books and other study materials. In these areas the surrounding community comprises upper-middle-class families of all races, but predominantly white and Indian families (Lam, Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010). The infrastructure and community environments surrounding these schools seem to be conducive and harmonious for both teachers and learners.

Township: Township schools are located on the outskirts of urban areas, where large populations settle on small portions of land (Inan, 2014). Classes are overcrowded, and teachers strive to engage all learners rather than providing individual attention to those who do not understand the subject matter. There is a large imbalance in the learner-teacher ratio, which contributes significantly to educational shortcomings. Most township schools do not have access to computers. Mampane and Bouwer (2011) argued that teachers working in such schools have higher levels of stress, making them more susceptible to bullying issues. The surrounding community is a mixture of middle- and working-class people. Township life is

mostly associated with poverty, crime and violence, easy accessibility to drugs, high unemployment of parents, and poor resources; Lam et al. (2010) have equated it to a war zone. Violence in schools relates to violence at home, and it is used by learners as an acceptable way of resolving conflicts (Lam et al., 2010).

Research indicates that the context in which a school is located is important when doing research on school violence (McMahon & Martinez, 2014; Bounds & Jenkins, 2018). McMahon and Martinez's (2014) study revealed differences in teacher victimisation rates in different contexts; in particular, teachers teaching in rural and suburban areas were less likely to report sexual harassment, property offences, and physical attacks than teachers working in urban-based schools. Bounds and Jenkins (2018) argued that it is important to consider the setting/demographic area of the school when researching teacher-directed violence, because previous studies suggest that learner-on-learner violence varies among these settings. This suggests that even the nature of violence targeted against teachers may differ (Bounds & Jenkins, 2018). In their study examining differences in teacher-directed violence experiences among 117 rural, township and urban teachers in the Midwest of the USA, Bounds and Jenkins (2018) revealed that teachers in township schools experienced a high level of teacher-directed-violence, followed by teachers in rural areas and then urban areas. However, with regard to work stress in general, teachers from urban areas had the highest level of work stress, followed by township teachers and then teachers from rural settings (Bounds & Jenkins, 2018).

Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory describes the school environment as a microsystem where learners spend most of their time interacting with teachers and their peers in a reciprocal manner to help construct this microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Secondary school learners are aware of the school as a system and, depending on the situation, might be motivated to conform to its demands or to challenge them. Within this system, the main difference among these schools is the environment and school culture. Factors contributing to these differences are the size of the school, infrastructure and resources in the school, the diversity of the learners and staff population, the extent of parental involvement, and the disciplinary policy measures. From a bioecological systems perspective, behaviour does not occur in a vacuum, but learners' violent behaviour is influenced by the interpersonal, social, cultural and physical environment (Bender & Emslie, 2010). All of these factors are influential in determining the nature of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers.

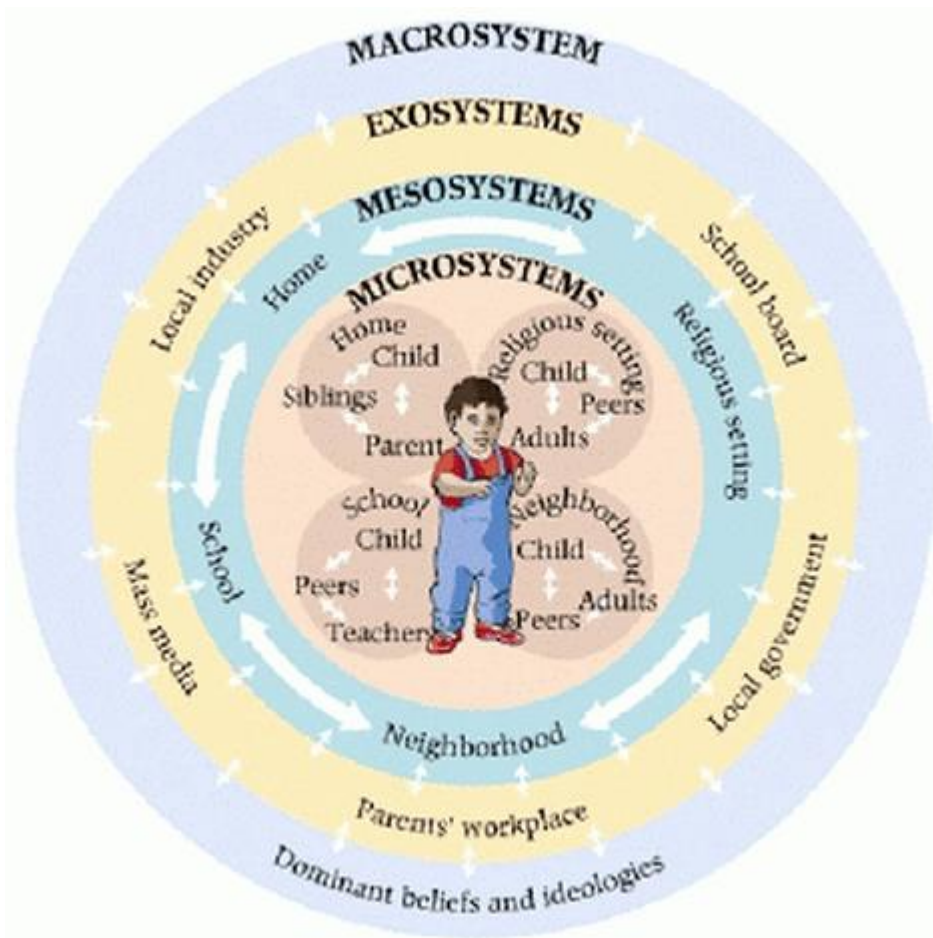


Figure 5.1: Representation of the child’s interaction with subsystems, based on the bioecological perspective as discussed in Chapter Four.

Bronfenbrenner proposed that many of these interactions surrounding the child are bi-directional; how children react to people in their microsystem will also affect how these people treat children in return. The factors impacting on the child’s development in any demographic context of a school influence their behaviour. With regard to learner violence, the nature of violence that learners perpetrate against teachers will also reflect the way they are socialised in their environments (Bender & Emslie, 2010).

The level of education and experience of a teacher are important elements in managing violence perpetrated by learners against teachers in schools. Teachers’ higher level of education is positively associated with learners’ achievement. Dake et al. (2003) pointed out that as teachers upgrade their knowledge through studying, their learners not only gain higher scores on the standardised tests, but are also likely to do better in other areas of success, such as school attendance and behavioural presentation. More educated teachers have a way of supporting greater student learning for their colleagues as well as for learners (Dake et al.,

2003). Yavuzer and Gundogdu (2012) conducted a study of teachers' responsibilities in preventing violence among school children in Turkey. The findings of this study indicated that teachers who participated in a violence prevention training programme reported higher levels of efficacy than those who did not receive training. The study demonstrated a significant relationship between teaching experience and teachers' self-efficacy in dealing with violence. Teachers with more teaching experience have more strength to manage violent incidents than those with less experience. Teachers with less experience feel threatened and are less confident in dealing with violent events (Yavuzer & Gundogdu, 2012). Other factors at school, as alluded to by Yavuzer and Gundogdu (2012), are teacher characteristics such as lack of subject knowledge and communication skills, aggressive leadership style, unfair practices, inability to manage student behaviour, and inability to support student development. Teachers with a high level of education and who are more experienced possess adequate skills that enable them to prevent violence and act as a proactive factor. They can contribute positively in creating a school atmosphere that does not include violence and that motivates learners to learn and become role models (Yavuzer & Gundogdu, 2012).

A study by Cetin et al. (2020) revealed that teachers with less experience were more likely to be victimised by learners than the well experienced teachers. However, a study conducted by Stevens, Eagle and Matzopoulos (2014) showed that teachers holding postgraduate degrees were more exposed to psychological violence perpetrated by learners than teachers with bachelor's degrees.

Having looked at the biographical data of the teacher respondents and the contextual framework of the nature of the schools from which the sample was drawn, the next section presents and discusses the findings of the study as they relate to the research questions.

5.3 Results and discussion

The themes which emerged from the study are presented and discussed sequentially in accordance with the research questions of the study. Other themes that are not related to the research questions were included because of their significance to the body of knowledge. Figure 5.2 presents the themes which emerged from the results of the study:

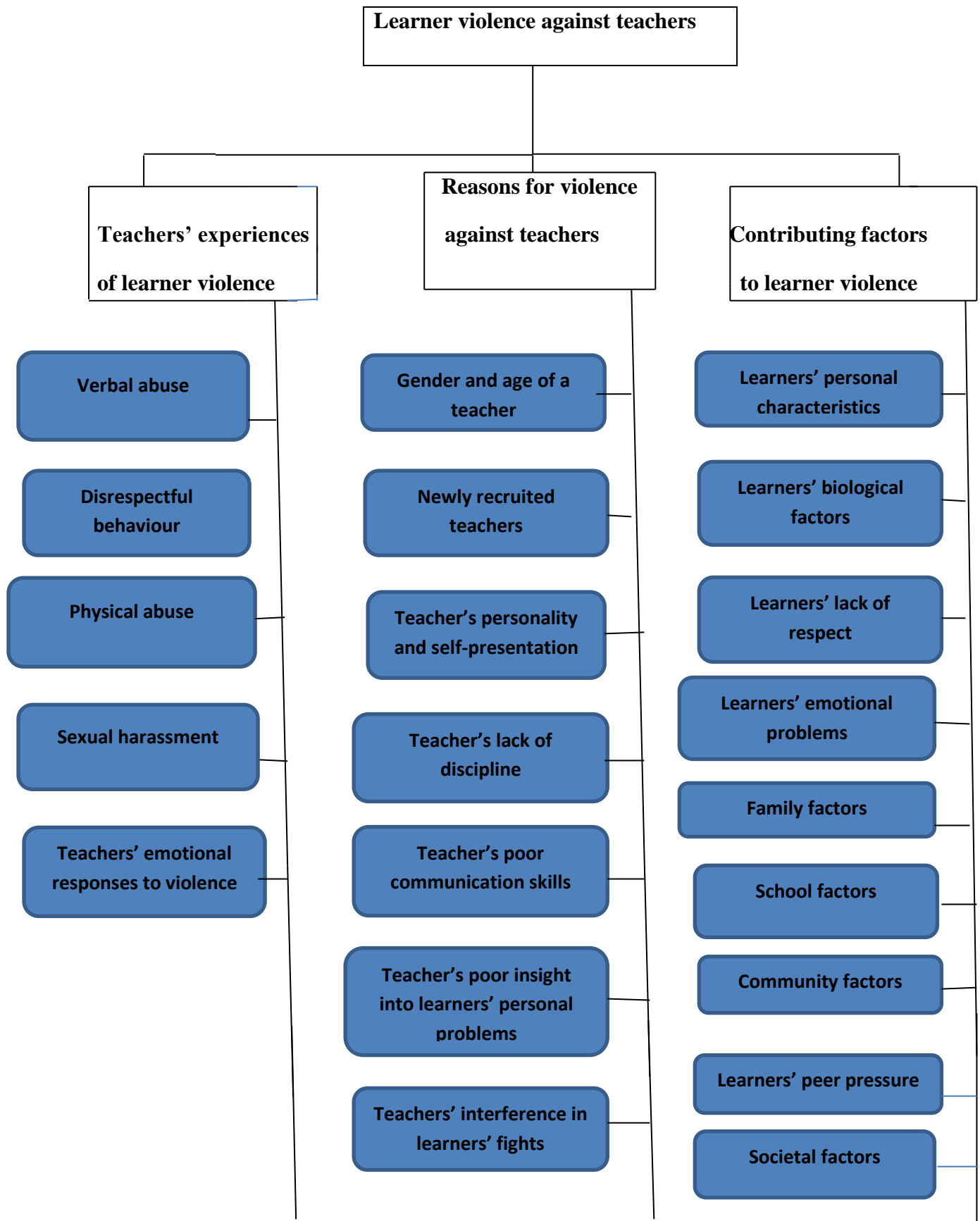


Figure 5.2: Themes that emerged from a study of teachers' experiences of learners' violent behaviour.

5.3.1 Teachers' experiences of learners' violent behaviour

The first objective of the study was to explore teachers' experiences of learners' violent behaviour in secondary schools of KZN. The participants mentioned various incidents of violence perpetrated against them by learners, both where they were victims themselves and that were experienced by their colleagues. They expressed the nature of the violence they experience and the feelings or emotional responses attached to these incidents of violence. Teachers experience learner violence in the form of physical, attitudinal and verbal abuse. These result in various emotional responses, namely shock, fear, worry, confusion, feeling insecure, demotivation, hopelessness and helplessness.

5.3.1.1 Teachers' experiences of the nature of learners' violence

It is evident from the teachers' responses that the schools in KZN experience a serious problem of learner violence. Teachers talked about their experiences of learners' violent behaviour as disruptive, demeaning and impacting negatively on their psychological wellbeing. The violence perpetrated against teachers appeared to range from mild to severe. More than half of the participants have a history of violence perpetrated by learners against them. It also emerged that even those that did not have a personal experience of violence have observed it happening in their schools. The study finding that violence is instigated by learners against teachers is consistent with the literature. The American Psychological Association Task Force on Violence Directed Against Teachers (2011) conducted a national anonymous web-based survey that examined violence perpetrated against teachers. From their total sample, the findings revealed that 80% of teachers reported that they had been victimised at least once or twice in the current or previous year, and of those who had a history of experiencing violence, 94% were victimised by students. The following are some of the incidents of violent behaviour displayed by learners towards teachers.

5.3.1.1.1 Learners' verbal abuse of teachers

The study established that verbal abuse is the most common form of violence that teachers experience. Teachers in this study attested that acts of verbal abuse against them are common. It is pervasive in the classroom context where teachers mostly interact with learners. Verbal

abuse is displayed in different forms, such as threats and insults towards teachers, teachers being called derogatory words and exposed to sexually harassing words. These extracts provide evidence of this kind of abuse towards teachers.

“He just came straight to me, pointed a finger to my forehead, and he said I will show you who I am if you continue fiddling with my life, just mind your own business.”
(Teacher A)

The extract from Teacher A indicates that taking disciplinary measures against the learner sometimes provokes the learner to behave in a violent manner. This participant reported that she was disciplining a boy who came to class late. The way this learner behaved shows that he had emotional problems; these were provoked by the teacher, and he eventually had the outburst. Teacher A is teaching in one of the suburb schools in Pinetown. Her experience of this kind of attitudinal and verbal attacks from a learner is evidence that school violence occurs in all contexts, irrespective of the resources and support that the learners receive from the environment.

“Some time in 2019, a group of learners conducted a campaign against me. They were posing threats against me, my car, my family and they were harassing me. My name was all over the school walls with demeaning words. I was insulted; called whore and so on and so forth.” (Teacher B)

Teacher B is a township teacher with the most severe experience among the participants in the study. The behaviour of the learners towards this teacher indicates that the environment where these learners live allows them to group together and fight against a teacher. Lam et al. (2010) indicated that townships are like war zone areas compared to other contexts. The environment is mostly associated with crime and violence, and poor parental involvement in learners' lives (Lam et al., 2010). In township areas, in most cases problems are resolved by violence; people easily group themselves and burn tyres in the streets whenever they want something or when they are complaining about something they do not want in the community. Thus, learners copy these tendencies and try to resolve their problems in schools in a similar way to their elders. This is in line with the bioecological systems theory, regarding its basic proposition that behaviour does not occur in a vacuum, but learners' violent behaviour is influenced by the interpersonal, social, cultural and physical environment surrounding the learner (Bender & Emslie, 2010).

The sentiments from Teacher A and Teacher B provide evidence that teachers live under threat from their learners. Teachers are threatened for intervening and disciplining unacceptable behaviour displayed by learners. This makes the teachers cautious of what they do, as the threats of being beaten up are serious. It is also evident that sometimes violence against teachers involves a group of learners threatening an individual teacher. The behaviour of a learner towards Teacher A suggests a communication breakdown, as explicated by transactional analysis theory (Berne, 1957). Communication between individuals sits at the core of transactional analysis that holds the assumption that once there is crossing of transactions between individuals, the conversation becomes hostile (Berne, 1957). The kind of behaviour displayed shows that learners have lost the understanding of the authority that teachers hold in schools.

Data from in-depth individual interviews and the focus group with teachers indicated that teachers are mostly insulted by learners. It is not uncommon that teachers are called derogatory words by learners, as more than half of the participants mentioned that they were insulted or they know of colleagues with a history of verbal abuse. This is demonstrated in the following extracts:

“You know what. It’s not only me who has experienced traumatic events from school recently. One of my colleagues was insulted by a boy in her Grade 9 class. The boy just uttered derogatory words [fuck you].” (Teacher A)

“In 2013 I had another case where a boy insulted me.” (Teacher B)

The sentiments from Teacher A and Teacher B indicate that verbal abuse of teachers by learners occurs in different contexts, as the former teaches in a school situated in an urban area and the latter in a township-based school. It is revealed that teachers experience verbal attacks by learners in both these contexts, particularly in the form of insults. The citation from Teacher A shows the seriousness and intensity of verbal abuse in her school. Apart from her own experience of verbal abuse, she reported another teacher who has a history of being called derogatory words by a learner in her school.

Further to these experiences of teachers in urban areas, Teacher C alluded that she had never experienced physical assaults in her 16 years of experience as a teacher. She attested that her experience of learner abuse took the form of verbal attacks and a negative attitude:

“I have never been hit or physically abused, but my personal experience is that of verbal attacks and negative attitude.” (Teacher C)

It has come to light that some parents support learners when they display unacceptable behaviour towards teachers in schools. Teacher D said the following in this regard:

“Apparently, the information provided to the MEC was that the principal is insensitive and discriminates against children on the basis of their financial status.”
(Teacher D)

The learners’ code of conduct for the school, as extracted from the narratives of Teacher D, stipulates that breaching the rule of properly wearing school uniform may lead to the suspension of a learner from the school. However, a school principal from a school neighbouring that of Teacher D was in trouble because of sending a boy home who came to school without wearing the proper school uniform. When the learner arrived home, his mother laid a complaint to the Minister of Education instead of supporting the principal for reprimanding the learner for not complying with the school rules. This learner’s parent recruited other community members and marched against the principal. The behaviour of the parents in this incident is in line with Inan’s (2014) assertion that problems in townships are sometimes resolved by applying violent behaviour, rather than engaging on the matter.

The learners also indirectly use verbally harassing insults against the teachers by whistling at or complimenting female teachers. In doing so, the teachers feel offended. Teacher A had the following to say:

“These young boys at their adolescent stage tend to try their luck. They will whistle at a female teacher, say all these words that are admiring the beauty of a teacher, yet are offensive.” (Teacher A)

It is clear from the findings that teachers experience verbal abuse as the most common form of violence perpetrated by learners. These findings concur with empirical data that learners use abusive language targeting teachers. A national study by Burton and Leoschut (2013) revealed that violence perpetrated by learners against teachers occurred in different forms and varies; the findings suggested that 52.1% of teachers were victims of verbal violence, 12.4% of physical violence and 33.3% of sexual violence. The current study established that insulting teachers was the most common form of verbal violence in the schools. Other forms were learners humiliating teachers, lying to teachers and whistling at them. These findings

were consistent with the results of previous studies (Singh & Steyn, 2014; Zengeya, 2016), which showed that among different forms of violence against teachers, verbal abuse is prominent. Further to this, Garrett (2014) argued that violence perpetrated against teachers may involve, among other forms of direct or indirect behaviour, verbal abuse. The non-physical violence is manifested in the form of verbal abuse such as the use of sexually inappropriate language, racial remarks, negative comments about a teacher's personal appearance, and threats of violence (Garrett, 2014). Singh and Steyn (2014) also revealed that teachers are mostly victimised in the form of verbal and physical abuse. The study showed evidence of backchatting between the teacher and the learner, which affected the whole class lesson (Singh & Steyn, 2014). Backchatting between teachers and learners suggests learners being disrespectful towards adults.

A study by Lokmic et al. (2013) showed that verbal violence is the most common form of violence instigated by learners towards teachers. It is defined as intentional use of inappropriate and unpleasant words to hurt another person. This study showed that learners and sometimes their parents use this to express their dissatisfaction with teachers' conduct.

5.3.1.1.2 Learners' disrespectful behaviour towards teachers

Garrett (2014) argued that violence against teachers may also be nonverbal, where the learners make offensive gestures or noises, stare at or giggle about a teacher, use intimidating facial expressions, throw objects towards a teacher or steal teachers' belongings, and display disrespectful behaviour towards a teacher (Garrett, 2014). One of the key areas of focus of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is to ensure that everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. This implies that the dignity of both teachers and learners needs to be protected by both teachers and learners. However, the findings of this study indicate that despite the laws set by the government and the schools' code of conduct, teachers experience disrespectful behaviour from the learners. In this regard, the teachers expressed their views as follows:

“However, there are those who stare you down, walk out of class when they feel like it, and disrespect you without any consequence from the front office.” (Teacher A)

“Besides this incident, there are incidences whereby learners get out of the class irrespective of the presence of a teacher. So, sometimes they are disrespectful to some of us but they don’t do this to all teachers.” (Teacher E)

The school code of conduct extracted from Teacher F’s narratives indicates that learners are required to refrain from behaviours that are disrespectful towards teachers or undermining of the authority figures. The school’s code of conduct strictly states that no learner shall be insolent to any staff member. However, learners are found guilty of disrespectful behaviour towards teachers. Excerpts from Teacher A and Teacher E give evidence that disrespectful behaviour occurs in different contexts, including in urban and rural settings. It is worth noting that learner violence also occurs in the urban areas, irrespective of the resources they have and the level of parental involvement in children’s lives (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). However, Maharaj (2011) pointed out that it is not always the case that parents from urban areas give their full support to their children. Some of the parents in urban areas have businesses which require a lot of their time to be run efficiently. They leave their children in the hands of carers or nannies. Thus, even though they provide financial support, they do not give parental supervision to their children (Maharaj, 2011). Given the current findings and the reviewed literature, it appears that the family structure is important in socialising a child and how they should behave towards teachers at school. According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), home and schools are systems that are interrelated, where the problem from one setting will ultimately affect another. In this study the problem of the lack of teaching good behaviour at home are transferred to the schools.

It further emerged that learners from urban areas have a tendency to undermine their teachers on the basis of their financial status. This is demonstrated by the following extract:

“Surprisingly, one learner stood up and said to me ‘You can’t tell me about the importance of education while you are still driving a Hyundai’.” (Teacher C)

The same participant showed that she has experienced numerous incidents where the learners displayed negative attitudes and disrespectful behaviour towards her. The following verbal quote illustrates the above:

“There are numerous incidents where I find myself in a situation whereby a learner looks down on me. And their facial expression, you can tell that she is looking at this nonsense, filthy or useless thing.” (Teacher C)

It transpired from participant Teacher C that some learners have a negative attitude towards the education profession. They have an understanding that teachers are not well paid, and they tend to compare teachers' lifestyles with their parents'. As a result of this, they undermine teachers and feel that they (the learners) are superior to them. Even though a higher level of parental support has been linked with a lower level of violent behaviour in children (Maharaj, 2011; McGaha-Garnett, 2013), the participants in the current study showed that violence occurred across the three different settings. It emerged that even the support that the learners receive from their parents can be a source of the aggression that they exhibit towards other people.

