

Teachers experiences on learners' violent behaviour in highschools

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Abstract

The aim of the study reported here was to investigate the experiences of teachers on learners' violent behaviour in South African high schools. The study followed the qualitative approach with Case study as research design. Interpretive paradigm was used to explore teachers' experiences on learners' rising violent behaviour. Purposive sampling was used to select 8 teachers with a working experience of 5 years upwards. Data was collected using individual semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Archer's Social Realistic theory, supplemented with Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecology were used as a theoretical lens to examine teachers' experiences on learner violence in high schools of the circuit under study. Descriptive content analysis was used to analyse the data. The study's findings revealed that indiscipline is the root cause of learner violence in schools and that teachers lack support from other external relevant stakeholders when dealing with learner violence in schools. Teachers are faced with the situation being alone hence the unceasing rise of learner violence. We conclude that various stakeholders in education need to collaborate and come up with better strategies to assist learners develop acceptable behaviour to eradicate learner violence in schools. The study recommended an integrated approach of dealing with learner violence in schools.

Keywords: Teachers, learners, violence, schools, stakeholders

Introduction and Background of the study

South African secondary schools are much concerned with violent behaviour of learners where teachers no longer feel safe to execute their work professionally. Learners' unruly behaviour of violence in schools creates an unpleasant atmosphere for successful teaching and learning to take form. To this, the South African Government showed interest by putting in place Act 84 of 1996 (SASA). This policy also aims at protecting teachers against violence by learners. Bhardwaj (2017:97), states that learners are being aggressive and recalcitrant day by day due to too much freedom they have and claiming that they have rights, forgetting that every right comes with responsibility. Botha (2016: 127) further reiterates that the matter is worsening as teachers have a low working morale. Elijah Mhlanga, as quoted by Child, 2017: 105, agrees that some teachers even resort to resigning and young teachers are pursuing other professions.

Internationally Beijing, in China, learners assaulted a young teacher, went as far as throwing dirt and used tissue papers from a rubbish bin on him (Sean, 2017:202). Egbochuku (2017:162) claims that there is a high rate of absenteeism of teachers in Ghanaian schools due to the violence they encounter from learners. Kibria, Yanti and Ibrahim (2016: 192) claim that learners are given much power than they are supposed to have and this causes bad relations in schools. Some learners view violence as a tool to show power over fellow learners and teachers as asserted by (Ominyi, 2013:44), forgetting that it breeds negative outcomes, for example, a learner may be suspended or expelled from school, and can also be arrested (Ronald, 2017:145). Mcube (2012:85) claims that violence could lead to serious physical, emotional and psychological implications for both the teacher and the learners and this can lead to possible barriers to learning. Woundstra (2015:16) indicates that learner violence in schools does not affect only teaching and learning in class, but it also affects the overall well-being of the stakeholders involved. A teacher who experienced violence is left feeling incompetent, less confident and thinking that the work that they do is worthless (De Wet and Jacobs, 2013:119). Moreti, Sakhe and Rampa (2019:44) reiterate that teachers tend to be victims of violence that is caused by learners in schools and it appears that no one takes note of the long effect this has on them. Meriet (2015:113) indicates that teachers constantly make errors in their work as they lose confidence in themselves.

Most studies in South Africa are carried out with the focus of the learner being the victim, the teacher being the perpetrator of violence, like the study of Espelage & De la Rue and the 2013 study of Burton & Leoschut. Some studies focus on the statistics in South African schools, like that of Woundstra et al carried out in Tshwane in 2012 and Smith's study conducted in 2011, and the findings of the NSVS (National School Violence Study) of 2012, but currently there is no study that I know of that was carried out on the experiences of teachers with regard to learner violence in South Africa, especially in Lepelle4 circuit. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the teachers' perspective on learner violence in the schools of Lepelle4 Circuit in Limpopo.

