



CHAPTER 6

Rethinking safety in today's schools

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Abstract

The question of safety in the Global South schools has been raised in different forums. This issue has sparked fiery debates in communities, social media, parliament, and many other platforms. Over the years, the Global South education departments have dominated the headlines of newspapers about the horrendous episodes of human slaughter in schools. Acts of violence have been unabatedly perpetrated by learners, educators, and the communities. Schools have become death traps both for learners and staff members. The author sought to consider the extent to which bloodbaths have affected the lives of learners in schools in the Global South. This chapter traces various forms of misdemeanour that are plaguing schools in this generation and suggests ways of mitigating this scourge. The method used to gather data for this chapter is literature review. Based on the findings established after an intensive literature review, the researcher confirms that there is no more safety in schools due to internecine violence that continues to ravage these institutions. The researcher further asserts that the tension brought by

violence has significantly affected the performance of learners in those schools. Moreover, the same phenomenon has deterred educators and administrators from discharging their duties effectively. The researcher proposes a more tactical approach to address this dilemma in schools to reduce the loss of lives and restore calm and order.

Key words: *Safety, school, violence, community, global south*

6.1 Introduction

In recent years, cases of violence in schools have been on the rise. Media has reported numerous incidents of violence among learners, for example, News24, (22 November 2018) reported that “a teenager was arrested for the murder of a fellow pupil at an Eastern Cape school, following a stabbing during a fight over a missing cell phone’. Moreover, in the same year on September 13, ‘a 17-year-old boy who attended a high school in Zeerust, North West, was arrested after allegedly stabbing a teacher to death (News24, 22 November 2018). Furthermore, there are instances where community members walk into schools armed with various weapons to murder educators. In KwaZulu Natal province, for instance, an educator was shot and killed allegedly by an unknown man within the school premises (SABC News, 12 June 2019).

Several years back, as an educator in the school management team (SMT), this researcher sat in numerous meetings that addressed different versions of violent behaviour among learners. In numerous instances parents were summoned to the school to assist in disciplining their children. In several disheartening cases, learners insulted their own parents in front of the educators. There

are various instances when the school had to invite police officers to deal with violent and intractable learners.

Moral degradation has eaten away the social fabric that defined schools as revered institutions of learning. Sadly, schools spend more energy on disciplinary issues and partially neglect their core business of teaching and learning (Xaba, 2014:1). It is further astounding that the communities that used to revere schools as centres of learning have positioned themselves as enemies of the same schools. This is revealed in the manner in which community members walk into schools to fight members of the school communities. This is a cause for concern and must be curtailed before schools are completely ruined.

The researcher traces the causes of violence that has besieged South African schools. Xaba (2014:1) posits that 'numerous incidents of violence and injuries are reported in the media'. Furthermore, Xaba (2006:1) highlights that schools are 'under a deluge of violence and crime'. Ironically, schools have an important duty towards the safety and the protection of learners (Prinsloo, 2005:2). However, the performance of this duty has almost become impossible due to the wave of violence that also threatens the educators and principals.

6.2 Method

Data for this chapter were gathered through extensive review of literature related to school violence or bullying. Several peer-reviewed journal articles were read and information relevant to this study was sieved and compiled to construct this chapter. In addition to the scholarly articles, newspapers and online news

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were read to gather the most recent examples of bullying / violence in South African schools, countrywide.

For a comprehensive literature review, Bastos et. al. (2014) advise that it should be 'very broad and thorough.' Extensive literature review was chosen as a data collection method because there are many articles that speak to bullying. Several news articles chosen are anecdotal in nature, they narrate cases of bullying or violence without any further interrogation of the causes, effects, and remediation. This chapter closes the gaps left by the anecdotes by analysing the articles and postulating some of the underlying origins, and dangers of, and possible remedies for bullying as a social malady. An extensive literature review was chosen because it is cost effective, and timesaving. The data that the researcher would have gone out to gather had already been availed by newspapers, online news platforms, and journal articles.