The current study results further demonstrated that learners showed disrespectful behaviour towards teachers. It is apparent that the nature of disrespectful behaviour differs from one demographic area to another. As much as certain behaviour occurs across the three different settings, learners from rural areas and townships are dominantly displaying physical violence, whereas learners from urban areas show attitudinal and verbal abuse types of violence towards teachers. The study findings of variation in the nature of violent behaviour exhibited by learners is consistent with the integrated theoretical model that guides this study, which suggests that the child's characteristics and the context in which they live influence and interact with one another over time to shape their behaviour (Overstreet & Mazza, 2003; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bender & Emslie, 2010; Espelage, 2014; Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).

It transpired from this study that teachers in all three contexts are disrespected by learners. Some learners move in and out of the classroom irrespective of the presence of the teacher, others backchat teachers, point fingers at the teachers, swear at them and even throw papers at them. This finding is consistent with previous research which revealed that some learners ignore a teacher or are constantly disruptive in class (Maunder, 2010), and they refuse to obey instructions or humiliate the teacher in front of colleagues or other learners (Parzefall & Salin, 2010). According to Garrett (2014), these undesired and painful experiences that teachers endure are the result of an imbalance in the interaction between them and their learners, and this is consistent with the belief held by the transactional analysis theory that in order for teachers and learners to have a good experience in their teaching and learning activities, they need to complement each other (Keshavazi et al., 2016).

The findings of this study that teacher participants experienced disrespectful behaviour the learners perpetrated towards them is consistent with research associated with the integrated

bioecological-transactional model that is based on the assumption that individual, family, peer, and community issues may manifest in aggressive behaviour in the classroom context (Keating, 2004; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Ndibalema, 2013). Learners carry out their frustrations and project them onto the teachers.

5.3.1.1.3 Learners' physical abuse of teachers

It emerged from in-depth interviews and the focus group with the study sample that learners are physically violent towards teachers. The current study revealed that physical violence took the form of beating up, pointing fingers at teachers, and throwing papers at them. This is shown by the following excerpts:

“So this boy brought his friends to fight against the teacher. They hit him severely such that he went to the hospital.” (Teacher F)

“One of my colleagues was hit by one of the learners with a paper at his back while writing on the chalkboard.” (Teacher E)

The participants do not have personal experiences of being beaten up by learners, but they witnessed this happening to colleagues. Both Teacher E and Teacher F teach in a rural setting. These findings illustrate that learners in rural areas engage in physical assaults against teachers. Teacher F reported the scenario of a colleague who was hit by boys as a result of fights over a girlfriend. It appears that learners in this area have anger management problems and can do as they please. One learner had a fight with a teacher, and he invited his friends to join in and they did so without fear of the consequences of their behaviour. Teacher E also witnessed a colleague being hit by a learner while he was writing on the chalkboard. This is pure disrespectful behaviour by a learner towards a teacher. Behaviour of this nature suggests that learners in this school do not respect their teachers as authority figures.

Apart from violence perpetrated by learners against teachers, it was found that learners engaged in fights with each other. The participants of this study indicated that even if violence is not instigated against them, they are ultimately involved as teachers. Violence among learners ends up being reported to teachers, and they are expected to mediate and conduct disciplinary proceedings. Learners are found to be carrying dangerous weapons at

school, and they also fight with stones, putting teachers' and their own lives at risk. This was shown by the extracts below:

“Learners carry knives and fight with stones. When there are wars between two groups, they throw stones onto each other. In such instances, male teachers are expected to mediate. By doing so, we are putting our lives at risk because we might get injured.” (Teacher E)

“Learners are fighting each other, carrying knives and other weapons. It is very scary. When they are fighting, you can't intervene because you may appear as if you are taking sides.” (Teacher D)

Responses showed that threats of violence are prevalent in schools, particularly in townships and rural settings. It is worth noting that this form of violence are reported in schools despite the government's rules and school polices to promote a culture of safety within schools, where learning processes should occur freely without the fear of violence or psychological harm to the school community members. Further to the threats posed to the teachers, the findings of this study suggest that some learners not only threaten teachers with physical violence, but they actually applied physical violence, as indicated by Teacher E and Teacher F. In these instances, it appears that learners were intentionally instigating violence against teachers, and they did not intend to hide themselves. It is also clear that weapons are easily accessible to learners in their community context outside the school. The micro-systemic level of the bioecological systems theory alludes to the importance of community values and their ideologies in shaping the behaviour of learners (Sameroff, 2009). In this study, teachers were blaming the communities for initiating violence and supporting learners when they had started wars between two villages. It appears that they learn violence from that which is perpetrated in their families and communities, and bring it into the schools. It is also revealed that some learners fight each other with stones and other weapons. However, it is appalling that even if they are fighting against each other, ultimately the teachers are expected to intervene. The respondent teachers expressed concerns about interfering in learners' fights, because it puts their lives in jeopardy.

5.3.1.1.4 Learners' sexual harassment of teachers

Sexual harassment is one of the serious concerns that teachers participants highlighted during in-depth interviews and the focus group. Such harassment included whistling at a teacher, asking for sex, unwelcomed and offensive words, seducing and making sexual gestures. Talking about sexual harassment initiated by learners against teachers, the teachers had the following to say:

“They will whistle at a female teacher, say all these words that are admiring the beauty of a teacher, yet are offensive. Just imagine. They see young teachers as though they can sleep with [them].” (Teacher A)

“I was so shocked when one of the colleagues told us that she was beaten by a boy for rejecting his sexual advances.” (Teacher C)

Teacher C was attending a workshop, and when they were chatting as teachers, one of the teachers from a township area mentioned that she was once hit by a boy for refusing to have sex with him. To a large extent the sexual harassment mainly targets girls or females. This is attributable to cultural practices that consider sexually harassing words towards women as normal. Teacher A mentioned that boys whistle at female teachers and say offensive things to them.

In the literature, Burton and Leoschut (2013) complement the reality that girls are commonly victimised by males in the form of gender-based violence, such as rape, sexual exploitation, unwanted touching, and even trafficking for sexual exploitation. Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) also assert that sexual harassment of female learners by males is common in South African schools. The way in which boys and girls are socialised differently indirectly promotes gender-based violence. Nhambura (2019) posits that males are expected by societal norms to display toughness and aggressiveness, while females are expected to be passive and nurturing. This is even promoted by the laws of other countries and religion, which promotes inequality (Netshitangani, 2019). Notwithstanding, female teachers also experience violence perpetrated by male learners, as evident from the study findings.

One participant shared her personal experience of sexual harassment in the focus group discussion:

“One day I was sitting in my class during break time. There were no learners and I decided to do marking. I was going to go to the staff room when children came back from lunch. I just decided to sit there because sometimes we are overcrowded in our staff room and we [teachers] make noise. So one of those big boys in school came in and told me that I’m beautiful and he would be glad if I may spend a night with him. Nxa! I was shocked such that I didn’t respond; I just stood up and went to the staff room. In fact, I did not tell anyone. I felt so embarrassed. You know, I feared that if I report this, they would approach him.” (Teacher C)

It is interesting to discover that not only female teachers are victims of sexual harassment – male teachers are also victimised by girls. Participant Teacher D said the following in relation to sexual harassment targeted against male teachers:

“Some girls see you as a potential boyfriend. They will say things implying that they need you or behave in a manner that you can see that this person wants to lure you. Some girls wear short skirts and open legs while I am teaching.”

The findings of this study are consistent with the reviewed literature, in that teachers have had some experience of sexual harassment. Over one-third of the teachers reported a history of sexual harassment by a learner, another teacher, or an administrator while at school (Buck, 2006). However, the results of the current study revealed that both boys and girls initiate sexual behaviours towards teachers. To an extreme extent, boys approach female teachers and even physically harass them if they do not accept their sexual advances. It was found that male teachers are lured by girls for sexual activities. Girls use signs that show interest in engaging in sexual activities with male teachers, such as opening their legs while they are being taught in class. However, the reviewed literature did not show that male teachers are experiencing sexual harassment from learners. Most studies (Ngakane, 2010; Shaffer, & Kipp, 2010; Mncube & Harber, 2013) found that schoolgirls are the ones who are the victims of sexual assault by male teachers. Mncube and Harber (2013) alluded that girls face sexual harassment every day of their lives. They are threatened with sexual assault by other learners, raped by learners and teachers, and some are given higher marks in return for sex (Mncube & Harber, 2013).

The findings of this study differ from the reviewed literature in that there are no reported incidents of violence perpetrated against teachers on the basis of their sexual orientation. In contrast to De Wet’s (2010) and Mooij’s (2011) findings of gay and lesbian teachers’

experiences of violence instigated by learners, the current study did not show this. A male respondent teacher in the study by De Wet (2010) attested that he saw his name written on the walls of a community building, referring to him as being a homosexual. He was also called offensive names by learners in school (De Wet, 2010). Netshitangani (2019) also stated that school violence is perpetrated against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and transgender people, especially in countries where the existence of people outside the heterosexual norm is denied or criminalised.

Although the study did not intend to compare findings from different contexts, it is evident that different demographic areas influence learners in different ways. Also, teachers from urban, township and rural settings have different experiences of learner violence. Teachers from urban areas experience verbal and attitudinal abuse as the prominent forms of violence against them, whereas teachers from township and rural areas reported various forms of violence, including verbal abuse, physical violence, threats of violence and sexual assaults. Consistent with the literature, Bounds and Jenkins (2018) conducted a study on teacher-directed violence and stress to examine the differences in teacher-directed violence among rural, urban and township teachers in the Midwest of the USA. The results of their study indicated that teachers from township schools experienced the highest level of violence perpetrated against them, followed by teachers in rural schools, and then urban teachers.

5.3.1.2 Teachers' emotional responses to/experiences of violence

The incidents of violence perpetrated against teachers were found to be very serious, and have far-reaching and persistent consequences. The nature of violence towards teachers is experienced as both physical and psychological trauma. In extreme instances, teachers end up in hospital for medical attention. On top of the physical trauma, teachers go through various emotional problems that interfere with their personal, social and work endeavours. The acts of abuse, whether verbal or nonverbal, provoke anger in the victim, who often responds by fighting against the perpetrator. Subsequent to this, some teachers involved get injured and need medical attention. However, when they keep to themselves what is said by the perpetrator, they may suffer gross psychological effects, from which it is difficult to recover. Similarly, Daniel (2018) argued that whether it is perpetrated against teachers or not, school violence has negative effects on the teachers' wellbeing. Most of the participants of the

current study revealed that they react to violence with overwhelming negative responses. The analysed data indicate teachers' strong underlying feelings of trauma as a result of the violent behaviour of learners towards them. The following expressions are suggestive of traumatic experiences teachers go through as a result of learner abuse:

"I was so shocked, I couldn't do anything, I was scared that maybe he was carrying a knife or something. I was so lost, confused ... I can say." (Teacher A)

"I felt inferior. I think I was depressed. I was so emotional, even now if I think about it, yah, I feel I am not good enough." (Teacher C)

The experiences of teachers, as previously stated, trigger vast emotional responses such as anxiety, sadness and anger. Teacher A was attacked by a boy who came to class late and was asked where he was coming from. Thereafter he suddenly became aggressive and behaved violently against a teacher. It emerged that this teacher had never previously had a personal experience of violent behaviour directed towards her in her 17 years of teaching experience. Hence this came as a shock, and she could not respond to this learner's behaviour. Teacher C experienced a violent act in the form of a negative attitude, which resulted in anger. The posttraumatic stress after exposure to violence impairs teachers' ability to deliver in class and perform adequately. Similarly, in Van der Westhuizen and Maree's (2010) study, educators reported that they were fearful that the learners could assault them. These events also suggest that violent behaviour does take place in the urban areas.

It is evident that teachers feel that they are not supported by the relevant personnel when they are faced with violence in schools. Teacher B said the following in this regard:

"I feel scared and intimidated, and the worst part I feel like the system is against us."

This teacher feels unsupported and disempowered, and this concurs with the reviewed literature. Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that educators felt that they were not receiving enough support from the parents, community and relevant government authorities. As a result of this, they feel helpless to handle the situation on their own. This feeling can make them demotivated and lead to a lack of commitment in carrying out their educational activities. Burton and Leoschut (2013) further found that lack of support such as by government institutions to teachers discouraged teachers from executing their work. Mthimkhulu (2015) also revealed that due to the unsafe and hostile school environment, teachers had a strong desire to resign and leave the profession.

The study revealed that violence is not only targeted at teachers. In some instances, learners engage in fights with other groups of learners from a different village. These kinds of fights involve community members when they come to assist their children. It often happens that in rural areas people engage in fights between two villages. This form of violence, exhibited by the learners in Teacher E's school, seems to be deeply rooted in their communities. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory argues that community factors are influential in instigating violence. Children are not born violent, but they learn it through experience or observation of others in their microsystem (Wachs, 2015). Notably, even though the fights are among the learners, the teachers fear for their lives. Teacher E shared the following sentiments:

“When there are such wars, we don't feel safe at all in our houses. You never know what would happen at night. We would be scared for our lives.”

The findings further indicate that teachers experience negative feelings about teaching learners with violent behaviour. Teachers' feelings of degradation as a result of violence perpetrated against them by learners were prominent. They expressed their uncertainty and feelings of powerlessness in their working environment. These findings are consistent with the reviewed literature (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010), in that the participant in their study experienced violence as a harsh reality that had a negative effect on her functioning as an educator in many ways, including feeling emotional, negativity towards learners, poor motivation to help learners, and burnout. Further to the psychological sequelae of the nature of violence experienced by teachers, they feel discouraged, unhappy, hopeless, degraded and demotivated. These sentiments were evident from the following extracts:

“We don't feel safe in our schools. We are so powerless.” (Teacher A)

“I honestly felt so small, degraded ... Yah, that's it.” (Teacher C)

“I am certainly unhappy because of violence happening in schools, be it against teachers or learners, all is a problem that ends up to the hands of a teacher.”
(Teacher D)

“It's really painful and I feel so discouraged.” (Teacher C)

The results also showed that teachers find the education support system to be helpful and not protecting them. They have strong feelings of being failed by the school management and the

Department of Basic Education (DBE) at large. This perceived failure is specifically related to disciplinary actions against learners' punishable behaviours, and the enforcement of acceptable practices in the classroom and the greater school grounds. Teachers consider their disempowerment as being caused by the larger systemic issues affecting the microsystem level. Bronfenbrenner (1994) argues that the effects of the principles laid by the macrosystem have a significant influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. This indicates that the lack of communication among the systems could be the reason that the teachers feel unsupported. The following extracts reinforce the identified claims:

"The bad thing about this, you cannot report it. Nobody cares, go to the principal, no action follows. Go to the school management team, you will not get a clear response, even worse the Department of Education." (Teacher A)

"So as educators, we are helpless. We have no trust in the system. When you report, you just waste your time. It's really a waste of time." (Teacher F)

"Nobody listens to us, even our unions are not helping us in such cases." (Teacher A)

"I escalated the case to the circuit manager. I was told to remain at home while the matter was investigated, or he was going to look for another school where I could teach. Indeed I remained at home for about three months; however, there were no positive news until I went back to school." (Teacher B)

"We feel that we are not protected in our working environments, yet there are laws that are placed to protect us." (Teacher C)

"As teachers, I feel that we are not protected and our structures are not supporting us." (Teacher D)

"She reported the case. You know, to tell you. Nothing happened about the case." (Teacher F)

These views expressed were shared by teachers from all different contexts. As the teachers shared similar feelings and experiences about the lack of support from relevant stakeholders, particularly the DBE, it appears that teachers have a systemic problem that needs to be addressed by the government at a higher level. According to Bronfenbrenner (1956), the macrosystem layer comprises of cultural values, religion, customs and laws that, directly or indirectly, affect all other systems of the bioecological systems theory. These sentiments the

participants expressed in this study imply critical links between events in the macrosystem that theoretically impact the microsystem. Thus, in attempting to resolve this matter, there should be strengthened communication between teachers and the government institutions.

Teachers feel that they are not receiving enough support from the relevant stakeholders involved in the school support system, and feel helpless when faced with incidents of violence in schools. Such feelings can make them become demotivated and lose interest in performing their work duties. The traumatic events that teachers are experiencing in schools are dangerous in that they can cause individual distress and serious disruption in the workplace. Similar findings were found in Buck's (2006) study, where most of the teachers were feeling unsafe at work. It is apparent that on top of the experiences of teachers' assault by learners, they feel that the system is also against them. This finding in this study speaks to the macrosystem of bioecological systems theory, which states that the effects of the principles laid down by the macrosystem have a significant influence throughout the interactions of all of the other layers (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The lack of support of teachers by the government authorities which the participants felt results in them experiencing gross psychological problems.

The participants in this study further indicated that the government does not seem to be bothered by the escalating events of violence in schools. The Department of Education only takes action when an incident is reported in the media. This was demonstrated by the comment below:

“Even when the government responds to violence occurring in schools, they only do that once there is a case reported through the media. They talk about it and visit that particular area where the incident happened. Thereafter, nothing happens.” (Teacher D)

It emerged from the literature reviewed that many teachers are suffering due to posttraumatic and depressive symptoms as a result of school-based violence (South African Council for Educators [SACE], 2011). Thus, there is a need to provide teachers with emotional and counselling services to deal with work stressors. It is important for both the teachers and the education management to know their rights and responsibilities (SACE, 2011). It appears that the government authorities have long been aware of the challenges experienced by teachers in schools; however, the teachers are still experiencing violence perpetrated by learners against them. Moreover, they still do not receive as much support as they deserve. The expression by

Teacher D gives the impression that the education authorities do not care for the safety of their subordinates, but are only concerned with maintaining a good image of the department to the public. In a study by Bester and Du Plessis (2010) it became evident that educators were feeling alone in the education system and unsupported by the DoE as well as school management. What transpired in the study is a construction of teachers as suffering and disabled victims of violence within an unsupported system (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010). A similar view was expressed in this study:

“I think the government responds to incidents that have a potential of ruining their reputation. Otherwise, they don’t care. But if the case concerns a teacher, they take time to respond or they don’t take it at all.” (Teacher F)

These findings demonstrate the vulnerabilities of teachers in South African schools as well as the problem of reporting learner violence, where they are not receiving the support they need. Duma (2013) argued that most schools in South Africa are chaotic and challenging, placing a great deal of pressure on teachers. Teachers are torn between executing their main work duties of teaching and the other roles they are expected to perform. They spend time preparing for the class lessons and deliver the lessons while they are suffering inside.

School violence affects teachers in many diverse ways, even if the act of violence is not intended to cause harm to them. Some participants mentioned that teachers experience challenges and they find it difficult to intervene in violence among learners because they are scared of what these learners could do to them. They feel that they can be viewed as taking sides and can be targeted too. Male teachers are expected to address violence among learners, especially in incidents of fights among groups. The following participant’s extract demonstrates this:

“When they are fighting, you can’t intervene because you may appear as if you are taking sides. Then what is going to happen about you.” (Teacher D)

Despite the gross emotional problems teachers are succumbing to due to learners’ violent acts instigated against them, they respond differently regarding teaching as a profession and their attitudes going forward. Some teachers expressed that they are no longer interested in teaching and they do not like their jobs anymore, whereas others still consider teaching to be their calling and believe in their role in improving children’s lives. The following extracts illustrate the different views of education as a profession:

“If I look at the future of education in South Africa, I don’t see young stars choosing a career in teaching. The system is very discouraging. The country will lose important teachers. Those who will pursue a teaching course will definitely do so just because of desperation, not with their internal will. I used to be passionate about teaching, but now I’m losing it.” (Teacher A)

“I love teaching and I chose this career, it was not a mistake. But now I see I can resign, not because of my salary but because I don’t feel safe anymore.” (Teacher C)

“I have come to the realisation that education is a risky profession. It is not safe in our schools. Look at this, we have problems now as the issue of punishing bad behaviour is not clear. How much more in future? It means you will really have to like the profession if you pursue a course in education.” (Teacher D)

“If I were to advise people on career choices, I would advise them to obtain a qualification in other fields because being a teacher is a hell.” (Teacher D)

What transpired from the above extracts is that negative learner behaviour towards teachers occurs in all three contexts – urban, rural and township. Teachers share similar feelings about education as a profession. The findings imply that there is a lack of focus on the impact of learner violence on teachers and how they cope with the situation. These findings concur with Du Plessis’s (2008) argument about the discrepancy that exists between teachers and the DoE. In Du Plessis’s (2008) study of secondary school educators’ experiences of school violence, teachers expressed a range of emotional responses to learners’ violent behaviour. These included feeling guilty as to whether they contributed to learners’ actions. Other outcomes included high levels of burnout, deciding to resign from the profession, as well as a possible decrease in the number of people being interested in becoming teachers (Du Plessis, 2008).

Although the majority of the participants in this study are no longer interested in teaching, there is a teacher from a rural area who still loves his job:

“Despite all these, I can say I love teaching and I am happy that I am a teacher. It’s just that there are things that need to be fixed. I mean important things like security measures in our schools.” (Teacher E)

Teacher E is a male teacher with 8 years of experience teaching in a rural setting. Although he reported a history of violent acts directed at his colleagues, he had never had a personal experience of violence perpetrated against him. This is probably the reason why he still has strength and hope in the profession. Teacher E also indicated that violence in his school is mostly perpetrated among learners. There are rare cases where a learner violates a teacher, and in those cases the learners are selective in terms of the targeted teachers. He indicated that as long as there would be actions taken to strengthen security in the school, he is willing to stay. Irrespective of the chaos and unruly behaviour of learners in schools, there are teachers with a high level of self-efficacy. In a study by Garrett (2014) teacher participants indicated that despite the emotional turmoil caused by their bad experiences in their working environments, they do not feel incompetent or perceive themselves as unsuccessful teachers.

It was also interesting to learn that some teachers endure the difficulties they are experiencing not because they like the teaching profession, but because they have nothing else to do. The following extract verifies this:

“But what must I do, I have to hang on. I need to survive and my children need me as well.” (Teacher C)

The expression by Teacher C speaks a lot about work dissatisfaction. It is evident from this view that there are teachers who are teaching not because they like what they do, but because of personal circumstances. Some of them had initially loved the profession, but lost interest along the way due to negative experiences. The persistency of this teacher to work despite the difficulties she is experiencing is due to a socio-economic problem, which is pronounced in the macrosystem of bioecological systems theory. The reality is that there are limited job opportunities in South Africa. As a result of the shortage of job opportunities in the country, people end up doing anything that will earn them a living. Teacher C highlighted that she is working because of the personal responsibilities she has, otherwise she would have diverted to something else.

The negative responses to violent behaviour perpetrated by learners against teachers take various forms of emotional and psychological responses that include, among others, shock, fearfulness, hopelessness, helplessness, being demotivated to perform their job, and feeling unsafe, intimidated, discouraged and degraded. As a result of their negative emotions related to the incidents of violence, teachers respond with negative attitudes towards learners, especially those who are perpetrating violence against them. The findings of this study are

consistent with the reviewed literature regarding the psychological shock that teachers are subjected to due to their personal experiences of violence or observation of violence perpetrated against their colleagues. Espelage et al. (2013) argued that many educators in townships experience feelings of anxiety about attending school, which results in poor motivation and difficulty executing their work duties. Furthermore, teachers take their frustrations home and project them onto their families (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Singh & Steyn, 2014). This in turn results in more stress, because their behaviour causes tension in their families. In addition, Govender (2015) found that educators were fearful that the learners could assault them if they intervened in their fights among themselves. They felt that they were disempowered to intervene because of their situation, which could put their lives at risk. Bester and Du Plessis (2010) also established that the physical and verbal attacks directed towards teachers by learners led to them feeling humiliated, helpless and disillusioned.