Research Problem

Schools are meant to be sites where effective teaching and learning takes place. However, this appears not to be the case in some schools. South African schools have turned into battlefields where learners are displaying various violent behaviours that compromise the quality of education. It is evident that violence in learners has now become our day-to-day reality. According to Meriet (2015:57), schools have witnessed scenes of violence by learners, be it among themselves or towards their teachers. Teachers work with fear and no longer feel comfortable in the school environment (Child, 2017). There seems to be a high rate of learner violence in South African schools.

Even though learner violence is not a new concept, Botha (2016:116) indicates that the problem of learner violence in schools is turning into a nightmare, especially because learners are no longer fighting amongst themselves, but escalated towards their teachers. Woudstra et al (2018: 198), add that teachers find it difficult to teach in situations whereby they must think of how to defend themselves, because learners come to classrooms with weapons. The government has come up with different legislation such as the (South African School Act) that regulate safety in schools, the problem continues to exist. So far, there are studies that were carried out on the impact of violence, but none or little is known of the experiences of teachers to this problem. This study seeks to investigate the experiences of

secondary school teachers on violence that take place in schools, in order to bring about the measures that can assist curb the problem.

The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' experiences on learners' violent behaviour with the view to suggest possible measures which can be implemented in schools to minimize and eventually eradicate learner violence in schools

Research question

What are the experiences of teachers on learner violence?

Literature review

Literature review discusses information that was published previously about a certain study area, in most cases about a certain phenomenon over a certain period (Chris M, 2010:112). Feak and Swales (2012: 68), define literature review as a review process of going through previously published scholarly studies. De Vos (2011:56) reiterates that literature review helps the current researcher to understand and establish the importance of the study thus helping in developing new ideas. It also demonstrates knowledge and shows how the current work is situated within and builds on, or departs from earlier publications (Feak and Swales, 2012: 72).

For this study, reviewing of literature will give a guide on what has been already highlighted and pave a way of finding other important facts not yet brought forward by previous researchers. It will also assist in giving a detailed understanding of the state of violence in our schools and what schools can do to help curb learner violence.

Violence as a challenge in schools

Violence is understood as often or prolonged exposure to hostile acts mostly accompanied by physical force which leaves the victim feeling uncomfortable, traumatized, physically injured or dead (Momberg, 2011:183). He further states that this may be caused by personal vendettas, or maybe the perpetrator feels they have a score to settle hence make their victim feel uncomfortable and unable to cope with the situation. It is also defined as the use of superior powers and influence or a group to make the other person or people feel intimidated, (Sorge, 2013:117). It is also defined as building up of negative reactions occurring more often and over a period of time, which is directed to victims with learners as perpetrators (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013:196).

Learner violence has now become an international problem that yields negative results as it creates uncomfortable climate in schools and deprives learners the right to learn undisturbed if not quickly attended and dealt with (Egbochuku, 2007:243). A teacher is regarded as an indispensable unit in teaching and learning. Daljevic (2014:78) mentions that when especially their learners violate a teacher, they feel humiliated and powerless, and they end up fearing going to class. In some cases, they are afraid to involve their superiors and colleagues, as they fear being judged. De Wet and Jacobs (2013:158) believe that violence leaves the victim with short and long-term negativity and may lead to suicide. In Ghana, teachers absent themselves from work, pretending to be sick or having some family matters that need their urgent attention, whereas the actual reason is just to avoid coming to school as their morale is low due to the violence they witness from their learners (Egbochuku, 2007:247). Cassey-Cannon and Gowen (2011:184) report that in Ghana, most teachers witnessed learner violent behaviours in their classes and have become reluctant to attend periods.

Michael (2018:114), states that lately in the United States learners perpetrate violence against their teachers knowing very well that nothing will be done to them and that since corporal punishment has been outlawed. As a result, learners feel that no form of punishment is painful enough to discourage them from behaving anyhow at school (Chris, 2010:127). Duran (2009:129) adds that learners feel that they have more rights and power than their own teachers do and for a learner to realize that, feels like an achievement to them. Gordon (2017:120) claims that parents somehow have an impact on learner violent. Parents who speak ill against teachers, degrading and challenging their classroom rules in the presence of their children indirectly promote this kind of behaviour (Egbochuku, 2017: 249).

