

**FACTORS RELATED TO THE PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE IN RURAL
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE XIMHUNGWE CIRCUIT IN BOHLABELA
DISTRICT, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

by

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Declaration

I declare that “Factors Related to the Prevalence of Violence in Rural Secondary Schools in the Ximhungwe Circuit in Bohlabela District, Mpumalanga” is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references

Chabangu, Lucas

Date

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, Meslina Chabangu, for she has provided me with an educational foundation and encouraged me to always hope for the best in life.

Acknowledgements

This work was made successful by the contributions, supports and motivations of various persons. I wish to convey my earnest gratitude to the following:

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Abstract

After teaching in High school for six years, I was frustrated to see the institutional action on the issue of school violence. The creation of a climate conducive to teaching and learning has become a serious challenge to many educators. Through research, it became clear that enough has not yet been done. Therefore, an empirical investigation into this problem was necessary to determine the nature of violence in order to enhance better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Bushbuckridge (Bohlabela) district in Mpumalanga province. This research employed a qualitative research approach to answer the research question. The study aimed to provide an accurate, objective, representative and empirically sound body of data on the extent of violence within schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga.

The research design comprised a case study that included focus group interviews with six participants in each group. In addition, I employed participant observation and document analysis. The study focused on four rural secondary schools that were purposefully selected in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga. Ethical issues were taken into consideration while conducting the sampling and the selection of learners was based on their accounts of frequent violence against learners or teachers, and because they were considered knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon under study.

Key words

Behaviour

Bullying

School violence

Perpetrators

Sexual harassment

Human Rights

Attitude

School rampage

Factors

The victim

Violence

Alleviation

Abbreviations

SMT	School Management Team
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SGB	School Governing Body
FGI	Focus Group Interviews
PO	Participant Observation
RSS	Rural Secondary Schools
DA	Drug Abuse
PP	Positive Parenting
VRA	Violence Risk Assessment
EBD	Emotional Behavioural Disorder
MA	Methamphetamine
WCP	Western Cape Province
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
BMR	Bureau of Market Research

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Popular discourse suggests that schools are safe havens and sites in which learners can expect to be safe from harm. Generally, schools are perceived as mechanisms for developing and reinforcing good personalities with pro-active social attitudes and as sites where individuals are prepared for the role they are to play in society. Over time, this perspective has changed. There is currently, a high degree of uncertainty about learners' safety. Mncube and Harber (2012:4) point out that school violence is a problem of particular significance in South Africa. Shootings, stabbings, and physical and emotional violence have taken place in both public and private schools.

Learners and teachers are increasingly becoming victims and perpetrators of violence in schools because, of increased levels of aggression and hostility in our school communities. The rate of that increase is itself growing; however, there is no single variable capable of predicting violence. Schools are responsible for teaching students the skills needed to maintain and advance our culture; however, students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach when fear for one's life runs rampant. This problem has turned the right to basic education into an illusion. This chapter therefore looks into the sting of violence that has become a major concern to all South Africans as well as the global community.

This chapter explores the nature of violence occurring in schools and which consequently leaves every learner and every teacher unsettled and uncertain about their safety. It also explores the extent of and reasons for violence in schools with regard to human rights, as well as the limits and the possibilities of working with a discourse of rights in education. Because violence does not occur in a vacuum, it is complicated by numerous variables in the aggressive students' life.

It is known that the more risk factors a child is exposed to, the greater the chance that the child will become violent. The role of teachers and parents is therefore of vital importance, since they are the ones who are on the ground and who are better able to identify early signs of anti-social and aggressive behaviour. To this end, an early identification of the potential problem should be done and necessary interventions implemented before the problem becomes chronic mainly in post-primary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

Violence has recently occupied the centre stage in many schools in South Africa, particularly in secondary schools. For instance, the study conducted by SACE (2011:13) on the level of violence in South African schools, indicates that theft and sexual assault was among the highest in schools. The good news is that schools and police officials are putting much effort into trying to present high profile strategies. The bad news is that we will never be a hundred percent successful because we are dealing with human behaviour. Youth and adolescent behaviours are difficult to predict and no one can do it with hundred percent certainty, because of its often experimental and erratic nature.

Furthermore, factors related to violence in the Ximhungwe circuit are complicated and deeply rooted. Therefore, it is significant to conduct an empirical investigation in order to have a better understanding of what really creates violent situations in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. How prevalent is violence in schools? This is not an easy question to answer. Our schools are not safe because we often see in both print and electronic media how learners brutally and ruthlessly murder one another right inside the classroom in the presence of teachers.

Children are precious yet defenceless; therefore, partnerships between school personnel and family members including the students themselves can work to bring about a non-violent school environment. Malicious damage to state property and theft of valuable equipment such as computers, laptops, and photocopy machines have become the order of the day. These are some of the many factors that are evident in our schools in South Africa and for the purpose of this study in the Ximhungwe circuit.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Van der Merwe (2009:15) states that school violence prevention programmes seldom address learners' contributory role in this phenomenon. The majority of violent behaviour by learners is blamed on "poverty", "apartheid" and racial issues, the media, socioeconomic factors, and external factors and can be encountered in any school with any combination of learners. However, school violence is no longer restricted to specific neighbourhoods, poverty, races, or socioeconomic factors, to mention but a few.

The investigation in this study focused on the following aspects:

- Factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools;
- Attitudes and behaviour of learners;

- Perceptions of victims of violence with regard to cases of violence dealt with in their schools;
- The feelings and emotions of learners with regard to violence in their respective schools.

The research aimed at depicting some deductions concerning the possibility that a culture of violence is developing amongst learners in Ximhungwe circuit, which means that such learners may exhibit a pervasive ingrained identification with violence, leading to their acceptance and valuing of this behaviour. Based on the findings pertaining to the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of learners, certain conclusions may be reached on the correlation between the attitudes of learners towards violence and their consequent behaviour.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Learners in the Ximhungwe circuit are exposed to an alarming variety of perpetrators of violence in schools. These perpetrators' acts have a negative effect on the quality of their learning and deny them equal opportunities and effective education in schools as envisaged in the constitution of the country. This includes the right to basic education (sec29), the right to privacy (sec14), the right to safety and security of the person (sec12), a right to life (sec11), to mention but a few (South African Constitution, 1994: Chapter 2).

Therefore, this study sought to explore the nature of violence learners are encountering and to determine possible ways and means of preventing violence, so that learners' rights are promoted and protected. The research was conducted at four purposively, selected rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district in Mpumalanga Province.

1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

It is important to see schools as sanctuaries for learners where they will grow up, learn with patriotism, and pride in an environment that is safe from abuse, robbery and neglect. This gives rise to the main research question, namely: ***What are the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools?*** These factors will be explained in depth in chapters 2 and 4 of the study.

The main research question above gives rise to the following four subsidiary research questions:

- What are the different forms of violence experienced in rural secondary schools?
- What are the perceptions of learners encountering violence with regard to cases of violence dealt with in rural secondary schools?

- What are the feelings and the emotions of learners with regard to violence in their respective schools?
- What are the alleviation factors to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools?

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study focuses to achieve the following aims:

- To investigate factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district in Mpumalanga Province.
- To determine different forms of violence experienced in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.
- To determine the perceptions of learners encountering violence with regard to cases of violence dealt with in rural secondary schools.
- To determine the feelings and emotions of learners regarding violence in their respective schools.
- To determine alleviation factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Maree (2010:29) states that a rationale serves as statement of how a researcher developed an interest in a particular topic and exactly why a researcher believes the research is worth conducting. This study adds knowledge to the already existing body of knowledge concerning violence in schools. The research study contributes towards creating awareness about the current circumstances to students, teaching staff, parents, the Department of Education (DoE), individuals and business communities in the Ximhungwe circuit and outside the affected area. The general public in other parts of the country are not aware of the current circumstances in schools in this circuit.

As a teacher in a rural environment in the Ximhungwe circuit, I have realised that school violence is taking its toll on learners and teachers especially in secondary schools. This challenge seems unmanageable, given its current prevalence in some of the schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. Different schools are unsuccessfully trying a combination of different strategies to keep violence at bay. I have therefore realised that an empirical investigation to

determine the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools is necessary to shed light on this matter.

Consequently, the results of this research therefore highlight the ills and the challenges that the society faces, so that they can find new initiatives of dealing successfully with this problem in order to maintain peace and stability in the Ximhungwe circuit. Through this research, the schools (i.e. learners and teachers) can formulate possible recommendations that could serve as valuable guidelines for the future successful management of school violence.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

To conduct research on factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools, it is necessary to formulate clear definitions of key concepts used in the research. The problem identified in this study should be seen in relation to the following concepts:

1.7.1 Factors

Factors are circumstances contributing to a result. This include among others the following: lack of safety and security measures, lack of educator and parental support, learner loss of morality, availability of drugs and dangerous weapons, exposure to family violence and direct victimisation at school. In support of this study, Forde and Hardley (2011:57) point out that sexting can result in humiliation, bullying, and harassment of students, and in the worst cases, students may be forced to leave their schools or may even take their own lives. These are some of the factors that will be discussed in the study.

1.7.2 Behaviour

Van der Merwe (2009: 22) defines behaviour as a generic term covering “acts, activities, responses, reactions, movements, processes, operations, and etcetera”. Violent behaviour in children and adolescents can include a wide range of behaviours: explosive temper tantrums, physical aggression, fighting, threats or attempts to hurt others (including homicidal thoughts), fire setting, intentional destruction of property and vandalism. In this study, behaviour will refer to the conduct and deeds of the participants (learners).

1.7.3 Violence

Burton and Leoschut (2012:2) define violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, (against oneself), another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

1.7.4 Bullying

Meyer and Brown (2009:83) cited Olweus as saying that a student is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed to, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. They indicated that negative actions could be carried out by words (verbally), for instance, by threatening, taunting, teasing, and calling names.

1.7.5 Ximhungwe Circuit

As the study is focusing on Ximhungwe circuit, it is important to explain the area where the research was conducted. A circuit is a cluster of schools in the same area that share educational leaders. It can also be defined as the head office for managing of school affairs with demarcations within the education district. Ximhungwe circuit is situated in a deep rural area fifteen kilometres west of the Kruger National Park. Ximhungwe is the name of a wild bird.

1.7.6 Culture

Luttrell (2010: 171) says that culture refers to how we organise our hopes and dreams of how the world should be. She also indicates that culture defines what should be the case. For the purpose of this study, “culture” thus refers to a set of rules or standards and the norms and values shared by a group (i.e. learners). Where learners act on these rules or values, this produces certain forms of behaviour that are considered acceptable, proper and valued by the members of that group. The group learn their culture through socialisation and exposure to certain occurrences while growing up.

1.7.7 Human rights

According to Nieuwenhuis (2006:86), a human right is an entitlement or legal claim that any person has – by virtue of being human – against the state. An important observation is that one person’s right is another person’s duty. In this study, life and human dignity are some of the important entitlements that need to be respected. In this study, no learner owns another, nor has a right to harm or to exploit other learners.

In spite of their apparent clarity, statements of rights are not simple tools for achieving desired educational outcomes. In legal terms, human rights should not be taken at face value as delivering what they appear to promise. Christie (2009:3) further alludes to the fact that rights provide an available language and tools for asserting the value and the vulnerability of people and for grappling with the ongoing question of how we value each other in the complex circumstances of our different and interwoven lives. The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as quoted in Christie's article (2009:5,) states that

[e]ducation shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

1.7.8 Secondary schools

According to South Africa's National Qualifications Framework Act no 67 (2008) secondary schools are compulsory and formal learning institutions that cater for learners from grade 8 to grade 12, ages 14 to 18 years.

1.7.9 Learners

According to the South African Schools Act no 84 (1996: 24), a learner means any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of this Act. For the purpose of this study, learners will mean the participants in this research from the four purposeful selected schools.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Qualitative research method

Maree (2010:50) describes a qualitative research as research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied. It therefore focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences.

In this respect, this study focused on two critical aspects, namely:

- what one wants to find out; and

➤ how best one intends to do it.

I therefore decided on a qualitative research approach as suitable for the investigation. This qualitative method included a case study design involving interviews, observation, and document analysis. With these data collection techniques or instruments, I aimed at gathering first-hand information from the selected participants.

1.8.2 Case study research design

Lichtman (2011: 111) states that a case study is a form of qualitative research that seeks to examine a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, or a process that is bounded by both time and place. For the purpose of this study, I used a qualitative case study design for gathering in-depth information, with the aim not to generalise the findings to a larger group, but with central focus on the interpretation of the data.

I chose case study design as most suitable for this study. Through this design, one gathers in-depth information penetrating situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis. This is possible because the aim of qualitative research is to understand rather than to prove. The design included case study interviews, observation and document analysis, as the aim of the study was to determine the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga Province.

With its strength of observing effects in real contexts, a case study enabled me to determine in unique cases the feelings and the emotions of learners who were neither victims nor perpetrators of violence in the school environment. Chediell (2009:70) asserts that the context is important in understanding human behaviour. In this study, the contexts (i.e. school environment) in which violence occur are very important in understanding the extent to which the participants experience violence.

1.8.3 Research participants and sampling

Gorman and Clayton (2005:84) state that it is essential that sampling be done in such a way that all types represented in the population are included. Ximhungwe circuit has a population of 15 schools, situated in the Bushbuckridge district in Mpumalanga Province. The Ximhungwe circuit served as the population of this study. I purposefully selected four rural secondary schools as sampling schools for the study. A detailed explanation has been done in 3.7 in chapter 3 of the study. Based on convenience; six information-rich participants who were and

are currently experiencing violence in each of the four selected schools were selected for data collection.

For the purpose of the study a manageable group was selected which would be directly related to the research problem, the major data collection technique and data analysis. Written permission was requested from the Department of Education in Mpumalanga to conduct research in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district. After the permission from the DoE was granted, learners (participants) from the four selected schools were briefed about the purpose of the research and the procedures to be followed during data collection process. Both learners and parents were given consent forms to read and sign as a token of accepting and granting permission to their children to participate in the research.

Four (4) focus groups interviews were conducted. Each school was represented by a focus group consisting of between six and eight learners. Selection was based on frequent experiences of violent acts on other learners or teachers. The research tools also included observation and document analysis. The aim with using these data collection tools was firstly to identify the kind of negative behaviour that may be displayed in rural secondary schools at Ximhungwe circuit, and secondly, to collect information on how best school managers, teachers, learners and parents could contribute to the alleviation of school violence.

1.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

Because this study involved human subjects, it is important to highlight ethical considerations about this research. TerreBlanche, Durrheim and Painter (2007:64) point out that the essential purpose of ethics is to protect the welfare of the research participants. This could include obtaining letters of consent, and obtaining permission to be interviewed. For the purpose of the study, the following ethical issues were considered: confidentiality, informed consent, privacy, no harm, deception, and anonymity. This will be detailed in chapter 3 of this report.

1.10 STUDY DERMACATION

The research took place in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district in Mpumalanga Province. The findings aim to extend the understanding of the phenomenon investigated through interviews, observation and document review, rather than generalising findings. In this study, the perception of safety was viewed from the learners' perspectives and their personal experience. The major limitation of this study is that it focused on specific learners between the

ages of 14 and 18 years old in rural secondary schools who were encountering violence within a specific geographic area (i.e. Ximhungwe circuit) in Bohlabela district.

1.11 DATA COLLECTION

For the purpose of the study, three data collection instruments were used. This includes the following:

1.11.1 Focus group interviews

Gorman and Clayton (2005:49) point out that an interview is a structured process in which the researcher is able to ask questions about what cannot be seen or observed. Using “who” “where” “what” and “when” questions, the researcher is able to collect data about the past events. A focus group interview was considered a suitable instrument in this research, because it enabled me to collect in-depth information from the participants who know a great deal about their personal perceptions of events, processes and the environments in which they live.

Each focus group consisted of six to eight learners (that is four boys and two girls) between the ages of 14 and 18 years. The information from the focus group interviews was tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. The focus group interviews were conducted in the four purposively selected rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga Province.

1.11.2 Participant observation

Hennink (2011:179) states that observation is a process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the activities of the participants in the research setting. It enables the researcher to observe and record people’s behaviours, actions and interactions systematically. In this study, I conducted participatory observation, because it enabled me to obtain detailed descriptions of social settings or events in order to situate the participants’ behaviours within their own socio-cultural context. My role in this study was therefore that of a participant observer; I observed participants while taking notes and participating in their activities because I was involved in the interviews. This activity was conducted concurrently with the interviews. The advantage of using this instrument is that it provides information on things people would otherwise be unwilling to talk about.

1.11.3 Document analysis

Maree (2010: 82) indicates that the use of documents as data gathering technique is to focus on all types of written communication that may shed light on the phenomenon under investigation. Written data sources may include published and unpublished documents such as memoranda, administrative documents, reports, email messages, and faxes that are connected to the investigation.

The intention with this method of data collection is to determine the impact of the published documents such as school safety and security policies and to determine whether the document serves the purpose it was intended for as well as to find out the context in which it was produced in addressing school violence. Detailed methods will be explained and discussed in chapter 3 of this report.

1.12 DATA ANALYSIS

The data from focus group interviews and observation was analysed to identify the kind of negative behaviour that may be displayed in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. Six steps of data analysis were followed, namely: organising the data, generating categories, themes and patterns, coding data, testing emergent understanding, searching for alternative explanations, and writing the report.

These steps will be presented in detail in chapter 3 and 4 of this report. Information on how best school managers, teachers, learners and parents will contribute to an alleviation of school violence was also analysed. Transcripts of the recordings of interviews were carefully scrutinised and analysed over a period in order to gain familiarity for categorising purposes. Content analysis was also used to analyse research data and this entailed identifying, coding and categorising the primary patterns in the recorded data.

1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter has highlighted the importance of realising how widespread school violence is in the entire country. Research studies generally focus attention on school violence in townships and urban areas, but nothing is said about rural schools particularly Ximhungwe circuit. The pervasive nature of violence, inaction of teachers, parents and the higher authorities have led to this study to determine the prevalence of violence-related factors in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. In the best way of answering the research question, the study

employed a qualitative method with the aim of gathering in-depth, rich information from participants.

The qualitative approach includes a case study observation, document analysis and focus group interviews as suitable research methods, as well as purposeful sampling for data collection. Based on convenience and collection of rich first-hand information, four focus group interviews were conducted in the four selected rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district. Observation and document analysis were also utilised where attitudes and behaviours of the participants were the centre of observation in a natural setting in order to gain understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The next chapter, Chapter 2 will focus on the literature review that will provide a broader understanding of the phenomenon of school violence.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE PRESENTATION: EXTENT OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As a teacher in a high school for six years, I was frustrated to see the institutional inaction on the issue of school violence. Asking questions from colleagues about it did not help to get the answers. Unfortunately, many schools in the Ximhungwe Circuit are blanketed by an atmosphere of untrustworthiness, anxiety, a lack of confidence, and uncertainty about the safety and the well-being of every individual. Mncube and Harber (2012:3) reveal that violence in schools can come from different sources, take many forms and involve different actors. For example, bullying is learned outside the school, but perpetuated inside the school, because the school ignores it or does not deal with it satisfactorily.

Negative social discrimination and consequent antisocial behaviour may lead pupils to experience more problematic social behaviour, bullying and other forms of violence and may lead them to leave school early by dropping out. The antisocial behaviour of pupils is reflected also in specific motivation patterns with respect to other pupils, teachers, educational support staff, and relatives of pupils. What is almost impossible to find amid the media reports is an understanding of the minds of the potential perpetrators of school violence.

This chapter attempts to look at literature that is relevant to the phenomenon under study. Through a review of relevant literature, this chapter is aimed at contributing a clear understanding of the nature and the meaning of the problem identified (i.e. school violence) in the Ximhungwe Circuit. Langman (2009:8) states that television, films, video games, computer games and books are often cited as causes of rampaging school attacks. This is a complex issue to understand. Research indicates that there is no evidence or simple connection between media violence and murder.

Van der Merwe (2009:18) argues that violence in schools has escalated beyond that which was normally associated with bullying and now includes serious levels of violence and even death. It is clear that violence in South African schools has become a growing problem. Not only is the number of school violence incidents increasing, but the severity of violence is also worsening. It is further emphasised that when the problem is ignored and neglected school violence is reinforced, or at least condoned. This state of affairs is cause for moral outrage, and it is dangerous, not merely to schools, but to every democratic society.

Bureau of Market Research (2012:3) highlights concern about the seriousness of the impact of bullying among young people who revealed feelings of sadness and depression. The impact primarily affect the young people's emotional development and functioning and it is anticipated that such negative emotions could contribute to the youth being trapped in a vicious cycle of exploration and not being able to cope psychologically within the learning environment and broader society.

However, literature is silent about research on school violence in rural schools, especially in the in the Bushbuckridge (Bohlabela) district, where violence is on the increase and factors related to this are yet unknown. An investigation therefore needs to be conducted among learners around schools in Ximhungwe Circuit to establish and explore new initiatives to prevent the phenomenon of escalating school violence. It might be easy to get the wrong message if we look only at the surface of the matter without dealing with the root of the problem. This chapter seeks to understand what kind of people the perpetrators of violence are, what kind of problems they have, what goes on inside their minds.

These are not easy questions to answer; hence, a thorough literature study is necessary to enhance a deeper understanding about the phenomenon under study. Also, a more important measure of the relative safety of any school campus may be the perception of safety among students, faculty and staff. Owing to this kind of an attitude, Wilson (2013:3) remarks that schools in many countries including South Africa turn a deaf ear to the female student's complaints and many girls do not even complain because of fear of reprisals especially from teachers but also because they believe that nothing will be done.

How will schools meet the educational needs of all these students with so many different problems that affect their ability to learn? This remains a serious challenge that needs targeted interventions to ensure stability in schools. UNICEF (2013:32) recommends preventive programmes such as "secondary prevention" that happens immediately after the violence has occurred to deal with the short- term consequences, e.g treatment and counselling. In order to ensure academic success, schools must consider the mental health problems that affect achievement and behaviour in schools.