In addition to an extensive literature review as a method of gathering data, the researcher used his auto-ethnographical experience. Cunningham and Jones (2005:1) explain auto-ethnography as a situation whereby

[T]he investigator creates an ethnographic description and analysis of his/her own behaviour, attempting to develop an objective understanding of the behaviours and work context under consideration by casting the investigator as both the informant 'insider' and the analyst 'outsider'.

The researcher's three decades of experience as both an educator and a university lecturer has brought him face-to-face with some excruciating forms of bullying. Undoubtedly, the

researcher's experience adds a credible source to the bullying data.

6.3 Data analysis

Data for this research were subjected to content analysis. Moore and McCabe (2005) posit that content analysis involves grouping data based on themes and sub-themes for comparability purposes. To conduct a content analysis on an article, the article is broken down into themes and then examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis. Wilson (2016:1), adds that:

Content is analysed by breaking it up into conceptual chunks that are then coded or named. Qualitative analysis develops the categories as the analysis takes place. The results are used to make inferences about the messages in the text.

The word *text* may refer to newspaper headlines, articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations etc. Wilson (2016:1) concurs with Moore and McCabe (2005) that "There are two types of content analysis: Conceptual analysis and relational analysis". Wilson (2016:1) explains that conceptual analysis is coding for certain words, concepts or themes and the analyst makes inferences based on the patterns that emerge. On the other hand, relational analysis builds on conceptual analysis by exploring the relationships between the concepts and themes that surface from the analysed text.

The main advantage of content analysis is that it reduces and simplifies collected data. In addition, content analysis gives the researcher the ability to structure the qualitative data collected in

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a manner that satisfies the accomplishment of research objectives (Langos, 2014). It can help to reveal trends and themes (Wilson, 2016:2).

The academic and newspaper articles and news broadcasts were grouped using categories that were drawn by the researcher. These categories are different versions of violence experienced in schools. In terms of the categories, violence is identified through perpetrators and victims.

The categories below were used to delineate forms of violence:

1. Learner to learner
2. Learner to educator
3. Learner outsider
4. Community to educator

6.4 Theoretical framework

This chapter draws its stance from Olweus's (1993) model of bullying in Schott & Søndergaard (2014:2). The major tenet of the model is that behaviour can be understood from the analysis of a person's character. According to the model, bullies are 'aggressive and impulsive, having a positive attitude towards violence, a need to dominate and demonstrating little empathy with their victims' (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014:2). The theory assumes that most bullies are callous; they hardly have humane feelings. In contrast, the victims of bullying are 'passive, submissive, anxious, insecure and weak' (Ibid). The chapter uses the term violence to include all forms of bullying in the schools' precincts. In addition, the chapter borrows generously from Erikson's theory of stages of

development. Erikson proposes eight stages through which a person develops from birth to old age. Among the stages, adolescents in the age group of between 12 -18 years are said to be in the 'identity versus role confusion stage'. Coincidentally, this is the stage during which the majority of perpetrators of violence resides. Based on Erikson's assertion, the learners in this stage of development must be handled with care as they are passing through a confusing transition stage.

During adolescence, children explore their independence and develop a sense of self. Those who receive proper encouragement and reinforcement through personal exploration will emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self and feelings of independence and control. Those who remain uncertain about their beliefs and desires will feel insecure and confused about themselves and the future. (Cherry, 2022)

In view of Cherry's assertion, two groups emerge from this stage of development – those who are confident and have a sense of self-worth and those who remain uncertain and feel insecure about themselves. More often, the latter group breeds bullies. Some of them may become bullies simply because they feel bullying others gives them control and promotes their visibility. Those learners who are confident do not have to exert their authority by means of bullying others; their confidence often mediates for them. The figure below illustrates Erikson's stages of development.