Porhola (2012:98) claims that, a higher percentage of perpetrators of violence appears to be male learners. Omoruyi (2012:156) argues that not only male boys have behaviours of violence but in Nigeria, female learners have also shown behaviours of violence, mostly against female teacher and learners. Jacobsen (2019:302) adds that it can be one learner or a group of bullies with a leader giving instructions when and how one group member should attack which teacher or learner. Espelage (2011:202) reiterates that most learners have a history of violent behaviours and could have experienced violence themselves directly or witnessed violence particularly at their homes. Moreti, Sakhe and Rampa (2019:146) add that sometimes a learner's violent behaviour can be provoked by something or remarks made by the teacher which is aggravated by the frustrations of the learner when they have failed a task or the grade or sometimes just a mere fact that they despise the teacher. Learners seem to enjoy desecrating teachers by just keeping quite when asked questions during lessons or not writing tasks (Gordon, 2019:322). De Wet (2014:34) claims that learners enjoy using verbal communication to provoke a situation deliberately, knowing that it will make the victim to act back leading to violence, for example, name calling, mocking and mimicking their target. South Africans recently witnessed videos where on learner was beating another while others were watching and cheering, making rounds on different social media platforms, in one unfortunate case, a learner ending by taking her own life.

Woudstra et al (2018:136) indicate that in 2017 South African statistics revealed that 62,1% expressed to be exposed to verbal violence, while 34,6% experience physical violence, on the other hand indirect violence is at 27% and 6.6% is cyber bullied.

Forms violence that occur in schools

3.2.1 Physical violence

According to Gordons (2019:5), physical violence is the most occurring type of violence among learners. It is when the perpetrator uses physical actions to control their victims e.g. slapping, hitting, kicking or shoving, and stabbing (UNESCO, 2017:14).

3.2.2 Sexual harassment

The Equality Act of 2010 defines sexual harassment as unwanted conduct or behaviour of sexual nature with the purpose of violating someone's dignity or creating intimidation, hostile or offensive environment for him or her. Williams (2017:119), claims that sexual harassment is very common in workplaces and most females and 'gay' teachers fall victims to their learners. In a study by TUC and Everyday Sexism, it was also revealed that 52% of female teachers had experienced sexual harassment by their learners.

3.2.3 Relational aggression

This includes manipulative acts such as direct controlling, silent treatment, glare, social alliance, exclusion and rejection, (Porter, 2011:115).

Prejudicial violence

It is when a person is treated badly because of their skin colour, their beliefs or religious practices (Gordon, 2019:6). For example, teasing, maltreating or even killing people living with albinism as if they are not human enough, some abomination or a curse.

3.2.5 Verbal bullying

Bullying comes in many forms but literature reveals that the commonly used form of bullying are verbal bullying. Daljevic (2014:68) defines verbal bullying as when a learner uses verbal language to mock and embarrass their teacher. He adds that it is a commonly used type of bullying in schools by learners towards their teachers.

Cyber bullying

Moreti, Sakhe & Rampa (2019:49) state that learners spend most of their time on their smart phones, tablets and computers socializing, and this creates an opportunity for bully learners to bully fellow learners. Who? further claim that some learners can, and sometimes, make use of the internet or any form of technology to target and harass fellow learners even their teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Yin (2016:113) explains theory as an aspect that explain, predict, and to help understand phenomena, in most cases, they challenge and expand knowledge that already exist. It can hold and/or support a research study.