Apart from teachers' experiences of violence instigated by learners, they also feel that the system is against them and that it supports learners. This finding is consistent with the literature reviewed, as it is argued that teachers' frustrations are mostly as a result of the lack of support from school management and the fact that school policies let them down (Du Plessis, 2008; Govender, 2015). Hart (2017) revealed that teachers felt demotivated to pursue their work activities and started questioning their suitability for the career they had chosen. This study further revealed that because of the unsafe and hostile school environment, teachers had a strong desire to leave their profession (Hart, 2017). The inferences elicited from the findings of this study and the literature reviewed is that the distress that teachers are experiencing on a daily basis could be the reason why they might feel like quitting their jobs. Some participants in the current study mentioned that they cannot advise a child to pursue the teaching profession because of their experiences of violence perpetrated by learners against them. Nevertheless, the current study also revealed that some teachers still believe in the teaching profession and believe that they have a calling to change children's lives, despite the painful experiences they go through.

Even though the nature of the violence that teachers experience may vary from one context to another, they experience similar emotional reactions to the acts of violence. For instance, Teacher C from an urban area reported that she had an experience of attitudinal abuse, where a learner looked down on her due to the type of a car she was driving. This teacher felt inferior and demotivated to do her work. Similarly, Teacher D from a township reported that one of his colleagues was once beaten up by a group of learners, to the point of needing

hospitalisation. After this incident he lost confidence and felt worthless and even wished to resign. Such emotional reactions indicate that teachers endure emotional pain irrespective of the nature of violence imposed on them.

It can be concluded that violence perpetrated by learners against teachers is present and pervasive across the three different settings, although not equally frequent. As it has been alluded to, the most common type of violence instigated by learners against teachers is verbal abuse.

Having discussed the findings in relation to the first critical research question of the study, the discussion below will present, analyse and discuss themes that emerged regarding the second research question of the study.

5.3.2 Underlying reasons for teachers experiencing violence perpetrated by learners

Fiorilli et al. (2019) argued that in spite of the various initiatives put in place to address the serious issue of violence in schools, it remains a cause for concern. This gives the impression that strategies designed to prevent learner violence have proven not to be entirely helpful, leaving teachers at risk of some form of aggressive and violent behaviour by learners (Fiorilli et al., 2019). I have noted that most of the studies (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Singh & Steyn, 2013; Netshitangani, 2014; Govender, 2015; Zengeya, 2016; Fitzpatrick et al., 2016; Pileggi, 2017) focus on the factors contributing to violence, from the perspective of the perpetrator. However, there is little focus on the teachers' susceptibilities to learners' violence from the literature, be it the teachers' personal characteristics or their social circumstances. Through the narratives of the teachers in the current study, substantial disappointment has been noted among teachers who experience violence perpetrated by learners against them and who are observing learners' behavioural problems in school, resulting in them questioning their competence and suitability for the teaching profession. It is therefore necessary to seek a thorough understanding of the factors that make teachers vulnerable to learner violence. Therefore, this section discusses these factors as revealed by the participants of this study.

Some researchers (Kauppi & Porhola, 2012; Hoffmann, 2013; Garrett, 2014) understand experiences of violence instigated against teachers as a subjective judgement of the individual being victimised, whereas Hunter (2010) considers violence against teachers as an imbalance

of power, where a learner is in a position of greater power than the teacher and violence is intentionally inflicted against a teacher irrespective of the teacher's perceived superiority (Hunter, 2010). In line with the view of an individual's subjective experience of violence, Bester and Du Plessis (2010) revealed that the educator's perception plays a pivotal role in their experience of violence perpetrated against them by learners. The educator in Bester and Du Plessis's (2010) study indicated that she finds herself in crisis due to a perceived lack of support, and that she feels incapable of dealing with the challenges posed by teaching learners with violent behaviour.

Fiorilli et al. (2019) asserted that there are various factors that predispose teachers to violence being perpetrated against them by learners. Teachers experience violence because of numerous reasons, ranging from individual characteristics to contextual factors, including systemic support from the macrosystem level (Fiorilli et al., 2019). These include teacher characteristics, poor consequences for punishable behaviour, gender of a teacher, age and experience of a teacher, poor conflict management skills, background, and sexuality of a teacher (Fiorilli et al., 2019).

Various studies (Allen, 2010; Hohn, 2012; Maunder & Tattersall, 2014) have indicated that teachers' perceptions and experiences of violence perpetrated by learners against them have been directly or indirectly influenced by the school context, an ecosystem of multiple environments coming together to make meaning of the school climate. The study by Mooij (2011) also demonstrates that teachers attribute violence perpetrated against them as motivated by their physical appearance, behaviour, level of school achievement, age, religiosity, gender, sexuality and disciplinary procedures. The following sections present and discuss themes which emerged from the current study as determinants of teachers' vulnerability to learner violence.

5.3.2.1 Gender of a teacher

The data generated through in-depth interviews, a focus group and teacher narratives confirmed that the gender of the teacher plays a pivotal role in teachers enduring violence instigated by learners. Gender of a teacher has been found by the majority of the participants to be contributing significantly to teachers' susceptibility to learner violence. In relation to the gender of a teacher, participant teachers in this study had the following to say:

“One, being a woman on its own is dangerous in our community. These children take advantage of us because they know well that we don’t have strength to fight them. We are physically weak.” (Teacher A)

“In most cases female teachers are the ones who are the target. One would argue that it is because learners know that female teachers are not as physically strong as males.” (Teacher C)

The narratives provide evidence that female teachers are those mostly victimised by learners in schools. In South Africa, as a country, gender-based violence is a serious problem that attracts the attention of government stakeholders and society at large. The majority of the victims of violence are women. It is therefore not surprising to find from the sample of the current study that female teachers attribute some of their attacks by learners to their gender. Teacher A opined that being a woman puts teachers at risk to experience violence by learners. Both Teacher A and Teacher C acknowledge that women, by nature, are not as physically strong as men, and learners capitalise on their physique to abuse them. The reviewed literature showed varying opinions regarding gender as a variable in making teachers susceptible to learners’ violent behaviour in schools. Some studies indicate that female teachers are more victimised by learners, whereas others indicate that male teachers are at high risk of learner violence. Yet other studies show no difference in the rate of violence males and females experience.

A study conducted by Cetin et al. (2020) found that female teachers were more exposed to psychological violence than male teachers. The study also showed that there was a significant difference in the dimensions of discrimination and humiliation between male and female teachers, with the latter being more vulnerable (Cetin et al., 2020). In line with these findings, Alzyoud et al. (2016) revealed that violence in schools is practised mostly against female teachers. Doumen (2008) and Netshitangani (2019) also had similar findings that female teachers are more vulnerable to violent behaviour exhibited by learners against them. However, the study by Robers (2013) suggests that male teachers are more vulnerable to learner violence. In addition to this study, Lokmic et al. (2013) revealed that, when comparing the prevalence of violence between male and female teachers, male teachers are more victimised by their students than female teachers. McMahon and Martinez (2014) also argued that when examining how gender impacts on teachers’ vulnerability to learner violence, male teachers were more likely than female teachers to report obscene remarks,

obscene gestures, verbal abuse, and having a weapon pulled on them. The study further revealed that male teachers were unlikely to be intimidated compared to female teachers (McMahon & Martinez, 2014). Contrary to most of the studies reviewed, a gender study by Parzefall and Salin (2010) revealed no differences in victim rates between males and females.

Although there are differing opinions regarding the prevalence of violence between female and male teachers, the current study indicates that female teachers are mostly victimised by learners, more so than male teachers. In this study there are male teachers who reported some acts of victimisation by learners. One teacher indicated that his male colleague was hit by a learner with a paper and another indicated that he has been a victim in the form of being seduced by girls while teaching in class.

It is further revealed that gender determines the nature of violence that teachers are exposed to. Bowman et al. (2014) argued that male teachers are four times more likely to engage in physical forms of violence with learners than female teachers. Female teachers are susceptible to psychological violence, which places them at higher risk of developing depression (Bowman et al., 2014). This research study that shows that women endure more psychological violence compared to male teachers is compatible with studies indicating that male teachers are physically stronger than female teachers (Allen, 2010; Netshitangani, 2019; Cetin et al., 2020). This could be the reason why men receive less psychological counselling than women. Also, the social stigmatisation that 'men do not cry' could possibly impact negatively on men seeking psychological help. It may also be possible that male teachers do not report incidents of learner violence because of the fear of being perceived as weak and the embarrassment they may incur when their colleagues hear about it.

It could be possible that male teachers place themselves – or are placed by circumstances – at risk of victimisation by learners through instances such as intervening in learners' fights, which may lead to higher victimisation rates. Societal factors such as gender roles and social stereotypes may lead female teachers to view themselves as physically weak, and to view certain situations as threatening, thus leaving male teachers to handle them. The current study revealed that sometimes male teachers are expected to mediate the fights among learners. Interestingly, Lokmic et al. (2013) consider violence against male teachers as stemming from their strict ways of engaging with learners. This could trigger fear in the learners, which impacts negatively and puts their relationships with their teachers in jeopardy. As a result, learners respond negatively to teachers' behaviour by engaging in violent conduct such as

internet-based bullying of teachers, especially when they are scared of being punished. In these instances, they comment on anything they are not happy about and that they were not allowed to express in the classroom context (Lokmic et al., 2013).

5.3.2.2 Age of a teacher

Apart from the gender of a teacher, their age was found to be a factor contributing to teachers' vulnerability to learner violence in schools. The data generated through in-depth interviews, a focus group and teacher narratives demonstrated that the gender of teachers influences their susceptibility to violence perpetrated by learners against them. The following expressions were extracted from the participants as evidence of age as a predisposing factor to teachers' susceptibility to learner violence:

"You know when you are a female and new in the field, these young boys at their adolescent stage tend to try their luck." (Teacher A)

"Younger teachers are likely to be victimised than older ones. You will find that some boys try to approach these young female teachers. If they [teachers] try to discipline them, they are called bad names." (Teacher B)

"Even boys are proposing to their female teachers, especially the younger teachers because some of them seem to be of their [learners] age." (Teacher C)

The participants Teacher A, Teacher B and Teacher C are female teachers who teach in a township and suburb settings. They expressed that female teachers are approached and propositioned by boys, and that they are offended by these kinds of behaviour. This kind of harassment occurs particularly among young female teachers. As these teachers come from two different contexts, it appears that sexual harassment of teachers by boys is not a demographic issue, since it is a problem experienced by teachers from different settings.

It was interesting to discover that not only female teachers are victims of learner violence in the form of sexual harassment. Young teachers are seen by girls as their potential boyfriends and sexual partners. Participant Teacher D expressed this concern:

"You know when you are young and new in the environment, learners tend to use that in a negative way. Some girls see you as a potential boyfriend." (Teacher D)

“When I started working as a teacher I was very young (new) and learners were not showing respect towards me. I think they were not seeing me as an authority figure. One day I tried to discipline learners that were making noise in class and one boy said ‘You are not going to do anything to me’.” (Teacher F)

Different studies have varying opinions with regard to the age of teachers as a contributing factor to their being susceptible to learner violence. The study by Cetin et al. (2020) indicates that teachers with 6–10 years of experience in teaching were more likely to be exposed to violence than teachers with 16–20 years of experience. This study suggests that young teachers with less experience in teaching are vulnerable to learner violence compared to the older and more experienced teachers. In contrast, Alzyoud et al. (2016) argue that older teachers are susceptible to violent behaviour by learners. The huge age gap between teachers and learners impairs their communication pattern. Older teachers have different interests and ways of thinking than learners. Due to their disproportionate level of thinking, teachers treat learners in a manner that provokes them, and in turn the learners fight with the teachers (Alzyoud et al., 2016). According to transactional analysis theory, communication breakdown and poor understanding between parties leads to conflict. Thus, in this instance learners engage in fights with teachers because of the clash between their needs and worldviews.

The study conducted by Lokmic et al. (2013) indicated that there is a statistically significant negative correlation between teachers’ age and years of experience and the prevalence of violence from learners that was experienced. The findings showed that the more experience in teaching that the teachers gained, the more that the violence instigated against them by learners decreased (Lokmic et al., 2013). The reason for this could be that as teachers gain experience in teaching and working with learners, they also gain experience in keeping learners’ violent behaviour at bay. Cetin et al. (2020) also allude that learners give respect to older teachers and see them as authority figures, compared to younger teachers. This concurs with Teacher F’s view that young teachers are not viewed as authority figures by learners. Learners undermine them and see themselves as holding more power than the young teachers. Interestingly, Lokmic et al. (2013) also suspected that teachers with many years of experience may be less sensitive to the misbehaviour of learners and do not view it as threatening as much as younger teachers do, which could be the reason they may not have reported it in their survey.

The findings of the current study indicate that there is a correlation between teachers' age and gender and the nature of the violence they receive from learners. It further transpired from the current study that female teachers are mostly victimised by boys, where boys perceive themselves as physically stronger than them and see young female teachers as their potential lovers. Nevertheless, girls also act in a negative way towards female teachers. The study revealed that girls display attitudinal forms of violence against female teachers. With regard to male teachers as victims of learner violence, they are also victimised by both girls and boys; the boys often engage in physical fights with the teachers, whereas girls sexually harass male teachers.

Although the study is not focusing on violence perpetrated by teachers, teachers are not exempt from committing violent actions. In the current study, one participant teacher shared that he has a colleague who was once beaten up by a group of boys in a fight over a girl. In this instance, the teacher had an intimate relationship with a girl who was in a relationship with another boy. In his narrative Teacher D shared that one of the school rules states that teachers are not allowed to enter into intimate relationships with learners. So this teacher breached this ruling and took advantage of a young learner, which jeopardised the life of a young girl. Bullying and male teachers sexually harassing female learners is thought to be learned from home and the society beyond the school (Mncube & Harber, 2013).

5.3.2.3 Newcomers in the profession and environment

The findings from interviews and the focus group indicated that newly recruited teachers were subjected to violent behaviour by learners. Some teacher participants shared experiences of their colleagues who endured violent acts by learners because of being new in the profession and new in the environment where they are working. Accentuating this kind of treatment, Teacher B said the following:

“Some teachers are crucified just for being new in the environment or being young. When you are not familiar with the environment, learners and even people in the community tend to treat you differently. In IsiZulu bathi bayakufikisa [they test you].”

This sentiment shows that young teachers and those that are new in the environment are not afforded treatment equal to that of the other teachers. Learners do not respect teachers as

much as they do the older teachers. It appears that learners learn this behaviour from the communities in which they live. Teacher B indicated that not only learners treat new teachers in the environment differently, the community members also do. In line with the bio-ecosystems theory, the environment plays a crucial role in influencing an individual's behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The model assumes that the violent behaviour of learners is an outcome of the interaction between individuals and their environment (Woolfolk & Allen, 2010). Ultimately, learners view the new teachers in their schools as strangers, and they behave differently towards them. It is somehow understandable that learners treat young and newly recruited teachers differently from older teachers, because the new teachers are almost the same age as some of the learners. Teacher B also said “*bayakufikisa*”, meaning “they test you”. This shows that they deliberately cause harm to the teachers.

It is apparent that when teachers are not familiar with the culture of the school and the context where they are working, they become vulnerable to ill-treatment by learners and the community members at large. In line with the extract shared by Teacher B, Teacher D had the following to say:

“Poor understanding of the school culture is a big problem for teachers.”

Teacher D highlighted that when he first came to the school where he is teaching, he was not familiar with the way that things are done. This resulted in him behaving in a manner that was considered taboo in the school, and as a result he was subjected to violent acts by learners. In line with the transactional analysis perspective (Berne, 1957), the way you behave may trigger an unpleasant response from the recipient of your acts. The basic assumption of transactional analysis theory is that everyone in any context is affected by another and in turn affects others (Keshavazi et al., 2016). In this instance, Teacher D was behaving in a way that he understood to be normal from his background. However, it was not normal in the environment where he was now working. Teacher D is a township teacher whose home background is that of a rural setting. It can be deduced from this finding that teachers should be culture-sensitive in order to prevent unnecessary violent acts from learners and other people in the community. Understanding this behaviour from the point of view of bioecological systems theory, it is argued that the social contexts in which people live are ecosystems, because they are in constant interaction and influence each other (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). This finding is consistent with the bioecological systems theory guiding this

study, where issues of community embeddedness suggest that the least predominant group in the community is at great risk of victimisation. Thus, the teacher's contextual background did not coincide with that of the new area where he was teaching, and this resulted in conflicts between them.

Teacher F confirmed the negative impact of disciplinary problems on teacher morale:

"I was young and did not know how to discipline learners." (Teacher F)

He indicated that he did not know how to control poor learner behaviour, and as a result he felt helpless and angry. This coincides with the sentiments shared by Masekoameng (2010), who revealed that teachers have difficulty in disciplining their learners. That is why they instead become sarcastic and scream at the learners.

It also emerged from the focus group that young and newly recruited teachers are not viewed as authority figures by learners, who have a negative attitude towards young teachers and undermine them. They feel that they are more powerful than the teachers, and do not see young teachers as having control over their behaviour:

"You know guys from my side, when I started teaching, learners were disrespectful. They would make sure that I can see myself that I was not in control. They were not listening and would backchat when I tried to discipline them." (Teacher F)

The behaviour of learners towards newly appointed teachers is a cause for concern. Most participants in the group concurred with Teacher F and shared similar experiences. They indicated that this mostly happened when they were still student teachers doing their practical training. The participants indicated that the learners were aware that they were still in training, and they would deliberately act negatively against them as a way of testing them. It was also revealed that they had difficulty in controlling the learners and that the learning process would be interrupted.

The findings suggest that teachers in all different settings endure violent acts on the basis of being new in the environment, not knowing the culture of the school and the surrounding community, and being new. Given the finding that not only the learners display negative attitudes towards new teachers, it is projected that such behaviour of learners emanates from the communities in which they live. The home plays an integral role in socialising a child and ultimately how the child conducts themselves in the school environment. The absence of

proper parental supervision, the modelling of community members and peer influences are some of the factors that stimulate learners' maladaptive behaviour towards teachers. Bronfenbrenner (1994) views the home, community and school environments as reciprocal systems, where problems in one system are likely to impact the others. Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) findings further allude that negative outcomes such as learners' violent behaviour are linked to proximal processes among the systems. In accordance with the bioecological systems theory, the transactional analysis model also explains human behaviour as a product of the interplay with processes in the individual's context over time (Keshavazi et al., 2016). The theory has the premise that the development of a child is a product of the continuous dynamic interactions of the child and the experiences provided by his or her social setting (Keshavazi et al., 2016). In this study the problem of a lack of good socialisation, which is presumed to be emanating from home and the community, is transferred to the school environment. This is mostly targeted at new and young teachers, who are not viewed as authority figures.

Learners' behaviour of disrespecting and refusal to cooperate with young and newly recruited teachers affects the teachers and the process of teaching and learning. These teachers develop negative feelings and some are discouraged from staying in the teaching profession. The findings of the study also point towards the teachers' unfamiliarity with the school and community culture as a contributing factor for the learners behaving negatively towards them. The teachers who do not understand the school culture behave in a manner that triggers a response from the learners that is viewed as unpleasant on the part of the teacher. In such instances, the learners tend to misunderstand and misinterpret teachers' behaviour and respond negatively.

5.3.2.4 Teacher's personality and self-presentation

The personality of teachers was found to have a detrimental effect on their susceptibility to violent behaviour the learners exhibited against them. Teachers' poor understanding of their personality, which relates to poor understanding of the ethical codes and ethical concept of what is good and what is wrong for a teacher to do as an educator, is found to be a problem in stimulating learner violence. The way in which teachers engage with learners and respond to their individual needs is important for a harmonious teacher-learner relationship. The theme

of personality as one of the determining factors in learner violence was highlighted by more than 50% of the respondents in this study, as represented below:

“Besides this incident, there are incidences whereby learners get out of the class irrespective of the presence of a teacher. So, sometimes they are disrespectful to some of us but they don’t do this to all teachers. For instance, I had one of my colleagues who passed away early this year. He was a reserved kind of a person and was always quiet. He could not discipline learners while teaching. Learners used to stand up and move around the class while he was teaching or writing on the chalk board.”

(Teacher E)

This view of Teacher E suggests that the teachers’ personality and the way they present themselves can indirectly influence learners to act violently against them. In explicating this, in a study of reconceptualising teacher authority, Tzou and Chen (2011) revealed that teachers who show a closed attitude make the learners and parents develop negative thoughts about them. As a result, they lack respect and doubt the teacher’s competence in delivering the content. As elucidated in the transactional analysis theory (Sameroff, 2009), a poor teacher-child relationship is likely to create tension between the two parties, and subsequently aggressive and violent behaviour prevail.

Similar to the sentiments Teacher E shared, Teacher D had the following to say:

“The teacher’s personality, knowledge and attitude towards learners are also a challenge sometimes. You find that some people are reserved by nature and cannot talk much. Yes, it is good to be like that, but sometimes you appear as if you don’t want to mingle around others or you are full of yourself. So learners would tease you because of that. Even other teachers who should be supportive towards you can refrain themselves from you. In that way, you are alone and you find yourself vulnerable.”

It is apparent from Teacher D’s expression that teachers with reserved personalities are more likely to be victimised by learners compared to the extrovert ones. Teachers with introverted kinds of personalities find it difficult to interact with learners and share their experiences with other teachers. Learners tend to perceive them as being ‘full of themselves’, and consequently a battle arises where learners want to show that they are more powerful. While teachers with reserved personalities experience a negative response from learners, they cannot learn from

other teachers how they handle learners with deviant behaviour, because of their inability to share their experiences. In a study of violence in schools, Lira and Gomes (2018) revealed that teacher isolation, especially among the more recently qualified teachers, is a significant factor exacerbating learner violence. The teachers who are not willing to share their experiences and listen to those who have been in the profession for much longer are more likely to suffer learner victimisation (Lira & Gomes, 2018). Learner violence is further evoked by the teacher's personal beliefs, as expressed in this extract:

“I think we care too much for our children and we want the best out of them. So they take advantage of that.” (Teacher B)

Teacher B is an old scholar who still holds the belief that teachers have an important role to play in grooming children to become the best they can be in their lives. In contravention of the concept of the chronosystem in the bioecological systems theory, Teacher B finds herself fighting with learners because of her rigid view of the world. The chronosystem concept of the theory takes into account changes over time relating to the person and the environment (Stivaros, 2007). Due to the teacher's poor consideration of the time in which she is teaching, she finds herself on the wrong side of the learners' expectations. Even though the attitude and belief of Teacher B seem to be in contravention of the current times and the ways in which learners expect to be treated, Sukyadi et al. (2017) argue that professional teachers should instil positive and productive values in their learners in order to shape them to become better people in the community. This view concurs with the participant's worldview, although it is apparent that learners are not happy with it. The connotation that transpired from this finding is that teachers' beliefs are viewed by learners as intruding on their own personal beliefs and ways of doing things.