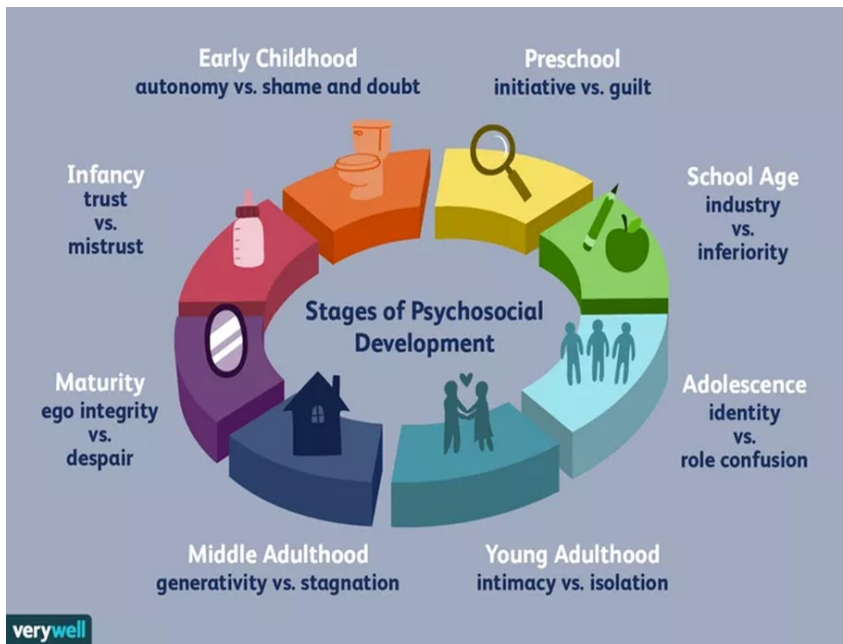


Figure 6-1: Erikson's stages of development

(Adapted from Cherry, 2022)

The focal point of the chapter is the adolescence stage which Erikson terms 'identity versus role confusion' (Cherry, 2022). The adolescence stage brackets the teens who, in this chapter, are found guilty of perpetrating various versions of violence. The researcher believes that learners should be viewed from the lens provided by Erikson's theory. This may help teachers, parents, and communities to understand and empathise with the youth as they pass through difficult stages of their growth. Lastly, Skinner's (1971) behaviourist theory will feature prominently in this chapter. The major view of the theory is that behaviour can be learnt, learners can be trained through operant conditioning, and children

learn through imitation of their caregivers, parents or adults who share spaces with them. The behaviourist theory seems to apportion the youth's bad behaviour such as violence, to caregivers, significant adults, parents, neighbours or members of the community.

6.5 Literature review and auto-ethnography

As it has been observed globally, violence has labelled schools unsafe spaces for both staff (including ancillary staff) and learners. Some of the inherent fears in schools 'include physical violence, homophobic bullying, sexual harassment and more recently, cyber bullying' (Juan et.al. 2018: S2). As in South Africa (SA), 'violence and the threat of violence against learners in schools remains a concern globally' (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, in Ngidi & Moletsane 2018: S1). Violence as a global phenomenon has received significant levels of attention from various stakeholders, including governments and various organizations that seek to rid the schools of this 'epidemic'. The researcher refers to violence as an epidemic because it continues raging and spreading fiercely in spite of efforts to curb it. Unfortunately, violence 'has the potential to impact on children not only physically but also psychologically (Laas & Boezaart 2014:1). At times it may force children to drop out of school, thereby permanently damaging both the psyche and education of the child (Laas & Boezaart 2014:1) In some cases children lose their lives through violence. The extract below exemplifies the grievous nature of violence in schools,

The South African media in 2012 reported a learner attacking an educator with a broom and with a chair. Another teacher was beaten unconscious after confiscating cellular phones

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during examinations. A learner fatally stabbed a fellow learner at school in KwaZulu-Natal in 2013. In 2012, a principal assaulted an educator in New Castle in full view of learners and other teachers. In Mpumalanga, a teacher applied corporal punishment causing a learner to be paralyzed. Five years ago, a learner in Gauteng hacked another learner to death with a samurai sword and injured three others (Mgijima, 2014:199).

Violence knows no boundaries, it could be learner to learner, teacher to learner, learner to teacher, teacher to teacher or community member to teacher. Mgijima (2014:198) posits that school violence manifests itself in different forms. She confirms that learner-on-learner violence, violence by teachers against learners and by learners against teachers are common. She further acknowledges that teacher-on-teacher violence happens although on a limited scale (Ibid).