According to Merriam (2018:112), a theoretical framework is a scaffold or a road map of the study. It gives direction to the current study. The study adopted the Ecological System theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Realistic Social Theory using the morphogenetic approach of sociologist Margaret Archer, developed in 1995. Bronfenbrenner (1979)'s ecological systems theory serves as an umbrella within which the complex factors and interaction that influence violent behaviour can be examined and addressed. It is also called development in context or human ecological theory. With his theory, Bronfenbrenner (1979:35) states that different types of environmental systems influence human development. He further claims that the environments that they come from influence people's behaviours, which could be the community, school or the workplace. The theory identifies five types of environmental systems within which an individual interacts, and they influence the behaviour of individuals in various ways.

Ecological systems are as follows

The Micro system

This system is a setting of life or environment and that directly involves a person and the people a person associates with, such as family, friends, neighbours, church-mates, classmates including the teachers. It is also about the interaction a person has with these social agents. With this system, the theory states that people are not just receivers of the experiences they encounter with other social agents, but they somehow contribute to the environment. When violence occurs, there is a perpetrator and a victim involved. The victim could have intentionally or unintentionally said or done something that triggered the perpetrator to become violent towards the perpetrator (Sincero,2012:184).

The Meso system

Meso system involves the relationships between the micro systems in a person's life. In short, it means the type of relationship that a person has at home has a way of directly

affecting how they relate with other people at school. Most of the violence that occurs amongst learners could be a result of what is happening at their homes. It could be the day-to-day life they are observing at home or be that they are the victims at home and they target weak learners to vent on (Espelage, 2011: 126).

The Exo system

The Exo system is about a link between the context where a person has power and a role to play, and a context where a person has no role. When given too much power, some learners may find an opportunity to mistreat fellow learners leading to violent behaviours (Philippe, 2015:118)

The Macro System

The macro system is about the culture, socioeconomic status of the person or their family, ethnicity and race, and type of community they come from. A learner from a better off family may find it easy to be violent against those from poor families or learner from what others consider 'superior' race harassing a learner from 'inferior' race thinking nothing will be done against them due to their economic status. Archer (1996:321) believes that we are shaped by the culture in which we are raised.

The Chrono system

The chrono system is about the historical changes in a person's life, which may influence their life in future. The violent behaviour that learners show in most cases is as a result of their past experiences and the changes they went through in their previous stages of life (Sincere, 2012:72).

The morphogenetic approach of the realistic social theory of Archer (1995) identifies three theoretical scopes under which human operate, which are structure, culture and social agents. Archer describes structure as a place where people interact with the aim of achieving a common mission. This study relates structure as the school's environmental setting. The theory sees structure as a critical element of the school. A sound structure ensures successful achievement of the organisations' mission (Kane, 2019: 154). Archer's theory defines social agents as stakeholders in the structure who have a culture under which they operate. The culture dictates how things should be done and how the social agents behave in the set structure. This study sees social agents as learners, teachers, non-teaching human resource in the school and departmental reps that exist together in the education structure to ensure that the culture of teaching and learning prevails. Archer's theory illustrates that for a successful teaching and learning culture to prevail in the school structure, the social agents must abide by all rules and respect one another. The problem emanates when one of the social agents, learners, adopts the culture violence that compromises the main objective of the school, which is successful teaching and learning.

1.4.2 Application of theory

According to Archer (1995:56), the term morphogenesis refers to differentiation (genesis) and growth, i.e., change, of the structure of an organization (morpho). The theory refers to the change in structure, culture, and agency. In trying to understand learner violence. The concepts: structure, culture, and agency as theoretical lenses were adopted in this study to interpret how learner violence affects teaching and learning, the wellbeing of the teachers and the manner in which education officials and unions interact regarding this pandemic. On the other hand, the theory of Bronfenbrenner of 1979 indicates the ecological systems that serve as an umbrella within which the complex factors and interaction that

influence learner's violent behaviour can be examined and addressed. It is also called development in context or human ecological theory.

The adoption of the two theories in this study was motivated and guided by their definition of agency. Teachers have an agential role to play in eradicating the culture of violence that exists in school structures. Additionally, as social agents, circumstances do just happen to us. The two theories were a clear indication that no one exists in isolation without any rules that guide how one should conduct themselves. Moreover, that as people, we somehow contribute to situations we find ourselves in.