Another important concept that came up in the current study is the manner in which teachers conduct themselves. The way in which teachers present themselves sends a particular message to the learners. Depending on how the recipient of the message receives it, violence is likely to commence as a response to the initial behaviour of a teacher (Keshavazi et al., 2016). In this regard, Teacher B shared the following account:

“Somehow I am to blame. I am still of the old school and I am very strict. I believe in discipline and I take my learners as children. I believe that I have a responsibility to raise our children at school with respect. I believe that as teachers we have got a role to play in terms of guiding these children.”

The attitude of Teacher B was holistic: she was not viewing learners as objects that she was working with. She had a belief that teachers not only have a duty to teach the content of the syllabus, but also have a responsibility to raise learners as their children. She was passionate about grooming learners as the future leaders of our country, the future parents, teachers, nurses, engineers, lawyers; however, her beliefs and attitudes towards learners proved not to have the result that she expected.

The above sentiments by teachers show that they are introverted and have a positive view of their learners. However, it transpired through the interviews and narratives that some teachers display negative attitude towards learners. Some teachers are aggressive towards learners and do not show respect to the learners. One of the teachers expressed the following in their narrative:

“It is worth noting that as much as children are getting out of line day by day, but on the other hand, teachers also play a certain role in triggering violence from learners. Concerning this, I mean a teacher’s personality, the way we behave, and the way we interact with learners and even with their parents.” (Teacher F)

Teacher D had the following to say with regard to the manner in which teachers conduct themselves as a precipitating factor to learner violence:

“There are teachers who are aggressive, teachers who have poor communication skills, teachers who lack respect towards other people.”

The extracts from Teacher F and Teacher D indicate that some teachers present themselves in a way that provokes anger and violence from learners. It is evident from the current findings that there are teachers who display aggressive behaviour towards learners. Poor communication skills of teachers are also highlighted as having a negative effect on learners. Thus, as a result of the teachers’ poor self-presentation towards learners, the learners respond negatively, and teachers are in turn affected by the learners’ response to their initial behaviour. The transactions occurring in these relationships are well explained by Berne’s (1957) transactional analysis theory. The core of this theory is the analytic emphasis placed on the bidirectional and interdependent effects of an individual and the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In this instance, the teachers’ behaviour influences the negative response of a learner, and in turn is influenced by this response. Teachers ultimately experience psychological shock as a result of violence instigated by learners.

Given the tough experiences that teachers are exposed to as a result of the negative attitude that they display towards learners and their poor communication skills, it is important that teachers learn from these experiences in order to improve the quality of their lives at work. Teacher C shared her analysis and proposal that may be helpful to other teachers:

“What I mean is that as a teacher the way you present yourself is important. If you are friendly, you listen to the learners and you show understanding of their situations, you are likely to be respected. Even those learners that are aggressive in nature, they find their aggression unnecessary.”

This extract from Teacher C simply indicates that teachers’ personalities, the manner in which they present themselves and their ways of disciplining learners play an important role in determining desirable or maladaptive behaviour on the part of learners. Teacher C’s opinion is that teachers’ self-presentation can even positively influence those learners with behavioural problems to behave in an acceptable manner. They may ultimately see their violent behaviour as unnecessary or of less value. In contrast, teachers’ negative attitude towards learners can trigger anger from learners and perpetuate already existing nefarious behavioural patterns.

At the extreme level of misconduct of teachers, one participant teacher shared an experience of a colleague who endured embarrassment as a result of her dress code:

“There was a case at school where the learners screamed at a teacher after seeing her private part. The teacher was writing on the chalk board and she had to bend down as the board was getting full. Due to the short skirt she was wearing, while she was bending down, her private parts were exposed to the learners. They screamed, laughed and some boys were saying only if they can get her. This, in turn, became sexual harassment from the learners, but in fact the teacher is the one who triggered the saga.” (Teacher E)

In the education sector dress code is emphasised as teachers work with young people, for whom their dressing should be exemplary. Teachers are expected to model and instil good behaviour for their learners. According to Sukyadi et al. (2017), teachers should be well presented because they are role models for their students. However, in the incident described by Teacher E, such modelling seems not to be respected, adhered to and practised. As well emphasised by the transactional analysis perspective, some violent acts are a direct response

to the initial presentation of the victim (Overstreet & Braun, 2000). The teacher in participant Teacher E's school was wearing clothes to work that are not appropriate for the nature of the work that she does. As a result, a negative event happened, which triggered a particular response in the learners, and ultimately did not sit well with the teacher. In turn, the teacher felt embarrassed and became a victim of sexual harassment. It can be deduced from this example that sometimes teachers' actions stimulate negative responses from the learners, which eventually affects the teachers' emotional wellbeing.

The evidence thus far indicates that the teacher's personality and the way they present themselves make them susceptible to learners' violence against them. According to Sukyadi et al. (2017), the personality of a teacher becomes the basis for teachers determining their attitudes to learners. Cetin et al. (2020) discovered a link between teachers with an introverted personality and being victimised by learners. Teachers who have a poor interpersonal relationship with their colleagues are unlikely to know how to handle learners with violent behaviour. They do not share their experiences and get to know other teachers' experiences or how others cope with learners' violent behaviour (Cetin et al., 2020).

From a transactional analysis point of view, teachers can affect learners' reactions with their approach and the way they present themselves. According to Lokmic et al. (2013), teachers' good preparation, interesting ways of presenting lessons and good communication skills with learners help in preventing undesirable behaviour towards them by learners (Lokmic et al., 2013). In addition to the point of lesson planning as a factor precipitating negative learner response, Masekoameng (2010) revealed that teachers' lack of preparation for lessons exacerbates misbehaviour in learners. Teachers who do not prepare their class lessons thoroughly promote negative self-esteem in learners, which subsequently results in disciplinary problems.

Moreover, violence against teachers results from the perception by the perpetrator of teachers' actions as being violent. Sukyadi et al. (2017) pointed out that sometimes violence instigated against teachers begins with actions of teachers that are considered violent. In their study, they revealed that both parents and children see the teachers' actions as violent and they respond by displaying violence towards them. It is apparent that if teachers display a positive attitude towards learners, learners are likely to develop intrinsic motivation, become confident and display commitment to teaching and learning.

Although teachers who have rigid personalities, teachers with aggressive behaviour and teachers with poor communication skills are factors that contribute to violent behaviour in learners, some teachers display a negative attitude towards learners and their colleagues because of personal problems that they are going through. Bowman et al. (2014) argued that teachers who have personal problems may suffer from shock and worry and may not think clearly, leading to improper behaviour. In such circumstances, these teachers need to show a strong and confident attitude and find ways to address their personal problems in order to improve the quality of their lives at work (Matzopoulos, 2014).

5.3.2.5 Lack of disciplinary actions against learners

The views expressed by teachers in this study show that most teachers in South African schools live in fear of the learners they teach. They are threatened by learners on a daily basis and they cannot do anything about it. Teachers are unable to discipline learners because of fear of the learners' negative response to teachers' actions. As a result, teachers have to treat each learner with caution because they do not want to make them annoyed, which makes disciplining learners difficult for teachers. The following extracts are teachers' expressions of their underlying experiences and feelings in relation to disciplining learners in schools:

“You know lack of proper discipline; that is why today children do not respect adults.” (Teacher B)

“What I realised is that school violence is not unique to us, but what I see is that in South Africa it is easy to get away with it because there are little or no consequences for the perpetrator's behaviour.” (Teacher C)

The expressed evidence suggests that learner violence in South African schools is a systemic issue. Despite teachers' personal characteristics and competencies, poor channels for learner discipline make teachers susceptible to learner violence in schools. Teacher C acknowledges that school violence is not new to South Africa, but that the problem in this country is that there are no practicable, relevant consequences for the punishable behaviour of learners. Understanding the factors influencing this problem from this teacher's point of view speaks to the socio-political concept in the macrosystem of bioecological systems theory. This concept relates to the events and decisions taken on a bigger scale that are affecting the

microsystem level. The effects of the principles and laws laid down by the macrosystem have a significant influence throughout the interactions of all of the other layers (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). That is, the laws of the country in relation to learner discipline directly or indirectly affect teachers at the microsystem level.

Learners have a tendency of reacting violently when the teachers discipline them, even if the learner has done something wrong or has breached the school rules. These learners have an understanding that they have rights and they capitalise on them to overpower the teachers. In contrast, teachers feel that they do not have power over the learners. With regard to this view, Teacher C further narrated as follows:

“One learner said to me if I ever touched her, she was going to sue me. I feel that teachers on the other hand are not protected. When a teacher penalises a child for a particular unpleasing behaviour, they are automatically subject to violation of the child’s protection law.”

Similar to the narrative by Teacher C, Teacher F had the following to say:

“When I got into class, learners were making noise and did not stop even when they saw me. I then asked them to stop talking so that I could introduce the lesson. One of the boys stood up and said he was not going to stop. He further indicated that I cannot do anything to him. Other learners laughed at me.”

A study of primary school teachers’ experiences of violence perpetrated against them (Govender, 2015) revealed that teachers are disrespected as a result of the new generation of children, whose rights seem to be given priority as opposed to the rights of teachers. The sentiments of both Teacher C and Teacher F allude to the difficult situations that teachers are exposed to in their daily lives at work. In support of Govender’s (2015) findings, the experiences of both Teacher C and Teacher F indicate that teachers feel powerless and confused because of the conundrum they face: while they observe intolerable behaviour by their learners and see a need to control it, the learners threaten them. The confusion here is caused by the fact that there are no clearly defined rules of what constitutes discipline of learners in schools. When teachers are punishing learners, their punishment is perceived by the learners as abuse, and the laws of the country seem to be more on the learners’ side. This leaves teachers not knowing how they should discipline learners without interfering with their constitutional rights. It appears that for the teachers to be able to instil discipline in the

learners, there should be clear rules, and teachers should also be protected against learner abuse. The evidence from the teachers indicates that learners are afforded too much power by their constitutional rights, while there is little consideration of the teachers' rights. It is also understandable from the teachers' views that there is little emphasis on the learners' responsibility to abide by the school rules and to protect others, including teachers. It also transpired that learners lack respect for adults and display maladaptive behaviour towards them, which is directed towards teachers in the school environment.

In line with the literature (Sukyadi et al., 2017) with regard to punishment as a causal factor in learner violence in schools, the current study revealed that when teachers are punishing learners for their bad behaviour, they are considered to be violent themselves. As a result of this, learners refuse punishment, and they backchat and engage in physical fights with teachers. In addition, Sukyadi et al. (2017) argue that violence in education is not always physical abuse, but can be in the form of violation of the code of conduct and the school rules. Thus, teachers who apply corporal punishment or who exert punishment that exceeds the expected limits are likely to provoke the learners, which ultimately results in violent acts on the part of the learners. In a study of the impact of disciplinary problems on educator morale in secondary schools and implications for management, Masekoameng (2010) discovered that, although this was the least of the findings, teachers who exercise harsh discipline and employ harsh punitive measures against learners were provoking or perpetuating aggression from learners.

Tzou and Chen (2011) revealed that teachers who impose penalties against learners on the basis of their punishable behaviour are subject to violating child protection laws. This actually causes conflict for teachers, because when they are punishing learners they know the reasons for it, but the learners complain to their parents and use any available systems to lodge complaints about the teachers' actions (Tzou & Chen, 2011). Apparently, this informs an area of focus where the laws that protect teachers should also be given high priority, as are those that protect learners. This is important because as much as there is a child protection law, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that everyone has equal rights before the law.

Sometimes the teachers do not receive a positive response from their superiors when they report the incidents of assaults by their learners. Then they end up not reporting such

behaviour, which could lead to more violence from the learners, because they know that their behaviour will go unpunished:

“You find that a child assaults a teacher and the teacher reports the case. But later on the child is brought back to the same class with the same teacher. Such incidents further break down the entire system of discipline. With this, other learners learn that they will get away with violence.” (Teacher F)

What transpired from the views of teachers is that children know that they cannot be touched by anyone, and they capitalise on that to violate teachers’ rights. Thus, teachers are prone to violent behaviour perpetrated by learners. The issue of learner ill-discipline results in teachers finding themselves in the middle of nowhere. Some authors shared similar sentiments as those of the respondent teachers of the current study. Sukyadi et al. (2017) argue that when violent acts by teachers against learners occur in the school environment, it is considered a violation of the Child Protection Act. However, if violence is exerted by learners against teachers, it is considered to be a failure of the teacher to discipline children (Sukyadi et al., 2017). All the blame is placed on the teacher, and learners are not held accountable for their actions.

In order to move forward in terms of combating school violence, learners should be incorporated in the intervention strategies that are planned. As much as learners have their constitutional rights, they also have to learn that their rights do not have to interfere with others’ rights, and they have a responsibility to protect others from harm. A sense of responsibility and respect has to be instilled in learners for them to be able to behave in an acceptable manner.

As much as there are numerous factors impacting negatively on teachers’ self-efficacy in managing learner violence, it is evident from the findings of this study that teachers’ lack of management skills to deal with school violence is one of the detrimental effects of their susceptibility to victimisation. It is generally expected that learners, at some point, will show behaviour that is deviant from the norm. In such instances, teachers have to possess adequate skills to deal with the maladaptive behaviour as it occurs:

“One more important point to mention is that as teachers, sometimes we lack skills to deal with children’s problems.” (Teacher C)

“I think as teachers we lack proper skills to deal with unforeseen incidents of violent acts in schools.” (Teacher D)

It is not unreasonable that the teachers lack the skills to deal with learners’ behavioural problems, given the fact that most teachers were raised in autocratic times and have few management skills appropriate for the modern styles of living. For example, participant Teacher B of the current study expressed that she is of the old school and still holds to the traditional styles of disciplining learners. Further to this, most teachers enter into the education profession due to lack of job opportunities in their course of interest. They complete their degrees and venture into teaching without having received proper skills to manage different kinds of problem behaviour they may encounter in their teaching endeavours. In support of this view, Cetin et al. (2020) and Alzyoud et al. (2016) argue that many educators graduate from non-educational programmes with no proper understanding of education, teaching methods or learning. Subsequent to this, they lack the knowledge and skills to deal with learners’ problems. Alzyoud et al. (2016) further stated that these teachers receive internship programmes that are not enough to capacitate them with the educational knowledge that they need to be professional teachers, and they are not well equipped to deal with learners, either educationally or psychologically. As a result of their poor knowledge of managing learner violence, they provoke learners and subsequently fight with them (Alzyoud et al., 2016). It is therefore imperative for teachers to equip themselves with the skills necessary to manage learners’ violent behaviour in schools through continuous professional development (CPD) programmes.

Teachers across the three different contexts where the study was conducted shared similar sentiments that the lack of discipline in schools make it difficult to teach efficiently. The majority of the participants indicated that most teachers struggle to find amicable solutions to the problem. Disciplinary problems seem to be the main reason for teachers losing interest in the profession and experiencing major psychological problems. Masekoameng (2010) argues that the extent of disciplinary problems in schools differs from one school to another. This is dependent on the diversity of the school community, the size of the school, the principal’s managerial skills, as well as the socio-economic background of the learners. In this regard, Masekoameng (2010) believes that multicultural schools are more prone to violence than schools with learners of the same cultural and ethnic background. Singh and Steyn (2013) concur with the issue of school size as the determinant of learner violence, and maintain that schools with higher numbers of learners are more at risk of learner violent behaviour, as

violence occurs frequently in more crowded schools. They also alluded to the nature of leadership and governance in a school as a determining factor of the occurrence and intensity of ill-discipline in the school.

5.3.2.6 Teachers' poor communication skills

According to Kheswa (2015), communication is defined as a process through which the information that is elicited triggers a response between the sender and the receiver. The information shared between two parties can be facts, opinions or images that relate an event, describe behaviour or ask questions. Communication is a pivotal element to promote mutual understanding in any form of relationship, in particular communication between teachers and learners, as this study indicates. The use of good language and mutual respect between teachers and learners is critical for the facilitation of smooth teaching and learning processes. In addition to this, Cetin et al. (2020) believe that teachers' communication with learners is imperative in order to understand the character of learners and their individual needs. The findings of this study indicate that poor communication skills of teachers play a detrimental role in learners' violent behaviour. In this regard, teachers in this study expressed that teachers' inability to engage well with learners can stimulate anger on the part of learners. As a result of this, the learners respond negatively to the teacher and ultimately get into fights. The following sentiment gives evidence of this:

“There are teachers who are aggressive, teachers who have poor communication skills, teachers who lack respect towards other people.” (Teacher D)

It transpired from the view of Teacher D that sometimes learners exhibit violent behaviour in response to the physical and psychological harm that teachers inflict on them. Teacher D's comment indicates that some teachers play a detrimental role in provoking violence from learners, which in turn affects them. In support of this finding, Keshavazi et al. (2016) stated that if a teacher behaves in a negative way towards a learner, the learner may internalise the communication and perceive it as criticism, rejection, fight or punishment. This in turn leads to violence from the learner, as argued in Berne's transactional analysis theory (Berne, 1957).

It is worth noting that as much as children are getting out of line, teachers also play a role in triggering violence from learners through the teacher's personality, the way they behave, and

the way they interact with learners and even with the learners' parents. In line with Teacher D's extract, similar sentiments were shared by Teacher C:

“You will find that a teacher communicates with learners in the manner that provokes anger on the part of a learner. Then problems begin.”

Teachers' perceptions of a learner's behaviour were further mentioned as problematic in provoking learner violence. In respect of this, Teacher B narrated as follows:

“So sometimes children do small things, and then you overreact. In turn a child responds in a way that will cause fight from the side of a teacher.”

The sentiments of Teacher B allude to the importance of understanding each other in relationships. In almost all activities in the school environment, communication plays an integral role, and the manner in which teachers communicate with learners can determine the nature of the relationship teachers may have with learners. A study conducted by Sukyadi et al. (2017) revealed that violence experienced by teachers is due to the poor communication skills of the teachers. Similarly, Alzyoud et al. (2016) discovered that teachers who are at the receiving end of violence from students are the cause of this, due to their actions and practices. The participants in this study further indicated that some teachers are unable to accommodate learners' needs, treat them in an unfriendly manner, and lack problem-solving skills to help students who have personal problems. The participants of this study also alluded to the fact that teachers were not qualified to teach, they graduated with the minimum score and joined the profession due to certain circumstances, without having the desire to teach and deal with learners' problems (Alzyoud et al., 2016). Mashaah (2016) also argued that teachers lack the right mood to communicate with learners nicely and resolve learners' problems well because they are overloaded with a heavy teaching load and administrative duties. In essence, the findings of the current study concur with the literature with regard to poor teacher communication as one of the factors that contribute to learners' violent behaviour.

A study by Lira and Gomes (2018) on violence in schools revealed that the way in which teachers handle delicate situations plays a role in reducing or exacerbating learner violence. This could be why learners in the same class or context behave differently to different teachers. Lira and Gomes (2018) stated that in some classes the ambiance of violence is more present than in others, precisely because the teachers intervene in different ways, in turn contributing to aggravating or overcoming violence. According to Kheswa (2015), when

teachers are authoritarian in their style of engagement with learners, their relationship with learners could be hampered because they may dominate and determine rules and procedures, with no allowance for learners' participation; this results in little or no effective communication flow. From a transactional analysis point of view, poor communication between two parties could result in adverse consequences, in particular violence between teachers and learners (Keshavazi et al., 2016).

The participant teachers in the current study cited that teachers' attitudes towards learners make an immense contribution to the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the relationships between teachers and learners. The participants in this study believe that teachers who support their learners by using positive reinforcement are instrumental in generating a healthy teaching and learning environment and improving the self-esteem and self-efficacy of the learners. Given teachers' lamentation of poor interventions from top management when faced with violence learners perpetrated against them, based on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory perspective it becomes easier for provincial and district officials to intervene when there is cooperation between the teachers, principals and parents. In a study of the impact of ineffective communication on educators' teaching performance at primary schools in Fezile-Dabi District, Free State Province, Kheswa (2015) established that the connectedness of the families, schools and community agencies can influence the development and behaviour of learners.

5.3.2.7 Teachers' poor insight into learners' personal problems

Like anyone, learners too have personal problems that affect their interpersonal relationships with other people and their scholastic functioning. Teachers' poor understanding and consideration of learners' personal experiences – either at home, in school or in the community, has a negative impact on learners' behaviour. Having a good relationship with learners is usually associated with the perception of reciprocated trust between learners and teachers. When learners with problems are shouted at, they feel confused and develop anger towards the teachers. As a result, they (learners) respond in a negative way, which also triggers anger from the teacher. It emerged from the participants in this study that those teachers who lack insight into learners' personal problems act in a manner that aggravates the emotional or psychological turmoil of learners. Although they do not do it intentionally,

learners perceive their behaviour as bullying, and it leads to emotional breakdown. The following extracts are teacher participants' views on the negative role that teachers may play when they do not have an understanding of why learners display deviant behaviour at times:

“Also, learners come with whatever they are carrying in their heads, and with just a small thing it becomes huge. Somehow, we need to understand that as people we have a lot going on in our heads due to family- or community-related stressors.” (Teacher B)

Teacher B's point gives an insight that learners, like adults, are also human beings, and go through some stuff that impacts on their emotional and behavioural presentations. Although they are always expected to behave in an acceptable manner, their emotional problems may interfere with their good behaviour. Teacher B is the oldest participant in this study, with many years of experience. It is clear that with her experience of working with children she has come to understand that some learners' behavioural problems are not intentional. Some learners have problems that have a negative influence on their behaviour, and these could be due to various factors, including family-related issues, community factors, and even internal problems such as the inability to cope with scholastic work (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Teacher D shared a similar sentiment, as follows:

“So I think some children are not really intending to cause harm on us. It's circumstances.”

Teacher D reiterates Teacher B's view that in other instances learners do not intentionally cause harm to teachers – there are certain circumstances that compel them to behave in the manner they do. Learners are exposed to a number of issues that need the attention of adults, particularly a teacher in the school environment. Sometimes their behaviour is an unconscious expression of their bad experiences and is a way of communicating their needs. Govender (2015) asserted that learners with emotional problems may behave badly in class because they want special attention or they want to be left alone. They may also behave badly because of their unconscious drive to hurt others as they are also hurt. The more teachers argue with learners, the more they are getting hurt, and they are likely to respond harshly. What ensues thereafter is a fight between the two parties involved.

It emerged from some of the participants that teachers who possess an authoritative attitude towards learners are likely to get along with learners, as opposed to those with an authoritarian style of engaging with learners. Teacher C shared the following sentiments:

“If you are friendly, you listen to the learners and you show understanding of their situations, you are likely to be respected. Even those learners that are aggressive in nature, they find their aggression unnecessary. But if you do things otherwise, you raise their anger and they will show you their true colours.”

Mashaah (2016) asserted that sometimes learners behave aggressively and violently towards teachers without the intention to cause harm to them, but due to teachers' poor problem-solving skills. Teachers' lack of skills that are appropriate for dealing with learners with personal problems was found to be a serious issue in this study. Alzyoud et al. (2016) argued that the reason why teachers have difficulty in managing learner violent behaviour is that they graduate without taking additional courses, particularly those that capacitate them with adequate knowledge about teaching methods, student psychology, and student needs. Such teachers have a rigid way of communicating and interacting with learners, who ultimately find it unacceptable. As a result, learners react to the teachers' behaviour in an unpleasant manner, leading to fights between them. This is in line with the transactional analysis theory (Berne, 1957), which states that violence between two people is grounded in the nature of the reciprocal relationship they have. The theory states that the way a person behaves may have a negative effect on another, and the perpetrator may be affected by the response of the recipient of the negative behaviour initially exerted.

