

**Exploring Leadership Practices of Addressing Learner-on-teacher Violence in
Secondary Schools**

By

MAJONG NOMASE SARAH

2006104513

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SUPERVISOR: DR S.D. MAKHASANE

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Declaration

I, **Majong Nomase Sarah**, declare that this treatise entitled **Exploring leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools**, submitted for the qualification of M. Ed. in Education Management and Leadership at the University of the Free State is my own independent work. All the sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.



14/11/2022

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NOMASE SARAH MAJONG

.....
DATE

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ABSTRACT

The manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence is a growing concern for contemporary schools worldwide. Although it is a global problem, it also appears to be on the rise in South Africa and is not adequately reported or addressed. Yet, this phenomenon is still severely understudied, especially from a leadership perspective. Thus, this study aims to explore leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. The study adopted a two-pronged theory consisting of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) and the Invitational Leadership Theory (ILT). A qualitative design was employed, and a multiple case study was utilised to call attention to leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. Two secondary schools in the eastern Free State were selected for this study. Eight participants were purposively selected for the study. The data was mainly collected through semi-structured interviews (one-on-one interviews) with principals, heads of departments (HODs), and teachers and was supplemented by document analysis.

Data collected from this study was analysed using thematic analysis, and five themes emerged. The findings revealed that learner-on-teacher violence in the forms of verbal violence, physical violence, and sexual harassment is prevalent in secondary schools. The study found that school leaders respond to learner-on-teacher violence incidents per the learner code of conduct, involvement of parents, and other school-based targeted violence intervention programs. However, the findings revealed that all these strategies seem insufficient to stop the prevalence of these incidents due to several challenges, including a lack of parent involvement, inadequate policies, and a lack of support from the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Therefore, this study recommends that the DBE capacitates school leaders on the review of policies and supports them with the implementation thereof. Parents and politicians must play their roles and refrain from interfering with disciplinary processes; thus, the Department of Education (DOE) must assist school leaders in that regard.

Keywords.

Leadership, Leadership practices, learner-on-teacher violence, secondary schools

List of Acronyms

DBE: Department of Basic Education

DOE: Department of Education

HOD: Head of Department

ILT: Invitational Leadership Theory

RCL: Representative Council of Learners

SACE: South African Council for Educators

SAPS: South African Police Services

SASA: *South African Schools Act* 84 of 1996

SBST: School-Based Support Team

SCLT: Social Cognitive Learning Theory

SGB: School Governing Body

SMT: School Management Team

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Chapter 1

1.1. Introduction and background

Learner-on-teacher violence continues to be a multi-faceted phenomenon, with prevalence increasing at an alarming rate globally. This phenomenon is better understood in the broad context of school violence. In contemplating school violence from a global perspective, Igu and Ogba (2019:24) state that different forms of violence exist at various levels, and school violence exists in many countries. Kolbe (2020:246) asserts that in the United States of America (USA), school gun violence remains a challenge that renders the school environment hostile. Commenting on the challenge of school violence, Fox and Fridel (2018:18) state that the USA is among the countries faced with the problem of school violence, with 235 cases of school violence reported in a single year. In the same light, Eadens *et al.* (2019:3) advocate that the challenge of school shootings in the USA is due to more citizens owning guns as compared with other countries in the world. Cross-national research conducted by Chen and Chen (2019:185) highlighted that even Asian countries, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, have experienced and still experience school violence. In Africa, Igu and Ogba (2019:24) highlight that Nigeria remains the most violent country in Africa due to political diversity and a history of mistrust. In addition, Ogba and Igu (2019:58) contend that Nigerian communities are violent, leading to serious implications for schools as learners are aggressive and violent.

Since the problem of school violence is a global crisis, South Africa is not exempt. To support this, Lunneblad (2019:1) contends that the phenomenon of violence is an ongoing concern in South Africa, as it remains the world's most significant contemporary issue. Singh and Steyn (2014:81) contend that violence is generally a catastrophe that occurs in private and public spaces, and the South African National Department of Basic Education (DBE) has recently struggled to control increased outbreaks of violence occurring at alarming rates in schools. From this perspective, Makhasane and Mthembu (2019:50) argue that South Africa is classified in the category of the world's most violent countries and thus its schools are bound to be vulnerable to school violence. Although researchers show interest in exploring school violence, Kgosimore (2018:2) argues that studies focusing on

educators as victims of violence remains scarce while this aspect remains a worldwide silent calamity. This study intends to construct a better understanding of how leadership practices are used to address learner-on-teacher-violence, with a deliberate emphasis on secondary schools.

Exploring the differences between violence and school violence using definitions is imperative to understand the landscape of the study. According to Titchiner (2019:6), the definition of violence is broad since the phenomenon goes beyond the physical realm. Violence can also be non-physical, including emotional abuse emanating from oppression and exploitation. Ogba and Igu (2019:57) define violence as an act that involves physical force to hurt, damage, or even kill due to existing anger, depression, and emotional trauma in perpetrators. Since violence also manifests in schools, Paolini (2022:23) defines school violence as aggressive behaviour resulting from the physical act of using punches and assault with weapons occurring with little or no intention to cause fear in both peers or teachers on school premises, during school events, and on the way from or to school. The scope of school violence is vast and can be categorised into bullying, physical attacks, sexual harassment, dating violence, and systematic violence; however, these acts can only be classified as school violence when they occur on school premises.

Acts of violence that occur in schools include, among others, learner-on-learner, teacher-on-learner, and learner-on-teacher violence. However, for the purpose of this study, the focus is only confined to learner-on-teacher violence. According to Woudstra *et al.* (2018:1), learner-on-teacher violence is malice to disempower teachers' professionalism and embarrass them in the process. In other words, learner-on-teacher violence occurs when learners misbehave by using physical force, insults, and even bullying teachers to hurt or embarrass them (Woudstra *et al.*, 2018:6). The concepts teacher and educator are used interchangeably in this study as in the South African context they mean the same thing.

Existing studies suggest that physical violence, sexual violence, cyberbullying, and verbal abuse are common types of violence perpetrated by learners on teachers. To support this, the study conducted by Woudstra *et al.* (2018:04) reveals that approximately 62.1% of

teachers have been insulted, sworn at, or shouted at by a learner whilst 34,2% of learners have threatened teachers, 30.9% sexually harassed teachers, and learners have physically hurt 9.2% of teachers. In addition, the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2020:2) reports that in a study conducted on teachers at 1380 schools, 17% of teachers revealed that some learners go to school armed, while 13% stated that most of their learners belong to gangs. Based on the above findings, the prevalence of violence at schools is real and no school is immune from it.

Since the study focuses on exploring school leadership practices directed at addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools, Mhlanga (2019:12) defines school leadership as a joint effort by a group of people to accomplish school's needs. Bagwell (2019:86) found that the core school leadership practice is centralised around the leader's ability to focus on stimulating, supervising, and monitoring school activities to engender effective teaching and learning without disruptions by supporting and promoting the development of teachers. From the perspective of this study, school leadership refers to principals as they are appointed as the leaders in secondary schools with the assistance of other School Management Team (SMT) members (Sinthumule 2017:18). In that regard, Ntuli (2018:28) defines the SMT as a school management structure responsible for implementing education policies and coordinating management functions to control school activities. The SMT includes the school principal, deputy principals, and heads of departments (Mosala, 2019:26).

Ntuli (2018:28) points out that to ensure the smooth operation of the school, SMTs are guided by numerous national policies and a code of conduct to caution learners who display violent behaviour. It is their responsibility to ensure the successful implementation and enforcement of such policies. In support, Bipath (2017:66) states that SMT members need to take a leading role in ensuring that safety policies and procedures are implemented effectively. However, Netshitangani (2018:104) cautions that, although SMTs are responsible for leading the process toward violent-free schools, the responsibility does not solely lie with them, but with all role players. In support of this, Nhambura (2020:173) advises that for SMT to combat learner-on-teacher violence successfully, they must collaborate with relevant stakeholders to interact with learners at schools directly, and

possibly conduct home visits. Nonetheless, Grobler (2018:3) asserts that persisting acts of learner-on-teacher violence in schools clearly indicate that current measures are inadequate to effectively solve the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence.

Van der Vyver *et al.* (2021:13) emphasise that, although teaching and learning remain the primary function of schools, effective leadership must be enacted to attain success regarding the school's goals. Yet, the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence remains an obstacle to achieving success in schools as it negatively affects the ability to achieve good results. The National School Safety Framework (2015:4) states that school safety remains the primary prerequisite for effective teaching and learning and thus needs to be prioritised. Eradicating all kinds of violence and teacher safety concerns at schools through addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, remains school leaders' responsibility, since section 12 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996) (hereafter "the *Constitution*") stresses that everyone has the right to be protected from any form of violence.

School leaders are responsible to create a safe learning and teaching environment. In this regard, Davids and Waghid (2016:32) advocate that school leaders are expected to fulfil the surrogacy role of being a parent and a pillar of security to both teachers and learners to minimise or eradicate the prevalence of violence instigated against teachers. However, since measures in place are inadequate to deal with the scourge, Makhasane and Khanare (2018:22) suggest that school leaders must implement initiatives that would help curb school violence as failure to do so would render addressing learner-on-teacher violence impossible.

1.2. Problem statement

South African schools continue to be plagued by incompetent management and poor standards. This is evident through increased school violence that makes news headlines regularly, especially learner-on-teacher violence. As such, school violence remains a widespread social problem affecting all school stakeholders in one way or another. According to Netshitangani (2018:97), a conducive school climate that would promote effective teaching and learning is unattainable: school violence remains a national concern.

Learner-on-teacher violence disrupts effective teaching and learning. Moreover, Nhambura (2020:4) states that schools experiencing learner-on-teacher violence exhibit poor learner performance, which conflicts with the goals of the DBE. The SACE (2011:31) reports that teachers do not feel safe in their respective workplaces as learners' violent acts have eventually led to the best teachers quitting their jobs, while some do not report to their workplaces out of fear. Petso (2021:10) agrees that many teachers are resigning due to insecurities in the teaching profession, and this will have severe repercussions in the long term as illiteracy, difficulty in recruiting teachers, and the struggle to retain the best teachers, become prevalent. Moreover, Ngidi (2018:3) points out that most teachers feel isolated as they believe that the DBE, parents, and communities do not support them in curbing the spread of violence by learners directed at teachers. In addition, Woudstra *et al.* (2018:6) maintain that most teachers who are victims of school violence suffer emotional and financial trauma, and this will eventually affect the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers. In her study, Bipath (2017:66) asserts that SMTs must take a leading role in ensuring a violence-free school environment.

Ngidi (2018:7) contends that the current measures and policies seem to be failing to prevent the problem as they are only applied to post-violent acts. Similarly, Bipath (2017:66) advocates that SMT members fail to address various safety concerns due to the lack of safety workshops and school safety monitoring systems from the DBE. In support, a study conducted by Davids and Waghid (2016:37) reports that school principals were outspoken when disclosing that they were not trained to deal with violent encounters, and thus they tend to respond against perpetrators with harshness, verbal abuse, and sometimes equal violence which creates more problem. Thus, the purpose of this study is to specifically explore various practices of school leadership for tackling learner-on-teacher violence.

1.3. Theoretical framework

The study employed a two-pronged theory consisting of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) and the Invitational Leadership Theory (ILT). Albert Bandura (1991) is the father of SCLT. According to Bandura (1991:248), SCLT focuses on human behaviour by observing various contexts that expose underlying good or aggressive behaviour and

consequences of it. Moreover, Nabavi (2012:11) adds that the central point of SCLT is observing adults' and children's behavioural, developmental, and cognitive responses when faced with challenging aspects of life. Further, Nabi and Prestin (2017:2) assert that SCLT is focused on the psychological state in terms of influencing learner development, observational learning, and enactment of learnt behaviour.

Additionally, Vahedi (2020:402) states that the principles of SCLT emphasises that leaders must model positive behaviour. As such, the theory of SCLT is relevant to this study because it will assist in understanding the nature and origin of violent behavioural patterns in learners against teachers. Moreover, SCLT is relevant for this study as it is considered to positively or negatively influence leadership practices concerning how learner-on-teacher violence is addressed, in addition to contributing to understanding how secondary school leadership practices tackle learner-on-teacher violence.

William Purkey and Betty Siegel developed ILT in 1991. ILT is concerned with offering a systematic approach to the educational process and strategies for making schools more inviting (Purkey & Siegel, 2003:1). According to Purkey and Siegel (2003:1), ILT is concerned with changing the narrative of leaders who control and dominate followers to leaders who advocate connectedness, communication, and cooperation with interested stakeholders. Invitations include messages of awareness communicated to interested stakeholders, reminding them that they are essential, and such messages are distributed through policies, interpersonal actions, various programmes, and the physical environment (Venketsamy *et al.*, 2020:122). In line with the definition, Egley (2003:58) states that the primary goal of invitational leadership is to create schools in which everyone in the school is invited to various activities to experience success. This means that for school leaders to address learner-on-teacher violence, all stakeholders, including parents, learners, teachers, non-teaching staff, and community members must be invited and reminded how valuable their inputs are toward addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

ILT is relevant for this study because it emphasises the idea that invitational leaders can overcome obstacles and challenges through collaboration with all interested stakeholders. From this perspective, school leaders can be invitational by inviting all interested school

stakeholders, especially leaders who have experience in addressing the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence as they would be able to assist those who are dealing with the problem for the first time. In addition, given the impossibility of a single leader addressing learner-on-teacher violence manifestation effectively, there is a need for leaders to be invitational.

The rationale for incorporating the two theories into this study is based on the premise of two major issues: leadership practices and learner-on-teacher violence. SCLT serves as a guide in analysing, interpreting, and explaining learner-on-teacher violence. In other words, SCLT is thus necessary for this study to understand violence issues as it will be used to explain the violent behaviour of learners. However, this theory is limited as it does not assist in explaining leadership practices, hence the need for ILT as it serves as a guide in understanding and explaining leadership practices used to address the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence.

In this context, SCLT stresses that the school leadership team must understand and analyse different behaviour to detect unwanted or deviant behaviour in the early stages. Detecting and dissecting deviant behaviour in the early stages enable school leaders to utilise strategies to prevent the onset of violence at schools. Since these acts are perpetrated on school premises, ILT recommends that through various strategic leadership practices, SMTs must invite all interested stakeholders to brainstorm and implement practices that assist in managing experiences and behaviour that motivates learners to instigate violence against teachers.

1.4. Research questions

1.4.1. Primary research question

What are the leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools?

1.4.2. Secondary questions

- How does learner-on-teacher violence manifest in the selected secondary schools?

- What are the challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools?
- How can leadership practices of managing learner-on-teacher violence be described and explained?

1.5. Aim of the study

This study aims to explore the leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools.

1.5.1. Objectives of the study

- To determine the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected secondary schools,
- To describe the challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools, and
- To describe and explain leadership practices of managing learner-on-teacher violence in the selected schools.

1.6. Research design and methodology

The following section focuses on research design and methodology. The section outlines the guidelines for conducting research and explores findings about the phenomenon.

1.6.1. Research paradigm

Since the study intends to explore how learner-on-teacher violence is addressed in secondary schools, the study employed an interpretive paradigm. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2017:195), a research paradigm is a set of beliefs, agreements, and assumptions that guide human action to understand inquiries for detailed research. Rahi (2017:1) defines an interpretive paradigm as “actual knowledge acquired through deeper understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon under investigation”. The interpretive paradigm is relevant for this study as it focuses on retaining the originality and authenticity of data collected without manipulation by the researcher according to their personal views.

According to Gaudet and Robert (2018:35), “research epistemology refers to the knowledge necessary to look and make sense of the world we live in, [while] research ontology involves analytical belief concerning the nature of social reality, including what can be known, and how. In the same way, Mutekwe (2017:197) defines research epistemology as the knowledge necessary to view and try to make sense of the world we live in. The interpretive paradigm is deemed suitable for this study because it enables the researcher to understand participants’ different perspectives in acquiring social knowledge. For example, given that schooling is constructed around the epistemology of caring, school leaders are expected to demonstrate their leadership practices by addressing the problem of learner-on-teacher violence by implementing strategies that would curb it. Subsequently, from the perspective of interpretivism, Al-Ababneh (2020:82) states that ontology means that the mind is responsible for shaping and constructing realities; thus, people will always see the world and its events by interpreting it in line with their beliefs and how the world views them.

The interpretive paradigm is suitable for this study because it allows the researcher to interact with participants and enquire about their perceptions to understand the realities of learner-on-teacher violence and leadership practices of addressing the phenomenon thereof. Moreover, through the interpretive paradigm, different viewpoints were used to sufficiently represent participants’ understanding of learner-on-teacher violence and assist in identifying leadership practices currently used to address learner-on-teacher violence and help answer the research question.

1.6.2. Research approach

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019:4), qualitative research emphasises narrating, understanding, and exploring phenomena using classification and subjective measurement procedures. Further, Williamson *et al.* (2018:454) define a qualitative approach as an instrument used to investigate and analyse people’s understanding and perceptions about a particular human challenge. Tracy (2020:53) adds that through qualitative research, a researcher can attempt

to make sense of a phenomenon from various situations, such as company meetings, community festivals, or during an interview.

Through this study, the researcher seeks to understand the leadership approaches that school leaders use to solve learner-on-teacher violence. Hence, the qualitative approach is deemed appropriate for this study, because, through direct interaction, participants were “interrogated” to realise the reality of learner-on-teacher violence and how school leaders respond to manifestations. Accordingly, data collected during interviews and discussions with school leaders regarding disciplinary measures used to address learner-on-teacher violence armed the study with first-hand information on how school leadership addresses learner-on-teacher violence.

1.6.3. Research design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:40), research design outlines a plan and procedure for collecting data to investigate the research question and to attain research objectives. The study adopted a multiple-case study design. Tracy (2020:61) describes case studies as a verifiable inquiry exploring an existing phenomenon incisively. In support, Creswell and Poth (2018:203) state that a multiple case study involves exploring a contemporary issue by using participants from several research sites. For this study, the multiple case study was two secondary schools in the eastern Free State.

1.7. Data collection methods

The study used semi-structured interviews as the main technique for collecting data supplemented by document analysis. According to Leavy (2017:139), semi-structured interviews allow participants to respond to non-predetermined questions with detailed responses. Semi-structured interviews are deemed appropriate for this study since they are flexible and encourage unanticipated and authentic responses using open-ended questioning. In addition, the semi-structured interview was chosen because it is inclusive of crucial questions that uncovered leadership practices and strategies for tackling violence directed against teachers.

One-on-one interviews were used. According to Howitt (2019:61), one-on-one interviews refer to a technique where the interviewer asks one participant relevant questions and probes to elicit more information about a topic of interest. One-on-one interviews are suitable for this study as they encourage participants to share information freely without shying away or being intimidated by the presence of other participants. Moreover, one-on-one interviews allow the researcher to probe for deeper understanding and clarity into participant views and perceptions regarding learner-on-teacher violence. Because individual interviews allow for social distancing to be observed as per South African government regulations associated with the COVID-19 response, interviews were conducted face-to-face in the two selected schools. Social distancing was indeed observed.

Regarding document analysis, Tracy (2020:81) describes it as a procedure involving reviewing, evaluating, examining, and interpreting printed or electronic material to make sense of information recorded in print without the researcher's intervention. For this study, documents that were analysed include school safety policies, codes of conduct, reports on cases of violence, and classroom rules. The rationale behind document analysis lies in its ability to verify statements verbalised in interviews and investigate the "unsaid". Moreover, documents assisted the researcher in understanding the current policies that school leadership uses when responding to learner-on-teacher violence; this assisted with spotting gaps limiting school leadership from addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

1.8. Selection of participants

1.8.1. Population

Williamson *et al.* (2018:360) define a population as a set of elements that has common characteristics. To explore school leadership practices to address learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools, participants were selected from South African secondary schools in the eastern Free State. In this regard, since the central focus is on school leadership as key role-players, the population for this study is members of SMT in South African schools in the eastern Free State. To elicit data from non-SMT members, secondary school teachers in the eastern Free State also formed part of the population for this study

as their participation and responses informed me of the leadership practices that leaders utilise when addressing cases of learner-on-teacher violence.

1.8.2. Sampling

Non-probability sampling was used. According to Rahi (2017:3), non-probability sampling refers to a sampling strategy in which the probability of the selection of a unit is unknown. In addition, the study employed convenience sampling in conjunction with purposive sampling. According to Scholtz (2021:2), convenience sampling involves selecting a sample based on many factors such as availability, location, time, and available funds. Since all participants could not be available on one given date, the interviews were conducted on days and times suitable to participants.

Further, due to financial constraints, the study was conducted in schools near the researcher's domicile. As such, Ames *et al.* (2019:2) define purposive sampling as a strategy that involves locating and recruiting relevant participants with qualities that will foster the answering of the research question. For this study, the two selected schools in the eastern Free State were schools experiencing or who have experienced learner-on-teacher violence. This assisted the researcher in understanding the impact of learner-on-teacher violence. In addition, such information assisted the researcher in making sense of how school leaders respond to this phenomenon.

The case study was conducted among three teachers from the two participating schools. Two principals and three HODs were selected because they interact daily with perpetrators and victims of learner-on-teacher violence and have a role to play in combating this problem. The rationale for engaging in a multiple case study was based on the realisation that by interviewing different participants from different sites, the researcher will be able to compare differences and similarities in learner-on-teacher violence and how leadership in each school addresses the issue.

1.9. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data for the study. Howitt (2019:122) defines thematic analysis as a method that involves categorising collected data into descriptive

categories of themes. Through thematic analysis, the transcription of interview recordings is done by a professional transcriber in stages to ensure that no vital information is omitted. The transcription was done in conjunction with notes jotted down by the researcher during the interviews. The rationale behind using thematic analysis is stated by Maguire and Delahunt (2017:352) who view it as a flexible method due to its non-connectivity to one's theoretical viewpoint. Lester *et al.* (2020:98) reiterate that the process of thematic analysis can only be done by adopting the stages that include becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing those themes, defining the themes, and writing up the report.

1.10. Trustworthiness

According to Creswell and Poth (2018:338), trustworthiness involves measures to convince readers that the study can be read and reviewed and that the study's findings are authentic and can be trusted. The study adhered to the principles of trustworthiness in relation to credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Since the study used semi-structured interviews, information on the audio recorder was transcribed and sent to participants to verify all information. Moreover, to abide by the principle of honesty, data was only collected from participants willing to share information freely. Also, the strategy of peer scrutiny of the research project by both participants and academics applies.

1.11. Value of the proposed research

The scarcity of research on violence against teachers from a leadership perspective presents many obstacles for policymakers and people responsible for discipline among learners. For example, the DBE still struggles to fully comply with the obligation of protecting all stakeholders' rights and dignity in the school system as per the *Constitution*. Furthermore, most studies that have been conducted have focused on violence in schools on a general level but have not specifically connected it to how leadership deals with addressing the occurrence of learner-on-teacher violence. This study is envisaged to make a desirable contribution to readily available knowledge on school violence, especially focusing on teachers as victims.

Moreover, the study seeks to add to the existing body of knowledge in terms of processes to find innovative solutions to eradicate learner-on-teacher violence in schools. The task should not lie only with SMTs – it should include a professional psychologist, parents, and the general community members, among others. Through the findings of this study, the emphasis was to possibly provide useful information to leaders, teachers, policymakers, future researchers, and even the school itself on alternative practices that can be adopted to address learner-on-teacher violence successfully.

1.12. Ethical considerations

Before embarking on the data collection processes, ethical clearance was applied for from the University of the Free State Ethics Committee. Further, the protocol was followed by requesting permission to conduct research from the Free State DBE. Moreover, principals of the two chosen schools were informed about the research and were thereby requested to conduct research in their schools. Furthermore, approval was requested from chosen participants. The participants were informed of all details (verbally and in writing) about their voluntary role in the study. Informed consent letters were distributed to the participants for signing. All possible participants were assured of their anonymity and privacy concerning their identity and information given, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way. Confidentiality and anonymity were upheld through the use of codes/pseudonyms. All information was stored electronically on a password-secure computer only to be accessed by the researcher and the supervisor.

1.13. Limitations of the study

The main limitation of this study is that the study was only conducted in two secondary schools in the eastern Free State, and thus the findings cannot be used for generalisation in all other South African secondary schools. In addition, only five SMT members and three teachers were purposely selected, thus findings cannot be used to make generalisations about all teachers.

1.14. Layout of chapters

Chapter One

This chapter focuses on the introduction of the study, providing an orientation to the study. The chapter outlines the introduction, background, and problem statement of the study. The chapter further outlines the research questions, aims, objectives, and theoretical framework underpinning this study. The chapter also provides the research design and methodology of this study, and the definition of terms.

Chapter Two

This chapter provides a literature review on leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence. It outlines definitions and different forms of learner-on-teacher violence from literature, causes of learner-on-teacher violence, consequences of learner-on-teacher violence, and leadership initiatives for addressing learner-on-teacher violence. The chapter further examines the challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence and the two-pronged theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter Three

This chapter describes the research design and research methods. The research design and methodology are presented in detail and include inter alia the selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter Four

This chapter presents the results and analyses and interprets the results.

Chapter Five

The summary of the study, discussion of the findings, the contribution of the study, and conclusion and recommendations are presented in this chapter.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the background of the study and the provided problem statement underpinning this study. The theoretical framework, research questions, goals, and objectives were discussed. The chapter also outlined the research design and methodology. The chapter further highlighted the preliminary chapter outline. In the next chapter, a literature review will be undertaken and the theoretical framework underpinning this study will be discussed comprehensively.

2 Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This study aims to explore leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher-violence in secondary schools. Guided by the research questions, this chapter will be presented in three sections. The first section explores the literature focusing on the concept of leadership and further linking it with school leadership. The chapter will also discuss selected leadership theories deemed relevant to the study. In the second section of the chapter, the literature concerning the concept of school violence and learner-on-teacher violence will be reviewed with a focus on the nature, forms, causes, consequences, and school leadership responses to the phenomenon. The last section will focus on a discussion of the theoretical framework.

2.2. The concept of leadership and school leadership

The term leadership is a complex concept that will continue to mean different things to different people. In this regard, Northouse (2019:33) states that the definition of leadership remains one of the concepts that many studies have been developing for centuries without reaching a single universal agreement. Northouse (2019:41) further defines leadership as a trait that individuals use to influence people toward achieving a common goal. Moreover, DuBrin (2019:2) states that the concept of leadership has to do with an individual ability to stimulate confidence that will transform visions into realities and thus achieve desired organisational purpose in the process. In other words, leadership advocates a direction toward organisational success through influence.

Riggio (2018:10) argues that leadership does not only involve describing an individual characteristic; instead, it is a phenomenon that portrays different models, including the shared, strategic, and complex social dynamic, to reach a common goal. In the same way, DuBrin (2019:3) points out that leadership responsibility does not only lie with people holding formal positions; the burden should be distributed evenly among people not assigned formal leadership positions. This means the responsibility of addressing school

violence should not only lie with school leaders because they are known to hold formal positions as members of SMTs. Additionally, this theory suggests that teachers are also tasked with the responsibility of addressing the problem. Marques and Dhiman (2017:8) state that leadership involves being open-minded to learn new skills that would enable one to develop traits that improve performance towards attaining the organisational goal. Although various leadership definitions exist, they share a common theme: a dynamic, goal-driven influence process toward reaching a common goal. Therefore, this study conceptualises the concept of leadership from the perspective of influence.

Since this study seeks to explore school leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools, school leadership can therefore be conceptualised as a broader concept concerned with bridging the gap between school challenges and the remedial action process through a shared authority (Pont *et al.*,2008:18). However, Ramatseba (2019:16) asserts that in South African schools, leadership is structured to make principals the key figures. Although principals are considered crucial, they are assisted by other members of the SMT, in contrast to the apartheid era, during which principals lead and ran schools alone. According to Ramalepe (2014:2), the newly redeveloped and recommended democratic model of decentralised models in schools is the one that is inclusive of SMTs, which comprises the school principal, deputy principal, and HODs. In the same way, Marques and Dhiman (2017:18) state that the school leadership role does not only belong to the principal but encompasses other people such as deputy principals and other members of the SMT, including the School Governing Body (SGB) and all other staff members involved in leadership tasks.