Methodology

The qualitative research approach was followed in this study. Qualitative research approach was more relevant for this study because it allowed me to gain a depth inside on the teachers' experiences on learners' violent behaviours in secondary schools. Interpretive paradigm was of great significance as it helped in investigating how learners' violent behaviours affect the day-to-day teaching and learning and how teachers and victim learners are directly affected by learner violence. The study focused on Lepelle4 circuit hence case study was more relevant for the study. Semi-structured interviews assisted in getting in depth understanding of how participants and teaching and learning are affected by learner violence. Document analysis made possible to determine if School Governing Bodies are well equipped to handle learner violence as it occurs in schools. Moreover, document review made it possible to determine if school policies of sampled schools include strong measures to prevent violence from occurring in schools. Content or descriptive data analysis was employed to analyse data and was more relevant as it helped present data raw as it is without altering what the participants have said.

Results

This study sought to explore teachers' experiences regarding learners' violent behaviour in schools. The primary aim of the study was to reveal the experiences of high school teachers on learner violence in schools. Teachers and principals were interviewed with the intention to gather direct data as they are the ones spending most of the time with the learners in school and in the class. School Governing Body chairpersons were also interviewed with the intention of understanding how learner violence is resolved and how the community is engaged in assisting the school deal with violent learners. The results were reached using the participants' responses to the interviews and other documentation. The following subthemes were raised: understanding of learner violence, forms of violence experienced in schools, causes of learner violence, teachers' contribution towards learner violence, effects of learner violence on teachers, measures to eradicate learner violence in schools, teachers' experiences on learner violence, understanding policy making and policy implementation.

Discussions

Main theme: Teachers' experiences on learner violence. From the main theme the following sub-themes emerged: understanding of learner violence, forms of learner violence experienced in schools, causes of learner violence, teachers' contribution towards learner violence, effects of learner violence on teachers, measures to eradicate learner violence.

Teachers' experiences on learner violence

Understanding of learner violence

Most of the participants understood violence as when learners fight one another in school. "Learners fighting each other, in worst cases gang fights with weapons and intentions to harm one another". It was revealed that violence is lack of respect to fellow learners and school staff including teachers. When asked about their understanding of violence in the context of respect, teachers replied that lack of respect for other people leads learners to violating others' peoples' rights. Violence on its own is a result of lack of respect for other people's rights. Learner violence violates other learners' right to freedom from unfair discrimination and the right to human dignity as per South African constitution. Three participants shared the same sentiments when saying "Blackmailing a person into doing something they never intended to do, like giving you money or their personal belongings is regarded as emotional violence. Insulting and talking ill about a person also serves as verbal violence"

Findings revealed that one of the major reasons for the occurrence of unacceptable behaviours in school is lack of discipline. The findings also revealed that indiscipline in schools is one factor that contributes towards learner violence in schools. Learners' lack of discipline leads to school's low performance in terms of results. Discipline is the core in the smooth running of schools. When learners' behaviour is immoral and uncontrollable schools stand greater chances of high failure rate.

It is recommended that schools can have rewards for good behaviour, such as certificates as a token of appreciation at the end of each term. Sword (2021; 146) believes learners will even indirectly compete for best behaviour thus making teachers' work of enforcing discipline easier.

Forms of learner violence experienced in schools

Physical violence appears to be one at top as compared to other forms of violence as revealed by the study. According to Gordons (2019:25), physical violence is the most occurring type of violence among learners.

Findings reveal that physical violence leads to vandalism as when learners fight, they break windows, chairs, doors and other physical property at their disposal. It was revealed that physical violence leaves victims with scars and verbal violence leaves a person with permanent emotional scars which in most cases does not heal as it can't be seen. Goldberg (2013:113) indicate that verbal bullying is believed to leave the victim with hurt that cannot go away easily but can escalate to adulthood.