Tzou and Chen (2011) pointed out that teachers' lack of understanding of learners' needs creates conflicts between the two parties. Teachers who lack a clear understanding of their duties, and teachers who are resistant to change and who do not have a proper understanding of their learners' personal problems, become victims of learner violence (Tzou & Chen, 2011). In contrast, teachers who treat learners as decent individuals, who show eagerness to listen to them, who value their opinions and who are optimistic about their future, are likely to get along with the learners. Alzyoud et al. (2016) stated that teachers who give motivation and encouragement to their learners increase the spirit of learning. This also creates a sense of empathy and care for the learners as valuable members of the community (Alzyoud et al., 2016).

Communication is key in the classroom context, and a teacher should be proficient in all modes of teaching, including speaking and listening (Kheswa, 2015). Teachers should know how to utilise this proficiency effectively in their environments. Being able to do this has been proven to impact the success that learners achieve in their academic lives, as well as the teacher's own career success. According to Mashaah (2016), communication skills are crucial for teachers in order to have good relationships with learners. Through good communication, teachers are able to listen to learners and understand their personal problems. Studies (Kheswa, 2015; Mashaah, 2016; Keshavazi et al., 2016; Sukyadi et al., 2017) indicate that the success of learners is directly linked to interactive and engaging teaching environments created by abled teachers, and the more that teachers show interest in listening to and understanding learners' personal challenges, the more violent behaviour of learners against teachers is prevented (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). The literature indicates that older teachers find it difficult to adapt to the modern needs of learners. Netshitangani (2019) stated that older teachers who were raised through traditional educational approaches strongly believe in such approaches in life, and they deny modern educational approaches and ways of open communication with learners. These teachers have difficulty in understanding learners' problems and lack support for them. It is, therefore, important for older teachers to learn new ways of engaging with learners in order to establish and maintain good relationships with them.

The findings indicate that learners also have personal problems that affect their emotional wellbeing. Their violent behavioural presentations are attributable to emotional problems. Learners may present with violent behaviour in class as a way of communicating their emotional problems and because of the need for special attention. Teachers are judgemental and who have negative attitudes towards learners may exacerbate the situation, causing more problems for the learners. It is, therefore, crucial for the teachers to observe their learners and seek to understand their situation in order to develop harmonious relationships.

5.3.2.8 Teachers' interference in learners' fights

It emerged from the themes in the current study that learner violence is not only perpetrated against teachers – learner-on-learner violence does occur in schools. However, no matter where it is directed, all cases end up in the hands of teachers. Teachers have a responsibility to solve problems among learners, and they are on the school disciplinary committees. It is also mentioned that when learners engage in fights, especially in the school premises, teachers are expected to intervene. While they are intervening, learners sometimes perceive it as though the teachers are joining the fight, especially when the decisions during the disciplinary proceedings are against one learner or a group of learners. The following extracts reiterate the views above:

“Sometimes we become victims of violence not because we are a target but because we interfere with fights between learners or groups of learners.” (Teacher E)

“Sometimes when you are in a disciplinary committee as a teacher, your role there can put you at risk.” (Teacher E)

The concern with regard to intervening in learners' fights emerged from one teacher, namely Teacher E. Teacher E is a male teacher with 8 years of experience in teaching, and is currently working in a rural area. In the school where he is teaching, learners often engage in the fights of villages, where learners from one village fight with those from another. In such instances the teachers, males in particular, are expected to intervene. The concern from this participant is that when they are intervening, they are putting their lives in danger. Teacher E is also a member of the school disciplinary committee, and he also expressed that the position puts their lives at jeopardy. The verdicts they make after disciplinary trials are sometimes perceived by the learners as unfair and against certain individuals. In these areas the fights may emanate broadly from the communities in which they live, and they bring them into the school environment; this is explicated by Bronfenbrenner (1994) where he states that learners' violent behaviour could be a result of community factors. Learners learn these community traits and they manifest them in the school setting.

5.3.2.9 Not reporting violent incidents

Given the negative response from the school management, district offices and the province at large, teachers resort to the tendency of ignoring incidents of violent behaviour displayed by learners. Teachers feel that it is not helpful to report violence, and they end up emotionally drained by the process of dealing with violence. They are also afraid of becoming targets of assaults and threats from learners when they report incidences of violence. This in turn plays a detrimental role in perpetuating it or allowing it to continue happening:

“No one cares. So it’s better to swallow it as bitter as it is.” (Teacher A)

The sentiments expressed by Teacher A indicate that teachers feel unsafe in school and share the strong feeling that they are not protected by the law. In spite of the schools’ codes of conduct and laws stipulated in government legislation on school discipline, these teachers in South African schools still feel unsafe at work. The concern expressed above is that it appears that the relevant stakeholders responsible to enforce discipline do not care about the safety of the teachers. Further to the views shared by Teacher A, Teacher B expressed similar concerns:

“At the end I would endure more pain than what I suffered. The way these cases are handled, it is even better not to report them.”

The sentiments Teacher B expressed indicated that it is better not to report school violence, because the results are always unsatisfactory to the teachers. Learner violence has a negative impact on teachers’ psychological wellbeing. When they report incidences of violent behaviour by learners, they endure more emotional pains than the psychological shock they elicit from the incident per se. This is because of the long processes involved where there are no actions taken against the instigators of violence, which leaves teachers more emotionally drained. That is why some teachers do not report incidents of violence. Although Teacher B is not happy about the way violent incidents are handled, she is of the view that not reporting violence indirectly encourages it:

“Sometimes as teachers we are the ones who indirectly encourage the occurrences of learners’ violence. Many of us do not report assaults from learners for fear of retribution from the administrators. You will also find that other teachers do not report incidents of violence just because they avoid media reports.” (Teacher B)

Teacher F also shared the following sentiment:

“In our school there is a corner where learners group themselves and smoke cigarettes and other drugs. We all know that but not even the principal talks about it.”

The rural area in which Teacher F is teaching has a high rate of crime and violence within the community. Alcohol and drug abuse has become the norm, and children access drugs easily. Teachers are no longer interested in helping learners, because when teachers do they are threatened for interfering with their activities. Teachers’ resolutions on matters related to learner violence are to keep quiet and not report it. In doing so, learners are encouraged to continue with their violent behaviour because they know that it will go unpunished.

Apparently the problem of poor consequences for violent behaviour in schools occurs in all of the different contexts where this study was conducted. It is apparent that school violence does not occur in isolation; learners mostly learn violent behaviour from their homes and the communities where they live. Both male and female teachers indicated that it is depressing to go to a school that negatively affects their psychological wellbeing. In their engagement with me as a researcher, they expressed that they lack zeal and motivation to teach with excitement, because of the fear of finding themselves on the wrong side of the learners. The findings of the study conducted by Daniel (2018) indicated that learners’ violent behaviour makes teachers less competent to perform their work duties. This is more of an issue with the beginner teachers who feel greater pressure with regard to their relationship with learners and their capability to manage their learners’ maladaptive behaviour (Daniel, 2018).

Irrespective of the severity of violence, whether it is mild, moderate or severe, it is abnormal and it leads to unbearable consequences. It is dangerous to whosoever is a victim and it should be dealt with. Therefore, it is important that as a society we find the factors that contribute to the perpetrator’s maladaptive behaviour and work towards stopping the chain of abuse. As a result of the need to understand the factors that contribute to violent behaviour, this study also aims to explore the factors that influence learners to act violently against teachers. The subsequent section discusses themes which emerged from the current study on factors contributing to learners’ violent behaviour from the perspective of teachers.

5.3.3 Factors influencing learners' violent behaviour

Violence in secondary schools is a serious problem that is prominent in all areas of life and is increasingly affecting public health. Violence is perpetuated mostly against certain groups in society, especially against children and women, and some professionals such as teachers, nurses and doctors (Anderson, 2016). Nevertheless, the focus of the current study is on violent behaviour against teachers that is instigated by learners. It is apparent that learners, among other perpetrators such as parents and colleagues, are common offenders in terms of violence against teachers, and this has a negative impact on the teachers' mental health and quality of teaching. According to Reynolds (2013), violence is a multifaceted matter associated with individual thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours. Thus, several factors can influence the occurrence or non-occurrence of violence, including biological, psychological, social, cultural, political, and economic factors. Shaffer and Kipp (2010), Cluver et al. (2010) and Kaya et al. (2012) concur with Reynolds (2013) that violent behaviour in humans is associated with a number of physiological, psychological, familial, and cultural factors as well as the child's specific learning conditions. Lokmic et al. (2013) also allude that there are four groups of factors that influence the development of violent behaviour in learners, namely individual, family and other close people to a learner; school and community; culture; and media. In a study of the causes of adolescents' maladaptive behaviour in secondary schools of Ebonyi State in Nigeria, Ugwu (2017) revealed that family background, socio-economic status of the parents, the school, peer influence, and influence of the mass media play a detrimental role in the development of learners' violent behaviour against teachers. Given these findings from different scholars, it is clear that learner violence cannot be viewed from a single perspective. There are various factors influencing learners' violent behaviour, as explicated by the bioecological systems and transactional analysis theories which served as theoretical lenses guiding this study.

Violence in schools can be defined procedurally as a pattern of offensive or compulsive behaviours, which include physical and psychological abuse of peers or teachers and the destruction of school property (Kaur & Niwas, 2017). In essence, teachers are the significant adults that provide learners with knowledge and a safe environment for academic, social and psychological development. Teachers are expected to model good behaviour to learners and be responsible for protecting learners from harm as well as promoting learners' wellbeing. In turn, learners and their parents are expected to give their full support to teachers, in particular

by showing great respect to them and collaborating with them. However, I have noted with serious concern that teachers suffer a great deal of psychological harm emanating from violence instigated by the learners they teach. This raises the question as to why learners perpetrate violence against teachers.

The reviewed literature showed that learner violence is a multifaceted phenomenon that is caused by various factors which are ecosystemic to the child's life. Dontoh et al. (2020) argued that the factors influencing violent behaviour of learners can be classified as parental induced, environmental induced and school induced. In their study to address learner aggression in rural South African schools, Singh and Steyn (2013) revealed three core factors that contribute to violent behaviour in secondary school perpetrated by learners, namely family, environmental and school factors. A study examining the lead causes of aggressive behaviour of adolescents at senior high school level in Ghana (Glozah & Pevalin, 2014) revealed that adolescents' family backgrounds that were characterised by domestic violence between parents, lack of parental love and affection, and divorce issues could lead to violent behaviour on the part of the learners. Furthermore, it was revealed that adolescents from broken homes also display violent behaviour, where the parents are separated and cannot reinforce and motivate learners (Glozah & Pevalin, 2014).

Moreover, the study conducted by Alzyoud et al. (2016) revealed that violence against teachers was due to the behaviour of teachers themselves, the school administration, media, and family factors. It is indicated that teachers who are unable to meet learners' needs, who treat learners in an unfriendly manner, who have a negative attitude towards learners, and who lack skills to help learners with personal problems contribute to learners' violent behaviour against them (Alzyoud et al., 2016). Estevez et al. (2013) also revealed, among other findings, that many behavioural problems in adolescent learners are the result of their lack of trust in the authority figures in the school setting; learners start to increase contact with their peers, and rely on the assistance of peers even where the intervention of an adult is needed.

Learners live in complex environments that overlap and influence their development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). To study the factors influencing learners to engage in violent behaviour against teachers, I did not only look at the learner and their immediate environment but also at the interaction of the larger environment. Learners who violate the rights of others must be fully understood in terms of the lives they live, the people they

interact with in the family, community and at school, their peers and friends they have, schools they are studying at, and the type of neighbourhood they were born into and grow up in. These different systems have a direct impact on a child's development. In line with this view, Burton and Leoschut (2013) pointed out that in order for one to have a good understanding of the causes of violent behaviour in schools, one needs to analyse and try to understand the context in which the school is located.

5.3.3.1 Learners' personal characteristics

It is well articulated that violence originates from various factors, including individual, family, cultural, and socio-economic reasons. Sezer (2021) argues that individual causes of learner violence can be understood as resulting from the inability to solve problems, inability to cope with stressors, an individual's inability to develop an alternative to violence in responding to what they are experiencing, and inability to control anger. There are learners that are predisposed with personality traits that make them vulnerable to violence. Individual characteristics influence risk and protective factors that may increase or decrease aggression and exposure to violence (Espelage, Rao & Rue, 2013). There are also learners who are more aggressive than others by nature, and such learners seem to get drawn to violent acts more easily than others. The participants in the current study showed that learners' internal factors do impact negatively on the development of violent behaviour perpetrated against teachers. The participant teachers in this study had the following to say in relation to this:

“Yah some learners have low level of intellectual ability and some have learning disabilities. So when a child cannot grasp content and fails tests, other learners laugh at them.” (Teacher C)

Similar sentiments were shared by Teacher D:

“You know when they get lower marks in tests, other children laugh at them. They eventually become angry and fight others.”

The above extracts from participants Teacher C and Teacher D provide evidence that some learners engage in violent behaviour because of their acquired internal variables. It is evident that learners with low intellectual functioning experience difficulties in coping with school work. They cannot grasp the content in class at the pace of the other learners, and to a certain

extent, depending on their level of intellectual disability, they cannot benefit from mainstream education. Some learners have age-appropriate intellectual abilities; however, they present with learning disabilities. These learners also have vast difficulties in assimilating, storing and producing any school material that has to do with reading, writing and doing mathematical operations. Teacher C and Teacher D indicate that these learners become victims of other learners who laugh at them on the basis of their barriers to learning. Due to the frustration they experience in the school ecology, they eventually develop anger and exhibit it in the form of violent behaviour. When teachers try to refocus them on what needs to be done in class, they become aggressive and fight with them.

According to Hohr (2012), in order for learners to achieve adequate socialisation in the home, community and school environments they must gain control over anger and tolerance for frustrating circumstances. By secondary school level most learners have acquired self-control strategies that enable them to manage anger and tolerate situations that put them under stress and frustration. However, some learners find it difficult to regulate their emotions. Such learners end up developing antisocial and violent behaviour. In addition to anger management, some learners have poor direction as scholars and lack knowledge of the significance of learning. With regard to this view, Teacher C iterated the following:

“I think that learners do not have a clear understanding of the importance of education. That is why they dodge classes, they do not write homework and they are uncooperative with the teachers and other learners in class.”

Learners' lack of understanding of the significance of learning and determination to complete school work were found to contribute significantly to the development of violent behaviour. Teacher C opined that some learners engage in violence against teachers because of poor direction; they exhibit various misconduct and disobedience to teachers' orders because of lack of understanding of what they are doing. Ugwu (2017) argues that violence is practised by people who have limited knowledge, understanding, tolerance, respect, and peaceful thinking.

The findings of this study concur with the literature in that learners' personal characteristics do influence them to display violent behaviour. Burton and Leoschut (2013) posited that apart from external factors as dictators of violent behaviour in learners, intrinsic factors such as impulsivity, antisocial personality traits, neurotoxin exposure and head injury may play a detrimental role in the development of children's violent tendencies. Govender (2015)

concur with Burton and Leoschut (2013) in that children's predisposing factors, such as a chemical imbalance (e.g. attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder), which drives children to act violently and impulsively, play a detrimental role in the development of violent behaviour. Also, Maharaj (2011) showed that learners exhibit violent behaviour because of many reasons, including an intrinsic motivation to be powerful; they engage in violent acts as a means of feeling powerful and in order to gain popularity. De Wet (2010) and Shaffer and Kipp (2010) believe that negative self-image and low frustration tolerance has a direct effect on learners' expression of aggressive behaviour.

More and more evidence, as revealed, suggests that successful efforts to alleviate violent behaviour should begin early in the child's life. It is also imperative to observe children in order to determine early what predisposes them to become violent at a later stage.

5.3.3.2 Learners' biological factors

Despite the clear evidence that contextual and environmental influences impact negatively on learners' antisocial behaviour, internal factors predispose them to behave violently when coupled with negative social events. The ecological system views individuals as nested within interactive systems. The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his/her immediate family or environment, and the societal landscape steers and channels their development. Changes or conflicts in any one layer affect other layers of the child's ecologies (Espelage et al., 2013). The bioecological systems theory stresses the combination of the child's biological disposition and environmental forces that shape their development (Woolfolk & Allen, 2010). The findings of this study showed that the learners' biological make-up has a negative impact on the development of violent behaviour, as explicated below:

“Learners at this level of schooling are transitioning from being children to young adults. So the hormonal changes make them crazy. I have noted that some boys who bully others have experienced some voice changes, definitely they are on puberty.”
(Teacher A)

These sentiments by Teacher A indicate that when they are entering adolescence, learners, especially boys, often see themselves as adults. This is because of the changes they note in their bodies, such as their change of voice. They engage in violent behaviour because they perceive themselves as adults and do not see teachers as authority figures anymore. They

suddenly think that they can control everything. This is seen in some of the cases we are witnessing in our society, where a boy propositions a female teacher and see her as a potential girlfriend or someone they may have sex with. In addition to Teacher A's opinion regarding biological factors as determinants of violent behaviour by some learners, Teacher B shared the following sentiment:

“When a learner comes to school angry, agitated or frightened, it is rarely caused by a teacher. Probably it's something that happened a night before while at home, something happened on the way to school or it's an individual thing like a girl on her menstrual cycle.”

Teacher B indicates that girls also go through certain biological experiences that trigger anger, which is subsequently projected onto others. The pains that girls experience when they are menstruating make them short-tempered and irritable. When teachers engage with them, they easily get frustrated and lose their temper. As a result, they respond harshly and violently towards other learners and teachers in the school context. In their study analysing the role played by learners' attitude to school and social reputation among peers in the relationship between classroom environment and involvement in aggressive acts in the school setting, Estevez et al. (2013), found a strong link between attitude to authority and aggressive behaviour on the part of learners.

In line with the literature (Govender, 2015; Fatima & Malik, 2015; Mthimkhulu, 2015), the current study found a link between biological or internal factors and learners' violent behaviour. Maharaj (2011) also revealed the negative effects of biological and genetic factors in the development of an individual's personality, which may result in aggression. These findings are on par with the bioecological systems perspective in explaining individuals' violent behaviour. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) central point places special focus on the body, with special attention to the biological aspects and behaviour of an individual. It is argued that many cases of violent behaviour are related to genetic or neurological factors and the family that the child comes from.

5.3.3.3 Learners' lack of respect

Respect is an important quality of life and a key element in establishing and maintaining good relationships with other people with mutual understanding. It enables everyone to communicate with other people in the manner they deserve. In this regard, particularly in the African culture, children are not expected to talk to adults in the same way as they would to a person of the same age as them. Once there is breakdown of communication between two people, a conflict prevails. Transactional analysis theory places great emphasis on respect and good communication between individuals to sustain good relationships. The findings of this study, as generated through in-depth interviews, a focus group and teacher narratives, showed that learners exhibit violent behaviour towards teachers as a result of poor respect of others. Teachers had the following to say with regard to learners' lack of respect towards them:

“One important element that we are losing in our lives is respect. Children, I must say, have lost this quality of life. They talk to adults as if they are talking to their peers. They can't separate. You will find yourself exchanging words with a child, that's not good at all.” (Teacher B)

The extract indicates that generally people are losing respect towards each other. Learners are now unable to differentiate between adults and their peers, and talk to adults without consideration of the age gap. As a result of their lack of respect towards others, they engage in violent behaviour with teachers. These behavioural patterns include verbal abuse, physical abuse, and sexual harassment, as discussed in detail in the first section of this chapter. In line with this, Teacher E had the following to say:

“I think the most important factor in this issue of violence is being disrespectful of learners. If learners have respect to teachers, no matter what a teacher might have done to the learner, they would not be found shouting, beating up, displaying negative attitude or insulting teachers.”

Teacher E places emphasis on the issue of disrespect of learners towards teachers as one of the factors contributing to violent behaviour against teachers. The point made in this extract is that if learners were respectful, the incidents of learner violence would not exist. With respect, learners can engage with teachers peacefully, even if the teachers have done something wrong towards them.

The findings of this study concur with the literature in that lack of respect of learners towards teachers plays an integral role in learner violence instigated against teachers. Alzyoud et al. (2016) revealed that learners are the cause of violence instigated against teachers; the learners who come from broken families with poor communication and social skills lack respect for teachers and cannot communicate with them peacefully. Reddy (2013) also argued that learners show significantly reduced respect of teachers, which is one of the reasons they easily display aggressive behaviour towards them. Also, learners are perceived to have taken advantage of the fear that teachers and parents have in disciplining them, and this has led to a significant decline in respect.

As much as learners are displaying aggressive and maladaptive behaviour towards teachers as a consequence of lack of respect, it was also revealed that teachers sometimes have an impact on learners' disrespectful behaviour. Some teachers display behavioural problems and are found to do things that are not expected of a teacher, which in turn affects their image and dignity. This subsequently leads to learners losing respect for them. In support of this view, Teacher C shared the following:

“In my previous school, there was one teacher who was found drinking alcohol in class. Just think about this. Can you blame children when they lose respect on us, see us as their peers, insult us or even assault us?”

This comment by Teacher C indicates that sometimes learners lose respect for teachers because of teachers' behaviour. In this extract, the teacher was drinking alcohol in the classroom context. It is well known that such behaviour is unacceptable, and it may lead to negative connotations for learners. This is in line with the transactional analysis view that sometimes people display a particular behaviour not because they like it, but as a direct response to the initial behaviour of another. The transactions existing between teachers and learners determine the nature of their relationship. It is clear that if teachers do not respect themselves, there is a high likelihood that learners will also lose respect for them. A similar finding was shared by Teacher F:

“I am not sure if you follow news; there was a case on TV about three years ago where a teacher was caught on video having sex with learners in the bush.”

The behaviour of the teacher as mentioned by Teacher F is in contravention of the laws of this country which prohibit teachers from engaging in intimate relationships with learners.

The National Safety School Framework (NSSF) promotes protection of the rights of all learners in South Africa from various forms of violence to ensure access to quality education. The behaviour of this teacher is unacceptable and violates children's rights; it also affects his dignity as an adult and a respected member of the society. It is this kind of behaviour that sometimes influences learners to lose respect for teachers, and they subsequently exhibit violent behaviour towards them. Understanding this behaviour from a bioecological systems theory, the social contexts in which people live are ecosystems that constantly interact and influence each other to shape an individual's behaviour (Ettedal & Mahoney, 2017).

Teachers need to be leaders or role models to their learners. They are expected to display good behaviour in schools and in the communities where they teach. A teacher's behaviour is very important to learners, as they serve as a role model to many young people. They need to be punctual themselves at school, behave responsibly and get to classes well prepared, so that children may learn a lot from them. The way teachers behave has an impact on the learners' behaviour.

5.3.3.4 Learners' emotional problems

Learners' emotional problems can come from any event or thought that makes them feel angry, frustrated, confused, and nervous. Learners are under constant stress due to school work, and when coupled with other stressful experiences they may be prone to violent acts. Learners who have emotional instabilities tend to react violently whenever they feel that things are not going according to their wishes.