I also found it necessary to include the selected theories as they are also relevant to the study in order to compare and contrast between other leadership theories used by school leaders. The selected leadership theories include transformational leadership, servant leadership, and democratic leadership theory.

2.3. Selected education leadership theories

I selected theories that I found relevant to the current study. The selected leadership theories include transformational leadership, servant leadership, and democratic leadership theory.

2.3.1. Transformational leadership

The transformational leadership theory was first developed in 1978 by James MacGregor Burns to focus on political leaders (Northouse, 2016:162). Winkler (2009:40) states that Bernard Bass later expanded this theory in 1985 to incorporate the psychological mechanism of developing a follower's personality. According to Antonakis and House (2014:1), transformation leadership theory was developed on the foundation that focused on enacting change by instilling a commitment to high standards of performance. Harrison (2018:17) defines transformational leadership as an act that involves inspiring followers to go beyond their known capabilities without limiting themselves to attain organisational objectives. Additionally, DuBrin (2016:89) states that transformational leadership is centralised around what leaders accomplish; however, the focus remains on the leaders' character and relationship with the subordinates.

Contrarily, Yadav and Agrawal (2015:35) caution that not every leader can be a transformational leader as only those with relevant characteristics, including charisma, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation, can successfully stimulate followers' creativity toward problem-solving situations. In addition, Smith (2015:20) believes that leaders successfully adopting transformational leadership are rewarded with improved employee satisfaction and performance, and their organisations tend to be more stable. Moreover, Harrison (2018:17) points out that successful transformation leadership focuses on the provision of a sense of ownership to both teachers and learners over what they do, as this is a powerful tool for motivation.

Subsequently, transformational leadership can be a crucial resource in curbing employee burnout by diminishing the negative consequences of learner-on-teacher violence and advocating a healthier workplace for teachers. Ultimately, this means that principals can enhance teachers' commitment and inspire creativity to address the prevalence of learner-

on-teacher violence through transformational leadership. In this regard, transformational principals can encourage teachers to successfully develop a quality learner–teacher relationship as this is believed to play a vital role in reducing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. In addition, transformational leadership through direct engagement with teachers, principals, and SMT members can raise the level of motivation and uprightness and thus successfully turn around the crisis mode of violence into violence-free schools as this will enable the school to accomplish its goals. Lastly, successful transformational principals would not only curb learner-on-teacher violence occurrence but would also produce happy teachers producing excellent learner performance or results.

2.3.2. Servant leadership theory

According to Lumpkin and Achen (2018:6), the servant leadership theory was developed by Greenleaf in 1977 with the simple emphasis that leaders must lead by serving. Harrison (2018:37) takes the idea further by defining a servant leadership theory as a theory emphasising the prioritisation of subordinates’ empowerment and long-term welfare to attain organisational goals. Moreover, Song (2019:3) defines servant leadership as a philosophy of life that encourages leaders to be servants before aspiring to lead. This means that principals that are regarded as servant-leaders are the ones that avoid enforcing their will on others; instead, they always assist subordinates to discover themselves, are selfless, and will do anything at all costs to ensure that subordinates are protected and empowered to defend themselves from any form of threat.

Although many studies state that servant leadership is vital for the success of schools, Davis (2017:208) argues that servant leadership is more functional in stable working environments. In support, Lumpkin and Achen (2018:7) state that, although enough literature exists to support the success factors of adopting servant leadership, not enough evidence is readily available to justify the validity as the available evidence is based on case studies of historical leaders. Nonetheless, Brière *et al.* (2019:10) warn that principals lacking servant leadership traits often create dysfunctional workplaces with unproductive subordinates. To avoid this, Schroeder (2016:9) suggests that principals must try to

personify servant leaders' characteristics but continue to demonstrate love and honour through the motivation to lead with the need to serve.

Due to heightened controversy among researchers associated with this theory, successful principals evidently must not only rely on a single leadership approach; instead, they should adopt various techniques to be used when necessary to succeed in their principalship journey. In conclusion, this theory suggests that principals and other members of the SMT must be healers of themselves and others. This is believed to be the only way leaders can enable subordinates to be involved fully in addressing learner-on-teacher violence cases, which is a process that leads to a need for leaders to be democratic.

2.3.3. Democratic leadership

According to Demirtas and Karaca (2020:314), democratic or participative leadership is among the three frameworks of leadership developed by a group of researchers led by Kurt Lewin, a psychologist in 1939. Dike and Madubueze (2019:130) define democratic leadership as a style in which leaders guide and actively participate in group tasks by acknowledging inputs from subordinates when solving various problems. In support, Kilicoglu (2018:7) asserts that by adopting a democratic approach, leaders can share decision-making authority with all school members. This means that, although leaders still have the final say, the democratic leadership style encourages leaders to facilitate participation by subordinates, especially in making essential decisions. The same view is held by Ray and Ray (2012:2), who advocate that democratic leadership is a style that also enforces the inclusivity of student leaders in addressing various issues of significant impact on students.

Nonetheless, Pinnington and Tourish (2009:28) warn that for democratic leadership to work effectively, all members must be willing to participate actively in decision-making. Since it remains clear that all leaders who wish to ensure productivity commonly result from happy subordinates, democratic leadership is therefore deemed relevant. In this regard, this study believes that in the fight to combat various behavioural problems, including teacher victimisation, school leaders need to involve all staff members, including boys, to transform gendered norms, conceptions, and attitudes. In that same view,

democratic leadership is deemed to complement this study as it is a style that emphasises group performance; in other words, the whole team's goals are not imposed only on the leaders but on the group. Therefore, in dealing with the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, school leaders must involve all staff members, including learners, in school leadership positions.

2.3.4. Distributed leadership theory

According to Grant (2017:3), the distributed leadership (DL) theory is a leadership conception birthed in 1954 by Gibb Cecil. Spillane (2005:144) states that DL is a theory centred more around leadership practices than other leadership traits. This means that DL emphasises the need for leadership practices that encourage close interaction between school leaders, followers, and various situations. Given the stance of this study, which is concerned with leadership practices, Spillane (2005:145) advocates that leadership practices involve several leaders, including those without formal education.

Grenda and Hackmann (2014:55) further assert that for schools to be classified as a school with better leaders, leadership roles must be undertaken by several leaders. In line with school situations, several people now exercise leadership roles, including the SMT, SGB, and Representative Council of Learners (RCL). From this, the understanding is that the responsibility of addressing learner-on-teacher violence is a complex task that needs to be undertaken by all relevant stakeholders, including members of the SGB and learners undertaking leadership roles. In essence, the responsibility of responding to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence lies not only with school principals.

Since DL stresses the need for shared leadership, the literature suggests that responsibilities for carrying out daily routines at schools must rest upon numerous leaders and not only the principal. Nonetheless, DL is regarded as a democratic theory and one that stands out among others for several reasons. Firstly, through DL, schools benefit from integrated expertise from various school leaders, making the obtainment of an organisation's goal easier. In support, Sol (2021:74) argues that DL is concerned with the expansion of all leadership responsibilities and roles in a democratic manner. From this, DL is dealing with correcting the imbalances of old systems where leadership responsibilities at schools were

handled by a single person. Given the complexity of dealing with school violence and several hiccups identified in addressing the issue, expanded leadership might assist with the whole process of curbing school violence, from monitoring all activities to dealing with perpetrators of violence accordingly.

Since schools are classified as a very demanding work environment, Chatwani (2018:19) states that successful adoption and implementation of the DL style will allow for better decision-making through a consultative contribution pattern. Moreover, DL also caters to individuals not holding formal positions, and literature suggests that for leadership responsibilities to be distributed effectively, all involved individuals need to be capacitated with skills through ongoing professional development and training. Nonetheless, Sol (2021:76) warns that even if schools use the DL style, which allows decisions from leaders without formal qualifications, only those with formal leadership positions can make final decisions. On the contrary, this study notes that dealing with learner-on-teacher violence is a complex issue since no specific policies guide addressing its prevalence. The assumption is that with the implementation of a shared leadership style, individuals will be able to generate ideas that can curb the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence.

The following section will generally review the concept of violence and school violence. Later, the focus will only be on learner-on-teacher violence from both global and local perspectives.

2.4. The nature of violence and school violence

The study's primary purpose is to explore leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. To promptly answer the research question and understand the phenomenon, it remains pivotal to review the literature as is it the only tool that serves as evidence that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is a widespread challenge affecting schools globally.

The phenomenon of violence remains a widespread social issue affecting schools globally (Mahome, 2019:91). Uhnnoo (2019:153) asserts that violence is a highly socialised issue that diverse communities are battling, with the majority of violence committed by young

men. Given the fatal mass violence of gun-related violence in the USA, its government was forced to introduce the Second Amendment to only allow people classified as responsible and law-abiding citizens to own guns (Kerr, 2018:95). Titchiner (2019:6) warns that violence is not just a social issue affecting households but has also spread to schools with youngsters in the lead. In other words, violence does not only manifest in schools as it is a practice and an influence seen in various communities from streets, homes, and all places used by human beings. Nonetheless, the phenomenon has also been a travelling discourse that has transferred into schools.

Although a study conducted by Hughes (2019:24) points out that formal education is perceived as a force for good, Zembylas (2018:577) contrarily argues that the model of education alienates learners, and thus schools are now considered as the harbour where children learn various forms of violence. In addition, Terzoudi (2020:4) warns that the school environment can also cause or even worsen the prevalence of violence due to the more significant influence of the community when it comes to violence. Moreover, McMahon *et al.* (2020:2) assert that school violence is linked to various variables such as inadequate policies, resources, and poor leadership. Subsequently, Abernathy (2019:201) highlights that the prevalence of school violence, irrespective of who the victims are, hampers the overall core activity of the school, and negatively impacts community trust in schools. Ultimately, although schooling is perceived as good for society, exploring the perception from a different perspective shows that school settings can unintentionally create and accelerate social norms for violence instead of preventing it.

There is a clear need to unpack the link between violence and school violence by distinguishing between the concepts by definition in examining the concept of violence. Although violence is a concept that has been widely researched, its complexity has made it difficult for scholars to reach a consensus on a single official definition due to individual people choosing to define this social issue based on their own experiences. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2002:4) defines violence as a deliberate use of physical strength by one person against another that may result in physical and psychological harm. On the other hand, Hammarén (2019:19) contextualises violence as actions or words spoken with the intention to cause pain or injure people with the intent to damage

something. In other words, in as much as the scope of violence is broad, the various definitions have a commonality that emphasises the idea of people misusing their power to force or prevent others from acting methodically.

Terzoudi (2020:4) states that school violence is centralised around general characteristics of violence; the only difference is that violent behaviour primarily occurs on school premises. Nonetheless, Hammarén (2019:17) points out that the traditional definition of school violence has always been centred around teachers abusing learners or allowing violence between learners. However, this definition was biased as it only depicted teachers as sole perpetrators and thus disqualified them from any possibility of being victims of school violence. In support, Terzoudi (2020:4) argues that from the perspective of school violence, it is now common for learners to be perpetrators of violence.

Although there's no single definition of school violence, Cuellar (2016:1) defines school violence as unwanted behaviour on school premises that result in physical or emotional harm to either learners or school personnel. In addition, Titchiner (2019:8) states that the concept of school violence is generally described as aggressive acts taking place on the school premises. Moreover, the National School Safety Framework (2016:5) defines school violence as an occurrence that happens not only on the school premises but all acts of violence that occur when learners travel from and to school or during school-related activities. Moreover, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2017:8) defines school violence as a broad term inclusive of physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and bullying that causes the intended victim pain. Additionally, Ogba and Igu (2019:67) take the idea further by defining school violence as a catastrophe that causes emotional, psychological, and physical trauma to victims (learners and teachers), resulting in frustration and stigmatisation. The above confirms that if a person was a victim of school violence, there should be an expectation that a stigma will arise around that person; for example, a victim may be labelled as weak.

2.4.1. The nature of learner-on-teacher violence

Generally, teachers are faced with several workplace challenges, including violence. In support of this statement, DeCordova *et al.* (2019:20) assert that schools remain

categorised in the high-risk group, a playground for violence, making teachers prone to becoming victims or perpetrators of school violence. Although several types of violence are found in schools, including learner-on-learner violence, teacher-on-learner violence, and learner-on-teacher violence, a study conducted by Turanovic and Siennick (2022:23) revealed that all these forms of violence share one common trait or consequence, which is to instil fear and depression in victims. Given that the focus of this study is on violence perpetrated against teachers by learners, it is crucial to note that school violence does not only pose a threat to learners but that teachers are also affected. In other words, both learners and teachers are exposed to school violence in one way or another.

When contemplating learner-on-teacher violence, Terzoudi (2020:5) asserts that the prevalence of victimisation and the forms of violence experienced by teachers tend to differ from school to school. For example, Kgosimore (2018:206) states that some teachers experience direct violence while others become indirect victims of violence. Moon *et al.* (2019:273) found that younger female educators are usually more prone to be victims of school violence due to inadequate experience as compared with more experienced co-workers. Arguably, unlike healthcare workers, where males are at high risk of workplace violence, Netshitangani (2019:25) found that more female teachers are likely to become victims of violence in school settings than men. In other words, in school settings, women tend to be more prone to be victims of violence than men as they are sometimes perceived to be not strong enough to defend themselves.

To broaden the understanding of learner-on-teacher violence, the phenomenon will be explored from both global and local perspectives.

The phenomenon of school violence is presenting itself differently globally, encompassing a variety of behaviour from theft, shootings, and sexual harassment (Lunneblad, 2019:1). Lunneblad and Johansson (2021:75) further attest that physical violence is at the top of Sweden's commonly reported school violence cases. Furthermore, Hammarén (2019:17) contends that the most common form of violence found in Swedish schools is learner-on-learner violence and learner-on-teacher violence. Fox and Fridel (2018:15) further highlight that the complexity of gang-related gun violence in the USA even forced the US

Congress to pass legislation that bans any person in possession of guns from entering school premises. Moreover, a study conducted by Longobardi *et al.* (2019:606) revealed that in the last three years, offensive and obscene remarks were among the most common forms of violence perpetrated against teachers in US schools. Nonetheless, Lunneblad (2019:2) asserts that most learners in Denmark are drug addicts, and some go to school drunk; therefore, victimising teachers became the order of the day every day and created a hostile environment. In the same way, Igu and Ogba (2019:31) assert that Nigeria is also among the violence-prone countries due to Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen targeting school children, forcing many out of schools and leading teachers to resign out of fear for their lives. A study conducted in Italy by DeCordova *et al.* (2019:4) revealed that harassment, property offences, and physical attacks are among the commonly known forms of violence toward teachers perpetrated by students.

School violence is a spreading social issue globally, and South Africa is also affected. Ngidi (2018:196) ascertains that in South Africa, most schools struggling with school violence are either located in extremely violent communities or have enrolled learners from these communities. The prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence jeopardises the health and safety of teachers and thus violates the school code of conduct and is in conflict with the *Constitution*. The SACE (2016:12) states that in South Africa, the issue of school violence is still not given much attention; hence victims are reluctant to report such cases out of fear for their lives and the mishandling of cases. However, this does not mean the problem does not exist, because a study conducted by Nhambura (2020:201) revealed that various schools encounter multiple forms of violence, with gang-related attacks being the most common.

Grobler (2018:130) found that cultural norms are also considered to be part of the problem as most perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence come from initiation schools. Moreover, Dube and Hlalele (2018:78) state that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence in South African schools is also propelled by social injustice resulting from teachers' unfair treatment, discrimination against, and degradation of learners. Similarly, Mahome (2019:97) found that in South African schools, the most frequent form of violence

experienced by teachers is verbal attacks, and he believes that the frequent occurrence thereof is due to it being normalised as a way of life even at home.

The above is an indication that learner-on-teacher violence occurs differently from one country to another. Moreover, learner-on-teacher violence is not the only type of violence that school leaders are battling with. However, it should be noted with great concern that the manifestation of any form of school violence can yield similar consequences, thus making it challenging to classify forms of school violence. Subsequently, there will always be a direct correlation between the three types of school violence. In other words, the existence of one kind of violence will contribute to the development of others.

2.4.2. Forms of violence experienced by teachers

According to Terzoudi (2020:17), there are two broad categories of violence perpetrated against teachers: direct (such as verbal and physical violence) and indirect violence (such as slandering, property damage, and spreading rumours). UNESCO (2017:8) believes that in schools, violence presents itself widely as physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and bullying. In the same way, Netshitangani (2019:24) asserts that boys are more physical in cases of learner-on-teacher violence while girls are more vocal. Kistnasamy (2019:216) mentioned that although teachers' primary concern is a lack of protection from physical violence, the primary type of abuse they face is verbal abuse by girls. Moreover, Cummings (2020:60) found that teachers experience various forms of violence, but physical violence is the most disturbing. Although teachers face several types of violence, this study will focus only on four forms of learner-on-teacher violence as various scholars found these to be the most persistent and dominating and they are thus deemed to be relevant for the study.

2.4.2.1 Harassment

Studies conducted on school violence have revealed that harassment is classified as the most frequently occurring form of learner-on-teacher violence. McMahon *et al.* (2014:754) defines harassment as unwanted behaviour that may include verbal threats, intimidation, sexual harassment, and obscene remarks and gestures. A study conducted by Lowe *et al.* (2020:193) revealed that the most reported form of violence experienced by teachers in

Australia was harassment, with 63% of teachers reporting that they had explicitly experienced victimisation from learners.

Although Lowe *et al.* (2020:189) report that direct victimisation is on the rise in Australia, they further assert that personal property offences also form part of the harassment that teachers are facing. Hoctor (2019:38) defines teachers' personal property offences as theft or damage to a teacher's private property, such as vehicle damage by learners. A study conducted by Hoctor (2019:36) further reports that everyone, including both teachers and learners, has suffered several personal property offences in South African schools. This is an indication that although countries are struggling with addressing learner-on-teacher violence in schools, the prevalence thereof differs from one country to another. The scope of harassment against teachers is not only limited to victimisation but inclusive of sexual harassment. Mabuza (2020:31) asserts that sexual harassment does not only involve physical gestures as it is easily confused, but its scope also includes verbal harassment (jokes of a sexual nature, hints, references to and questions about the body, enquiries about sex life, and insults of a sexual nature) as well as visual harassment (the display of explicit pictures).

Although teachers do not experience all forms of sexual harassment, especially rape, from learners, Bondestam and Lundqvist (2020:340) advocate that teachers experience multiple forms of sexual harassment perpetrated by learners. Mabuza (2020:31) warns that the complexity of sexual harassment perpetrated against teachers is too broad, and thus teachers are sexually harassed not only by learners but by teachers of the opposite sex as well. Even though it is evident that sexual harassment has a negative impact on teachers, the issue of teachers being harassed by learners continues to be overlooked as the standard view is that learners are considered victims. Nonetheless, existing studies have revealed that the issue of sexual harassment does not target a specific gender, as both female and male teachers are prone to be victims.

2.4.2.2 Physical aggression

Physical aggression remains a form of violence perpetrated against teachers. Although an ongoing debate exists among scholars regarding the definition of physical aggression,

Ersan (2019:2) defines physical aggression as an offensive behaviour that includes physical harm, such as throwing objects at teachers, brandishing weapons, and physical attacks by learners. Melanda *et al.* (2018:2) add that physical aggression can also be a form of violence in which the use of power with an object is used to injure or cause pain and potentially leads to death. Although physical aggression seldom occurs in schools, research conducted by Nhambura (2020:134) reveals that in South African schools, physical aggression is mainly committed by overaged learners finding it challenging to be disciplined like their peers. This alone is a clear indication that the policy that allows overaged learners in schools is problematic.

Lowe *et al.* (2020:189) highlight that on Australian school premises, physical aggression occurs less compared with other forms of teacher-directed violence. On the contrary, Riley (2018:20) reports that 35% of teachers in Australia had experienced both punches and assault with weapons. Although an ongoing debate exists among researchers regarding the causes of physical aggression, it is believed to be promoted by various factors, including alcohol use and gang affiliation (Ersan, 2019:6). Nunan (2018:4) warns that teachers are sometimes not all innocent, as physical aggression sometimes occurs in retaliation to provocation from teachers, which may include the use of corporal punishment to instil discipline. In other words, physical aggression is linked to emotional reactions as a result of various factors that cause anger. From this, it can be argued that teachers also trigger learner-on-teacher violence in the form of physical aggression by provoking learners through various forms of ill-treatment.

2.4.2.3 Bullying

Özkılıç and Kartal (2012:3435) define bullying as persistent unwanted and aggressive behaviour that incorporates abuse, swearing, mocking, gossiping, and damaging victims' personal property to shame victims. Although anyone in the school context can be a victim of bullying, teacher-targeted bullying remains on the rise, and is often given minimal attention. Moreover, Steyn and Singh (2018:2) caution that bullying is different from other forms of learner-on-teacher violence because its prevalence is repeated and persistent over a period. Nonetheless, this is a clear indication that the prevalence of bullying against

teachers is often undermined despite its ability to disempower teachers as professionals and human beings and leave them with mental health issues. This further contravenes teachers' constitutional right to work in a safe workplace.

To ascertain the prevalence of learner-on-teacher bullying, a study conducted by Billett *et al.* (2019) reported that 70% of teachers have experienced bullying. Since bullying against teachers manifests within the school context where teachers are working, it is also regarded as workplace bullying. Similar to verbal harassment, verbal bullying remains the main form of learner-on-teacher bullying. A study undertaken by Woudstra *et al.* (2018:6) reveals that most teachers who are victims of learner-on-teacher bullying reported that they suffered all forms of bullying during class times. This is a clear indication that no one is immune to victimisation when it comes to bullying, regardless of social status or the person's position.

2.4.2.4 Verbal aggression

According to Beckmann (2019:1), verbal aggression can be defined as a behaviour that involves threatening others through various means, such as sending threatening letters or notes, spreading gossip, and name-calling. Although parents are also part of the problem, as they are sometimes perpetrators of verbal victimisation, the literature suggests that learners perpetrate most cases of verbal violence at school against teachers. Furthermore, Beckmann (2019:1) warns that children exposed to parental verbal aggression in their childhood are more prone to be perpetrators of verbal aggression against teachers at school. This is noted to be consistent with the theory of social cognitive learning theory. In support of this, Aloia (2017:230) asserts that a direct link exists between verbal attacks in childhood and adult outcomes. This further supports the idea that children that were exposed to verbal aggression in their childhood often become perpetrators of verbal aggression when they reach adulthood.

Poling *et al.* (2019:9) further advocate that although verbal aggression is indirect in its nature as opposed to physical aggression, it can be as damaging to victims as physical violence. This means that verbal aggression is undermined in terms of danger, but its prevalence is dangerous and inhumane as it can embarrass teachers and make them seem unprofessional. Given the negative impact of verbal aggression against teachers, a great

need exists for all teachers to be protected from becoming victims of verbal aggression by learners at all costs, and only school leaders can do this.

2.4.3. Causes of learner-on-teacher violence

Although the occurrence of learner-on-teacher violence can never be justified, Malihah *et al.* (2017:402) contend that learner-on-teacher violence does not occur without underlying causes. In support of this, Dube and Hlalele (2018:74) believe that the leading underlying cause of school violence generally, which tends to be ignored, is the nature of the school relationship between teachers and learners. Consistent with Dube and Hlalele, Malihah *et al.* (2017:402) state that poor communication between teachers and learners often creates negative school relations. In this regard, the understanding is that if teachers and learners have a good relationship, then the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence can be mitigated. However, this implies that if the existing relationship between teachers and learners is unhealthy, more cases of learner-on-teacher can be expected. Although there are various causes of the phenomenon, this study will focus only on four causes of learner-on-teacher violence as they are believed to be increasing and thus relevant to the study.

2.4.3.1 Peer-related factors

According to Kaczowski *et al.* (2020:1), peer-related factors include all the specific characteristics or influences of peers that can increase or decrease the likelihood of learners being violent. Liu *et al.* (2021:2) assert that peer factors have both negative and positive effects on children as these relationships involve peer attachments and emotional connection. In other words, a negative peer relationship can aggravate learners to be more violent, whilst a positive peer relationship can yield non-violent behaviour. Terzoudi (2020:19) further contends that schools with a learner culture that normalises aggressive behaviour contribute to facilitating peer pressure of victimising teachers. For this study, negative peer-related factors are believed to play a significant role in learner-on-teacher violence.

Studies on the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence have confirmed that schools that threaten teachers' safety have enrolled learners using drugs, belonging to gangs, and

carrying weapons on the school premises. A recent study by Lunneblad (2019:2) revealed that there is a direct correlation between incidents of learner-on-teacher violence and learners consuming alcohol and drugs. A study conducted by Saladino *et al.* (2021:5) reported that most of the learner-on-teacher violence-related reported cases resulted from exposure to violence and illicit substance use in learners. To discipline or work with intoxicated learners remains a challenge for teachers as this is perceived to influence learners to become aggressive and violent.

Kistnasamy (2019:34) asserts that in South Africa, learners belonging to gangs are taught violence and are even rewarded for perpetrating several violent activities. This thus makes them feel powerful. In support of this, Gxubane and Mguzulwa (2019:268) advocate that all gang members always live in fear perceiving that everyone wants to attack or even kill them since they are always in conflict with other gangs and in need of protection from fellow gang members. This means all learners belonging to gangs are often behaving the same due to upholding the gang code of ensuring that they do not appear weak to their opponents, and in this regard, teachers unfairly suffer in the process.

The literature further argues that the geographical area of the school also plays a major role in gang enrolment by learners. In this regard, Du Plessis (2019:2) contends that schools located in the suburbs tend to suffer higher levels of offensive behaviour than their counterparts in rural communities. However, Gxubane and Mguzulwa (2019:268) assert that the majority of South African learners staying in rural areas, where they walk to school, tend to be more prone to joining gangs. Although gang-related violence is not a problem confined to rural schools only, schools situated in rural settlements are more prone to dealing with an increased rate of learner-on-teacher violence. This is then a clear indication that schools in communities where learners belong to gangs are prone to experience a high rate of learner-on-teacher violence.

2.4.3.2 **School factors**

Although schools are supposed to be environmentally safe for both learners and teachers, Malihah *et al.* (2017:402) assert that one simple mistake, such as the breakdown of relations between learners and teachers, can escalate learner-on-teacher violence.

Moreover, reviewing the literature concerning school climate suggested that the quality of the school climate is directly linked to the prevention and escalation of learner-on-teacher violence. Varela *et al.* (2020:4) believe that depending on the quality of the school climate, a positive environment can be a potent factor for moderating the effects of a violent environment, whilst a hostile school climate can yield more cases of learner-on-teacher violence. Notably, teachers sometimes also contribute to escalating cases of learner-on-teacher violence. Grobler (2018:28) contends that teachers lacking professionalism and ethics also perpetuate learner-on-teacher violence using unwanted comments, bullying, and abusing learners verbally.

Dube and Hlalele (2018:78) assert that the observed escalation of learner-on-teacher violence is also caused by social injustices, including unfair treatment of learners, unfair distribution of resources, and discriminatory statements by teachers. Subsequently, even though the *South African Schools Act* 84 of 1996 (hereafter “SASA”) stipulates that corporal punishment is forbidden in South African schools, some teachers continue its implementation. Mahlangu *et al.* (2021:3) warn that corporal punishment also contributes to the escalation of learner-on-teacher violence as some learners respond negatively by attacking teachers. Moreover, Ngubane (2018:182) advocates that teachers still applying corporal punishment aggravate learners to be more violent, and this makes them look unprofessional.