In context, similar programmes of this nature are in place in South African schools (including Ximhungwe circuit), for example, "The wellness programme"; in Bohlabela district does not address the issue of violence affecting learners, as it is exclusively confined to address issues affecting educators only.

2.2 RATIONALE FOR THE LITERATURE STUDY

Atkins and Wallace (2012:77) point out that it is important that there is a wide range of potential sources from which you might elicit useful literature. These include thesis and dissertations held in university libraries, reports, conference proceedings or statistical data. This chapter provides a detailed literature study to reach a better and broader understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The sources of information that this chapter exploited include the following: firstly, articles in professional journals, because they provide information on the most recent investigations into school violence written by professionals and are credible for use in this research; secondly, research reports and dissertations. I referred to the methodology used by these sources that allows wide room for further application in a different context, scrutiny and critical analysis.

Thirdly, according to Isidiho (2009: 22) the internet saves time, and serves as an information service available day and night with an unlimited number of books and sources of information, notwithstanding the fact that not all information is necessarily controlled, reliable, verified, or correct. Lastly, this research referred to scientific books on the subject of school violence that are included in the catalogues of academic libraries.

2.3. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF CORE CONCEPTS

To conduct research on factors related to the prevalence of school violence in rural secondary schools, it is important to formulate clear definitions of the key concepts that will be used in the research. In this section, I analyse a number of concepts relevant to the topic under study, including the following: school violence, violence, school rampage, perpetrators or instigators, bullying, sexual violence, threats and leaks.

2.3.1 School violence

Langman (2009:42) indicates that school violence serves to intimidate and terrorise others, forcing their enemies to cower. Violence also provides an emotional release; for example, when the perpetrator punches the walls. The implications of these experiences are many. In the first instance, the impact of exposure to, or experience of violence in any form and in any context in SA is well documented in theory. In brief, violence at a young age negatively affects the cognitive development of the individual as well as the development of “pro-social” behaviours (or the ability to relate and interact in a healthy, positive way with peers and others).

Mncube and Harber (2012:3) highlight the fact that violence attempt to inflict injury on another person or to damage school property. Furthermore, violence and violent victimisation during childhood significantly increase the risk of anti-social or delinquent behaviour during adolescence and of engaging in criminal behaviour in adulthood. Isidiho (2009:23) further alludes to the fact that violent behaviour is not healthy for learners: it causes them to lose concentration, feel uncomfortable or unsafe and disrupts the social and learning environment of classes.

Violence affects the behaviour of learners: some stay away from certain places in the school or on the school grounds, some stay away from school-related activities, while some decide to stay out of school and at home. Absence from school owing to fear of violence directly affects the psychological well-being, academic involvement, and performance of learners. Fox and Burstein (2010:10) state that the risk of victimisation of teachers poses a special problem for schools in terms of faculty retention. Whereas most students have little choice attending schools, educators who fear for their safety can always decide to seek alternative placements or even to abandon the teaching profession altogether.

2.3.2 Bullying

Research into bullying will foreground the major types of bullying and describe pupils' experiences about being bullied at school. Not only the victims of bullying are affected; teachers and parents are also concerned about the emotional, physical and psychological effect victims suffer from (Isidiho 2009:5). The anti-bullying interventions would be more effective when reasons or factors leading to bullying are understood, because it often leads to greater and prolonged violence in schools. According to Isidiho (2009:20), a power imbalance is found at the heart of the bullying dynamic.

A learner who is stronger, more aggressive, bolder and more confident than the average child is typically bullies other learners who are weaker and more timid, who tend not to retaliate, or who act in an assertive manner. Learners suffer bullying as part of violence in the Ximhungwe circuit when they are at school, going to and from school. Langman (2009:12) states that bullying manifests itself in many different kinds of behaviour, for instance physical assault, threats and intimidation, verbal hostility, spreading rumours, or ostracising peers. The bully has more power than the victim does. This could be through larger size; greater strength, superior confidence, or force of numbers (i.e. many kids ganging up on a victim).

According to Meyer and Brown (2009:2), bullying is “behaviour” that repeatedly and over time intentionally inflicts injury on another individual. Negative action can be carried out by words (verbally), for instance, threatening, taunting, teasing and calling names. It is a negative action when somebody hits, pushes kids, pinches or restrains another by physical contact. It is also possible to carry out negative actions without the use of words or physical contact, such as by making faces or dirty gestures, or intentionally excluding someone from a group. Most of the entire school’s climate must be amenable to changing norms surrounding intimidation and aggression.

Intolerance for acts of bullying must be the perspective widely embraced and shared by both faculty and students. In this regard, Mncube and Harber (2012:9) point out that bullying is also not confined to boys. Girl to girl bullying is an increasing problem and tends to be verbal, based on sexual insults and about competitions for boys. Farrington and Ttofi (2010: 4) point out that bullying includes several key elements namely: “physical, verbal, or psychological attack or intimidation” that is intended to cause fear, distress or harm to the victim.

An imbalance of power (psychological or physical) with a more powerful child (or children) oppressing less powerful ones; and repeated incidents between the same children over a prolonged period may cause delay for a child to recover damages for psychological injury caused as a result of a school’s negligency. In keeping with the above claim, Mail & Guardian 12 April 2013 at 08:02 page 2 titled “Class warfare rife among SA schools” shows that a unisa survey has found that most pupils experience violence at school, mainly among their peers.

2.3.3 The perpetrators

According to Langman, (2009:15), perpetrators of bullying may to certain extent be school shooters. These are not ordinary kids who were bullied into retaliation, these are not ordinary kids who played too many video games, and these are not ordinary kids who just wanted to be famous. They are kids with serious psychological problems. School violence in South Africa often fits into various typologies learner-on-learner, educator-on-learner, and peer-on-learner violence. The most common form of school violence in the South African context seems to be learner-on-learner, although other forms are also common enough to warrant growing concern. Individuals committing those acts may be known to their victims.

2.3.4 School rampage

Langman (2009:2) defines school rampage as “the random shooting that occurs when students or former students attack their own schools. The attacks are public acts, committed in full view of others”. Most often, the shooters open fire on crowds of people with no attempt to kill anyone in particular. Violence in television programmes, films, video games, computer games and books are often cited as causes of school rampage attacks.

Langman (2011:16) argues that millions of kids are exposed to violence in the media without becoming mass murderers. Threats may be made directly to the intended victim, but in most cases, threats are communicated to third parties. Shilubane, Ruiter, Borne, Sewpaul, James, and Reddy (2013:5) remarked that suicide related deaths in SA schools are increasing. The report shows that depression and suicidal behaviour have shown positive correlation to the prevalence of school rampage in South African schools.

The intention to commit a school shooting can be expressed through a wide variety of behaviours and expressive actions. For example, there may be statements or boasts about the impact of an event on others that hint at an impending event. A student may also reveal violent intentions through essays written for school assignments, poems, songs, or drawings.

2.3.5 Sexual harassment

Prinsloo (2011:306) defines sexual harassment as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. The unwanted nature of sexual harassment distinguishes it from behaviour that is welcome and mutually acceptable. For example, sexual attention becomes sexual harassment if the behaviour is persistent, or the recipient has made it clear that the behaviour is offensive; and the perpetrator should have known that the behaviour was regarded as unacceptable.

Sexting as another form of sexual harassment has become a serious concern in many parts of South African schools. Forde and Hardley (2011:57) say: “The term “sexting” is derived from “texting” and refers to the sending of sexually provocative material from modern communications devices”. Although sexting is typically voluntary at first, it raises many legal and social concerns, especially when the images are spread beyond the control of the sender.

2.3.6 Violence risk assessment

Cawood, Michael and Corcoran (2009:165) state that violence risk assessment is the process of identifying behaviour that may signal an individual’s preparation to commit a violent act;

assessing such behaviour and other known incidents of violence that have demonstrated those behaviours. The assessor then quantifies the level of risk from this behavioural information by using professional judgment and objective, appropriate tools to provide a balanced assessment and presentation to the requestor of the assessment, in such a way as to qualify the opinion and its limitations appropriately.

2.4 FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Although the levels of school violence differ from one school to another, schools may experience different forms of violence. For instance, forms of violence that learners experience in South African schools among others include the following: suicide, bullying and intimidation, rape, fighting using dangerous weapons like bottles and knives, sexual harassment, to mention but a few. The above mentioned forms of violence occurring in secondary schools, may be influenced by certain factors as discussed in 4.8 of chapter 4, depending on the behavioural patterns of an individual or a group of learners.

2.4.1 Suicide

Often children of today face situations that are developmentally beyond their capacity to handle or understand. Suicide represents a significant public health problem among the nation's young people. Suicide deaths however represent only one extreme end of a continuum of suicidal thoughts and behaviour. Shilubane, Ruiters, Borne, Sewpaul, James and Reddy (2013:1) reveal that in SA suicide rates are believed to be higher than the world average. The findings show that adolescents have highest suicide rates compared to adults. This indicates that it can be difficult to discern the student's reasoning and motives, and although some victims might have identified the attacker, and in other cases the attacker seemed to have been indiscriminate in choosing specific victims.

Juhnke, Granello and Granello (2011:5) indicate that although suicide is a public health problem across all young people, some groups within 10 to 24 year age group are at a higher risk than others. Boys are four times more likely to die from suicide than girls. These differences are due primarily to the lethality of the method used to attempt suicide. Males may tend to choose more lethal means such as firearms, whereas females are more likely to choose pills or poisons.

Most suicides in South African schools are regarded or ruled as accidental deaths, while most of them are not reported. These accidents are associated with recklessness or alcohol abuse, which are also suicide risk factors. Shilubane, Ruiters, Borne, Sewpaul, James and Reddy

(2013:5) further state that although the information can be overwhelming, it is important to take some time to reflect on the implications this has for all of us as individuals, whether we are counsellors, educators, or family members and friends.

Each of us can do something to help prevent suicide. The frustration and fear that we all have around the topic of child and adolescent suicide in South African schools is clearly indicative of the concerns we all have about larger social problems that face today's youths. Learners who display suicidal thoughts often do not see another way out of their current situation. Quite often, they are obsessed with psychopathic feelings.

Suicide risk factors are extremely complex and everyone's pathway to a place of suicide crisis is different. The risk factors can help us understand some of the major concerns that many suicidal people share, but they are useful only to the extent they help us understand the problem of suicide as it affects segments of our population in general. If we become educated, informed, and willing to educate others, intervene when needed, and seek help when appropriate, we can help make a difference.

Research highlights that little is known about the specificity and predictive power of leakage (the communication to a third party of intent to do harm to a target) and threats and how these two overlapping categories of behaviour are related. Shilubane, Ruiters, Borne, Sewpaul, James and Reddy (2013:4) express concern that the 2008 survey on 'suicide attempt' shows that across gender groups, suicide attempt seems to be somewhat more prevalent in Mpumalanga compared with other provinces.

Disappointingly, the question it raises therefore is: how can schools encourage students to come forward with information, as the students are much more likely to observe threats or leakage than teachers are. What are the motives for leakage and threats, and to what extent can these be regarded as crisis for help or perhaps efforts by students to assess the responses of peers to their plans? Further research is therefore necessary to answer these questions.

2.4.2 Bullying and intimidation

A study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2012:19) on 'School Violence in South Africa' shows that about 78, 7% of learners had ever been bullied. This shows that bullying as part of violence in South African schools reflects serious threats to learner safety. Most bullying in schools does not involve actual violence or fighting, but rather constant threat of violence,

which can make school halls and bathrooms tremendously fear provoking. It is important to keep in mind that school shooting reflects only the most severe and visible responses to bullying, a long-standing and widespread problem in South African schools.

Juhnke, Granello and Granello (2011:13) indicate that research in the USA has also found a large number of negative impacts associated with being the victim of bullying. These studies report that those students who were victims of bullying also reported symptoms of anxiety, depression, stress, hopelessness and low self-esteem and were more likely to attempt self-harming behaviours and suicide. Burton and Leoschut (2012:102) indicate that bullying as a component of violence in South African schools is cited as having a very clear relationship with other forms of violence, particularly criminal victimisation.

Mncube and Harber (2012:15) indicate that although bullying seems to be a key risk marker for anti-social development, it is important to note that less attention has been given to the relation between school bullying and long-term criminal or anti-social behaviour in the life course. Furthermore, they argued that even though school bullying was found a strong predictor of later delinquency, violence and aggression, it is necessary to consider that serious bullies had an enhanced risk of developing long-term anti-social problems.

Juhnke, Granello and Granello (2011:15) further indicate that most recently, an Australian study conducted in 2007 shows that teachers' own moral orientation (justice or care-oriented) influenced how and when teachers intervened in bullying. They also determined that the perceived severity of the incident increased the likelihood of teacher intervention. In the South African context, studies of this nature are rare. Given the circumstances in the Ximhungwe circuit, it is currently difficult for educators in schools to determine the appropriate means and ways of stabilising situations of violence.

Isidiho (2009:32) points out that in widely published research boys are much more likely to bully others than girls and a relatively large percentage of girls report that bullying occurs among girls but much more among boys. Girls, instead of using physical means, resolve to use more subtle and indirect ways such as slandering or rumour, intentional exclusion of others from their group, and manipulation of friendship relations.

Meyer and Brown (2009:16-17) states that the main weakness in the current trend of bullying studies is that they fail to explore and acknowledge the influences of larger forces such as sexism, homophobia, and transphobia in understanding relationships of power and dominance in peer groups. The author recognises various forms of verbal aggression but with little

exception, never explores its relationship with social biases and cultural norms. Only name-calling were addressed but never explored what names were being used to hurt and insult students.

However, this study is not aimed at exploring the names used to hurt or insult other people. Mncube and Harber (2012:8) state that what is worrying about bullying as another component of violence is the fact that it can be looked at through the lense of social learning. For instance, when the model is rewarded rather than punished for the behaviour. Bullies may influence their peers to become involved to bullying as active participants. Due to peer pressure, some learners reinforce bullying by passively watching.

2.4.3 Rape and sexual harassment or assault

Wilson (2013:2) states that if education for girls is not equitable, then academic learning is compromised and the psychological empowerment that education can confer is greatly reduced. It is imperative that girls stay in schools and remain safe to complete their education. Mail & Guardian 14 June 2008 06:00 page 3 titled 'System fail child rape victim' shows that an eight –year old Worcester boy told his teacher and his mother that he was repeatedly raped, beaten and threatened by children at his school. This shows the seriousness of sexual violence girl learners are encountering in South African schools.

In the study on gender, bullying and harassment, Meyer and Brown (2009:9) points out that, sexual harassment in schools has been the subject of research and public conversation since the early 1990s. The research also indicates that in spite of this, school violence creates volatile situations in schools. This activity creates a hostile climate for most students. The findings indicate that teachers do generally not stop this behaviour and sometimes it is encouraged by their tacit participation. About sexual harassment, the view expressed is that male teachers might “laugh along with the guys” or support the comments and even blame the victim.

SACE (the South African Council of Educators 2011:26) highlights the point that, with specific reference to the school context, what is becoming evident is the increasing availability of drugs and alcohol among school learners. The relevance of drugs or alcohol abuse to violence is the fact that learners who are under the influence of these substances are more likely to be violent in and outside the school premises. It seems that learners are not the only ones bringing these substances onto the school premises. Some teachers are using children to get alcohol from

the shebeens or missing classes to go and drink, which constitutes a flagrant negation of the right to human dignity as enshrined in the constitution of South Africa.

Wilson (2013:2) revealed that sexual abuse may occur outside the school with adult men engaging in sex for exchange of gifts and money. In order to prevent this from continuing, she indicates that we must learn effective strategies for intervention that will help educators create schools where such discriminating attitudes and behaviours will be replaced by more inclusive notions of respect, equality and understanding. The questions that this statement raises are; are our schools safe heavens for learners? Is the South African nation seeing hope for the total restoration of peace and stability in our schools? These are not easy questions to answer regarding the complexity of violence in South African schools.

Mncube and Harber (2013:17) contend that crime and violence are severe threats to the fragile democracy, peace and economic stability in South Africa. It corrupts the social fabric of communities and the nation as a whole and endangers the health of both children and adults. It disrupts the provision of basic services and destroys respect for human rights. Given these situations in South African schools, it is patently clear that our schools are not safe. For instance, girl learners are kidnapped and suffer rape and torture at the hands of hoodlums.

Prinsloo (2011:310) remarked that although girls in South Africa have better access to school than their counterparts in other sub-Saharan African states, they are confronted with levels of sexual violence and sexual harassment in schools that impede their access to education on equal terms with male students. It is important that the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Education provide leadership and mobilise commitment for combating sexual violence in schools at every level in the education system.

2.4.4 Drug abuse and or substance and alcohol abuse

Fox and Burstein (2010:134) allude to the fact that, although it is an advantage that students in upper grades are older and able to assume greater personal responsibilities, they are in some respects more vulnerable to temptation and at greater risk. For example, alcohol consumption and drug use are more likely to be serious issues at middle schools and high schools than at lower-level schools. Despite laws and law enforcement efforts, drug dealers may see middle schools and high schools as fertile ground for expanding their market shares.

Van Heerden (2009:17) has revealed that there is good evidence that drug availability and drug use in the general population coexist. For example, since the first democratic elections in

South Africa in 1994 there has been an increase in the trafficking and use of heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine-type stimulants in the country. The use of all drug types has increased in younger populations, with younger gang members starting to use “harder” drugs at a younger age. More recent cohorts gang members were much more likely to start drug use, particularly extra-medical and other drug use, in childhood and in early to mid-adolescence. Relatively, alcohol abuse has a potential for xenophobic attacks in schools.

To support the above claim, Bester and Duplessis (2013:7) point out that, South Africa has been the centre of xenophobic attack and it has been confirmed as one of the contributory factors to school violence. According to this report, teachers had been victims of xenophobic attacks in schools in the Western Cape due to no sense of pride in learners because of alcohol abuse and gambling. The report also indicated that the reason for the attack is that the student may attempt to exert control over authorities, win favour with peers, and seek revenge on the one in authority by carrying out a prank that endangers the well-being of a teacher.

In dealing with xenophobia in schools, Bester and Duplessis (2013: pointed out that the disciplinary support mechanisms on the part of school governance need to be investigated to clarify their effectiveness and to determine if they really accomplish what they set out to do, namely, to support educators in their complex task of maintaining discipline in our schools.

The relationship between alcohol and drugs and school violence also needs to be investigated. While secondary school learners are not entitled to drink alcohol, there is an indication that alcohol and drugs are becoming an increasing problem in schools (SACE 2011:37). Unfortunately, the school authorities can be as complicit in this problem as the learners can, while learners bring alcohol on to the school property. Educators are also using children to fetch alcohol from taverns and shebeens neighbouring the schools. Some learners are sneaking out to shebeens to buy alcohol for their own consumption. Drug dealers sit outside school gates or in close proximity, hawking drugs to learners during schools hours and after school.

In this manner, dealers are identifying learners as easy prey and as a reliable source of income. According to Nyabandza (2010:2), there has been a dramatic increase in treatment demand for abuse of drugs such as dagga, mandrax, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine (MA) in the Western Cape Province (WCP) of South Africa. In the year 2002, the (MA) users were at twenty-one patients and in 2008, the number increased to one thousand four hundred and fifty one patients who enrolled into treatment centres in the WCP. Methamphetamine (MA)

has been described as the primary substance of abuse, which is linked to high risk of sexual behaviour and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.

Drug abuse and its impact on society present a vast and complicated field of research; however, the model has some limitations because the methamphetamine (MA) epidemic in Cape Town has to some extent been exacerbated by drug lords who target innocent school children in disguise by selling them sweets tainted with drugs. This tendency does not end in the Western Cape (WCP) but it is widely spreading to all parts of the country. For schools to consistently remain focus to the vision, it is significant for all stakeholders to critically consider and maintain the essence of a warm and a healthy relationship in schools.

2.5 THE ESSENCE OF A WARM AND A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP IN SCHOOLS

It is important to note that the prevalence of violence in schools brings instability and fear between learners and teachers. In addition, it is a threat to the prevalence of a healthy relationship in schools. As children grow older, there is a clear tendency to confide more in friends first than in people of authority such as educators and parents. The levels of trust between learners and educators can be an important indicator of the overall health of a school, and can in itself be a predictor of delinquency levels within schools.

One factor that can provide some indicator of trust is the degree to which school authorities (educators and SGBs), rather than adults (parents), receive information directly from the learners on incidents of violence. The ability to report violence to a teacher does reflect some level of trust between learner and educator. Isidiho (2009:24) supports this notion by indicating that it is of paramount importance that parents pay attention and listen to their children, and encourage them to discuss academic matters and their relationships with their peers and with them as parents. Children should be encouraged to refrain from violent acts, but make friends at school and their neighbourhood.

Through this, parents can then come closer and work together in supervising their children's socialising activities, both on their way to and from school. According to Mtsweni (2008:19), the real essence of being an educator is helping learners to exercise self-discipline and move towards a happy and fulfilled life and future. Educators should therefore be provided with a framework to deal with parents in a professional and positive way in order to develop partnerships in promoting discipline in schools. Also, instead of emphasising punishment and encouraging conformity, schools need to create violent-free climates in order to recognise the

individuality of learners and make the school and classroom community places where educators are happy to teach and learners happy to learn.

Burton and Leoschut (2012:98) point out that the negative interaction effect of severe physical violence experienced by pupils and staff seems to indicate the mutual strengthening of this violent behaviour between these social actors in school. To this effect, the national policy should try to increase the safety of pupils and staff in schools by enhancing pro-social rules of conduct and the shared control of these rules, taking school measures against truancy, and redefining curriculum differentiation procedures.

According to Parsotam (2009:26) in his study of the role and impact of a stress intervention programme for primary school principals, we should take a holistic approach to health and wellness, wherein the mind and the body are regarded as a unit. His study was in support of the principle of “healthy mind in a healthy body”; health could take a turn for the worse when one is in a close contact with stress and physical illness. Stressful individuals may tend to be more violent when they lack attention especially victims of violence.