In addition to Mgijima's 2014 statistics, Times Live revealed that,

'Nine murders and 19 attempted murders which were recorded by the police between April 2019 and March 2020 were as a result of bullying in schools. The statistics further showed that 345 assault cases with the intent to cause grievous bodily harm (assault GBH) and 546 common assault cases were opened as a result of bullying in the country's schools (Times Live 31 July 2020).

Moreover, on 12 March 2023, the Independent Online (IOL) media, one of South Africa's prominent news and information websites, shared the DA's Shadow-Basic Education Spokesperson in Gauteng, Ramulifho's, shock about the precarity

of the lives of learners and educators in that province's schools. Ramulifho confirmed that the schools were under siege as eight learners, and a principal had been killed inside school premises over the last five years. His comments came after 40 stabbings, 10 shootings and 16 violent crimes involving learners and teachers had been reported in Gauteng (IOL media, 12 March 2023).

The focus on South African schools should not be misconstrued to exonerate neighbouring countries; the study only selected research material and news items based on South Africa. However, there are volumes of research material and news on other countries as well.

The examples per category below reveal the extent to which violence has ravaged SA's schools.

6.5.1 Learner to learner violence

News24, (22 November 2018) recorded the following incidents of violence in South African schools:

- Grade 1 pupil stabbed to death

... pupil was arrested for allegedly stabbing a 7-year-old Grade 1 pupil to death in Makapanstad on November 20.

- Murdered over cell phone

On September 24, a teenager was arrested for the murder of a fellow pupil at an Eastern Cape school, following a stabbing during a fight over a missing cell phone.

- Stabbed to death by schoolmate

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In August, the provincial department of education suspended classes at Kwamasakhane High School in KwaZulu-Natal after two pupils were stabbed to death. Two friends, Sihle Mngadi and Mangaliso Mbatha, were allegedly stabbed to death by a schoolmate. Sihle had allegedly been involved in a fight with the suspect. On the following Monday, when they came back to school, they continued with their fight at the school. Mangaliso, who was in Grade 10, was killed while trying to stop the fight.

- Attempted stabbing

On October 24, Ekurhuleni metro police arrested a Grade 11 pupil at Fumana High School in Kattlehong after he allegedly attempted to stab fellow pupils. The pupil faces charges of attempted murder, assault with the intent to commit grievous bodily harm and intimidation.

- Culture of sexual assault

Also in August, a report into allegations of sexual assault at Parktown Boys' High School in Johannesburg blew the lid off a number of disturbing practices at the school. These practices include "sexually predatory behaviour" by senior pupils against junior pupils, a culture of assault and sexual assault under the guise of "initiation practices" and "profoundly shocking" utterances made by teachers in the presence of pupils. A former Parktown Boys' High School assistant water polo coach was found guilty of 114 counts of sexual assault and 12 counts of common assault. The hostel master initially faced 327 counts, but pleaded guilty to 144

counts of sexual assault, while the court also acquitted him on some charges.

- Taking bodyguard to school

On October 22, it was reported that a 16-year-old Grade 10 pupil at Grey College in Bloemfontein would complete his studies at home after showing up at school with a bodyguard to protect himself from being bullied. This followed two incidents of violent bullying – one in March and another on October 12. In the first incident, his head was bashed against a wall, and he was hit against his ear, causing damage to his eardrum.

In addition, Times Live, (31 July 2020) reported on more occurrences of violence:

The scenarios – based on real-life events in local classroom – include one pupil stabbing another with a pair of scissors,

In March, a grade 9 pupil from Sizwe Secondary School in Germiston, east of Johannesburg, was stabbed to death. The alleged attacker was a grade 11 pupil. An 18-year-old grade 10 pupil from Reiger Park Secondary School was also fatally stabbed.

In February, a group of Durban schoolgirls was suspended after a video clip, allegedly of them viciously assaulting a fellow pupil, was shared on social media. In the footage, pupils were seen dragging, kicking, and punching their fellow pupil.

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Fourteen pupils were expelled in the same month from a Western Cape high school after pupils sustained stab wounds and other injuries in a gang fight.