Apart from corporal punishment, Bushman *et al.* (2018:333) contend that social exclusion, isolation, aggression displayed by teachers, and a lack of support from teachers also contribute to the development of resentment, making learners more prone to perpetrating violence toward teachers. Nonetheless, Singo (2017:41) warns that schools with a weak teacher-learner bond will lead to an escalation of the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. A study conducted by Malihah *et al.* (2017:402) revealed that another underlying factor that contributes to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is teachers that fail to properly conduct themselves in line with the code of ethics by consistently displaying a closed attitude toward learners. This is a factor that can also send a negative message home that will lead parents to distrust the school. In that regard, the issue of poor communication between schools and homes arises, and controlling the prevalence of learner-on-teacher

violence will be a challenge if parents are not willing to play a significant role. For example, some schools use the old traditional method of parent involvement in addressing misconduct, such as using a letter as a source of communication with parents. However, this method cannot successfully address various discipline issues as the expectation is that the letters would not reach the people they are intended to reach, who are the parents in this instance, or parents might be unwilling to intervene.

2.4.3.4 **Family and community factors**

Although no comprehensive theory for parenting exists, there is, however, a perception that family love and support assist significantly in reducing aggressive behaviour. This implies that children raised in families that use violent ways to resolve issues are likely to imitate the example and might be perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence. Moreover, Kistnasamy (2019:37) warns that most South African township communities face multiple risk factors, such as high poverty rates, lack of employment opportunities, and a pro-violence culture, all of which are associated with increased violence in school learners.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2020:11) believes that children who lack financial support and parental love and are exposed to violence tend to misbehave. This means negative family factors are linked with various cases of school violence. Just as the theory of social learning cognitive strongly suggests that learners' perpetration of violence can be connected with their upbringing, Castro-Sánchez *et al.* (2019:2) further confirm that children who have been exposed to any form of violence and trauma in the early stages of their lives are likely to become perpetrators of any form of violence.

Singo (2017:41) found that poor parent-child relationship is also a significant concern as any exposure linked to increased levels of household stress can lead to a prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. For instance, in different communities, corporal punishment is normal; however, this is also considered a factor that aggravates children to be violent and instigates them to attack teachers. In conclusion, good parenting skills, irrespective of community perceptions, play a vital role in protecting children from violent behaviour, whilst bad parenting can contribute to an increased rate of learner violence.

2.4.3.4 Individual factors

Individual factors can be defined as all personal traits relating to behavioural problems in children, such as positive beliefs about the use of violence to address issues. Moreover, Røysamb *et al.* (2018:2) assert that individual factors include personal characteristics influenced by both genetic and psychological characteristics. The factors that perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence struggle with include irritability, the need to dominate through a respectable social reputation, and attitude toward given rules. Castro-Sánchez *et al.* (2019:2) warn that learners with low levels of self-confidence exhibit a high likelihood of either perpetrating school violence or victimising others.

Moreover, Liu *et al.* (2021:2) assert that individual factors are also linked to the learners' ability to cope with an emotional state because a negative emotional state will result in lower levels of self-control, which in turn manifests as an increased rate of violent behaviour. Perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence are generally characterised by high levels of impulsivity and the urge to constantly control others. These learners want to stand out and be praised for their ill behaviour. They are, furthermore, struggling with emotional problems linked to the aggression they experienced. In support of this, Nhambura (2020:43) warn that perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence often suffer from psychological disorders.

Although the literature suggests that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is due to learners failing to comply with school rules, this study adds that individual factors are mainly influenced or aggravated by both family and community factors. This means that if parents can discipline their children from the adolescent stage, it will be easier to identify ill behaviour as soon as possible and deal with it at its inception stage, as failure to do so means schools will continuously be facing a problem of misbehaving learners.

2.4.4. Consequences of learner-on-teacher violence

The prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is a silent national crisis presenting various safety issues to both direct and indirect victims and negatively impacting the school environment. Moreover, learner-on-teacher violence is a primary factor that denies

teachers their constitutional right to work in a safe workplace. Therefore, learner-on-teacher violence is seen as a disruption of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasises that the fundamental need of all human beings is centered around feeling safe (Maslow, 1987:97).

Since the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence has both physical and psychological impacts, including disability and long-term mental ill-health, Varela *et al.* (2020:3) state that emotional and professional effects are the two main categories associated with consequences of victimisation at school. Moreover, a study conducted by Berlanda *et al.* (2019:3) found that other severe negative implications of learner-on-teacher violence include poor teachers' well-being, resulting in poor learner performance due to lost teaching and learning time. Below are some of the consequences that learner-on-teacher victims face, which are relevant to this study.

2.4.4.1 Poor social life

The primary expectation from teachers is delivery of quality education and skills with an attitude that would enhance learners' interest and mould them to become functional members of society. However, the presence of various forms of victimisation can cripple teachers in carrying out their duties properly. Ferrara *et al.* (2019:3) state that teachers who are victims of any form of victimisation by learners tend to develop reactive attachment disorder from a trauma-related condition of maltreatment. A study conducted by Pingley (2017:11) revealed that violence that victims experience and witness at work impact them, and their family is also affected by the trauma as some even find it difficult to interact with family members.

In support of this, Terzoudi (2020:18) found that what truly makes the trauma worse is dealing with family members who are also impacted by their emotional trauma and worry about the victim's well-being. Turanovic and Siennick (2022:33) report that victims of learner-on-teacher violence also suffer from low self-esteem, which becomes another contributing factor that renders socialisation difficult for victims. This is an indication that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence does not only affect direct victims; instead,

everyone close to victims tends to also suffer in the process. This also means that colleagues and learners who interact daily with the teacher are also impacted.

2.4.4.2 Fear of violence

The prevalence of any form of violence remains a pandemic that denies victims their constitutional right to work in safe spaces. Moreover, it disrupts Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasises that the fundamental need of all human beings is centered around feeling safe (Maslow, 1987:97).

Reid *et al.* (2020:620) contend that teachers victimised by learners are faced with the challenge of fear and insecurity. This implies that victimisation affects the person who is the target of such violence and the people in their proximity.

Curiel and Bishop (2018:2) state that victims of violence often respond negatively due to fear for their personal safety and the risk of being victimised again in the future. Janssen *et al.* (2020:102) point out that victims of violence reported feeling uneasy when coming into contact with or even seeing perpetrators of violence. Although Curiel and Bishop (2018:3) warn that struggling with fear after victimisation is unavoidable, the reality is that upon realising that victims are suffering from anxiety, perpetrators of victimisation tend to continue with victimisation.

2.4.4.3 Stress and health problems

Irrespective of the presence of violence in schools, multiple studies on teaching as a profession revealed that teaching is one of the most stressful occupations. According to Kgosimore (2018:58), stress is a context that can be defined as a term used for various factors that pressure people. Existing studies suggest a direct link between stress and violence, meaning the prevalence of violence can cause stress, and stress can also make people violent. Moreover, Kgosimore (2018:58) further contends that severe exposure to stress and violence in the workplace eventually wears down employees. and their health is compromised in the process.

Berlanda *et al.* (2019:1) take the idea further by revealing that victims of learner-on-teacher violence suffer from sleep deprivation and decreased energy levels whilst some are

struggling with feelings of guilt and blaming themselves for being victimised. In addition, Cummings (2020:60) asserts that teachers impacted by learner-on-teacher violence are also struggling with emotional and mental instability. This further confirms that exposure to or witnessing learner-on-teacher violence indeed hampers the victims' health.

In addition, a study conducted by Velotti *et al.* (2018:2) indicate that teachers who are victims of learner-on-teacher violence often experience anxiety when being close to perpetrators of violence out of fear that they can violate them again or people around them. Moreover, findings emerged from the transcriptions of a study conducted by Terzoudi (2020:11) revealed that most participants, regardless of which form of violence they experienced, present similar symptoms of psychological distress. In this aspect, it is evident that both victims and teachers who have witnessed violence are more prone to experiencing long-term adverse effects of trauma, including psychological strain.

2.4.4.4 Burnout

Due to the complexity of consequences of learner-on-teacher violence, burnout is also among the typical effects of teacher victimisation. Olivier *et al.* (2021:201) define burnout as a mental state that makes a victim suffer from low self-esteem and negative emotional consequences. Varela *et al.* (2010:5) add that a hostile school climate resulting from the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence provides multiple contexts that often lead to burnout. Maran and Begotti (2020:3) state that exhaustion and disengagement are different dimensions for measuring burnout. In support of this, Olivier *et al.* (2021:197) argue that both direct victims and witnesses of victimisation face a significant risk of emotional exhaustion.

A study conducted by Cummings (2020:14) emphasises that learner-on-teacher violence causes physical and emotional problems and leads to personal detachment by teachers. Bjereld *et al.* (2021:259) advocate that teacher victimisation at school also negatively impacts victims' identity as they are often labelled as weak. Moreover, Mabuza (2020:33) states that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence affects teachers psychologically to the point that they lose self-esteem and even contemplate suicide. This sketches a clear

picture that repeated exposure to victimisation is likely to create increased psychological issues leading to more chronic exhaustion.

2.4.4.5 Teachers' intention to leave the profession

Among the various adverse effects of the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, stripping teachers of their professionalism remains a battle. For example, studies suggest that victims of learner-on-teacher violence struggle with the ability to concentrate and some even miss classes due to trauma caused by the prevalence. Kelly *et al.* (2019:90) contend that teachers who are victims of any victimisation are also linked with the likelihood of leaving the profession. Furthermore, Mofokeng (2015:74) adds that since any ill behaviour in school has to be addressed by enforcing its code of conduct, a lack of support from school leaders in enforcing such rules increases teachers' vulnerability to violence, leading them to quit the profession. Berlanda *et al.* (2019:3) point out that teachers who are victims of learner-on-teacher violence also develop a negative attitude that discourages and reduces their motivation and commitment to the profession.

From the above literature, any form of violence against teachers bears significant consequences. The consequences not only impact the victims themselves but also disrupts their personal lives, social lives, and the school climate as a whole. This means the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence does not only negatively impact teachers' well-being but also affects the quality of their teaching. This is an indication of the crisis violence brings. Thus, this study suggests that school violence requires immediate intervention. To overcome this scourge, school leadership must take the lead.

2.5. Leadership initiatives to address learner-on-teacher violence

Although the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence remains a silent pandemic, no empirical research has been conducted to understand various leadership practices for addressing and responding to incidents of learner-on-teacher violence. Moreover, little is known about the extent of learner-on-teacher violence reported to school officials. However, the literature on criminal victimisation or violence suggests that violent crimes, especially serious violent crimes, are generally reported to the police. Cummings (2020:60)

concludes that addressing learner-on-teacher violence demands various multi-strategic approaches regulated and implemented by school administrators. However, literature on administrators' responses to learner-on-teacher violence is not available.

Given the reality that obtaining a restraining order and a longer incarceration sentence for perpetrators are the only courses of action that will satisfy victims of violence, Moon *et al.* (2019:268) argue that school intervention through any disciplinary punishment that can be imposed on perpetrators leaves victimised teachers dissatisfied. In South African schools, school leaders are guided by various safety policies to intervene in multiple behavioural challenges. According to Makota and Leoschut (2016:21), safety policies are documents used to guide all stakeholders on how to behave to be safe from incidents of bullying, harassment, violence, and drug use within the school premises. In other words, safety policies are legal documents used to guide the school's daily running, including ensuring that schools become safer spaces where learning takes place effectively without hiccups.

Although school policies address various safety issues, Varela *et al.* (2020:12) found that when dealing with teacher victimisation, physical measures alone are not sufficient to reduce the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence; their study encourages and supports teacher bonding programs as part of the response. Several studies revealed that the complete eradication of learner-on-teacher violence is challenging. Nonetheless, this study will outline three strategies that leaders use to respond to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence as they are deemed relevant for this study.

2.5.1. Utilising discipline policy

In line with the provision for discipline and punishment in schools as stipulated in sections 8 and 9 of SASA, discipline policy is a policy formulated explicitly by the school disciplinary committee to address various misconduct through the introduction of appropriate disciplinary procedures and consequences thereof. This policy strongly suggests utilising two approaches for dealing with learner-on-teacher violence: retributive justice and restorative justice. Reyneke (2011:134) defines retributive justice as an approach concerned with ensuring that perpetrators of various misconducts are punished

for their offences. In other words, this is an approach that supports punishment through incarceration and several sanctions that can be used.

On the other hand, Murhula and Tolla (2020:99) define restorative justice as an approach concerned with ensuring that perpetrators of misconduct are held accountable for all the harm they cause victims. This means restorative justice is a phenomenon that mainly focuses on introducing various mediation strategies, such as securing an apology from perpetrators of misconduct, including learner-on-teacher violence. In other words, restorative justice is only concerned with presenting justice for victims of learner-on-teacher violence after a crime has been committed. Lodi *et al.* (2021:2) assert that both restorative and retributive approaches aim to control learners' behaviour; however, the restorative only;

acts by questioning the assumptions of the judicial system without denying them, emphasising harm reparation as a means of restoring justice and relational balance rather than punishing incorrect behaviour.

In this sense, the restorative approach can aggravate disciplinary problems by contradicting approaches concerned with promoting the whole school's well-being.

The USA is among the countries using the restorative approach. Fronius *et al.* (2019:27) assert that there has been a drastic decline in ill-discipline in classrooms where teachers have successfully employed the approach. On the other hand, Reyneke and Pretorius (2017:113) state that the majority of South African schools have adopted the retributive perspective as an approach to dealing with discipline problems. Nonetheless, similar to Lodi *et al.* (2021:2), researchers assert that both punitive measures do not address the problem; instead, they increase learners' aggressive and unacceptable behaviour even more. This is believed to be caused by disparities that arise between the approach and best-interests-of-the-child principle as stipulated in sections 28(2) and (3) of the *Constitution*, .

In the same regard, despite the different approaches to dealing with learner-on-teacher violence, it is noted that achieving violence-free schools remains a significant challenge because all these strategies can only be used post violent acts. Moon *et al.* (2019:278) warn that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher incidents remains a critical policy issue as school

leaders' response to investigating the prevalence is inadequate. In other words, school administrators responsible for investigating the reported cases of learner-on-teacher violence fail to undertake the duty effectively.

2.5.2. Code of conduct for learners and school safety policy

The school's code of conduct is a document formulated by school principals, SMTs, and SGBs to outline laws and rules regarding how learners must behave as well as the disciplinary sanction for each transgression (SACE, 2021:32). In other words, a code of conduct is a policy document developed in line with the country's *Constitution* to promote school safety. Bray (2005:137) asserts that the code of conduct governs the implementation of learners' suspension and expulsion, especially in extreme cases. This is done to give a clear message to other learners that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. Given the hope that the code of conduct sanctions of suspending learners brings towards addressing learner-on-teacher violence, a study conducted by Hartnack (2017:10) revealed that the education district often pressures school leaders to return learners to school on the basis that learning is a priority as stipulated in section 7 of the *Constitution*. Although it is empirical for all learners to know what corrective action is when they have broken the code of conduct, recent literature contends that addressing various school issues, including learner-on-teacher violence, can only be used post violent acts.

Due to the scourge of learner-on-teacher violence in Australia, Arnold *et al.* (2021:15) state that policymakers released a national strategy that is inclusive of five areas of priority centralised around supporting the mitigation and prevention of ill behaviour towards teachers. Several strategies are used to address indiscipline in Kenyan schools, including formed committees and commissions guided by school rules and regulations; however, Waithaka (2017:21) warns that the issue of aggressive behaviour against teachers still remains a problem. From this, it can be concluded that school leaders from different countries utilise various school policies to address different challenges, including learner-on-teacher violence. However, no policy to date can apparently stop the occurrence of learner-on-teacher violence.

2.5.3. School-based targeted violence-intervention programs

The SACE is clear that the principal and SMT must lead the process of protecting teachers from various violations in schools. However, Meyer and Chetty (2017:131) suggest that applying a holistic approach through a transformation of young people can assist significantly in dealing with the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. Xaba (2014:1586) defines a holistic approach as a strategy focusing on establishing professional relationships with various networks providing emotional support.

This means the introduction of multiple ways to help learners realise their potential, such as supporting them to navigate through different challenges, creating opportunities for them, and mentoring them, which could minimise if not eradicate learner-on-teacher violence. Moreover, the SACE (2011:34) recommends sending learners with aggressive behaviour to counselling services and involving faith-based organisations, such as churches and social services. Furthermore, Jagodzinski (2019:194) contends that in an attempt to deal with learner-on-teacher violence, school leaders must establish a culture that fosters respect for all and provides learners with mental health services.

On the other hand, the Department of Education (DOE) also has a role to play in the battle to address learner-on-teacher violence. Davids and Waghid (2016:32) state that another intervention strategy for addressing this issue includes linking schools to the South African Police Services (SAPS). In assisting schools to deal with the learner-on-teacher violence crisis, police conduct random checks to search learners for drugs and weapons at school and sometimes visit schools to give face-to-face warning presentations to learners about the dangers and implications of violence and crime. Moreover, the Life Orientation (LO) curriculum is designed to include various aspects of self-discipline and other essential tools for living a healthy lifestyle. In complementing LO efforts, the DOE also supports school leaders by providing multiple sporting equipment to assist with promoting learners joining various sporting codes in schools.

Since the problem of learner-on-teacher violence remains a global challenge, Brants and Ariel (2020:3) advocate that schools in Israel have adopted the state-sponsorship intervention program as a school leaders' tool for addressing learners who are at risk of

committing violence against either teachers or peers. Due to US school violence being inclusive of shootings, Green (2020:1) states that US school leaders have deployed police officials on school premises and further installed metal detectors to detect any weapons that learners carry to school and use to injure both teachers and their peers. Like all other strategies used to address learner-on-teacher violence, different violence-intervention programs still prove to be the only remedies that can be used post violent acts.

2.5.4. Strategic involvement of parents

It is generally expected of teachers to play the role of surrogate parent to all learners, yet learner-on-teacher violence is a significant concern that can also be addressed through parental involvement. According to Ntekane (2018:1), parental involvement can be defined as ways parents can use to participate in their children's education through support and involvement in activities that enable schools to know the type of learners they are dealing with. This reiterates that both parents and schools share information that helps both understand learners from a school and home perspective through this strategy. Given that other learners with behavioural problems result from various medical issues, involving parents will thus assist with relevant information that will enable school leaders to address the issue with the utmost sensitivity. Subsequently, Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017:141) advocate that involving parents in handling various issues at school is directly linked with the outcome of positive behaviour in learners.

According to school safety programmes, parents should be informed about their children's bad behaviour through formal letters. Through parental involvement, parents will be encouraged to take full responsibility for disciplining their children. However, Masha (2017:28) suggests that school leaders must also ensure that parents are capacitated by introducing developmental programmes whereby all parents will be trained on maintaining discipline at home, which might later affect discipline at school. This study adds that to effectively address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, both school leaders and parents must work together to set limits and decide how to manage children to attain the desired behaviour.

2.6. Challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence

Given the significance of addressing learner-on-teacher violence, the literature suggests that school leaders' coping strategies to prevent or reduce the problem are limited. De Cordova *et al.* (2020:6) warn that despite several preparation training programs offered to teachers, few guidelines or directives exist that can be used to address learner-on-teacher violence. The literature suggests that addressing learner-on-teacher violence remains a problem due to various shortcomings resulting from insufficient policies, lack of parental involvement, insufficient departmental support, and lack of support from other stakeholders.

2.6.1. Inadequate policies

As per the SACE (2021:32), schools utilise various policies to promote discipline and high ethical standards. In support of this, Manamela (2021:54) asserts that concerning learner discipline, responsible personnel use the learner code of conduct and the school safety policy. In the same way, Mohlala (2021:48) found that among the identified policy challenges, the main loophole was the implementation due to various factors, including limited powers such as powers to expel learners. In agreement, Hanslo (2020:38) highlighted that in terms of implementing sanctions as per the learner code of conduct, learners get away with many misconducts since there are no proper structures in place, and thus the seriousness or follow-up of these policies is not adhered to. In this light, there is a gap between policy and implementation that is not assisting but hindering attempts to deal with learner-on-teacher violence.

On the other hand, Mncube (2018:25) found that principals become dictators in disciplinary procedures as per policies and sometimes make unilateral decisions. In other words, in some instances, principals are the ones who weaken the system when addressing learner-on-teacher violence. This is consistent with Makhasane and Khanare (2018:22), who outlines that leaders with positions, including principals, are struggling to establish and preserve a climate where teachers would encounter less learner-on-teacher violence. In the same light, Mkandla (2021:11) shares that in other instances, the same policies contradict each other, hence the identified loopholes in addressing various learner behavioural

problems at school remain a challenge. For example, the learner code of conduct and safety policies have sanctions that include expelling learners; however, this is a contravention of *The Children's Act* 38 of 2005, which addresses issues relating to children's right to care, including safeguarding them from any prejudice, exploitation, moral, physical, and other physical risks. This is consistent with findings by Segalo and Rambuda (2018:3), who articulate that responsible people are not sure how to discipline learners due to human rights principles outlined by the *Constitution*, SASA, and the *South African Council of Educators' Act* 31 of 2000. Another known factor linked to complicating leadership's ability to address learner-on-teacher violence is outdated policies. This is confirmed by Hanslo (2020:84), who reports that in some schools policies are not reviewed as expected due to various reasons.

2.6.2. Lack of parental involvement

Studies have suggested that addressing learner-on-teacher violence cannot only be done at school as parents are believed to have the power to make a significant change in addressing this problem. This is supported by Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017:141), who advocate that involving parents in handling various issues at school is directly linked with the outcome of positive behaviour of learners. In the same way, Seoka (2019:52) believes that teachers are struggling with learners who instigate violence against them due to a lack of parental discipline at home. Moreover, according to SASA, parents are required to support the school by keeping an eye on their children's behaviour. In other words, parents are entrusted with developing their children's morals.

However, Segalo and Rambuda (2018:5) state that parents are deliberately absconding from their responsibilities regarding disciplining their children. Zwane (2021:206) shared the same sentiments that lack of parental involvement was portrayed as uncaring because educators believe that wealthy parents rubs salt to their wounds as they disrespect and treat them as lower class. In agreement, Josiah *et al.* (2018:36) reported that when disciplinary measures are implemented against their children, some parents have a track record of threatening school leaders, particularly those in positions of authority in the community.

This means that parents with influence make it difficult for leaders to implement disciplinary measures against learners who instigate violence against teachers.

On the other hand, Sitoyi (2020:73) unveils that parents do not guide their children; they do not want to intervene. Instead, they leave everything to teachers. This means that parents' resistance to supporting schools is believed to contribute to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. Knowing that their parents will defend them can directly encourage learners to disrespect teachers. This is confirmed by Nhambura (2020:141), who indicated that instead of supporting schools, parents are defensive and always side with their children. Manamela (2021:55) also shares the same sentiment that in instances where disciplinary measures are implemented, parents question the process and claim they were unaware of such measures. This indicates that parents who do not fulfil their role of disciplining their children and supporting teachers are contributing to the problem.

2.6.3. Insufficient departmental support

The creation of policies and regulations that guide the formation of disciplinary procedures in schools remains the primary responsibility of the DBE. However, Manamela (2021:55) asserts that there frequently appears to be a breakdown in communication between the DBE and schools and insufficient preparation of school leadership for implementing policies. Manamela (2021:55) further advocates that school leaders fail to enforce disciplinary policies due to inadequate training in school leadership. This indicates that the communication breakdown between schools and the DBE is one of the reasons why implementing policies still presents several gaps.

On the other hand, Biyela (2018:48) states that although the DBE, in partnership with the Crime and Prevention Institute and Human Research Council, provides statistics on issues related to school safety and security, these organisations never address the problems directly. Mohlala (2021:48) is of the view that the DBE must make provision for trained security personnel to minimise the incidents of teachers being victimised by learners; however, this is not possible as schools are under-resourced. Furthermore, Zwane (2021:239) states that the general mindset of learners becomes compromised if they learn without extra mural activities, but schools lack adequate sports facilities, and the DBE is

slow to respond to these needs. This means learner-on-teacher violence is inevitable in schools where sports are not supported.

2.6.4. Lack of support from other stakeholders

According to Manamela (2021:53), school leaders need to collaborate with educators, support staff, the school community, SMTs, and SGBs through the development of connections and networks to deal with various issues at school. This means that all relevant stakeholders, including educators, support staff, the school community, SMTs, and SGB need to play a role to address learner-on-teacher violence. To maintain law and order, which may lead to minimising the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, mutual participation of all relevant stakeholders and the school must occur. However, Obadire and Sinthumele (2021:4) caution that society and media have normalised acts of violence, making instigation of violence against teachers by learners inevitable.

On the other hand, Manamela (2021:55) reports that in the process of addressing disciplinary problems, some stakeholders start questioning the approaches without approaching school leaders, instead complaining through the media. Other than media influence, political interference is also seen as a challenge. Josiah *et al.* (2018:36) advocate that sometimes principals fail to use appropriate disciplinary measures because politicians use their influence and intimidate principals. This is further confirmed by Aman *et al.* (2020:15), who demonstrated that school leaders fail to discipline learners because they are scared that parents will take them to court. In this light, Josiah *et al.* (2018:36) advocate that the rule of law costs school principals their respect and honour when cases are decided in favour of learners and their parents, thus making it more challenging to address the ill behaviour of learners.

2.7. Theoretical framework

To gain clarity on leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools, this study adopted a two-pronged theory consisting of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) and the Invitational Leadership Theory (ILT). Because this study is concerned with the observational learning process as a cause of aggressive

behaviour, SCLT is reviewed. Moreover, ILT is also examined from the perspective of leadership as an influence, given the importance of understanding leadership practices in addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

2.7.1. Social cognitive learning theory

SCLT is a theory concerned with the explanation of aggressive behaviour through the observational learning process. SCLT is a theory that seeks to bring about an understanding of human behaviour as a continuous reciprocal interaction (Bandura, 1977:vii). SCLT suggests that people learn not only by being supervised but also by observing others. This reiterates that aggressive behaviour results from what children observe and learn from external stimuli and internal cognitive factors in their social environment. This study argues that learners do not necessarily learn only aggressive behaviour; learners can also learn how to be good community members from their role models. This explains why this study adopted this theory as it emphasises the role of influence from models that can lead to learners either perpetrating or assisting in curbing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence.

Castro-Sánchez *et al.* (2019:2) assert that children who are victims or who have witnessed any violent act do not only suffer immediately as they internalise the experience and, in the process, some learn and practice being violent. Igu and Ogba (2019:30) affirm that children that have been raised in violence-infested environments tend to be more violent. Ceka and Murati (2016:61) contend that children raised in loving and positive homes are often equipped with traits that guide and enable them to be emotionally intelligent. Although the idea is not scientifically proven, this means the chance of competent emotional learners being perpetrators of any form of victimisation is minimal. Bandura also highlights that the process of modelling does not occur at once but builds up in four different phases, as outlined below.

Attentional phase. According to Bandura (1977:23), this is an inception stage where learners are paying attention to the features of modelled behaviour. In other words, during this phase, children pay attention to various forms of a model that perpetuate multiple forms of violence. Bandura (1977:24) warns that media is a powerful medium that influences

children, and as all its messages are illustrated, children easily pay attention and learn. Additionally, Johnson (2019:138) points out that this theory argues that children exposed to violent media such as violent films tend to be susceptible to violence.

The behaviour could be learnt from various media outlets, such as social media (including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp messages), various television dramas, films, and series, and internet pages portraying the prevalence of violence. Moreover, children raised in violent homes and communities are also paying attention to violent acts at this stage. In the same regard, this study notes that at this stage, children do not only pay attention to negative models as expected but they pay attention to models they specifically connect with. Learners pay attention to teachers, school leaders, and peer counterparts. This means if one stakeholder perpetrates any form of violence in the presence of these learners, this would be an environment that will allow learners to learn violent behaviour.

Retention phase. Given that the mind is a powerful tool, Bandura (1977:25) states that children cannot be influenced by behaviour they do not recall. Bandura (1989:24) defines a retention process as a phase of converting observed or learnt information into memory. This implies that individual learners cannot be influenced by the behaviour of their models only through observation; instead, they observe, keep information observed in their memory, and later symbolise the acts acquired from their models. In support, Harnie *et al.*,(2017:3) assert that in the retention phase, observing models relies on two systems of internal representation, namely imaginal coding and verbal coding. This means that for memory to perform what it has learnt successfully, information observed must be transformed into both image and verbal symbol. This study notes that only if the above process has been perfectly followed, learners can successfully violate and victimise their targeted victims.