SACE 92011:23) remarked that for one to gain a sense of the cause of violence in schools one need to examine and attempt to understand the broader context in which the school is found. Based on this assumption, schools need to put in place systems that will protect learners who reported learners who report incidents and ensure that the issue is dealt with.

Wilson (2013:4) states that making schools safe and equitable must be the goal to improve education for girls because school climate is a foundational component of a safe and protective environment that promotes connectedness and bonding. Having clear rules and procedures, and positive relationships among all members of the school community, are important for creating and maintaining such an environment. Health educators can play an important role in creating and maintaining a positive and protective school climate.

Burton and Leoschut (2012:106) reveal that students experiencing victimisation and perpetrating aggression (e.g. relational, verbal, or physical) in peer contexts are positively linked with difficulties related to academic achievement and adjustment. Thus, the increased risk of being exposed to violence in peer contexts such as bullying (especially as victims) among youth with disabilities and the associated negative consequences, highlight the need for prevention efforts that effectively serve the needs of youths with disabilities.

2.6 THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS TO ENSURE PEACE AND STABILITY IN SCHOOLS

Peace and stability in schools are not a one man's show, but a collective responsibility. Schools need effective interventions in violence to enable learners to realise their dreams in education. It is significantly essential to restore peace and stability within South African schools. As part of the society, some members of the community are directly or indirectly involved in school violence. Consequently, they should be part of the solution to violence prevention. Therefore, the following stakeholders have a crucial role to play in combating school violence.

2.6.1 The role played by school authorities (Principal and educators including the SGBs)

School authorities refers to the the school management team (SMT) and the school governing bodies (SGBs). As pointed out previously, Mncube and Harber (2012:17) further point out that the social cohesion characteristics of a school may be useful in promoting feelings of safety, particularly in pupils. Because crime and violence are severe threats to the fragile democracy, peace, and economic stability in South Africa, it is significantly essential that in any attempt to curb violence, occurring in schools, the authorities need to extend beyond the school itself. Because environments are not the same, every school need to have a very well planned strategic actions of addressing school violence.

The escalating concern about violence in South African schools is an indication of a serious challenge that schools are faced with regarding security as a means of combating school violence. Wilson (2013:11) expressed concern that given the fact that some teachers are perpetrators of abuse, and others may be victims of abuse, it is important that strategies to address gender violence in schools acknowledge and addrees teacher's experiences as well as students, so that constructive and collaborative relationships can be encouraged.

According to the research conducted by Isidiho (2009:25) about the victims of bullying in Lesotho, the effects of school bullying can be devastating. Learners who are bullied suffer from low-self esteem, often have poor concentration, and may refuse to continue in school. Bullied learners tend to feel stupid, ashamed and unattractive and gradually begin to view themselves as failures. How do we teach children that hurting others is wrong? What does hurting others mean? How does defending our possessions, bodies and dignity differ from committing an unacceptable aggressive act? It is clear that school authorities must accept this mandate and

make it a major part of their mission to address the causes of violence in working towards its prevention.

According to van der Merwe (2009:13), in the study on the culture of violence amongst learners in South African schools, the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM) was called into life with a vision to build an ethical and moral community and a mission to promote positive values. He argues that in order to do so, the MRM aspires to developing strategies aimed at restoring social values in our new democracy and to promote national advocacy for the creation of an ethical, caring, and corrupt-free society.

In most cases, students who exhibit aggressive behaviour early in life will, without support, progress toward severe aggression or violence. It is therefore significant that the spirit of ubuntu should be seen to exist in society regardless of the environment, because a safe school is a healthy school that is physically and psychologically safe. Burton and Leoschut (2012:23) point out that the visibility of school staff, specifically educators, serves as a greater deterrent for criminal and violent behaviour within schools than police officers. Effective teacher support and student connection and involvement with school can protect against the effects of difficult conditions.

Unfortunately, the psychological outcomes of the research indicated that these factors did not fully moderate the impact of exposure to violence for males. The literature findings have further shown that increasing connection to school and teacher support could result in less exposure to community violence for male students. Fox and Burstein (2010:130) indicate that exceptionally disruptive and chronic misbehaviour often results in fighting among students. This most often takes place on the playground, but a significant share of incidents can occur within the classrooms or elsewhere in the school building. In addition, the period just after the school day ends, when many children are unsupervised and restless from having been cooped up in classrooms, is particularly problematic.

Even when fighting occurs after school lets out the source of conflict, such behaviour often stems from issues that arose during school. In keeping with the above notion, Wilson (2013:7) points out that the voices of children are primarily in trying to curb school violence. School officials therefore have a responsibility to confront and resolve disputes among students, even if the combatants settle matters elsewhere. Indeed, the potential for injury or death inherent in fighting exists at all grade levels, whether the fight is between two individual students or between two rival gangs.

The investigation into the effects of school culture on bullying and assessment in the USA, Meyer and Brown (2009:27) reported that teachers are exhausted and overwhelmed by the professional demands placed on them and do not feel they are given the necessary support or resources to deal with everything they would like to address. They are frustrated by these limitations. The study indicates that this may suggest that school authorities have a very limited sense of control over their school environment. So far, very few educators in South Africa have skills, expertise to address bullying, and sexual harassment in schools.

What one teacher interviewed by Meyer and Brown (2009:31) supports this when saying: "I don't remember ever specifically talking about sexuality or sexual orientation. It was never a specific topic that we were asked to discuss." It is necessary to stop young people in crisis before they become violent. UNICEF (2013:34) reveals that intended target groups may be designed to address the issue of violence. For example, programmes that promote gender equity e.g sexual harassment, community stepping up environmental safety programmes including community action to prevent abuse.

In South African schools a programmes like these are applied in many schools but very little has been achieved because its impact and translation is left largely to the commitment level and tenacity of the teachers and students that become club members (Wilson 2013:9). It is apparent that these factors make it difficult for the school social workers to do an adequate job of addressing interpersonal violence. The connection between social skill training and improvement of a student's academic performance should be considered as a means of linking behavioural and academic goals, thereby reducing the barriers faced by social workers while continuing to provide an academic focus for the students.

It is of utmost importance that teachers extend their area of responsibility by moving away from dealing with issues only within the microstructures of their classrooms. They need also to focus strongly on macrostructures of the school to improve student safety and a positive school climate. Different schools will require a combination of different strategies to foster relationships with students and create a sense of responsibility to one another among all who are part of the school community. Shilubane, Ruiters, Borne, Sewpaul, James and Reedy (2013:4) point out that the school has a role to play in the identification and initial assessments of students at risk of suicide.

Because schoolteachers often know students well, have the benefits of a long-term understanding of the individual at risk. Their assessment can provide a useful context for

mental health providers who conduct more comprehensive risk assessment. However, the school where many instances of violence occur is not the place for comprehensive clinical risk assessment; the time limitations on staff and the lack of training in comprehensive suicide risk assessment for educators in South Africa are of great concern.

Mtsweni (2008:26) highlights that children should be instilled with concern for the rights of others, with respect for peace and order and an understanding that law enforcement officers are friends, not enemies. Too many children today learn these values at home, so educators should make an effort to teach them the message at school. Mtsweni (2008:31) further contends that managing discipline is one of the most crucial tasks of managing in a social sphere in order to prevent violent acts. Educators, learners and parents have to collaborate in ensuring that discipline is created and maintained at all time.

Success, which is the main aim of the school, can be attained when the climate of the school is conducive to teaching and learning. As is the case in the USA, teachers in South Africa are at the receiving end and their unions seem to team together with the law or policy makers. In these circumstances, learners have broken loose; they do as they please, because they own the power to act outside the moral parameters of the society. Parents and teachers have no power to control learners because given the extent of violence in schools they do not have a voice in decisions affecting the quality of their products.

2.6.2 The role of parents

According to Bureau of Market Research (2012:3) most bullying occurs off school premises, which places a burden on especially parents and the community to familiarise themselves with and refrain from trivialising this behaviour, and take the bullying phenomenon more seriously. As such, no child should feel threatened as he or she travels to or from school, or while in a school building. Parents should be able to trust that their children are in safe environments that are fostering academic growth from one year to the next.

Attempts to develop strategies to deal with school violence can be facilitated by the partnership of school personnel and family. This is something that the district should be committed to: making parents feel empowered because it is one of the greatest factors in making a “bad” school good and a good school great. Blossnich and Bossarte (2011: 111) argue that it may be possible that the presence of teachers or other adults in the hallways would allow for greater cohesion and interaction between students and adults that would facilitate proper behaviour.

Both parents and school connectedness seem to work together to buffer against the effects of exposure to violence on later violent behaviour. Kotze (2012:29) indicated the fact that strengthening caring relationships amongst adults and amongst caregivers and children, the well-being of children and families can be enhanced leading to healthier communities. Parents who provide love, support, and structure also appear to facilitate important protective processes. The authors emphasise that providing opportunities for young people to pursue interests and education appears to promote adaptive behaviour. Increasing resources and building on adaptive processes are also important strategies that can provide protection in a context of risk.

Thompson (2011:27) emphasises parents' suggestion that school administrators must find ways to keep schools safe without turning them into prisons. In their lobby for peace and stability in schools, they supported the idea of implementing cameras and metal detectors to provide some level of relief that there would be no guns in their children's classrooms. Ironically, availability of these measures in the Ximhungwe circuit to provide the expected safety and security for both learners and teachers in schools is still a serious challenge.

Fox and Burstein (2011:48) state that when the parent's aggression is directed against the child, the psychological effects go well beyond learning and imitation. However, the abuse or posttraumatic stress disorder explanation is incomplete at best. UNICEF (2013:34) on 'Key elements of an integrated primary intervention approach' reveals that if strengthening primary prevention is to be achieved, it implies adopting approaches that take account of the community, thereby removing the burden from individual action or leaving the work to gender based violence advocacy group.

While discipline, remains a critical factor in shaping behavioural styles of children at home, it is also important that the school should allow the child the right to be understood. Whenever the child is encountering violent situations, he or she should not be put in another powerless situation, for instance forcing the child to reveal the alleged sexual abuse.

2.6.3 The role of learners

According to Bureau of Market Research (2012:4) most learners above fifty percent were said to have reported bullying incidents to parents, friends and to teachers. This shows an important role that learners play in combating violence in schools. At the same time, it shows a high level of trust to peers, parents and teachers. Learners have a crucial role to play in

preventing violence if they can be positioned in a framework of respect and respectful relationship, despite the fact that they may be victims or perpetrators of violence in schools.

The more learners are invested in the process of creating a non-violent atmosphere, the more their potential to avoid violence themselves, at school and at home. Unal and Cukur (2011: 566) remarked that commitment to the school seems to inhibit delinquency, regardless of its nature. This suggests that students who invest time and energy in school to have a better life in the future are less likely to engage in delinquent acts. They further report that other important factors such as families, peers, and neighbourhoods, should be considered to understand delinquency, some of which can interact with the effects of the school-related delinquency process.

2.7 SUMMARY

From the literature review, it is apparent that violence is endemic in many South African schools. This perspective suggests that a lot more needs to be done to address the current situations in schools. Many learners and teachers know no peace, or the social freedom they are entitled to. They are tortured, terrorised, brutally murdered, raped and pressured to suffer some sort of harassment, and many of the perpetrators go unpunished. Research has shown that violent acts such as threats, assault and sexual harassment or assault are common and even prevalent in secondary schools.

The questions that these acts of violence pose are: What influences these acts of violence? Why are they so dominant? What goes on the inside mind of the perpetrators? A review of the literature indicates that answers to these kinds of questions are not yet known and many school authorities together with the DoE seem to take a soft stance on school violence. Research indicates that as children grow older, there is a clear tendency to confide more in friends first, than in people of authority such as educators and parents.

All stakeholders in education have a key role to play to ensure that all learners in schools are safe and learn with pride and patriotism in an environment that is free from threats, murder and sexual violence. Despite the fact that secondary school learners are not entitled to drink alcohol, research conducted by SACE (2011:31) shows that a number of learners go to school drunk and hence their courage to commit crimes may be heightened. It is apparent that schools cannot change the past, but have the potential to improve the future for the safety of all learners.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) of the study will look into the research design and methodology that were chosen for answering the research question to enhance a better understanding of the phenomenon under study so that schools can ultimately come up with targeted interventions to combat school violence.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on the research paradigm and methodology that were used to find answers to the postulated research questions. It is significant to build a comprehensive understanding of what is going to happen in or during the data collection process. This chapter deals with the research design and methodology, which includes the data collection techniques, the sample of the study and empirical research procedure. The techniques include among others the following: a focus group interview, participant observation and document analysis.

For the purpose of the study, a qualitative research approach was chosen as a suitable research methodology to employ a case study research design. This design was aimed at collecting in-depth information from the purposefully selected participants. Maree (2010:75) defines case study research as a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events that aims to distribute and explain the phenomenon of interest.

For the purpose of the study, it was crucial to conduct an extensive investigation into the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe Circuit in Bohlabela district. The investigation was aimed at reaching a comprehensive (holistic) understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a real-life context in a specific situation and how they make meaning of the phenomenon under study.

To achieve the objectives of the study, a case study research design used multiple sources to determine in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use (for instance the six steps of data analysis) with the data to answer the research questions. Institutions involved in the study were four rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe Circuit in Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga Province. There were four focus groups (i.e. one focus group of six to eight learners in each school). Participating learners in the research were selected purposefully and ethical issues and gender sensitivity were taken into consideration because the study involved people who are entitled to human rights.

3.2 THE NATURE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study chose the problem related to the acts of violence taking place among learners in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela (Bushbuckridge) district in Mpumalanga province. Regarding the nature of the research problem, the study was explorative and it involved a review of the existing literature about the learners' experience of school violence in order to describe the nature and the effects of the action and propose possible intervention strategies.

Isidiho (2009:7) states that research demands a clear and unambiguous statement of the goal, in other words what the research intends to accomplish. As a point of departure, it is important to remind the reader the aims of the study. The first aim of the research was to explore and to describe the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga Province. The second aim was to investigate the possible ways and means that could be implemented to address the problem.

The following research aims served to focus the investigation, namely to:

- determine the different forms and nature of violence experienced in rural secondary schools;
- investigate the perceptions of learners encountering violence in their respective schools;
- determine the feelings and the emotions of learners in dealing with cases of violence in their schools; and
- reflect on the alleviation factors of violence in schools.

It is important to note that violence in schools occurs in various forms such as sexual violence, assaults, bullying, etc and the manner in which learners experience it, differ from one individual to the other. For the study to reach the set aims, I formulated a set of interview questions for the participants to answer. In addition, I used an observation schedule or protocol as well as document analysis as suitable methods of data collection in order to develop a rich and comprehensive understanding about violence in the chosen rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Muyeghu (2009:5) remarks that qualitative research is more concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. The rationale for using qualitative

methodology is to gain a subjective view of how people perceive issues in their social world by examining their opinions, behaviour and experiences instead of simply relying on numbers.

TerreBlanche and Durrheim (2007:34) state that a research design is strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. For the purpose of this study, I chose a case study research design, which included semi-structured focus group interviews, participant observation and document analysis. This research design was aimed at providing a comfortable atmosphere for participants' disclosure in order to understand behaviour, beliefs, opinions and emotions from the perspective of the study participants themselves.

Lichtman (2011:110) points out that a research design consists of varying emphasis on data collection by observations, interviews, and document or archival reviews, in which triangulation among the data is sought to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation. A qualitative research design was appropriate for this study, because a naturalistic method was used to collect the required data on the sources of factors related to the prevalence of violence in the chosen rural secondary schools.

The qualitative research design examined one phenomenon of interest as stated above in-depth at the purposefully selected sites for the sake of a better understanding of the phenomenon of school violence, regardless of the number of participants, social scenes, processes and activities. Furthermore, data collection strategies with a qualitative approach are multiple, such as verbatim accounts, low-inference descriptors, mechanically recorded data and participants' reviews of their experiences in their own terms.

Maree (2010: 86) states that qualitative research can be either exploratory or fully interpretive in nature. It offers insight into reasons behind events. The investigation into the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools shed light on the reasons for the acts of violence in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district. This research required an intense and prolonged contact with the "field" or life situation, which warranted a qualitative approach.

3.4 THE RESEARCH METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

For the research design to answer the research problem, I used the following data collection methods. In order to gather in-depth information, I chose a semi-structured focus group interview as the best instrument for data collection.

3.4.1 In-depth Interview as a qualitative research method

Hennink (2011:109) states that an in-depth interview is a one-to-one method of data collection that involves an interviewer and an interviewee. He adds that an in-depth interview is a meaning-making partnership between interviewers and their respondents that indicates that in-depth interviews are a special kind of knowledge-producing conversation.

Christenson (2011:56) describes an interview as a “data collection method in which an interviewer asks the interviewee a series of questions, often with prompting for additional information”. For the current study to achieve in-depth data collection, I entered into a collaborating partnership (establishing rapport) with the participants with the aim of creating understanding and a comfortable zone in the interview.

Hennink (2011:124) alludes to the fact that when meeting an interviewee for the first time, it is important not to rush straight into asking your interview questions, but to take time to become acquainted with the interviewee so that you both become comfortable. It is important always to remain a sensitive observer who records phenomena as faithfully as possible while at the same time raising additional questions. The advantage of using interviews as a suitable method of data collection is that it allows probing and posing of follow-up questions and can provide information about participants’ subjective perspectives and ways of thinking.

3.4.2 Interviewing used in this research

Maree (2010:88) says that the aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant, and they can be a valuable source of information provided they are used correctly. For the purpose of this study, I employed qualitative focus group interviews. The aim with this instrument of enquiry was to obtain rich descriptive data that enabled me to understand the participants’ construction of knowledge of their school reality. This was chosen because participants were in a relaxed environment with their peers and it was easier to share their experiences in a group rather than being alone or as individuals.

3.4.2.1 The semi-structured interview with a schedule

In this study, a semi-structured interview was used. This interview is a schedule that contains a set of questions or themes relevant to the research topic, which serves as a guideline for the interviewer. The themes in the interview schedule are not addressed in a particular sequence, but all the relevant topics are covered during the interview. See attached Annexure D.

3.4.2.2 Semi-structured focus group interviews

Hennink (2011:136) says that a focus group is a situation where a focus group moderator keeps a small and homogenous group (of six to twelve) people focused on the discussion of a research topic or issue. Focus group sessions generally last between one and three hours and are recorded by means of audio and video tapes. In this study, I used four focus groups in four purposefully selected rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit, Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga Province.

Each focus group consisted of six to eight participants. Considerate of the issue of gender four boys and two girls were purposefully selected to form a focus group in each school. In total, the study engaged thirty-two (32) learners in focus group interviews. The advantage of using a focus group is that it is a useful tool for exploring ideas and obtaining in-depth information about how people think about an issue (violence in schools).

It is also good for measuring attitudes and eliciting other content from research participants. For the effective management of the focus group, I laid down ground rules for the participants to be followed throughout the interviews for instance listening without interruption, speaking audibly for effective capturing of the voices, switching off the cell phones to avoid disturbances, and looking at the camera when speaking.

Unlike a series of one-on-one interviews, in a focus group interview participants get to hear one another's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say. However, participants need not agree with one another or reach any kind of consensus. The object is to obtain high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others.

Maree (2010:90) further states that group interaction is productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information. In focus group interviews, participants are able to build on each other's ideas and comments to provide an in-depth view not attainable from individual interviews.

3.4.2.3 Procedure for the focus group interviews

Before the interview starts, the researcher introduces him or herself to the focus group and explains the purpose of the study to the participants; what will be done with the data collection and the outcome of the research, for example an article or report, or an intervention. The

researcher further informs the participants about ethical considerations such as confidentiality of the interview and anonymity of the data. Participants are informed that their participation in the research will be voluntary and that they can withdraw their participation from the project at any stage should they feel like doing so. Permission is sought for audio-recording and taking pictures and the use of the recorded information explained.

After explaining details of research and procedure, participants were asked if they are willing to be interviewed and if so, they were asked to consent for the interviews. On conclusion of the introduction, an interview schedule or guide with a list of questions is used for interviewing purposes. During interviews, the body language of participants is observed and the social environment in which the study population lives noted.

Questions are asked in a non-directive way without leading the interviewees. The advantage of a focus group interview schedule or guide is, firstly, to identify people's own perceptions, feelings and emotions and the meaning they attach to their experience, and secondly, to gain in-depth information on sensitive issues of school violence.

3.5 OBSERVATION AS DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

Hennink (2011:170) says that observation is a research method that enables researchers to observe and record people's behaviours, actions and interactions systematically. The method allows researchers to obtain a detailed description of social settings or events in order to situate people's behaviours within their own socio-cultural context.

Buchanan and Bryman (2011:478) indicate that observational techniques are based on the idea of a systematic process of observing, noting and later categorising the observed activities. The key of observation is to record words, activities or events without judging them. This study used participant observation where I observed the participants while participating in their activities.

3.5.1 Type of observation used in this research

For the purpose of this study, I used the following type of observation:

3.5.1.1 Participant observation

Hennink (2011:185) states that participant observation refers to a process of learning through exposure in the activities of the participants in the research setting. I was not there when learners were actually encountering violence. I conducted this type of an observation

participating in the activities that I was observing. The aim was to get the learners's perceptions, feelings and their emotions about school violence. This was the only observation I conducted during focus group interviews. It was a suitable method of data collection because I managed to gather information I wanted from the participants to answer the research question.

During observation, it was essential not to influence what I was observing. By so doing, I had ample chance to observe, listen and take notes more freely. The purpose therefore was to provide important contextual data that would lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. During observation, participants were also video-recorded after obtaining their permission to do so. Explaining the observational procedures formed part of rapport building and at the same time enabled me to be part of the natural setting. It was important to explain to the participants observed, that only what was in the focus of the video camera would be captured and not the broader context of the situation.

The aim with using video recordings was to study the body language and interactions of the group, and to facilitate a detailed observation as it is conveniently close to providing more detailed notes than in other types of observation. For ethical purposes, the study ensured the protection of participants' integrity and anonymity while observation and interviews were unfolding.

3.5.1.2 The advantages of participant observation

Participant observation serves to:

- see directly what people are doing without having to rely on what they say or do.
- see things that escape the awareness of people in the setting.
- provide information on things people would otherwise be unwilling to talk about.