In Gauteng, a 14-year-old boy from Freedom Park Secondary School was killed. (Times Live 31 July 2020)

Moreover, 'early last year, the nation was left shocked when 15-year-old Lufuno Mavhunga committed suicide after being bullied. The teenager overdosed on pills after a video – showing her being repeatedly slapped by a schoolmate – went viral' (Madonsela 2022)

The first learner is said to have murdered an innocent grade one child after he was jilted by the sister of the poor child. This seemingly senior learner vented his anger on a vulnerable, unsuspecting individual. This, in addition to other numerous cases of violence, speaks to the blighted inner conscience of a teenager. The gruesome murder of this grade one learner attests to Olweus' view that perpetrators of violence have no empathy for their victims. The same perpetrator could be a threat to the entire school. A knife-wielding individual who is obsessed with power and control could be dangerous to the school communities.

The other two murder cases in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal schools reflect the toxicity of the school environments. Learners carry weapons to and terrorise their peers and the members of staff alike, in schools. The kind of bullying that extends to murder reflects the dead conscience of the perpetrators and exposes the lives of the school community members to the risk of being killed. The attempted stabbing case could have

resulted in the death of the victim. In fact, the intention of the perpetrator was to commit culpable homicide.

The rest of the cases may appear lighter in comparison with the stabbing cases. However, the intention to cause grievous bodily harm may lead to the death of the victim. If these cases were to be viewed closely, the aims of the perpetrators are the same – that of inflicting pain on their victims. In terms of SACE, the principals of schools should take “reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the learner” (SACE, 2017:4). This, however, puts their lives in danger of being killed by the criminals. It appears that the government is lethargic to solve the problem of violence in schools; the silence of the government may simply be construed as tacit or complicit in the murder cases that appear to be on the rise in schools. It is evident that schools can no longer address the issues of violence single-handedly.

6.5.2 Learners to educator

In South Africa, testimony that bullying is prevalent in schools has appeared in research and, more noticeably, in widely accessible media and newspapers (Ngidi & Moletsane 2018:S 1). News24, (22 November 2018) revealed various incidents in which learners were caught bullying educators:

- Stabbing teacher to death

On September 13, a 17-year-old boy who attended a high school in Zeerust, North West, was arrested after allegedly stabbing a teacher to death.

- Stone thrown at teacher

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On November 16, the Gauteng education department expelled a Soweto pupil who threw a stone at a teacher, causing the teacher to suffer minor injuries.

- Water in teacher's face

Also in November, a Kimberley Boys' High School pupil, seen throwing water in his teacher's face in a viral video on Twitter, was suspended and will attend a disciplinary hearing, the Northern Cape education department said.

- Toy gun pointed at teacher

Also in September, a 15-year-old pupil from Eldorado Park, Johannesburg, was arrested after he allegedly pulled out a toy gun, pointed it at his teacher and threatened to shoot.

In addition,

... a pupil under the influence of drugs and alcohol shoving a teacher, and a bully waiting to confront a teacher outside school (Times Live, 31 July 2020).

In the first case, a learner murders a teacher. The crime of the teacher is controlling the queue during the feeding programme. There might have been underlying reasons for this behaviour, but such a comportment cannot be condoned. As Olweus (1993) avers, bullies have an inherent nature to control, and often demonstrate aggression to achieve their goals. The challenge is that the perpetrator has distinguished himself as a social misfit whose presence in school premises raises fear and anxiety to the would-be victims. The other complication is that the psychologists may not recommend custodial sentences, arguing that the learner

is a minor. In spite of psychological arguments, the learner remains a threat to the peace and tranquillity of the school community. For example, Erikson in Weiland (1993) suggests that this behaviour may be blamed on the poor socialisation of the learner in their stages of development that exonerates the learner. However, whether or not the violence is a result of poor socialisation, the government needs to take a decisive action to correct such learners and restore order in schools.