Reproduction phase. During this phase, children practice or translate what they have observed from their models into an appropriate course of action. This further implies that learners want to ensure that they personify their model's observed violent behaviour. Harnie *et al.* (2017:4) contend that learners who want to enhance their learnt behaviour from models would ensure that they deliberately perpetrate violent acts against teachers as

this will enable them to facilitate the learning process. This implies that at this stage, perpetrators of violent acts seek feedback to ensure that they master perpetrating behaviour learnt from models. Furthermore, this indicates that perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence can only receive the feedback that, they have mastered what they have learnt if they see teachers suffer the effects of violence.

Motivational phase. This phase is concerned with determining the success of behaviour learnt from models. As stipulated by Bandura (1989:24), the stage emphasises the idea that learners are often motivated to perpetrate violent acts because of the similar success stories of others. Moreover, Harnie *et al.* (2017:5) argue that even if models' behaviour can be exciting, as long as there is no individual motivation, booster, or any incentive, it will remain a challenge for observers to practice what they have learnt. In other words, perpetrators of various acts only pursue them if they are going to benefit therefrom. In support, Bektas *et al.*(2010:1145) contend that learners can also be discouraged and refrain from engaging in or pursuing violent acts by seeing adverse consequences of the perpetration of unwanted behaviour. Ultimately, this means that from learnt observed behaviour, learners will probably follow what will satisfy them and sanction what they do not believe in. In pursuing violent acts against teachers, these perpetrators have some motivation and choose to perpetuate these acts because they find them self-satisfying.

In the context of this study, SCLT was deemed to be relevant as it emphasises the potential of influence by various stakeholders that can yield either positive or negative outcomes in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. Given recent studies that suggest that several factors are linked to making learners aggressive, Cox-Wingo and Poirier (2019:123) argue that a direct link exists between mental health and violence. This means that if the violent behaviour is not identified and addressed at its inception stage, these children can develop other behavioural disorder problems such as self-harming, isolation, or acts and forms of anti-social-behaviour.

This study found SCLT relevant because Bandura outlines through this theory, those who learn from observing others do not need external reinforcers. This approach strongly suggests that various models, including parents, teachers, and school leaders, must ensure

that learners are exposed to good models that encourage good behaviour as this will assist significantly in curbing learner-on-teacher violence. Likewise, this study upholds that in terms of cognition, not every learner exposed to violence will emulate violent behaviour; if these learners are taught to think that the violent behaviour is inappropriate, they will not pursue violence.

2.7.2. Invitational leadership theory

ILT was developed in 1991 by William Purkey and Betty Siegel as a theory of practice concerned with offering a systematic approach to the educational process and strategies for making schools more inviting (Purkey & Siegel, 2003:1). According to Purkey and Siegel (2003:1), ILT is concerned with changing the narrative of leaders who control and dominate followers to leaders who advocate connectedness, communication, and cooperation with interested stakeholders. Invitations include messages of awareness communicated to interested stakeholders, reminding them that they are essential. Such messages are distributed through policies, interpersonal actions, various programmes, and the physical environment (Venketsamy *et al.*, 2020:122). In line with the definition, Egley (2003:58) states that the primary goal of invitational leadership is to create schools in which everyone in the school is invited to various activities to experience success. Thus, for school leaders to address learner-on-teacher violence, all stakeholders including parents, learners, teachers, non-teaching staff, and community members must be invited and reminded how valuable they are.

According to Cobb (2014:14), one of the crucial fundamental needs of all human beings is to feel safe socially, physically, and emotionally. From the perspective of this study, feeling safe must go hand-in-hand with preventing and addressing learner-on-teacher violence. In other words, teachers must feel safe to be emotionally and psychologically ready to teach learners. However, the responsibility of ensuring that schools are safe lies with school leadership. ILT advocates that the overall success of the goal lies with the principal's ability to invite other stakeholders to actively contribute to the development and implementation of measures to address learner-on-teacher violence (Anderson, 2019:48). ILT is founded

on five fundamental characteristics of invitational leaders: optimism, respect, trust, intentionality, and care. Novak (2002:70) defines these characteristics as:

Optimism: Refers to a leader's ability to recognise and understand that the potential of human beings is unexplored and that a positive mindset and belief in others increase the likelihood of good things happening. According to Smart (2019:26), invitational leaders must acknowledge that people have different skills and ideas that could be useful in addressing various challenges and thus create an environment that enables people to realise their strengths. In this regard, school leaders should believe that people's ideas and contributions can assist in addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

Respect: Refers to the idea that people must be treated with the care that makes them feel valuable (Younis, 2017:30). This means a school leader must give all interested stakeholders a chance to take ownership of their part in the relationship. From this perspective, school leaders can show their trust by giving teachers, parents, and learners a sense of value, as being valued would make insisting on contributing to addressing learner-on-teacher violence come naturally.

Trust: According to Younis (2017:30), trust refers to the ability to possess confidence in others through acknowledging the interdependence of others through possessing confidence in abilities and responsibilities. From the lens of trust, Amanchukwu *et al.* (2015:12) contend that school leaders need to know how to develop and sustain trust between them and interested stakeholders. In this regard, leaders must lead with integrity and thus be competent in their jobs. To use invitation leadership theory successfully, school leaders must be skilled in knowledge practices and policies for addressing learner-on-teacher violence. In other words, other stakeholders can only be invited once leaders have identified areas that need collaboration with other stakeholders.

Intention: Is a deliberate decision to act in a specific manner to achieve and carry out a predetermined goal (Novak, 2002:70). School leaders who use ILT should ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of the organisation's intention. In this light, school leaders must ensure that teachers, learners, and parents are aware that they want to eradicate

learner-on-teacher violence as this would make their contribution work in accordance with that goal.

Care: Is the ability to possess total openness to others' ideas by being polite and listening to the interests and meaning expressed by others (Novak, 2002:70). In addition, Yamini and Mahdian (2018:10) state that through care, leaders must demonstrate their concern for others through sharing empathy and interest in what they can contribute with the intention to assist them to discover their potential. This means that through this element, the emphasis is on the leader's ability to listen to different views from interested stakeholders that may be utilised in addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

In addition to the assumptions mentioned above, Purkey and Novak (2015:4) suggest that schools can be invitational by focusing on five factors that contribute to success or failure: places, policies, programs, processes, and people. Schat (2021:2) advocates that the tenets of ILT emphasise that being inviting is a continuous and deliberate endeavour. Similarly, Cankaya (2019:3) asserts that the five Ps are used to intentionally invite others to create an environment whereby all those summoned develop socially, spiritually, and intellectually.

People: According to Purkey and Novak (2015:4), to create successful and safe environments, people are essential assets. Brion (2021:5) states that the strength of relationships between school staff members is the most effective predictor of school progress. This would lead to an environment in which everyone feels that they belong. This is because when all interested stakeholders are invited to participate in developing safety measures in school, this will give them a sense of ownership and belonging. To ensure commitment by all interested stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and learners, Durna (2018:21) states that school leaders need to show courtesy by appreciating their work. In that regard, school leaders need to be tolerant and value people's contributions and willingness to assist with addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

Place: The school's physical setting considerably impacts how safe and successful schools are; thus, Durna (2018:78) advocates that school leaders must create an appropriate physical environment for all concerned. In addition, Anderson (2019:47) cautions that place is the most visible factor within school climate and thus effective leaders can either

promote it to be warm and exciting or make it sterile and empty. In other words, school leaders must ensure that there are facilities such as offices and board rooms that can be used as meeting points to brainstorm with all interested stakeholders regarding addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

Policies: According to Cankaya (2019:3), formal written policies, including discipline and school procedures, must be used to cascade a solid message to all stakeholders concerned about how things should be done on the school premises. This reiterates that all stakeholders interested must be capacitated, and thus policies must always be used to address various challenges, including learner-on-teacher violence. Okonofua *et al.* (2020:3) caution that all policies for dealing with school discipline must be fair and not biased. After the adoption of these policies, school leaders must make sure that these policies become working documents. All interested stakeholders must be carried along and be capacitated with understanding and implementing policies that are used to address learner-on-teacher violence.

Programmes: Brion (2021:5) asserts that through ILT, leaders must look for programmes that can distract learners from their intended objectives. In the same way, Cankaya (2019:3) highlights that school leaders must incorporate family and social environment activities into school programmes to make schools more socially appealing. In that regard, invitational leaders must enhance the commitment of interested stakeholders by designing programs that combat societal challenges at large instead of focusing on the few already known ones. In the same light, school leaders must develop programmes such as peer mediating and conflict resolution teams as these can assist with teaching learners skills for dealing with conflict situations. These programmes must also be extended to also develop other interested stakeholders with the same skills for dealing with conflict.

Processes: According to Venketsamy *et al.* (2020:119), processes are a transparent way of including people, places, policies, and programs in schools. Through this element, the emphasis is on leadership's ability to make school processes more appealing by enforcing collaboration with external organisations (Cankaya, 2019:3). In addition, Ekeke and Telu (2017:145) state that the processes must cover all practices and strategies that promote

sustained and ongoing family involvement. In other words, efficient processes must foster communication between the school, family, external organisations, and learners. Moreover, one of the efforts that school leaders can adopt as far as processes are involved is to have regular meetings with RCL members, as these meetings can unveil issues that lead to the learner being violent and instigating violence against teachers from the learners' perspective. In the same way, these meetings can also be held with other interested stakeholders as they can help raise awareness to address learner-on-teacher violence.

This theory is relevant to this study because it emphasises cultivating a democratic environment that includes and engages all school stakeholders, including teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, and community members involved in implementing policies and other measures for the school's smooth running. Moreover, ILT is relevant because studies revealed that the responsibility of developing and sustaining a positive and safe school climate does not only lie with school leaders; teachers, learners, and parents are equally responsible. Because communities are different and thus challenges for each are also different, ILT advocates that the contribution of community members remains an integral component of building a safe school climate.

This study adopted a two-pronged theory. Firstly, the study used SCLT to explain learner-on-teacher violence. However, this theory was only limited to understanding one issue, which is learners' behaviour, while the study is based on the premise of two major issues. The need arose for a theory that would assist in understanding, analysing, and interpreting the second issue, which is leadership practices. Through SCLT the study aimed to investigate the different influences models have on learners, motivating or discouraging them from perpetrating violence against teachers. On the other hand, ILT was used to help scrutinise leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence. Furthermore, the approach assisted with describing relevant participants that will help answer the research question. The two theories further complement each other, because SCLT stresses the importance of modelling good behaviour as a strategy that can assist in reducing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. On the other hand, considering that the battle of dealing with violence is overwhelming, through ILT school leaders invite all key role players and advocate the importance of positive modelling that should also be performed

at home, which might help substantially in reducing the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence.

Among the tenets of ILT, people, processes, policies, and programs directly impact SCLT; thus, the expectation is that school leaders must carry along all interested stakeholders in the development of policies to address learner-on-teacher violence. Developing such policies obliges all involved stakeholders to understand the causes of learner-on-teacher violence as it remains a challenge to address an issue not clearly understood. In this light, school leaders can share best practices whilst also learning good practices from parents that can assist in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. As SCLT emphasises that children are influenced by things happening around them, through ILT, leaders can thus advocate connectedness, communication, and cooperation with interested stakeholders and develop programmes that can mitigate and address learner-on-teacher violence. Moreover, through ILT, programmes can be extended to developing sessions that would equip other interested stakeholders with various skills that would enable them to deal with various social issues such as dealing with conflict.

The two theories further complement each other because to develop processes that will address learner-on-teacher violence, SMTs and all invited stakeholders should work together in determining and exploring underlying factors contributing to learners perpetrating violence against teachers as the behaviour is also linked to factors surrounding them at home, school, and other platforms or spaces they spend time in, such as social media. From this lens, all stakeholders can contribute to addressing learner-on-teacher violence by ensuring that learners are always protected from things that may expose them to violence at home or school. In other words, the process of formulating practices to address learner-on-teacher violence must include all interested stakeholders, and they must be allowed to share their views. Once a consensus has been reached, the SMT and all involved stakeholders must ensure they understand and analyse different behaviours to detect unwanted or deviant behaviour in the early stage, as noticing and dissecting deviant behaviour in the early stages would enable school leaders to utilise strategies to prevent the onset of violence at schools.

2.8. Summary

This study aimed at exploring leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. The chapter reviewed other selected leadership theories that were also deemed relevant to the study. Given the complex nature of violence, the study examined the nature of violence and school violence from both local and global perspectives. Several causes and various forms of learner-on-teacher violence were noted, and a review was undertaken. Because it is the responsibility of school leadership to address learner-on-teacher violence, the leadership response to dealing with the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence was also reviewed. Lastly, an investigation of the theoretical framework underpinning this study was conducted. The next chapter will focus on data analysis and interpretation.

3 Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

3.1. Introduction

This study aimed to explore leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. The literature review furnished the study with an overview of learner-on-teacher violence, its forms, causes, and consequences thereof. Moreover, the overview provided comprehensive information concerning leadership practices and their roles in mitigating the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. As safety is a problem in many South African schools, this illustrates that learner-on-teacher violence is a serious challenge in secondary schools (Hochfeld *et al.*, 2011:1).

This chapter will explain and justify the research paradigm, approach, and design relevant to the study. Furthermore, data collection instruments, including interviews and documents, are also discussed in this chapter. Moreover, this chapter will explain the sampling strategy used to select the targeted schools and the relevant participants. Thereafter, the chapter will describe how data will be analysed and discuss the issue of trustworthiness. Lastly, ethical issues will also be discussed.

3.2. Research paradigm

According to Khatri (2020:1435), a research paradigm is a philosophy that outlines people's way of thinking, informed by a set of beliefs, agreements, and assumptions thus guiding human action to understand inquiries for detailed research. In the same regard, Rahi (2017:1) asserts that the research paradigm contains a collection of researchers' shared beliefs and agreements about how they view the world, understand its problems, and pursue research. As this study intended to explore how learner-on-teacher violence is addressed in secondary schools, the study employed an interpretive paradigm. Rahi (2017:1) defines an interpretive paradigm as actual knowledge acquired through a deeper understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon under investigation. Merriam and Grenier (2019:35) state that the primary goal of the interpretive paradigm is centralised

around interpreting and uncovering the constructed meaning of how people make sense of their lives.

Since a paradigm is informed by philosophical assumptions which includes ontology and epistemology, Mutekwe (2017:197), defines a research epistemology as the knowledge necessary to view and try to make sense of the world we live in. Furthermore, Ejnavarzala (2019:94) states that epistemology is concerned with what knowledge is and how knowledge is justified. Similarly, Muller (2018:2) advocates that through constructivist epistemology, reality is regarded as subjective. Given that schooling is constructed around the epistemology of caring, learner-on-teacher violence clearly hinders schools from achieving their goals. Therefore, from the epistemology assumption, knowledge was produced by exploring and understanding the reality of learner-on-teacher violence from participants' interpretations of the phenomenon. Thus, in the process, meanings were socially constructed by participants.

Walach (2020:2) defines ontology as a concept concerned with understanding the nature of reality. In addition, Takahashi (2019:104) states that ontology demonstrates one's worldview, definition of reality, understanding of nature, and perception of social reality. The ontological belief associated with the interpretive paradigm considers the world and its reality as socially constructed and thus constantly changing. From this perspective, the reality is that people are actors in the knowledge construction process. Data collected from participants reflect experiences and multiple realities of victims of learner-on-teacher violence from individual perspectives, given the assumption that reality is socially constructed. In line with SCLT, the interpretive paradigm asserts that knowledge of the social world often influences human behaviour. Subsequently, from the perspective of interpretivism, ontology means that the mind is responsible for shaping and constructing realities; thus, people will always see the world and its events by interpreting it in line with their beliefs and how the world views them.

Because this study was concerned with retaining the originality and authenticity of data without manipulation by and infiltration with the researcher's self-views, multiple realities were found and not a single reality through interaction with participants. Moreover, the

interpretive paradigm was relevant to the study as it enabled the researcher to construct and reproduce reality and knowledge concerning leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence through communicating and interacting with participants. Therefore, collected data revealed different viewpoints that sufficiently represented participants' understanding of learner-on-teacher violence and assisted in identifying leadership practices currently used to address learner-on-teacher violence and helped in answering the research question.

3.3. Research approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is an approach that allows researchers to know and understand people's perceptions through their experiences at a particular point in time and in one specific context, according to Merriam and Grenier (2019:4). Tracy (2020:53) contends that through qualitative research, a researcher can make sense of a phenomenon from various situations such as company meetings, community festivals, or during an interview. In this regard, researchers can immerse themselves in a scene and attempt to make sense thereof through qualitative research. This can only be achieved successfully if the researcher is actively engaging with participants and can identify issues from the perceptions of participants. The collected data furnished this study with different perceptions and viewpoints on leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

Creswell and Creswell (2018:41) advocate that data generated from qualitative research is based on the meanings participants assign to their real-life situations and experiences about a specific issue of interest. In this study, the emphasis is that knowledge is not discovered but constructed from a qualitative perspective. I visited schools, teachers, and principals who experience learner-on-teacher violence in their schools to understand leadership challenges encountered in curbing the phenomenon and strategies that can be adopted to curb the problem. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study because multiple realities emerged through direct interaction with participants.

3.4. Research design

Research design outlines a plan and procedure for collecting data to investigate the research question and attain research objectives, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018:40). This study adopted a multiple case study design. Tracy (2020:61) describes case studies as a verifiable inquiry exploring an existing phenomenon incisively. However, Batta (2018:74) argues that the definition is limiting as single and multiple cases may exist in a single study depending on the aim of the research, which is the case in this study. Creswell and Poth (2018:203) state that a multiple case study involves exploring a contemporary issue by using participants from several research sites. For this study, the multiple case study was conducted in two secondary schools in the eastern Free State.

Multiple case studies were deemed relevant for this study as they allowed the study to use various data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis, which assisted in shedding light on leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. Diop and Liu (2020:12) advocate that it is impossible to manipulate participants in case studies as the study or interviews take place in the participants' space of comfort or environment. This indicates that it becomes easy for researchers to understand and interpret participants' perceptions as responding to questions comes naturally due to being comfortable. Multiple case studies also enabled the researcher to explore both similarities and differences between cases. Due to this, the multiple case study design was believed to be an approach that forced the study to successfully comply with enhancing data trustworthiness and thus producing rich information on the phenomenon. Using multiple case studies, data were collected and analysed for each case.

3.5. Data collection methods

This study adopted interviews as the main method of collecting data supplemented by document analysis. Interviews were explicitly used to deeply investigate participants' perceptions and views on leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence. All data collected from interviews were audio-recorded, and all documents availed were scanned and saved in order to comply with the principle of confidentiality.

3.5.1. Semi-structured interviews: one-on-one interviews

Tracy (2020:78) defines interviews as two-way conversations guided by question and answer or an interchange of views between two people to gather subjective information about a particular topic or experience. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019:2) state that several forms of interviews exist, including open-ended, structured, and semi-structured interviews. This study only focused on semi-structured interviews because Leavy (2017:139) contends that semi-structured interviews allow participants to respond to non-predetermined questions with detailed responses. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019:5) advocate that pre-determined questions are essential as they assist the researcher in setting up a line of enquiry that makes reordering and probing possible, which will lead to more comprehensive data.

Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for this study since they are flexible and encourage unanticipated and authentic responses using open-ended questioning. According to Züll (2016:1), open-ended questions are those in which participants do not have pre-determined answers; instead, they help enable participants to use their own words when responding to questions. Thus, open-ended questions were used as they allowed participants to voice their experiences and knowledge on how leadership practices are used to address learner-on-teacher violence. Denzin and Lincoln (2018:579) assert that semi-structured interviews are flexible in their ability to allow an interviewer an opportunity to follow up with interviewees on any unclear issues, enabling the extraction of rich data. In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (2018:579) profess that in semi-structured interviews, interviewers become active participants that need to control and direct interviews towards only discussing issues relevant to the study. The semi-structured interview remained relevant in this regard because it included crucial open-ended questions wherein all answers contributed significantly toward exploring leadership strategies to address violence directed against teachers by stimulating discussion and not dictating it.

Moreover, Roulston (2014:3), suggests that through one-on-one interviews, the interviewer can ask one participant relevant questions and probe to elicit more information about a topic of interest. In line with a suggestion by Mulvihill and Swaminathan (2022:20), one-

on-one interviews were adopted due to their ability to enable the direction of the interview to be led by the participants. However, Krouwel *et al.*(2019:2) warn that one-on-one interviews tend to present several challenges, such as cases whereby some interviewees avoid more profound questions and some include irrelevant responses for the study. Nonetheless, to address known challenges associated with one-on-one interviews, the researcher gave each participant a copy of the interview schedule in advance and offered to clarify any questions that participants did not understand.

One-on-one interviews were suitable for this study as they encouraged participants to share information freely without shying away or being intimidated by the presence of other participants. One-on-one interviews further allowed the researcher to probe for deeper understanding and clarity into participants' views and perceptions regarding learner-on-teacher violence. Interviews took place face-to-face, an appointment was first scheduled to secure a convenient time for the interviewees. To establish rapport, the researcher ensured that participants became relaxed and started the session with ice breaker questions, putting participants more at ease. All interviews were recorded and saved to a password-protected iCloud account. Recording was done after receiving consent from the interviewees.

3.5.2. Document analysis

This study further adopted document analysis to supplement interviews. Tracy (2020:81) states that document analysis includes all human-made objects, such as hard copies of documents that provide information about the research phenomenon. Furthermore, Dalglish *et al.* (2020:1424) define document analysis as a process of reviewing documents used to provide context and thus supplement other data collection methods. To expand the knowledge acquired through interviews, the researcher had to supplement the data by reviewing documents used to address learner-on-teacher violence. The two principals from two research sites were requested to provide the learner codes of conduct, classroom rules, school safety policies, reports on violence cases, minutes of disciplinary hearings, and records of learners' misconduct from the disciplinary committee.

These documents were used to garner a better understanding of leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. The rationale behind using

document analysis was its ability to verify statements verbalised in interviews and to investigate the “unsaid”. Moreover, Principals of participant schools the availed documents without a hassle and these documents assisted the researcher in understanding the current policies that school leadership uses when responding to learner-on-teacher violence, thus spotting gaps that exist in the policies that limit school leadership in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. In addition, document analysis assisted the researcher with an insight into how school leadership utilises policies to address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence by providing a longitudinal analysis of how learner-on-teacher has evolved over the years and how it has been addressed. Nonetheless, the most significant advantage of using documents was that documents could be accessed anytime when the researcher needed them, especially for further clarity purposes.

3.6. Population and selection of participants

3.6.1. Population

According to Casteel and Bridier (2021:343), population refers to a set of entities or a group of individuals that the study seeks to understand as they are individuals of interest to the researcher. In addition, Williamson *et al.* (2018:360) define population as a set of elements that has common characteristics. In this study, all South African secondary schools in the eastern Free State became the population from which the researcher had to sample participants. As indicated in the section for research design, the study was conducted in the eastern Free State.

3.6.2. Selection of participants

Because this is a qualitative study, non-probability sampling was used to select participants. In addition, the study employed convenience sampling in conjunction with purposive sampling. According to Tracy (2020:83), convenience sampling or opportunistic sampling refers to a sample guided by various factors that ensures that it becomes easy and relatively inexpensive to access participants. Because it remained a challenge for all participants to be available on one given date, the interviews were only conducted on days

and times suitable to participants. Further, due to financial constraints, the study was conducted in schools near the researcher's domicile.

Tracy (2020:85) defines purposive sampling as a strategy that involves locating and recruiting relevant participants with qualities that will foster the answering of the research question. Moreover, in line with the study purpose, purposive sampling was used to guarantee that participants were selected based on their leadership positions and relevant experience with the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, two schools in the eastern Free State were chosen on the basis and perception that schools in rural settlements tend to struggle with violence more than their counterparts in urban settings (Du Plessis, 2019:2). This, on its own, assisted this study greatly in understanding the impact of learner-on-teacher violence from both locations.

Because this study aimed to explore leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence, school leaders were the centre of the study as they are expected to address learner-on-teacher violence. Two schools were sampled for this study. The selection of the two schools was guided by geographical location and the existing perception that township schools are more disciplined than schools in informal settlements. One school from an informal settlement and another one from a township were selected as this was used to confirm whether both schools from different settings deal with learner-on-teacher violence in the same manner. Four participants were purposefully selected from each school from the entire population of eastern Free State secondary schools. This specific number of participants was chosen as it was enough to ensure enough data.

The sampled participants were experienced, and the majority were in managerial positions, including the school principal and HOD. They all proved to be crucial participants as their interaction showed that they all interact daily with perpetrators and victims of learner-on-teacher violence and have a role to play in combating this problem. Moreover, to elicit data from non-managers, teachers were also included. Teachers were purposefully chosen as their participation and responses informed the study of the leadership practices that SMTs utilise when addressing cases of learner-on-teacher violence. This criterion was selected as it ensured that all participants involved were only ones relevant to the study. The chosen

participants were approached and given consent forms after permission to conduct a study was granted by the Free State DBE and the two secondary schools' principals. One-on-one interviews only took place after participants returned signed consent forms.

3.7. Data analysis

Data analysis is a systematic process of exploring and arranging data in a way that will make understanding it more straightforward, according to Tracy (2019:212). Because data was collected through interviews and document analysis, thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Howitt (2019:122) defines thematic analysis as a method that involves categorising collected data into descriptive categories of themes. Xu and Zammit (2020:2) state that thematic analysis is a step-by-step approach to discovering repeated meanings across a set of data that plays a significant role in interpreting a phenomenon. In other words, from a thematic analysis perspective, data is organised into a collection of themes that identify broader patterns of data about a shared topic concerning the area of focus.

Given that the study adopted multiple case studies, data was collected from two secondary schools, which were considered two cases. The two case studies conducted were deemed necessary for the study as this process allowed for comparative analysis. Moreover, the reports from the two case studies were separated and later compared to analyse the consistency of patterns. Through thematic analysis, data transcribed from interviews were explored and interpreted and patterns were discovered and five themes were generated namely:

- The nature of learner-on-teacher violence
- Causes of learner-on-teacher violence
- Consequences of learner-on-teacher violence
- Challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence
- Leadership initiative for addressing learner-on-teacher violence

Thus similarities and differences were established. To comply with the principle of trustworthiness, the transcription of interview recordings was done in accordance with all known processes to ensure that no vital information was omitted.

According to Howitt (2019:125), transcription is the process of turning spoken words into written words. Transcription was performed in conjunction with notes taken by the researcher during the interviews. Lester *et al.* (2020:98) reiterate that the process of thematic analysis can only be done through adopting the stages that include becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing those themes, defining the themes, and writing up the report. Complying with the process of thematic analysis, the researcher transcribed the recorded audio of the interviews. All transcriptions were checked carefully against the recording to ensure accuracy.

3.8. Trustworthiness

According to Creswell and Poth (2018:338), qualitative research trustworthiness is an attempt to explore and assess the authenticity of the findings detailed by a study. In addition, Diane and Cope (2014:90) state that research trustworthiness involves measures to convince readers that the study can be read and reviewed and that the study's findings are authentic and can be trusted. Tracy (2020:275) states that trustworthiness comprises four essential components, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Tracy (2020:275) defines credibility as an approach that expresses and confirms the reality that seems true. In support, Creswell and Poth (2018:338) define research credibility as the endeavour to assess the accuracy of research findings.

To establish credibility that would contribute toward trustworthiness, a strategy of triangulation and member checks were employed. According to Dutta and Ranjan (2019:130), credibility is centralised around participants' ability to recognise information shared and experience in the research outcome. This means that credibility is directly linked with member checking, which emphasises that a researcher should test data with participants. Thus, Cohen *et al.* (2018:268) define triangulation as a strategy of research credibility that involves using multiple source of data collection. In that regard this study used interviews and documents as sources of data collection and this was consistent with the principle of triangulation.