As much as the current study focuses on the teachers' experiences of violent behaviour perpetrated against them by learners, learners also experience vast emotional turmoil stemming from various factors. Since learners spend most of their time at school with their teachers, the attitude and self-presentation of teachers is very important not only to learning outcomes but also to the emotional and social development of learners. Sezer (2021) stated that learners in schools suffer emotional problems as a result of physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual or cultural violence in their lives. Hence they experience psychological problems that need the attention of mental health services. In relation to emotional problems that learners are experiencing, Teacher B shared the following:

“Children come to school with various and complex needs, and as school officials we don’t have resources to address the root causes of these incidents. We need more mental health services in our schools for children who have behavioural problems and who lash out in unpredictable ways.”

“Some assaults are intentional acts of violence, whereas others are due to anger that a learner is carrying.”

Teacher B highlighted the importance of mental health services in our schools. Learners live in communities where they are exposed to various forms of negative experiences that lead to emotional problems. They carry stress, anger and frustrations due to family or social effects and project these onto the teachers at school. It is important to note the statement by Teacher B regarding teachers’ lack of the necessary skills to deal with learners’ emotional and behavioural problems. This suggests that if learners’ emotional and behavioural challenges can be dealt with accordingly, there would not be this much violent behaviour by learners in schools.

Teacher D also shared the following:

“But if you look at a child that just bursts out of a small thing, you can see that this is just the manifestation of underlying issues the child is deeply experiencing. They can’t express their emotions appropriately.”

There are various reasons why learners have emotional problems that they carry into the school setting. The study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013) showed that learners who have a history of violence develop emotional problems, including feelings of inadequacy, poor self-image, cruelty, impulsivity, rebelliousness, lying, fighting and depression. Such psychological problems put them at risk of developing behavioural problems in the form of bullying, destruction of property and other violent behaviour (Govender, 2015). In addition to these findings, Netshitangani (2014) also revealed psychological problems, among other findings, as factors that lay the foundations for the high incidence of school-based violence in South African schools.

A study of the effect of psychological violence on preschool teachers’ perceptions of their performance by Cetin et al. (2020) revealed that learners display violent behaviour against teachers due to depression that they are experiencing. These learners come from poor, broken, and single-parent families, and these families are depressed. Some of these learners

observe violence at home and experience it as well. As a result of this, they often project their emotional experiences onto other people that they have close contact with (Alzyoud et al., 2016). Learners from such backgrounds lack socialisation skills, problem-solving skills, and communication skills. When faced with conflict with others, they resort to physical and verbal abuse. Burton and Leoschut (2013) also argued that emotional problems, including depression, anxiety, and stress, to name a few, can result in long-term psychosocial effects which have an impact on the way the individual associates with and assimilates into society in general, and this in turn may result in violent acts.

Apart from the social factors influencing learners' emotional problems, poor scholastic performance of learners may give rise to emotional and psychological problems, such as problems in communication and low self-esteem, which ultimately interfere with their interaction with other learners. These learners may not be able to blend into school activities and may feel left out and ignored. Some endure the experience of being ridiculed by others because of their social incompetence.

During the focus group session, one teacher indicated that when they were interrogating one learner who had instigated violence against the teacher, the learner expressed that he was involved in a fight with a teacher because he wanted to revenge what had happened to him. In relation to this, Bester and du Plessis (2010) argued that retaliation against provocation and bullying at school may lead to violence. From a transactional analysis point of view, some violent acts by an individual are a direct response to the initial behaviour by the person who then becomes the victim. The learners carry an emotional burden that needs the attention of psychosocial support services at school. However, due to the lack of these services, learners end up having outbursts and violate the rights of the teachers as well.

5.3.3.5 Family factors

Families are the integral ecologies of the learners, where their development is mostly dependent on significant others. The most important function of a family is to ensure the upbringing of children in accordance with the norms and standards of society. Thus, learners learn through the family what is acceptable and unacceptable in relation to behaviour, attitudes and views towards others. It emerged from in-depth interviews and the focus group with the study sample that family circumstances play a detrimental role in development of the

learners' violent behaviour. According to Marais and Meier (2010), families are regarded as the foundation for learners to learn to act in a moral way; thus guidance regarding proper behaviour is deeply rooted in the values and beliefs of the family (Mohapi, 2014). The family factors in learners' violence vary, depending on the family structure and lifestyle. A participant in this study submitted the following observation with regard to family factors in learners' violent acts against teachers:

“Many of the parents there drink alcohol and drugs are easily accessible in the community.” (Teacher B)

The sentiment by participant Teacher B shows a link between parenting style and learners' violent behaviour. It is evident that parents who are abusing alcohol neglect their children. Teacher B teaches in the township context, where there is easy access to alcohol and drugs. In most cases parents who are drinking alcohol excessively give little attention to their children's needs. It appears that parental neglect and poor supervision leads learners to resort to maladaptive behaviour. Teacher D also alluded to this issue:

“Some children come from families where they are neglected, some experience violence abuse themselves, and some come to school with empty stomachs.”

Further to learners' neglect by parents, some learners experience domestic violence in their home environments. It is also indicated that some learners come from poor families with inadequate food. All of these experiences of neglect, abuse and poverty have a negative impact on the learners' emotions and behaviour. Burton and Leoschut (2013) are of the view that learners who are raised by families with violence develop a belief that it is normal to solve conflicts with violence. Mthimkhulu (2015) also pointed out that children who are exposed to family conflicts and violence between their parents are prone to violent behaviour. Notably, both Teacher B and Teacher D are teaching in the township areas; thus it appears that there is a problem regarding parental involvement in children's lives in this context.

Teacher F submitted the following expression:

“But this traces back to one's home background. What are the teachings you are given at home? What have you learned from home? If you were taught well, we will see it by the way you behave, the way you engage with others, and the way you conduct yourself. On the other hand, if you are not raised well, definitely you will likely do things the wrong way.”

Teacher F is highlighting the important role that the family has in terms of preventing the antisocial behaviour of learners and their development in general. The lessons learned from home are crucial, as they determine the likely occurrence or non-occurrence of violent behaviour of learners. The sentiments from this participant indicate that if learners are taught socially acceptable behaviour at home, they are likely to behave accordingly; if not, they will definitely display obnoxious behaviour in their social interactions.

Teacher E shared the following:

“Sometimes it happens that it’s not that learners are taught wrong things from home, but there is a lack of discipline from home.”

Teacher E is of the view that some learners are not properly disciplined in their home environment. They behave as they please, and there is nobody who cares to channel them into proper ways of doing things. This is most prominent in spoilt children who are allowed everything that they want. Mohapi (2014) argues that the home environment is the primary place where children learn how to behave in society. Thus, if they are not taught the proper standards of behaviour in society they are likely to show deviant behaviour.

Teacher C shared the following sentiments in both the individual interview and the focus group:

“Another thing, the environments where learners come from are sometimes toxic. Even those places that seem to be fancy or conducive for children’s development are also a problem to them. You know in the suburbs, some parents are too busy to care for their children’s emotional needs; they run businesses, independent practices and more. Some of them even leave everything to the caregivers. Yet children need the love of their parents.”

It is general knowledge that richer families take good care of their children’s development, more than parents from other areas such as rural areas and townships. Nevertheless, the expression by Teacher C provides a different perspective. It is clear that neglect of children happens in all different settings, the only difference may be in the manner in which it occurs. As a result of learners’ feelings of personal neglect, they develop major emotional problems and project them onto other people, particularly their teachers. This extract gives a different angle on the neglect learners are facing at home. In this instance, parents are working and providing for their families; however, they are absent emotionally and depend on the

assistance of nannies to care for their children. These children feel neglected, as they do not receive emotional support directly from their parents.

The findings of this study identified various circumstances in the family setting that may result in learners developing aggressive and behavioural problems in schools. In line with the current study, Singh and Steyn (2013) revealed that family factors include broken homes, poor parenting and poverty, that contribute to the violent behaviour of learners. Burton and Leoschut (2013) alluded to the issue of children who are brought up by single parents as prone to developing violent behaviour, compared to those from two-parent homes. Fatima and Malik (2015) found that family background, including parents' behaviour and their interaction with children, is a common cause of the aggressive behaviour of learners.

Fivush and Merrill (2016) contend that the lifestyle of parents influences their children's development. Most learners come from unsupportive family environments. Parents are generally not involved in the children's development, especially those that are experiencing learning difficulties. In such families, learners are not provided with support in their scholastic work, as the parents perceive school work to be solely the task of the school. Given parents' low educational attainment, they struggle to find jobs and succumb to some form of poverty. Learners that grow up in such home environments are prone to poor scholastic achievements. Furthermore, McGaha-Garnett (2013) posited that some learners are raised by parents that are unsupportive and who display unsympathetic behaviour towards their children who experience barriers to learning. Instead of showing love and care to them, they make negative comments about the learners, which may lead to a poor self-concept). In such instances, learners ingrain the negative inferences towards them and project these onto the teachers at school.

Family conflict is likely associated with the presence, maintenance, and later emergence of associated oppositional and conduct problems in children (Duma, 2013; Okeke, 2014; Pileggi, 2017). Family influences may play a major role in determining the outcome of aggression and violence. According to Okeke (2014), unclear boundaries of subsystems in family functioning have been identified as contributing to the development of learners' violent behaviour. If boundaries are not well defined so as to allow subsystem members to carry out their respective functions without unnecessary interference, problems may emerge. However, these boundaries must allow contact between the members of the subsystems. Families that have clear lines of responsibility and authority enable better functioning.

Therefore, the clarity of boundaries within the family is essential in preventing children's emotional problems.

5.3.3.6 School factors

A school is an institution providing primary and secondary education to learners from childhood through adolescence. It is in these institutions that learners learn new behaviours, be they positive or negative. There are various factors determining the positive or negative behaviour of learners, and these include school factors. In the school setting, teacher-child relationships have emerged as an important factor associated with learners' problem behaviour (Markowitz et al., 2006). The study conducted by Anderman et al. (2014) found that teachers are victimised by a number of individuals in the school ecology, including learners. It is argued that whenever the issue of school violence is raised, most people think of violence perpetrated against learners; however, this study revealed that although parents and other colleagues were the offenders of violence, teachers experience victimisation commonly instigated by learners (Anderman et al., 2014). Like that study, the current study revealed that learners do perpetrate violence against teachers. The following findings demonstrate some of the school factors contributing to the violent behaviour of learners perpetrated against teachers from the teachers' perspective:

“I think one of the reasons why learners display disruptive behaviour is that most classes are full and teachers are unable to pay attention to each child's needs. As a result, those who experience difficulties coping with school work become aggressive. They become frustrated and this frustration leads to violent behaviour.” (Teacher C)

The transactional analysis theory is of the view that positive interactions between teachers and learners inhibits development of misbehaviour at school, whereas a negative teacher-learner relationship adversely affect learners' psychosocial adjustment and may contribute to escalated aggression. According to Estevez et al. (2013), a positive school environment exists when learners feel happy, valued and socially accepted based on the support they receive and mutual respect and trust among themselves and their teachers.

Maunder and Tattersall (2014) are of the view that it is not informative to study school violence without considering community factors influencing learners' maladaptive behaviour.

As reiterated in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, schools are embedded within communities and in many ways reflect larger community-level processes. Lam et al. (2010) also pointed out that the largest correlates of school disorders are characteristics of the school's population and the community context. Schools in urban, poor, and disorganised environments experience much more violence than schools in rural and suburban areas (Lam et al., 2010).

It is obligatory that every public school in South Africa have a code of conduct for learners, aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of quality teaching and learning processes. According to Fivush and Merrill (2016), schools with a clear mission and strong standing against violence have lower rates of violence. However, many South African schools, whether rural, urban or suburban, report violent behaviour by learners against teachers and other learners. This is incongruent with the efforts that government has made to fight against school violence.

The findings of this study suggest that teacher-targeted violence occurs across all different settings, namely urban, rural and townships, although the nature of violence may vary. These findings concur with Anderman et al.'s (2014) findings that in terms of community setting, the rate of teacher victimisation is higher in township areas compared to rural and urban areas, yet teacher victimisation is present across all three different settings. This suggests that what is typically perceived as a township or urban problem is not confined to those areas, but is distributed across all settings.

5.3.3.7 Community factors

The data generated through in-depth interviews, the focus group and teacher narratives confirmed that various factors in the community where learners live play a critical role in the violent behaviour they exhibit against teachers in schools. The majority of the participants believe that use of substances, such as alcohol and drugs, is a major factor in learner violence. They expressed that these substances are easily accessible in the communities of Pinetown District.

As highlighted, the participants in this study argued that substance use in the school premises plays a detrimental role in learners' violent behaviour against teachers:

“As I mentioned earlier on about the child that fought with my colleague, he was smelling tobacco. There are drugs in our communities, children have access to them.”

(Teacher A)

The sentiment by Teacher A demonstrates the causal link between learners’ use of substances and violence against teachers. This participant shared an experience of a teacher who had a fight with a learner who was smelling of cigarettes. This extract also serves as evidence that learners do use substances, even on the school premises.

Teacher B further shared a similar sentiment:

“As I have said, learners are exposed to various negative things in the communities in which they live. There are drugs corner to corner of the streets. Taverns are easily accessible; they are found in every street.”

Teacher B expressed that the area in which she works is surrounded by a high number of shebeens, and it is easy for learners to access alcohol and other substances, even during the break times. It appears that the vendors sell to learners alcohol and drugs without considering their age, while the laws of this country prohibit selling alcohol to people younger than 18 years old. Consistent with current findings, Singh and Steyn (2013) found a high correlation between the abuse of drugs and violent behaviour among learners in South African schools. Anyio (2015) also concurs with these findings that there is a link between substance abuse and the violent behaviour of learners in the school environment. As Teacher E said in this study:

“The only thing I know is that some have started drinking alcohol. We see them around the area. That’s the only problem I am noting. With drugs I think it’s more happening in those urban areas.”

Teacher E teaches in a rural setting, and mentioned that learners in their area are drinking alcohol, which could lead to maladaptive behaviour at school. Teacher E indicated that he has not observed the use of drugs in their community, which gives a picture that drugs have not spread into their community. There is also no mention of drug abuse by Teacher F, who is also working in the rural area. This suggests that, even though this finding may not be generalised to other rural areas in South Africa, the use of drugs has not become a problem in rural areas, apart from alcohol consumption, which seems to be widespread throughout the different contexts.

The views expressed by participant Teacher D below indicate that learners display violent behaviour in schools due to different reasons. Some learners deliberately violate the rights of others, whereas some are influenced by the pressure exerted by the need for drugs. When they are longing for the drugs, they lose their minds and can do anything to get them:

“Some do it intentionally whereas others are influenced by certain situations they are going through. For instance, you find that a learner wants money to buy drugs. You know these children, when they need drugs, they can do anything. They can break into a house or even cars to get something and sell it. So, sometimes they break into teachers’ cottages and find some staff to sell and get money.”

It is evident from the sentiments of Teacher D that learners engage in various maladaptive behaviours when they need to get drugs, which includes breaking into teachers’ properties and stealing their belongings. Reddy (2013) concurred through the findings of his study that learners might engage in various socially unacceptable activities due to the influence of drug abuse. Anyio (2015) also argued that learners exhibit violent behaviour because of a variety of reasons, such as dealing with stress or to cope with family or community issues.

In support of the view of community as a factor contributing to violence, Teacher E also expressed that an increase in learners’ exposure to home or community violence can influence the prevalence of violence in schools:

“Learners’ behaviour is a good representation of their background. If there is violence in the home or community where they are coming from, they are likely to be influenced to behave in a similar way. If the community is violent, even if violence started from school, it is perpetuated by the community members.”

The extracts indicate that the environment or the community in which learners live may place them in stressful situations and compel them to be aggressive. Learners may experience psychological problems in adjusting to normality and end up believing that violence is the only way to solve problems. As a result, they lose respect to authority figures and are subject to no discipline. These findings are in line with the literature indicating that most learners are involved in violent behaviour because they are exposed to it and they perceive this form of behaviour as normal (Gudyanga et al., 2015).

The overall findings of this study indicate that violence does not occur in a vacuum and it is not an individual thing. It is influenced by the interpersonal transactions occurring among

people in a particular environment. Most adolescent learners become involved in violent behaviour because of the behaviour of the community in which they live. If the community where they grow up is characterised by violence, learners are likely to also be involved in violent actions. Most of the participants in this study stated that there is a high correlation between learners' violent behaviour and the socialisation of the community in which they live. These findings are consistent with the literature that was reviewed. Zengeya (2016) sought to establish the causes, manifestation and impact of classroom aggression on students' physical and mental health and academic performance in urban secondary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. The findings of this study showed that instability in the community plays a detrimental role in learners' aggressive behaviour. If adolescent learners witness violence in the community, they ingrain it which ultimately alters their image and behaviour. As they frequently observe violence, they are likely to expect it at any time, and expect the world to be a hostile place (Zengeya, 2016); this makes them feel easily threatened and respond in an aggressive manner (Garrett, 2014). Mohapi (2014) also pointed out that if learners live in fear of attacks, they need to learn coping skills or survival skills to defend themselves. That is why some of them end up joining gangsters, as a way of protecting themselves (Mohapi, 2014).

In the focus group session Teacher E expressed that when there is a fight starting at school between learners from different villages, you will see young people who are not at the school join in the fight. In that way, instead of mediating or stopping it, they are perpetuating it. This shows that toxic communities perpetuate acts of violence rather than suppressing them. Anderman et al. (2014) postulated that schools that are nested within communities that experience more violence and where organisational structures do not effectively deal with violence may be more likely to produce learners with violent behaviour.

5.3.3.8 Learners' peer pressure

During adolescence learners develop relationships in which there is equality, mutual understanding and reciprocity among the group (Berne, 1957). Peer interaction provides the opportunity for learning specific skills that learners may not learn from other social relationships. Peer groups, particularly in adolescents, play a pivotal role in the development of self-concept. However, the peer group may also influence learners to behave in a manner

that is harmful to others. Children tend to be violent because of peer influence, especially when they are part of a group in which all members are violent. If a learner's friends are violent and exhibit violent acts in school, then they will learn it and also express it in school. The participants in the current study mentioned peer pressure as one of the factors that influence learners to display violent behaviour against teachers. In this regard, the following sentiment give evidence of violent behaviour perpetrated against teachers as a result of peer influences:

“Although I have spoken about anger problems of children, but in most cases it is not that children are venting out their frustrations or anger when they are displaying violent behaviour against teachers. They do it intentionally so that they get approval from the group that they are strong. That’s peer pressure for you.” (Teacher C)

Here Teacher C gives evidence that some learners engage in maladaptive behaviour because of peer influences. Learners engage in these peer groups because they need recognition by and the approval of others. They deliberately violate others' rights in order to be seen as strong.

Some learners are coerced by certain circumstances to display violent behaviour towards other learners and even to teachers:

“I think some children engage in violent behaviour because of peer pressure. Especially those learners that are struggling with school work, they are the ones who mostly present with violent behaviour. You know when they get lower marks in tests, other children laugh at them. They eventually become angry and fight others.” (Teacher D)

Teacher D indicates that some learners are bound to commit violence against other learners and teachers because of the pressure exerted by their peers. Teacher D indicates that learners, especially those that are battling with school work, are prone to emotional problems and subsequently to violent behaviour. They are laughed at by other learners and develop anger, which is then projected onto the people around them. Some become violent alone, whereas others find themselves joining others with bad behaviour. They probably do this because they want something they can excel in or for a sense of belonging. If they cannot do well scholastically, they look for something else that will earn them recognition.

Teacher E also gave testimony on peer influence as a determinant of learners' violent acts against teachers:

“Children as they grow they meet different people whom they interact with. They make friends from the school environment and it happens that they make wrong friendships. So in such cases they get influence from outside the home.”

Estevez et al. (2013) pointed towards the importance of peer relations, postulating that relations with peers may provide beneficial opportunities to learn socially acceptable values and attitudes, and to acquire interpersonal skills such as the ability to resolve conflicts. Some children have social interaction with children of the same age at school for the first time, and these peer relations have a significant effect on their emotions and behaviour. However, as much as peer relations have a positive effect on the learners' emotional development and social competency, some peer relations have a negative influence, leading to the development of maladaptive behaviour. In their study of the aetiology of student's violence, Gudyanga et al. (2015) revealed that learners behave in a certain way due to pressure from other learners. When a learner behaves out of the norm, he/she is thrown out of the group. Because of the fear of rejection, some learners end up displaying negative behaviour that will gain them approval from the group. During secondary school life, the peer group is critical in shaping behaviour. The more positive living experiences learners have, the better it is for the other learners (Gudyanga et al., 2015).

It is clear from the study findings that as much as the peer group provides a positive setting for learners' development, it can also lead to risky behaviour. The peer group not only provides the support for social development that an adolescent learner needs, but also sometimes compels them to conform to maladaptive behaviour, which in the school setting is directed towards school personnel, including teachers.

5.3.3.9 Social factors

Section 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees all citizens protection against violence, cruelty and inhumane treatment. There are a number of legal frameworks, as highlighted in Chapter Two of this study, that aim to protect the rights of all individuals. Although the South African DoE and the South African Schools Act established

policies aimed at combating violence in schools, the issue of school violence remains a public concern. The literature indicates that school violence is prevalent almost all over the globe (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Cluver et al., 2010; Kaya et al., 2012; McGaha-Garnett, 2013; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Anderson, 2016). The findings of the current study indicate that South Africa is no exception regarding the phenomenon of school violence. Most of the participants of this study expressed that the democratic dispensation, particularly the Bill of Rights, played a substantial role in causing violence perpetrated by learners against teachers. The following sentiment provides evidence of this:

“One learner said to me if I ever touched her, she was going to sue me. I feel that teachers on the other hand are not protected. When a teacher penalises a child for a particular displeasing behaviour, they are automatically subject to violation of the Child Protection Law.” (Teacher C)

Teacher C further expressed the following:

“What I realised is that school violence is not unique to us, but what I see is that in South Africa it is easy to get away with it, because there are little or no consequences for the perpetrator’s behaviour.”

These extracts indicate that the problem of violence is not an individual or community-based matter, but a general concern for the country as a whole. Teacher C indicates that learners are given more priority than the teachers in the country. When teachers are disciplining learners, they step on the learners’ toes; however, the disciplinary measures set by the country’s policies are interfering with the learners’ rights. Teacher C also mentioned that as there is poor discipline against learners who exhibit violent behaviour, and teachers eventually endure gross emotional problems such as feelings of powerlessness and uselessness. Subsequent to this, some teachers resort to alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism to deal with the emotional problems associated with learners’ violent behaviour.

The Constitution of the country affords children special and additional constitutional protection because of their vulnerability. Section 28 (1) clearly states that children have the right to be protected against maltreatment, neglect, abuse and degradation. However, it appears that children misinterpret this and use it against the adults, including teachers. Teacher F shared the following extracts with regard to the link between the changes in the Constitution concerning learners’ rights and their violent behaviour against teachers:

“Disciplinary measures have been relaxed by government.”

“You find that a child assaults a teacher and the teacher reports the case. But later on the child is brought back to the same class with the same teacher. Such incidents further break down the entire system of discipline. With this, other learners learn that they will get away with violence.”

The findings from Teacher F indicate that the problems of learner violence that teachers are facing at the microsystem level are caused by the decisions and measures taken by policy makers at the macro level of the bioecological systems model. It appears that as the government places more emphasis on the protection of children’s rights, the disciplinary procedures guiding their misbehaviour are relaxed. This ultimately affords the learners power over the teachers.

Teacher B further alludes to the disciplinary problems that affect the school system, in particular teachers:

“You know lack of proper discipline; that is why today children do not respect adults.”