The rest of the learners in this category beat or tease teachers, which is a form of bullying. The total disregard of law and order is a violation of the educator's rights. Besides, it humiliates and belittles the educators and strips them of all the powers to act in their capacity. The 1996 ELRC document stresses that learners must act responsibly and tabulates various forms of offenses from level 1 to level 5, level 5 offences being offences that attract dismissal or expulsion from school. However, the process of expulsion takes eternity as the whole protocol has to be observed. The bureaucratic nature of disciplining violent children is cumbersome; it requires the writing of numerous reports which eventually debilitates the victims. In most cases, the laws seem to favour learners because they are still minors. The government should encourage more debate on reconfiguration of the meanings of the words 'minor' and 'juvenile'. If juveniles commit adult crimes, it will seem they have already promoted themselves to adulthood and must therefore be treated as such.

6.5.3 Learners and outsiders

Violence is not limited to school communities only; occasionally members of the outside communities are also trapped in violent

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acts of learners. In some instances, the conflicts between learners and community members are staged in schools. This labels schools very unsafe spaces. News24, 22 November 2018, broadcasted the following:

- Bus driver assaulted

In September, a pupil was filmed assaulting a bus driver. The video went viral and the pupil faced disciplinary action.

Mpumalanga education MEC Sibusiso Malaza said he was horrified that a school pupil could place others at risk through his violent actions.

"One cannot imagine that a learner can conduct himself in such a horrible manner. It's really so unfortunate and heart breaking. There is nothing that can justify violent conduct and disregard for the safety of other learners," he said.

- Pupil killed at school

In July, a 38-year-old man was arrested for allegedly murdering a Grade 10 pupil on school grounds in the Northern Cape. Lieutenant Colonel Dimakatso Mooi said the shooting occurred at Mokgolokwe Middle School near Batlharo. "I can confirm that a 17-year-old boy was shot, and we have opened a preliminary investigation to determine the surrounding circumstances," Mooi said.

In the third category, learners embroil themselves in community quarrels and attract aggression from community members. Some of the learners are members of feared gangs in the communities. Sometimes the fights among gang members are staged on school

grounds. This creates a very unsafe space for innocent learners and members of staff. When quarrels and fights occur in the school precincts, the school becomes a dangerous place. Innocent learners and staff members may be killed or maimed by stray bullets or missiles. This serves to heighten the need to speedily resolve the issue of violence in schools. Some schools have hired security guards who man the school gates, but they too are similarly massacred, for example:

Sobuwa and Mahlangu (2022) reported that at least four people (two pupils, a general assistant, and a deputy principal) had lost their lives after three shooting incidents hardly two weeks after schools reopened, rekindling fears that violence would continue escalating if nothing was done.

Xaba (2014:1582) posits that school environment comprises both the physical and psychosocial spaces and provides a context and a link among activities at the school in such a way that they all are aimed at, not only safety and security, but effective and productive education and achievement of schooling goals. The school environment should thus be understood as spaces occupied by school communities in executing effective teaching and learning. Thus, safe and secure school environments relate to safe and secure physical and psychosocial environments.

In fact, teacher training institutions must consider introducing modules on safety for educators, to equip them with skills of maximising their safety whenever they are in schools. Xaba (2014:1583) concludes his argument by emphasising that a 'safe school environment is therefore, one that is not dangerous and

that poses no threats to the school occupants in terms of their physical, emotional and psychological well-being.’

Furthermore, a study by Ngidi and Moletsane (2018: S2) revealed that bullies choose the toilets because they largely stay unsupervised by teachers and other adults; thus are ideal to use for bullying and victimising others. Based on the evidence shared above, teachers and ‘other adults’ referred to, may find it difficult to enter the learners’ bathrooms for fear of victimisation. The situation has become so dire that the need for intervention from outside stakeholders is urgently required.

6.6 Findings based on comprehensive literature review and auto-ethnography

Firstly, this study has established that the lives of ‘learners and educators alike are equally at risk, as victims but also as perpetrators of violence’ (de Wet, 2009; Mncube & Harber, 2012 in Mgijima, 2014:198). This suggests that intervention measures should be aimed at teachers and learners alike. This dovetailed intervention should be at liberty to address the dilemma of abusive teachers.

Secondly, literature revealed that ‘incidents resulting in injuries and sometimes death, continue and seem to be on the increase (Xaba 2014:1580).