Creswell and Poth (2018:342) define member checking as a critical technique for establishing the trustworthiness of the study through sending, analysing, interpreting, and

concluding data back to participants to verify the accuracy of the information they shared. In terms of member checks, the recorded interviews were transcribed and sent to all participants to verify the accuracy of the information they shared. Member checking was used during the data analysis stage as it was deemed essential in ascertaining the emerging findings. Therefore, participants were requested to thoroughly read transcripts and give their interpretive summaries through member checks, which were later discussed. This process became a helpful tool that assisted with reanalysing data and ensuring mutual comfort and recognisability in interpreting the data gained from interviews. Moreover, because the study adopted thematic analysis, all formulated themes and categories identified from data analysis were sent to participants to ascertain whether the themes identified reflected their shared views. In addition, all interviews were recorded and later sent to participants to check the accuracy of the information transmitted.

To establish triangulation and member checking whilst establishing trustworthiness, this study also considered some critical criteria for validity, including transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985:300) created transferability, dependability, and confirmability as alternative terms that ensure that research findings are transferable between the researcher and participants, as this is useful in establishing validity. According to Tracy (2020:279), transferability can be defined as the process of ensuring that research findings resonate and correspond with readers' own world and can thus be transferred to another context with other respondents. Through transferability, both the behaviour and experiences of participants were described in a way that they become meaningful to readers by making use of thick description.

Korstjens and Moser (2018:122) define dependability as all the necessary steps followed to ensure consistency from the start to the development and reporting of research findings. This means all research records must be safely kept from the beginning to the end of the study. To comply with dependability, a detailed project report was kept safe, including the research design, methodology, methods of collecting data, and the nature of participants. On the other hand, confirmability refers to a concept concerned with ensuring that the researcher remains neutral throughout the research process by not filtering information using their knowledge and viewpoints (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:122). To comply with

confirmability, I presented my findings at the postgraduate conference where neutral experts helped with identifying weaknesses and omissions and ensured that the study is well constructed.

3.9. Ethical considerations

Creswell and Poth (2018:95) advocate that ethical consideration remain a critical and fundamental issue that researchers must bear in mind and adequately plan for in the process of planning and designing a qualitative study. Generally, ethics are defined as rules that determine moral conduct. Howitt (2020:409) defines research ethics as principles that govern the conduct of research, including how a researcher should treat participants. In the same regard, Cohen *et al.* (2018:111) state that research ethics is a tool concerned with guiding researchers on what to do and what not to do in their research, including how they should behave or conduct themselves.

From these definitions, research ethics comprise all principles entailing the conduct of research, including how participants must be treated. Howitt (2020:406) warns that qualitative researchers ought to always be vigilant about ethics due to the close relationship they tend to establish with participants. Some of the ethical issues to be taken into cognisance include, among others, ethical clearance, permission, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, rights and protection of participants, and the consequences of the interview for participants.

In preparation for the application for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State Research Ethics Committee, several documents and information had to be compiled. The researcher further applied for permission to conduct research in the two secondary schools from the Free State DBE, Thabo Mofutsanyane District. Moreover, because this study is centered around a sensitive topic, in the process of ethical clearance application, the researcher had to be clear on how research practice will adhere to principles of ethics and ensure that participants are not exploited. Due to the ability to successfully meet the requirement of the ethics committee, and with no objections to conducting this study if the researcher could assure that all participants were adequately informed and not deceived during the study, ethical clearance was approved. Furthermore, permission was granted by

the Free State DBE, Thabo Mofutsanyane District to conduct research in the two selected secondary schools.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018:54), before research can be carried out, the researcher must obtain a letter of approval from the institutional ethics committee. Following approval from the ethics committee and Free State DBE, Thabo Mofutsanyane District to conduct the study, letters were then written and sent to the two schools' principals explaining the purpose and objectives of the study and thus requesting permission to conduct the study. Following the approval from principals, letters were written to HODs and teachers on which the researcher intended to carry out the research, seeking their consent as participants. All letters specifically outlined the purpose of the study and the study process.

All permission request letters that were sent out to participants were inclusive of consent forms. Care was taken to ensure that the research will not hamper schools' academic plans and thus permission was requested outside of participants' busy times. As Creswell and Poth (2018:98) suggest, the purpose of the study was adequately disclosed for all participants' cognisance. In addition, consent forms stipulated that all participants agree to do the interview voluntarily, and thus they would not be paid for taking part in the study. Moreover, the consent form clearly stated that the interview was going to be a single-off session; however, if the need arises, the researcher may request another session. Furthermore, consent forms clearly stated that interviews would only be conducted at a time convenient for participants, and it was understood that their main priorities had to be fulfilled first. Lastly, all consent forms clearly stated that all participants had a right to withdraw from participation if they felt uncomfortable at any research stage.

Due to challenges associated with the breach of data that could lead to several obstacles, including embarrassment to participants, which could lead them to suffer from anxiety and other related issues, all participants were assured that the information shared would remain confidential. Thus, pseudonyms were used in place of participants' real names and prospective schools throughout the study. Furthermore, to minimise psychological and social risks, participants were further informed of the prospects of benefits from the

research, which are centralised around assisting the DBE with several strategies that could help address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. Confidentiality and privacy were also maintained by storing audio recordings and transcripts on a password-protected iCloud drive, which was made available and accessible only to the researcher and the supervisor.

According to Fleming and Zegwaard (2018:211), participants involved in research have the right to protection from any harm and discomfort. All participants must be protected from both physical and psychological harm that could lead to loss of dignity and loss of self-esteem. Moreover, all participants must be protected against any deception, and thus privacy and confidentiality should be upheld. In line with the definition and the conditions of the consent forms, voluntary participation was encouraged at all stages of the research as participants were informed that they had a right to withdraw at any time. All participants were told that they had a right to the study and information shared once it has been finalised and, upon request, the information will be availed to participants.

3.10. Limitations

Because the scope of the study was limited to only two schools, the findings were limited and could not be used to make generalisations about all schools.

3.11. Chapter summary

This chapter dealt with the research design and methodologies for this study. To shed light on the method used, a thorough description and explanation of the qualitative approach as well as the research techniques for data collection were given. The chapter further discussed in detail the research instruments for this study and how they were used. Moreover, the chapter further clarified the sampling procedure as well as the process of purposefully selecting participants for the study. The validity and reliability of the study were also fully outlined. In conclusion, the chapter outlined the ethical considerations of the study, which guaranteed the protection and safety of all prospective participants in this study. The next chapter will analyse data and present the findings before recommendations for further studies are made.

4 Chapter Four: Data presentation and analysis

4.1. Introduction

Chapter Three of this study outlined the data collection process, including ethical considerations, used to generate data on leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in two selected South African secondary schools. In the analysis of data generated from one-on-one interviews with principals, HODs, and teachers, as well as document analysis from two case studies of secondary schools, five themes emerged. The findings from both schools are presented in one section one after another to ensure clarity in depicting the differences and similarities between the schools. For purposes of clarity, data will be presented from the views of participants, and documents will be used where relevant. Regarding participants, the report will start with views from school A followed by views from school B. As discussed in Chapter Three, themes were generated through a thematic analysis strategy.

As a qualitative researcher, I understand the importance of context. To provide such context, this chapter commences with a description of the case study schools and the participants. Thereafter, I highlight the data analysis procedure. The remaining part of the chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis.

4.2. Description of the cases and the participants

The diagrammatic table below outlines the information of participants from the two case study schools that served as research sites. The composition table presents participants' backgrounds, including their roles in school, work experience, and gender. Although this is indicated in Chapter Three, as a qualitative researcher, I decided to include the demographic data of participants again in this chapter to highlight that the selected participants were relevant to generate data that will help answer the research questions. To protect participants' identities, as indicated in Chapter Three, pseudonyms in the form of codes were used to replace the participants' real names and names of the schools. P stands for principal, H stands for HOD, T stands for teachers, S for school, and the last letter

indicates the school where the participant is from. The first school is represented by code A and the second school is represented by code B.

Table 4.1: Participant demographic data.

School	Participant position	Participant role	Experience in current position	Gender	Code
A	Principal	School head	3 years	Male	PSA
A	HOD	Head of dept	1 year	Male	HSA
A	Teacher	Member of disciplinary committee	2 years	Male	TSA1
A	Teacher	Member of disciplinary committee	32 years	Male	TSA2
B	Principal	School head	5 years	Male	PSB
B	HOD	Head of dept	3 years	Male	HSB1
B	HOD	Head of dept	24 years	Male	HSB2
B	Teacher	Class teacher	17 years	Female	TSB

4.3. Revisiting data analysis procedures

As indicated in Chapter Three, after one-on-one interviews with school principals, HODs, and teachers, I transcribed the voice-recorded interviews and analysed the data to make sense thereof. I requested the school learner code of conduct, safety policy, classroom rules,

and disciplinary committee records from the principals for document analysis. I further read the documents and identified emerging themes, compared and contrasted data from the interviews with documents, and generated themes. In line with the procedure for analysing qualitative data as suggested by Xu and Zammit (2020:2), I assembled all transcribed data and identified all data that answered the research questions.

From the analysis of data generated through interviews with principals, HODs, and teachers and document analysis from the two selected secondary schools, five themes emerged as illustrated in Figure 4.1.

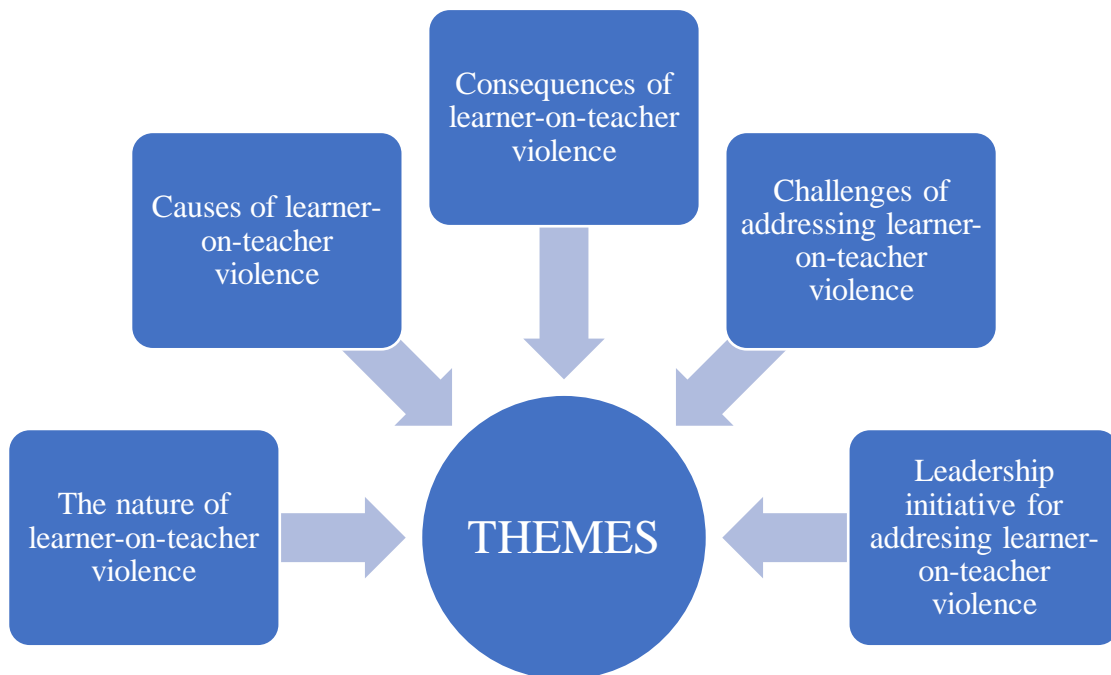


Figure 4.1: Illustration of the themes identified from data analysis

4.4. Theme 1: The nature of learner-on-teacher violence

Data generated from one-on-one interviews with principals, HODs, and teachers revealed that teachers in the selected participant secondary schools experience various forms of learner-on-teacher violence. Moreover, data for this theme showed that learner-on-teacher

violence manifested differently in the two selected secondary schools. Thus, participants articulated the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence and forms of learner-on-teacher violence in the two selected secondary schools.

The findings from interviews revealed that addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence remains a problem in the selected participating secondary schools as this phenomenon emerges differently but frequently. The disciplinary records requested from the two participant schools directly confirmed what participants shared. With regard to the extent to which the two schools address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, participants shared that they are experiencing learners who disrespect teachers, threats of violence, and racism. Participant HSA had this to say: *“It is so bad, I don't want to lie. Our learners are somehow unruly, ill-disciplined, they do not want to be told what to do, they are rebellious.”*

Participant TSA1 from the same school articulated that learners in their school are not only violent but they also display intolerance. This is what he reported:

Since my arrival at this school, in fact learners at this school are not only engrafted by the issue or the culture of violence, but they are engrafted by culture of intolerance.

The empirical data from the same school further revealed that they struggle with a problem of overaged learners who disrespect young teachers. In this regard, PSA alluded:

We've got a large number of overage learners and a number of very young educators, and these learners tend to disrespect or undermine them. I am going to cite an example of some couple of weeks back, we just appointed an educator who is still very young to replace one educator who has gone on transfer and learners were throwing papers to that educator.

At school B it was also found that the issue of learner-on-teacher violence is an everyday problem. However, in their case, the majority of learner-on-teacher violence incidents were linked to racial inclination and overaged learners. Participant TSB highlighted: *“We have*

a serious problem. Because we have coloured learners and some black learners, some are overage, and the coloureds learners always threaten us as black teachers.”

Consistent with Participant TSB, participant PSB said:

Often times there are times where the coloured learners do not want to be reprimanded by any other race except the white educators. At times, they would not want to be reprimanded by white educators and go for black educators, so it depends on their taste.

From the same school, HSB1 revealed that in other circumstances, learners are disrespectful to the extent that in one incident they even fought in the classroom and in the presence of a teacher.

These prevalences differs from situation to situation because in one incident, it was a boy who attacked another, so the teacher was trying to intervene by restraining them, then one boy would not have none of it and the teacher couldn't cope, so the teacher was pushed outside the class.

Because participants in school A unveiled that learner-on-teacher violence manifest in different forms, participants from school B mainly linked the problem of learner-on-teacher violence to racial differences. The same problem is experienced in school A despite learners and teachers being of the same race. Moreover, the two schools are located in different geographic areas, and the above findings revealed that the problem of learner-on-teacher violence is not only confined to school A, as school B also encounters the scourge of learner-on-teacher violence. School A is located in a rural area whilst school B is located in the township. However, both face the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. Moreover, the findings concur with the records from the disciplinary committee. This year alone several cases were reported, and in school A, they were attending cases of suspended learners due to various forms of ill-discipline, including victimisation of teachers.

The findings regarding school location as one of the factors contributing to learner-on-teacher violence contradict the findings of Du Plessis and Mestry (2019:2), who contend that schools located in the suburbs tend to suffer higher levels of offensive behaviour than

their counterparts in rural communities. However, the findings concurred with those of Uhnou (2019:153), who found that violence is a highly socialised issue that diverse communities are battling, with the majority committed by young boys. This indicates that children raised in violent communities are prone to be perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence.

4.4.1. Forms of violence

Empirical data indicated that learner-on-teacher violence prevails in various forms and occurs often. The participants from the two participating schools reported that the three common forms of learner-on-teacher violence experienced by teachers include verbal violence, sexual harassment, and physical violence. I present findings for each form.

4.4.1.1 Verbal violence

The findings from the interviews with participants show that verbal attacks are a form of learner-on-teacher violence frequently occurring in the participant schools. Participants mentioned that they experience learners who swear at them and click their tongues when they are being reprimanded. Participant PSA from school A reported:

We also experience learners who tend to confront teachers when they are being reprimanded for committing misconducts. These are learners who are actually talkative when you teach, when you try to reprimand them, they keep on saying nasty things and would even swear at you but what is worse is that you might not even notice who is the one saying something because they wear masks in the classes.

The empirical data also shows that in terms of verbal attacks, teachers are not the only victims as all SMT members, including the principal, are also affected. HSA shared:

Learners usually push the principal over the limit; for instance, they arrive late, and when they find the gates locked, they insult the principal demanding to get in. So, it's always that kind of situation.

Participant HSA from the same school lamented that even when school is lending a helping hand, learners still find a way to instigate violence against teachers by swearing at them:

Since we're having new teachers, during the break time, learners go to get food from the kitchen, and teachers must supervise this activity. There is a boy who always demands more food than others, and when he is reprimanded, he insults these teachers most of the time.

Consistent with what is happening in school A, participants from school B also articulated their views regarding verbal attacks in their school. Participant HSB1 alluded: *“The other incident includes learner who would be clicking tongues to teachers when being reprimanded, and that behaviour seems like a norm in this community.”*

From the same school, Participant HSB2 mentioned: *“We have situations where when learners are being disciplined, they would protest, they would swear at their teachers and that’s unlike before, there is a generational gap.”*

Moreover, Participant TSB from the same school shared that in their schools, some learners sometimes verbally abuse teachers because of their sexual orientation. *“Learners don’t listen to teachers most of the time, especially gay teachers because most the time they do chaos in their classes and swear at them.”*

The findings from both schools revealed that a common form of verbal violence against teachers is learners swearing at teachers, especially young teachers. Moreover, in school B, empirical data showed that some teachers are sworn at because of their sexual orientation, thus indicating prevalence of homophobia, although this was not the case in school A. Nonetheless, in school A, it was clearly articulated that perpetrators of verbal aggression against teachers are primarily boys. This is contrary to Denson *et al.* (2018:2), who highlighted that verbal aggression is more frequently committed by female learners than male counterparts. Moreover, because in school B the prevalence of verbal aggression is linked to the community where the school is located, this concurs with Beckmann (2019:1), who warns that children exposed to verbal aggression in their childhood are more

prone to be perpetrators of verbal attacks against teachers at school. This is consistent with Bandura's theory of learnt behaviour, which suggests that learners observe the behaviour of the community and families, learn, master the behaviour, and then perpetuate it on others, which are teachers in this case.

4.4.1.2 Sexual harassment

Empirical data outlined that in the two selected participant schools, both female and gay educators are more likely to be targets of sexual harassment compared with their counterparts. Among the forms of sexual harassment that teachers endure include improper suggestions, comments of a sexual nature, and inappropriate touching by boys. In school A, Participant HSA who openly shared he was gay had this to say:

There's this learner who would literally harass me because I was trying to help him, and then he thought that I was into him, and then he literally said that he wanted to come to my house to visit me, and then he could not wait to see me and do the deed, and that learner looked at me in a very sexual way.

Participant HSA further referred to an incident where a learner sexually harassed him by inappropriately touching his bum. This is what he said, *"The one time I was harassed as far harassment is concerned, was when a boy learner sexually harassed me by slapping my bum."*

In the same way, participants from school B also highlighted that the problem of sexual harassment is rampant as in their school, teachers are also experiencing sexual harassment in the form of comments of a sexual nature and improper suggestions from learners. HSB2 shared similar sentiments as HSA by reporting that:

You know what I earlier alluded to young female staff, and some of these boys are bit you bigger in terms of age. They even propose female teachers. There was an incident which is still being addressed; it has been referred, and the boy has been suspended because he touched the teacher inappropriately [Touched his bum]. They were in the middle of something,

and then he was telling the teacher that he wanted to visit the teacher at her home until the teacher reported the matter.

Empirical data revealed that teachers from both schools experience sexual harassment from learners mainly as comments of a sexual nature and improper suggestions. Moreover, empirical data suggest that both female and gay teachers were victims of sexual harassment in the two participant schools. The interviews also unveiled that teachers do not know how much harassment they must endure, as Participant HSA did not report the matter, although it happened on the school premises. This was confirmed by the disciplinary records that had no record of a learner who sexually harassed an educator in any way. In the same way, HSB2 mentioned that the matter was reported, but the case was not found in the school's disciplinary records.

Although Lowe *et al.* (2020:189) report that direct victimisation of teachers by learners is on the rise and that personal property offences also form part of the harassment that teachers face, empirical data contrarily only reported sexual harassment in both schools. However, the observed data is consistent with Mabuza (2020:31), who asserts that sexual harassment does not only involve physical gestures, as it is easily confused, but its scope also includes verbal sexual harassment (jokes of a sexual nature, hints, references to and questions about body, enquiries about sex life, and insults of sexual nature) as well as visual harassment (display of explicit pictures).

4.4.1.3 Physical attack

One-on-one interviews from both case studies suggested that teachers experienced learners who not only fight each other but also physically attack teachers. Participants reported that although learners were found with weapons, in terms of cases they have dealt with, learners used bare hands to fight teachers. In school A Participant HSA provided details of the incident by reporting the following: *“There was another instance whereby a female learner was fighting this particular teacher in class. I had to intervene and ensure that the teacher was safe and felt respected by this learner.”*

Consistent with what is happening in school A in terms of teachers being physically attacked by female learners, HSB2 mentioned: *“I’m sure two months back, if you were lucky enough, it was circulating on social media that one of our educators was accosted, and the learners waited for the teacher outside the gate. And then female learners assaulted the poor teacher.”*

Contrary to the above empirical data, which identifies female learners as perpetrators of physical violence against teachers, Participant HSB2 further remarked that teachers are also physically attacked by male learners: *“I remember it was after 12:30 that one female teacher tried to discipline a boy, and the boy manhandled the teacher. Had we not come in time, something terrible could have happened to the teacher.”*

The findings from school B highlighted that both female and male learners physically attacked teachers, whilst in school A, only female learners were perpetrators of physical attacks against teachers. However, in the disciplinary records for both schools, there were reports of teachers being physically attacked. The learner code of conduct clearly states that learners who physically attack teachers must be suspended because the offence is a level four misconduct, and its sanction is immediate suspension. However, when analysing disciplinary records for school A, the documents revealed that for these cases, the sanctions implemented were contrary to the code of conduct as parents were called to the school and warning letters were issued to learners. These findings contradict Denson *et al.* (2018:5), who state that boys usually perpetrate physical aggression and that females are less physically aggressive. The study findings in school B are consistent with Nhambura (2020:134), who reports that physical attack seldom occurs in schools, and when it does, it is mainly committed by learners finding it challenging to be disciplined like their peers.

4.5. Theme 2: Causes of learner-on-teacher violence

The empirical data suggests that the multiple forms of learner-on-teacher violence prevail due to various causes. In the same light, the empirical data indicates that the causes of violence originate from both within and outside the school environment. This theme highlights the underlying factors that motivate or provoke learners to be violent and victimise teachers. The participants revealed that individual factors, peer factors, school

factors, family factors, and community factors are among the factors that contribute to the causes of learner-on-teacher violence in the two selected participant schools.

4.5.1. Individual factors

The interviews with teachers and SMT members from the two schools all raised that the smooth running of the school is also negatively affected by factors not linked to family, community, peers, or school but are more linked to the individual. The empirical data revealed that emotional-related factors, overaged learners, and the cultural practice of initiation schools are believed to influence learners to be aggressive and victimise teachers. In school A, Participant HSA alluded to the following:

Learners are emotionally burdened by the things happening at their homes; teachers do not notice due to lack of time. Sometimes we fail to notice that there is a cry for help because we are overloaded with curriculum activities, and we are also not specialists in that particular department.

TSA2 concurred with HSA by outlining that:

These learners are bitter, and you can see that it results from domestic based on contemporary socio-economic issues, especially if these learners are studying with learners from well-off families as this is also perceived to cause learners to be bitter and ill-disciplined.

From the same school, PSA shared that they have many overaged learners and that it remains a challenge to discipline overaged learners, especially for young teachers:

We got large number of overage learners and a number of young educators, such that learners tend to disrespect or undermine them. Sometimes in class, for instance, I will cite an example of some couple of weeks a week or so back; we just appointed an educator who is still very young to replace one educator who has gone on transfer. These learners were throwing papers at the teacher.”

Referring to another factor, PSA spoke about how culture also impacts how learners conduct themselves. He lamented that learners coming from initiation school do not want to be told what to do, especially by those who do not come from initiation school: *"Then the other thing, it's this culture of lebollo (initiation school). It makes them feel like they are adults more than us who did not go there; they do not want to be told what to do by us and they disrespect us."*

In support TSA2 mentioned: *"These gigantic boys often tell us that they won't listen to us as they classify us as small boys because we do not come from initiation school. Initiation is one of the examples that prompt learners not to respect teachers."*

Participants from school B also raised a point on individual factors linked to provoking learners to be violent. PSB articulated that learners with emotional burdens often become violent against teachers:

Our learners are bottled in anger, and they are not challenged and channeled in any way to anything specific or something that can benefit and redirect their energy towards positivity, and we realise this when they become violent to teachers.

Consistent with what participants from school A shared, in school B, Participant HSB2 identified that the main factor believed to play a role in influencing learners to victimise teachers was age:

We've got teaching staff which is very young or youthful, and some of these learners see them as their peers because, they are very young indeed and sometimes most of these learners, feel that they cannot be disciplined by people who are their peers or their equal.

Although empirical data revealed that substance abuse is usually linked to peer-related factors, HSB1 argued that this is not always the case as some learners resort to drugs willingly without anybody's influence due to being overwhelmed by many things:

I think substance abuse is the problem that learners are battling with because according to the life orientation teacher, learners are saying they use it because it helps them forget situations and challenges around them such as hunger or poverty.

The empirical data from both case studies pinpointed psychological distress and psychosocial issues as the main factor that provokes learners to be violent. Moreover, empirical data revealed that learners who perpetrate violence against teachers are influenced by many individual-related factors, including emotional distress due to various socio-economic factors. In addition, participants from both schools reported that learners have resorted to substance abuse due to the challenges they face individually. Although participants from school B were silent about the issue of initiation school, participants from school A shared the insight that culture as a societal factor presents a pressing issue as far as learner behaviour is concerned after the initiation. The understanding is in line with Mohlaloka *et al.* (2017:19), who report that there is an existing perception that learners who come from initiation schools contribute to discipline problems at schools.

In line with distributed leadership theory, learners, especially those who come from initiation and are introduced to manhood, which is perceived to shape attendees into responsible members of society, which might include prohibiting others from perpetrating violence against teachers. However, in this case, the opposite is seen. Subsequently, findings from both schools are consistent with literature data, which outlines that individual factors including personal characteristics are influenced by genetic and psychological aspects (Røysamb *et al.*, 2018:2).

The literature warns that learners with low levels of self-confidence have a high likelihood of either being perpetrators of school violence or victimising others (Castro-Sánchez *et al.* 2019:2). Additionally, judging from both schools' responses, participants also focused on the attitude of overaged learners, especially when they must be disciplined by young educators, as both schools have employed many young female teachers. This is consistent with a report by Nhambura (2020:134), who advocates that physical aggression seldom

occurs in schools, and when it does, it is mainly committed by overaged learners finding it challenging to be disciplined like their peers.

4.5.2. Peer related factors

The empirical data indicates that peer pressure is one of the factors whereby learners are influenced to perpetrate violence against teachers. Participants suggested that concerning peer-related factors, some contributing factors are learners belonging to gangs, peer pressure, the smoking of dagga, and drugs. During a one-on-one interview with participants from school A, HSA shared the following:

Being violent is not the problem for the newcomers who have just arrived this year. But some of them have joined these others who were repeating that grade, which is grade ten, and have formed a gang. So, they are also unruly, bad behaving and bad chatting to the teachers.

Another participant from the same school unveiled that one of the leading causes of learner-on-teacher violence resulting from peer-related factors is learners smoking dagga, because, in most cases, they do not smoke alone but do it in groups. HSA said:

Smoking is one of the biggest challenges that our school is facing right now. I usually go to the toilets, the boy's toilets, anytime. When I'm free I'll just go because I'm in charge of the grade 12 block, so I usually go there randomly, and I always catch them smoking dagga in groups.

PSA shared the same sentiments and reported the following:

What is worse is that there is very rife smoking of the dagga here; this dagga is like they are mixing it with something else maybe because they feel it is no longer doing anything alone then; they must mix it with something. After smoking and those who are smoking excessively, they become so stubborn.