The extract indicates that poor application of disciplinary action to punishable behaviour of learners encourages them to continue violating teachers. There is an outcry that the DoE, through its district offices, does not do justice to teachers when they have cases against learners. Teacher B further expressed the following in this regard:

“I escalated the case to the circuit manager. I was told to remain at home while the matter was investigated, or he was going to look for another school where I could teach. Indeed I remained at home for about three months; however, there were no positive news until I went back to school.”

One of the participants narrated the following in the focus group:

“When we discipline children, whatever way of discipline we use is against their rights. We don’t know what to do now. Learners use our powerlessness to disrespect us. For instance, when you take a learner out of the class for his or her misbehaviour, you are infringing the child’s right to learn.” (Teacher E)

There is a general feeling that the government banned corporal punishment as a way of disciplining learners in schools. Corporal punishment has now become an illegal act and constitutes a breach of the learners' constitutional rights to be protected against abuse. However, while the government prohibits the application of corporal punishment, there are no clear forms of discipline substituted for it that do not violate learners' rights.

During the focus group session, most of the participants in this study concurred with Teacher E's view that the rights that were promulgated in the new era of South Africa influenced learners to lose respect for adults and exhibit maladaptive behaviour. Learners' knowledge of these rights has caused them to perceive themselves as having power over their teachers and parents. Learners also know that teachers are now scared of disciplining them, because any form of discipline that teachers use might infringe their rights. As a result of this, the learners take advantage by behaving carelessly, and violate others' rights because they know that they will get away with it.

Consistent with the findings of this study, Mthimkhulu (2015) revealed that learners engage in violent behaviour due to the new generation of the introduction of rights. Children end up misusing their rights by behaving recklessly, because they know that there will be no relevant consequences to their maladaptive behaviour (Mthimkhulu, 2015). Similar findings were demonstrated in Reddy's (2013) study, which showed that teachers find it difficult to discipline learners because they are scared of the legal action that learners might take against them.

The findings of this study clearly indicate that there is a causal link between events happening at a high level of the learners' social system and their maladaptive behaviour. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model proposed that events in higher-order social systems influence human development through their impact on events in lower-order social systems.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the themes that emerged from individual interviews with the teachers, the focus group session and teacher narratives in relation to teachers' experiences of learner violence directed against them, the factors predisposing to the

violence, and causes of learner violence as perceived by teachers. It was revealed that teachers experience learner violence in the form of physical, attitudinal and verbal abuse, and endure various emotional responses of shock, fear, worry, confusion, insecurity, demotivation, hopelessness and helplessness. The study demonstrated that teachers attribute violence perpetrated against them as being motivated by their age, gender, and being new in the environment, the teacher's personality and self-presentation, teacher's lack of discipline, teacher's poor communication skills, teacher's poor insight into learners' problems, and teacher's interference in learners' fights.

It is clear from the findings of this study and the discussion thereof that children learn from adults as well as from what they are surrounded with. Thus, there is no single factor that contributes to learners' violent behaviour towards teachers. The theories (bioecological systems and transactional analysis) that were employed to explain the causes of learners' violent behaviour against teachers were able to tackle all of the aspects or ecologies that directly and indirectly influence maladaptive behaviour in learners.

With regard to the contributing factors influencing learners' violent behaviour, teachers confirmed that learner violence stems from individual factors, family issues, community instability, social issues, peer pressure, and school factors. It is also shown that school violence occurs in all three different settings, although the nature of the violence and the causal factors associated with it may differ.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five presented a discussion of the data that were generated by means of in-depth interviews, a focus group and teacher narratives from the sample drawn from three schools from three different contexts. The rationale for using multiple sources of data generation was to ensure that the phenomenon of learner violence against teachers was not viewed from a single perspective, and this gave the researcher a broader range of information from which to make logical inferences. The use of different qualitative methods was also a form of triangulation enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Examining data from more than one source is an important way of triangulating qualitative research data and with multiple methods of data generation the insights gained from teachers could be used to complement and enrich the overall research findings (Cohen et al., 2011). The aim of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in contextually selected high schools in KZN. This chapter presents the main findings of the study, followed by conclusions drawn from the findings. The recommendations that emerged from the findings are highlighted, as are areas for further research.

The data generated responded to the three critical research questions posed in the beginning of the study, namely:

- What are teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools in KZN?
- Why do teachers experience learners' violence in the way that they do?
- What are the reasons behind such violent behaviour of these learners?

Chapter Five of this study responded to, presented and discussed these critical research questions that guided the study. The generated data were compared to the existing literature, and the similarities and differences of the findings were highlighted. Of note were findings that came as a surprise to the researcher. A detailed discussion is presented in the summary of the research findings that follows the reflection on the research journey.

6.2 Mapping out the research journey

This study was undertaken as a result of the high rate of learner violence observed to be overwhelming South African secondary schools. Violence in schools is a serious, pervasive and global problem that affects learners, teachers, parents and all stakeholders involved in the education sector. The motivation for me to pursue this study emanated from the increasingly heightened incidents of violent behaviour in South African schools reported through various media platforms. I observed that whenever there was an incident of violence that attracted the attention of the media, the focus was mostly directed towards the rights and safety of the learners, while overlooking the rights of the teachers to a safe working environment. I believe that teachers are also affected by school violence, even if it is not directed towards them, because all cases end up under the attention of a teacher. Therefore, this study focused on teachers' experiences of learner violence instigated against them. I wanted to gain a deep understanding of teachers' lived experiences of school violence, their feelings attached to violence, and the effects of learner violence on their personal and occupational endeavours. As an educational psychologist, I am quite cognisant that, among other intervention strategies to combat school violence, the intervention of psychosocial services is also crucial. I also believe that the provision of mental health services can play a critical role in helping our communities in fighting the social ills that we are subjected to, particularly learners' violent behaviour.

In crystallising the research journey, I began by exploring the background of school violence internationally and nationally in order to gain insight into the phenomenon. I then formulated the problem statement, which was on the persistence and increase in learner violence, despite the laws and intervention strategies that have been introduced by policy makers and government legislation (Chapter One). The problems of school violence informed the significance of undertaking the current study. In positioning my own study in terms of the existing literature, as a way to fill a gap in the knowledge, I reviewed literature related to teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour (Chapter Two). For the purposes of gaining a deep understanding of the factors influencing violent behaviour, two theoretical lenses were selected, namely the bioecological systems and transactional analysis theories. Through the application of these two theories I was able to make meaning of what makes teachers vulnerable to learner violence, and to gain an understanding of what influences learners to display violent behaviour towards teachers (Chapter Three). The study

further identified and described the paradigm in which the study is located. The research design and methodology were explored and described fully in Chapter Four, and the justification of the data generation methods was explained. Given the amount of data generated in Chapter Five, it was divided into three sections: section 5.3.1 discussed data related to teachers' experiences of learners' violent behaviour; section 5.3.2 described possible reasons for teachers experiencing violence instigated by learners against them; while section 5.3.3 presented and discussed factors influencing learners to be violent towards teachers.

The main intention for conducting this research was to understand secondary school teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools in KZN. Data were generated from six teachers from three different contexts in Pinetown District. Through individual semi-structured interviews, a focus group session and teacher narratives of their experiences of violence by learners, the focus was on exploring teachers' subjective experiences and the observed experiences of their colleagues, their understanding of the reasons why they are susceptible to learner violence, and their perceptions of the causes of learners' violent behaviour against them. It transpired from the findings of this study that violence against teachers does exist in secondary schools in KZN. Moreover, the study showed that there are various reasons for teachers' vulnerability to learner violence. The study also revealed possible causes of learner violence from the perspective of teachers. The information gained from the participants in this study could be useful to the DoE in terms of revising and changing policies to combat violent acts exhibited by learners against teachers.

6.3 Summary of major findings

In response to the critical research questions of this study, various themes emerged from analysis of the data, and these were related to teachers' experiences of violent behaviour of learners, teachers' susceptibility to learners' violent behaviour, and the reasons behind learners' violent behaviour towards teachers. With regard to teachers' experiences of learner violence, the themes which emerged speak to the nature and prevalence of violence by learners against them. Concerning the main reasons for teachers experiencing learner violence, factors relating to their personalities and self-presentation, age, gender, being new in the environment, disciplinary procedures against learners, communication style, insights

into learners' problems, interference in learners' fights, and not reporting violent incidents were revealed. With regard to the reasons for learners to be violent towards teachers, the themes which emerged related to the learners' personal characteristics, biological make-up, contextual factors such as family, school, community, social, and peer pressure, learners' lack of respect, and their emotional problems.

6.3.1 Teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour

School violence is a phenomenon of criminalisation and undermining the rights of others in the educational environment (Anderson, 2016; UNESCO, 2017). The school as a formal institution gives learners the platform to acquire knowledge and shape their character, and teachers and learners are an integral element in schools. Teachers as professionals, have a responsibility of teaching, directing, guiding, training, assessing and evaluating learners with the knowledge and skills they have in the learning process. Learners on the other hand have a task of listening and following instructions, obeying rules, learning and participating in all learning activities given by teachers. However, in the last few years there has been significant disharmony between teachers and learners as evidenced by various incidents of teachers experiencing violence instigated by learners in various areas across the country.

The findings of this study revealed that teachers in high schools in KZN are not exempted from learner violence, like schools abroad. While the findings are based on the experiences of teachers in a specific designated area and on perspectives of a small group of teachers, they offer a glimpse of what teachers are going through on the daily basis. Their experiences of learner violence include the nature of violence they are experiencing, the emotional and psychological experiences attached to violence, and the subsequent effects of violence on their personal, work and social lives. With regards to teachers' experiences of learner violence, various themes emerged and are summarised below:

In line with the research (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Cluver et al., 2010; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Kaya et al., 2012; McGaha-Garnett, 2013; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Anderson, 2016), the current study revealed that violence instigated by learners against teachers is not a taboo to teachers in high schools in KZN. The participants of this study revealed various forms of violence experienced by teachers in their working environments. All the three different settings selected for the study are encountering some form of violence perpetrated against

teachers on a regular basis. Notably, the nature of violence occurring in schools differs from one setting to another depending on the demographic area where the school is located. The various forms of violence experienced by teachers in schools include verbal abuse, learners' disrespectful behaviour towards teachers, learners' physical abuse of teachers, and learners' sexual harassment of teachers.

The current study found that verbal abuse is the most common form of violence that teachers experience. The teachers who participated in this study expressed that verbal abuse against them is common, and are prevalent in the classroom context where teachers mostly interact with learners. Verbal abuse is displayed in different forms, such as threats and insults towards teachers, teachers being called derogatory and sexually harassing words, humiliating teachers, lying to teachers, and whistling at them. Data from in-depth individual interviews and a focus group with teachers indicated that it is not uncommon that teachers are called derogatory words by learners, as more than half of the participants mentioned that they had been insulted or knew of colleague with a history of verbal abuse. These findings concur with empirical data showing that learners use abusive language that targets teachers (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Lokmic et al., 2013; Singh & Steyn, 2014; Zengeya, 2016). It is also apparent that this form of violence occurs across the three different settings, namely rural, urban and township areas. Townships have worse incidents of verbal abuse against teachers, probably because of community factors influencing learner behaviour. Lam et al. (2010) argued that the reason for elevated incidents of verbal abuse in townships is because these areas are equated to a war zone, in comparison to other contexts. In townships, problems are mostly resolved by violence and the learners learn this behaviour from the community in which they live (Lam et al., 2010; Inan, 2014). This finding is consistent with the bioecological systems theory's basic assumption that learners' violent behaviour is influenced by the interpersonal, social, cultural and physical environment surrounding the learner (Bender & Emslie, 2010).

Apart from verbal abuse of teachers by learners, the participants in this study mentioned learners' disrespectful behaviour as one of their experiences in schools. Other than the verbalised form of violence against teachers, learners display nonverbal cues that are intended to exploit teachers emotionally. In line with the findings of the current study, Garrett (2014) revealed that violence against teachers may also be nonverbal, where the learners make offensive gestures or noises, stare at or giggling at teachers, use intimidating facial expressions, throw objects towards a teacher or steal teachers' belongings, and display

disrespectful behaviour towards a teacher. It transpired from the study participants that disrespectful behaviour occurs across all of the different settings, which concurs with the literature (Maharaj, 2011; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

Consistent with previous research (Maunder, 2010), the current study revealed that learners move in and out of the classroom irrespective of the presence of the teacher; others backchat teachers, point at them, swear at them, and even throw papers at them. Parzefall and Salin (2010) also pointed out that learners refuse to obey instructions or humiliate the teacher in front of colleagues or other learners. These undesired and painful experiences that teachers endure are the result of an imbalance in the interaction between them and their learners (Garrett, 2014), congruent with the basic assumption of transactional analysis theory that in order for teachers and learners to have a harmonious relationship in the teaching and learning process, they need to complement each other (Keshavazi et al., 2016).

The study further demonstrated that learners are physically abusive towards teachers. Physical violence, as emerged from the participants' narratives, took the form of beating up teachers, pointing fingers at them, and throwing papers at them. The responses from the teachers showed that threats of violence were prevalent in schools, especially in townships and rural settings. This is significant when looking at the community influences and the values attached to the community. These findings concur with the findings of the literature (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; INTO, 2011; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Espelage et al., 2013; Singh & Steyn, 2014) that teachers do experience physical violence perpetrated by learners. It also emerged that in other cases violence towards teachers is not completely intended, but that they end up being victimised because of the role they play in mediating in learners' fights.

It also emerged from the participants in this study that teachers experience sexual harassment from their learners. Although such behaviour was considered a taboo previously, it has now become a common problem experienced by teachers. Sexual harassment took the form of whistling at a teacher, asking for sex, unwelcomed and offensive words, seducing, and making sexual gestures. The findings of this study shows that teachers have had some experience of sexual harassment (Buck, 2006; Ngakane, 2010; Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Duma, 2013; Netshitangani, 2019; Nhambura, 2020). The findings of this study revealed that both boys and girls initiate sexual behaviours towards teachers. This study differs from previous research, in that there are no findings showing that male

teachers experience sexual harassment by learner, and the learners' sexual harassment towards teachers is predominantly exercised by male learners towards female teachers. This finding came as a surprise to the researcher.

Consistent with the bioecological systems theory, teachers strongly believe that their powerlessness is largely caused by the larger systemic issues influencing the microsystem level. As Bronfenbrenner (1994) argues, the effects of the principles laid down by the macrosystem have a significant influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. Thus, it is evident that teachers have a systemic problem that needs to be addressed by the government at a macrosystem level.

In addition to the nature of violence that teachers experience in their work environment, the participants shared their emotional experiences attached to past traumatic events. The acts of learner violence instigated against teachers were found to be very serious, pervasive, and to have far-reaching consequences. It was evident from the participants' comments that teachers experience violence as an emotional and psychological trauma. The analysed data indicate teachers' strong underlying feelings of trauma as a result of the violent behaviour of learners towards them. The vast emotional problems that teachers are experiencing interfere with their personal, social and work endeavours, as discussed intensively in the previous chapter. These findings are consistent with the literature that was reviewed; for instance, Burton and Leoschut (2013) posited that teachers endure psychological problems as a result of the teacher-targeted violence they are facing in schools, and they feel discouraged to continue with their work. SACE (2011) revealed that many teachers are suffering posttraumatic and depressive symptoms as a result of school-based violence. Mthimkhulu (2015), Wachs (2015) and Hart (2017) further concur and state that teachers are even willing to quit their jobs due to unsafe and hostile school environments. The participant in a study conducted by Bester and Du Plessis (2010) also expressed that she experienced violence as a harsh reality that interfered with her functioning as an educator in many ways, including feeling emotional, negative towards learners, poorly motivated to help learners, and burnt-out. It came to light that although the nature of violence that teachers experience may differ from one demographic area to another, they experience similar emotional reactions to the acts of violence.

It transpired from the participants that as they are teaching in an environment where school violence is prevalent and recurring, they are gradually losing the ethical care of learners,

which is increasingly leading to a diminished capacity to care for learners' development and their lives in general. Nonetheless, it is interesting to learn from the findings of this study that irrespective of the experiences that teachers are going through in schools, some still hold the view that they have a calling in teaching, have the ability to change the world, and are willing to maintain the morale that will enable them to enact caring practices towards their learners.

6.3.2 Underlying reasons why teachers experience violence perpetrated by learners

Violence against teachers in schools is a serious problem that has received little attention in the South African society. It is normally talked about when there is an incident that draws the attention of the media, and thereafter no further developments ensue. The prevalence of teacher-targeted violence has invoked the question of why it happens. The findings of this study demonstrated that there are numerous factors contributing to teachers' vulnerability to learners' violent behaviour. Different authors have different understandings of teachers' experiences of learner violence: some researchers understand it as a subjective judgement of the victim (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; Kauppi & Porhola, 2012; Hoffmann, 2013; Garrett, 2014), whereas Hunter (2010) considers it to be an imbalance of power, where the learner is in a greater position of power than the teacher. Fiorilli et al. (2019) alluded to various factors predisposing teachers to learner violence, and these include teacher characteristics, poor consequences for punishable behaviour of learners, gender, age and experience of a teacher, poor conflict management skills, and the background and sexuality of a teacher. The current study revealed that teachers are susceptible to learner violence due to various reasons, including their gender, age, personality and self-presentation, being new in the environment, lack of discipline towards learners, poor communication skills, lack of insight into learners' personal problems, their interference in learners' fights, and not reporting school violence.

The data generated through in-depth interviews, a focus group and teacher narratives confirmed that the gender of a teacher is an important factor in teachers' susceptibility to learner violence. The majority of the participants in this study mentioned gender (although in deferent ways) as inciting some connotations in learners about teachers, which dictate their attitude towards teachers. The findings of this study indicate that both female and male teachers experience learner violence, but female teachers are most often the victims. Given the incidents of violence instigated against women in the country, it is not surprising to find

that female teachers are more often subjected to learner violence in schools. These findings are consistent with the literature, in that both female and male teachers are subjected to school violence. Some studies (Doumen, 2008; Alzyoud et al., 2016; Netshitangani, 2019; Cetin et al., 2020) indicate that female teachers are more victimised by learners, whereas others (Robers, 2013; Lokmic et al., 2013; McMahon & Martinez, 2014) indicate that male teachers are at high risk of learner violence. In contrast, Parzefall and Salin (2010) showed no difference between the amount of violence male and female teachers experience. Of note is that the gender of the teacher determines the nature of the violence that they are subjected to, with male teachers at risk of physical violence and female teachers being susceptible to psychological violence.

It is revealed that the age of the teacher triggers learners' particular view about them, and learners ultimately capitalise on it to victimise teachers. The study revealed that girls display an attitudinal form of violence against female teachers and seduce male teachers. Male teachers are also victimised by both girls and boys, where boys often engage in physical fights with teachers, whereas girls sexually harass male teachers. Learners with violent behaviour perceive young teachers as their peers and they try their luck to engage in love or sexual relationships with them. The study revealed that this form of behaviour is mostly experienced by female teachers. What came as a surprise is that young male teachers also experience sexual harassment by female learners. The participants of this study revealed that most often younger teachers are reportedly subjected to violent behaviour by learners, rather than older teachers.

The findings of the current study concur with those in the literature with regard to the occurrence of violence against teachers on the basis of their age (Cetin et al., 2020). However, the literature showed that older teachers are subjected to learner violence as much as younger teachers are (Alzyoud et al., 2016). In accordance with the transactional analysis theory (Berne, 1957), communication breakdown and poor understanding of the level of communication between two parties play a detrimental role in causing conflict. Lokmic et al. (2013) alludes to the negative correlation between teachers' age and years of experience and the prevalence of violence from learners. Teachers with a great deal of experience in teaching are unlikely to experience violence from learners (Lokmic et al., 2013). This is because as teachers gain experience in working with learners, they gain experience in dealing with learner violence, and learners give respect to older teachers and consider them as authority figures (Cetin et al., 2020).

Further results from the interviews and focus group indicated that newly recruited teachers were subjected to violent behaviour by learners. In addition, being new in an environment was found to make teachers vulnerable to learner violence. Teachers that are newcomers in the school are afforded less respect by learners. It is argued that it is not only the learners who display negative attitudes towards teachers who are not familiar with the culture of the school and its surroundings, but also the community members. This suggests that the learners inherit this kind of behaviour from the community in which they live, as explicated by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, in that the environment plays a crucial role in influencing individuals' behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Ettekal and Mahoney (2017) also argued that the social context in which learners live constantly influences their behaviour. Thus, they learn that people who are not known in their communities are treated differently from the rest of the group.

Apart from the external factors impacting on teachers' susceptibility to learners' violent behaviour, the personality of a teacher and the way they present themselves was found to be a factor contributing to their vulnerability. Most participants in this study mentioned that a teacher's personality and self-presentation determine the attitude of learners towards them and their subsequent behaviour. Teachers who are strict and who do not allow learners free expression of their feelings are at high risk of learner violence. Consistent with the literature, Tzou and Chen (2011) pointed out that teachers who display a negative attitude towards learners make learners develop negative feelings about them. As a result, they lack respect, become rebellious, angry and violent towards the teacher (Tzou & Chen, 2011). As the transactional analysis theory explains (Sameroff, 2009), a poor teacher-child relationship creates tension and results in maladaptive behaviour. The results of this study also indicate that teachers with reserved personalities are more likely to be victimised by learners than the extroverted teachers. Lira and Gomes (2018) and Cetin et al. (2020) also argued that teachers who isolate themselves and are not willing to share their personal experiences with others are likely to suffer learner violence. From a transactional analysis perspective, teachers can affect learners' reactions with their approach and the way in which they present themselves (Overstreet & Braun, 2000).

The findings of this study further indicated that despite teachers' personal characteristics, poor communication skills, and incompetence, poor channels for learner discipline predispose teachers to learner violence in schools. The study results show that poor disciplinary measures against learners with deviant behaviour has a negative impact on teachers'

susceptibility to school violence perpetrated by learners. Teachers expressed that even though they understand that school violence is an endemic issue, in South Africa there are no practicable, relevant consequences for punishable behaviour of learners. When teachers apply punitive measures against learners with violent behaviour, the punishment is perceived by the learners as abuse, and the laws of the country seem to be more on the side of learners. The reason for the occurrence of this problem could be understood as a socio-political matter in the macrosystem of bioecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner posited that the effects of the principles and laws laid down by the macrosystem level have a significant influence throughout the interactions of all of the other layers (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This means that the laws enacted at a national level in relation to learner discipline directly or indirectly affect teachers at the microsystem level.

Teachers with poor communication skills were found to be at high risk of learner victimisation. The findings of this study indicate that teachers who engage with learners in a disrespectful manner trigger a negative response to their behaviour in learners. The misunderstanding that is consequent to teachers' poor communication leads to violent behaviour on the part of learners. Cetin et al. (2020) argue that in order for teachers to understand the character of the learners they teach and their individual needs, they need to possess good communication skills. Consistent with the literature (Keshavazi et al., 2016; Sukyadi, et al., 2017), this study demonstrated that sometimes learners behave violently towards teachers as a response to the negative attitude of teachers displayed towards them. This, from a transactional analysis theory point of view (Berne, 1957), leads to learners' violent behaviour.