In addition, ‘schools seem to be beset or even under siege of violent and other safety-threatening incidents’ (Ibid). Acts of violence in schools are on the increase. Xaba’s view that schools are ‘under siege’ evokes feelings of classrooms that have been turned into battlefields. The imagery marks schools as warzones and very

unsafe spaces. The government together with various stakeholders should prioritise safety and security in schools before schools entirely become battlegrounds.

However, 'It is important to note that safety threatening incidents appear to be two-fold – those that school communities can deal with through adherence to and implementation of best practices in safety and security measures as detailed in legislation and those over which they do not have control like crime in the community and incidents emanating from poverty and related socio-economic factors' (Xaba 2014:1581). Schools can ensure the safety of the members of the school community to a limited extent. The most recent cases of violence are far above the scope of ordinary teachers, principals, and higher school authorities such as School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and district education officials. This calls for a more professional way of handling the scourge of violence.

Thirdly, one of the nuggets gleaned from the scholarly articles, media and newspapers is that most perpetrators are secondary school learners. This realisation shifts the attention of this chapter to focus on secondary school learners. However, the chapter does not entirely exonerate primary schools because several cases of bullying have been reported from primary schools although the majority of cases are prevalent in secondary schools.

Fourthly and lastly, the selected articles have confirmed that the majority of cases where grievous bodily harm or death are mostly perpetrated by male learners. This realisation endorses the male child as the 'more aggressive other'. There are fewer incidents in which girls stab their victims to death. The most prominent cases

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for girls relate to lower forms of bullying, although in some instances these bullying incidents have resulted in the victims committing suicide. Nonetheless, the articles concur that boys are guiltier than girls when the nature of the crimes they commit is carefully examined. There are more articles that trace violence perpetrated by boys than girls and usually the violence from boys is more gruesome.

6.7 Recommendations

To address the first finding, the recommendation is to educate the would-be victims of violence in schools. Life Orientation teachers should be encouraged to prioritise bullying in their teaching. There should be awareness campaigns from as early pre-school. Besides, in order to fight violence in schools, the victims should be assisted immediately. Some of the tips that could be used are highlighted by Madonsela (2022) below:

- Assure the child that you will immediately investigate and report the situation to the school
- Suggest that your school increases supervision in the high-risk areas
- Encourage your child to talk to an adult, such as a supportive teacher, regularly to report ongoing bullying
- Be sensitive to the fact that your child may feel embarrassed and ashamed
- Find out what happened, who was involved, and when and where it happened, and keep a record of this information

- Ask your child to express his/her thoughts and feelings about what happened
- Watch for signs of depression and anxiety in your child, and do not hesitate to seek professional counselling. (*Health-e News*, Madonsela, 22 January 2022)

Moreover, parental involvement at school-level should be non-negotiable. Parents should be encouraged to report any illicit behaviour from their children so that schools may be on the alert mode whenever dealing with that particular learner. Before enrolling a child, schools must give parents questionnaires that seek to mine information about the background of a child, parents etc. This might help to 'nip the problem in the bud'. Moreso, schools should employ school-based psychologists who should always be there to counsel and teach learners about the importance of dealing with emotions. This too, may prevent the would-be murderers from accomplishing their evil plans. In addition, the ministry of police must deploy police officers to man all the schools. There should be trained law enforcement officers resident in schools. All schools should create space for law enforcement officials and adopt them as permanent members of the school community. In addition, schools should engage the services of pastors. The counselling and prayers from pastors may help minimise violence in schools. Of late, Christian movements have become prominent and dominant voices in most communities. Taking advantage of Christianity as a weapon to fight violence in schools should not be underestimated. Nowadays, the world has inclined its ears on faith-based leaders. The evidence of this is the unprecedented proliferation of churches across the country. Based on this windfall, each school

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should adopt a pastor who will regularly speak to the inner conscience of learners. To a large extent, this may win the hearts of several learners and consequently address the dilemma of violence in SA's schools. It is unfortunate though that some of the faith-based leaders have betrayed the world of Christians. However, those who remain upright must be used to fight the scourge of violence in South African schools.