3.5.1.3 Aspects observed

For the purpose of the study, the following dimensions were observed: observing people, their actions, interactions and body language, place and social settings in which the actions occurred. Observation of place or the physical setting made it possible to understand the place and then locate the activities or behaviour within this place.

During observation, I managed to observe teachers' reaction during the interviews (as they were piping trying to overhear what the learners were saying), learners' interaction with each other, the behaviour and the attitude of learners to their educators and the environment in

which the interviews were conducted. The success of the interviews is an indication of both learner and teacher cooperation in the context of this study.

3.5.1.4 Writing of notes during observation

I recorded some of the notes in my record sheet immediately I entered some of the classrooms in which the interviews would be conducted, because there were violent words on the walls of the classroom that were worth noting for data analysis. This was not the case in all the schools because the degree of violence differs from one school to another.

Hennink (2011:194) mentions that observation requires skills not only in observing social situations, but also in recording your observations. In this study, the notes taken during observation became data for analysis. Therefore, it was important to take clear and detailed notes in order to achieve the aim of the study.

To meet this objective, I did the following:

- Wrote notes continuously while observing.
- Wrote notes about people's behaviour, attitude and the physical environment itself.
- Counted the number of people and described their characteristics (e.g. appropriate age, gender and ethnicity).

I also used a field diary as another way to record the thoughts and interpretations about what I observed.

3.6 POPULATION

Babbie (2008:170) states that a population is the aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected. For the purpose of this study, Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district was the population of the research.

3.7 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

A sample is a group of individuals who will participate in the research. TerreBlanche and Durrheim (2007:49) point out that sampling is the selection of research participants from an entire population, and involves decisions, about which people, settings, events, behaviours, and/ or social processes to observe. The aim is to select a sample, which will be representative of the population about which the researcher aims to draw conclusions.

3.7.1 Selection of schools

Four rural secondary schools were selected from the population of 15 rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela District for carrying out interviews. The criteria used for selection were based on anecdotal evidence of incidents-this evidence was gathered from informal conversations with 'critical friends' (teachers, and principals) from other schools around Ximhungwe circuit.

Schools were chosen based on the perception that these schools are more violent, as per discussion with other colleagues mentioned above. Further based on criteria, the selected schools were convenient schools in respect of access and nearness in space and time and because they were schools in which violence was rife, hence purposeful selection.

Maree (2010:79) highlights that purposive sampling simply means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study. Sampling decisions are therefore made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions and often continues until no new themes emerge from the data collection process (data saturation).

3.7.2 Selection of learners (Participants)

I requested the school authority in each school to identify learners who experienced violence in schools to be participants in the research project. I also mentioned in the letter of requesting permission to conduct research that participation in the research will be voluntary. On gathering the selected learners, I explained the purpose of the research. I also ensured them that their names and the names of the schools will be anonymous. The rationale behind this selection is that teachers in each school are the ones who know what their learners are experiencing as far as violence is concerned. The research focused on experiences, and insights of the participants, which was the main reason for mainly qualitative approach.

Thus, in this study a sample of four focus groups in each school was purposefully selected for in-depth focus group interviews. Each focus group consisted of six to eight learners (i.e. two girls and four boys). Sampling was done in four rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district in Mpumalanga Province. The purpose of selecting this sample was not based on whether learners were victims or perpetrators, but to identify a particular group of persons who were knowledgeable and informative from whom it would be possible to obtain open-ended data.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Identifying and negotiating access to the site and individuals is an important procedure of the qualitative research design. Written permission was obtained from the Mpumalanga Department of Education to conduct research in the Ximhungwe Circuit. Permission was also obtained from the parents through signing the consent forms for their children to participate in the research. The purpose of the study and the procedures to be followed during interview, were detailed in the consent forms.

Parents were requested to sign consent forms (see Annexure F) as a token of granting permission to their children to participate in the research. Through the cooperation of both parents and learners, the signed consent forms were returned to the schools for verification. There has been a welcome and quite widespread acceptance of learners as persons who have similar rights to those of adults (parents) in regard to giving informed consent to research access.

Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were taken into consideration during the data collection process, which included interviews and observations. Once the permission to conduct research was granted by the HOD, it was essential to start identifying sites and the participants. Access to the research sites was negotiated with the principals in order to conduct the interviews. The purpose of conducting interviews was to obtain open-ended data.

Once this was done, it was significant to begin with the process of negotiating and maintaining relationships with individuals at the research site in order to obtain authorisation to take pictures, record and/or interview the learners for the purpose of the study. Permission was requested from the participants to record the interviews. Thus, a brief proposal was written, which included an honest reflection of the primary research purpose in order to gain access to the school. The dates of the interviews were negotiated with the participants of the four selected rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

During data collection, three sources for data collection were used including in-depth semi-structured focus group interview, observation and document review. Thirty-two (32) learners from four purposefully selected rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit were interviewed using semi-structured focus group interview and a combination of participant observation and document analysis. The bulk of the data were from interview with learners in

their respective schools. Throughout the study, I kept the notes of the observation periods, and contacts with participants.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Lichtman (2011:62) contends that data analysis is a process that contains both linear and circular dimensions that allow for a logistical systematic analysis and allow for introspection and ruminating. Qualitative data analysis tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their participation, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon.

The aim of analysis is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of that which is found within. In this study, I wanted to understand how participants relate to others within their world, how they come to have that point of view of their situation or environment in which they find themselves and how they identify and see themselves and others who share their own experiences and situations. This is best achieved through a process of inductive analysis of qualitative data. In this research, six steps of data analysis were followed.

I have allowed research findings to emerge from the significant themes inherent in raw data, without the constraints imposed by a more structured theoretical orientation. The themes include inter alia the following: lack of safety and security measures, lack of educator support, lack of parental support, shebeens and taverns operating near schools. Data analysis was conducted in an ongoing and exploratory design as this research sought to uncover common themes (factors) between learners' experiences to help inform future studies and school interventions. The analysis of the data collected from school learners proceeded as follows:

3.9.1 Step 1: Organising the data

Information that I recorded during interviews and from observation were organised and later analysed into categories and themes identified beforehand. Responses from different participants and schools were organised separately using folders and labelled them. Materials dealing with the same data for instance sexual offences were kept together and later compared with each other. The observed data was written down in a journal and analysed in accordance with the themes and categories that were guided by the observations during interaction and communication.

3.9.2 Step 2: Generating categories, themes and patterns

This step made the interpretation of the information easier. Materials dealing with the same batch of data, e.g drug and alcohol related Information received were divided into categories and groups to show similarities and differences for easy identification of the pattern in the study. After identification of the patterns, sub-categories were developed on the categories that already existed, (see 4.6. of chapter 4 of the study).

3.9.3 Step 3: Coding data

Data was then coded for easy interpretation. In this stage, the similarities and differences in the information supplied by participants were identified. These two aspects were highlighted in different colours and used for interpretation. For qualitative purposes, the computer aided software ATLAS ti: assisted with the coding of the interviews to assist me in managing data that was collected.

3.9.4 Step 4: Testing emergent understandings

This step tested the understanding of the interpretation of the information. In this stage, it was important to determine whether the participants had understood the questions or not and whether they had identified different words and attached the correct interpretation to the words. It was crucial also to determine whether participants gave irrelevant answers to the questions or not and try to interpret their responses in the way they would have intended to respond. For the purpose of the study, the interviews revealed the major factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

3.9.5 Step 5: Searching for alternative explanations

At this stage of data analysis, it was necessary to initiate alternative ways of interpreting and understanding responses because some words or responses might not be easy to understand because participants might use unfamiliar words. This was necessary to ensure that alternative ways were found to explain clearly and reflect exactly what the participants intended to describe. This was achieved by asking for clarity from the interviewees.

3.9.6 Step 6: Writing the report

This is the stage where important efforts were made to make sense of the recorded materials. Thereafter the information was compiled and the report on the findings of the study written down. At this stage, it was significant to take all the steps of analysis of data through correct

interpretation of the responses from the participants. The report needed to represent the views and opinions of the participants in the study correctly. The following chapter (Chapter4) will be a detailed report of the data collected from interviews, observations and document analysis and hence of, the findings of the research.

3.10 ETHICAL ISSUES

Atkins and Wallace (2012:30) point out that ethical issue is an approach that should inform every aspect of the study from the initial planning stages, through the data collection and analysis to the final reporting. For the purpose of this study, I kept private all information obtained from the participants in order not to make them feel bad and strain relationships. Data was treated with the confidentiality it deserves, ensuring that it is consistent with the law, because it is a human right. Because the study involved human participants, the following ethical issues were taken into consideration:

3.10.1 Informed consent

Before the process of data collection commences, it is important to inform all research participants about all the aspects of the study: the purpose and the procedures to be followed or any risks and benefits, including such things as incentives for participation. This was done to allow the research participants to make an informed decision and choose either to decline to participate in the study or give their informed consent.

Informed consent forms were also requested from the parents (see Annexure F) of the research participants, because secondary school learners are minors who are still under the guidance of their parents. Participants were given the assurance that participation in the research was voluntary and that they could withdraw their participation at any stage should they wish not to continue with the interview.

3.10.2 Confidentiality

Christenson (2011:124) states that in the context of a research study, confidentiality refers to an agreement with research investigator about what might be done with the information obtained about a research participant. In this research, I assured participants that the information obtained, although known to the research group, would not be revealed to anyone other than to be used for research purposes only. Confidentiality would be ensured throughout the research process, because to do otherwise represents a violation of the right to privacy.

3.10.3 Anonymity

In this research, it was crucial to assure all research participants that the aim of interviewing them would be to obtain their ideas and opinions regarding the forms of violence they have experienced; as well as their perceptions, feelings and emotions about cases of violence dealt with in their respective schools. They would further be assured that the information obtained would be used only for research purposes and no names of participants, schools or any identifying data regarding the schools would be made known in the report. The intention therefore was to protect the privacy of the research participants.

3.10.4 No harm to participants

Although physical harm to the participants seldom occurs in qualitative research, some people can experience humiliation and loss of interpersonal trust. In this study, there was no harm to any participants because none of them was required to do physical exercise. However, it was important always to exercise a sense of caring and fairness with regard to thoughts and actions.

3.10.5 Inducement

For the purpose of the study, research participants were free to decline to participate in or to withdraw from the research at any time. No participant was offered any form of incentive to participate in the research as this could influence the outcome of the study.

3.11 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

3.11.1 Validity

Luttrell (2010:279) states that validity is a goal rather than a product. It has to be assessed in relation to the purpose and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or circumstances. It seeks to establish whether the research measures what it is in fact intended to measure. In this research, I ensured validity by using multiple methods of data collection, which included in-depth semi-structured interviews with 32 learners, participant observation and document reviews. These instruments allowed me to get a feel for the 'flesh and blood' and more nuanced and detailed reality of what happens inside rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

The study managed to measure construct validity because the interview schedule consisted of different set of violence related items that are relevant to the research topic. Because I had a

face- to- face situation with interviewees, I managed to ask followup questions until I was satisfied with the responses from the participants. The study therefore gathered rich first hand information about the perceptions, behaviour and the feelings and the emotions of the learners with the aim of having a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. To strengthen validity, I also avoided asking leading question and using unrepresentative data.

Furthermore, I used participant verbatim language by using simple English language that everyone can understand. The emerging data was video recorded for analysis as has been done in 4.8 of chapter 4 of this study. However, every study has some threats to validity such as the reliability of the instruments, social desirability, and item bias. In this study, it was important to use a suitable qualitative research design (case study), which included an in-depth interview and observation in addressing the issue of gender bias by including male and female participants in the research.

3.11.2 Reliability

Maree (2010:215) states that reliability refers the extent to which a measuring instrument is repeatable and consistent. In a qualitative research paradigm, however, reliability is interpreted as trustworthiness and the degree of transferability of findings. To ensure reliability (trustworthiness) of this research, I conducted peer briefings before starting with the interviews to determine the neutrality and clarity of the interview schedules.

The audio recordings and original transcripts of the in-depth focus group interviews were stored. The study also provided an accurate record of the dates, times and persons involved in the research. The total interview time was also recorded and the data from the audio cassettes was corroborated with the participants at all stages of the research.

3.12 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While identifying learners for data collection purposes, the study has the following limitations.

- Firstly, the small sample size does not allow for a generalisation of the findings. The sample may not be representative of all rural secondary schools in Ximhungwe circuit.
- Secondly, there was a limitation in the geographical area chosen; the conditions in Ximhungwe circuit may not be representative of other areas. Violence varies from school to school.

- Thirdly, the time factor was negotiated with the principals of the four purposively selected rural secondary schools to avoid disruption of school activities. The information or data was collected after school hours.
- Fourthly, I arranged with some teachers in each school to voluntarily offer transport to the participants after the interviews. This was so because some learners use transport to and from school. I did not give any incentives to learners for participating in this research as this could jeopardise the validity of the study.

3.13 SUMMARY

This chapter has focused on the research design and methodology employed in the empirical investigation. It explains the qualitative research procedure and justifies its choice as the best method to find answers to the research questions. A qualitative case study research design was used which included in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The primary purpose of choosing these instruments was to obtain open-ended data. The role of the researcher and the ways in which raw data was analysed have been explained as well.

This research employed purposive sampling of four rural secondary schools with an interview to identify rich information from participants to answer the research questions. This chapter has also given an outline of how ethical standards of research were applied during the data collection process. Related aspects such as validity and reliability strategies for the study have been clearly explained to produce a strong rather than a weak or flawed qualitative study.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation will focus on an analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the participants.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focussed on the research design and methodology that were used to find answers to the postulated research questions. This chapter will focus on the analysis of data collected and the interpretation of the findings of the empirical investigation. It is worth noting that there is an increasing concern within South African schools, particularly in the Bohlabela district in Mpumalanga Province, about widespread violence.

Until now, there has been no provincial data on the exact extent of the problem and little understanding of the nature or the cause of school violence in rural secondary schools in Bohlabela district. This chapter discusses the data collected from the participants. The data will be presented and typed in *italics* to quote what the participants have said regarding different identified themes (factors) in the study.

It is important to remember that the primary aim of the study was to do an exploratory investigation into factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe Circuit in Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga Province. The investigation also aimed to propose appropriate guidelines or interventions for consideration by the Head of Department together with the school authorities to alleviate the incidence of school violence encountered in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe Circuit. The data collected for this study addressed the research questions as presented below.

The main research question was:

What are the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools?

Subsidiary research questions were:

- What are the different forms of violence with regard to cases of violence dealt with in rural secondary schools?
- What are the feelings and the emotions of learners with regard to violence in their respective schools?
- What are the perceptions of learners with regard to cases of violence dealt with in rural secondary schools?
- What are the alleviation factors to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools?

The study focused on the problems related to acts of violence among learners in the rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 17 years. All participants were black, mostly from highly populated high schools. I conducted the investigation between half past two and half past three in the afternoon, because I did not want to interfere with normal school hours.

4.2 LIMITATIONS AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

Any study based on self-reporting of involvement in school violence is necessarily dependent on the willingness of participants to talk about their experiences, many of which may be both personal and painful. However, the study has several limitations that are common to qualitative research. Because this was an exploratory study, a non-randomised sampling method with a small number of participants at each site was conducted.

Some teachers at some schools were restless when the interviews unfolded, to the extent that they walked along the interview room with the intention of listening to the conversation. Interestingly, this kind of an attitude never had any influence on data because I managed to control the situation. The restlessness of some of the teachers might suggest that indeed instability and lack of healthy relationship between learners and teachers remains a serious challenge in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

In this regard, I requested the teachers not to interfere with the process, because research is about confidentiality of the information gathered and respect of participants' privacy. Despite this limitation, the study achieved its aims because data was collected using the suitable instruments at the right place (after school hours) at the right time.

4.3 NON-GENERALISATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

It is imperative that violence in all schools be managed in an effective manner to pursue excellence in the classroom. Maree (2010:113) states that at no stage can any conclusion reached be generalised to a broader audience, as it is only applicable to your participants in their own context. The intention of this study was not to generalise the findings to all rural secondary schools in Bohlabela district, but the findings could provide the impetus for further research on the subject. The results of the study are presented in the context of its limitation within the rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

4.4 What the researcher intended to accomplish

The in-depth focus group interview conducted with the four focus groups together with the observation aimed at:

- *exploring the nature of violence* taking place in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit; and
- *describing the factors related to the prevalence of violence* in rural secondary schools.
- *Discussing the alleviation factors of combating violence* in rural secondary schools.

4.5 THE FORMS AND THE PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE XIMHUNGWE CIRCUIT

According to SACE (2011:12), the exact extent of school-based violence in South Africa is unknown. Ximhungwe circuit is no exception in this regard, because it is part of South Africa where this research was conducted. This study presents the findings on school violence prevalent exclusively in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district. Violence at rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit tends not to be isolated incidents. With no exception of sexual violence, thirty-two (32) learners in rural secondary schools who reported violence or victimisation reported that they had experienced it on more than one occasion. School documents showed different forms of violence committed in schools. Unfortunately, the documents never indicated how the cases of violence had been dealt with. This suggests that further research needs to be conducted to shed more light into this problem.

SACE (2011: 10) revealed that weapons, drugs and alcohol are available in many schools across the country. For example: 3 in 10 learners at secondary school know fellow students/learners who have brought weapons to school; 3 in 10 reported that it is easy to organise a knife, and 1 in 10 reported that it is easy to organise a gun. With such easy access to substances and weapons, it is not surprising that levels of violence in South African schools would be so high. Many studies show that the age at which learners start drinking is getting younger and younger. In this regard one girl said: *“Many boys at the age of 14 years in our school are involved in alcohol abuse on day-to-day basis”*.

Now, it is very common for school learners to bunk classes or to be seen drinking alcohol on their way to school. The investigation shows that in the vast majority of threats, assaults and sexual violence, the learners know the person responsible for perpetrating the violence. During

the interview, one participant described her feelings: *“We know the people who cause violence and what is sad about it is that some of them go unpunished because of fear of victimisation.”*

The interviews revealed that weapons, alcohol and drugs are readily available in many schools. This has generated a greater potential for rape, sexual assault, threats, and robbery. SACE (2011:12) in the ‘School-Based Violence’ points out that the report aimed at collecting data that was representative of schools across the country and to provide a picture of the extent of violence in South African schools. It shows that the Department of Education (DoE) has little or no data on the levels of school violence. For example, one boy expressed himself like this: *“We requested for harsh punishment to those who carry dangerous weapons to school, but those who should take responsibility do not care about it.”*

The interview suggests that violent environments in rural schools threaten and compromise learners’ opportunities to realise their full potential because they are faced with uncondusive environments for teaching and learning. This emphasises the violent nature of the school communities in which young people live. SACE (2011:14) states that the perception of teachers in the region of Pretoria on school violence revealed that the extent of violence in some inner schools is greater than in schools located in suburban areas. This indicates a need for serious attention in all rural areas where perpetrators of violence operate without interruptions.

Violence in inner city schools tends to be more prevalent in girls; often involving the use of weapons such as scissors. Assaults seem to be the most common form of violence experienced in rural schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. Assaults referred to in this study were wide-ranging in nature. Some learners spoke about targeted victimisation by another learner from school fights that could be sparked by a love relationship with a fellow girl learner. One girl exclaimed: *“Fridays are the most dangerous days on which we hear of cases of girls being victimised of sexual assaults.”*

Some learners (participants) spoke of gangs hanging around the toilets selling drugs or educators who were sexually harassing girl learners. For instance, one girl alleged: *“I am afraid to attend morning studies because I may be a victim of gang rape”*. Given these various forms of violence in rural secondary schools, the current study found that girl learners said to be more addicted to alcohol consumption than boys were. This relates to the increased vulnerability of females seen as soft targets.

The pattern emerging in this study is likely to reflect the high rate of violence and aggression more generally targeted at adolescent girls. Rates of violence may be influenced by the easy access to alcohol, drugs, and dangerous weapons such as guns and knives. The investigation revealed that Ximhungwe circuit is experiencing all sorts of violence. One boy lamented as follows: *"I was bullied in silence by a group of three boys, because I refused to buy them sticks of ciggarets"*. Bullying and suicidal thoughts are not an exception. The investigation shows that boys bully girl learners who are in love relationships with teachers. In some instances, the bullies are said to be making comments that were distressing even to other learners.

One girl learner expressed her anger over bullying as follows: *"I have been bullied several times and I had to leave that school and go to another school outside my home village, because of fear for my safety."* Participants said that they were scared for their lives, because educators ignored the bullying. What learners are experiencing in rural secondary schools in Ximhungwe circuit bears evidence to the findings of a study which points out that learners who are bullied suffer from low-self esteem, often have poor concentration, and many refuse to continue in school (Isidiho 2009:24). Many students echoed their serious concern about bullying, but it seemed that the school authorities did not consider it seriously. This is obviously posing a serious threat to the smooth management of the school.

Sometimes bullying would be verbal or sometimes physical, and occur in the presence of teachers. Students said that some teachers would laugh about it when they saw or heard about it because some of them promote violence in South African schools. The findings suggest that students suffer serious fights that include injuries or hurting of other learners with little or no intervention from parents and educators. This clearly suggests that schools in the Ximhungwe circuit need significant support to deal with this problem of undermining the plight of the learners by their teachers.

All these factors reflect an environment that is not only conducive to violence, but that is unlikely to foster a culture where the reporting of violence or crime of any nature is encouraged. As a worrying factor in the rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit, gang activities threaten safety of learners who walk to and from school. As a result, learners are robbed and forced to surrender their cell phones and other valuable possessions because perpetrators want to feel that they belong somewhere. The data revealed that this stems from something going on in the home.

Reporting of violence emanating from gang activities is often difficult and can lead to further victimisation, stigmatisation or revenge in a variety of forms. One girl expressed her concern as follows: *“Lack of regular police visibility makes the gangs to move freely from one school to another without fear”*. Reporting of violence is one area that needs to be specifically targeted by school authorities, including SGBs, as just one-step towards making schools safer environments.