As indicated above, vandalism and gangsterism are amongst the popular forms of violence in the top five in schools of Lepelle4 circuit because learners from various schools seemed to have a common culture of breaking windows, doors, and school furniture without caring for them as their own. One of the participants indicated that learner do not care about the school property as they believe it is government's property instead of viewing school as something that is there to empower the community at large and must be valued to benefit the future generation.

It was also evident from the findings of this study that learner-to-teacher violence is one of the types of violence that are experienced in schools. Participants shared the same sentiment when saying that some of the learners are disrespectful and are not afraid to show their sexual feelings to their teachers. Just because they physically look older than the young

teachers, they think they can have sexual relationships with them. This is an observable growing behaviour among most female learners in Lepelle4 schools as they have developed a tendency of asking teachers out on dates or making advances on them. One participant indicated that in his first year of working, there was a learner who asked him to meet them in the evening at a private spot in pretence of wanting assistance on Mathematical Literacy.

This also reveals that the teaching profession requires teachers with self-discipline, if not, one can easily fall into a trap and end up having sexual relations with learners.

Causes of learner violence

Participants had a lot to say when narrating the possible causes of learner violence, the following appeared to be outstanding;

The study revealed that some parents have less involvement in their children's academic life, which could be a result of illiteracy, death, being away from home for work purposes. The study revealed that there is less parental involvement as some parents are unable to read and write. Some parents work far from home, only to come home sometimes only once a month, making it impossible to keep track of their children's daily school work. On the other hand, some of these learners come from child headed families their parents have passed on. In this case there will be no adult to monitor and guide their behaviour.

The study revealed that most learners have psychological issues as they come from child-headed families with high levels of poverty, which affect their academic life and relation with fellow learners. Learners feel inferior and develop low self-esteem, which is a risk factor to poor mental illness or even worse, suicide. This is attested by Cais (2012:137) when saying poverty and mental health are inseparably linked and the two have a very strong effect on the psychological wellbeing of a person and, sometimes, have very negative effects on their emotions and behaviour.

Ncontsa and Shumba (2013:368) indicate that parental involvement in children's education is of paramount importance as parents are the foundation when it comes to children's support structure.

It is suggested that parents can go to the school where their children have enrolled and ask the teachers to help them with checking on how their children are doing and ask about their general behaviour in the school. Moreover, as for those working away from home, they can make arrangements to be updated about their children's work through all available means of communication. Witmer (2020:283) reiterates that it is imperative for parents to regularly go to school and check their children's work and behaviour because, he assumes, some learners' behaviour at school is quite different from their behaviour at home

The study also revealed that policies governing education seem to limit the power of schools to make suitable decisions when faced with situations that involve disciplining learners. Take for example, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 states that a learner may only be suspended for 5 school days after disciplinary steps have been taken. A learner can only be suspended not expelled. Prior to suspension, a disciplinary process should be taken, which may take long time. This seems to limit school management power to expel learners with unruly behaviour and makes schools look like they are failing the victim.

Findings revealed that peer pressure is also one of the causes of learner violence, it appears some learners have befriended bad influencers and have become gang

members. Participants attest that most learners formed some gangs, they would come to school late, bunk other classes then leave school early. It is alleged that learners who never smoked dagga before learn smoking from their friends and in the end, they change behaviour and disrespect their teachers.

Teachers' contribution towards learner violence

Bronfenbrenner's theory of 1979, indicate that we are not just receivers of the things happening to us, we directly or indirectly contribute to the situation. Teachers' behaviour also contributes to the situation of learner violence schools find themselves in. The study revealed that improper dress code by teachers, teachers socializing and drinking alcohol with learners after hours and on weekends leading to engaging in sexual relationships with learners and the language they use to address the learners in class dictates how learners perceive them.