Participant TSA2 concurred with his colleagues by mentioning: *“Learners are smoking dagga and committing a lot of misconducts, we caught learners smoking and selling dagga, and we forgave them, but they must be punished.”*

Moreover, in school A, the issue of peer influence seems to be on the rise to the extent that the management even resorted to suspending their regular assembly as its existence was believed to contribute to learners victimising teachers and even influencing others. This was highlighted by the principal PSA, who said: *“Even now, we have suspended one assembly that we used to have because when they are together, they are even worse because even the new ones join the older ones.”* PSA highlighted that learners who belong to gangs target teachers by provoking them:

This morning, we were informed that some learners were plotting against one particular educator, and they said they would do certain things that would provoke that teacher to say certain things so they could all gang attack him. So, it has come to our attention.

Another participant from the same school shared that one of the peer-related factors that pressure learners and lead them to be violent is trying to fit in with their peers. TSA2 said: *“Sometimes these things happen due to peer pressure as some learners fake their lives to remain relevant to their friends. And in other instances, some learners victimise teachers to appear strong to their gang members.”*

In school B, participants reported that they were also dealing with learners who are gang members. Moreover, some learners who belong to gangs even perpetrate violence against teachers in groups. HSB2 provided details of the incident:

Two girls assaulted a teacher, and others were screaming and cheering on top of them until one gentleman from the community passing by the car saved the poor teacher. So, the whole thing was now gang-related because it was not only one learner on one teacher. It was more than one learner ganging up against the teacher.

Similar to school A, Participant TSB shared that learners are smoking dagga, but in school B, this problem was linked to community socio-economic factors:

For me, it's the community because, you see here in location X, most of the parents are not working. The learners here are smoking dagga, as they say

smoking helps them forget their problems, but now the problem is that as soon as they are high, they become aggressive and trouble teachers.

The findings from both schools suggest that learners succumb to being perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence due to peer pressure. This is found to be triggered by the fact that when they join gangs, they become introduced to bad habits, including smoking dagga, which makes them disrespect and violate teachers. Moreover, the findings revealed that in school A, the issue of learners perpetrating violence against teachers in groups was just a plan. On the contrary, in school B, it prevailed, and a group of girls assaulted the teacher. The empirical data further highlighted that learners from both schools use dagga. In school A, it is even worse because learners are selling dagga. In terms of learners using drugs, the learner codes of conduct provided by the two principals indicated that this is a level four misconduct and thus its sanctions include suspension. However, no record of suspension due to drug use was found in the disciplinary records of either school.

The empirical data concurs with the literature data, as Coleman (2020:89) unveils that through peer influence, children are influenced by many factors, but each element always directs them towards being physically aggressive. In the same way, this is also a confirmation of findings by Adeniyi and Jinandu (2021:171), who state that schools are now seen as environments or locations that encourage gang activities due to activities that bind learners. Subsequently, literature data advocated that most South African learners staying in rural areas, where they walk to school, tend to be more prone to joining gangs (Gxubane & Mguzulwa, 2019:268). The empirical data is further consistent with findings by Saladino *et al.* (2021:5), who report that most learner-on-teacher violence-related cases result from exposure to violence and illicit substance use in learners.

4.5.3. School factors

Schools are formal environments where learners and teachers engage and interact daily. Yet, empirical data indicate that in some cases, the very engagements meant to strengthen the learner-teacher relationship end up stirring learner-on-teacher violence. Participants shared that several factors are believed to be aggravated by schools that contribute to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. Participants reported that teachers play a

significant role in how learners behave as they sometimes provoke learners to be violent. In school A, the main problem identified was teachers' attitudes toward learners. Participant HSA noted the following:

Sometimes a teacher may say something in class because they are very angry or maybe because of what happened in the previous class, so they are taking emotions to the next class. Like what happened today, I had a situation, and I was in a case whereby a teacher insulted a learner because a learner did something in class. So, the teacher somehow let their emotions take over and insulted this learner, and then the learner wanted to slap the teacher.

Although that was the only finding in school A, other cases were found in school B. The empirical data unveiled that teachers' conduct, coupled with teachers' preparedness for the class, as some teachers do not attend their classes, contribute to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. This was confirmed by TSB, who reported the following:

Sometimes learners stay at the class without teachers for the whole week. We are struggling with finding qualified Afrikaans teachers because the school is a mixture of Afrikaans and English. So, to find Afrikaans teachers who willingly want to work in this community is a struggle.

PSB concurred with HSB:

One would say the incidences we experienced where racial inclination has been in the forefront are because our school is mainly coloured with blacks being a predominant percentage. My teaching and non-teaching staff is a mixture of black and coloured. And you will find that there would be times coloureds learners do not have teachers as we struggle with finding Afrikaans teachers and that seems like they are being discriminated.

Another realisation was that the education system itself has the potential to accelerate learner-on-teacher violence. One participant from the same school highlighted that the syllabus is structured unfairly for learners with learning barriers as it is mainly comprised

of theory and lacks practical components for those who are not academically strong, which is perceived to frustrate them. In this regard, PSB mentioned the following:

But our learners go to school from grade R up to grade 12 without skill, and that causes frustrations for learners who are not academically strong with theory but good with practical, as it seems the system is disadvantaging them, and frustrations, as a result, could be a reason why they violate teachers.

Participants further unveiled that school B has learners and teachers of different races, which has contributed to struggling with the problem of racial inclination. HSB2 reported the following:

One of the issues that cause learners to be rebellious is discrimination by us as teachers. We must be aware. I'm sure you have heard over the news that in Gauteng province, teachers were involved in misconduct due to offending learners because of the colour of their skin; some in as far as gender and race were the most common ones.

The findings from the one-on-one interviews with participants from both participant schools echoed that staff members fall short of their duties through several factors that lead them to instigate and make learners violent. This is in line with Malihah *et al.* (2017:402), who share that one simple mistake, such as the breakdown of relations between learners and teachers, can escalate learner-on-teacher violence. Although in school A, the only reported factor was one caused by teachers' attitudes, which is consistent with another participant in school B, who mentioned that they struggle with finding qualified Afrikaans teachers willing to teach in that school. Malihah *et al.* (2017:402) share the same sentiments by highlighting that another underlying factor contributing to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is teachers that fail to properly conduct themselves in line with the code of ethics by consistently displaying a closed attitude toward learners. Moreover, this finding is consistent with Grobler (2018:28), who shares that teachers lacking professionalism and ethics also perpetuate learner-on-teacher violence through unwanted comments, bullying, and abusing learners verbally.

In school B, the issue of teachers not attending classes is mainly due to a shortage of teachers, which is believed to be the responsibility of the DOE. Additionally, participants also shed light on discrimination and racial inclination. This finding is consistent with the findings of Dube and Hlalele (2018:78), who share that the observed escalation of learner-on-teacher violence is also caused by social injustices, including unfair treatment of learners, unfair distribution of resources, and discriminatory statements by teachers. Although participants in school A remained silent on the inadequate syllabus, which does not cater to learners who are better with practical than theory, participants in school B perceived this as one factor that causes learners to be frustrated and provoke them to be violent against teachers. This concurs with Nhambura (2020:155), who reiterates that learners are not equally gifted as some are academically disadvantaged but good with sports, and if they are deprived of this opportunity, they get frustrated with school and end up with learners who perpetrate violence against teachers to get attention.

4.5.4. Family factors

Participants' responses indicated that the behaviour of parents is in the spotlight. One-on-one interviews revealed that parents behave badly in their children's presence, including fighting each other and abusing alcohol. In this regard, absent parents, family backgrounds, and socio-economic factors were among shared family-related factors contributing to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. In school A, this is what participant HSA shared regarding the matter:

Learners don't have that communication with their parents, so that's why this happens because our learners do not have people whom they can communicate with. Their parents sometimes drink a lot; they don't have time for their children. The parents are not giving them attention. Parents are not there emotionally and physically; they're not because it is still the same if you have a parent who comes home at night drunk every day.

In the same way, participant TSA1 reported: *“But what I’ve realised is that one other issue that causes these learners to be violent is because they have low confidence due to poor family backgrounds.”*

Nonetheless, although other participants blamed the problem on the influence of socio-economic issues, HSA argued that learners perpetrate violence against teachers as a result of anger caused by absent parents. He highlighted that he once called in a learner who was unruly to teachers, and this is what the learner unveiled:

The mother left him and relocated to location X apparently; the learner is staying at the farms with the grandmother. He does not know his father, and although the mother is alive cohabiting with another man in location X, and does not take care of him, does not call, does not come home does not do anything. So literally, he depends on the grandmother.

In the same way, PSA outlined that one of the perceived factors related to family factors is child-headed families, as this is believed to make learners feel that they are adults everywhere, including when they are at school: *“And then another thing that contributes to the problem is the background where learners are coming from. Learners are treated as adults at home, so they also want us here at school to treat them as adults.”*

PSA further lamented that boys who lack discipline and perpetrate violence against teachers are being raised without present father figures: *“So, they do not have father figures, and as a result, they are being treated as father figures at their homes, and as a result, they end up wanting to portray that here at school, and when they are reprimanded, they retaliate.”*

School B participants also concurred with participants from school A, especially on the issue of poverty-stricken homes. Participant TSB said: *“Here, most parents are not working; they are staying home, and their children come to school without food, and they are probably bottling things up inside and full of anger; hence they are so unruly towards teachers.”*

Consistent with what participants from school A shared, in school B, Participant HSB1 also shared the same sentiments:

One thing that I've realised where we have disciplinary issues concerning learners who victimise teachers, it's usually a combination of learners from

child-headed families and learners coming from homes where I can say the conditions are not good. So maybe victimising teachers is their way of coping.

Findings from both schools revealed that despite various causes linked to family factors contributing to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, the absence of parents seems to be the main problem. This is because parents are expected to protect their children from various socio-economic factors and teach them good social values and societal etiquette. Secondary to that, the findings unveiled that although the two schools are not from the same geographical area – school A is in a rural settlement while school B is in a township – both communities are faced with the problem of poverty. Nonetheless, participants from both schools revealed that both communities are dysfunctional, and participants from both schools mentioned child-headed families as part of the problem.

For example, UNICEF (2020:11) contends that children who lack financial support, parental love, and are exposed to violence tend to misbehave. Kistnasamy (2019:37) shares the same sentiments that most South African township families face multiple risk factors such as a high poverty rate, lack of employment opportunities, and a pro-violence culture, all of which are associated with making learners violent at school.

4.5.5. Community factors

Empirical data further revealed that apart from family factors, community factors are also linked with aggravating learners to be violent, thus making it easy for them to instigate violence against teachers. Among community-related factors shared by participants were socio-economic factors, substance abuse, and community resistance to change. In school A, participants highlighted communities where learners stay are poverty-stricken and are communities in which parents are affected by various socio-economic factors. In this regard, TSA2 said: *“The location of the school is one that the government identifies as poverty-stricken. So, I think another main issue contributing to learners’ ill behaviour is contemporary socio-economic issues”*.

Although that was the only finding in school A, participants from school B shared similar sentiments regarding socio-economic factors. HSB2 had this to say:

First, we must start with where the school is situated, and the environment wherein we are surrounded by families with poor background actually, the learners that we teach, over 98% of them are from a disadvantaged background and being in school with other learners from well-off families makes them bitter.

The other finding from the same school was that in some cases, the incidence of learner-on-teacher violence was deep-rooted in communities as members play a role in teaching and influencing learners to be violent due to the normalisation of gang influence to abuse substances. Participant HSB2 reported the following:

We're in a community which is a bit rough if I should use the word, there is a gang influence whereby kids would indulge maybe in substance abuse over the weekend and then on Mondays they are absent, and there's quite a lot of ill-discipline against teachers among them.

Another realisation was that school B is located in a community where its members are resistant to change. Even if the school leaders advise them on aspects that can assist with improving children's discipline, they do not want to be told what to do. PSB said:

But having dealt with various cases of learners victimising teachers and other cases, one finds that the problems that we experience at school are only a sign of the inherent problems that are coming from home and within the society, because even if you or ask for parents' assistance, or advise they do not want to be corrected.

The findings from both schools reveal that although there are various factors linked to community socio-economic factors as both schools are located in poverty-stricken communities despite school A being in a rural settlement while school B is located in the township. Empirical data from school B revealed the community surrounding their school is contributing to learners being violent, as its members are resistant to change. Although

participants in school B also lamented the problem of substance abuse due to communities with gangs as one of the community-related factors aggravating learners to be violent, this was not the case in school A.

From the literature data, South African communities are violent by nature and thus children are prone to be violent (DeCordova *et al.*, 2019:20). De Juan and Wegner (2019:34) found that when South African community members feel deprived and frustrated by poor service delivery, they tend to resort to mobilisation and protests, which teaches children to be violent. This is believed to be another contributing factor that teaches learners to be violent. This is also consistent with the theory of SCLT, which emphasises that children are not born violent, but that they learn violent behaviour from observation (Bandura 1971:3). In terms of learners bringing weapons to school, Peguero *et al.* (2020:87) blame the problem on the dysfunctional community that makes accessibility of weapons easy for learners.

4.6. Theme 3: Consequences of learner-on-teacher violence

According to empirical data, learner-on-teacher violence hampers teaching and learning as its occurrence disrupts the smooth functioning of the school. From the teacher's perspective, it was identified that if the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is not addressed, the results have both physical and emotional impacts on victims, negatively affecting victims' social lives and compromising their health in the process. Moreover, participants further revealed that learner-on-teacher violence victims are on the verge of permanently leaving the profession. Negative effects on teachers' social life, fear of violence, stress, health problems, and intention to leave the profession are among the consequences of learner-on-teacher violence.

4.6.1. Negative effects on teachers' social life

Although the empirical data has identified several consequences of the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, participants highlighted an underlying belief that after being victimised by a learner, one never recovers fully. In addition, the findings revealed that both direct and indirect victims of learner-on-teacher violence are affected at a personal and professional level. In school A, Participant TSA reported that the prevalence of learner-

on-teacher violence is known to affect a victim's social life negatively: *“These incidents belittle how we as teachers are supposed to cultivate their lives, making it as if we have stopped living, not only at school but even at home.”*

Similarly, Participant TSB from school B shared the following:

It affected me emotionally and socially because you come here, become threatened, and that causes you to be scared for your life at all times, not only at school but everywhere, and you end up isolating yourself and not trusting anyone.

Empirical data from both case studies revealed that learner-on-teacher violence affects victims negatively by hurting their emotions and confidence and leaving victims with trust issues. This is consistent with Turanovic and Siennick (2022:33), who report that victims of learner-on-teacher violence also suffer from low self-esteem, which becomes another contributing factor that makes it difficult for victims to socialise. Coetzee (2017:16) echoes that violence victims suffer both emotional effects and withdrawal. Once a victim of learner-on-teacher violence goes through the withdrawal stage, their external relationships are also affected.

4.6.2. Fear of violence

The findings from the two participant schools revealed that teachers were faced with a risk of being victimised by learners. Recent cases that participants shared echoed that teachers are aware of the safety risks they face, yet they are powerless. Participant HSA from school A reflected that this is because if teachers do something to learners to protect themselves, the behaviour is regarded as unprofessional, even resulting in suspension:

At our school, the majority of teachers are females, so of course, they will be intimidated, especially if it is boys who are doing these things, and well, it's normal that if you are a victim, you'll always be very cautious when dealing with that particular learner even though you cannot show it affects you negatively. So, we try to be strong but are always scared.

Participant HSA further posits: *“It's not easy to be a teacher in the class with a particular learner who will literally humiliate you and make fun of you in front of all learners, and there is nothing you can do because you fear disciplining them because of what they might do to you.”*

Although participants in school A outlined that females tend to suffer from fear of violence, the empirical data from school B also revealed that when comparing the consequences of learner-on-teacher violence on both male and female teachers, female teachers are most vulnerable as compared to male counterparts. In support of this, TSB shared: *“Nowadays, I am so scared of learners; when you talk to learners, you must make sure that you don't shout, you cannot do anything to them because they will strike back.”*

From the same school, Participant HSB2 concurred with TSB by admitting that living in fear of being victimised by learners makes it difficult for teachers to discipline learners, which creates another problem of poor performance: *“When teachers are allowed to state why they are underperforming, then they would cite not being able to discipline learners due to fear of being victimised as one of the reasons why learners poorly perform.”*

The findings from the two schools presented similarities. The identified similarities are that female educators in both schools struggle with fear of violence, which is linked to a perception that females are too weak to defend themselves. This is consistent with the findings of Moon *et al.* (2019:273), who found that younger female educators are usually more prone to be victims of school violence due to inadequate experience compared with more experienced co-workers. In the same way, the finding concurs with Bjereld *et al.* (2021:259), who advocate that teachers' victimisation at school also negatively impacts victims' identity as they are often labelled as weak.

The empirical data from school A also highlighted that in most cases, victims of learner-on-teacher violence do not feel comfortable teaching their perpetrators. This finding is confirmed by Janssen *et al.* (2020:102), who point out that victims of violence reported feeling uneasy when coming in contact with or even seeing perpetrators of violence. In addition, participants from school B revealed that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher

violence causes fear in teachers that even leads to teachers not being able to discipline learners and thus affects academic performance in the long run.

4.6.3. Stress and health problems

According to empirical data from the two participant schools, teachers who are victims of learner-on-teacher violence not only suffer at the hands of perpetrators but also experience tremendous repercussions. Among the long-term consequences that victims of learner-on-teacher violence endure, participants reported constantly feeling down, stressed, and depressed. Furthermore, participants highlighted that the far-reaching ripple effect of the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is that the consequences frustrate victims as it becomes difficult for them to conduct lessons freely, and they end up suffering from anxiety.

In school A, participants spoke about how being victimised by learners deeply affects teachers, as victims sometimes find themselves crying due to feeling down. HSA had this to say: *“It is painful that learners would disrespect you to a point whereby you feel so down when you get to your house, you cry because of one particular learner who did something you did not expect from them.”*

From the same school, TSA1 further revealed that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence negatively affects teachers' mental health: *“These incidents affect both academic and psychological life of teachers negatively because as a teacher when learners disrespect you or violate you in any way, that incident belittles your mental capacity.”*

Another participant from the same school alluded that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence tampers with teachers' ability to enhance lessons as they are demoralised by these incidents. In this regard, PSA outlined: *“You see the moral of teachers whom learners always stress up becomes low, they struggle to deliver good lessons, and you see then the situation worsens.”*

Participant TSA2 shared the same sentiments:

Going to a class that you know that there's a learner you always clash with automatically demoralises you as compared to when you have to go to a class where learners respect you. So, this on its own affects one psychologically as it also causes anxiety.

At school B, HSB2 shared his frustrations by reporting cases of colleagues who suffered depression due to being victimised by learners: *"I'm saying this with a heavy heart that, in the last four years, four of my colleagues, I still call them my colleagues even though they are gone. One of them suffered depression due to learners."*

The empirical data revealed that in school A, teachers are demoralised to the extent that they even find themselves crying because of learner-on-teacher violence. Participants from school A further highlighted that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence affects them psychologically, making it difficult for them to deliver quality lessons, which on its own has psychological effects. This finding concurs with that of Kgosimore (2018:58), who contends that severe exposure to stress because of violence in the workplace eventually leads to employees being worn out and their health being compromised in the process.

Despite school A participants' silence regarding the issue of depression, in school B, one participant shared that some colleagues suffered depression because of being victimised by learners. This is consistent with Terzoudi (2020:11), who found that most participants, regardless of which form of violence they experienced, present similar symptoms of psychological distress. In support, Zysberg and Sabbag (2021:286) state that the physiological effects of stress are linked to imbalances that weaken the immune system and thus lead to opportunistic health conditions such as depression.

4.6.4. Intention to leave the profession

As per information collected through interviews from the two case studies, learner-on-teacher violence affects direct and indirect victims. Participants revealed that the rising cases of learners instigating violence against teachers are a call for concern. Exposure to these acts leads to colleagues developing a negative attitude that could lead to being suspended or fired whilst other colleagues are leaving the profession. In this instance,

participant HSA reported a case where a teacher developed an attitude to the extent that the teacher was rebellious:

One teacher who was always victimised by learners recently developed attitude to a point whereby if we say there's a meeting at 8:00 o'clock, the teacher decides not to show up go straight to their office and sit there, play with their phones, taking selfies you know that kind of situations. So that means she's trying to be rebellious, pushing the principal into disciplining them or even suspending them because that is absconding.

Participant TSA2 had conflicting views regarding resorting to leaving the profession due to violence instigated by learners against teachers because of fear of being unable to find jobs due to age: “*At times, we feel like leaving the profession, but where will we go? Who would hire us at this age?*”

In school B, participants shared that dealing with learner-on-teacher violence is a challenge for teachers as retaliation in self-defence has landed their colleagues to suspension. HSB2 said:

And then subsequently, the three others resigned at different times, and they are now at home. I feel sorry for them because we would still be with them if the system favoured them. One teacher was forced to resign because the court found him guilty of fighting back, and this was not fair on the teacher because the teacher was only protecting and defending himself.

The findings from two case studies reveal that although teachers face all threats that learner-on-teacher violence presents, some are forced to accept the situation as they cannot afford to lose their jobs. In addition, an empirical study highlighted the realisation that teachers have no control over the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. A participant shared that one of the effects of being frustrated by these incidents was that teachers' personalities and attitudes are changing for the worse. This finding is consistent with that of Berlanda *et al.* (2019:3), who point out that teachers who are victims of learner-on-

teacher violence also develop a negative attitude that discourages and reduces their motivation and commitment to the profession.

In school B, participants shared that three teachers resigned because of the continuing prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence without any permanent solution to address the matter. This finding is similar to that of Mofokeng (2015:74), who alluded that any ill behaviour in school has to be addressed by enforcing its code of conduct, as a lack of support from school leaders for enforcing such rules increases teachers' vulnerability to violence, leading them to quit the profession.

4.6.5. Poor performance

The empirical data from the two participant schools outlined that learner-on-teacher violence also negatively impacts school performance. Among various consequences of poor performance in a school setting, participants unveiled that a significant negative impact of learner-on-teacher violence is on academic performance as teachers' focus shifts from pursuing their core duties to dealing with the incidents. Some factors that participants believe contribute to poor performance are teachers who do not attend classes, teachers with low morale, and a high rate of teacher absenteeism. In the same light, PSA outlined that in their schools, the perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence are usually learners in grade 10 and grade 11. Teachers' performance in those respective grades drops: *“It actually leads to underperformance of the general school particularly grade 10 and grade 11, and the morale of the teachers become so low to such an extent at times you find teachers bunking such classes.”*

In support, HSA highlighted the following:

In order to ensure that teachers attend their classes we have to conduct random spot checks and if teachers are not in class, we usually have WhatsApp group I would post in the group to say teacher so and so you are supposed to be in class please report to your class immediately but if we don't do that then teachers do not attend classes.

In school B, one participant reported that in their school they are also faced with the problem of poor performance, and it is due to teachers and school leadership spending time on resolving issues of discipline instead of teaching and learning taking place. PSB highlighted:

The unfortunate scenario is, where there is violence there will always be poor performance. Learners would not perform, the culture of the school, the way the school does things would also change because instead of planning for the school to become active, the school will be planning to be reactive because we are not implementing our plan; instead we are reacting to what our learners and the situation is dictating to us.

From the same school, Participant HSB2 echoed that their school is underperforming because teachers' morale is negatively affected by learner-on-teacher violence: *"Their morale gets low; they are no longer motivated, and then you would see this in their performance."*

In addition, HSB2 highlighted that in instances where there is demotivation, the only thing that makes them aware that there is a problem is when teachers' absenteeism increases: *"And then some teachers are so demotivated by learners' ill-discipline, and we see this by their rate of absenteeism that is now increasing."*

From the responses given in one-on-one interviews, it was revealed that both schools are experiencing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, and its effects run so deep that it has affected school academic performance. Poor performance by both schools is an indication that there is an outcry, and if something is not done, the aftermath will have negative effects on everyone, including national education goals, the school system, learners, and teachers. Moreover, responses were alarming because it appears that teachers spend too much time dealing with violence-related issues instead of curriculum coverage. This is consistent with Botha and Zwane (2021:2), who articulate that teachers find themselves in a position where they need to pay attention to learners' poor performance whilst also responding to violence against them. In support, Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2019:270) advocate that one of the many contributors to poor performance is an

unbearable teaching and learning environment due to a lack of discipline and overloaded teachers.

4.7. Theme 4: Challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence

Data collected through one-on-one interviews shows that although learner-on-teacher violence remains a complex issue in secondary schools, school leaders are using various practices to address its prevalence. Participants from the two participant schools echoed that although various leadership practices are used to address learner-on-teacher violence, they are limited as they present several gaps. The challenges shared by participants included, amongst others, parents unwilling to support schools, inadequate policies, limited support systems from other stakeholders, and a lack of departmental support. Each is discussed below.

4.7.1. Parents unwilling to support school

Empirical data suggests that parents are not giving school leaders enough support to address the challenge of learner-on-teacher violence. Participants further mentioned that addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence cannot be a one-way road as parents are expected to play their role and support school leaders and teachers. This realisation came about as participants lamented that when a learner has committed misconduct and parents are called in to intervene, parents become defensive, take the side of their children, swear at teachers, and they do not want to be corrected. Participant PSA from school A said:

You'll sometimes give a learner a letter to summon the parent, but then the learner will always give only her side or his side of the story and then the parent will come here being angry without even giving us a chance to present our own story and once you start coming with a sanction, the parents start becoming defensive.

In the same school, TSA2 spoke about cases in which parents failed to play their part because their children are very disciplined at home but at school become the opposite:

Learners tend to play double standards by being very disciplined at home but the opposite at school but parents always jumping the gun when they summoned to school due to ill-behaviour of their children makes it hard to deal with the prevalence of learner on teacher violence.

Another participant from school A revealed that parents do not want to take responsibility and being accountable for their children. HSA said:

Parents don't have time, you call the parent, and the parent is not there. It's like they have decided that these children are for teachers; therefore, every morning they should come to teachers, but at the end of the year, parents are marching at the school gate demanding their children to pass.

The problem of parents not being prepared to support the school is not only confined to school A as the issue resurfaced when school B participants were interviewed. HSB1 shared: *“We also involve the parents, but unfortunately, most parents do not support the effort because they are summoned to the school; they don't pitch.”*

In the same school, PSB echoed that parents do not understand their roles:

I have been advocating we cannot have a situation where you have a school within your community, and the community does not understand what the role of the school is. Instead of being supportive, they become instant enemies because the school is saying this and the community is saying that. Because of that conflict, we have a situation where it's like we have to compete for the client, and the client, in this case, becomes the learner.

When parents are summoned to schools to intervene in school B, they swear at teachers. TSB highlighted:

But here at the school when let me say, for example, sometimes you call in a parent when they get here, they start swearing at us. Parents swear at us, and when they are like that, we must at all times remain calm and humbled

and not swear or even shout back because if you as a teacher can shout back, it's going to be regarded as unprofessional behaviour.

The principal PSB took the idea further by referring to an incident involving some parents who did not want to be corrected:

We once had an incident where we called parents to intervene in discipline issues concerning their children, but parents did not want to listen, and they told us that we cannot come now and tell them what they've been doing for the past 20 years is wrong.

The role of parents in the process of addressing various school issues, including the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence, is of paramount importance. However, parental unwillingness to play their role makes it challenging for school leaders to address the problem. Participants from both schools unveiled that one of the challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence was that parents do not support school leaders. Participants further revealed that parents shield their children and become defensive instead of supporting school and teachers with issues concerning learner-on-teacher violence.

Empirical data from school B further echoed that due to parents' resistance of changing their behaviour, efforts to address learner-on-teacher violence will always be hampered. These results concur with Petso (2021:235), who articulates that a lack of appropriate parenting and involvement in school activities contributes to escalating cases of learner-on-teacher violence at school. The findings contradict Botha and Zwane's (2021:12) belief that if teachers and parents have a close relationship, the development of self-discipline among learners is ensured, and the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence can be addressed.