It is also not adequate to rely on school principals to collect data and accurately represent this data on violence in their schools. This was evident in the document analysis, because after the interview I requested to see whether violence records were available. I had an opportunity to peruse them, unfortunately, not all jail warranting cases were recorded. In many instances, the study revealed a tendency for principals to significantly under-report incidents of violence within their schools.

Fighting was reported as a norm in many of these rural secondary schools. In this regard, one boy anxiously said, *“I am worried about how the principal deals with violence, because cases involving knives and bottles are not recorded”*. The findings show that this problem frequently happens among learners, especially boys fighting with knives and bottles. Sometimes fights would occur between a teacher and a learner. The reason behind the fight was often related to clashes over love relationships with girl learners.

Participants revealed that this problem usually occurred at the toilets during breaks and that the reasons varied. Learners said that principals increasingly saw the prevalence of violence within their schools, but reporting only those incidents where injuries were serious enough to warrant hospital treatment, or where parents or the SGB became involved. *“I am concerned, of police threats usually made by the school principal when finding us smoking our own staff in the toilets, and ignoring teachers who sexually abuse our girl sisters,”* lamented one boy.

Given all these forms of violence experienced in the Ximhungwe circuit, the study therefore suggests that there is a collapse of accepted values, and that the integrity of teachers, parents and learners is far lower than could be expected. According to the interview, there is a serious lack of a sense of responsibility among the key components of the school, because they are perceived as contributing factors towards school violence within the region. To this effect, one girl said: *“I do not know how best our communities can be educated in realising the danger of exposure of dangerous weapons such as guns to children”*. This concern warrants serious attention by both the school community and the DoE to address school violence.

Figure1: 4.6 presents results of the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. The table shows the main categories and the sub-categories of factors related violence in this context. Below the sub-categories are alleviation factors (themes) that the study established to alleviate both the main and the sub-categories of factors. Each main and sub-category together with their alleviation factors (themes), is discussed in details in conjunction with the literature findings in section 4.8 of this study, in order to enhance a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

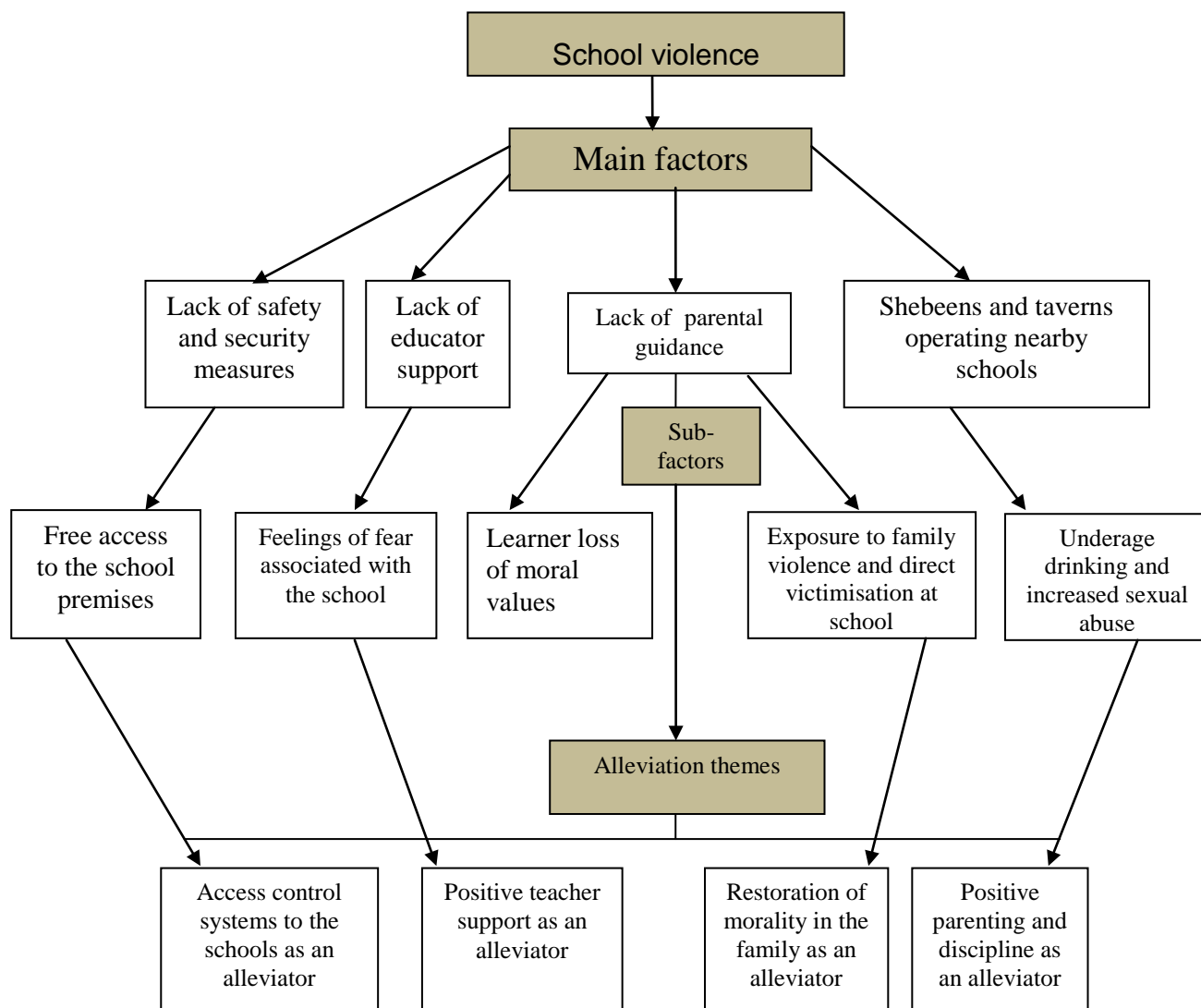
From the participants' point of view, these themes are important in preventing school violence in rural secondary schools. The study did not aim at measuring the levels of violence (intensity) experienced by learners, but to explain the factors determined to be exclusively related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. As individual factors, attitudes, and beliefs, the lack of communication skills, alcohol and substance abuse, previous exposure to or witnessing of violence and ease of obtaining weapons, were found significantly related to the prevalence of violence in these rural secondary schools.

Within school regulation of prosocial behaviour, and cooperation with external institutions, such as child welfare and South African Police Service (SAPS), may also advance social security and safety in the school and, as a consequence, promote the pupils' feelings of safety. Due to the limitations of this study, these factors relate exclusively to the Ximhungwe circuit. Consequently, further research in different regions of Mpumalanga province is required in order to reduce the level of school violence.

4.6 RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS: FACTORS RELATED TO THE PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE XIMHUNGWE CIRCUIT

Figure 1: Results of the analysis with respect to the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. During data analysis, I found that prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit relates to the following factors: Lack of safety and security measures, Lack of educator support, Lack of parental support or guidance, and shebeens and tarvens operating near school. These serve as the main factors that also give rise to sub factors such as, free access to the school premises, feelings of fear associated to the school, learner loss of moral values, underage drinking, and increasing sexual abuse.

4.6 RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS WITH RESPECT TO THE FACTORS RELATED TO THE PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE XIMHUNGWE CIRCUIT.



4.7 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings of this study are described according to different categories in 4.8 of this chapter. The main factors in the table represent the major factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in Bohlabela district, Mpumalanga province. The sub-factors represent specific risk factors that contribute to violent behaviour that learners frequently encounter in their respective schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. The magnitude of these risk factors and their alleviation by the school authorities in collaboration with the parents warrant a well-planned intervention. These measures are discussed as themes serve as

interventions that emerged from each factor to answer the research question. This is evident from the literature, which shows that when considering the current figures on child injury mortality in South Africa, it is clear that child safety is under threat (Kotze 2012:29).

The first subsidiary research question of the study in paragraph 1.6 is relatively answered by the literature findings that the manifestations of violence in secondary schools are mainly attributable to psychological and behavioural tendencies, for example mental disorder, homicidal, and violent delinquency. As illustrated in the literature, violence in schools has escalated beyond what was normally associated with bullying, and now includes serious levels of violence and even deaths. Serious intervention strategies are necessary to address risk behaviours in an integrated and comprehensive manner, guided by systematic explorative research to develop evidence and theory-based suicide prevention and behaviour change programmes (Shilubane, Ruiter, Borne, Sewpaul, James and Reddy 2013:6).

4.8 LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS:

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALLEVIATING SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN THE XIMHUNGWE CIRCUIT

4.8.1 LACK OF SAFETY AND SECURITY MEASURES

4.8.1.1 Free access to the school premises

Participants were asked to talk about their safety at their respective schools. The majority of them responded that they did not feel safe at school, because their schools did not have proper fencing to ensure learner safety. One learner responded sadly: *“I do not feel safe at all here at school, because the gate is left wide open during school hours and everybody including thugs from outside enter the school without identification at the gate.”* The investigation suggests that learners are exposed to threatening environments.

Participants indicated that whenever an outsider wanted to enter the school premises, they were often the ones who would be requested by their teachers to open the gate. In a very large number of instances, learners also reported that the school was infiltrated by more formal gangs from the community or from other schools, who would enter through holes in the schools' perimeter fencing or through unsecured gates and threaten, steal, rob and sexually assault innocent learners.

SACE (2011:15) highlighted of the presence within schools of informal gangs who terrorised and victimised learners. Gangs would often use stones, or threaten and beat learners for no reason if they were not given what they wanted. There are also cases of formal gangs that infiltrate schools, recruiting new members with the aim of increasing their power and control. In some instances, gang members may force younger schoolchildren to sell drugs to their peers on their behalf.

This was evident from the observation made from the first day of the visit to the schools. The majority of schools had no gatekeepers and I could enter and leave the gate without identification. Situations like these in schools create threatening environments for the learners. Incidents of threats of violence, robberies and sexual violence are prevalent due to lack of safety and security measures in these rural high schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

In this instance, one girl said in anguish: *“A group of boys in the school smoke dagga during breaks in order to gain power to sexually abuse us”* The frequency of violence, especially threats at gunpoint, is more likely to be higher because of gang activities in the communities in which the sampled schools are located. It follows that the predominance of guns and knife threats and the frequency for instance on monthly basis of incidents in the Ximhungwe circuit across the crime categories, suggests that there is an urgent need for targeted interventions in the Bohlabela district.

The most common form of violence in schools involved learners acting violently towards other learners. Similarly, other researchers contend that often the perpetrators are children who tend to use weapons such as knives and guns when engaging in violent acts. SACE (2011:15) showed that in more than nine out of ten cases of school-based violence the perpetrator was a fellow student/learner. It was also shown that peers or classmates were often the primary perpetrators of school-based violence.

Participants echoed their concern that the school authorities were reluctant to prevent sneaking in of dangerous weapons into the school premises because of fear of victimisation. For example, a teacher was accused of having a sexual relationship with a sixteen-year-old girl. One learner explained the situation: *“The boyfriend of the girl accused of having sexual relationship with the teacher enters the classroom with a knife in his bag and when the teacher concerned entered the class, he was attacked, fortunately he managed to escape uninjured.”*

The prevalence of violence can be attributed to the influence of criminals and gangs in the school environment – a situation that is recognised by both learners and educators as a cause

for serious concern and relates to inadequate security infrastructure as well as to free access and egress control. Owing to this challenge, one girl said: *“If police are failing to root out thugs and gangsters in schools, who else can guarantee our safety?”* Negative peer relationships were also cited as having contribution towards ill-disciplined behaviour among learners.

The literature supports this finding as those children who had friends involved in antisocial behaviour (drug-related or criminal) were significantly more likely to report the experience of violence against them than their peers who spent time with more conventional friends. Problematically, the rate of crime and violence within South African society means that there is a very high possibility that learners will be exposed to criminal and violent individuals/peers (SACE 2011:10). When learners (participants) were asked about the growing levels of violence, they said that the apparent reasons were the increased access to and availability of alcohol and drugs, which resulted in more blatant violence, levelled against people of authority.

Learners said that they felt unsafe, and were often abused by people to whom they attached honour and integrity. Of great concern, is that most incidences of violence went unreported; creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and lack of confidence in the school authorities. Teachers’ failure to create safe environments contributes directly and indirectly quite significantly towards rising levels of violence in schools, for example failure to report serious crime to the police. Participants indicated that types of violence that tended to occur in the classroom included assaults and theft. In this regard, one boy learner was reportedly alleged to have stolen a teacher’s gun, roamed around threatening some community members.

He ended up using the gun in an armed robbery and the case was not reported. One concerned girl said: *“Teachers have no rights to carry guns to school; we all need security even though we do not have the means to protect ourselves”*. This became evident from the interviews, as one learner elaborated stating: *“We are no longer safe in the school; teachers are also carrying guns to the school, because of fear of being victimised”*. This is evident according to the report from Mail & Guardian 22 August 2008 13:59, titled, ‘School violence under the spotlight’ where a 17-year- old boy was arrested after being found in possession of an unlicensed firearm at a school in Jabulani, Soweto, Johannesburg.

Research cited an example of perceived characteristics of safe schools as the physical characteristics and safety features that are tangible and visible items (e.g. security cameras) located in or around schools and designed to increase physical safety. One girl furiously said: *“It is easy for boys to carry along dangerous weapons to the school premises, because of lack*

of parental supervision". She is aware of the important role played by parents in discipline of their children. It should however be noted that violence at school was often not a one-off cut encounter. The rate at which learners were repeatedly victimised was more pronounced in the case of threats of violence and sexual assaults. (Burton and Leoschut 2012:8).

The emerging pattern from the data collected shows that rural secondary school learners experience knives and gun threats. The source of fear among learners is more likely related to free access to the school environment because of lack of metal detectors or guards in the schools, although access to the buildings is controlled. The fact that schools are increasingly seen as dangerous environments for educators and learners is apparent from the fact that the morale of the learners has been reported to be extremely low and learners have little hope about school violence prevention.

One boy sadly said: *"I was attacked by two boys with knives when I was alleged of having love affair with one of the two boy's girl-friend"*. The majority of participants showed a slightly more pessimistic view that rural secondary schools could receive effective violence preventive measures in the Ximhungwe circuit. One girl learner expressed fear and worry as follows: *"It is extremely difficult to live your dream at school, because drugs and alcohol are also sold in the classrooms."* This learner and many others are exposed to illegal and dangerous drugs that are harmful and may perpetuate violence in schools.

According to SACE (2011:11), it is clear that when examining the actual physical context of the school, reports indicated that there were certain areas in and around schools that increased learners' vulnerability of being victims of violence: travelling to and from school and the location of toilets manifest themselves as high-risk zones.

4.8.1.2 The availability of dangerous substances

This scenario has been reported as the result of educators who do not honour their legal obligation to care. While this suggests a strong relationship between two aspects, the cause-effect relationship warrants further examination, as punishment may be a function of more legal action for ill-disciplined learners in the classrooms. In support of what was said above, another boy expressed his concern as follows: *'It is painful to see strangers entering the school premises and assault teachers and learners'*.

Participants also pointed out that the perpetrators of violence are not assaulting learners, but also bring along dangerous substances such as drugs and alcohol to some of the boys in the school. When participants were asked about whether using drugs would make them more

mature, one boy proudly said: *“It will really give me power to fight my enemies when I am attacked”*. The question was designed to elicit responses on instances where at times an individual had or had not been pressured into an anti-social act of any kind, such as bullying, or assault and alcohol consumption against his or her will.

Participants reported that they witnessed violence related cases resulting from alcohol abuse in the classroom. There are a number of implications of this data. For example, something is clearly wrong with the supervision of classrooms, if all this violence occurs within the very environment where an educator should be present at all times. In this instance, it is possible that the young people make use of the substances at home or elsewhere and arrive at school drunk or high –still a problem for the other learners and school authorities. Learners reported that they knew people who smoked dagga while at school because of easy access to the school premises.

One girl expressed her concern and fear uttering that: *“The toilets are too close such that it is sometimes scary to enter the toilet, because after smoking dagga boys do enter our toilets”*. Areas behind both classrooms and toilets were identified as dangerous places, especially because youngsters collected in these spots to smoke dagga. Literature shows that in many schools boys’ and girls’ toilets were located next to each other, approximately five metres apart, making it easy for boys to enter girl’s toilets or harass girls going to or leaving the toilet (SACE 2011:11). These places (toilets) were reported as posing more threats to girls.

When learners were asked about the knowledge and the prevalence of other drug substances, they reported that dagga was predominantly available, even at home, whereas with other substances such as cocaine, mandrax or ecstasy, they knew less about them. However, even though toilets tend to be the most feared places in the school they are not the most common sites of violence. The classrooms in rural secondary schools appeared to be the places where the most incidents of violence occur, for instance, selling dagga to classmates in the absence of the teacher.

One boy expressed his concern as follows: *“It will not be easy for the school to stop abuse of dagga, because some parents have planted these plants at home”*. According to research, teachers tend to leave classes unsupervised for the majority of the lesson time, thus creating a significant opportunity for violence to take place (SACE 2011:11). These findings suggest that drugs and alcohol are reasonably accessible to learners of all ages. The study found that there

was a correlation between the use of alcohol, drugs and weapons at rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

Asked about the availability of these substances, participants reported that it was easy to get dagga, alcohol and knives at school. They said that they could also easily get a gun through friends, although not many instances of usage were reported. With such easy access to substances and weapons, it is hardly surprising that rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit exhibit such high levels of violence. This gives rise to the question: If drugs and alcohol are so readily available in and around schools, how does the DoE stop this problem?

4.8.1.3 EFFECTIVE ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEMS

It is the responsibility of the school to use school funds to instal security measures to ensure learner safety. The empirical investigation revealed that schools without access control systems pose a serious threat to the safety of learners and teachers. It follows that learner safety should be a priority to schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. The high percentage of participants who reported an increase of access to weapons at school suggests the need for comprehensive action on the part of the DoE.

While situational prevention or target hardening (that is, increasing security around a school including security fencing, security gates alarm system, security guarding and metal detectors) do not at any level address the causes of violence within the school. They do make it easy for the learners who bring weapons to school and by doing so, do aggravate the intensity of the violence that occurs within the school environment. To intensify security and prevent free access to the school premises, security gates should always be kept closed.

The interviews revealed that some school lights were not functional and this provided enough opportunity for thugs to break into school property and steal valuable assets such as computers and photocopying machines. In this regard, alarm systems around sensitive areas of the school should be installed to reduce breaking school property. Burton and Leoschut (2012:106) recommend that school-based interventions should place additional emphasis on generating awareness that violence and bullying is not the norm, is unacceptable, and will not be tolerated.

It is evident from the participants' responses and from the observations conducted, that schools are operating without security guards. The safety of learners is compromised and the school authorities do not treat safety as a priority. Not only the safety of learners is a significant

concern to the communities, but also the safety of the school properties is at stake because criminals have free access to the school premises. School Management Team (SMT) in rural secondary schools has a responsibility for hiring a security man who will accept accountability for access into the school.

One participant believes: *“I expect that searches for dangerous weapons and drug substances be conducted at the gate and in the classrooms to avoid violent behaviour.”* The well-being of learners and teachers in schools depends on the availability and effectiveness of access control systems. Proper fencing, metal detecting devices and any other mechanisms or measures should be made available to regulate access into the schools. Learners should not be engaged in opening and closing the gate in every school. In this regard, learners are expected to be in class and be taught throughout the contact time. Undermining circumstances like these in schools violates the rights of the learners, especially section 29 of the human rights bill.

One girl is of the view that: *“For the school to provide safety to learners and teachers there should be effective access control systems”*. Lack of metal detectors or safeguards in place raises the question of how learners can be protected while they are at school. One suggestion is that nametags should be compulsory. Every person in the administration should wear nametags and learners should always be in their uniforms to enable trespassers on the school property to be highly visible.

This would make it easy for school officials to identify learners who were causing problems. It is unlikely that a school will reflect high rates of gunfire or access if the surrounding community is clear of guns and regulation of these weapons is strictly enforced by law. The data highlights that school authorities, including the SGB, should ensure that a well-trained security man be employed and equipped with all the necessary tools to perform his or her duties without fear. Availability of effective access control systems and measures can reduce the level of vulnerability to violence for both learners and educators in schools.

4.8.2 LACK OF EDUCATOR SUPPORT

4.8.2.1 Feelings of fear associated with the school

Mncube and Harber (2013:24) point out that for better or for worse, teachers are role models. Male teachers act as role models for male learners. By being involved in sexual harassment and rape, male teachers are actively encouraging their male learners to behave in a similar

manner. In this regard, a number of learners across the interviews spoke of “*love relationships*” between educators and learners in the Ximhungwe circuit. Such relationships were at times covert and at times open, at least to other learners.

In relationships like these, learners feared that any attempt to disclose the relationship or to break it off might result in negative consequences in academic terms, such as being failed at the end of the year or even throughout the year. SACE (2011:14) condemns this practice by pointing out that even though in many cases the sexual relationship was consensual, the SACE does not approve of this behaviour arguing that educators are in position of power and therefore the exploitation of learners will not be tolerated.

In one instance, a participant spoke about how an educator would openly choose a learner in class with whom he wanted to sleep and that this would happen in such a way that the other learners were fully aware of what was going on. Research has revealed that absence from school owing to fear of violence directly affects the psychological well-being, academic involvement and performance of learners (Isidiho 2009: 23). In another instance, a different learner spoke about how male educators would take girls to shebeens, get them drunk and start a “*love relationship*” with them that would continue throughout the year.

Where the perpetrator of violence is known, this knowledge clearly facilitates some action being taken against the offending individual, should the learner report the incident. However, in too many instances the act goes unreported. Bureau of Market Research (2012:4) points out that the absence of action following the reporting perpetuates the violence can be a contributory factor to learners feeling a sense of helplessness and despair. This leaves many students with little choice attending school. Often, cases come to the attention of the authorities simply because the seriousness of the damage or injuries incurred prevents concealment (intentional or otherwise) of the act.