The researcher's recommendation for the second finding is a revision of punishable offences in the ELRC document of 1996. Based on the ever-escalating cases of violence in schools, criminal offences have mutated, giving birth to more evasive offences compared to those that were envisaged by the 1996 ELRC document. Moreover, those learners who are sentenced to expulsion must not be left to terrorise the communities. Once a learner has been expelled from school for a serious offence, a rehabilitation programme must be designed to assist the affected learner to reform. If they are left unattended, as is often the case, they are likely to graduate into higher levels of crime such as cash heists, serial rapists, and murderers. The researcher proposes intensive community projects aimed at reforming the expelled school offenders.

On the third finding which established that most of the perpetrators of violence are secondary school learners, secondary school educators must be re-skilled to handle violent children in schools. The Department of Basic Education should plan compulsory refresher courses for secondary school educators on how to handle difficult learners. Based on Skinner's operant conditioning theory, educators should know how to deal with learners in the classroom; they must use more positive reinforcement and less

harsh negative reinforcement. Otherwise stated, teachers should be taught the importance of not provoking learners, they must respect learners' spaces at all times.

Added to this, educators should understand the nature of their learners using stages of development posited by Erikson: '... Erikson's theory was best known for its designation of the "identity crisis" of adolescence' (Weiland,1993:17). Educators should appreciate Erikson's theory as it may assist them to understand the challenges the learners are facing. Once they have understood the nature of the learners' problems, educators will avoid frustrating these learners to a point where they resort to retaliating violently – by either killing or causing grievous bodily harm.

In support of the view that educators need to be re-skilled, The South African Council for Educators (SACE) has also weighed in on the matter: In March, 2020, the Sunday Times reported that the South African Council for Educators (SACE) unveiled a 124-page handbook on how teachers in primary and high schools should deal with violent situations (Times Live 31 July 2020). Educators' lives remain at risk as long as they are ignorant of ways by means of which they can handle recalcitrant learners. The handbook referred to in the extract should hasten to reach all schools. In addition, experts in handling violent behaviour should be invited to workshop educators on promotion of safety in the classrooms.

To address the last challenge that boys are the most perpetrators of violence, the researcher recommends the involvement of fathers. This calls for urgent attention to address issues of toxic masculinity in schools. To a large extent, fathers may positively

influence the behaviour of boys in schools. Male figures in the communities must model the kind of behaviour that boys are supposed to adopt. Father figures must be encouraged to address these concerns to help the boys who might be experiencing life-related challenges. Furthermore, the government should prescribe the syllabus that is taught in initiation schools. Those schools should teach many lessons that aim to transform the boy child into a miniature father figure in and outside their households. Lastly, the social structures such as family, church and traditional leadership should also help groom these errant male children into responsible citizens.

6.8 Conclusion

Schools have experienced various forms of crime ranging from molestation to murder. This leaves schools unsafe spaces for victims and would-be victims. Teachers, principals, and ancillary staff can no longer handle the problems of violence in their school for fear of being victims or of increasing the statistics of the deceased. Stakeholders that include parents, churches, NGOs, community leaders, the ruling party and politicians from minority political parties should join hands to establish the causes of violence in schools and further generate solutions. In the African culture, it was believed that a child was raised by the village. This notion must be revived and reprinted in the minds of the community members. Children belong to communities, they are born and raised by the same communities who should educate them to behave responsibly. Communities are built from families and have social support systems such as churches, various developmental clubs sponsored by non-governmental

organisations (NGOs). These organisations must work on a common agenda to restore sanity among community members, including the youth. Sanity must begin from home. The caregivers must exercise control when they raise children as suggested by behaviourists such as Skinner, Bruner etc. The behaviour of a child should be shaped by parents or caregivers assigned to that role. Children are highly likely to imitate behaviour from parent/s or caregivers. It is therefore critical for children to be exposed to correct role models. This notion subsumes that when children have been taught and guided by parent/s, churches, supportive organisations, the community, and cultural organisations, this may reduce incidents of violence that are wreaking havoc in schools.

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