4.7.2. Inadequate policies

The two participant schools provided their learner code of conduct, safety policies, and classroom rules policies and revealed that they consult them to address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. However, participants indicated that these policies do not help to alleviate the problem of learner-on-teacher violence due to several reasons, including

not amending them regularly and school leaders not being capacitated to be able to review the policies. During one-on-one interviews with a participant from school A, an enquiry was made, and this is what Participant PSA shared:

I must say that in our schools, particularly township schools, we don't usually amend policies because we concentrate on catch-up and results. We don't have time, and we sometimes find ourselves using very old policies and don't even refer to them.

HSA echoed that their school policies are not reviewed regularly: *“I got here last year in July. And from then until now, the policy is still the same; it has not been reviewed this year.”*

Upon this realisation, the researcher further probed to find out why the school opted to use outdated policies to address various arising issues not covered by old policies and not amend them. HSA unveiled:

Sometimes we are not capacitated to work on amendment of policies that align with the South African Schools Act or the Constitution. Furthermore, we don't have a straight policy that addresses learner-on-teacher violence. It's a general policy; we don't have a specific policy; we only have a code of conduct for learners.

Despite both PSA and HSA outlining that their policies are not reviewed, TSA from the same school highlighted: *“Policy amendments are normally dependant on situations. For example, if there's a new arising challenge which is not covered by policies, then that would force policy review.”*

On the other hand, although PSA from school A complained that they are not capacitated to deal with the amendment of policies, in school B, HSB2 reported: *“We attend workshops, where we are trained and equipped, and people are invited, consultants, to come and train us on an array of issues.”*

HSB1 further outlined that in school B, policies are reviewed: *“We review them annually; if it’s not annually, it can be when necessary, but we have to amend them.”*

In support, HSB2 shared the same sentiment: *“By bi-annually, we come together and review policies because you, in other instances, reviews are being attended to by other authorities in high positions where new policies are enacted.”*

Although the code of conduct is clear that when addressing serious misconduct, including learner-on-teacher violence, learners must be suspended or even expelled, PSB advocates:

My role in a disciplinary hearing, in a law language they call it to adduce evidence, when you adduce evidence, you don't sit as a constant member of a disciplinary committee even the prescripts of the law. So once the HOD receives a message that the principal was sitting in the disciplinary hearing, they know that the learner wins the case; it is thrown out. It's scrapped because we are instructed even if you have suspended that learner, the supervisor of that school is instructed to ensure that the learner the next day sits in class. After all, the process becomes flawed.

Through the data collected the researcher found that there is clear contradiction between policies and their implementation. While the learner code of conduct policy outlines that when a learner has committed a level four misconduct they must be suspended, the *Constitution* defends the learner by stipulating that learner must be protected and by suspending them their constitutional right of being at school would be violated. Although participants from school B highlighted that their policies are reviewed annually or bi-annually, participants in school A unveiled that their policies are not reviewed. Participants from school B mentioned that their policies are even reviewed when necessary, but the fact that the principal protects the learner when sanctions are implemented revealed the inconsistency and contradiction in policy implementation. This finding concurs with that of Du Plessis and Mncube (2018:25), who found that in disciplinary procedures, principals become dictators and make unilateral decisions. In addition, the findings are consistent with those of Hanslo (2020:84) as they warn that although the learner code of conduct must

be reviewed at least once a year, they found that the responsible people do not review the policy.

4.7.3. Lack of support from other stakeholders

Data collected revealed that to address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected participant schools, all stakeholders must be involved, including SGB members, parents, government, politicians, and community structures. However, empirical data unveiled that these stakeholders are part of the problem and not the solution. Concerning SGB members who are supposed to help school leaders with the amendment of various policies to ensure that they remain relevant, PSA from school A reported: *“One of the responsibilities of the SGB is to represent all parents and amend school policies, but they are not literate to can go to the extent of being able to amend the policies.”*

Regarding the role played by community members, PSA highlighted that they remain silent when schools battle with many issues, including the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. However, when they introduce sanctions as stipulated in policies, they start to act defensively. He highlighted: *“And as it is of now, we've got suspensions of learners due to various misconducts, and I will not be surprised if next week I might see the politicians taking this up instead of supporting us.”*

TSA1 shared the same sentiments and added:

These learners are well informed with politics more than school-related information because of influence, and they know how the system protects them over us through community political leaders and because of that they do as they please.

Participants from school B echoed sentiments that the education system lacks societal support to eradicate confusion in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. PSB shared:

In our case, our support system in our school is wanting. It's very confusing to a point where we are not sure of what we want in school or what we don't want in a school. Whatever comes goes because our system is not built up

or created in such a way that the challenges in the society are supported from the society into the school from the school and to the society.

In instances where school support structures are active, PSB states:

The unfortunate thing is people serving in various committees and those who are school-based supportive coordinators; are ordinary teachers trained to be ordinary teachers. Only a few who majored in psychology are appointed as school-based support coordinators, and that's where we are also missing the point. For example, you cannot take a nurse and say that because you have a nursing qualification now, we want you to be a doctor and operate on a patient.

These findings revealed that school A is situated in a community with politically affiliated families. Such families are believed to help children get away with many things, including violating teachers through their political leverage. This is consistent with Aman *et al.* (2020:15), who found that school leaders do not discipline learners because they are scared that parents will take them to court for disciplining learners. Although participants from school B were silent on the issue, they echoed that the community does not do its part in instilling discipline at home so that the school can build on what they have already started. This was also echoed by Aman *et al.* (2020:2) as they emphasised that in schools, discipline can only be maintained if parents at home instil both valuable skills and morals in the children.

The empirical data further revealed that school B has different school-based support coordinators. What is lacking is that its members did not study psychology to be able to address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. The findings further concur with Nhambura (2020:76) as he echoes that schools will not be able to address the problem of violent learners without the support and assistance of social workers, psychologists, politicians, and law enforcement.

4.7.4. Lack of departmental support

Participants from the two participant schools indicated that school leaders extract and employ the framework of discipline and addressing learner-on-teacher violence from the DOE policies. However, participants revealed that the DOE does not support them in issues of learner-on-teacher violence. Furthermore, participants indicated they lack infrastructure, teachers, security guards, and school-based psychologists. In school A, HSA stated:

The department does not support us; I know it will be like I'm anti-department, but they are doing nothing to support us with addressing violence. The only time the district officials come to us is when we were underperforming as a school or as a particular subject teacher, but they do not come to support us.

Subsequently, one participant from school A raised an important issue: if schools want to retain well-disciplined learners, they must also cultivate extra-mural activities they do not have. Participant TSA outlined:

It is challenging to encourage learners to be disciplined without exposing them to extra-mural activities because. But we have what we call extra-mural activities so that learners can play. But where will the learners play because we don't have governmental support to clean and maintain those grounds.

From the same school, TSA2 also shared that government does not want to be accountable for anything:

And in different issues at schools, the government always looks for loopholes to protect itself by making sure that principals take a fall, to the extent that government even presents new policies that we don't even know of when a trouble has presented itself at school.

Participant HSA lamented that teachers could not do anything to protect themselves against violence perpetrated against them due to limited power: “*Teachers don't have power, we*

don't have power as teachers, our power has been stripped away by our same government. It's all about the learner. I mean, everything is all about the learner.”

In school B, participants also shared that government does not support them in addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence; instead, they are overworked. PSB indicated:

Dealing with learner violent behaviour has become an add-on the school. And in this case, we don't have specialists to deal with that within our education system, as compared to other countries like America, where they've got a social worker within the school, a nurse placed at the school, a psychologist placed at a school and the principal's role is to manage the school, the teacher's role is to teach.

Consistent with HSA, who indicated that teachers' power concerning protecting themselves is limited, HSB2 said: *“The saddest part is that our constitution has spoiled learners or children in South Africa. Teachers are so helpless nowadays; many feel like leaving this dear profession because they feel they are not protected.”*

Moreover, TSB spoke about an incident where learners opened a case against him:

Most of the time, when you do anything to learners trying to discipline them, they go to the police station and open the case for us. Especially the learners of location B, they opened a case for me, and earlier today, the police were here looking for me because of the same thing.

Participant PSB believes that there is a gap as the department does not assist in addressing learner-on-teacher violence:

As township schools, we have realised that we are on our own, and thus, we continue to have disciplinary problems among our learners because even our department is not assisting in closing the gap, and I don't see a time where the gap would be closed.

The findings from the two participant schools indicated how a lack of departmental support has added to the challenge of addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. In school A, participants revealed that the lack of support from the government is rising; instead, participants felt that they were overworked. This is consistent with a finding by Nhambura (2020:15), who asserts that non-participation in sports, especially for learners gifted in sports, may breed frustration that will result in aggression. Furthermore, in school A, participants also lamented that teachers' powers are limited whilst the government does not want to take accountability in addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

In the same way, in school B, participants shared the same sentiments that government does not close the gap as far as the discipline problem is concerned; instead, policies meant to discipline learners protect them. Although in school A participants never mentioned anything regarding learners opening cases against them, in school B, one participant said that police were earlier looking for him because a learner opened a case against him. This is to a finding by Aman *et al.* (2020:15) as they reported that school leaders do not discipline learners because they are scared that parents will take them to court for disciplining learners.

4.8. Theme 5: Leaders' initiatives to address learner-on-teacher violence

The findings from interviews with the participants show that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence hampers the school's normal functioning and national education goals. In this regard, responsible role players, including school leadership, must take action to address the problem. The empirical data further revealed several practices that school leaders adopt as responses to the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. Among various leadership practices used to address learner-on-teacher violence, participants shared the school code of conduct for learners, classroom rules, safety policy, school-based targeted violence intervention programs, and involvement of parents as responses that the SMT utilises to address learner-on-teacher violence. Each is discussed below.

4.8.1. Code of conduct for learners

According to Sections 8 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 every school must develop a code of conduct. The responsibility for formulating and developing this policy lies with the SGB in consultation with parents, learners, teachers, and non-teaching staff. After its successful adoption, copies are then distributed to relevant stakeholders. To ensure that this policy remains relevant, it must be reviewed from time to time, and when the need arises, all stakeholders must be consulted again. In that regard, a learner code of conduct is a policy that explains how learners should conduct themselves on school premises. Participants from the two participant schools shared that school leadership utilises the learner code of conduct to address cases of learner-on-teacher violence. Participant HSA in the empirical study stated: *“When we deal with discipline issues, Learner Code of conduct, is the first one that we apply; remember there are misconducts, and different levels of misconduct in our code of conduct as schools.”*

In the same manner, the principal from school A reported: *“When it comes to discipline, we read the code of conduct for learners, and we apply the code of conduct to help maintain order and discipline within the school premises.”*

From the same school, TSA1 mentioned: *“Our code of conduct policy is developed by the school, and it is structured in such a way that sanctions are included on each and every transgression.”*

To ascertain implementation clarity and to assert that this is a working document that is consulted now and then, Participant PSA said:

For any ill-discipline, we encourage teachers to have incident books. In this incident books, they have got to record any form of ill-discipline of the learner in class starting from minor ill-discipline or misconduct up until more serious misconduct including learners who victimise teachers.”

Similar to what participants shared in school A, in school B, participants echoed that they also utilise the learner code of conduct to inform learners about behaviour that is acceptable and that which is not. Participant HSB2 said:

During admission, the very same code of conduct is given to all learners, both new learners and current learners; when they go to the next grade, they are given the code of conduct each year. We use it to explain to them in full what is expected of them.”

PSB shared the same sentiments and reported: *“We issued a code of conduct last year at the end of the year with their report cards so that when they come in January, they know what to expect and their parents have signed for it; they know what we expect.”*

From the same school, HSB1 highlighted that although some teachers choose not to report these incidents, if any case comes to their attention, they deal with it as per the recommendation of the code of conduct:

If we are aware of the incident because some teachers choose not to report them, depending on the seriousness of the incident, we normally have disciplinary procedures of such learners as per learner code of conduct. Then recommendations will be made if the behaviour or action does not change, then the matter is escalated to the DG.”

The learner codes of conduct requested from both schools revealed four levels of misconduct, together with sanctions for each thereof. Physical attacks against teachers, sexual harassment, and verbal attacks are among the transgressions listed in the learner code of conduct for both participant schools. According to the learner codes of conduct, a physical attack against a teacher is considered a level four misconduct. The sanction includes a warning letter, suspension from school, disciplinary hearing, and detention. The learner code of conduct further classifies both sexual harassment of teachers and verbal attacks as level three misconduct. The sanction for level three misconduct includes a warning letter, suspension from school, disciplinary hearing, and detention or expulsion.

The findings above indicate that both schools have developed and adopted a code of conduct. In school A, participants only reported that they read the code of conduct to learners, while in school B, participants outlined that they give each learner a copy and allow them time to familiarise themselves with its content and request both learners and

parents to sign and return it to school. Nonetheless, in school A, participants shared that to enforce the school code of conduct, they have requested each teacher to have an incident book where they record all forms of misconduct.

On the other hand, the learner code of conduct outlines the procedure that school leaders undertake to deal with and address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. The findings are consistent with the literature as Mofokeng (2015:74) highlights that any learner ill behaviour in schools must be addressed by enforcing its code of conduct. In addition, Mhlongo (2017:36) also advocates that the code of conduct must be developed clearly to discourage any ill discipline.

4.8.2. Classroom rules and school safety policy

During one-on-one interviews with the SMT and teachers, it was discussed that to instil discipline in classrooms, including addressing learner-on-teacher violence, both schools also utilise classroom rules. The classroom rules policy, provided in school A, outlines how learners are expected to behave in class. PSA advocated: *“Through classroom rules, we emphasise that when the teacher is standing in front of learners and teaching, learners must always be seated listening and only raise their hands to talk if they are allowed to talk.”*

From the same school, participants TSA1 said:

We normally use classroom rules, and we read them so that learners can know what is expected from them. For example, if a learner vandalises anyone’s property, or disrespect teachers we call them in to the staffroom and remind them the classroom rule regarding the matter and the sanction thereof.

Empirical data from school B revealed that classroom rules are linked with a safety policy, and thus they also use a safety policy to address learners who attack teachers. HSB1 reported:

There is also a safety policy, and the safety policy is linked to RCL policy and classroom rules, and this is where both teachers without formal managerial positions and RCL members are strategically involved and expected to assist with addressing learners who pose risks to teachers but remember the RCL members are also learners so they cannot do much.

The empirical data showed that both schools utilise classroom rules to deal with classroom discipline. Although participants from both schools attested that both schools utilise classroom rules, only the principal of school A availed the policy, and it presented a policy gap in terms of sanctions for each misconduct. The classroom rules sanctions regarding dealing with vandalism and disrespect against teachers included a verbal warning, which contradicts the safety policy and the code of conduct, as both are clear that if a learner vandalises anyone's property or disrespects teachers, that learner must be suspended or even expelled as the behaviour is a level four misconduct. Nonetheless, the safety policies provided by the two principals were similar and consistent with the learner code of conduct in dealing with learner-on-teacher violence.

4.8.3. School-based targeted violence intervention programs

The findings from interviews with the participants show that although school leaders utilise various policies to address learner-on-teacher violence, they also use different intervention strategies to address learner-on-teacher violence. During one-on-one interviews with participants from school A, participants shared that a random search for weapons by police using a metal detector, making sure that learners are attended by teachers, an electronic incident book application for recording misconducts, and a school-based support team (SBST) were amongst school-based violence intervention strategies that school leaders adopted to address learner-on-teacher violence. In school A, PSA shared: *“As part of disciplinary committee member, my role in terms of safety is that I should encourage a random search by the police so that we can ensure that learners do not come to school with weapons.”*

Participant PSA further echoed that they also use metal detectors and warning signage to raise awareness that weapons are not allowed on school premises:

We also have a board, even though it has faded a little bit, that indicates to learners that they are not allowed to bring weapons to school for the safety of other learners and teachers. We also have that thing used to detect metals; however, when police conduct random checks, we still find learners with weapons.

From the same school, Participant HSA highlighted that the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence is also linked to classrooms without educators. In school A, they have developed a strategy for ensuring that teachers attend their classes:

First of all, I follow all teachers in general because I think that is one of my responsibilities, to ensure that teaching and learning take place in school and learners are attended to. So, I follow teachers, conduct spot checks if I'm free and don't have a class, pass through, and ensure that if there's no teacher in a class, I usually post in the group to summon the teacher to attend the class.

Participants further revealed that they involve teachers in addressing learner-on-teacher violence and thus had developed an application used by teachers to record all learners' misconduct to supplement school safety policies. HSA articulated:

We have a Google form whereby we record all the incidents when something happens or if a learner is doing misconduct. So, if a learner is involved in any misconduct, teachers use their phones to capture and record that misconduct. This is used when we call parents, as we project it on a screen and then show the form in a bar chart for a particular learner.

It was also reported that school A had a support team that addresses all violence-related cases, including learner-on-teacher violence. TSA1 said: *“In addition, inside the school premises, there is what we call school-based support team (SBST). This is a team that assists a lot with violence issues including learners who attack teachers.”*

Participants from school B also shared their views regarding various intervention strategies to address learner-on-teacher violence. HSB2 highlighted:

So, there are structures such as school-based support team (SBST). It is based at the school level; it is comprised of teachers who are offering life orientation, including the principal and the SGB members, to deal with learners who misbehave and disrespect teachers.

PSB shared similar sentiments by outlining:

The School Based Support Team supports learning; it supports teaching, but it is more on a learning side because it deals with issues and challenges that learners experience and that can have a bearing in terms of their learning which might also include challenges in terms of discipline, challenges in terms of behaviour, challenges in terms of psychosocial issues that can lead into anger issues, behaviour issues and all that, so it's quite a heavy committee it is actually critical in the school.

Participant PSB also echoed the importance of coming down to the level of learners as an active strategy that enables leaders to understand where perpetrators of learner-on-teacher violence come from to be able to correct them:

I indicated I'm one of the people that though I can have disagreements with my learners, but still laugh at the end because I would put my foot down in a way that says to the learner help me understand you better so that I understand your actions and be able to help you.

As in school A, HSB1 reported that in terms of ensuring that learners do not bring weapons they might use when victimising teachers, they also conduct random searches with the assistance of police officers:

My role is to ensure the safety of the learners and the teachers; we normally ask the police because we have a police officer who's assigned to the school. We normally arrange random searches especially for weapons and maybe the substances if they have.

In support, PSB mentioned that they do not only involve police officers in conducting random searches. They also invite them to conduct sessions with learners and advise them on matters of safety:

We would from time to time invite the adopted cop of the school to come in because we believe they are dealing with issues of law, so we invite them, and we have sort of moral lessons to say learners once you do this, we come and pick you up we lock you there, and this is what's going to happen. We also make use of childhood family welfare that would come and have awareness campaigns talk to these learners and make them aware of some of the things and the impact of the effect they would have at the end of the day.

Participant HSB2 shared the same sentiments and added they also invite social workers and other stakeholders to encourage learners:

I have been tasked with inviting stakeholders from the community, like the police forum and the ministry, to come in and address learners. Social workers are also invited as professionals to come, motivate and talk with learners about the problem of violence and the repercussions of attacking teachers.

The school principals of the two participant schools disclosed that apart from using policies to deal with learner-on-teacher violence, they have a safety committee called the SBST that focuses on learners who instigate violence against teachers. In addition, empirical data from participants further revealed that both schools are seriously concerned with learners who carry weapons to school, which they believe could be used against teachers. In this regard, participants revealed that to prohibit learners from bringing weapons that can be used to injure teachers at schools, they have boards that stipulate that weapons are not allowed. Although participants in school B were silent about metal detectors, in school A, participants indicated that they have metal detectors to help identify learners with weapons

when they enter school premises. This finding is in line with the findings of Nhambura (2020:70), whereby he articulated that using metal detectors is one of the working strategies school leaders are using to deal with learners who bring weapons to school and put both teachers and learners at risk. However, Schildkraut and Grogan (2019:3) warn that using metal detectors has a detrimental effect as learners in schools that use metal detectors perceive schools as less safe.

Empirical data from both schools revealed that school leaders conducted a random search with the assistance of the police to address the problem of learners who bring weapons to school. This strategy is consistent with Davids and Waghid (2016:32), who believe that another intervention strategy for addressing learner-on-teacher violence includes linking schools to the South African Police Services (SAPS) who can conduct random checks. In addition, school A revealed that they had developed an electronic incident recording application to record all learner misconduct, including learner-on-teacher violence; however, this is not available in school B.

4.8.4. Strategic involvement of parents

During one-on-one interviews, participants revealed the importance of involving parents in all aspects of school as they are believed to have the power to bridge the gap regarding learners' behaviour. In this regard, participants from the two participant schools highlighted that they involve parents by requesting them to monitor their children and tasking them with contributing to designing and implementing the code of conduct. Regarding parental involvement, HSA said: *“We involve parents in many ways; for example, we ask parents to monitor their children and help us deal with unwanted behaviour.”*

To raise awareness about what is expected from learners and parents and thus the importance of parental involvement in learner s’ education, Participant HSB2 reported:

When we formulate code of conduct, we involve parents who are SGB members and further give the code of conduct to learners, to give to their parents who must sign, and then they return it, and that is how we try to

involve parents so that parents also know what is expected of their children when they are at school.

For HSB2, the involvement of parents was occurring, but parents were not taking the initiative seriously as some did not show up when called to school:

We also involve the parents, even though most of the time parents do not support the effort, because they are called in, they don't pitch up, but we try by all means to request for their support hence we always involve parents in the disciplinary hearing of their children.

HSB2 further indicated that to address excuses that parents do not understand the language used in policies, they always translate the learner code of conduct into a language parents know. *"We invite parents, and then the code of conduct is read, and even though it is written in English and most of them are not conversant with English now, it is translated into a language they understand."*

The involvement of parents in both schools as a practice to address learner-on-teacher violence was believed to make a significant impact. Ultimately, the school leadership's response with the involvement of parents is consistent with invitational leadership theory. Participants from the two participant schools outlined that they involve parents in everything as they even give them a code of conduct and explain it in a language they understand. The empirical data concurs with Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017:141), who advocate that involving parents in handling various issues at school is directly linked with the outcome of positive changed behaviour of learners. In addition, Botha and Zwane (2021:12) assert that one collaborative function that assists in eradicating learner ill-discipline against teachers is the close relationship between parents and teachers. Petso (2021:234) pointed out that a positive "parental involvement" in learner education is a crucial intervention strategy that can ensure that learners do not tamper with systematic teaching and learning by victimising teachers.

4.9. Summary

The findings from the two participant secondary schools have revealed that participants are frustrated by the continuing prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence due to the inability

to address it. Their frustrations were highlighted when they mentioned that all practices and measures in place seem insufficient. The prevalence was proven calamitous as learner performance in both schools is hampered. The participants further opined that there is a gap between policies and practice as the code of conduct says one thing and principals are mandated to do another. Participants further emphasised that lack of parental involvement is making matters worse, as they believe parental involvement is their last resort to address learner-on-teacher violence. The next chapter, Chapter Five, will focus on presenting the discussion of the findings, the significance and implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

5 Chapter Five: Summary and discussion of the findings and recommendations

5.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter focused on data analysis and interpretation of responses from the two participant secondary schools. This chapter will discuss the findings presented in Chapter Four, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

The primary aim of the study was to explore leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. The objectives were as follows:

- To determine the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected secondary schools,
- To describe the challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence effectively in secondary schools, and
- To describe and explain the leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in the selected schools.

5.2. Summary of the study

Chapter One of the study outlined the research setting, including the introduction and background, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, and conclusion. The second chapter focused on reviewing literature relevant to the study and the theoretical framework thereof, including ILT and SCLT. The methodology and research design were described and explained in Chapter Three. A qualitative study design involving two data-generation instruments was adopted, using semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Eight participants, four from each of the two schools, were purposefully selected. In Chapter Four, data was analysed through thematic analysis, and five themes emerged and were discussed. The final chapter of this study presents a summary and discussion of the findings concerning the research questions. The chapter also discusses the significance of this study, comparing it with other studies on learner-on-

teacher violence conducted internationally and in South Africa. This chapter will also discuss the study's limitations and future research recommendations on leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools.

5.3. Discussion of the findings

This section discusses the major findings of this study. In doing so, it is guided by research objectives, as stated in the introduction of the chapter. Three major findings include the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence, challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence, and leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

5.3.1. The manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence

The first research objective of this study was to determine the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected secondary schools. In response to this objective, the findings emanating from interviews with participants and document analysis revealed that learner-on-teacher violence in the participant schools manifested in different forms due to various causes and resulted in several consequences. This section will outline forms of learner-on-teacher violence, causes of learner-on-teacher violence, and consequences of learner-on-teacher violence.

5.3.1.1 Forms of learner-on-teacher violence

The forms of learner-on-teacher violence that emanated from the findings from interviews with participants and document analysis suggest that teachers in the selected schools experienced the following forms of violence: verbal violence, sexual harassment, and physical violence. Among the reported forms of violence, findings revealed that threats of violence and racism were the most common forms.

Regarding verbal violence, findings from both schools' participants revealed that a common form of verbal violence against teachers, especially young teachers, is swearing, primarily perpetrated by boys. This finding concurs with the findings of Moon *et al.* (2019:273), which revealed that younger female educators are usually more prone to be victims of learner-on-teacher violence due to inadequate experience compared with more

experienced co-workers. In terms of physical violence, the findings revealed that both girls and boys instigate physical violence against teachers. Although Denson *et al.* (2018:5) articulated that boys are usually perpetrators of physical violence as females are less physically aggressive, this was not the case in the two participant secondary schools as both boys and girls instigate physical violence against teachers. Concerning sexual harassment, empirical data revealed that teachers were also sexually harassed by learners in the form of improper suggestions, comments of a sexual nature, and inappropriate touch by boys; however, its occurrence is seldom.

SCLT emphasises that children do not just become violent without a triggering factor. In other words, learners become violent after being exposed to violence.

5.3.1.2 Causes of learner-on-teacher violence

Participants shared community, family, and school-based factors as factors strongly linked to the causes of learner-on-teacher violence. Empirical data revealed that learners learn how to be violent from the communities they are staying in, as these communities have normalised gangsters and substance abuse, and nothing is done about that. This finding is consistent with the findings of De Juan and Wegner (2019:34), who caution that South African communities always resort to mobilisation and protests when they feel deprived and frustrated by poor service delivery, which teaches children to be violent. This finding concurs with SCLT because it indicates that during the reproduction phase, children enhance what they have learnt from their models by instigating violence against others, which are teachers in this case.

On the other hand, regarding family factors, empirical data highlighted that learners are often raised in families where parents argue and fight in their presence, and there is no punishment for perpetrators. This finding is in line with the retention phase of SCLT, which emphasises that children are influenced by the behaviour they recall. In other words, this is a phase where learners are converting to observed behaviour. In the same way, SCLT strongly suggests that children learn from watching their role models. This means in families where domestic violence is a norm, children will be prone to learning and perpetrating violence against teachers.

School factors also play a role in exposing learners to violence. Empirical data revealed that in school A, regular assembly was suspended because it became a challenge as even the learners who were not violent were joining violent ones. In addition, empirical data revealed that teachers also provoke learners to be violent through discrimination and unfair treatment of learners. From this perspective, participants further shared that learners are continuing to perpetrate violence against teachers due to known success stories of perpetrators of violence who got away with the offence. In this light, another participant shared instances involving learners who violated teachers differently; however, such cases were not found in disciplinary records, which means no formal disciplinary actions were taken against such perpetrators. This indicates the motivational phase of SCLT, which emphasises that learners are often motivated to perpetrate violent acts because of the success stories of others.