Learners may fear stigmatisation or revenge, or simply not view the act of violence as serious enough to warrant reporting to anyone. Of particular concern are the learners within rural secondary schools that report incidents of sexual violence perpetrated against them, but who do not feel that these are important enough to report to anyone. One girl articulated: “*It is with the greatest shame to report crime to the criminal*” This response suggests the frustration that learners are experiencing.

SACE (2011:12) remarked that the problem of reporting might be a result of various factors. It seems that the problem of reporting may be because of the normalisation of the problem. The

victim may feel that the case was not severe enough to be reported, a sense of shame, guilt or secrecy in relation to the violent act. In addition, the problem may be attributed to fear of revenge attacks, ineffective reporting procedures and systems, as well as the possible unavailability of caregivers to confide in. The findings suggest that the most common reason cited by participants for not reporting, however, was that they did not think it would help.

This also reflects a “*broken loyalty*” and a lack of trusting the school authorities, in that there is little or no faith that any action would be taken or that there could be any possible positive outcome from reporting incidents of violence. In this regard, it is clear that family structures care less about the safety of children who encounter violence in schools. Children, especially girls, should be taught to be assertive. Learners should report if they get suspicious about something or something happens on the street and on the school campus.

Concerning human rights, research has highlighted the need to ensure that the rights of those most vulnerable are a priority and that bullying, abuse or violence between students at school is treated as seriously as incidents involving adults or that occur outside the school environment. This suggests that parents and teachers are failing their children for their brighter future. Teachers as well are not playing their part as role models to the learners; instead, they satisfy their sexual desires on school learners (Human Rights Commission 2009:3).

From the participants’ point of view, teachers in the Ximhungwe circuit are sexually abusing learners. This is evident from the participant who disappointantly said, “*I have no confidence in my teachers, especially the male ones, because they are also perpetrators of violence such as sexual harassment.*” In view of the above, Wilson (2013:12) points out that there must be a system of enlightenment to dispel the myths and thoughts at the low value of girls.

These findings suggest that the feelings of learners in this regard show that the fear towards educators is a growing concern, as educators are demolishing instead of building the nation. This is an indication that moral values are no longer something to live by. In instances like this, educators are turning a blind eye on violence and the behaviour continues uninterrupted by the authorities. The ability to report violence to a teacher does reflect some level of trust between learner and educator.

On the issue of how educators deal with cases of violence for instance bullying and drinking alcohol during school hours, one participant infuriatedly remarked: “*Teachers are very much aware of perpetrators of violence; no action is taken by the teachers because in some other instances they are the ones who send learners to buy liquor during school hours.*” This is an

unfortunate situation because teachers create loopholes for disrespect from learners. Teachers' role is to teach learners to know what is good or bad for their future. One girl indicated, *"Once one is drunk, he or she tends to loose control of his or her actions which may lead to fighting other learners"*.

Relatively high levels of unruly behaviour by educators in their workplaces are likely to undermine effective learning and the experience of schools as caring and healthy places where children and young people can feel safe. Literature reveals that educators are expected to set an example of consistent, ethical, just, kind and expectable behaviour if they want learners to become well behaved and disciplined (Mtsweni 2008:46). Incidents of violence may be perceived as not serious enough to warrant reporting as one boy learner who is wheelchair-bound exclaimed: *"Sometimes victims are afraid to report violence, because of the fear that there may be stigma attached to the reporting."*

It was a disappointing experience to hear that the victim might fear attacks and the educator or the principal might be the very one perpetrating the violence. It may be perceived as in the principal's best interest not to report such incidents because he or she might fear the school developing a negative reputation of being perceived as unable to manage his or her school effectively. Nevertheless, the school principal carries an obligatory role of protecting the rights of learners and any child at risk of exploitation or abuse in or outside school.

4.8.2.2 Awareness of professionalism

Fear associated with the school was found related to unprofessional practices of teachers in the Ximhungwe circuit. This professional role as alleviator has been suggested, as the appropriate practice teachers should exercise on discharging their duties. Investigation suggests that school authorities should organise constructive meetings to remind teachers about their professional roles regarding their relationship with learners.

Teachers' own moral orientation (justice or care oriented) influence how and when teachers intervene in bullying. Researchers have determined that the perceived severity of the incident increased the likelihood of teacher intervention. However, the literature reveals that the unacceptable behaviour is generally not stopped by the teachers and sometimes it is encouraged by their tacit participation (Meyer and Brown 2009:9). One girl howled angrily: *"I really do not know who is going to make us realise our dreams, if people we rely on continuously destroy our future"*

In relation to the code of professional ethics, SACE (2011:17) stresses the point that despite challenges and frustrations teachers are faced with, they are still expected to act professionally, and above all, act ethically and to make ethics part of their daily lives. Learners have indicated that fear within the school is exacerbated by the teachers' discriminating attitude towards them. The findings suggest that learners suffer from low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority and hopelessness.

Regarding teachers' relationship with learners, teachers need to respect learners, exercise authority with compassion, but not to abuse them sexually, financially, emotionally or physically. Research shows that violence disrupts the social and the learning environment of classes and learners feel uncomfortable or unsafe. As a result, some learners stay away from certain places in the school grounds, some stay away from school-related activities, while some decide to stay out of school and at home (Isidiho 2009:23).

Parents have entrusted the lives of their children to teachers, and they expect of them to acknowledge the uniqueness, individuality, and specific needs of each learner, guiding and encouraging each to realise his or her potential. Participants expressed their concern that teachers they interacted with had turned into monsters and their conduct had made the teaching profession the least respected among all the professions. Literature findings revealed that school principals occasionally give orders to educators and observed the efficiency of all assembly line jobs.

Bureau of Market Research (2012:4) points out that lack of support from the school authorities who are entrusted with protection powers potentially increases the risk of heightened victimisation. This perception therefore suggests the significance for teachers to perform their fundamental roles in striving to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. One participant still has faith that: "*Teachers are what they are because somebody has exercised professionalism to guide them, and we are expecting the same from them than abusing us*"

Research states clearly that teachers should be provided with a framework to deal with parents in a professional and positive way in order to be able to develop partnerships in promoting discipline in schools. Instead of emphasis on punishment and encouraging conformity, schools need to recognise the individuality of learners and make the school and classroom community places where educators are happy to teach and learners happy to learn. Teachers should be interested in knowing what is happening with the learner at school during

breaks and during study times because these are times when most violence occur (Mtsweni 2008:19).

With regard to sexual harassment such as sexting and the use of inappropriate language and behaviour in their interaction with teachers, one participant disgustly said: *“It is a disgrace to the teaching profession to hear of many teachers making love relationship with school girls”*. In an attempt to mitigate the problem, teachers need to consider the plight of the learners with the serious care it deserves. School authorities and educators need to revitalise the teaching profession and foster renewed commitment to the profession’s important role in the development of the country.

This is significant because the current circumstances in the Ximhungwe circuit suggest a serious disgrace to the profession and its reputation. Given the mood of the participants, it was clear that something was seriously wrong in the Ximhungwe circuit. One girl expressed her concern as follows: *“Some school principals do not care much about our safety, because they also make love with some girls”*. It looks as if learners are facing difficult situations to handle and people management seems like a serious challenge to the authorities.

Spies (2006:217) points out that when allowing the child a right to be understood the professional needs to be sensitive to the child’s unique disclosure process, not being shouted at, called rude names or told how bad they are. Literature indicates that this attitude should be avoided at all times, because children who have been sexually abused feel stigmatised and embarrassed, and may therefore avoid the topic of sexual abuse. Regarding the role of teachers in preventing school violence, one learner strongly believes as she states *“I expect every educator to promote a harmonious and peaceful interaction between them and learners and stop abusing them.”*

School authorities should arrange regular workshops to remind educators about their role as professionals in relation to identifying early warning signs of anti-social behaviour. In this regard, research reveals that most of the entire school climate must be amenable to changing norms surrounding intimidation and aggression. Intolerance for acts of bullying must be the perspective widely embraced and shared by both faculty and students (Burton and Leoschut 2012:89)

Educators need to be encouraged to adhere strictly to the SACE Code of Conduct with regard to their interaction with learners and with colleagues. The participants’ responses suggest that educators should provide guidance to every learner and that they should work in loco parentis

at all times. Abiding by this conduct would imply that educators do not show any disrespect to the values and customs of the community they are serving. In support of teachers' commitments, it is important for educators to realise that the overall level of organisation and the climate of the school appear to be more influential factors on perceptions of school safety than academic achievement or geographic location.

It is worth noting that the school is a fundamental institution erected by society to exercise a certain specific function in maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society. Participants expressed their views that the School Management Team (SMT) needs to improve the professional support provided by educators through involving parents on a regular basis to deal with aggressive behaviour displayed by learners. Relatively, one boy expressed his desire as follows: *"I would like to see parents voluntarily assist teachers in supervising the Saturdays and evening studies, because these are times when serious incidents of violence occur"*

Literature findings clearly indicate that exceptionally disruptive and chronic misbehaviour often results in fighting among students. This most often takes place on the playgrounds, but a significant share of incidents can occur within the classrooms or elsewhere in the school building. Bureau of Market Research (2012:2) expresses concern that learners in Gauteng experience some form of abuse at the hands of unknown and known (parents/teachers) adults, who may make it very difficult for learners to report these incidents.

Concerning their knowledge of the code of conduct, participants indicated that they were not aware of the learners' code of conduct. In this regard one boy acclaimed: *"You will be told of a learner code of conduct only when you have committed an offence they are willing to deal with"* This implies that school authorities ignore the value of bringing the code of conduct to the attention of all the learners at school. Perhaps this may instil a clear understanding of what is expected of each learner in the school. Ultimately, it may help reduce the escalating levels of violence.

Teachers should teach learners to face any sort of difficulty without any fear and that violence should not be seen as a solution to disputes or conflict. This is a significant milestone for educators to reach. It is critically important that educators should take responsibility to confront and resolve disputes among students, even if the combatants settle matters elsewhere. One factor that can provide an indicator of trust is the degree to which school authorities, rather than other adults, receive information directly from the learners on incidents of violence.

Given the data obtained, it is significant that educators always adhere to the high standards of professional ethics. One participant expressed himself saying: *“Educators are expected to respect the constitutional rights of the learners and start responding to their needs to enable them to realise their potential”*. Significantly, learners should therefore increasingly be encouraged to confide more in people of authority first, such as educators and parents, than in friends about the incidences they experience.

Participants suggested that schools together with other stakeholders such as social workers police and health sectors should introduce programmes such as Teenage Against Drug Abuse and encourage learners to actively participate in the programmes. These programmes would help girl learners to prevent premature sexual involvement, which would ultimately reduce teenage pregnancy. Prinsloo (2011:18) remarked that teacher unions should play a major role in improving the professionalism of educators and in preventing unethical conduct such as sexual harassment and abuse of learners.

4.8.3 LACK OF PARENTAL GUIDANCE

4.8.3.1 Learner loss of moral values

Parents and educators are key role players in the success of learners in education. An analysis of the data on the role of parents and educators shows that the majority of the participants received inadequate support from parents as far as school violence was concerned. Participants were asked about the extent of their concern about school violence and one girl responded saying: *“We are very much concerned about the growing levels of abuse by some parents especially on the issue of sexual violence”*.

Participants indicated that loss of moral values such as respect from both parents and learners should be restored in order for learners to draw clear distinction between good and bad practises. Research has shown that the responsibility of the school is not only to teach the educational and cognitive skills to young people, but also to transfer social values and the appropriate social behaviours to them (Unal and Cukur 2011:561). Regrettably, some girls take advantage of being *“sweet talked”* by unruly parents. Instead of leading from the front, parents fail to show the way for all their children to follow. It was evident that together with educators, parents were not offering a sympathetic hearing to the learners in order to guide them towards the realisation of their dreams.

In this regard, one girl fumingly said: *“My step father use to touch my breast when my mother is at work.”* It is vital to boost the confidence of learners from the early stage. One boy

elaborated further saying: *“My father is not working and he use to force me to take two matchboxes of dagga and some cigarette sitck to sell at school.”* Given this responses, it is clear that loss of societal values has a negative effect on the behaviour of the learners. The issue of key roles of teachers and parents is addressed also by the literature study, suggesting that committed individuals accept the conventional ways to reach success, so that they will be less likely to get involved in delinquent acts.

Burton and Leoschut (2012:4) further point out that trusting relationship with peers, and adults can serve as a strong protective or resilience factor for young people against violence, particularly those growing up in adverse circumstances. Parental involvement should be one of the critical issues worthy of consideration to many of the violent incidents occurring in schools. One girl expressed her concern as follows: *“I am always late to school and my father orders me to make up his bed before I leave”*. The investigation unambiguously established that some parents were operating outside the parameters of their custodianships.

Owing to this responsibility, one concerned participant said, *“It affects me negatively, because I will always be told of nasty things about my appearance by some ‘sugar daddies’ to and from the school.”* The school has power to modify the social order. Knowledge of rights constitutes a guarantee of doing right. This implies that through their possession of financial power, parents see the opportunity from which they can benefit at the expense of the desperate children. Data shows that because of the moral decline in the community of Ximhungwe circuit; secondary schools in these communities are increasingly reflecting their inability to return to the discipline of the traditional values.

This includes values such as respect, self-reliance, kindness and discipline. One boy exploded saying: *“I do not care who the teacher is, I punch whoever inflict pain on me”*. Regarding the level of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit, it is apparent that tolerance is a serious challenge that fuel violence in schools. It is a common perspective that drugs and alcohol have a potential to exacerbate this moral decline (Langman 2009:22). Participants indicated that some of the learners come from child-headed families.

This leads them to a breakdown in moral standards. Many learners are likely to display anti-social behaviour that eventually leads them into violence. Regarding the question of how they would respond, for instance, if a friend advised them to sell drugs within the school premises, one participant responded: *“I can agree to the advice, because sometimes I sleep without anything to eat and selling in private at school can make me money to buy food.”*

The investigation shows that little is done by schools for character training, which is envisaged as the ultimate purpose of all education. Participants explained that the reason behind the idea of accepting wrong advice was that a very small percentage of the learners from the population of Ximhungwe come from affluent families. Not only were learners who tended to be violent from a poor background but learners from affluent families also showed greater potential to commit crime. However, this was not a major concern of learners regarding school violence.

The school (SGB), together with the community, has a crucial role to play in realising that they have a problem that they need to talk about. The data therefore suggests that there is a need to explore further the socio economic issues as drivers of school victimisation and, most importantly, to target factors within the home in order to deal effectively with school violence. Research findings have shown that learners in many South African schools are exposed to educators who misuse their position of authority to intimidate and sexually abuse them (Prinsloo 2011:5).

It emerged that parents were significantly contributing towards violent behaviour, in that they instructed teachers to use corporal punishment as a solution; this stirs the anger of learners because they know that corporal punishment has been abolished. The school therefore has huge task of educating parents on issues of legislation as far as violence prevention is concerned.

4.8.3.2 OBSERVATION OF HIGH MORAL STANDARDS

The literature clearly states that research has failed to explore and acknowledge the influence of larger forces such as sexism and homophobia in an attempt to understand the relationship of power and dominance in peer groups. All that could be recognised were various forms of verbal aggression, but with few exceptions never explored their relationship with social biases and cultural norms. With regard to sexual harassment, bullying policies were implemented, but achieved very little results. For instance, educators were warned to discontinue discriminating attitudes and behaviours and create climates of respect, equality and understanding (Van der Merwe 2009:17).

Given the founding values of democracy in South Africa such as human dignity, freedom, equality and accountability, it is apparent from the data analysis that parents are neglecting their responsibility of championing the better future of their children. Participants suggested that as champions of children at home, parents should demonstrate moral practices based on

the virtues of kindness, responsibility, good manners, and faithfulness. By all this, the entire human dignity could be reestablished (Human Rights Commission 2009: 4).

The interviews clearly indicated that parents in the Ximhungwe circuit often expect wonders from teachers instead of providing support to them in order to guide the child to become a responsible person in the community. Regardless of good parenting formula, parents need to create a climate for a sound and open communication, caring and appreciation for the good. No community can afford to live in enduring conflict with other groups for instance; between teachers and learners, teachers and parents and learners themselves. Ongoing conflict and violence destroy the soul and spirit of a community.

One girl expressed her feelings saying: *"It is only when I am in my mother's hands that I can feel safe"*. Parents should strive for peace to pursue personal happiness and self-fulfilment. Some members who are more committed to the values of the community are more in close orbit to the values directing their choices and actions in adherence to these values. Accountability for actions and decisions that enable those in the school community to express concern about decisions that affect them adversely is significant in alleviating school violence. The need to balance the various rights to maximise respect for all has been cited as a priority (Human Rights Commission 2009:5). The significant factors that give meaning to the lives of learners are directly related to and influenced by the values the families uphold.

Because the more parents are able to act in a manner that is true to their values, the more people see them as being of good character. It was the feeling of the participants that parents as pioneers of good moral values align themselves with these values and actively strive to promote them in their children. As one participant believes, *"I trust that a caring community can create better opportunities for the child's safety"*. The moral work and worth of the society requires crucial consideration of the child as a member of society in the broader sense, and demands for and from the school whatever is necessary to enable the child to recognise all his/her social relations and take his/her part in sustaining them.

It follows that parents need to provide special care and sufficient support to their children for them to realise that violence does not and will never pay. Contrary to this, one participant expressed his concern as follows: *"Because of the moral decline in our communities, some of the fathers sexually assault their own children when their mothers are away"*. The data revealed that this is significant for the restoration of values within the family circle. This would imply that the school community of Ximhungwe circuit is living up to those standards that

impose reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander and fraud.

Whether it is for the purposes of promoting and/ or aligning these aspects of ubuntu with the core constitutional demands of the school, it is crucial to consistently observe these values at all times (Human Rights Commission 2009:10). In essence, these values can play an important role in the creation of responsible family units for the advancement of ethical behaviour by learners in schools. These desires and ambitions solely depend on a good working relationship between parents and educators and most importantly on the restoration of peace in schools. The Human Rights Commission (2009:16) affirms that children's rights to be heard in relation to any judicial or administrative proceedings that affects them should always be provided for.

Parents should create the perception among children (learners) that discipline is a priority and that children (learners) do not have more rights than they think. Quite obviously, the significance for the family system in the Ximhungwe circuit will thus be in finding and or creating value reforms in the society. The business of the educator, whether parent or teacher, is to ensure that the greatest possible number of ideas acquired by children and youths become moving ideas, motive-forces in the guidance of conduct. Literature shows that student's academic performance is lower when they view the school environment as dangerous. Mncube and Harber (2012:26) state that educators should refrain from any form of sexual relationship with learners at school.

4.8.3.3 Exposure to family violence and direct victimisation at school

Parent's unemployment, substance abuse, neglect, poverty, and poor nutrition can pose a serious threat to the safety of the child. These factors can exacerbate and extend the negative effects of violence exposure in children. Not only are children and young people experiencing primary victimisation, they are also constantly exposed to the violence going on around them. One girl explained her situation like this: *"I am staying with my stepfather who drinks a lot, often when he is drunk, he would beat my mother and she would run out of the house to seek refuge from the neighbourhood"*

Exposure to victimisation and criminal behaviour in itself acts as a predictor of later delinquency, as well as increases the likelihood of victimisation later in life. Participants reported that they had seen someone in their community intentionally harming or hurting someone else, usually known to the victim. Research reveals that students who are frequently

victims of bullying or exposed to various forms of deviant acts are more likely to commit violent acts. Burton and Leoschut (2012:77) further point out that learners who fall prey to violence are often revictimised subsequent to their initial encounter with violence, and experience several forms of victimisation.

The majority of learners reported that they did not feel safe either at home or at school. Those who did not feel safe at home cited the reason as that they were living in an environment characterised by fighting and substance abuse. Research revealed that in the case of girls being victimised, they were more likely to use violent-related behaviours as a means of problem solving. Exposure to physical violence, threats with guns, robbery, and sexual violence was quite high, both at home and in the school district.

The findings suggest that the home life of too many children is a scenario where there is domestic violence involved; in many instances, this violence plays out in their school life as well. Responding to the question of how often they experience violence in schools, one male participant said: *“Every weekend we hear of sexual assaults where one of our fellow schoolmates was involved.”* The reason behind those incidents of violence was that many learners, especially girls, were drug and alcohol addicts. Under the influence of these substances, they were more vulnerable to violence. Burton and Leoschut (2012:40) support the above claim school pupils in schools across the country are responsible for approximately 90% of the threats, sexual assaults, robberies and thefts of personal belongings.

It has been pointed out that any child who has witnessed domestic violence, who was not able to fully understand what was happening, might tend to internalise their feelings and take on an aggressive role at school. This clearly explains that learners in the Ximhungwe circuit are showing the same violence against their fellow students they have witnessed at home. The investigation shows that older children (i.e. learners between 15 and 17 years old) were at times able to articulate their feelings to others, but they were plagued by uncertainty and fear of putting themselves at risk of being attacked at home.

Mtsweni (2008:56) suggests that some ways of gauging school safety are discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Some of these suggestions were repeatedly applied, but could not effectively address violence in the Ximhungwe circuit. The findings show that these learners may exhibit violent tendencies at school that are coupled with periods of depression, anxiety, anti-social behaviour, and poor performance in school. Even though the study does not emphasise domestic violence as the source of most of incidences of school violence, it

should be eliminated in all possible ways. As long as these attitudes and behaviours continue to go unchallenged, schools will continue to be sites where youths are harassed out of an education.

4.8.4 SHEBEENS AND TAVERNS OPERATING NEAR SCHOOLS

4.8.4.1 Underage drinking

While a definitive cause-effect relationship is often hard to pinpoint, there is little doubt that a strong correlation exists between substance abuse and crime. This is evident from the literature study, which indicates that ensuring students' physical and mental health is a necessary feature of safety. In part, this means providing an environment free of drugs and alcohol. Use of illegal drugs and alcohol continues to be a common feature of adolescents' in-school experiences (Burton and Leoschut (2012:66)

Often both alcohol and drugs are used to generate the courage needed to commit crime. While the aggression associated with excessive alcohol consumption and the use of some drugs may increase the level of violence used to commit crime, may simply increase the likelihood of the actual crime such as assault taking place. A 15-year-old boy exclaimed, "*When we are on trips, we use to drink alcohol with the teachers, because they buy for us*". Observations conducted during the data collection process revealed that underage drinking plays a major part in contributing towards violent behaviour in schools.