In addition to the teachers' poor communication skills, teachers' inability to recognise learners with personal problems was found to be a factor that contributed to teacher-targeted violence. The analysed data indicate that teachers' poor understanding and consideration of learners' personal experiences, emanating either from home, school or the community, has a negative impact on learners' behaviour. The study revealed that teachers who lack insight into learners' personal problems act in a manner towards them that aggravates the emotional or psychological turmoil they are experiencing. Even though they may not intend to cause harm to learners, learners perceive their behaviour or actions as bullying, which consequently leads to emotional breakdown. Learners then ultimately respond in a negative way, which also triggers anger from the teacher. This argument is in keeping with the transactional analysis theory (Berne, 1957), which states that violence between two people is grounded in

the nature of the reciprocal relationship which they have. In addition to this, teachers' lack of adequate competencies to deal with learners with emotional problems was found to be a serious problem in this study. In support of these findings, Mashaah (2016) argued that in some cases learners behave violently against teachers not because they intend to cause harm to them, but due to teachers' poor problem-solving skills. Moreover, Alzyoud et al. (2016) expressed that teachers lack the professional competencies to deal with learner violence, because after their graduation with junior degrees they do not up-skill themselves through continuous professional development (CPD), with courses that capacitate them about student psychology and student needs. The overall findings of this study are consistent with the reviewed literature (Tzou & Chen, 2011; Kheswa, 2015; Alzyoud et al., 2016; Mashaah, 2016; Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017), in that teachers' lack of understanding of learners' needs creates conflict between the two parties.

It is also evident from the analysed data that teachers endure more pain inflicted by learners because they sometimes do not report incidents of violence. The participants in this study mentioned that it is not helpful for them to report incidents of learner violence, and they are scared that they may become targets of further abuse by learners. However, this behaviour is experienced as a psychological conundrum by teachers, because either way, the violence continues. When they report violence, they become targeted for further violence by learners. However, when they do not report school violence, they are subjected to further violence because the perpetrators continue violating others as they realise that their maladaptive behaviour will go unpunished.

6.3.3 Factors influencing learners' violent behaviour

The current study demonstrated several factors influencing the violent behaviour of learners, which are both internal and external to the learner. The participants in this study perceive learner violence to be caused by various factors, ranging from the learner's personal characteristics to environmental influences, and their views are consistent with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory which states that the environment is crucial in shaping an individual's behaviour. This study established that learner violence is influenced by their personal characteristics, biological factors, lack of respect, their emotional problems, family factors, school factors, community factors, peer pressure, and social factors. These

findings are consistent with the reviewed literature (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Cluver et al., 2010; Kaya et al., 2012; Reynolds, 2013; Ugwu, 2017; Sezer, 2021) on various factors influencing learners' violent behaviour against teachers, which include biological, psychological, social, cultural, political, and economic factors.

Among several factors impacting negatively on learners' violent behaviour against teachers, the personal characteristics of learners were found to be a contributing factor in the current study. Some learners are predisposed with personality traits that make them vulnerable to using violence; they are born with a diathesis, such as aggressive traits, which are triggered by an external stimulus. As a result, learners easily engage in violent activities, more so than learners who do not possess similar traits. Some learners with low intellectual functioning and those with learning disabilities are prone to emotional problems. Due to their difficulty in coping with school work, they are subjected to bullying, such as being laughed at and teased by other children. They subsequently develop anger and exhibit this in the form of violent behaviour. Consistent with the current study, Burton and Leoschut (2013) posited that intrinsic factors such as impulsivity and antisocial personality traits may play a detrimental role in the development of children's violent tendencies. Maharaj (2011) also contended that learners with an intrinsic motivation to be powerful exhibit violent behaviour. It was also discovered that learners with poor problem-solving skills are more likely to engage in violent behaviour towards other learners and the teachers. This finding concurs with Sezer's (2021) argument that learners' inability to solve problems and cope with stressors leads to violent behaviour.

In addition to the internal factors influencing learner violence, biological make-up proves to be another contributing factor. The study demonstrated that due to hormonal changes in boys when they reach adolescence, they perceive themselves as adults and do not consider teachers as authority figures. Girls are also found to go through biological experiences that make them susceptible to violent behaviour. The pains they experience when they are menstruating make them irritable. In such instances, when learners are engaged in challenging scholastic content they easily get frustrated and lose temper. As a result, they could respond harshly and violently towards other learners and teachers in the school context. These findings are on par with those of previous research (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Govender, 2015; Fatima & Malik, 2015; Mthimkhulu, 2015; Zengeya, 2016) that children's predisposing factors, such as a chemical imbalance, traumatic head injury, normal hormonal changes and neurotoxin exposure, drive them to act violently and impulsively. In line with the bioecological systems

theory, the child's biological disposition and environmental forces shape their development (Woolfolk & Allen, 2010).

One of the important qualities of life that enable people to establish and sustain good relationships is respect for others. Without mutual respect between two parties in any interpersonal relationships, conflict prevails. The participants expressed that learners exhibit violent behaviour towards teachers as a result of a poor degree of respect for others. These findings are in keeping with the literature that reveals that lack of respect of learners towards teachers plays an integral role in learner violence instigated against teachers (Reddy, 2013; Tareef, 2016). It is also interesting to note that some learners display aggressive and maladaptive behaviour towards teachers as a consequence of the disrespectful behaviour displayed by teachers. The study participants stated that some teachers have behavioural problems and are found to do things that are not expected of a teacher, which in turn affects their image and dignity, and learners' response to them.

Although the study focused on teachers' experiences of violent behaviour instigated by learners towards them, it is evident from this study that learners also experience major emotional problems that need the attention of an adult. The analysed data demonstrated that learners who have emotional instabilities due to various life stressors tend to react violently whenever they are faced with challenging situations.

With regard to environmental factors influencing learner violence against teachers, the findings of this study indicated that family factors play a major role, which varies depending on family structure and lifestyle. Family circumstances highlighted in this study include families where parents lack in giving parental supervision to their children, where parents are alcoholics, those with domestic violence, with unclear boundaries in the family subsystems, and families with low socio-economic status. All of these experiences of neglect, abuse and poverty have a negative impact on the learners' emotional and behavioural disturbances. As mentioned by the participants, and in keeping with Bronfenbrenner's theory, instability in the family, lack of parents' support to children, poor communication, and poor discipline in the family influence learners to develop violent behaviour. Previous research findings (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Singh & Steyn, 2013; Mthimkhulu, 2015; Fatima & Malik, 2015; Fivush & Merrill, 2016) concur with the current study findings with regard to family factors as contributing to learners' violent behaviour. This study indicates that learners from all

different demographic settings experience some form of family-related problems that influence their behaviour.

Within the microsystem level of a learner, the school environment was found to have an impact on learner violence. Issues relating to class size, lack of sufficient staff, full classes, poor attention of teachers to learners who need extra support, and poor teacher-child relationships were found to place learners at risk of developing aggressive and violent behaviour. The study participants also mentioned that the lack of support that teachers receive from the DoE encourages learners to continue violating others' rights. Within the community as a microsystem, various factors impact negatively on learners' maladaptive behaviour. The majority of the participants believe that substance use, such as alcohol and drug abuse, is a major factor in learner violence. It is indicated that some areas, especially townships, are surrounded by a high number of shebeens, and it is easy for learners to access alcohol and other substances, even during break time. These findings concur with those of previous research (Singh & Steyn, 2013; Anyio, 2015) that there is a link between substance abuse and the violent behaviour of learners in the school environment. Although this study is not amenable to generalisation, it transpired from the participants that the use of drugs has not become prominent in rural areas – with the exception of alcohol consumption, which seems to be widely spread throughout the different contexts. Community violence was also regarded by the participants as contributing in influencing learners to normalise violence and practice it in the school context.

The participants in this study mentioned peer pressure as one of the factors that influence learners to display violent behaviour towards teachers. The respondents indicated that learners tend to be violent because of peer influences, especially when they are part of a group in which all members are violent. Consistent with the findings of the current study, Gudyanga et al. (2015) postulated that when learners behave out of the norm, they are thrown out of the group; given their fear of rejection, they end up displaying negative behaviour that will gain them approval from the peer group.

Within the macrosystem ecology of learners, the current study found that the new generation is afforded more rights than the teachers in schools by the Constitution of the country. During data analysis it was discovered that learners abuse the rights afforded by the Constitution to the point that they overpower their teachers. Most of the participants in this study are unhappy about the democratic dispensation because they feel that the Bill of Rights

emphasises the rights of children over those of adults. It is believed that the disciplinary measures set by the country's policies interfere with the learners' rights, leaving teachers not knowing how they should deal with maladaptive behaviour. Similarly, Govender (2015) revealed that teachers are disrespected as a result of the new generation of children's rights seeming to be given priority over the rights of teachers. Also, Reddy's (2013) study showed that teachers find it difficult to discipline learners because they are scared of legal action that learners might take against them. Thus, learners exploit the rights afforded to them by violating the rights of teachers, because they are cognisant that they cannot be punished.

In keeping with the chronosystem, related to all of the subsystems of bioecological systems theory, some learners have an understanding that the only way to solve problems is through violent behaviour. Their rights, as promulgated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, contribute negatively to violating teachers' dignity, because the learners know that the teachers cannot do anything to them, as no clear disciplinary actions against punishable behaviour are given. Teachers are of the view that all of the disciplinary measures that are in place today impinge on children's rights in one way or another. Learners are quite cognisant of the limitations that teachers have in responding to their maladaptive behaviour.

6.4 Conclusion

This thesis reports on an exploratory case study focusing on teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools in KZN, particularly in Pinetown District. This thesis has demonstrated that despite the legislative frameworks put in place by government to combat violence in South African schools, there is little to suggest that these laws are achieving their intended outcomes. The views of participants of this study highlight and advance our understanding of multifaceted influential contexts and interactions, which according to the theoretical lenses of the study (bioecological systems theory and transactional analysis theory) account for teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour. There is an increasing prevalence of violence instigated against teachers by learners in schools abroad, and it is evident that schools in this sample do not fall behind in this negative trend. It has transpired that violence in schools occurs irrespective of the demographic area, age and gender of teachers. It seems that there is no question as to whether it will happen – the concern is about the frequency of its occurrence. The study revealed

various forms of violence experienced by teachers in schools, and these include verbal abuse, learners' disrespectful behaviour towards teachers, learners' physical abuse of teachers, and learners' sexual harassment of teachers. The incidents of violence that teachers are facing are experienced as an emotional and psychological trauma.

The study further identified factors that contribute to teachers being susceptible to violence perpetrated by learners against them. The various reasons attributed to such violent behaviours against teachers include the gender and age of a teacher, teachers' personality and self-presentation, being new in an environment, teachers' lack of discipline towards learners, teachers' poor communication skills, teachers' lack of insight into learners' personal problems, teachers' interference in learners' fights, and teachers' tendency of not reporting school violence. The study also aimed to establish factors influencing learner violence from the teachers' viewpoint. The overall findings indicate that violence does not occur in a vacuum, and it is not an individual thing; it is influenced by the interpersonal transactions occurring among people in a particular environment. More specifically, the study revealed that factors such as learners' personal characteristics and biological factors, learners' lack of respect for others, emotional problems, family factors, school factors, community factors, peer pressure, and social factors, have a negative impact on learners' violence instigated against teachers.

6.5 Contribution of the study

I believe that this piece of research contributes to the existing body of knowledge based on understating teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in high schools. The use of in-depth interviews, a focus group session and teacher narratives allowed a deep understanding of teachers' experiences of learner violence, reasons for their susceptibility to learner violence, and their attributions about causal factors of learner violence. The overall factors contributing to teachers' susceptibility to learner violence and the factors influencing learner violence are consistent with the bioecological systems and transactional analysis theories. The study brought awareness of what teachers are going through on a daily basis, and established new insights into the negative impact of learner violence on teachers. The knowledge created through this study can assist policy makers, DoE personnel, teachers, and mental health professionals tackling the problem of school

violence in high schools in KZN. The application of bioecological and transactional analysis theories yielded a new model of understanding school violence to be adopted for other similar research on social unrest. There should be an integrated approach that incorporates all stakeholders involved in the upbringing of children, including parents, community members, teachers, government personnel from local to national level, and relevant departments.

6.6 Areas for further research

The study was confined to one district with a small sample, and therefore the results are not amenable to generalisation to other districts in the country. Further research should extend to study teachers' experiences of learners' violent behaviour in other parts of the country.

6.7 Limitations of the study

As much as this study yielded fruitful information regarding teachers' lived experiences of school violence, the study also has a limitation that should be taken into account when reading the results. The major limitation of this study is that the data were generated from a small sample of six participants in one district of KZN. The interviews were also conducted virtually due to the national lockdown regulations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the researcher could not observe the participants when they were narrating their lived experiences.

6.8 Recommendations

The recommended strategies to curb violent behaviour perpetrated against teachers, as transpired from the viewpoints of the participants in this study, are to target the policy makers from national government, the DBE, high schools, and teacher training institutions. In light of the findings above, the following recommendations are made:

- Given the prevalence of learner violence perpetrated against teachers, there is a strong need for awareness seminars and workshops at a school level that are aimed at providing psycho-education to learners about the impact of violence on the school community.

- There is a need for the availability of mental health services in schools. The DoE should expedite access to mental health practitioners in the form of educational psychologists, registered counsellors and social workers.
- The study showed a need for trainee teachers to be equipped with the necessary skills to cope with and manage school violence. The practising teachers should up-skill themselves through CPD, with professional training programmes focusing on handling violent behaviour of learners in schools.
- There are no clear disciplinary procedures promulgated by policy makers that do not interfere with the rights of learners as stipulated in the Bill of Rights of the Republic of South Africa. As a result, teachers are faced with a conundrum with regard to the disciplinary actions they should take against the punishable behaviour of learners. Thus, it is recommended that the policy makers review the existing measures and amend them accordingly.
- Deriving from the interpretivist paradigm and guided by the two theoretical frameworks, there is a need to establish an integrative approach to combat school violence, and a collaborative effort from all stakeholders involved in the education sector is recommended.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



10 September 2020

Mr Xolani Simangaye Fakude (219091629)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Fakude,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001542/2020

Project title: Teachers Experiences of Teaching Learners with Violent behaviour in KwaZulu-Natal High Schools: A Case of High Schools in KwaZulu-Natal

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 07 September 2020 to our letter of 19 August 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 10 September 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

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

Appendix B: Gatekeeper's letter



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma
Ref.:2/4/8/2062

Tel: 033 392 1063

Mr Xolani Simangaye Fakude

Email: xolanifakude@yahoo.com
Cell: 0729889297

Dear Mr Fakude

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **“Teachers’ Experiences of Teaching Learners with Violent Behaviour: A Case of Contextually Selected High Schools in KwaZulu-Natal”**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 28 October 2019 to 10 January 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.

Please note that your research and interviews will be limited

Appendix C: Counselling Psychologist Consent Form

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 31 October 2019



Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
ASHWOOD
3605
03 September 2020

Dear Mr S.M. Makhanya

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT TO THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

I am Xolani Simangaye Fakude a Doctor of Philosophy student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education (Edgewood Campus). As part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, I am required to conduct research and interview teachers as the participants of the study.

My study title: " Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Learners with Violent Behaviour: A Case of Contextually Selected High Schools in KwaZulu-Natal". The study aims to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in KwaZulu-Natal High Schools. Given the nature of the study, it is envisaged that emotional reactions related to their past traumatic experiences may be evoked. Thus, I humbly request your assistance in this research by providing counselling to the participants of the study during data generation process, should the need arise.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will come to you to discuss the costs of your services, our working relationship and payment arrangements thereof. As an indication of your positive response to my request, please fill the declaration form attached to this letter.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor or the research office whose contact details are as follow:

Supervisor: Dr B. Ndlovu; Tel: 031 260 3670 (office); E-mail: ndlovubl@ukzn.ac.za

Researcher: Xolani Fakude; Cell: 0729889297; Email: xolanifakude@yahoo.com

Research Office: HSSREC-Ethics, Tel: 031 260 8350; Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely

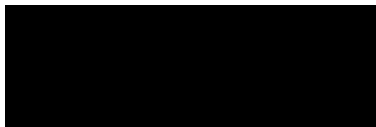
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Mr X.S Fakude

Declaration

I... SIYABONGA MAKHANJA a... COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST

declare that I will be available to provide psycho-social support to the participants of the study conducted by Mr X.S. Fakude. I also confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project for the study.



Signature of the psychologist

Date: 04/ 09/2020

Thank you in advance

Mr X.S Fakude

Appendix D: Registered Counsellor Consent Form



Edgewood Campus

Private Bag X03

ASHWOOD

3605

03 September 2020

Dear Mr M.B. Nxumalo

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT TO THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

I am Xolani Simangaye Fakude a Doctor of Philosophy student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education (Edgewood Campus). As part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, I am required to conduct research and interview teachers as the participants of the study.

My study title: " Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Learners with Violent Behaviour: A Case of Contextually Selected High Schools in KwaZulu-Natal". The study aims to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in KwaZulu-Natal High Schools. Given the nature of the study, it is envisaged that emotional reactions related to their past traumatic experiences may be evoked. Thus, I humbly request your assistance in this research by providing counselling to the participants of the study during data generation process, should the need arise.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will come to you to discuss the costs of your services, our working relationship and payment arrangements thereof. As an indication of your positive response to my request, please fill the declaration form attached to this letter.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor or the research office whose contact details are as follow:

Supervisor: Dr B. Ndlovu; Tel: 031 260 3670 (office); E-mail: ndlovubl@ukzn.ac.za

Researcher: Xolani Fakude; Cell: 0729889297; Email: xolanifakude@yahoo.com

Research Office: HSSREC-Ethics, Tel: 031 260 8350; Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely

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Mr X.S Fakude



UNIVERSITY OF TM
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

Declaration

I Mphokozisi B. Nkomo a Registered Counsellor

declare that I will be available to provide psycho-social support to the participants of the study conducted by Mr X.S. Fakude. I also confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project for the study.

Signature of the Registered Counsellor [REDACTED] Date:

04/09/2020

Thank you in advance

Mr X.S Fakude

Appendix E: In-depth Interview Consent Letter



University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
ASHWOOD
3605
17 October 2019

Dear teachers

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN MY RESEARCH

I am a Doctor of Philosophy student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus, in the faculty of education. As part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy I am required to conduct a research and to interview teachers. I humbly request you to participate in this research because I hope that you are in a good position to provide me with valuable information in this study.

The study aims to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in KwaZulu-Natal High Schools. It is hoped that the study will bring about insight into understanding the nature, extent and effects of learners' violent behaviour in schools; therefore, by understanding their situation will enable relevant stakeholders to render appropriate intervention.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will come to interview you at a time convenient to you. I will give you the note books where you will write your experiences or observations and how you respond to that. I would also urge you to participate in a focus group together with other participants. Nothing more will be expected from you.

Please note that you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

For more information, kindly contact the following personnel.

Supervisor contact details	UKZN Research Office	Researcher's/ Student's contact details
Dr B. Ndlovu Tel: 031 260 3670 (office) E-mail: ndlovubl@ukzn.ac.za	Mariette Snyman HSSREC-Ethics Tel: 031 260 8350	Xolani Fakude 0729889297 xolanifakude@yahoo.com

As an indication of your positive response to my request, please fill in assent form attached to this letter.

I will greatly appreciate your help.

Yours Sincerely

.....
ASSENT DECLARATION

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

 YES NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

 YES NO

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?

 YES NO

Audio recording

 YES NO

Focus groups

 YES NO

Signature of a teacher

Date



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

 INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Private Bag X03

ASHWOOD

3605

Date.....

Informed consent declaration

I.....the.....

I fully give consent to my participation in this research study. I give consent to that the interview may be audio recorded and that I will participate in a group discussion. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my participation at any point without penalty.

Preferred method of contact (please circle):

home / cell / office phone / e-mail

Contact info:

 (number)

 (e-mail)

.....

.....

Signature

Date

Audio recording

YES

NO

Focus groups

YES

NO

Appendix F: School Consent Form



Attention: The Principal

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am Xolani Simangaye Fakude a Doctor of Philosophy student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree requirement, I am required to conduct research. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct this research at your school February to March 2020 at any time convenient to you.

My study title: “Teachers’ Experiences of Teaching Learners with Violent Behaviour: A Case of Contextually Selected High Schools in KwaZulu-Natal”. The purpose of the study is to understand teachers’ experiences of teaching learners with violent behaviour in KwaZulu-Natal High school. The planned study will focus on purposively selected participants which are the teachers. Data will be generated through semi-structured interviews and focus groups and narrative analysis. The confidentiality of participants will be protected. In this regard, pseudonyms will be used Instead of school and participant’s names. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Participation will always be voluntary, meaning withdrawal can be done at any time without any harm. Kindly note that there will be no financial benefits that the participant may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project. The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview. The participants will be contacted in advance about the interview dates and times.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor or the research office whose contact details are as follow:

Supervisor: Dr B. Ndlovu; Tel: 031 260 3670 (office); E-mail: ndlovubl@ukzn.ac.za

Researcher: Xolani Fakude; Cell: 0729889297; Email: xolanifakude@yahoo.com

Research Office: Mariette Snyman; HSSREC-Ethics; Tel: 031 260 8350

Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely

Mr X.S Fakude



Declaration

I,..... the principal of..... give the consent to Mr Xolani Fakude to conduct his study at my school provided that the study will not interfere with the official business of the school. I also confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project for the study.

Signature of the principal: Date:

Signature of witness: Date:

Thank you in advance

Mr X.S Fakude

.....DETACH AND RETURN.....

Appendix G: Editor's Report

Leverne Gething, M.Phil. *cum laude*

PO Box 1155, Milnerton 7435; cell 072 212 5417

e-mail: leverne@eject.co.za

16 May 2022

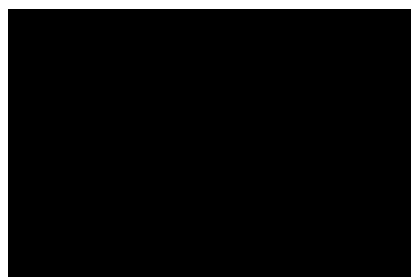
Declaration of editing of PhD thesis for submission to UKZN

TITLE: Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Learners with Violent Behaviour: A Case of Contextually Selected High Schools in KwaZulu-Natal

I hereby declare that I carried out language editing of the above thesis on behalf of Xolani Simangaye Fakude.

I am a professional writer and editor with many years of experience (e.g. 5 years on *SA Medical Journal*, 10 years heading the corporate communication division at the SA Medical Research Council), who specialises in Science and Technology editing - but am adept at editing in many different subject areas. I have edited a great deal of work, including academic papers and theses, for various academic journals, universities and publishers.

I am a full member of the South African Freelancers' Association as well as of the Professional Editors' Association.



Yours sincerely

LEVERNE GETHING leverne@eject.co.za

Appendix H: Turnitin Certificate



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Learners who exhibit maladaptive behaviour present significant challenges to their adult caregivers, peers, and others they interact with. Anderson (2016) asserted that the demonstration of problem behaviour early in a child's life is predictive of various negative developmental outcomes such as drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, violence, and school dropout in the later years of schooling. Moreover, learners who lack social, emotional, and behavioural competence receive less mental health services and, when coupled with the potential for serious negative outcomes, are at a significant disadvantage in the classroom setting (Markowitz, Carlson & Frey, 2006).

There are a variety of influences on human development, including but not limited to biological factors, family circumstances, community, socio-economic status, and neighbourhood influences. In addition, the impact of the school and, particularly, classroom

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