5.3.1.3 Consequences of learner-on-teacher violence

Empirical data from participants indicated that the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence has adverse effects on victims. Fear of violence, a negative impact on teachers' social life, stress and health problems, and intention to leave the profession are among the consequences of learner-on-teacher violence. Regarding fear of violence, empirical data indicated that in both participant schools, teachers are predominantly young females, and learners tend to strike back when young teachers are disciplining them. This finding was linked with an existing perception that female teachers are prone to be victimised by learners because of being labelled as weak. This finding is consistent with Bjereld *et al.* (2021:259), who advocate that teachers' victimisation at school also negatively impacts victims' identity as they are often labelled as weak. In school B, participants further revealed that teachers always cite fearing learners as a reason for poor performance. This finding concurred with Middleton *et al.* (2017:251), who found that victims of learner-on-teacher violence find it challenging to come in contact with their perpetrators.

Considering the consequence of adverse effects on teachers' social life, participants mentioned that the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence affects victims emotionally and socially to the extent that it becomes a challenge for them to socialise due

to always fearing victimisation. Moreover, empirical data highlighted that victims of learner-on-teacher violence also struggle with cultivating their lives, making them feel as if they are no longer alive. This finding was consistent with Coetzee (2017:16) as he echoes that victims of violence suffer both emotional effects and withdrawal. Similarly, De Wet (2019:35) mentions that victims of learner-on-teacher violence live with the humiliation of being portrayed as disempowered and vulnerable human individuals and thus leading to several health problems. In this light, participants of learner-on-teacher violence also struggle with stress and health problems. Participants from the two selected schools shared that the prevalence of learner-on-teachers violence negatively impacts teachers' academic and psychological lives.

Moreover, empirical data revealed that the morale of victims of learners is always low, affecting their performance and thus resulting in high stress levels. One participant further highlighted that one of their colleagues suffered depression due to being victimised by learners without being protected. Similarly, a study conducted by Kgosimore (2018:58) reveals that severe exposure to stress because of violence in the workplace eventually leads to employees being worn down and their health being compromised in the process. Terzoudi (2020:11) shares the same sentiments that most victims of learner-on-teacher violence, regardless of the form of violence they experienced, present similar symptoms of psychological distress.

On the other hand, empirical data revealed that some victims of learner-on-teacher violence are also leaving the profession. Participants from one school revealed that one victim of learner-on-teacher violence developed an attitude that was perceived as a push factor towards being suspended or released from their duties. One participant further shared that after being victimised by learners, she felt like resigning but what stopped her was a lack of job prospects. Lastly, participants from both schools revealed that some teachers who were victims of learner-on-teacher violence resigned at different times. These findings are similar to those of a study conducted by Berlanda *et al.* (2019:3), who pointed out that teachers who are victims of learner-on-teacher violence also develop a negative attitude that discourages and reduces their motivation and commitment to the profession. Moreover, De Wet (2019:31) advocates that victims of learner-on-teacher violence

consider early retirement or career change; however, some are scared that the decision may have dire financial consequences for them and their families.

5.3.2. Challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence

The second research objective for this study was to describe the challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence effectively in secondary schools. In this regard, participants from the two selected case study schools stated that learner-on-teacher violence presents several challenges for the school, including disrupting the smooth running of the school, thus making it challenging to attain the goals of the school. In agreement, participants highlighted that various leadership practices are used to address learner-on-teacher violence; yet, all measures are insufficient due to several identified gaps. Some parents' unwillingness to support schools, inadequate policies, limited support from other stakeholders, and a lack of support from the DBE are among the shared challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in the selected secondary schools.

In terms of some parents' reluctance to support school leaders in addressing learner-on-teacher violence, participants echoed that this is one area of concern due to a belief that if parents are involved in disciplinary matters, a better outcome can be achieved. Nonetheless, participants reported that parents interfere with disciplinary procedures by seeking assistance from influential individuals in the community. This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Josiah *et al.* (2018:36), which revealed that when disciplinary measures are implemented against their children, some parents have a history of threatening school leaders, particularly parents in positions of authority in the community. Findings also revealed that parents do not want to be involved in anything concerning their children's education. This result concurs with Zwane (2021:235), who articulated that a lack of appropriate parenting and involvement in school activities contribute to escalating cases of learner-on-teacher violence at school. Because parents are believed to play a significant role in the disciplinary process, the lack of parental involvement makes addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence difficult. The realisation that school leaders invite parents to various school activities, but some choose not to support these efforts indicate that school leaders in the two participant schools are invitational. From this

perspective, the challenge of some parents' unwillingness to participate in school activities directly contrasts with the ideals of invitational leadership.

Empirical data from two participant secondary schools highlighted the use of various policies, including the learner code of conduct and safety policy, to instil discipline and address learner-on-teacher violence cases. Participants identified a gap between policies and implementation due to various factors, including principals being dictators in the disciplinary processes and policies not being reviewed. A study by Du Plessis and Mncube (2018:25) found that in disciplinary procedures, principals become dictators and make unilateral decisions. Hanslo (2020:84) found that in some schools, policies are not reviewed as expected due to various reasons.

Regarding policy review and implementation, the view of participants was that they were not trained to implement and review policies. Consistent with the finding, Manamela (2021:55) asserts that there frequently appears to be a breakdown in communication between the DBE and schools and insufficient preparation of school leadership for implementing policies. In cases where a disciplinary committee has decided on the implementation of sanctions, especially the suspension of learners, participants stated that principals hamper the process. This finding is similar to results by Hartnack (2017:10), who reported that the education district often pressures school leaders to return learners to school because learning is a priority, as stipulated in section 7 of the *Constitution*. Therefore, the above factors are strongly believed to cause policies to be inadequate, making it challenging to address learner-on-teacher violence. One of the tenets of ILT is policies and the emphasis is that policies should communicate inviting guidelines to all interested stakeholders.

On the contrary, in cases where policies were inadequate in the two selected schools, this shows that, to a certain extent, the school leaders seem to be uninviting. Regarding policy implementation and review, ILT emphasises that after policy adoption, it becomes the responsibility of school leaders to train or communicate with all interested stakeholders. The realisation that messages about how policies should be implemented were not communicated to participants and that they were further not trained to review policies is

thus a contradiction of ILT, thus further revealing that the school leaders in the participant schools were not invitational.

A lack of support from the DBE and other stakeholders was also among the challenges in addressing learner-on-teacher violence in the selected secondary schools. Participants highlighted a great need for a specialist to be permanently placed at schools in this regard. Participants further revealed that politics also interfere with disciplinary processes making it difficult for school leaders to apply sanctions for each misconduct as stipulated in policies. This is consistent with Aman *et al.* (2020:15), who found that school leaders do not discipline learners because they are scared that parents will take them to court. In the same way, Manamela (2021:55) reports that in addressing discipline problems, some stakeholders start questioning the approaches without approaching school leaders, instead complaining through the media. The results further concur with Nhambura (2020:76) as he echoes that school leaders will not be able to address the problem of violent learners without the support and assistance of social workers, psychologists, politicians, and law enforcement.

Regarding the DBE, participants lamented that the department does not take accountability for addressing learner-on-teacher violence. For example, participants revealed that it came to their attention that some incidents of learner-on-teacher violence result from frustrations of learners who are good in sports whilst schools do not have the resources to support extra-mural activities. This was also found by Nhambura (2020:15) as he asserts that non-participation in sports, especially for learners gifted in sports, may breed frustration that will result in aggression. Similarly, Zwane (2021:239) reports that the general mindset of learners becomes compromised if they learn without extra-mural activities, and thus the DoE is slow as schools lack adequate sports facilities. The scope of ILT suggests that inviting leaders must be able to develop programmes that can distract learners from misconduct. In this case, participants shared the belief that integrating sports with academics distracts learners from committing misconduct, including learner-on-teacher violence. However, the DBE's reluctance to assist with this effort contradicts programmes as one of the tenets of ILT.

5.3.3. Leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence

The third research objective of this study was to describe the leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in the selected schools. Accordingly, findings from the two participant secondary schools revealed that addressing learner-on-teacher violence remains a complex challenge that needs responsible role players, including school leadership, to be fully committed. Participants reported that school leaders use learners' code of conduct, classroom rules, safety policy, involvement of parents, and other school-based targeted violence intervention programs to address the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence.

Participants from the two participant schools reported using the learner code of conduct to address various misconducts relating to learner-on-teacher violence. In addition, both school principals availed their learner codes of conduct for document analysis. The literature consulted for this study further revealed that any ill behaviour in schools was addressed by enforcing the learner code of conduct (Mofokeng, 2015:74). On the other hand, participants also revealed that they have classroom rules and safety policies that also assist in addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. The two principals also availed these two documents. Although participants highlighted the challenge of not being trained to implement and review policies, they appear to still use policies to address learner-on-teacher violence. In other words, they implement them the way they understand them. Pertaining to school-based policies such as learner codes of conduct, ILT was apparent as participants refer to policies to address learner-on-teacher violence.

Participants and the literature consulted for this study recommended the involvement of parents in addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence. Participants reported that they involve parents due to an underlying belief that parents are expected to instil values and morals in their children at home. These values and morals must prepare children to be good citizens who respect their peers and other adults, including teachers. This finding is similar to the findings of Petso (2021:234), who found that positive parental involvement in learner education is a crucial intervention strategy that can ensure that learners do not hinder systematic teaching and learning by victimising teachers. Similarly,

Botha and Zwane (2021:12) assert that a collaborative function that assists in eradicating learner ill-discipline against teachers is the close relationship between parents and teachers.

To some extent, this indicates that school leaders are invitational in that other stakeholders, such as parents, are called upon to address the issue of learner-on-teacher violence. In this way, it is apparent that principals acknowledge parents' potential critical role in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. One of the tenets of ILT is people, and it advocates that all interested stakeholders must be invited to participate in developing safety measures in school. Because participants revealed that school leaders involve parents to address learner-on-teacher violence, this shows that school leaders are somehow invitational.

The literature and participants for this study show that apart from using policies and involving parents, school leaders have also developed other intervention strategies, including several structures such as the SBST, that deal with learners with discipline problems, using metal detectors, and conducting random searches with the assistance of the police. The finding is consistent with Davids and Waghid (2016:32), who believe that another intervention strategy for addressing learner-on-teacher violence includes linking schools to the South African Police Services (SAPS), who can conduct random checks. Similarly, in terms of controlling learners who bring weapons that can be used to injure teachers, participants revealed they have metal detectors and warning signs to warn learners that weapons are not allowed on school premises. In the same way, Nhambura (2020:70) found, whereby he articulated that using metal detectors is one of the working strategies school leaders are using to deal with learners who bring weapons to school and put both teachers and learners at risk. In this regard, school leaders are invitational as several programmes have been developed to address the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence.

Among developed programmes to address learner-on-teacher violence, participants highlighted inviting police officials to conduct random checks at school and using metal detectors. In this way, leaders are optimistic in terms of ensuring that different key role players partake in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. Similarly, school leaders are also invitational by clarifying intentions so that each stakeholder can understand their role.

Similarly, leaders in the two participant schools were invitational by being optimistic and including parents. This shows that leaders believe in parents' confidence and recognise their value and potential in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. In this regard, the finding addresses diverse views regarding trust because, in the challenges, participants mentioned that some parents do not support them; however, it appears that there are still parents who are still supportive because they come to school when invited.

5.4. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. The findings of this study suggest that addressing learner-on-teacher violence remains a multifaceted challenge that current leadership practices are still insufficient to address. To understand the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence, different forms, causes, and consequences of learner-on-teacher violence were identified. Verbal violence, physical violence, and sexual harassment appear to be the leading forms of learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. The aforementioned forms of learner-on-teacher violence are thus linked to several causes, including family, community, and school-based factors. These factors affect victims negatively; therefore, their consequences include negative effects on social life, fear of violence, stress and health problems, poor performance, and intentions to leave the profession.

The leadership challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence indicated that some parents' unwillingness to assist school leaders in addressing learner-on-teacher violence was a major challenge. The findings of this study suggest that parents use influential community members to interfere with discipline procedures. Inadequate policies, limited support from other stakeholders, and a lack of support from the DBE are evident challenges in addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

School leaders in secondary schools use various initiatives to address learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. Although the study found that existing leadership initiatives did not assist in permanently addressing learner-on-teacher violence, the findings indicated that school leaders were invitational as they invited various interested stakeholders to assist in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. Among the suggested initiatives, the initial

response was that leaders should use different policies, including the learner code of conduct, safety policy, and classroom rules, as these are the guiding policies in addressing disciplinary issues in secondary schools. To supplement disciplinary policies, findings revealed that school leaders also apply different school-based targeted violence intervention programs and the involvement of parents.

5.5. Recommendations

Because several strategies can be used to address the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence, the below recommendations can be used by participants' schools and other schools in the same way. The recommendations are made for school leaders, the DBE, parents, and curriculum designers.

5.5.1. Recommendation for school leaders

The findings of the study indicated that addressing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools cannot be achieved by principals only. As such, school principals must be invitational by inviting all key role players, including SMT members, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, and community members to partake in addressing learner-on-teacher violence. School leaders need to collaborate with teachers and encourage them to support each other, especially in aspects of discipline problems that cause the manifestation of learner-on-teacher violence. Similarly, school leaders must also develop programmes for training and equipping new teachers with skills that enable them to manage violent learners. Regarding sporting activities, school leaders must develop processes and programmes that encourage all learners to participate in sporting activities.

School leaders must further collaborate with the Department of Social Development and the Department of Police. In this way, professional psychologists can assist in dealing with learners with behavioural problems, as this is linked to anger management issues and utilises various rehabilitation methods for those learners as they are specialists in this regard. The Department of Police should be invited to assist school leaders by educating learners about the consequences of perpetrating violence against teachers. Regarding policies, school leaders must invite all key role players, including parents and learners, into

the formulation and adoption processes of school rules, including the learner code of conduct, as this would make them perceive the rules as fair and straightforward to follow. School leaders need to educate parents about various policies and further translate them into a language that parents understand. School leaders must also review these policies often to ensure relevancy to address all issues. Regarding learners smoking dagga and belonging to gangs, school leaders need to be invitational by organising random drug searches with the assistance of police officials and workshops for parents and learners. School leaders must also encourage teachers to treat learners with respect and care and avoid unethical interactions with learners.

5.5.2. Recommendation for Department of Basic Education

One of the identified challenges in addressing learner-on-teacher violence is the DBE's lack of support. Because the DBE is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that schools become an environment safe for all, the study recommends that the DBE needs to work hand-in-hand with school principals. The DBE must further liaise with Higher Health and sister departments, including the Department of Social Development and the Department of Police, for the allocation of social workers, psychologists, and police to schools to directly work with the SMT and teachers. To ensure that learners also engage in sporting activities and thus remain active, the DBE must support schools financially by building and maintaining sports facilities. On policy review, the DBE must formulate the reviewing process, including specific periods when policies need to be reviewed, and further provide training to different key role players involved in reviewing policies.

5.5.3. Recommendation for parents

Parental involvement is one of the school leaders' responses to addressing learner-on-teacher violence. However, some parents' reluctance to support school leaders creates more problems. In this regard, this study suggests that all parents must help school leaders by instilling good moral values in their children. Parents must ensure that they model good morals that encourage their children to be less violent, as children also learn from them since they are their role models. In the same way, parents must also monitor television shows their children watch and not allow them to watch violent scenes. In cases where

learners are exposed to violent scenes, parents must use the scenes to teach their children the negative effects of violence. Parents need to stay updated with their children's behaviour at school by accepting school invitations and collaborating with teachers and school leaders.

Regarding learning and understanding policies and sanctions, parents need to take the initiative of learning school policies and assist with implementing sanctions as stipulated in discipline policies. Parents, especially politicians, must stop meddling in the affairs of school administration and instead support leaders by encouraging the enforcement of disciplinary measures. Parents must create room for healthy relations between schools and community members and ensure that teachers are protected from any attacks from learners or community members. This will assist leaders in devoting time to ensure that teaching and learning take place.

5.5.4. Recommendation for curriculum designers

To address learner-on-teacher violence and its effects on teachers, the DBE must lead the process of developing an effective curriculum. Curriculum designers must formulate and introduce Emotional Intelligence as a compulsory subject. Its curriculum content should be centralised around equipping learners with skills that would enable them to know how to control their emotions. The subject should also integrate conflict management as this skill is perceived as a tool that will assist learners with anger management issues.

5.5.5. Recommendations for further research

Because the primary aim of this study was to explore leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools, the study explored learner-on-teacher violence only in two secondary schools in the eastern Free State; thus, the findings do not apply to other secondary schools in other districts. Further research must be conducted in other districts to have a broader understanding of addressing learner-on-teacher violence. Because the study only focused on addressing learner-on-teacher violence from a leadership perspective and participants lamented parents as the main obstacle, further research must be performed on the collaboration of school leaders and parents in addressing

learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. This study employed a qualitative approach; to understand the extent of learner-on-teacher violence, further investigation must focus on the statistics by using a quantitative or mixed-method study.

5.6. Limitations of this study

This study was initially intended to be conducted in two secondary schools in the eastern Free State, which succeeded; however, there were a few shortcomings in collecting data. The researcher initially planned to interview six participants per school, including two educators, three SMT members, and the principal. It became a challenge for the researcher to access all participants as only four participants were available from each school. On the days of interviews, some participants were hospitalised due to COVID-19, whilst others were in isolation due to COVID-19. Nonetheless, eight participants were available from the two participating schools. Lastly, the participant-profile leaned more to male gender and the voice of female participant was nearly silent and this indicated a gender prejudice.

5.7. Conclusion

This study explored leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. This study revealed that addressing learner-on-teacher violence remains a challenge for school leaders. Although utilising the learner code of conduct, involvement of parents, and other school-based targeted violence-intervention programs are among leadership practices for addressing learner-on-teacher violence in the selected participant schools, schools are still experiencing learner-on-teacher violence. In this regard, insufficient policies, a lack of parental support, a lack of support from other stakeholders, and a lack of support from the DBE remain challenges that make addressing learner-on-teacher violence difficult.

Although the study found inadequate policies, limited support systems from other stakeholders, and a lack of departmental support among the challenges of addressing learner-on-teacher violence, a lack of support from some parents was a significant challenge that school leaders are struggling with. Regarding policies, it was found that some principals and some SMT members do not understand their roles as stipulated by

policies regarding dealing with learner misconduct. Moreover, some schools' policies are not reviewed to ensure relevance in addressing challenges, including learner-on-teacher violence. Empirical data also revealed that some teachers are unaware of policies that deal with learner discipline-related issues. This study argues that to address learner-on-teacher violence, school leaders must invite all key role players to participate in designing programs that will assist in addressing this issue. Lastly, the DBE must introduce Emotional Intelligence as one of the compulsory subjects in secondary schools as this can change learners learned violent behaviour and thus contribute to addressing learner-on-teacher violence.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A TITLE REGISTRATION



28 August 2021

APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

Applicant: Majong, NS
Student Number: 2006104513
Discipline: Education Management
Study Code: Masters (EDML8900)

Dear Ms Majong

Your registered title is: "EXPLORING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF ADDRESSING LEARNER-ON-TEACHER-VIOLENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS"

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Patrick Mafora
Chair: CTR committee

Ms CS Duvenhage
Secretary: CTR committee



APPENDIX B ETHICAL CLEARANCE



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

11-May-2022

Dear Mrs Nomase Majong

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Exploring Leadership Practices of Addressing Learner-on-Teacher Violence in Secondary Schools

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2021/1460/22

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis
Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Dr Adri
du
Plessis

Digitally signed
by Dr Adri du
Plessis
Date:
2022.05.11
13:57:43 +0200

205 Nelson Mandela
Drive
Park West
Bloemfontein 9301
South Africa

P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein 9300
Tel: +27 (0)51 401
9337
duplessisA@ufs.ac.za
www.ufs.ac.za



APPENDIX C PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM DBE

Enquiries: MZ Thango
Ref: Notification of research: N.S. Majong
Tel. 082 537 2654
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



District Director
Thabo Mofutsanyana

Dear Ms. Mabaso

NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that Mrs. N.S. Majong has been granted permission to conduct research in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District under the auspices of the University of the Free State. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

Topic: Exploring Leadership Practices of Addressing Learner on Teacher Violence.

- 1. List of schools involved:**
- 2. Target Population:** Two Principals, six Departmental Heads, and four Educators at the selected schools.
- 3. Period of research:** From the second week of February 2022 until 30 September 2022. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
- 4. Research benefits:** Through this intended study, it is envisaged to make a desirable contribution to readily available knowledge on school violence, especially focusing on teachers as victims. Moreover, the study seeks to add to the existing body of knowledge in terms of strategising to find innovative solutions to eradicate learner-on-teacher violence in schools; this task should not lie only with SMTs - it should include a professional psychologist, parents, the general community members, among others.
- 5. Strategic Planning, Policy and Research Directorate** will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 10/11/2021

Enquiries: MZ Thango
Ref: Research Permission: N.S. Majong
Tel. 082 537 2654
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



69 Plein Street
LA Provance
Bethlehem
9701

Dear Mrs. N.S. Majong

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

Topic: Exploring Leadership Practices of Addressing Learner on Teacher Violence.

1. **List of schools involved:**
2. **Target Population:** Two Principals, six Departmental Heads, and four Educators at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the second week of February 2022 until 30 September 2022. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 10/11/2021

APPENDIX D PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM THE SCHOOL



To School Principals

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request to carry out a research at your school

My name is Nomase Sarah Majong. I am a Master of Education candidate at the University of the Free State (Qwa Qwa Campus), supervised by Dr Makhasane SD. I am engaged in a research study entitled: **Exploring Leadership Practices of Addressing Learner-on-Teacher Violence in Secondary Schools.**

The aim of this study is to explore leadership practices of address learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. This is a noble topic in the field of education. The findings will be used to recommend possible intervention strategies of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools. In order to achieve my objectives, I kindly request your school to participate in this research. The first part of the research involves one on one interview with you and the second part interview schedule involves two heads of departments and two teachers. In addition I am also going to request various policies that you use when dealing with learner-on-teacher violence and latest reported cases of learner-on-teacher violence. The interviews will be carried at the most suitable time according to you. I also request to audio record the interviews.

I assure you to complete anonymity and confidentiality of your participation in this research. I am willing to share my findings with your school should you be interested. If you feel you want to understand more you can contact my supervisor, Dr Makhasane SD at University of the Free State (Qwa Qwa campus). If you want further information and clarification you can contact me on this cell-number: 0837530905/ 2006104513@uf4life.ac.za

Thank you for helping me to achieve my aims as this will also contribute to my own professional development.

Yours faithfully
Majong Nomase Sarah

APPENDIX E CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS

Consent form for Principals

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study University of the Free State

Title of Study: **Exploring leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools.**

Introduction

You are hereby requested to be in this research study, which is conducted by Majong Nomase Sarah in the Department of Education Management at University of the Free State, Qwa Qwa campus. This research is being conducted to fulfil the degree requirements of Master of Education Management at University of the Free State, under the supervision of Dr. SD Makhasane.

Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn more about leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools.

Description of Procedures

This study involves a one-on-one interview and will take approximately 1 hour. The interview will be audio recorded and you will have the opportunity to see the questions on the interview guide before signing this consent form.

Risks and Discomforts

There is a possibility for participants to suffer emotional distress resulting from answering the questions. However, should a need arise, a professional counselling service has been arranged and will be provided at no cost.

Benefits and Financial considerations

You may not receive any direct benefit from this study as you will not be compensated for participating in this study, however, the knowledge gained from this study may eventually benefit others.

Confidentiality

Any information about you that is obtained as a result of your participating in this research will be kept as confidential and pseudonyms will be used. Information from audiotapes will be uploaded in a computer and be saved in a password protected iCloud storage. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

You are hereby given the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and you will receive answers concerning areas you did not understand.

I _____ willingly consent to participate in this research.
_____ Signature of Participant

Date _____ Time _____ Contact _____
_____ Signature of Researcher
_____ Printed Name

Date _____ Time _____

CONSENT FORM FOR HODs

Consent form for HODs.

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study University of the Free State

Title of Study: **Exploring leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools.**

Introduction

You are hereby requested to be in this research study, which is conducted by Majong Nomase Sarah in the Department of Education Management at University of the Free State, Qwa Qwa campus. This research is being conducted to fulfil the degree requirements of Master of Education Management at University of the Free State, under the supervision of Dr. SD Makhasane.

Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn more about leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools.

Description of Procedures

This study involves a one-on-one interview and will take approximately 1 hour. The interview will be audio recorded and you will have the opportunity to see the questions on the interview guide before signing this consent form.

Risks and Discomforts

There is a possibility for participants to suffer emotional distress resulting from answering the questions. However, should a need arise, a professional counselling service has been arranged and will be provided at no cost.

Benefits and Financial considerations

You may not receive any direct benefit from this study as you will not be compensated for participating in this study, however, the knowledge gained from this study may eventually benefit others.

Confidentiality

Any information about you that is obtained as a result of your participating in this research will be kept as confidential and pseudonyms will be used. Information from audiotapes will be uploaded in a computer and be saved in a password protected iCloud storage. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

You are hereby given the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and you will receive answers concerning areas you did not understand.

I _____willingly consent to participate in this research.

_____ Signature of Participant

Date _____ Time _____ Contact _____

Signature of Researcher

Printed Name

Date _____ Time _____

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Consent form for teachers

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study University of the Free State

Title of Study: Exploring leadership practices of addressing learner-on-teacher violence in secondary schools.

Introduction

You are hereby requested to be in this research study, which is conducted by Majong Nomase Sarah in the Department of Education Management at University of the Free State, Qwa Qwa campus. This research is being conducted to fulfil the degree requirements of Master of Education Management at University of the Free State, under the supervision of Dr. SD Makhasane.

Purposes of the Study

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Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

You are hereby given the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and you will receive answers concerning areas you did not understand.

I _____ willingly consent to participate in this research.

_____	Signature	of	Participant
Date _____ Time _____	Contact	_____	
_____	Signature	of	Researcher
_____	Printed		Name
Date _____ Time _____			

APPENDIX F Interview Schedule

Interview questions

Introduces myself to the participant and explain the purpose of the study and ethical issues

1. Ice breaker questions

- How many years do you have as a Principal/ SMT/ teacher of this school?
- How would you describe your style of leadership?

2. Main questions

- Is your school experiencing the prevalence of learner-on-teacher violence? If, can you elaborate on the various forms your school is experiencing?
- Please tell me about incidents of violence perpetrated by learners against teachers in your school.
- What are the possible causes of learner-on-teacher violence?
- What are the consequences of violence instigated by learners against teachers? ?
- What challenges do you come across when dealing with learner-on-teacher violence?
- How is the role of various stakeholders (learners, teachers, SMT, parents SGB?) in addressing learner-on-teacher violence?

In what ways do the stakeholders work together to address learner-on-teacher violence?

- Are measures put in place to curb learner-on-teacher violence working or effective?
- Which policies does the school use to guide its decisions, when addressing learner-on-teacher violence cases?
- How often are school policies reviewed and amended?
- what support do external stakeholders such as the Department of Education offer to combat challenges of learner-on-teacher violence?
- What systems or support programmes do the school have to support teachers who are victims of learner-on-teacher violence?
- Is there anything else you would want to add?

Document analysis schedule

Documents to be requested

- Learners' code of conduct
- Classroom rules
- School safety policies
- Reports on violence cases
- Minutes of disciplinary hearings
- Records of learners' misconduct from the disciplinary committee.

Guiding questions

1. Which policies guide schools in the management of learner-on-teacher violence?
2. Which forms of violence are stated in the policies?
3. Who is protected by the policies?

4. Who formulated the policies?
5. Who are mandated to implement the policies?
6. What proactive strategies do the policies provide?
7. Which reactive strategies do the policies provide?

Majong NS EDML 8900 PROJECT

by Nomase Majong

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APPENDIX H Language editor letter



14 November 2022

Confirmation of language editing

This is to certify that I, Cornelia Magdalena Meyburgh, provided language editing services for the Master's dissertation of **NS Majong** titled:

**"Exploring Leadership Practices of Addressing Learner-on-teacher
Violence in Secondary Schools"**

For further enquiries, please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards,

CM Meyburgh

✉ auxiliarinke@gmail.com

☎ 072 251 1892