Shebeens and taverns are operating within the immediate radius of the schools and the participants suggested that the Department of Education (DoE) should put in place interventions that will effectively address this problem. One of the interventions suggested was a discipline handbook. In this research, I found that the discipline handbook was never used for infractions and the administration was reluctant to take strict actions for fear of victimisation. This was not consisted across the research sites. In some schools, I found that learners who committed serious violent acts were already suspended.

Regarding this scenario, however, the study had no interest in knowing who was responsible or not in suspending learners from the school. However, participants raised the concern that school authorities were constantly shifting their problems from one school to another without dealing with the root cause of the problem. Research shows that school leadership and a positive school climate can influence feelings of safety for both students and faculty regardless

of academic success and neighbourhood characteristics (Bosworth, Ford and Hernandaz 2011:198).

Participants' responses reveal that gender does not seem to play the role as commonly perceived regarding alcohol intake in schools. On the contrary, the data shows that girls are more addicted to alcohol than boys are. In this instance, one boy said: *"I am no longer impressed by the manner in which girls in our school conduct themselves; they spend sleepless nights in taverns during weekends"*. The investigation showed that girls have much a higher desire for consuming alcohol and this implies that teenage girls show greater potential for violent behaviour in the chosen rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

Once they become intoxicated, they cannot control their actions. In addition, they are likely to fall prey to sexual abuse, some of the activities happen without noticing the perpetrator. In essence, these sub-factors suggest that girls are more vulnerable to different forms of violence such as sexual violence due to excessive drinking. Consequently, they are exposed to different kinds of diseases such as HIV and AIDS. Asked about how the school authority deals with alcohol consumption on the school premises, one learner (participant) responded by saying: *"Alcohol and drug abuse is one of our major concerns in our school, because educators are sending learners to buy liquor for them and they start drinking with them."*

"Educators also share some cigarettes and alcohol with learners within the school premises," said another participant. With intent to generate more money tavern owners, sell liquor to children younger than 18 years, regardless of gender. It is clear that liquor traders do not follow the liquor laws. Teachers as well are conducting themselves irresponsibly; their actions suggest that learners' time for effective teaching and learning is being compromised by alcohol consumption. Ineffective and inconsistent measures to discipline learners are a contributing element to higher alcohol consumption, which eventually leads to loss of respect from both learners and teachers.

Regarding these scenarios, it is clear that learners are not living up to their code of conduct and this creates more loopholes for underage drinking. Participants pointed out that, because of easy access to drugs and alcohol, youth gangs were in existence and used schools as a base for unethical behaviour. One participant expressed his view in this manner: *"Drugs cannot be tolerated within the school premises, because once addicted, it generates a sense of egocentrism that could lead to a lack of concern for morality and welfare of others."*

Research shows that adults often overlook the prevalence of dangerous substances such as alcohol and dagga at school ((SACE 2011:13)

As far as this category is concerned, it is apparent that there are further emerging contributing factors such as ignorance and lack of accountability towards the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. One concerned girl said: *“It looks like the justice system of our country is lacking a lot, in the sense that it cannot avoid shebeens and taverns that are operating near our schools”*. Due to alcohol consumption or abuse, a significant number of learners do not report incidents of violence to anyone, let alone the school. Some school principals confiscate dagga when found in the possession of boys at the toilets, only to consume it themselves after school hours.

This suggests that the level of trust between learners and educators can be an important indicator of the overall health of a school and can be a predictor of delinquency levels within schools. Data shows that many incidents of sexual violence influenced by alcohol intake such as rape in the toilets, thefts, robbery and bullying are not reported. A number of reasons for failing to report such violent acts have been cited, for instance, the learner was too scared to report, too scared to be embarrassed, or was threatened if he /she should report. Each reason, while significant in itself, has secondary implications.

For example, a learner who is too scared to report suggests that there is little trust between learners and educators. Because learners allegedly consume alcohol suggests that there are significantly high levels of implicit fear and intimidation among learners to the extent that they cannot talk to anyone. This suggests the presence of violence as a norm rather than an exception in rural high schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. This is worrying, given the fact that violence is not crime per se but that it is becoming normalised by school communities.

4.8.4.2 Unselfish role modelling

Underage drinking relates to shebeens and taverns that are operating within close radius from the schools. The investigation revealed that the majority of learners are concurrently living their lives in two different environments, (that is the school and taverns). I have mentioned that girls show greater potential for alcohol consumption than boys do in the Ximhungwe circuit. While under the influence of liquor, learners disrespect their teachers, peers and their parents. In order to alleviate thi problem, Wilson (2013:11) indicates that there needs to be a change in attitude and behaviour among the people of South Africa, focusing on economic and social growth that increases the education and fiscal stability of the developing countries.

In this endeavour, the investigation showed that it is imperative that both teachers and parents exercise the appropriate intervention, offering positive parenting and consistently carrying out their obligations to mould the desirable character in the child. Parents together with other community structures should ensure that children are instilled with concern for the rights of others, with respect for peace and order and with an understanding to be consistent with the law as enshrined in the constitution of the country.

The investigation established that managing discipline should be seen as one of the most crucial tasks in the upbringing of every child in a social sphere, including the home environment. One participant said: *“Parents should also create awareness for children to realise that violence is the enemy of progress and be able to live according to their dreams and aspirations”*. With regard to alcohol consumption, parents should drink responsibly (i.e. they should not drink in the presence of their children), and they should not send children to buy liquor for them.

Privacy in the family should always be maintained and be carefully protected in order for children not to lose respect. In discouraging the growing prevalence of teenage drinking, the interview has shown that children should be monitored to determine with whom they associate. Nyabandza (2010:2) pointed that in the Western Cape Province a large number of learners were sent to rehabilitation treatment for substance abuse of methamphetamine (MA) in an attempt to reduce the increasing number of addicted learners. This would help parents to prevent children from falling into wrong relationships.

The findings suggested that parents should listen to their children without interruption in order to create a warm platform for children to tell them their thoughts and feelings about issues under discussion. In this manner, parents would be in a better position to know how and when to help children resolve any form of violence. Significantly, children should be consistently discouraged immediately they show any warning signs of anti-social behaviour that may have a potential for violence.

Parsotam (2009:26) states that the impact of stress intervention programmes for schools principals illustrate that schools should take a holistic approach to health and wellness, wherein the mind and the body are regarded as a unit. However, in order to make every conversation a win-win situation, the interview showed that it is in the interest of the learners to see their parents intervene in a positive mood, control their emotions and not respond with anger when addressing violence related issues

In this kind of atmosphere, educators, learners and parents need to create a collaborative climate to maintain discipline in their schools so that schools are manageable and operational. Earlier research conducted by SACE (2011:18) revealed that teachers could also play an important role in reducing stress through solving conflicts among students in ways that are more constructive. The attempt to achieve this aim, schools will need to incorporate not only an academic focus for the student, but include the family within the education structure.

The participants' responses showed that the key role of parents among all other things is to cultivate a healthy, open and cooperative relationship with their child's teacher. Building on this foundation, the parent will be able to create a home environment conducive to open discussions with his/her child about social life as well as issues related to educational matters. As pointed out in research, parents need to play their roles in influencing their children's attitudes and behaviours. In this regard, one girl said: *"Parents are expected to provide unselfish role modelling in all issues pertaining to social life for children to follow sooth"*.

The investigation has established that there should be collective initiatives among to know who the child is associated with in order to prevent them from falling into undesirable relationships. If children (learners) feel comfortable talking openly with their parents, there will be a greater chance of parents guiding them towards healthy decision-making. With regard to sexual abuse, one girl participant echoed: *"I think the greatest responsibility in this problem lies with our parents in the sense that they should encourage constructive conversation with their children and start to realise that no child deserves to be abused."*

The perception therefore is that parents need to encourage their children to talk about whatever interests them. Furthermore, literature findings advocate the creation of a climate of trust in which stereotyping is avoided and female learners are encouraged to talk to educators who are trusted about any incident of sexual harassment or sexual abuse (Prinsloo 2011:18). To maintain an atmosphere of trust between learners and teachers, it often requires mutual relationship to be the platform of open communication to prevent any warning signs of violence in schools.

4.8.4.3 Increasing sexual abuse

One girl expressed her experience as follows: *"I used to smoke and drink and make troubles in class without fear."* Girls are predominantly the victims of physical and sexual abuse at schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. They are raped, assaulted and sexually harassed by their male classmates and even by their teachers. Burton and Leoschut (2012:8) reveal that delinquency,

especially in schools, has also become an important social problem in developing countries. Literature further shows that females show significantly higher rates of sexual assault than male learners do.

A fifteen-year-old girl alleged: *“My teacher promised to give me a pass mark if I can have sex with him and I must not tell anybody about it”*. From this response, it is apparent that some teachers have turned into “monsters” that intentionally damage the image of their profession and do not care about the well-being and the future of the learners entrusted into their hands. The investigation shows that there is a pattern of power abuse by educators at the expense of learners to satisfy their desires.

While alcohol and drugs use is strongly associated with criminal behaviour, as is access to weapons, the strongest predictor of criminal behaviour among particularly young children (aged 12 to 16 years) is criminal or anti-social parents. It is apparent from the literature findings that students who invest time and energy in school for a better future life are less likely to engage in delinquent acts. Learners were asked whether they had been kicked, punched or whether they had been assaulted sexually. More than fifty percent of the learners pointed that they encountered this kind of situations.

One girl participant allegedly said: *“I have a friend who was raped by a boy learner and the perpetrator was expelled from school, the incident was not reported to the police, this makes me scared of our school environment.”* This shows that while most forms of violence are more likely to be experienced at home, learners are more likely to be victims of sexual violence at school than at home, because of higher access to drugs and alcohol at school. Data shows that underage drinking can have the potential for sexual harassment at school with particularly profound consequences for young people, creating a permissive culture where those actions are not seen as serious enough to warrant punishment.

The form of sexual contact could vary. If power relations are established at a very young age, a culture of silence is established and a lack of respect prevails. In this regard, UNICEF (2012:16) reveals that without discipline, the girl child in our society is the most vulnerable to both gender violence and HIV/AIDS. My observation revealed that touching of girls happened openly in front of the researcher and educators. In other cases, both boys and girls spoke about instances, for example in the toilets or in empty classrooms, where they are forced to engage in sexual contact especially during evening studies.

Under the influence of drugs and alcohol, learners are more likely to carry dangerous weapons such as firearms and knives onto the school premises with the aim of threatening other learners. The presence of firearms and knives in schools is considered one of the most threatening and dangerous aspects of school violence. Participants alluded to the fact that the perpetrators of violence were using these dangerous weapons to commit sexual violence such as rape. Perhaps based on the knowledge of alcohol and substance usage, it is hardly surprising that learners tend not to report sexual violence due to fear of victimisation and embarrassment.

Regarding the frequency of experiencing sexual violence in schools, one boy participant pronounced: *“Sexual abuse is a common thing every month, and it happens between school and home.”* Violence in rural secondary schools shows a negative impact on the learner’s rights. Prinsloo (2011:9) reveals that many young girls aged 15 and below have been coerced or persuaded to have sex against their will. They are encountering all kinds of sexual violence in their schools. For example, raped, sexually abused, sexually harassed, and sexually assaulted at school by male learners and educators. The inquiry in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit also found the existence of sexual abuse through acts of fondling and aggressive sexual advances.

Madsen, Hicks and Thompson (2011:463) state that one approach to increasing youth resiliency involves using physical activity as a vehicle to promote the development of critical internal and external assets. Higher alcohol intake was found to be among the major contributing factor towards increasing sexual offences, among all age cohorts in rural secondary schools. Given this kinds of situations in rural secondary schools, one can assume that there is close correlation between underage drinking and increased sexual abuse. The investigation therefore suggests that many girls need strengthened intervention strategies to create awareness that suffering the effects of sexual violence in silence and having learned submission as a survival skill is not a norm.

On this note, perpetrators of violence see an opportunity to continue to act without punishment, because no one takes responsibility to prevent the problem. Concerning reporting of cases of sexual violence such as rape and sexual abuse, one girl learner responded as follows: *“When we report cases of violence, we are laughed at by some of our teachers, especially if it is sexually related”*. This is evident from the documents analysis: there is absolutely no document reflecting any jail-warranting event such as rape handled up to the

court level, despite reports from the participants that they had experienced rape incidents in their respective schools.

This study found that between fifteen and eighteen years of age, girls and social economic backgrounds were victims to violence in rural secondary schools. When asked about the rate of rape in their respective schools, one girl learner responded stating: *“I know my friend who was raped by her father, but she could not report the case to the police, because of fear of being threatened to die, if she tells anyone about it.”* The incident occurred during the examinations and the victim did not perform well because of trauma. This suggests the seriousness of violence learners are experiencing in the Ximhungwe circuit.

Despite the amendment to the Employment of Educators Act, No. 76 of 1998 in the Education Amendment Act of SA, Section 17 (c) of the Employment of Educators Act, many girls interrupt or leave school altogether because they feel unsafe in such violent environment. Other girls stay at school but suffer in silence, having learned submission as a survival skill and that sexual violence at school is inescapable. They seem to have no one to show them sympathy and wish them well in life. Sadly, these are clear indicators of the undermining and direct denial of the learners’ opportunity of equal education (Prinsloo 2011:9).

This shows that there is a pattern of abuse within schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. Some of the anti-social behaviour, that undermines the dignity of the learners, warrants serious intervention particularly at the school level. Prinsloo (2011:11) has shown that the net effect of the serious infringement of these girls’ right to human dignity is incalculable. They are denied access to school and effective education due to the pestering of educators and boys. In addition, they are harassed by the possibility of unwanted pregnancy and emotional pressure, and are denied their self-respect, and they could even be denied their health and their lives.

4.8.4.4 Responsible parenting

The findings revealed that lawlessness in families is significantly associated with school violence because learners have a tendency to reflect the way they were raised at home. Kotze (2012:30) point out that despite the numerous interventions, policies, and legislation that serve to protect children against sexual violence, there is still a great need to improve the implementation thereof. As long as these attitudes and behaviours continue to go unchallenged, schools will continue to be sites where youths are harassed out of education. Under the intoxication of liquor, boys tend to develop some elements of bullying behaviour or

aggression towards peers, including aggressive behaviour towards children (Meyer and Brown 2009:11).

In an attempt to prevent this from continuing, one participant appealed as follows: *“Parents as family figures whether single or not, should serve as good rather than bad examples to all children to copy the good actions”*. Good examples could include creating an alcohol free zone at home, and implementing zero tolerance for drug and substance abuse. Children should be part of the initiatives and they should be encouraged to live up to expected standards, exercising self-respect and respecting the well-being of others. Data revealed that ownership of values should be upheld as fundamental family principles. Internalising these notions would help reduce the incidence of girl learners who are kidnapped and suffer rape and torture at the hands of hoodlums.

Parents in collaboration with educators should strive for adopting of acceptable standards such as empathy, compassion and observing the rule of law. This is possible by applying the adoption of a corp principle and ensuring police visibility at all times. Dealing with drug dealers who sit outside school gates or in close proximity, hawking drugs to learners during school hours and after school, the school should ensure engagement of family members as partners in reducing crime to contribute knowledge about how best to approach violent situations.

In essence, schools need to discourage violence and create an atmosphere where both teachers and parents can be role models for learners. Victim’s instigators, in their need to feel a sense of worth, may reflect serious lack of family support. It is imperative that the school should determine how outside influences can affect the behaviour of the child, because the culture the perpetrator of violence lives in is significant and can indeed have a profound effect on a family member’s character. Children should know that underage drinking and involvement in pre-marital sexual relationships destroy their future.

Therefore, it is essential for parents to cultivate a relationship of trust between them and their children in order to ensure that learners report violence to the school authorities. One girl said: *“To mould children of character and integrity, we expect parents to provide consistent and responsible parenting”*. The findings thus suggest that parents should know their children intimately, knowing how and when the child is angry and what actions the child displays to express his/her anger. Most important is the holistic understanding of the fact that a learner at school reflects the nature of the family he/she comes from.

Burton and Leoschut (2012:55) confirm that the overall behaviour such as having poor success in school, being exposed to physical violence on school property, being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property and being exposed to emotional violence in the neighbourhood is more likely to generate violent behaviour. From an educational point of view, the investigation suggests that parents as key role players in the success of every learner cannot be left out in the fight against school violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. Parents are sending children to school for studies, but their children are becoming part of school violence. However, no parent wants to believe that the child he or she raises would be capable of inflicting harm on another human being.

Wilson (2013:11) indicates that in tackling violence in schools, a whole school approach involving management, teachers, pupils and the curriculum is necessary to ensure that the messages are consistent and reinforced by teachers and pupils alike. No one party can point fingers to one another; they are equally responsible to make an effort to prevent school violence. However, there are times when schools do not pay attention to these issues. The interviews suggest that parents in collaboration with the school should take strict action to help children who exhibit violent behaviours in schools.

On asking about the extent of support, that they receive from their parents, one participant responded like this: *“The role our parents are playing is clearly showing lack of love, affection, appropriate support and guidance.”* This response reveals that parents are not yet ready to embrace the vision to build an ethical and moral community and a mission to promote positive values. The data suggests that parents should always be there for their children, and give the necessary support, because in times of difficulty learners really do not know where to go and whom they should ask for help.

What is sad about violent attitudes is that instead of studying at school, children are learning things that are extremely bad for them as well as for the whole society. Mtsweni (2008:27) has shown that the development of the necessary personal controls serves a number of particular functions in the growth process of learners on their way towards responsible adulthood. In order to understand what occurs within the school environment, one needs to have a clear picture of what occurs within each of the other spheres. The family is the first point of departure for such analysis.

In an attempt to create safe schools, Prinsloo (2011:12) shows that educators have a legal obligation to care (which implies educators' duty to discipline learners). The duty to care is

therefore comparable to the degree of care that a diligent father would show towards his family. One male participant suggested that fathers should fulfil their crucial role of a positive father figure, providing good rather than bad examples. The findings suggest that parents should avoid the use of illegal drugs and encourage children to practise abstinence from alcohol abuse and premarital sexual relationships.

Because children (such as teenagers) grow up by copying what their parents are practising, it is important to guide them towards the right direction. These findings have profound implications for the development of pro-social attitudes and behaviours in teenagers who are in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. It is from their parents – followed by siblings and peers – that young people growing up are most likely to learn acceptable behaviours and it is on the behaviours of these adults that children's own behaviour is most likely to be modelled.

Prinsloo (2011:13) states that while a range of complex predictors exists that influences a young person's likelihood to engage in crime, almost all of these factors (underage drinking, access to dangerous weapons, sexual abuse, and poor parenting) can be mediated by parenting variables. It further reveals that the governing bodies of public schools have a major responsibility to ensure that the learners' rights to a safe school environment are realised. It further indicates that the primary role of school governing bodies is to develop a code for learners in terms of section 8 of the Schools Act, which includes policies dealing with safety and school discipline.

The findings suggest that it is perhaps in the family sphere that the key solution lies and that in order to address efficiently the issue of young people engaging in violence within the school environment, this is where much of the intervention work should be targeted rather than at schools themselves. The premise presented throughout the study is that schools reflect what is happening within the home and community. However, a change of attitude is a significant starting-point in the alleviation of sexual violence in schools. Research findings reveal that change is something that should come from within schools and school communities.

To improve the situation in schools, it is necessary that school management teams co-operate with governing bodies and make a serious attempt to stop any form of sexual harassment.

Such an attempt should involve for example equipping the learners with the necessary skills to be able to assert themselves in cases of emotional and sexual harassment, victimisation, intimidation, hate speech and all forms of sexism (Prinsloo 2011:18). In view of the above, one

girl expressed her feelings as follows: *“Families should not be seen as jungle of wars, but should be seen as places of character building to the youths”* Before violence can be stopped, it should be noted that it is impossible to keep schools safe without cooperation from the school, parents and the community. The society, including all stakeholders in the education system, needs to ensure that everyone shares the problem. No one group is to blame, nor should one group alone take responsibility for stopping school violence in the Ximhungwe circuit, everyone is equally responsible.

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the findings of the empirical investigation conducted on factors related to the prevalence of violence in the rural secondary schools in Bohlabela district in the Ximhungwe circuit. It is evident that the main factors associated with violence in these rural secondary schools relate to lack of parental support, taverns and shebeens neighbouring the schools, free access into the school premises, easy access to drugs and alcohol, fear associated with the school, exposure to family violence, direct victimisation at school, and lack of empathy.

For every category of factors responsible for school violence, participants have suggested particular intervention (alleviation) strategies to address the challenges that rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit are experiencing. I linked a number of alleviation themes to a particular factor causing school violence, such as implementing effective access control systems to alleviate lack of safety and security measures, awareness of professional roles to alleviate lack of teacher support, as presented in figure 4.6 in the previous chapter.

Restoration of values in the community addresses lack of parental support; positive parenting and role modelling to address increased sexual abuse and exposure to and direct victimisation at school; as well as underage drinking in the school. It has become apparent that both teachers and parents have a significant role of providing guidance and support to combat violence in the Ximhungwe circuit.

Chapter 5 will present the conclusion and the recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

From the safety and security point of view, schools are currently sites of widespread violence. This is not unique to South African schools, but reflects rising levels throughout the world. This has given rise to a growing body of literature on the causes and the nature of violence occurring in schools, as well as a range of possible interventions to address it. The primary aim of the study was to collect sound data that is representative of rural secondary schools at district level and that would provide an insight into the real extent of violence in the Ximhungwe circuit. The study found that there are four main factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in Bohlabela District in the Ximhungwe circuit. These are presented in 4.6 of Chapter 4.