The study revealed that teachers have ignored or forgotten that how they dress affects how learners look at them. The behaviour that a people, teachers in this sense, exhibit when intoxicated is humiliating to be witnessed by learners. Some teachers have a tendency of making learners feel inferior before other learners through the comments they make about them, this makes learners lose their temper and end up attacking their teachers. Mohamed (2019:3) highlights that teachers who present themselves effectively might earn the respect required to set a good example for their learners. The theoretical lens, agency, of Archer (1995)'s realistic social theory, teachers are supposed to use their agential powers to ensure that the culture of abuse on learners in schools is eradicated.

Effects of learner violence on teachers

The study revealed that learner violence leaves teachers feeling doubtful of themselves, asking themselves if they are worthy and capable of being teachers. Some are left feeling as if they chose the wrong profession as they cannot handle the violence they experience from learners. Grobler (2018:31) indicates that violence in schools has the potential to make teachers feel like they have made a mistake by choosing teaching as their career.

Findings also reveal that teachers are left feeling fearful of learners. The study found that teachers experience dread after observing the aggressive behaviours that learners exhibit at school. Teachers are no longer sure how to teach in a setting where they must continuously worry about their safety or the safety of other learners who might be attacked by other bully learners. According to the study of Walker (2021), if resources are not increased and safety procedures are not strengthened, teachers may leave the teaching profession out of worry for their safety and the protection of their learners. This is attested by two participants by saying teachers' constant request for transfers and some studying for other professions is a sign that they fear for their lives and can no longer continue working in an environment where they feel unsafe. This made it quite evident that learners have turned violent to the point where teachers are afraid of them and do not feel secure around them.

Measures to eradicate learner violence

Participants appeared to have lost faith in the current strategies their schools have been employing to end learner violence. They contend that the persistence and escalation of violence are results of the current approaches failing. Findings revealed that involving various stakeholders can assist schools in eradicating learner violence. Two participants shared the same sentiments when saying the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) which involves various influential people in the community, for example, traditional leaders, the ward councilor, business men and women, traditional healers and other

influential members of the community. QLTC members know the learners and their domestic situations better than teachers in the school. It is believed this campaign will create a strong collaboration as members of the QLTC, who happen to be respected people in the community, will assist monitor the behaviour of learners in the community as they reside with them in the village.

Conclusion

The study concludes that learner violence is a serious challenge and a threat to a stress-free teaching and learning environment. It was revealed that some schools rely solely on the South African Schools Act to draft their policies which do not guarantee for resolutions they take. Not all members of the SGB receive training, only the chairperson, the treasurer and the secretary receive induction before commencing their term of office and revealed that the SGB training is a one-day workshop with a maximum of four hours. Therefore, it is concluded that SGBs are not well equipped to handle learner violence. It is also concluded that the manuals used for training are written in a language most SGB members do not understand, especially in the rural schools. This appears to be not enough for people faced with so much responsibility of governing the school and deal with unruly learners. The study further concluded that some political party leaders use schools for their political gains instead of supporting schools, as they challenge schools' resolutions. Lastly, the study concluded that it is important for stakeholders to collaborate and work together against learner violence in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the study then suggests that schools develop their policies guided by the Integration of Stakeholders and Learner Centred Framework. The framework was developed in this study guided by what the participants have indicated under the theme: strategies to curb learner violence. The framework suggests that various stakeholders work together with the common goal to curb learner violence in schools. According to Freeman et al. (2016:156), using frameworks has a useful technique for dealing with learner conduct and enhancing behaviour, attendance, and academic performance as well as important measures of school success and long-term learner outcomes. As a result, this approach is a good choice for schools facing challenges of learner violence.

The study further recommends that schools adopt the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy which is aimed at improving access to education for vulnerable children. SIAS policy suggests that learners, on admission, be screened which can be done by means of a form developed with questions that can identify behavioural challenges faced by learners. A proper plan for support can be identified and implemented. This can be integrated with the roles of the SGB to supplement their strategies.

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Author's contribution

The study was written by Makofane S.E under the supervision of Malatji KS, co-supervised Mthembu T.J.

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