School violence is indeed a serious challenge that threatens the optimal functioning of school communities. Various themes related to the risk factors have been determined as possible alleviation measures. In this chapter, a brief summary of the important literature and empirical findings is followed by recommendations in the form of guidelines to both parents and the school authorities to assist them in their efforts to alleviate school violence encountered by the learners and the teachers respectively. In this regard, the findings and recommendations are guided by the aims of the study, which are as follows:

- To investigate the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in Bohlabela District in the Ximhungwe circuit.
- To determine the different forms of violence and the nature of violence experienced in rural secondary schools.
- To determine preventive or alleviation strategies of violence.

5.2 SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT FINDINGS

The literature and the empirical findings of this study address the research problem and the aims related to the nature and the extent of violence experienced by teachers and the learners in rural secondary schools. Various factors that could serve as alleviators of school violence were also determined and discussed in detail in 5.3 of this chapter

5.2.1 Description of empirical findings on the violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. It was significant therefore, to review the literature on school violence in order to determine what is already known about school violence that affects adversely on the teaching and learning in schools as well as on the safety of both teachers and learners. Chapter 2 presented the theoretical background on school violence and some strategic interventions on how challenges could effectively be dealt with.

The rationale of the literature study was to provide detailed information on school violence to enhance a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. Clear definitions of key concepts such as factors, school violence, violence, bullying, perpetrator, victim, school rampage, sexual abuse, violence risk assessment, and sexual harassment were discussed through the literature review in order to reflect the true picture of the nature and the extent of school violence in South African schools, including Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela District.

5.3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALLEVIATING SCHOOL VIOLENCE WITH REGARD TO IDENTIFIED THEMES

5.3.1 Access control systems as an alleviator

The empirical investigation revealed that schools without access control systems pose a serious threat to the safety of learners and teachers. It was suggested that learner safety should be a priority to schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. The alarmingly high percentage of participants who reported an increase of access to weapons at school suggested the need for comprehensive action on the part of the DoE.

The findings of this study suggest repairing fences, hiring security guards and even purchasing metal detecting devices depending on the intensity of violence in a that particular school to tighten or reinforce safety and security at schools. The unavailability of all these measures in each school showed dismal disparities across the research sites. It is essential to repair dysfunctional lights to keep the school clear from unseen intruders.

In this category, openings on the school perimeter fence and non-availability of security guards, including effective locking gates suggest a close relationship with school violence. The trend observed in this category is that learners' safety is at stake and a high number of

learners are vulnerable to all forms of violence at school. These findings show a clear correlation between high levels of violence and lack of access control systems in schools. For creating safe environments in schools, it is required that further empirical investigation be conducted on the significance of safety and security measures in schools to ensure learner protection.

Lack of these measures presents drug dealers with fertile grounds to market their business, which also signals a sense of hopelessness in students to perform up to the expected standards in academic learning. People or any visitors should identify themselves at the gate before they can access the school premises. Based on reasonable grounds, any visitor suspected of carrying dangerous weapons on the school premises should be searched. The integrity of perimeter fencing needs to be monitored daily and the school authorities, together with SGBs, must assume responsibility for monitoring and maintaining this infrastructure.

The empirical investigation suggested that parents, educators and learners should be encouraged to collaborate in ensuring that discipline is created and maintained in their schools so that schools are manageable and operational (Mtsweni 2008:31). At some schools, learners attend evening studies; as a result, they are more likely to be vulnerable to victimisation. It is important to strictly monitor the evening studies by both educators and parents to avoid learners from sexual violence. This will not avoid sexual violence only, but will also enable learners to focus on their academic activities without interruptions. Considering the ready availability of guns to learners of all ages, it is essential to clear guns from the surrounding communities and regulation of these weapons be strictly enforced by law.

This category answers the main research question, which was to determine the factors related to the prevalence of violence in the Ximhungwe circuit. This is evident from the replies to penetrating questions about school safety and provides insight into elements that lead to perceptions of safety. The school authorities together with the DoE should therefore explore further with rigorous designs the perception of safety in order to ensure optimal safe environments in schools.

5.3.2 Positive teacher support as an alleviator

Research findings have shown that the school is responsible for teaching norms and values of society and controlling the behaviour of young people. In this regard, the findings show that discipline should begin with teachers before it is addressed at the level of the learners despite challenges and, frustrations teachers are faced with. The perception that teachers's quick

actions are determined by the severity of the incident increases the likelihood of violence in schools. This notion demonstrates teachers' ill preparedness to deal with violent situations.

Based on what emerged from this category, teachers should refrain from subjecting learners to feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness, physical assault, sexual violence, which includes sexual harassment, and emotional abuse. All these bad practices by teachers suggest that there is a significant association between victimisation and delinquency, even though the two aspects were not the focus of the study. However, the association is more likely to predict the prevalence of violence in schools, which ultimately answers the research question, in the sense that the modus operandi of the school authorities demonstrates a major concern for learners and parents.

The unprofessional role of teachers as confirmed by the research report by SACE (2011:10) that not only learners are the ones bringing harmful substances (alcohol and drugs) onto the school premises, but that educators are also involved in this practice. This is a clear demonstration of a shortcoming in the education system. The shortcoming in the education system answers the research question because it explicitly suggest lack of educator support in schools to reduce violence. It is therefore critically important for teachers to collaborate with the police in the fight against crime in the community where they are serving.

It follows that failure to abide by the rule of law suggests a high probability of violence in schools. Teachers should ensure that they create child-friendly environments of sharing, for instant, talking about 'rude' and ;unfair; teachers is usually a good start to allow the child to voice his or her concern on issues of violence. Because participants expressed a serious concern about teachers' bad practices in schools, it is imperative that the DoE together with teacher unions deal not with educational issues, but also with social issues to restore high ethics of professionalism.

This may create a comfortable climate for the communities they serve to be proud of their work, because they have a noble profession. Attachment to the school signals the preparedness of the teachers to put the interest of the child/learners first. This perception suggests therefore the obligation of teachers to perform their fundamental roles in striving to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. Mtsweni (2008:19) also support the idea of developing partnership in promoting discipline in schools to make the school safe environments.

The general concern of the community of parents and learners about teachers's conduct particularly regarding sexual violence answers the research question of who the perpetrators of violence are. In the light of the above, one may deduce that educators are intentionally disregarding their knowledge that regardless of the child's background, violence is not worth their time at school. Teachers have to carry out their legal obligation (duty to care), and provide the necessary support to the child to be able to realise his or her dreams.

5.3.3 Restoration of morality in the family as an alleviator

Research has indicated that the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM) was called into life with a vision to build an ethical and moral community with a mission to promote positive values. This is done to develop strategies aimed at restoring social values and to promote national advocacy for the creation of an ethical, caring, and corrupt-free society. The findings therefore suggest that the creation of family value systems should play an integral part in the family practices in the Ximhungwe circuit. Parents should remain true to their values, align themselves with these values, and actively strive to promote them in their children (Van der Merwe 2009:13).

One of the aims of the study was to determine the feelings and the emotions of learners in dealing with cases of violence in their respective schools. In addressing this objective, learners pointed out that family engagement is essential in dealing with school violence because families know what kinds of strategies work or do not work concerning their children. The findings of this study further show that learners in the Ximungwe circuit reflect negative school effects. This then suggests the importance of considering the child as an important treasure who will make a meaningful contribution to society.

Creation of responsible family units would be the key for the advancement of ethical behaviour in schools. The findings also show a decline in learner morale, thus intervention strategies aimed at tackling school bullying and promoting safer school communities were emphasised as moral imperatives. Concerning sneaking in of dangerous weapons into the school premises, participants suggested that physical infrastructure should be prioritised, because they may be related to safety concerns. Both interventions suggest concrete possibilities to improve school safety by taking specific measures.

This investigation highlights the trend the category shows, namely; 'learners suffering a high degree of severe physical and sexual violence'. Higher degrees of violence that learners are experiencing suggest lack or loss of moral values, which is a considerable predictor of anti-

social behaviour. The pattern identified across the interviews shows a high rate of aggression targeted at adolescent girls because they are soft targets of violence. A relatively high degree of physical and sexual violence suggests a clear indication of moral decline in and around the school community. The research question aimed at determining the kind of violence experienced by learners is answered by the need to strengthen social systems in the families.

As shown by the findings of the present study, almost all the participants (learners) suffer significant effects of loss of social values that should be targeted at home and at school in order to dignify family systems. When this affects their psychological and family lives negatively, it even leads to a decrease in confidence, and affects their academic performance as well as their sense of worth at school.

5.3.4 Positive parenting and discipline as an alleviator

The findings on this aspect are in keeping with countrywide estimates of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use. Alcohol remains the substance most often used by South Africans. Alcohol was one of the major concerns among students in the context of this investigation. I did not record mortality associated with drug and alcohol usage by age fifteen and beyond between members of gangs. However, a high number of incidents of violence occurred through easy access to drugs and alcohol, which suggests that parents have created loopholes in sharing these substances with their children.

The observations and document analysis of drugs and alcohol related crimes showed that there was a significant correlation between free access to the school property and high alcohol consumption. The significant correlation between these two aspects answers the research question. Unfortunately, this study did not use statistical comparison of usage of drugs and alcohol between girls and boys at school; however, throughout the interviews a high percentage indicated that girls showed a substantially increased consumption compared to their male counterparts. This relates more to shebeens and taverns operating in close proximity with the school property.

The research report by Nyabandza (2010:2) about rehabilitation of learners who are addicted to substance abuse, deemed rehabilitation an ideal to violence alleviation. While this study established the issue of managing discipline, creation of platforms for children to voice their thoughts without criticism and an atmosphere of trusting communication between parents and their children are necessary steps to curb violence. This signals a significant correlation

between combinations of different interventions that need implementation in alleviating anti-social behaviour among learners in rural secondary schools.

The perception of safety in this study may not correlate with concrete statistics such as the presence of illegal drugs because I did not conduct the study based on any statistical information available; rather, it explored factors that influenced learners to perform violent acts. In essence, schools should create an atmosphere where learners should be role modelled by both teachers and parents.

5.4 TRENDS OBSERVED THROUGHOUT THE STUDY

Trends identified in this study include amongst others the following:

- firstly, easy accessibility of drugs and alcohol within and around the school property due to shebeens and taverns operating within close proximity of the schools;
- secondly, frequent use and threats of guns and other dangerous weapons such as knives and bottles, due to free access to the school premises;
- thirdly, high alcohol consumption by girl learners, due to moral decline or deficiency in the family;and
- lastly, sexual abuse of girls mostly by their teachers, due to the low socio-economic status of girls.

Another possibility raised by the study might be that drug availability simply changes patterns of use in a given population. This has been very true in the Ximhungwe circuit based on the findings that girl learners in high schools show a considerably higher rate of substance consumption than their male counterparts. This is a factor that negatively affects the psychological and physical ability to resist violence.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

There has been relatively no data on the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in Bushbuckridge (Bohlabela) district in the Ximhungwe Circuit. This study will serve as a basis from which follow-up studies and further examinations of the phenomenon could be developed in order to lobby government to engage in appropriate, targeted intervention. I therefore suggest that the DoE should streamline the activities and interventions within schools.

A scan of all interventions targeting learner safety in schools should be undertaken through which a concise, coherent and holistic picture of all interventions can be established. Since learners are precluded from the decision making process on matters that affect them directly, the Provincial Head of the Department of Education should in pursuit of democracy motivate students' representatives by letting them realise that their inputs are valued and needed for the development of sound, secure and violent-free institutions.

The roles of the Department of Education (DoE), parents and other important role players e.g. SGBs in alleviating school violence were not part of the empirical investigation of this study and thus require further research through the consolidation and refining of intervention procedures. The DoE will be able to consolidate the resources and expertise available to it and maximise the impact of a few targeted interventions on a local, provincial and national level, thus leading to the ultimate objective, namely schools that are violence free, healthy and safe environments for learners and teachers.

5.5.1 Recommendations in brief

The table in 5.5.2 provides a brief outline of all the recommendations discussed above, suggested in three time frames, namely short term, medium term and long term. It is important that all interventions be seen as, and form part of, an integrated, coherent and cross-cutting programme of school safety, led by the school, the DoE, and involving other stakeholders such as teacher unions, SACE, SAPS, the Department of Health and Social Services and the community. These recommendations are offered here as a set of integrated actions that are intended to deal with the issue of violence in a holistic manner.

5.5.2 Table of recommendations

As discussed in 5.5.1 above, this table portrays the activities and roles that each stakeholder should play in alleviating school violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit.

TIME FRAME	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
Short term	Identify early warning signs and hotspots in all schools.	School authorities and SGBs
	As a priority, roll out security infrastructure at all schools.	DoE.
	Provide training for educators in effective classroom management and identification of violent related behavioural patterns.	DoE.
	Implement interventions offering positive parenting and discipline alternatives for parents.	SGB and schools.
	Clean up social environments, surrounding schools (i.e. create drug free- zones).	Schools, SAPS, provincial liquor boards.
	Scan, review and disseminate all school-based safety interventions.	DoE.
	Promote harmonious interactions and relationships between learners and teachers.	School authorities, teacher unions, DoE and SACE

	Develop ongoing research monitoring frameworks.	DoE, with other stakeholders.
Medium term	Develop and implement appropriate substance prevention and addiction interventions targeted specifically at learners (pilot projects).	DoE.
	Implement accountability mechanisms holding principals and educators responsible for levels of violence within schools.	DoE.
	Raise awareness of the impact of violence in the homes and communities.	Schools, SGBs, SAPS, and DoE.
	Reduce availability of weapons within school communities and homes.	School security committee and SAPS.
	Implement ongoing research and monitoring framework.	DoE with other stakeholders.
	Create awareness around issues of substance abuse	DoE.
Long term	Monitor and maintain school infrastructures.	Schools and DoE.
	Introduce coherent inter-sectoral crime reduction	Schools, SAPS, Health and Social Services and

	programmes (e.g. psychological and social guidance, values and ethics and therapy sessions).	DoE.
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Figure 2: An integrated, coherent and crosscutting programme to improve school safety.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The study was motivated by the research problem related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in Bohlabela district in the Ximhungwe Circuit. To address the research problem, four rural secondary schools were purposefully selected as research sites for focus group interviews, observation and documents review in order to obtain in-depth information about the phenomenon under study: namely school violence. The research results outlined in Chapter 4 were informed by the literature findings in Chapter 2. I therefore cannot disprove or approve an hypothesis, because the study was not based on the formulation of any hypothesis, but employed a qualitative research design and methodology as mode of investigation.

The research findings showed that learners are indeed experiencing all forms of violence in rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe circuit. For example, girl learners are kidnapped, suffer rape, and torture at the hands of hoodlums, including their own teachers and fellow students. The current findings discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to the literature findings answer the research question concerning the factors related to the prevalence of violence in the Ximhungwe circuit. Both literature and the current research findings suggest concrete possibilities to improve school safety policies by implementing specific measures. Regarding learners’ perceptions of violence, learners did not express opposing perceptions of safety.

They all expressed their deepest concern about school safety in their respective schools. They indicated that they were scared of strangers who were freely coming onto campus without identification. This was evident from the observations made during data collection; gates were left wide open without security officers. The study established that the research problem relates to a number of factors causing school violence, namely: lack of safety and security measures, lack of teacher and parental support, exposure to family violence and direct victimisation at schools, shebeens and taverns operating within a close radius to the school,

and increasing sexual abuse shown by perpetrators of violence. The empirical investigation determined that the DoE, teachers, parents, learners and their important stakeholders have significant roles to play in alleviating school violence in the Ximhungwe circuit in Bohlabela district.

These roles include the provision of safety and security measures to ensure that schools create a climate of safety, the restoration of morality, parental role modelling to enable the development of skills for positive parenting, provision of programmes for young people who show the potential for alcohol and substance abuse. In addition, it is imperative to encourage high moral standards amongst learners to create a sense for human dignity, respect, inclusivity, compassion and concern for others. I hope that the study will contribute meaningfully towards the creation of violence-free environments that are conducive for raising a generation of young people with character and integrity.

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APPENDIX A

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P.O.BOX 1364
MKHUHLU
1246
24 October 2011

The Head of Education Department
Private bag x11341
Nelspruit
12001

Dear Sir/madam

RE:APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE XIMHUNGWE CIRCUIT IN BOHLABELA DISTRICT.

With reference to the above subject i hereby apply for permission to conduct research in the Ximhungwe Circuit in Bohlabela District. The programme of study is as follows:

Degree: MED (Full research in Education Management)
Title : Factors related to the prevalence of violence in Rural Secondary Schools in Bushbuckridge (Bohlabela) District in Mpumalanga.

Type : Dissertation
Supervisor : Dr P.R. Machaisa
Institution : University of South Africa (UNISA)

The research methodology and design that the study will employ will be a qualitative research design. For the purpose of the study, the research design will include individual interviews, focus group interviews, observing and document analysis as data collection instruments.

On completion of the study, a copy of the report will also be submitted to the Department of Education. Attached please find a copy of letter of registration for academic year 2012, application for Ethics Reviews form and a copy of an abstract of the proposal.

The research will be conducted at four rural secondary schools in the Ximhungwe Circuit. I therefore wish to promise that during the process of conducting the research, the investigation will not interfere with the daily duties of my work, and the activities of the learners at the research sites will not be disturbed as the research will be conducted after school' hours.

Hoping that my request will receive your kind support.

Yours Faithfully


.....
Chabangu L

APPENDIX B



education
DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

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wezeMfundu*
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MR. L. CHABANGU
PO BOX 1364
MKHUHLU
1246
24 OCTOBER 2011

**RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN THE
XIMHUNGWE CIRCUIT IN BOHLABELA DISTRICT.**

Your application (Dated 24 October 2011) to conduct educational research on the topic: "Factors related to the prevalence of violence in Rural Secondary Schools in Bohlabela District in Mpumalanga" was received on the 27 October 2011.

Your detailed research proposal, research questions, objectives, aims and the background gives an impression that your study will benefit the entire department especially the educators and learners who are aspiring to be successful citizens. Given the motivation and the anticipated report of the study, I approve your application to conduct your research in the institutions of the department.

You are further requested to read and observe the guidelines as spelt out in the attached research manual. The importance of this study cannot be overemphasized; therefore you are expected to share your findings with the

Wou

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL/FORM

Setting/individuals _____	Date _____
Role of observation _____	Length of observation _____
Descriptive Notes _____	Reflective Notes _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

QUESTIONS THAT I AM GOING TO ASK THE PARTICIPANTS

1. Tell me about your experience in your first year in this school. How comfortable or not were you?
2. When do you often experience violent acts in this school? Describe how the situation was.
3. Often perpetrators of violence have no feelings for others. What is your view on this statement?
4. How concerned are you about the prevalence of violence in the school?
5. To what extent do you receive support from parents and educators as far as violence is concerned?
6. Learners are largely involved in school violence. What is your view of the effects of violence on the morale among the learners?
7. If your friend advises you to sell drugs within the school premises, how would you respond to his/her advice? Substantiate your response. Do you think drug use has an effect on increasing violence in your school?
8. Rape is one of violent crimes that have a traumatic effect. Give reasons to support or refute this statement. Has it ever happened in your school? If yes, how did you solve the case?
9. When and what kind of violent crimes were you involved in or have you seen in your school that really made you feel unsafe. Explain your reaction to the situation.
10. Does a teen who tells you that using drugs will make you look more mature; really care about your wellbeing and health? Motivate your answer.
11. Alcohol use is more prevalent than any other drug and has been linked to violence. How often do you experience this in your school? And how does this impact on violence in your schools? or is there any link between alcohol use and violence in your school?
12. Explain how it feels to find yourself in violent situations.
13. What consequences did this experience have on you?

14. What does the school do to prevent violence? Are you satisfied about what the school is doing? If yes, how do you think you can help the school prevent violence?
15. What do you think could be the contribution of parents towards assisting with violence prevention in the schools?

APPENDIX E

LEARNER'S INFORMED CONSENT

RESEARCH TOPIC: Factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in Bushbuckridge (Bohlabela) district in Mpumalanga province.

DATE:

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at investigating the factors related to the prevalence of violence in rural secondary schools in Bushbuckridge (Bohlabela) district in Mpumalanga Province

Your participation in this research project is voluntary and confidential. You will not be asked to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be established, unless you are willing to be contacted for individual follow-up interviews. You can withdraw at any stage should you wish not to continue with an interview. Also, note that the interviews will be recorded for data capturing purposes and that the results of this study may be published in a journal. In both instances, your identity will be protected.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Under no circumstances will your identity be known to any parties or organisations that may be involved in the research process.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

Ihereby consent that I participate in this project out of my own free will and voluntarily shared my thoughts and experiences in this interview. The researcher explained to me the purpose of the research and I was informed and guaranteed my rights to confidentially. I fully acknowledge that this information will be used solely for

Masters Studies and not for commercial purposes and thereby give consent to the researcher to use this information.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE..... DATE.....
RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE..... DATE.....
SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

APPENDIX F

PARENT'S CONSENT FORM

I, the undersigned _____ (name) in my legal capacity as parent/guardian of _____ (minor's name):

Hereby declare that I am the parent/legal guardian of the minor and am duly authorised to act on behalf of the minor.

Give my consent and authorise the researcher to take pictures, record and /or interview the minor for the purpose of the study.

Acknowledge and consent that the pictures, recording and interviews will be used in any form of distribution, be it by print or electronic media and that neither I nor the minor will receive any compensation in any form from the researcher for the use of the pictures, recording and interviews.

Acknowledge and consent that all copyright and intellectual property of the pictures, recording and interviews vest with the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Hold the researcher harmless against any loss and / or demand in respect of injury or death sustained by me, the minor or any person, which damage or loss arises directly or indirectly from consenting to clause 1, 2 and 3, through my or the minor's participation in the programme and /or any further associated activities as well as in respect of all claims which may be made against the researcher by any third parties by reason of or in any way arising from the aforesaid.

Declare that I and on behalf of the minor indemnify the researcher against any further cost which will cover all legal or other expenses that may be incurred by the researcher in examining, resisting or setting any such claim and that I will be held liable for such cost should same arise from my authorisation and or the minor's participation.

SIGNED AT _____ ON THIS _____ DAY OF _____ 20__

SIGNATURE: _____

NAME: _____

PHYSICAL ADDRESS: _____

TEL NO:

ID NO:
